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MASTERY CHARTER SCHOOLS

The Design and Implementation of an Effective Social and Emotional Learning Program

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

This case study was prepared by FSG Social Impact Advisors. FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides guidance to foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and other public sector entities on issues of strategy, evaluation, and operations. FSG was commissioned by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “promising practices” of portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared across the NewSchools portfolio. To complete this case study, FSG conducted background research on Mastery Charter Schools and interviewed Laura Keane, Director of Social and Emotional Learning; Ali Caccavella, Assistant Director of Social and Emotional Learning; and David McDonough, Principal of Mastery’s first school, the Lenfest Campus. Jordan Meranus of NewSchools Venture Fund provided additional context on Mastery.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

We hope that reading this case study sparks conversations about how the practices highlighted here relate to your own organization. We have developed the questions below to help guide these discussions. We encourage you to keep them in mind as you read through the case study and to refer back to them as you reflect on the case study’s implications for your own organization.

1. How does your organization address culture-building within the academic context of your schools and classrooms? Do you feel that your organization has successfully built a culture that cultivates high performance? Does social and emotional learning play a part in this culture-building?
2. Do you feel that your students are gaining the interpersonal skills they need to succeed beyond the classroom? If so, how are students developing these skills? If not, would an integrated social and emotional learning (SEL) program be effective in your organization?
3. What makes an SEL program successful? How would you weigh the tradeoffs inherent in implementing this type of integrated program?
4. Do you offer students internship opportunities to connect academics to a real-world context? What would be the benefits and drawbacks of such a program? What resources would such a program require?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Research shows that developing social and emotional skills in young people leads to increased academic achievement, decreased incidence of high-risk behaviors, and an improved ability to compete in a global economy.¹ While many schools agree with the importance of social and emotional learning, they struggle to make it a priority given the academic demands imposed by state and federal accountability requirements. Furthermore, schools lack the resources or expertise needed to develop an effective program or use such a program to create a respectful, safe school community.

This case study explores how Mastery Charter Schools (Mastery) created and implemented a Social and Emotional Learning Program (SEL) that is integrated into its school curriculum and culture and designed to develop students who possess the interpersonal skills needed to thrive in today's global economy. Two elements of Mastery's program, the freshman seminar and junior year internship, have been in practice for five years, and have codified elements. The other components of the SEL program discussed throughout this case study are being implemented for the first time in the 2006-07 school year. Although these components are new, they still offer valuable lessons and tools that can help other schools think about how to implement a school-wide social and emotional learning program.

Mastery Charter Schools Background

Realizing that his colleagues in business were unable to find and hire an educated workforce in Philadelphia, Scott Gordon and a coalition of business and civic leaders founded the first Mastery high school in 2001 with the mission to *"prepare all students for success in higher education and the global economy."*²

Mastery is a nonprofit charter management organization (CMO) that seeks to create a network of exceptional schools in Philadelphia. In 2005, Mastery partnered with the School District of Philadelphia to open one Mastery school, partnered in 2006 to open the second, and will open its third campus in the fall of 2007. Mastery schools currently serve approximately 1,000 students in grades 7–12.

THE MASTERY MODEL

Development of the Program

Mastery's Social and Emotional Learning program (SEL) focuses on developing three sets of skills that it views as critical to success in higher education and the workforce: self-awareness and self management; social awareness and relationship building; and critical thinking and decision making. In its first school's third year, Mastery

In the real world, it doesn't only matter if you are really brilliant in an area. What matters more is your attitude, communication, and decision making skills. People don't want to hire you if you don't have those skills. It takes SEL skills to have success in the real world.

- Ali Caccavella, Assistant Director of SEL, Mastery

¹ "Social and Emotional Learning at Mastery Charter Schools" PowerPoint Presentation January 2007

² Mastery Charter Schools Web site <http://www.masterycharter.org/>

offered an internship program to its first group of juniors to provide them an opportunity to learn and practice skills in a real work environment. In this same year, staff created a SEL seminar that was held four days a week for 9th graders. This program was implemented after Mastery realized that some students were not succeeding in school because of social and emotional issues. Mastery staff saw this 9th grade orientation and the 11th grade preparation for the workforce as fundamental to developing youth who could succeed in school and career. In the 2006–07 school year, Mastery began to expand its SEL program into a six-year curriculum for grades 7–12, aligned with students' age-appropriate developmental needs.

Laura Keane, the Director of SEL who helped build the program, originally tried to identify an off-the-shelf curriculum, but she could not find something that fit the needs and mission of Mastery. As she remarked, *“If you Googled social and emotional learning or character education, you would find mountains of information, but it is not tailored to your population, and it is not clear if it is effective. Off-the-shelf curricula tended to be more relevant for elementary-aged students than for high school students, and many provided these huge notebooks...you can't just give a teacher a huge binder.”* Ultimately, Mastery decided to combine off-the-shelf elements with its own curriculum. The process of developing the program was *“a combination of trial and error and good instincts after having been a teacher for 8 years.”* According to Ali Caccavella, Assistant Director of SEL, *“We still have to pull out and do scope and sequence with clear objectives each day. Some things, like financial literacy, are almost entirely off the shelf. Other things, like time and stress management, were harder to develop. We had to piece together what was relevant for our kids.”*

Key Components

Mastery decided to focus on Social and Emotional Learning rather than Character Education because it wanted to focus on skills and decision-making rather than on morals and values. As SEL Assistant Director Ali Caccavella explains,

Character education is one small piece of SEL. Character education can become values based, and we try to focus on factual information so students can learn how to best make decisions for themselves, rather than teaching what is right or wrong. While we do focus on traits that we want students to develop like perseverance and responsibility, we try to give students the information they need to understand how to make good decisions and how to think through the consequences of their decisions.

