

PRACTICES FROM THE PORTFOLIO, VOLUME 2

By NewSchools Venture Fund

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INTRODUCTION

NewSchools Venture Fund is pleased to share this second installment in our *Practices from the Portfolio* series of publications. As a venture philanthropy firm that invests in education entrepreneurs and supports them as they grow to scale with quality, one of NewSchools' greatest assets is its ability to connect education entrepreneurs with each other and with other leaders, and to enable them to share ideas and knowledge in order to accelerate the pace of systems change for underserved students in public schools. In our engagements with the entrepreneurial education organizations we support, we have found that these entrepreneurs have much to share with—and much to learn from—one another.

We launched the *Practices from the Portfolio* series in order to capture, synthesize, and share this powerful knowledge residing within the NewSchools portfolio. For the first volume of *Practices from the Portfolio* (<http://www.newschools.org/about/publications/practices-from-the-portfolio-volume1>), we identified some of the most effective practices in use by the organizations in our portfolio and produced a set of case studies organized around three areas: human capital, organizational growth, and educational curriculum and quality.

For this second volume of *Practices from the Portfolio*, we identified four critical challenges faced by charter management organizations (CMOs) as they grow to scale. For each challenge, we profiled the practices that three organizations within our portfolio have developed in response. We then collected relevant documents and templates used by these organizations. We believe the resulting set of tools, which are detailed below and cover challenges that range from human capital to performance to home office operations, will inform practitioners as they grapple with these same challenges.

Entrepreneurial education organizations find that one of the biggest challenges they face as they grow is finding and preparing the school leaders they need to achieve at high levels. In ***Principal Selection, Development, and Evaluation***, we describe how three organizations in NewSchools' portfolio – New Leaders for New Schools, Green Dot Public Schools, and Achievement First – have developed strategies to select, train, support, and evaluate school leaders.

As education organizations grow to scale, they must create systems for collecting and managing data about their own performance and about the students they serve. In ***Performance Dashboards***, we describe how three organizations in NewSchools' portfolio – Leadership Public Schools, Aspire Public Schools, and Uncommon Schools – have used documents called “performance dashboards” to collect and measure performance across their operations, finances, and education functions. In ***PowerSchool Student Information Systems***, we describe how three organizations in NewSchools' portfolio – Aspire Public Schools, The Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools, and Uncommon Schools – have implemented PowerSchool software to maintain up-to-date, accurate student data.

As an education organization grows, so too does its physical plant, and it must develop an effective strategy for ensuring that its facilities continue to meet the needs of students and educators. In ***Facilities Management and Maintenance***, we describe how three organizations in NewSchools' portfolio – Mastery Charter Schools, Aspire Public Schools, and Lighthouse Academies – have developed approaches to school facility management and maintenance.

We would like to thank all of the organizations whose practices are profiled here for their willingness to share openly with others and for the time they spent working with us to produce these tools. We believe this compilation exhibits the depth of knowledge and experience embedded in the NewSchools portfolio and highlights the value of sharing effective practices across these organizations as they work to transform public education for underserved students. We look forward to the reflections, conversations and strategic decisions that they will bring about within and among your organizations.

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENT: SELECTION, SUPPORT & EVALUATION

Key Strategies From NewSchools' Portfolio Ventures

June 2008

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METHODOLOGY

This case study was prepared by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “promising practices” in use by our portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared with others in the portfolio. To complete this tool, NewSchools conducted background research on Green Dot Public Schools, New Leaders for New Schools, and Achievement First, and interviewed management teams at each of these organizations. Additionally, practices from Aspire Public Schools were included. As a result, NewSchools compiled a variety of practices and approaches that nonprofit charter management organizations (CMOs) have put in place to select and develop their principals.

About the Organizations

Green Dot Public Schools is a nonprofit charter management and development organization founded in 1999 to improve the schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). The first Green Dot high school, Animo Inglewood, opened in the fall of 2002 and has since been joined by 11 other high schools in Los Angeles that provide a college-preparatory curriculum to students in a small, personalized environment.

Achievement First (AF) is a nonprofit charter school management organization founded in July 2003 with the mission to “deliver on the often-denied promise of equal educational opportunity for America’s urban children by inspiring in them the belief that they can achieve and by developing in them the academic and character skills necessary to compete on a level playing field.” Building on the exceptional success of Amistad Academy in New Haven, CT, Achievement First now operates twelve schools (elementary, middle and high school) in Connecticut and New York City.

