

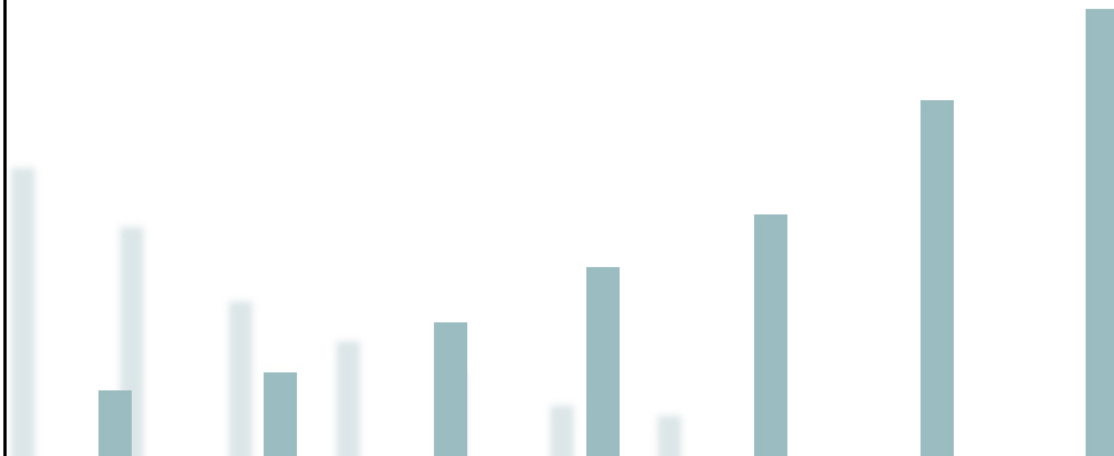
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Expanding the Supply of High-Quality Public Schools

Susan Colby, The Bridgespan Group

Kim Smith, NewSchools Venture Fund

Jim Shelton, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation



Over the past decade, the supply of both new schools and redesigned district schools has mushroomed. Propelled by forces ranging from charter-school, state, and federal accountability legislation, to strong demand from parents and students, to mounting public opinion pressing for reform, educators and education entrepreneurs have poured their energies into developing innovative solutions to improve America's schools.

Despite the growing momentum, however, there are not yet nearly enough good schools to go around; nor does the capacity exist to turn around all the schools that are currently failing. Many educators remain skeptical of the staying power of current reform initiatives. The news media continue to be filled with reports about schools that are not living up to their promise—many high-profile success stories notwithstanding.

The fact that so many of the successful new and redesigned schools have been one-off, isolated experiments magnifies the confusion. Everyone knows that certain schools work: but exactly what is working or how the success of one school can be replicated in other contexts is much less clear.

The NewSchools Venture Fund, the Bridgespan Group, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have been working with a wide range of school development organizations across the country to increase the number of high-performing schools. In the process, we have identified two levers that appear to play a critically important role in determining how quickly and consistently successful schools and design models can be replicated. One is the degree of managerial responsibility, support, and control the organization chooses to exercise. The other is the specificity of its school design. The choices an organization's leadership makes about each of these levers will affect how quickly its model can be replicated, the human and financial capital it will require, and the likelihood of achieving consistent high-quality outcomes.

In general, the greater the degree of management support and design specificity a school development organization provides, the better the odds are that it will be able to replicate high-quality results in new locations. At the same time, such models are likely to grow slowly and, in many cases, their cost structures are unlikely to be replicable at a broad systems level. In contrast, models that are more

loosely managed and leave more room to others for interpretation can be replicated quickly, but the odds that the quality of the results will suffer are also higher.

Given the urgent need for more high-quality schools, there is room for many approaches to increasing the supply of new and redesigned schools. By the same token, however, it is crucial that school development organizations understand the tradeoffs that are inherent in each approach, so that the decisions they make about management responsibility and design specificity will be aligned with the impact they are trying to achieve as well as with their replication strategy.