The program has two components. The first is a curriculum component, which includes direct SEL instruction for students in grades 7–12 taught by academic teachers and full-time SEL staff and a junior year internship program. The second is a cultural component which includes school rituals, policies, and discipline processes. SEL is implemented universally throughout the school. The program is both proactive, teaching students how to build skills and make positive decisions, and reactive, focusing on how to resolve questionable decisions and turn them into learning opportunities.

SEL Curriculum

Direct SEL Instruction

The SEL curriculum focuses on teaching self-awareness and self-management, social awareness and relationship building, and critical thinking and decision making. These skills are taught in an integrated, sequenced curriculum from grades 7–12 (see sidebar). While curricula for several grades are still being finalized, the 2006–07 school year marked the first time that all grades used a SEL curriculum. The course sequence follows a

developmental progression. In 7th and 8th grades, the primary focus is on building self-awareness and self-management skills. In 9th and 10th grades, the focus is on building personal skills and extends to interpersonal and decision-making skills. In 11th and 12th grades, the focus shifts to address all five skill

Grade	Frequency	Semester 1	Semester 2
7	40 min, 2x/week	Violence Prevention	Interpersonal Skills; Sex & Drug Education
8	40 min, 2x/week	Conflict Resolution; Negotiation; Diversity	Sexual Health; Career Education
9	60 min, 4x/week	Personal and Interpersonal Skills	Peer to Peer Sessions; Decision Making; Sex & Drug Education
10	40 min, 2x/week	Community Leadership; Healthy Relationships	Sexual Health; Upper House Prep
11	40 min, 2x/week (then 1x/week during internship)	Internship Training (9 weeks)	PSSA Prep (<i>state standardized test</i>); College Readiness
12	40 min, 2x/week	College Application Process	Senior Project; Transition

competencies with a concentration on real-world applications in the work place and higher education. The 12th grade also has a focus on applying to college and developing financial literacy skills. The 9th grade course meets four times a week, and courses for all other grades meet twice a week.

Ninth Grade Seminar

Instituted in the fall of 2003, the First Year Seminar in the 9th grade is one of the most well-developed parts

Peer to Peer Sessions (PPS)
 Students are trained in the five steps of PPS and then lead these sessions themselves with the teacher outside the circle serving as a time keeper.

The Five Steps

1. Frame the issue/problem
2. Investigate — ask open ended question
3. Raise the root — get to the root of the issue
4. See all sides
5. Think it out and decide — brainstorm options, assess consequences

of the program. Each seminar has about 14 students, meets four days a week for 60 minutes, and is taught by a dedicated SEL instructor. The seminar is designed to develop students’ social and emotional skills, use peer pressure as a positive agent for change, build attachment to the school, orient students to the high expectations of the school’s culture, and teach awareness of sex, drugs, and violence issues.

A critical component of the course is Peer to Peer Sessions (PPS), where students learn how to help their peers navigate through different decisions and problems they face, such as how to handle abusive relationships, where to live if there is a problem in the family, or how to deal with conflicts with fellow students. Students use PPS to address opportunities as well as challenges. It is a time when an entire class of students focuses on one student and uses their skills to best support their peer (see sidebar).

The seminar is the only SEL class that is single-gender. Mastery designed the seminar to be single-gender “*in order to promote relationship-building, provide sexual health education in a single-gender environment, and allow the PPS sessions to run in a single-gender environment given the sensitive nature of some topics chosen by students to share.*”

Eleventh Grade Internship Program

Experiential Learning through the 11th grade internship program is the other key component of the SEL curriculum. The purpose of the internship is to “*connect academics to the real world, introduce students to the demands of the professional world, prepare students for the competitive economy, and instill in students the skills needed for higher education.*”

Students meet twice a week for a nine-week course devoted to learning about the transition from school

Students learn many of the unspoken and spoken rules of the workplace. For instance, in a school, when you are given an assignment, you are not going to ask for more work when you are done. But in the workplace, taking initiative is an important protocol — you can't just wait for someone to tell you what to do. Also, in school, your peers are similar to you in age, interests, and background. The workplace is much more diverse, and you have to be able to navigate many different relationships.

- Ali Caccavella,
Assistant Director of SEL, Mastery

culture to work culture and are trained in work skills, such as communication, how to ask good questions, and how to dress for an interview. Students must pass this nine-week course before they can begin their internship.

To place students in internships, Mastery has developed relationships with 200 companies in Philadelphia. Students do self-assessments to determine where they want to work and why, and then interview with 3–6 companies. Because the internship is a mentor-based program with a strong focus on building a caring relationship with someone who wants to give the student a good experience, Mastery places a lot of emphasis on finding a good mentor match for each student.

Students participate in an 18-week internship, in which they intern at a company every Wednesday for four hours. Throughout the internship, students meet in class once a week to discuss what they are learning and challenges they are facing, and they work as a group to help each other problem solve. Students must also write a “workplace anthology” in which they evaluate the culture of their workplace.

We are located in downtown Philadelphia, so it is easy for students to walk or take the subway to their internship.

- David McDonough,
Principal, Mastery

Mastery has a full-time Internship Coordinator who teaches the class and is in touch with all the mentors. The coordinator regularly visits the sites to check on students. Mastery also employs a part-time assistant to help run the program (see Toolkit for *Internship Program Overview and Internship Program- Intern, Organization, and Mentor Responsibilities*).

School Culture Systems

Mastery’s SEL program is reinforced by its school culture, which is based on high expectations for students coupled with a high level of support. Every school has classroom circles, which are classroom-specific meetings that are used to resolve conflicts or address issues such as test preparation stress or cultural differences. All schools also have larger community meetings, which are often student-led and can be used to collectively problem-solve or recognize students.