New Leaders for New Schools was founded in 2000 with the mission to “ensure high academic achievement for every student by attracting and preparing outstanding leaders and supporting the performance of the urban public schools they lead, at scale.” New Leaders recruits talented and committed individuals through a rigorous selection process. These principal candidates receive extensive training and are placed in a yearlong, full-time residency with a talented mentor principal. After this residency year, principals and their schools also receive ongoing support, tools and resources from New Leaders and become part of a community of other New Leaders fellows. New Leaders for New Schools works with districts across the country, including Baltimore, California’s Bay Area, Chicago, Memphis, Milwaukee, New Orleans, New York City, Prince George’s County and Washington, D.C.

Aspire Public Schools (Aspire) establishes and operates public charter schools in California focused on providing low-income, urban youth with a high-quality education that will prepare them for college. Founded in 1998 to “enrich students’ lives and to reshape the public school system,” Aspire opened its first two charter schools in 1999 in California’s Central Valley and currently operates 21 schools in six counties throughout California, serving nearly 6,000 students in grades K-12.

About NewSchools Venture Fund

NewSchools Venture Fund is a national nonprofit venture philanthropy firm that seeks to transform public education – particularly for underserved students – by supporting education entrepreneurs and connecting their work to systems change. In order to maximize the impact of its ventures, NewSchools also connects the work of these entrepreneurs with one another and with the broader field through events and publications. By leveraging this collective knowledge, NewSchools’ ultimate goal is to empower these entrepreneurs to transform public education so that *all* children have the opportunity to attend a high-quality public school.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As you think about how the practices described here apply to your own organization, please consider the questions below.

1. What are your organization's assumptions about which skills are "coachable" and which skills a principal candidate must already possess upon entry?
2. What are the 3-5 requisite core competencies for a principal to be successful at a school in your organization?
3. Does your principal selection process map to your organization's core values and mission? Does it successfully screen for these qualities? How do you know?
4. Are structured scaffolds in place to ensure new principals are supported as they open a school and lead for the first year?
5. Are coaching sessions frequent, structured and focused? How does your organization match coaches with principals?
6. What types of targeted training do principals receive? Are training topics differentiated by principal experience and need?
7. Are principal performance metrics explicit, clear and based on measurable and observable metrics rather than on subjective criteria?
8. Are principals' learning needs attended to for all levels of development (e.g. pre-service to veteran)?
9. What does your organization do really well in the principal selection and development process? Where are the gaps? What areas need improvement?

INTRODUCTION

The school principal has a significant impact on student achievement. Research shows that the knowledge, skills, and disposition that a principal brings to the leadership of a school affect nearly all facets of the learning environment. School culture, teacher quality and retention, staff professional development, student behavior, and parent satisfaction are all influenced by the principal. Moreover, the role of principal is both demanding and challenging, which results in a low principal retention rate across both traditional district schools and charter schools. Some experts have gone so far as to declare a “crisis in school leadership,” calling for an overhaul of the current credentialing system (Usdan, 2000). Given these realities, principal selection, development and evaluation has been the subject of much attention and research in recent years. With this new knowledge base, school systems are increasingly devoting more time and resources to uncovering best practices and implementing principal development programs that are reflective of their core values and performance standards.

In this tool, we explore the practices of three organizations – charter management organizations (CMOs) Achievement First (AF) and Green Dot Public Schools, and national nonprofit New Leaders for New Schools – identified as leaders in principal development. While each organization has constructed a distinctively different approach, they are united in their commitments to selecting principal candidates who whole-heartedly embrace their organizations’ core values. In addition, they perceive principals’ learning needs as a continuum from pre-service to veteran. These organizations have made strides in selecting leaders that represent a tighter “fit” with their cultural norms and have put in place scaffolds to help their new principals succeed. However, it is important to note that all three organizations still struggle with the challenges of developing strong leaders and continue to seek out ways to improve their systems. As such, they have developed dynamic approaches that are responsive to the changing needs of their organizations, learning environments and student populations. In addition, practices from Aspire Public Schools have also been included given their deep experience and innovative strategies in principal selection and development.