Mapping the School Development Landscape

The universe of school developers is highly diverse.¹ For the past 30 years, many talented educators, leaders, and funders have taken up the call to fix America's schools, bringing with them a variety of creative and often research-based solutions. Early on, many of these efforts focused on pieces of the problem: offering rigorous academic enrichment to remedial students, for example; or expanding college preparatory course offerings; or providing students with caring adult mentors. But while many of these programs achieved good results, more often than not the results occurred in some contexts for some students. Consequently, researchers have increasingly concluded that if lasting change is to occur for all children, particularly the most disadvantaged, the entire system will have to change, with effective schools becoming the norm in every district without the cost—and delay—of creating new models each and every time.

New American Schools, the privately funded, nonprofit corporation established in 1991 in conjunction with President Bush's America 2000 Initiative, was one of the pioneers in taking a comprehensive approach to reforming schools and, in some

¹ As used in this paper, the term "school developer" refers to third-party organizations involved in the transformation and/or creation of public schools.

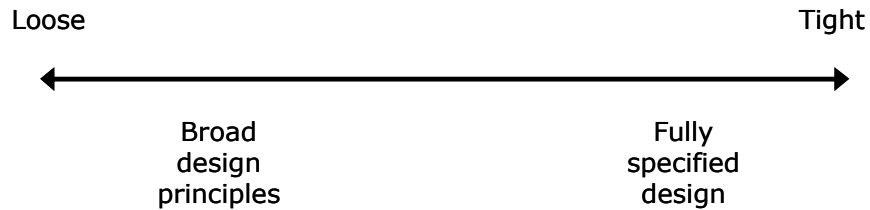
cases, school districts. NAS was guided by the principle that all high-quality schools possess a unifying design that provides a consistent and coherent instructional program to all students and allows all staff to work to the best of their abilities. As NAS and others have learned, however, conducting effective whole-school reform is vastly more complicated than designing a targeted program. All the components of the school—from its curriculum to its governance structure—are in play. Developing an integrated model that will work in multiple contexts is an even more daunting task. Nevertheless, growing numbers of school reform organizations have taken up the challenge.

Broadly speaking, these organizations approach their work in one of two ways: by consulting to new or existing schools or school and district leaders; or by operating new or redesigned schools themselves. Developers in the first group (technical assistance, or TA, providers) provide training, a research-based model for the design of the school, and coaching to the schools and leaders in their networks, but they neither “own” nor operate schools themselves. Those in the second group (school managers) represent a more recent addition to the ranks of school reformers. These organizations create, manage, and sometimes own new start-up schools, either within a district or outside of it. Unlike TA providers, which can expand the number of schools with which they work by adding part-time or consulting staff, school managers grow by replicating entire schools with their supporting infrastructure.

THE SPECTRUM OF MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY, SUPPORT, AND CONTROL

Based on this fundamental difference in approach, developers can be arrayed along a spectrum of management responsibility, support, and control, running from loose to tight. TA providers tend to be clustered at the left end of the spectrum, in the voluntary association camp, organizing the schools in their networks in loose federations, with little operational oversight. School managers, on the other hand, tend to fall at the right end of the spectrum, operating the facilities, hiring and managing the staff, and even holding the schools’ charters or performance contracts.

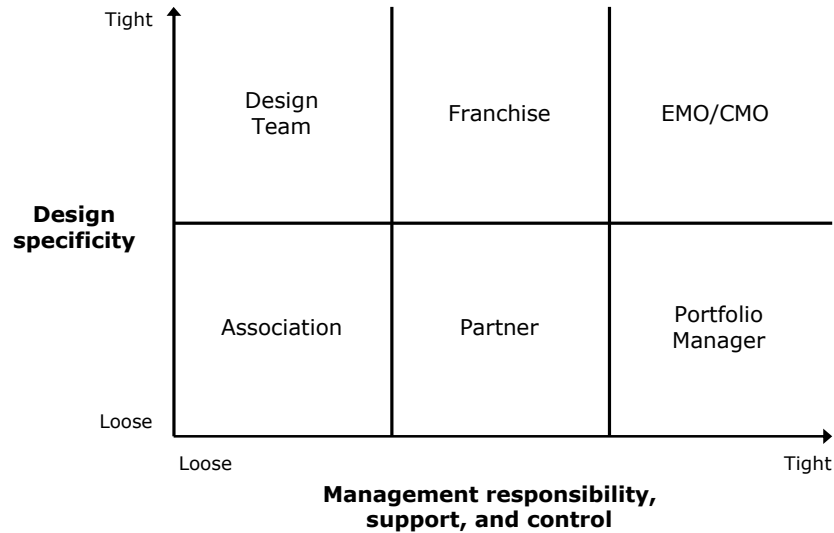
Exhibit 2: Spectrum of design specificity