SEL policies are also reinforced on a regular basis through the Code of Conduct, which all students must know and recite at the beginning of every community meeting. All students also sign a non-violence contract (see Toolkit for *Non-Violence Contract, Mastery Code of Conduct, Community Rules, and Code of Conduct Violations*).

Mastery Code of Conduct:

- I choose to be here.
- I am here to learn and achieve.
- I am responsible for my actions.
- I contribute to a safe, cooperative, respectful community.
- I come with a clear mind and healthy body.
- This is my school, I make it shine.

SEL informs Mastery’s disciplinary process, which uses restorative practices in addition to more traditional punitive measures in order to help students hold themselves accountable for their own behavior. Mastery

People often question why we spend so much time and so many resources on SEL when we need to focus on academics. With the reality of tight resources, it is rare to see both academic and personal skills as part of a school’s mission. Our mission is for students to acquire the academic and personal skills needed to compete in higher education and the global economy, so we are committed to this and make time for it.

- Laura Keane, Director of SEL, Mastery

staff strives to turn negative student decisions into teaching opportunities. Mastery also has higher discipline standards than most public schools. According to Principal David McDonough: *“Last year we suspended 32 students for cheating and plagiarism and 65 for cutting class. However, I see this as a sign of a healthy school because we enforce our policies. We are not thrilled students are cheating, but most urban schools are so focused on reacting to major issues like violence that they can’t enforce discipline for things such as cheating on homework.”*

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Dedicated Time

Our main goal is that students are successful and safe, and we believe that SEL is a part of the formula to get there. However, in the world of AYP, we have to push back to convince leaders that the time is worth it. In the big picture, everyone agrees it is important, but it is hard to make it a priority. We feel under pressure to show things are working right away, but we need time to show that this is useful and effective.”

- Ali Caccavella, Assistant Director of SEL, Mastery

Mastery commits to making SEL a priority. Freshmen have SEL class four days a week, and all other grades have SEL class two days a week. Mastery has a longer school year and school day, which allows some extra time for these courses. However, sacrifices must be made in order to fit them in. As one staff member remarked, *“We are committed to making SEL work, so we fit it in by cutting more negotiable parts of the day.”* For example, Mastery has reduced the amount of music and art

courses and has two days of gym instead of four (see Toolkit for *Sample Course Schedule and Graduation Requirements*).

Dedicated Staff

Mastery devotes substantial staff resources to teaching and reinforcing SEL. Mastery has full-time SEL staff to teach the First Year Seminar and coordinate the Internship Program. To fill these positions, Mastery looks for people with both instructional

experience and a counseling background, which is a challenging combination to find. As Principal David McDonough emphasizes, *“It takes a special person to teach SEL courses — a role model and relationship-builder who can create trust.”*

It’s the people and relationships that make this work, so we spend a lot of time hiring and training strong people

– David McDonough,
Principal, Mastery

Each school has an Assistant Principal of School Culture or a Director of School Culture. Laura Keane and Ali Caccavella comprise the central office SEL team, together totaling 1.2 FTEs. They develop the curriculum, coach teachers on SEL, model lessons, and help ensure a smooth implementation of the curriculum. They also design and deliver trainings and coach administrators and teachers at all sites on the school’s cultural rituals and policies. Having devoted central office staff is critical to the success of the program.

All teachers are trained in the cultural components of SEL and run classroom circles and community meetings. They are coached on the rituals and are trained on how to set the tone for the meetings, how to present certain topics, how to handle tough questions, and how to manage classrooms dealing with these challenging topics.

Connection to the Outside World

Through the internship program, Mastery provides significant opportunities for students to apply skills in real world settings. Students learn about work culture and expectations, and many students are

There needs to be testimony and authentic experience from those who are not part of the school community because students need to see the connection to the outside world. Through mentors, guest speakers and a career day (all elements of the internship program) students learn from people in the real world.

- Ali Caccavella, Assistant Director of SEL, Mastery

Impact of Internship Program – In-house survey results

- 60% of 2005 spring interns offered paid jobs at their site after internship ended
- 80% of graduating seniors reported intention to major in area related to internship
- 96% of 04 – 05 mentors continued into 2005 – 2006

offered full-time jobs at their internship sites or decide to major in the subject area related to their internship. Because the internship program is tied to workplace readiness, it helps prepare students to succeed in the outside world (see sidebar).

Universal, Consistent Implementation

The SEL program is consistently reinforced throughout all facets of the school, from direct instruction to school culture to disciplinary policies. As Laura Keane notes, *“SEL is woven throughout the fabric of the schools. The systematic six-year program of instruction tied to rituals, training, discipline, and the code of conduct make this effective. You can’t just drop a class in here and there on conflict resolution. You need to enforce it across grades and across the school and think about the whole program.”*

Mastery is also very consistent in its messaging and ensures that consistent expectations are upheld by all staff. As Ali Caccavella states, “*Students are constantly pushing boundaries, so we need a united, consistent response about how we treat each other, build relationships, and manage conflicts. Keeping the vision and mission clear and transparent for staff and students is essential.*”

Accountability

Mastery holds students accountable for mastering the SEL program. In all its courses, Mastery uses a Mastery-based grading and promotion system rather than a traditional A–F system, meaning that graduation is based on mastering skill standards and is tied to an individual student’s goals. Thus, in SEL classes, students set goals and must reach mastery before passing onto the next level. Students are given pre- and post-class

First Year Seminar Impact		
Course Evaluation	% Yes (2004)	% Yes (2005)
Did First Year Seminar (FYS) help you adjust to your new school?	85	82.5
Do you think FYS has changed the way you think about sex?	77	95
Do you think FYS has changed the way you think about drugs?	72	78
Has FYS helped you better deal with your classmates?	82	81
Has FYS helped you succeed academically?	57	53

self-assessments around the SEL skills and, throughout the year, there are qualitative assessments in the form of journals and portfolios. Completing an internship is a graduation requirement, so all students must pass the internship course, be hired for an internship position, and complete all coursework in order to graduate.