This tool is organized into three key activities related to principal development: 1) selecting leaders, 2) training leaders, and 3) evaluating leaders, and aims to identify the best practices and protocols within each activity. In order to maximize this tool’s practical applications and to make it user-friendly, we have distilled practices, pulled out snapshots of protocols, and highlighted key lessons. In many cases, we have included in the appendix full versions of documents that are excerpted in the text.

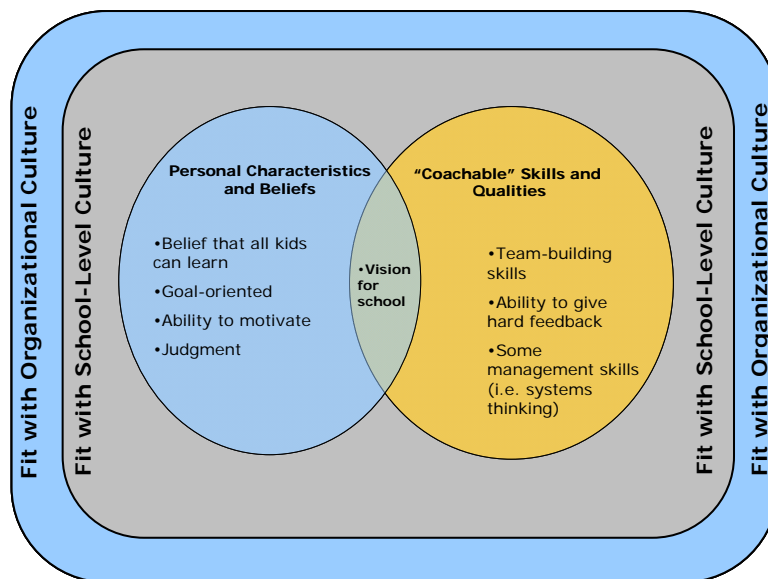
KEY ACTIVITIES

1. *Selecting Leaders*

Selecting the right people to develop for leadership roles is a process worthy of investing time and money up front, to ensure candidates are a good fit for the principal role. It is important for an organization to begin with a clear understanding of the requisite skill set and talents necessary for a principal to be successful.

Achievement First, Green Dot and New Leaders for New Schools all stressed the critical importance of early talent identification. New Leaders assesses and selects individuals who excel on a set of selection criteria (based on research and the competencies of successful school leaders) which are used to assess candidates in four areas: Beliefs and Orientation, Teaching and Learning, Strategic Management, and Personal Qualities¹. According to New Leaders, after developing the set of skills needed to succeed as a principal, organizations should then delineate between skills they believe are “coachable” (e.g. team-building skills, management) and can be taught, and those deemed difficult to teach (e.g. deeply held personal beliefs and dispositions). While an organization should guard against hiring candidates who lack the critical skills that are deemed difficult to teach, it may choose to hire a principal candidate without the requisite “coachable skills,” because a promising candidate could learn these skills once joining the organization. Since organizations will have different beliefs as to which skills fall within each of these two categories, they should create distinct development programs that reflect their core beliefs. Below is a sample framework to help your organization identify which skills and qualities your organization has identified as important to be a successful principal and categorize these skills and characteristics as “coachable” or difficult to teach (a blank template of this map can be found in the Appendix).

Sample of layered criteria for selecting principals



Another layer of characteristics to discuss as an organization is “cultural fit,” an overlapping and less tangible set of traits that describe the candidates’ overall match with the school and organization given the existing organizational norms (the conceptual framework above shows how these qualities and skills relate). In fact, cultural fit is so important that Green Dot, Achievement First, and other CMOs in the NewSchools portfolio often prefer developing their own pipeline of principals from within their schools. These organizations identify teachers who demonstrate promising leadership talent and who have already embraced the

¹ Note that NLNS launched an ongoing learning and fieldwork plan, informed by analyses of high-gaining schools compared to schools making only incremental gains, in order to identify and differentiate what school-level practices and leadership actions have the most impact at different stages along a school’s trajectory of improvement. The organization is now working to revise and refine its principal selection, training and evaluation processes.

organization's cultural norms and core beliefs, and then recruit them into leadership positions. Reportedly, retention rates are higher for internal promotions than for principals brought in from outside these organizations. In fact, school districts are also starting to use this approach: New York Superintendent Irma Zardoya noted, "We have to grow our own leaders ... so that we have a constant, ready supply of leaders, which means that we have created a continuum (Darling-Hammond, 2005). We keep adding steps to it every year, to get people from the classroom right up to the superintendent."