Once again, the degree of specificity a given school developer chooses is likely to be influenced by a number of considerations, including its leadership’s values and beliefs about the nature of schooling and teaching and what will motivate others to become involved in their efforts. For example, some school developers believe that each new school has to be customized and co-created with the local community at the grass-roots level; while others believe, equally strongly, that research-based models can work in many contexts as long as they are adjusted to accommodate local cultural and community needs and desires.

When these two organizational levers are arrayed along the x- and y-axes of a matrix, the result is a grid with six cells which we have named on the basis of the prototypical organizations that occupy them. Although many school developers will move about within this grid during their organizational lifetimes, most can be located in one or another of these cells. We recognize that these names may change as the field evolves over time; what is important is not the name of a particular category per se, but rather what it implies for a school developer’s ability to grow and maintain the quality of its results over time. (Exhibit 3 illustrates this matrix. The Appendix contains a definition of each category accompanied by an example.)

Exhibit 3: Mapping the school development landscape



Managing the Levers of Growth

The degree of management responsibility a school developer exercises and the specificity of its school design have implications for its growth trajectory. Organizations that maintain a high degree of management responsibility generally grow more slowly than those that give affiliates more autonomy. For that very reason, however, the latter also may have more difficulty achieving consistent results, especially over time. Similarly, a highly flexible school design can enable faster growth, but it is also subject to less consistency, especially if the founding leaders or teams move on. In contrast, more highly specified designs can have mixed effects: the existence of a prescribed model that others are able to replicate can speed up growth; but the need to monitor the fidelity of its implementation may slow the pace down or drive the cost up. Whatever the consequences, however, greater design specificity is likely to increase the consistency of the results.

Finding the right level of managerial responsibility and design specificity is a balancing act, which depends not only on the school developer's skills, capabilities, assets, and relationships, but also on the site-level leaders and community in which reform is occurring. (Oakland, Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York are all urban school districts, for example, but each city's political context is quite different.) It is also a learning process, which often leads to different decisions as an organization ages or grows.

For example, school developers that start out overseeing new sites quite loosely may decide to tighten the reins as they add more sites in order to maintain consistent results. The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) began its Charter School Development Initiative (CSDI) in 2000 in response to significant demand from community-based affiliates and persistent failures on the part of the public schools to close the education gap between Hispanics and other groups. CSDI provided a range of training programs and technical assistance to its initial grantees, but it did not require them to adopt a specific school design. Now, with achievement of its initial goal of 50 affiliate-based schools in sight, NCLR is shifting toward a tighter design model and a deeper level of management support, including performance evaluations of CSDI mid-managers linked directly to improvements in student achievement. Alternatively, if developers that have successfully created small numbers of high-performing schools want to increase the pace at which they can provide better outcomes for more kids, they will have to identify—and focus on—the handful of elements in their school-design and management models that are most critical to achieving results.

To illustrate how the organizational levers of responsibility and design can be used to promote more consistent, higher-quality replication, consider three examples.

BAYCES: FROM ASSOCIATION TO PARTNER

The Bay Area Coalition of Equitable Schools (BayCES) was founded in 1991 to create and sustain networks of high-achieving and equitable small schools. Working with the educational principles promulgated by Brown University professor Ted Sizer in his book *Horace's Compromise*, but with increased focus on the issue

of equity, BayCES originally was located in the association (or lower left) corner of the matrix. Its leaders were strong believers in the value of local ownership and felt that each community had to adapt its school design to meet the needs of its own constituency of students, teachers, parents, and neighborhoods and, ultimately, help schools achieve high and equitable outcomes for all of their students. As a result, BayCES focused on developing a customized design at each site through a collaborative process of listening, playing back what they heard, mobilizing the school community toward short-term, achievable goals, and learning from the results. Persuaded that reforms could be sustained by changing the norms and expectations of communities and classroom teachers, BayCES's leadership did not attempt to exercise management control at the school or district level. The only absolutes were its guiding principles, which were broadly directional rather than prescriptive (for example, "teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent," and "the school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies").