Mastery gathers substantial data on its internship program. Mentors are given

periodic qualitative and quantitative assessments of interns. Students write up evaluations on the internship, their mentor, and what they learned.

School wide, Mastery tracks both positive and negative student behaviors through a merit/demerit system. (For a full description of the merit/demerit system, see Toolkit for *Code of Conduct Violations*.) In order to continue to strengthen its culture, Mastery also tracks which disciplinary infractions are most common and uses this data to design interventions for a given school site or for specific groups of students. Additionally,

each campus submits a weekly scorecard to the CMO, which includes the tracking of numerous school performance indicators such as daily attendance, enrollment, and detentions (see sidebar).

It has also designed an in-house survey administered twice a year on prevention of sex, drugs, and violence based on the California Healthy Kids Survey and Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which enables Mastery to compare its school data to national figures (see Toolkit Additional Documents for *Mastery First Year Seminar Survey*). A recent survey found that in Philadelphia, the number of students that became sexually active over the course of a year increased 18 percent, but among Mastery students, the increase was negligible.

Sample Weekly Scorecard Elements

Each campus submits weekly update to the CMO on indicators such as:

- Daily attendance
- Tardiness
- School enrollment
- Transfers/withdrawals/additions
- Detentions
- Suspensions
- Students enrolled in Special Education
- Students enrolled in academic support programs (e.g., Guardian Angel, Homework club Club, Office Hours)
- Teachers receiving formal and/or informal coaching

Eventually, the school hopes to track students' college attendance and retention rates, but it is still too early for this.

Staff emphasizes that much of SEL's impact is intangible. As Principal David McDonough says, *"We measure success formally and informally. We can see it when we see the way students travel in the building when the bell rings — they are respectful. We have very few fights, little vandalism, and students are comfortable standing up in community meetings. These are intangibles that are difficult to measure and quantify."*

CHALLENGES

- **Scheduling and Prioritizing SEL.** Given that there is limited time during the school day, Mastery faces an ongoing challenge to find the time to meet both academic and SEL needs. *"Scheduling is an ongoing issue. Teachers value SEL and are on board with the content, but when it comes to delivering it, some can get stressed because they are so focused on meeting benchmarks and closing the achievement gap."*
- **Hiring Staff.** *"It is hard to hire for these positions because there aren't people trained in it."* In its full-time SEL instructors, SEL seeks individuals with both instructional experience and a counseling background, which is a hard combination to find. Right now, Mastery relies on word of mouth or hires from within the school.
- **Training and Time to Prepare.** It is challenging to find time to support and train teachers given the multiple professional development goals for the schools, and this is especially challenging this year, as Mastery pilots its five new SEL courses. *"So much of our curriculum is new, so even though we have materials, we need time to train teachers and prepare."*

CONCLUSION

Mastery is an illustrative example of how a CMO can implement a system-wide social and emotional learning program. It serves as a good model for schools who want to teach interpersonal skills that equip students with the skills needed to succeed in today's economy.

MASTERY SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING TOOLKIT

Toolkit Contents

- **Internship Program Overview (Mastery Document)**
- **Internship Program – Intern, Organization and Mentor Responsibilities (Mastery Document)**
- **Non-Violence Contract (Mastery Document)**
- **Mastery Code of Conduct, Community Rules, and Code of Conduct Violations (Mastery Document)**
- **Sample Course Schedule (FSG Synthesized from Mastery Document)**
- **Graduation Requirements (Mastery Document)**

Additional Documents (Available Separately)

- **Mastery First Year Seminar Survey (Mastery Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Mastery-A.pdf>



Mastery Internship Program Overview

(Page 1 of 2)

Purpose:

Mastery Charter requires students engage in an 18-week internship in order to graduate. This requirement comes from our mission to prepare students to compete in the global economy. The Internship Program challenges students to connect academics and personal skills to the “real world.” The internships provide opportunities for our students to meet the demands of the professional world and to demonstrate the skills needed for post secondary learning and work-place achievement. The Internship Program is comprised of two components; Training and Practicum, which are outlined in more detail below.

Internship Training Seminar:

This nine week course is: “Like no other class you’ve taken...” Training Seminar meets 2 days/week for nine weeks and strives to prepare students to enter the working world with confidence and a clear understanding of the expectations for success in a real job, in the real world. Requirements for the course include: Two Site Visits with Research and Documented Observations; a professional resume; Mock Interview; Site Selection Meeting including Interest Assessment; and 3 interviews with research, transportation plan and post-interview reflection per site.

It focuses on understanding company cultures through research and observation, clarifying skills and strengths in resumes and interviews, preparing to present both strong verbal and non-verbal communication, managing time and organization of work, and expanding and assessing their career interests and goals.

Skills emphasized during Training Seminar:

- Observation – understanding workplace culture, organization, behaviors and expectations
- Research – prepare for interviews to be an informed candidate with
- Code-Switching – transition confidently from school to work culture
- Communication Skills – verbal, including speaking and grammar, and non-verbal messages
- Time management and organization – resolving time conflicts, being there on time, and prioritizing assigned work appropriately, “No Excuses”
- Resume development – translating unpaid activities and experience into functional skills
- Interviewing – dress and self-presentation with poise and the ability to discuss skills and strengths in meaningful and professionally applicable ways
- Framing and Persuasion – “selling” their skills and demonstrating positive attitude
- Self –Awareness -- honest assessments and reflection of interests, skills & personality



Mastery Internship Program Overview

(Page 2 of 2)

Internship Site Placement and Practicum:

This 18 week course includes both a site internship (a weekly 4-hour placement on Wednesday afternoons) and a weekly process seminar to debrief and clarify the education each student receives on site. The course builds upon and deepens the learning gained in the Training with an application in a real-world setting. The internship is for educational purposes, it is unpaid though transportation is covered by Mastery. Requirements for the course include several assignments for reflection: contract with student, mentor, parents & Director; weekly journals; Mentor Interview; Workplace Anthropology; and Final Power Point Presentation Project delivered to both a Mastery review panel and the team of co-workers at the site placement.