EXHIBIT 1

Principal Performance Criteria Rubric for "Aspire Values"

Below is a truncated version of Aspire's principal performance rubric for one of their five identified performance competencies, "Aspire Values." Please see the appendix for the full rubric.

	Unsatisfactory	Proficient	Distinguished
Is collaborative	Does not work well with own staff, other principals, and/or Home Office staff	Consistently goes beyond mere coordination to work own staff, other principals, and Home Office in ways that add value	Consistently finds new ways to encourage collaboration within school and across the organization
Displays a sense of ownership	Does not hold self or others accountable for behavior or results; makes excuses; resists looking at or discussing goals and metrics.	Consistently holds self and others accountable for school results. Creates and follows-up with timely action plans in response to results measured by Home Office.	Consistently holds self and others accountable for school results. Creates and follows-up with timely, robust and flexible action plans in response to results measured by Home Office. Creates additional interim measures to ensure action plans are effective, and modifies activities accordingly.
Holds self to high quality standards	Has low expectations and standards for self and others' work. Does not seem to understand Aspire performance standards.	Understands and embraces Aspire standards and expectations for own and team performance. Work is consistently high quality.	Understands and embraces Aspire standards and expectations for own and team performance. Continuously improves. Work consistently exceeds expectations.
Is customer-service oriented	Does not respond to parent and student requests in a timely manner.	Consistently responds to parents, student and staff requests in a timely manner and in a way that reflects an understanding of the needs of customers.	Consistently responds to parents, student and staff requests in a timely and appropriate manner. Deeply understands needs of customers. Finds ways to increase customer satisfaction at the school.
Is purposeful	Does not understand Aspire or school vision and mission; works at cross-purposes or lacks direction.	Understands, embraces, and consistently acts in ways that are aligned with Aspire vision and mission, not just school needs.	Deeply understands, embraces, and consistently acts in ways that are aligned with Aspire vision and mission. Seeks and finds ways to

Mapping Your Selection Process

Below are three key steps for developing a principal selection process, drawn from the practices of the organizations profiled.

- 1. Establish clear selection criteria.** Criteria that are aligned with organizational culture and mission are essential for developing an evidence-based selection process. The criteria should be both detailed enough to describe a clear vision of proficiency and broad enough to span the full range of instructional, interpersonal, cultural, organizational, and community-building competencies needed to be a successful principal (see Exhibit 1 for an excerpt from Aspire Public Schools' rubric).
- 2. Identify “non-negotiable” traits.** New Leaders points out that there are certain critical traits and skills that an entering principal candidate must know and be able to do and therefore are the most important to screen for. As an example, New Leaders believes that every prospective principal must demonstrate:
 - **A fundamental belief that all students can learn:** A passion and relentless drive to ensure high academic achievement for every child regardless of background.
 - **Strong knowledge of teaching and learning:** An ability to distinguish outstanding teaching and provide guidance to improve instruction.
 - **An unyielding focus on goals and results:** A goal-oriented disposition and holds self personally responsible for setting and achieving goals.
- 3. Develop a multi-modal selection process aligned to your organization's values.** Research shows that many schools successfully develop mission-aligned criteria, but fall short when developing an interview process that successfully screens candidates against these criteria. Examples of effective interview questions and tactics include:
 - At Achievement First, interviews begin with the question: “What makes a good leader?” Listening to candidates explain their vision of good leadership helps clarify whether there is cultural alignment.
 - At Aspire, questions are aligned with core values. For example, to screen for the Aspire value of “collaboration,” candidates are asked to respond to the following scenario: “An amazing teacher candidate has applied to every Aspire school in the region. You really need a teacher with his/her skills and background, but are behind schedule on interviewing. Another principal has already interviewed him/her and is ready to make an offer. What do you do?”
 - At Achievement First, candidates are taken through particular scenarios that they may face as a principal. What is most important to AF is not the specific plan of action the candidate develops but whether the candidate can think through the systemic effects of his or her decision. Can he or she anticipate the consequences of the proposed plan of action?
 - Another critical question is to ask candidates to talk about a project they have managed (e.g. tutoring program, curriculum mapping process). Evidence of an ability to lead people and manage projects is a strong indicator of future success.