As BayCES evolved, however, its leadership increasingly realized that the district bureaucracy was itself a major impediment to classroom-level change. It therefore chose to work with the leaders of its focus districts to create a policy environment conducive to its work at the school level (for example, creating a new policy in the Oakland Unified School District to promote and support the development of small schools). To gain the requisite degree of control, BayCES took an unusual and powerful approach: rather than try to operate the schools, which officially reported to the district, BayCES developed reciprocal relationships with grassroots groups like the Oakland Community Organization to mobilize thousands of parent-activists to interrupt "business as usual" at the district and to protect BayCES's work—and its benefits to their children. This overwhelming community support (together with its credible, professional staff of former teachers, research-based approach, understanding of Oakland politics, and flexible funding) gave BayCES a degree of influence over the district that moved it significantly along the axis of management responsibility, support, and control.

Today BayCES is a deeply-engaged partner, playing an integral role at the school, district, and community levels: supporting new small schools, building district capacity and ensuring supportive policies, and mobilizing sustained community

demand for better schools. The tradeoff BayCES has had to make is in the pace of growth. Under its earlier coaching model, BayCES was able to grow rapidly and flexibly by extending its services to schools throughout the Northern California region. The only major impediment to its growth was the availability of skilled coaching staff—a major constraint, but not as binding as having to be able to work at the district, school, and community level. Now, because so much of its ability to achieve impact depends on its deep local knowledge, district relationships, and active political constituency, as well as the availability of skilled coaching staff, BayCES cannot replicate its model easily in new locations.

BayCES anticipates that the process of building a lasting local coalition could take many years and that its impact will require work at multiple levels: the community, the school, and the district. The work in the community, in fact, is what will hold schools and districts accountable—a key way in which BayCES exerts management control. Looking ahead, BayCES plans to grow by deepening its work with its current partners in Oakland, Emeryville, and Berkeley and truly transforming those districts and communities into places where the community demands and expects high quality education for all of its students.

KIPP: FROM FRANCHISE TO MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

KIPP, which stands for the Knowledge is Power Program, got its start in 1994 when Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin, two Teach for America graduates, launched a program for 5th graders at Garcia Elementary, an inner-city Houston public school. On the basis of their students' accelerated results, the program quickly evolved into one of Houston's first charter schools and expanded to New York, with the opening of the KIPP Academy in the South Bronx in 1995. As word of the schools' success spread (especially after a 60 Minutes profile in 1999), requests to replicate the program multiplied; and in 2000, Feinberg and Levin partnered with Gap, Inc. founders Doris and Don Fisher to create the KIPP Foundation to support the school model's replication in new sites.

Rather than try to stipulate every aspect of a school's design, the Foundation focused on the element it believed was paramount: the school's culture. Culture

was defined through a set of values, norms, and practices, which were spelled out in the “five pillars” of the KIPP model. For example, every KIPP school has to have high, clearly-defined, measurable expectations for its students’ academic performance and conduct. Norms such as parent and student contracts supported this culture of achievement, which was reinforced by a range of formal and informal rewards and consequences as well as a “no-excuses” mindset.

The KIPP Foundation was similarly judicious about emphasizing a small number of essential management levers, of which leadership was by far the most important. KIPP uses a rigorous selection process to identify prospective school leaders who are both high achievers themselves and committed to improving the educational achievements of their students. The Foundation then hones these qualities and ensures the consistency of its vision and values through a year-long leadership program, which includes a six-week program on instructional, operational, and organizational leadership, a two-month residency in existing KIPP schools, and six months of school start-up work, supported by KIPP Foundation teams. In addition, the KIPP schools’ charters are generally held by a local KIPP school governing board, which is accountable for its performance and compliance with local charter laws as well as local community support.