This class utilizes the peer-to-peer support model to encourage sharing and problem-solving, as well as offers continued professional development for protocols they will encounter in the workplace. Through various assignments and journals, students are asked to deepen the observation skills they've gained during their internship experience.

Skills emphasized during Practicum:

- Active Listening and Paraphrasing
- Taking Initiative – demonstrating responsibility for learning, work and communication
- Question Asking and Critical Thinking – deepening observation as the “newness wears off”
- Reflection - learning from experiences big and small, mistakes made and progress shown
- Building Relationships & Networking – e.g. meeting co-workers, showing gratitude and keeping in touch
- Workplace Protocols – e.g. making & taking phone calls, meeting behavior, appropriate communication
- Understanding Organizational Structure
- Recognizing and demonstrating Hard, Soft and Transferable skills
- Public Speaking, Presentation and sharing of their learning and experience



Internship Program – Intern, Organization, and Mentor Responsibilities

Student Intern Responsibilities
Contribute to value and productivity of host organization
Arrive and leave site on time
Contact mentor if sick or absent
Complete requested tasks with efficiency and attention to detail
Follow company policies and procedures
Represent Mastery Charter and the school Code of Conduct at all times
Take initiative towards reaching their identified internship goals

Organization Responsibilities
Designate one site mentor per student intern
Complete student intern application form
Conduct prospective student intern interviews
Sign contract with selected student intern, program coordinator, and site mentor

Mentor Responsibilities
Provide information for criminal background checks
Provide student intern with organizational orientation
Offer regular supervision and support to student during duration of 18 week internship
Communicate problems or concerns with an Internship Coordinator
Assist Students with “Mentor Interview” and “Organizational Anthropology” assignments
Complete Evaluations (every other month) and Final Student Intern Assessment



Mastery Non-Violence Contract

(Note: This document is currently under review in preparation for the 07-08 school year)

All students at Mastery must sign the non-violence contract below:

Safety is an absolute priority and necessity at MCH. Accordingly, all MCH parents and students have signed a non-violence contract that states:

I agree not to use violence for any reason what-so-ever at Mastery Charter High School, while representing Mastery Charter, or with any members of the Mastery Charter community. I understand this non-violence pledge applies to all parties involved in any fight, no matter whether I am “right” or “wrong”, or whether I am acting in “self defense”. Students are officially under the jurisdiction of the school from the time that they arrive in the morning until they reach home in the afternoon.

If I do engage in violence or participate in a fight, (during the school day or after dismissal) I understand that I may be asked to withdraw from Mastery Charter High School or face expulsion. In the event of an incident, I agree to submit to a staff review. I further agree to abide by the decision of the staff review. If the review determines I participated in a fight, I will voluntarily withdraw from Mastery Charter High School.

Violence at Mastery Charter will not be tolerated. To be a member of our community, students must accept that violence is not an option for resolving problems at the school



Mastery Code of Conduct

(Note: This document is currently under review in preparation for the 07-08 school year)

Mastery Charter High School is a place where education is highly valued and where students succeed. In order for every student to succeed, Mastery Charter seeks to create a community that is:

- safe
- professional
- based on strong quality relationships.

A physically and emotionally safe community is necessary for learning to occur. Professional behavior and dress creates a productive learning environment and prepares students for the world outside of school. Finally, students need to feel connected to and supported by their teachers and fellow students in order to achieve their best. We have embodied these principles in the following code of conduct:

- I choose to be here.
- I am here to learn and achieve
- I am responsible for my actions.
- I contribute to a safe, respectful, cooperative community.
- I come with a clear mind and healthy body.
- This is my school... I make it shine.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

At Mastery Charter High School we believe that true learning comes from understanding one's responsibility to oneself and to the community. Therefore, students who violate our community's Code Of Conduct will face a restorative consequence -- an opportunity to give back to the community they violated and repair relationships they have damaged. This concept of honoring the community and the relationships within our community is a foundation of our program and our Code. Restorative Conferences will be held daily from 2:45 – 4:15. Any student referred for a conference must attend or face disciplinary action.

I agree not to use violence for any reason what-so-ever at Mastery Charter High School, while representing Mastery Charter, or with any members of the Mastery Charter community. I understand this non-violence pledge applies to all parties involved in any fight, no matter whether I am "right" or "wrong", or whether I am acting in "self defense". Students are officially under the jurisdiction of the school from the time that they arrive in the morning until they reach home in the afternoon.

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Mastery Community Rules

(Note: This document is currently under review in preparation for the 07-08 school year)

At MCH, staff and students are expected to operate in a manner that is consistent with the code of conduct. The code and its associated rules guide the conduct of all community members while they are at Mastery Charter High School, when they represent the school in outside events, or when they participate in extra-curricular and off-campus activities.

Staff members shall have the authority to take reasonable actions as may be necessary to control the disorderly conduct of students in all situations and in all places where such students are within the jurisdiction of Mastery Charter and when such conduct interferes with the educational program of the school or threatens the health and safety of others. Consequences may include detention before or after school, community service, a restorative consequence, a circle in front of the SCC, loss of classroom privilege, out-of-school suspension, and/or expulsion. Mastery Charter abides by State law regarding due process in regards to suspension and expulsion. These due process requirements are described in the appendix.