In addition to traditional interviews, a variety of activities should be designed to better understand the candidates' range of skills and responses to challenging situations. The list below is a sample of screening activities gathered from organizations in this study. Candidates were asked to do the following as part of the selection process:

- Teach a class
- Observe a class or video lesson and give feedback (written and/or oral)
- Participate in a parent or community event, or field questions from a parent town hall meeting
- Analyze student data and develop a four-week plan (see Exhibit 2 below)
- Participate in a teacher-led data discussion
- Respond to difficult case study scenarios

EXHIBIT 2

Aspire Data Analysis Assignment

The document below is a take-home assignment for Aspire's principal candidates.

DATA ANALYSIS ASSIGNMENT FOR PRINCIPAL CANDIDATES

This assignment is designed to evaluate a candidate's ability to provide instructional leadership using student performance data.

Set-up

- Candidates are provided with:
 - Database of school performance data (by student, prior year CST and % correct on all benchmarks)
 - Edusoft reports for all benchmarks by strand
- For internal candidates, data provided is for another school. For external candidates, data provided may be for actual school.

Directions for Candidate

- Attached are the following pieces of data:
 - Spreadsheet of student performance data – by student, prior year CST and % correct on all benchmarks. (Note: benchmark exams are Aspire-created, standards-aligned tests that are given in the fall, winter and 6 weeks prior to CST testing. Each benchmark tests all the standards for that grade level, but each test is different from the others.)
 - Reports for all Spring ELA benchmarks, by student, by strand
- Using the data provided, develop a plan for the last 4 weeks prior to testing. Assume you are the principal with the autonomy to make all the decisions normally related to that position in an Aspire charter school.
- In addition to the core classroom teachers, assume that the school has the following people to deploy: 2 instructional coaches (10 hours per week per coach), 2 instructional assistants, and 2 after school tutors. You may be as creative as you wish.
- Your final plan may be in any form (Word, Excel, PowerPoint).
- Your plan is due in one week. Please do not feel obligated to spend more than 3 hours on this assignment!

2. Training Leaders

The Pre-Service Training Year

Practical, pre-service leadership experience – whether in the form of an internship or a residency – is critical to the success of principal training programs. For many organizations, especially those that prefer to develop candidates internally, promoting promising teachers to administrative roles provides the most economical solution to costly internship training programs. Ideally, candidates spend a few years honing their management skills in administrative support roles such as academic dean or assistant principal until they are ready to lead as principal. In addition to having ample time to hone management skills, this approach has two other benefits. First, while working in administrative support roles, promising candidates have the opportunity to learn from the school's current principal. Second, advancing a promising teacher from classroom teaching to administrative support roles and then to the role of principal creates an attractive career path for talented individuals who desire school leadership roles.

Ideally, this on-the-job training should be supplemented by coursework or skill training that is tightly interwoven with and aligned with practice (Darling-Hammond, 2007). This finding is consistent with research that suggests adults learn best when exposed to situations requiring the application of acquired skills, knowledge, and problem-solving strategies within authentic settings. However, in reality, practical on-the-job training often supplants coursework, in part because university programs are often poorly aligned with practice. In order to address this challenge, Green Dot and Aspire are joining forces with other CMOs in the Los Angeles area to bolster their own principal training programs with an external partner that can provide job-embedded coursework and skill training.

Nationally, about 25% of principal preparation programs offer full-time, paid internships that combine coursework, shadowing, and training with small scale administrative projects or duties. These programs, including New Leaders for New Schools, stress authentic learning with opportunities to directly transfer knowledge of best practices to actual school initiatives. New Leaders' candidates spend a "resident year" in a school in the district where they will be placed. During the year, each Resident works with a mentor principal as a member of the school's leadership team to hone his/her leadership skills and advance the goals of the residency school, with a responsibility for improving student achievement and teacher practice. Residents are supported by a leadership coach and take supplemental coursework throughout the year. Residents also participate in weekly city meetings for ongoing peer support and coaching, with opportunities for learning, reflection, group problem-solving, and training on deeper district context around educational issues. In order to fulfill the requirements of the New Leaders for New Schools Program and receive administrative certification, each Resident must demonstrate proficiency by the end of the year in each of the competencies outlined below (see Exhibit 3).