Adopting this “franchise” model, which controls certain elements of replication (the culture of KIPP schools is so strong that you know you are in one when you walk in the door) and requires local partners to fundraise part of each school’s ongoing costs, allowed KIPP to grow from two schools to 38 schools between 1999 and 2004. At the same time, best practices, which could be codified and replicated, were beginning to emerge, opening the door to the possibility that other sites would not have to reinvent the wheel. In addition, while most schools were posting impressive gains, KIPP’s leadership recognized that too much variability in outcomes would compromise the strength of the organization’s emerging brand and therefore its ability to achieve its mission of changing the country’s expectations and proving that “all children can and will learn.”

To meet the challenges of growth, therefore, KIPP has further defined its school approach and bolstered its level of support for school leaders. For instance, KIPP has begun to codify and promote instructional and organizational tools that have

proved effective in one or more KIPP schools, such as the KIPP math curriculum. Although the curriculum is not prescribed, every new KIPP leader receives information about it, and a substantial number of schools now use the approach.

Similarly, while KIPP's strong commitment to the autonomy of its school leaders precludes it from truly owning affiliated schools, the Foundation has begun to deepen its support and engagement with them in several ways: bolstering local and national central office support for key functions such as real estate, knowledge management, and research and evaluation; collecting and disseminating content to KIPP school leaders; and using the leadership development process to help recruit KIPP teachers.

ASPIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS: CREATING A CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

In 1992, the San Carlos school district authorized California's first charter school, the San Carlos Charter Learning Center. Don Shalvey, the district's superintendent at the time, was a lifelong educator and school leader who had seen at first hand (in his own district and across the state) public education's failures to serve many students, especially those in low-income areas. Shalvey believed that charter schools could be a catalyst for promoting district-wide change by providing a supply of high-quality new schools, introducing competition into public education, and demonstrating what could be accomplished by giving schools flexibility in exchange for accountability.

Working with other state leaders, Shalvey succeeded in getting California to raise the cap on the number of charter schools it would allow. In 1998, realizing that an aligned system of schools could have even more leverage on districts, he started Aspire Public Schools, and in 1999 opened two new schools in Stockton and Modesto. The schools' core elements included: a high-needs student population; small school size; a longer school day and year; high expectations for students and staff; and rigorous coursework.

Since Aspire was the first nonprofit charter management organization, many of the design choices that Shalvey and his team made are instructive for other

organizations that want to scale up their operations and impact. Chief among them is their decision to centralize management responsibility, support, and control. Because Shalvey sought deep, dramatic change in the California school system and wanted to demonstrate the power of Aspire's model at scale, the team chose a tight management model and a tight school design that is consistent across all sites. They also decided to cluster the schools geographically, locating all of them in a handful of northern California communities that are within a few hours' drive of each other. Clustering enables the Aspire team to provide the kind of hands-on support and guidance each school needs as it grows to scale and adapts the basic Aspire educational model to the needs of its student population and community. It also makes it possible for the schools to share resources with each other and allows the Aspire brand to spread more quickly by word of mouth.

Today Aspire serves nearly 4,000 students with 11 K-12 schools clustered in the Stockton, Modesto, Oakland, and East Palo Alto communities. It also plans to expand to both Los Angeles and Sacramento—areas with a high degree of need and a potential fit with Aspire's model.

It is important to note that Shalvey chose to structure Aspire as a nonprofit so that student outcomes would take priority over potential profits. This choice was also crucial to Aspire's theory of change, which aims to develop a coherent, aligned system of high-quality schools that can serve as a model for districts and, as such, shares its lessons learned along the way. In their quest for market share and return on investment, for-profit education management organizations tend to be less open to such shared communication.

Looking Forward

In light of the continuing evolution of the school-development movement, this paper is far more likely to be a snapshot in time than an official history. Nevertheless, after working with many school development organizations, we believe one set of findings is unlikely to change: effective schools can be harder, or easier, to replicate with quality, consistency, and speed, depending on the developer's degree of management responsibility and the specificity of its design.