School Community Committee (SCC)

The SCC is a student group that meets with students who have violated the Code of Conduct. The SCC does not have the power to punish students, but they do work with students to understand the impact of their actions on the community. The SCC along with the Dean/Assistant Principal works towards possible restorative consequences. The SCC will hold meetings on Tuesdays and Fridays between 2:45 and 4:15 during the 2006-07 school year.



Code of Conduct Violations

(Note: This document is currently under review in preparation for the 07-08 school year)

A: Level III Violations:

Level III violations involve actions that are very serious violations of our code of conduct, and/or are criminal violations of Pennsylvania law. Once the Assistant Principal has determined that the student has a level III violation the following will occur:

INCIDENT & REFERRAL TO DEAN/AP	<p><u>Consequence(s)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Notified • Out-of-School Suspension (1-10 days) • Upon return from suspension, loss of classroom privilege until Disciplinary Board Hearing. • Board Hearing
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Level III violations include but are not limited to:

- **Having Any Type Of Firearm, Weapon Or Dangerous Instrument**
Any person found, or observed on any school property, or at a school-sponsored event in possession of a firearm, weapon (i.e. BB gun, bullet, pistol, rifle, gun, disguised gun, dagger, switchblade, knife, box cutter, paint ball gun, dart gun, pepper spray or other noxious sprays, explosive or incendiary bomb or other instrument, material or device that can cause physical injury etc.), or dangerous instrument shall be immediately reported to the School Principal. Law enforcement officials shall be immediately informed.
- **Terrorist Threats/Acts**
Terrorist threats/act shall mean a communication/act to commit violence, to terrorize another, to cause evacuation of a building, or to otherwise cause serious public inconvenience, or take reckless disregard of the risk of causing such terror or inconvenience. Depending on the nature of the incident, law enforcement officials may be informed.
- **Drug Possession, Use, or Illicit Activity**
This violation includes drug possession, use, or illicit activity on school grounds or at a school-sponsored event. Illicit activity means the intent to use, sell, store, or purchase illegal substances, and paraphernalia. Law enforcement officials shall be immediately informed. The school administrator reporting the incident to the police shall provide all known information concerning the matter to school and law enforcement authorities.
- **Theft/Larceny**
Theft means withholding or removal of property, tests, test material etc. without the owner's consent. Larceny means the unlawful taking and carrying away of personal property without the consent of its lawful possessor. Depending on the nature of the incident, law enforcement officials may be informed.
- **Arson And/Or Possession of Fireworks and Other Explosive Devices** Arson means the malicious burning of another's property. Students may not possess or use fireworks or the



paraphernalia needed to explode them—matches, lighters—on school grounds or during any school activity. Law enforcement officials will be informed in the event of arson.

- **Vandalism**

Vandalism includes any act of intentional or reckless damage to the property of another, or an attempt to damage the property of another, or the causing of damage while committing an act contrary to this code or to the law. Depending on the nature of the incident, law enforcement officials may be informed.

- **Assault of Staff Members, Vendors, Guests**

Every adult will be treated with proper respect by students at all times. Any violent act against a faculty or staff member or a visitor to Mastery Charter may result in severe penalties, including the filing a criminal complaint. This type of reckless behavior includes throwing objects out of windows onto public property.

- **Violence, Fighting & Fighting with a Weapon**

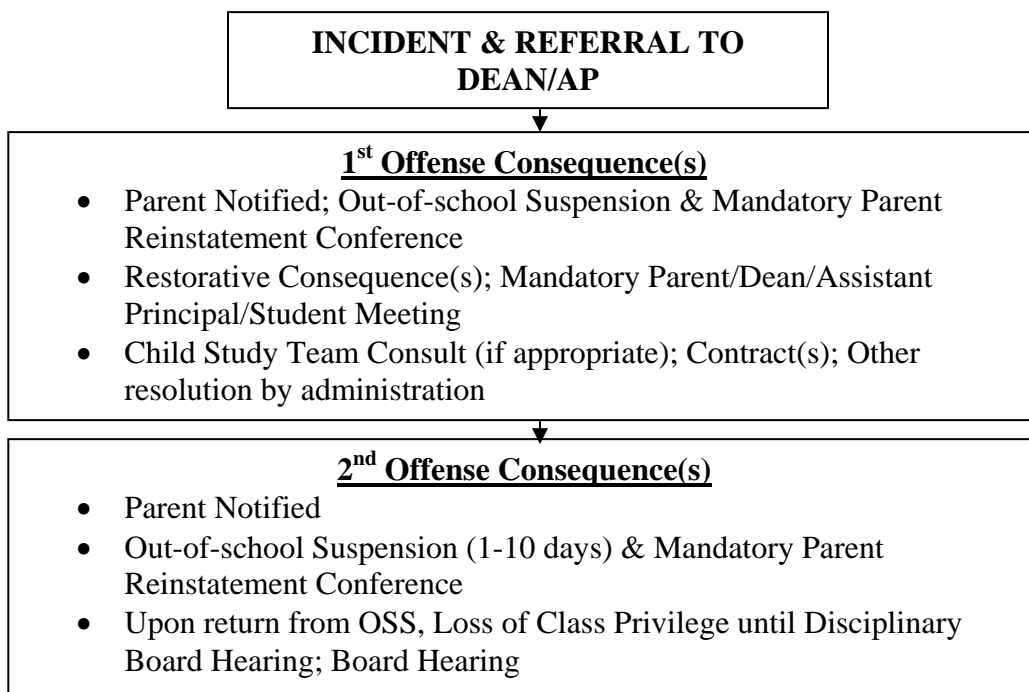
Violence includes physical aggression between two or more students that escalates into punching, wrestling, knocking down, or damaging or destroying property. Any aggression that includes use of a weapon or use of an implement as a weapon clearly falls into this category. In cases of violence with a weapon or violence that results in bodily harm (hospitalization), law enforcement officials will be informed.