EXHIBIT 3**New Leaders for New Schools Resident Core Competencies**

The following table summarizes the core competencies that New Leaders for New Schools expects its Residents to master during the residency year. Please note these competencies were in use during the 2007-2008 school year. New Leaders is now revising its competencies based on its research, data and achievement analyses, and fieldwork in high-gaining schools.

School Leadership	Personal Leadership	Technical Leadership
<p>Ensure Effective Teaching and Learning</p> <p>Focus on Data & Outcomes</p> <p>Nurture Student & Staff Efficacy</p> <p>Lead Learning Organizations</p> <p>Build School Community & Culture</p> <p>Manage Effectively</p>	<p>Model the Way – <i>clearly articulate personal values and non-negotiable; align actions with shared values</i></p> <p>Inspire a Shared Vision – <i>enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations</i></p> <p>Challenge the Process – <i>seek innovative ways to change, grow, and learn from mistakes</i></p> <p>Enable Others to Act – <i>strengthen others by building their capacity and creating a climate of trust and positive interdependence</i></p> <p>Encourage the Heart – <i>recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence</i></p>	<p>Budget – <i>develop and manipulate school budget to maximize resources for student learning</i></p> <p>Union Contract – <i>understand union contracts to make effective decisions in service of student learning</i></p> <p>School Law – <i>implement necessary school policies and procedures in accordance with local, state, and federal school law</i></p> <p>Scheduling – <i>implement effective school schedule and procedures</i></p> <p>Human Resources Policies and Procedures – <i>implement effective human resources policies and procedures to ensure that all staff members are managed effectively</i></p> <p>Facilities – <i>use school facilities to enhance student learning and school culture</i></p> <p>Technology – <i>use technology effectively to support student learning, school management, and school culture</i></p>

Summer Training

All three organizations take advantage of summer vacation time to provide additional training. Achievement First allocates one week of their three-week summertime professional development to administrative training. Training sessions titled, “School Culture Conversations” or “School Culture and Character,” speak to the importance of the principal’s role in upholding and reinforcing the schools’ culture. Other sessions focus on instructional leadership with training on observing and evaluating staff.

While organizations often use the summer months for discrete skill training, it is also a busy time for principals to prepare the school for students. For all principals, summer months are spent on the myriad

operational, instructional, and management tasks necessary to open the school. Principals oversee a range of preparation tasks including: developing the school calendar, determining teacher loads, planning professional development, and drafting teacher professional growth plans. Exhibit 4 below provides what may appear to be a simple list of administrative tasks, but such a tool is an enormously helpful scaffold for new principals opening schools for the first time, who are in need of a reference with a clear delineation of who owns which responsibilities.

EXHIBIT 4

Excerpted from Achievement First's Administrative Calendar Task List: July

The following excerpt highlights some tactical information that may be helpful to first-time principals.

Administrative Tasks – July	Responsible Party
All teacher information in the student information system (demographics, courses, classes)	Registrar
All student information in the student information system (demographics, courses, classes)	Registrar
Auto-caller, emailer set-up for all parents in the student information system	Registrar
All standardized tests for the year in locked bins/files	School Ops
Finalize school site daily calendars	Principal
Finalize busing lists and routes	School Ops
Facilities preparation (cleaning, painting, electrifying, AC, telephony/IT, build-out)	School Ops
Family Chats - finish	Principal, Dean of Students
Set-up classroom and offices (receive and sort/distribute MOL orders)	School Ops
Establish yearly elementary data spreadsheets (Saxon, DI) on server	AF Ops
All computers ready for new staff, returning staff getting new computers	IT Team
New sites fully outfitted with all IT functions	IT Team
Establish Student Performance (Class of 20XX) spreadsheets on server for new cohorts	AF Ops
Set-up folders/files for year in school spec. info: daily schedule, parent handbook, pd plans, weekly memo, parent update	AF Ops
Daily schedule, parent handbook, PD plans for year/trimester in these folders	School Ops
ES Student testing: Grade and record scores on spreadsheets - for NEW students	Registrar
MS Student testing: Grade and record scores on spreadsheets - for NEW students	Registrar
Letter to all staff about the start of training, etc. (by mid-July)	Registrar (drafted by principal)
Letters to all returning students, parents (by mid-July)	Registrar (drafted by principal)
Letters to all new students, parents (by mid-July)	Registrar (drafted by principal)

On-the-Job Learning Supports

Once the school year starts, the demands on principals' time make it challenging to continue professional development. However, the need is critical, especially for new principals. Embedded learning supports are an important component of the development continuum extending from pre-service through induction and are essential to any principal development program. On-the-job learning supports generally fall into three categories:

- A. Coaching/Mentoring:** on-the-ground, individualized support;
- B. Cohorts:** collaborative learning through peer groups; and
- C. Targeted training:** professional development focused on skills and content.