Tighter management responsibility, support, and control or a more specific model will increase the consistency of the organization's outcomes. Tightening both management control and the school model is likely to increase the consistency of a new school's results even more, given the complexity of school models and management. But it is likely to increase the cost of replication as well.

School developers do not need to own and manage their schools, nor do the schools necessarily need to be charter schools, in order to achieve a sufficient measure of management accountability. Management responsibility, support, and control can be strengthened in a variety of ways: through relationships and the leverage the school-development organization provides to a district through its staff and resources; through community engagement; and/or with formal contracts and accountability systems. Similarly, school designs need not be spelled out in every detail in order to be specific enough to ensure consistency. Rather, school developers need to identify the core elements of their models that make them effective and ensure that those elements are replicated faithfully.

Given the many external obstacles to true school reform, building an adequate supply of high-quality public schools will require the active participation of school developers of all kinds, from school management organizations whose new schools offer models for redesigning districts to TA providers that can supply coaching and proven school designs to struggling schools. For their part, educators committed to raising the performance of their districts—whether by developing entirely new schools, augmenting existing capacity, or both—should seek out and work with proven operators.

The need to learn as much as possible, as quickly as possible, about how to scale effective schools is indisputable. According to "Who Graduates? Who Doesn't?" a study published by the Urban Institute, the dropout rate for the class of 2001 in high schools across the country was 32 percent, with some cities and rural areas having dropout rates of more than 60 percent. Many high school seniors lack basic reading and mathematics skills. The majority of high school graduates are not academically prepared for college. The gulf between students of different races is growing: African-American and Latino 12th graders have math and reading skills that are at the same level as those of white 8th graders.

These results are shameful and, increasingly, unacceptable. After years of growing momentum, the political will to transform public education is now remarkably strong on both sides of the aisle. Many school developers also believe that they are positioned to help achieve the kind of breakthroughs that will make such poor educational outcomes obsolete. The framework presented in this paper is designed to inform the choices these developers will face as they try to replicate models that have been successful on a smaller scale. As such, we hope that it will help them and their supporters make the most of this window of opportunity to give all American students the education they deserve.

Appendix: Populating the Matrix

Associations

An association is a voluntary alliance of schools and/or leaders that agree to follow a set of design principles for educating students and organizing the school. Associations typically share best practices through publications and conferences that bring together and educate the members of the alliance community.

Example: Education has been a central priority for the National Council of La Raza (NCLR)—the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States focused on “reducing poverty and discrimination and increasing life opportunity” for Latinos—since its inception in 1968. In 2000, NCLR established a Charter School Development Initiative (CSDI) in response to both the public school system’s continuing failure to close education-achievement gaps between Hispanics and other groups, and significant demand from its community-based affiliates, many of whom were operating alternative and contract schools and/or providing early-education, after-school, and English-as-a-Second-Language programs. CSDI’s mandate was to provide planning, re-opening, implementation, and follow-up grants to new and emerging charter schools, along with training and technical support for their leaders and sponsors. Technical support was provided primarily through Professional Development Institutes, multi-day training workshops which were open to all NCLR affiliates including non-grantees.

In 2004, with its initial goal of 50 affiliate-based schools in sight, NCLR began a deliberate, purposeful shift toward a “tighter” school design model with greater capacity to support on-site coaching and instruction, a deepening focus on assessment and accountability, and a new training protocol requiring greater monitoring, on-site observation, and follow-up after training workshops and institutes, consistent with best practice in the field.

Design Teams

Design teams are more structured in their approach to school design than associations.

Example: America’s Choice, part of the New American Schools design competition, housed at the National Center on Education and the Economy, offers its affiliated schools a highly prescriptive school design, which includes standards-based curriculum materials, policies, and tools that aim to enable all students to do college-level work by the time they reach 10th grade. Investments to research the design, benchmark it against educational systems in other countries, and refine it amounted to some \$80 million. Schools that join the network (more than 500 in 15 states since it began in 1998) cannot change the design, although teachers who have received formal training are given some discretion in implementation. America’s Choice has developed a detailed protocol for assessing the extent of the design’s implementation and schools’ need for focused attention and feedback. It is also rigorous in training its coaches and certifying teachers to train other teachers, so that the design is consistent across schools.