- **Sexual Misconduct**

This may include attempting or carrying out a sexual act with oneself or another person whether it is consensual or non-consensual. Depending on the nature of the incident, law enforcement officials may be informed.

B: Level II:

Level II violations involve actions that significantly impact MCH’s high achievement culture and community of safety, respect, and cooperation. Once the Dean/Assistant Principal has determined that the student has a level II violation the following will occur:





Level II Violations include, but are not limited to:

- **Threats, Intimidation, Provocation and Pre-fight**

Threats include words and/or actions that are intended to taunt, provoke, do emotional harm to, or intimidate any member of the community. Intimidation includes aggravating or making others uncomfortable by calling others “out of their names,” passing rumors, etc.

Provocation means to use intimidation with physically threatening behavior such as poking, “getting in his/her face” (e.g. violation of personal space, aggressive gestures).

Pre-fight includes physical aggression between at least two members of the community (e.g. pushing, shoving) that ends very quickly or is easily stopped by an adult or other student.

Note, depending on the nature of the intimidation, threatening behavior /provocation and/or pre-fight, the Dean/AP may consider the violation to be of a Level III nature.

- **Plagiarism**

This includes any act of using, without permission or acknowledgement, the ideas, writings, or inventions of another; either work for word or in substance, and representing such as one’s own.

In addition to the consequences determined by the Dean/AP, the student shall receive a failing mark for the assignment. In addition, the student will submit to a School Culture Committee hearing. A second offense will lead to the student foregoing credit for that course. A third violation will result in an expulsion hearing.

- **Cheating**

This includes any attempt to mislead by deception, or to obtain by fraud or deception, with the intent to gain by doing so (i.e., copying assignments from others, lending one’s own work for the purpose of aiding another to cheat; giving or receiving aid during a testing period).

- **Insubordination**

This includes failure to comply with directions of administrators, teachers, or other authorized school personnel during any period of time when s/he is properly under the authority of school personnel to include—but not limited to—leaving class without permission and/or multiple class cuts. This may also include vulgar language that is directed towards school personnel.

- **Harassment / Sexual Harassment**

Harassment means any behavior which is repeatedly and persistently annoying.

Mastery Charter recognizes that harassment on the basis of sex is a violation both of federal and state discrimination laws and that these laws apply to students and employees. Mastery Charter will provide a learning environment free from sexual harassment and will not tolerate such conduct on the part of any student or staff member.

Definition Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal and physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- submission to such conduct is made a term of the student’s right to learning
- such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment



- submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for academic decisions effecting an individual

Forms of sexual harassment include but are not limited to the following:

- Derogatory comments, jokes, or slurs; sexually-oriented sounds or remarks.
- Uninvited, unnecessary or offensive touching, pinching, patting, grabbing, brushing against another person's body, or impeding or blocking movement.
- Derogatory or offensive pictures, posters, cards, cartoons, graffiti, drawings, or gestures.

Any individual who is found to be responsible for sexual harassment will be subject to appropriate discipline; the severity of the disciplinary action will be based upon the circumstances of the infraction and/or repeated offenses could include termination of employment or suspension or expulsion from school. Repeated or serious violations may also result in other actions including, but not limited to, filing of criminal charges as deemed appropriate by the school.

- **Gambling**

Gambling includes betting or wagering for money, favors, or fun.

Any individual who is found gambling will be subject to appropriate discipline; the severity of the disciplinary action will be based upon the circumstances of the infraction and/or repeated offenses. Consequences could include termination of employment, suspension, or expulsion from school. Repeated or serious violations may also result in other actions including but not limited to, filing of criminal charges as deemed appropriate by the school.

- **MISDEMEANOR Damaging Of School Property and/Or Property of Others**

For the purposes of this code misdemeanor damage means damage to any school property or of others of \$50.00 or less.

A second level II violation in a school year will lead to a disciplinary board hearing.

C: Level I: DEMERIT SYSTEM

Students' lanyard systems consist of an ID card, gold Merit card and blue Demerit card. This system is a communication tool for home/school about daily behaviors whether they need improvement or reward. Students must wear them at all times during the school day and at any school events. Parents are encouraged to check them nightly as they are taken home each day and required for re-entry to school.

Level I violations involve actions that negatively impact MCH's high achievement culture and community of safety, respect, and cooperation. Once school personnel and/or administrators have determined that the student has a level I violation the following will occur:

- Detention assigned for each 3 demerits assigned to the student;
- 2 detentions: Parent contact, SCC referral (decides restorative consequence @ 6 demerits)
- 4 detentions: Parent contact, Child Study Team Referral, SAP referral, and letter home.
- 6 detentions: Home/School conference (ISS until meeting) and 4-hour detention with restorative consequence determined by SCC.
- 9 detentions: Disciplinary Board Hearing (Out-of-school suspension if parent fails to show)



Level I Violations include, but are not limited to:

- **Misuse/Unauthorized Use of Privilege**
This includes, but is not limited to, use of the school elevator and misuse of lockers, computers, school furniture, etc.
- **Violation of Uniform Policy**
This includes, but is not limited to, un-tucked shirts in the hallways or classroom, inappropriate dress on dress down days, and students being sent home more than three times for not wearing their uniform.
- **Obscene/Abusive/Inappropriate Language.**
Obscene language means any language, spoken or written, and graphic representation or gesture which is foul, filthy, indecent, or lewd. Abusive language means any language, spoken or written, which constitutes a harsh or unfair attack, or which is disrespectful, or which consists of racial, religious or ethnic epithets which may clearly be inflammatory. Inappropriate language means any language which is offensive to generally accepted community standards.
- **Disruptive Behavior**
Students are expected to follow the rules that individual teachers have established for student conduct in their classrooms. No student's behavior can be permitted to disturb the learning of others or disrupt the classroom. Any violations of a given classroom's behavior code will constitute inappropriate classroom conduct. Violations include:
 - Disruptive behavior, including disruptive outbursts, talking while others are talking, throwing objects, and inappropriate gestures and sounds.
 - Sleeping in class or sitting in class in an inattentive manner, e.g. slouched in chair, putting head on desk
 - Wearing headphones except for **approved instructional purposes**
 - Horseplay that includes but not limited to pushing, shoving, kicking, or other physical contact, knowingly taking of another's property done in a playful and/or confrontational manner.
- **Contraband**
Students are prohibited from carrying food or drinks from the cafeteria to any other part of the building. **This includes gum chewing.** Lunch must be taken in the cafeteria. Students who have a pass from their teacher may eat lunch in their teacher's classroom. If this pass from the teacher is abused, the Dean/Assistant Principal will revoke the privilege.
- **Environment**
Mastery Charter is committed to maintaining a pest and bug free environment. Students are required to maintain a clean school environment by picking up behind themselves at lunch,



disposing of dropped paper in hall/class, retrieving lost/unwanted personal items throughout the building.

- **Disrespect / Body Language**

Conveyance of disapproval that attempts to challenge or undermine the authority of school personnel. This may include—but is not limited to—rolling eyes, sucking teeth, talking back, silently mouthing words, defiantly folding arms, pouting, avoiding eye contact, slouching in chair, etc.

- **Integrity**

Attempt to deceive or mislead by verbalizing intentions that misrepresent a student's actions when questioned by school personnel.



Sample Course Schedule (7th, 8th, 10th, 11th, 12th Grades)

(Note: This document is currently under review in preparation for the 07-08 school year)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:23-9:33	Humanities	Humanities	Humanities	Humanities	Humanities
9:34-10:39	Music, PE	Music, PE	Club	Music, PE	Music, PE
	Spanish 1 & 2	Spanish 1 & 2		Spanish 1 & 2	Spanish 1 & 2
	Academic Enrichment Seminars	Academic Enrichment Seminars	Academic Enrichment Seminars	Academic Enrichment Seminars	Academic Enrichment Seminars
10:42-11:47	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math
11:50-12:30	Math Lab	SEL	Science	Math Lab	SEL
12:30-12:55	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:58-2:03	Humanities	Humanities	Office Hours/Internship Practicum	Humanities	Humanities
2:06-3:13	Science	Science		Science	Science
3:18-4:15	Office Hours/EC/GA/HS	Office Hours/EC/GA/HS			Office Hours/EC/GA/HS

Sample Course Schedule (9th Grade)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:23-9:33	Humanities	Humanities	Humanities	Humanities	Humanities
9:34-10:39	First Year Seminar	First Year Seminar	Club	First Year Seminar	First Year Seminar
10:42-11:47	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math
11:50-12:30	Math Lab	Nutrition, PE, SYS, PS	Science	Math Lab	Nutrition, PE, SYS, PS
		Keyboarding, SS, JS			Keyboarding, SS, JS
12:30-12:55	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:58-2:03	Humanities	Humanities	Office Hours	Humanities	Humanities
2:06-3:13	Science	Science		Science	Science
3:18- 4:15	Office Hours/EC/GA/HS	Office Hours/EC/GA/HS			Office Hours/EC/GA/HS

Synthesized by **FSG**  SOCIAL IMPACT ADVISORS

from documents provided by



How Mastery Fits in SEL:

- 3 academic classes: Math, Science and Humanities (history, social studies, and English are all combined into one course)
- 2 blocks of Humanities each day
- 2 years of Spanish
- Reduced music, no art, and 2 days of gym a week (instead of 4)

HS = Homework Seminar for students who need additional support

GA = Guardian Angel class teaches organizational and study skills

Office Hours: All teachers hold office hours at least 2x a week. Students schedule an appointment.



Mastery Minimum Graduation Requirements

(Note: This document is currently under review in preparation for the 07-08 school year)

NOTE: Students' actual graduation requirements are defined in each student's Individual Graduation Plan, based on their individual plans for higher education and career. The requirements below serve as a minimum only.

PROGRAM AREA	MINIMUM CREDITS ACHIEVED	benchmark requirements/notes
ACADEMIC MAJORS 26.25 *		
HUMANITIES	12.25	Must successfully Master sequence through Humanities 1651 or equivalent
MATHEMATICS	6.0	Must successfully Master sequence through Mathematics 2651 or equivalent
SCIENCE	6.0	Must successfully Master sequence through Science 3552 or equivalent
*To reach this total Academic Major minimum, additional credits in one or more disciplines (Humanities, Mathematics, Science) must be earned.		
SEMINARS 5.5		
Student Internship	1.5	Workplace Skills Seminar (0.5) & Internship Practicum (1.0)
All Seminar courses	4.0	1 st Year Seminar, Music, Spanish 1 & 2, Physical Fitness & Nutrition seminars, Typing, Public Speaking, Guardian Angel, etc.
Students will be required to successfully complete additional seminars assigned to provide support and development. Examples may include test prep, IGP, PSSA remediation, and others. These seminars must be successfully completed as assigned but are not credited in the transcript.		
PROGRAMS, PROJECTS and ASSESSMENTS		
College-Level Course or Extended Work-study	Mastery	One college-level course or extended work-study, depending upon student postsecondary plans.
Exhibitions & Senior Project	Mastery	Exhibitions for Upper House during 1 st and/or 2 nd year Senior Project during 4 th year
PSSA Assessment or MCH equivalent	Proficient	Evidence of 10 th grade minimum mathematics and reading comprehension
TOTAL MINIMUM CREDITS	31.75	plus all programs, projects, assessments and additional seminars as required