While these learning supports take different forms across different organizations, together they provide a comprehensive approach to supporting new principals and often veteran principals as well.

A. Coaching/Mentoring

New principals cite individualized coaching as the most valuable form of on-the-job support. All three organizations profiled in this tool strive to provide mentoring or coaching that supports modeling, questioning, observations of practice and feedback, and is tailored to the individual leadership needs of the novice principals. Coaching sessions can take on a range of formats depending on the developmental needs of a principal. For example, a coach and principal might review and analyze student achievement data and develop strategic plans in response to the data, or a coach might observe a principal's conversation with a teacher and then provide follow-up feedback.

While coaching can vary from unstructured (impromptu discussions) to highly structured (protocol-driven data meetings), all three organizations protect time on the calendar for formal coaching sessions. These sessions are designed to be: **frequent**, occurring at a minimum of once every month, but more often twice monthly; **structured**, with agendas and clear expectations of both role and outcome; and **focused**, tightly concentrated on a specific topic, such as supervision of instruction. For example, Green Dot's Key Results Protocol, shown below in Exhibit 5, illustrates the structure and focus of these formalized coaching sessions.

It is important to highlight the distinction between principal development and school improvement. Achievement First finds that there are always two issues involved in principal support: 1) how is the school doing? and 2) how is the principal doing? The first question, which elicits problem-solving on school performance issues, often receives the most attention in principal/supervisor dialogue. The second question, which elicits discussion on principal growth and development, too often takes a back seat to school issues. As AF's superintendent notes, "The reality is that we spend most of the time on school-based issues. The challenge is finding time to look through the other lens, of ongoing professional development and growth (for individual principals)."

New Leaders also stresses the importance of driving continuous learning and development of the New Leader, while also deeply supporting the tailored and focused school improvement efforts needed to drive dramatic achievement gains. A New Leaders coach works with each first-year principal to support the continued growth of the principal around political/interpersonal/operational issues, change management, and principal trajectory needs. Growth plans are used to structure feedback, determine future professional development opportunities, and assist in performance evaluation. These plans also help to foster a culture of personal reflection, encouraging new principals to continually assess their own performance. Coaches also work with principals to lead others in diagnosing school needs and develop and monitor an action plan.

EXHIBIT 5**Green Dot's Key Results Meeting Protocol**

The following protocol provides an example of an agenda for a structured coaching session for new principals.

Description:

Once a month, each principal will meet with the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) or Mentor/Lead Principal to reflect on their role as an instructional leader. The meetings are meant to provide principals with feedback on their supervision of instruction and to help the CAO and Mentor/Lead Principal individualize the support provided to each principal.

Agenda for Key Results Meeting:

- Reflection on the month's staff development
 - What went well? How do you know?
 - What did not go well? How do you know? How would you change it for next time?
 - How did you determine the focus of staff development for this month?
- Plan next month's staff development
 - What is the focus of your staff development for next month?
 - How does your staff development for next month connect to the needs you have noticed while in classrooms?
 - What resources do you need for your staff development next month?
 - Who will help you facilitate the staff development?
- Reflection and discussion of coaching, evaluation, and the supervision of instruction
 - How often have you been in classrooms this month?
 - What are you doing to recognize and highlight the best practices of your best teachers?
 - How are you using your best teachers to teach their colleagues?
 - What are you doing to support your struggling teachers?
- Feedback on written documentation
 - What documentation do you have that contains the feedback you have provided to teachers during your observations?
 - What documentation do you have that is evidence of the support you have provided to your struggling teachers?
- Set goals for supervision and instruction for the next month

Artifacts to Bring to the Meeting:

- Staff development agendas
- Evidence of supervision and evaluation including:
 - Teacher conference summaries
 - Documentation of observations: informal and formal memos
 - APAP goals
 - Teacher buddy observations
 - Mentor teacher observations
 - Any other documentation regarding supervision and evaluation of employees: action plans, development plans, etc.