Partners

Partners create networks of schools and other organizations, organized around a set of principles. Partner schools receive training, resources, and technical assistance to redesign existing schools or to set up new ones. Partners typically have strong quality assurance mechanisms, and potential schools go through a vetting process to become part of the network. Partners may also collaborate with the schools to identify new leadership and other interventions if schools are not performing.

Example: Urban Assembly in New York City works with teachers and community-based organizations to develop theme-based schools (such as media; sports; and law, government, and justice) that will engage students and connect each school to a network of partners in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. The school's theme is incorporated into all aspects of the academic experience, including the core curriculum, field trips, internships, and mentoring programs. Since its founding in 1997, Urban Assembly, in partnership with the NYC Department of Education and New Visions for Public Schools, has opened nine new, small, public high schools.

Franchises

Franchisers license their brand to other organizations that agree to follow their specific program design and meet their standards. Because they have explicit agreements with the schools in their networks (in some cases, holding the schools' charters), they have much more control over individual schools than partners do. Also, although it is not easy to do, franchisers can dissociate themselves from local schools that do not meet their standards, which can help ensure quality if the franchise truly offers valuable services and brand association.

Example: EdVisions operates a network of 16 schools in Minnesota and Wisconsin. EdVisions requires its schools to adhere to a 14-point checklist of non-negotiable school design attributes, including the use of projects, rather than classes or courses, to meet state standards, and commitment to creating a "Teacher Professional Practice," in which teachers take control of and responsibility for staffing and compensation, academic programs, teacher quality, and other key decisions. It recruits, trains, and provides technical assistance to school design teams who, in turn, open and operate schools in their communities. EdVisions provides grant funding over a three-year period and requires rigorous school assessment plans, which it uses as levers of control to ensure that schools meet its accountability standards.

Portfolio Managers

Portfolio managers wholly own and operate schools, but individual schools within the network can follow different school designs. All are strongly “branded” so that parents and teachers know what to expect. The portfolio management organization performs much of the back-office work for its schools, typically including finding and opening new facilities, often pursuing and holding charters and raising funds, and sometimes hiring and firing principals and teachers. In some ways, a portfolio manager is like a “virtual school district,” with a number of different educational “brands” within its system.

Example: The Chicago Charter School Foundation, founded in 1997, operates seven multi-site campuses (with the potential to add more as opportunities arise), under the terms of its charter with the Chicago Board of Education. Rather than create these schools from the ground up, CCSF contracts with school-management organizations with diverse school designs to run the schools it owns. While each school adheres to a general set of principles of collaboration, innovation, and healthy competition, CCSF offers parents a choice of schools—and, within those schools, programs and designs (including such well-known brands as Success for All, Saxon Math, and Junior Great Books).

Education Management Organizations (EMOs) and Charter Management Organizations (CMOs)

These school developers wholly own and operate schools, either as for-profit businesses (EMOs) or as nonprofits (CMOs), according to a specified school design. They tend to be branded in much the same way that a business is (so that the brand tells school leaders, teachers, parents, and students what they can expect in terms of the school's values, curriculum, and approach); and they strive for alignment along every dimension from mission and governance to curriculum, human resources, and evaluation. EMOs tend to be national in scope and to open the entire school at one time. Because of their for-profit orientation they are strongly focused on managing costs and achieving scale quickly. CMOs tend to be

locally or regionally focused and often open their schools one grade at a time. In part due to capital constraints, they tend to grow slowly at first.

Examples: Founded in 1992, Edison Schools, Inc. now serves more than 250,000 public school students in more than 20 states across the U.S. and in the U.K. The earliest (and still the best known) of the EMOs, Edison establishes whole-school management partnerships with districts and charter schools, summer, after-school, and SES programs, and provides achievement management solutions for school systems. Aspire Public Schools is a CMO that started in 1998 and now includes 11 schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. Aspire builds highly personalized, high-quality, small schools that emphasize high standards and clear learning goals for every student; and it oversees every aspect of the schools' day-to-day operations.

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