Achievement First practices an intensive form of individualized coaching they call "Co-observation Days." Each Academic Dean and Principal participate in four "co-observation" days each year, in which a supervising mentor spends the entire day observing the learning environment of the school together with the principal. Following a structured format, the mentor shadows the principal for the day, and accompanies him or her in several classroom observations and school walkthroughs. They watch transition times, lunches and dismissals, and consider together the core issues that the school needs to address. In addition to conversations throughout the day, they allocate time to debrief at the end of the day, talking through leadership issues and challenges. By calibrating their observations, they develop common understandings of quality and also identify emerging challenges (see Exhibit 6 for more information).

EXHIBIT 6**Achievement First Co-Observation Day**

This is excerpted from the schedule for Achievement First's Co-Observation Days and demonstrates the organization's focus on instructional leadership. See the Appendix for full schedule.

- Morning Walk-around - 40 minutes scheduled for school walk-around & conversation
- Afternoon Walk-around – 40 minutes scheduled for walk-around & conversation
- Observing your class -- observation of principal-taught class
- Debriefing your class – 20 minutes scheduled
- Observation #1 – full class observation
- Debrief of Observation #1 – 30 minutes scheduled with the teacher
- Observation #2 – full class observation
- Debrief of Observation #2 – 30 minutes scheduled with the teacher
- Encore! Walk-around – 20 minutes scheduled for walk-around & conversation
- Final thoughts – 45 minutes scheduled for conversation

After the visit:

The mentor will provide written feedback highlighting school strengths and challenges (with suggestions) and, as relevant and appropriate, written feedback to individual teachers.

B. Cohorts

At their best, cohorts of principals promote collaboration, networking, and teamwork. Research suggests that cohorts provide natural opportunities for new principals to share knowledge, reflect on practice, identify challenges and weaknesses and develop new skills and strategies (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Cohorts also help to reduce principal isolation by creating opportunities to problem-solve collaboratively and test ideas in a supportive, non-judgmental setting.

At Achievement First, principals participate in a monthly cohort conference call, facilitated by the superintendent. Each principal shares one great thing that has happened at his or her school, and one challenge that he or she is struggling with. The principals then discuss solutions to one of these challenges together, offering feedback and suggestions. The group also discusses a particular common challenge that has emerged across multiple schools. The superintendent, based on feedback and communication from principals, chooses these topics in advance; past topics have included issues such as math curriculum or character education.

C. Targeted Training

Targeted training opportunities tailored to current challenges to new principals are an important source of support and continued learning. But rather than offering a flavor-of-the-month approach to professional development, thoughtful organizations actually tailor trainings to the emerging needs and skill sets of the new principal cohort. Targeted training strategies can range from full-day, on-site professional development for administrators to off-site conferences on a specific subject to visiting a neighboring school district to observe a particular best practice.

Green Dot has developed an approach to professional development for administrators that is known as the 95/5 model. The model is named for Green Dot's commitment to ensuring that principals spend 95% of their time at their school site and 5% of their time on professional development. Topics for professional development are chosen based on emerging needs and have included: "Re-classification of English-Language students," "Read 180," and "What makes an ideal leader – art vs. science" (see Exhibit 7 for more information). Achievement First points out that in addition to being responsive to individual principal needs,

professional development should also be used strategically to target the kinds of leadership skills the organization believes all school leaders should develop.

EXHIBIT 7

The following outlines Green Dot's approach to professional development for administrators.

Green Dot's 95/5 Model

Rationale:

- To maximize time spent on administrator professional development during the work day
- To maximize the potential for experiential professional development through observations teachers and programs in action at specific school sites
- To provide focused, ongoing professional development for administrators
- To allow for differentiated professional development for administrators

Description:

- Administrators will spend 95% of their time at their school sites, and 5% of their time engaged in professional development sessions.
- A 95/5 training session on a specific topic will be offered once a month for a full day or a partial day.
- Unless otherwise stipulated, each school is expected to send one administrator to each session. The principal and assistant principal should alternate their attendance at the training sessions.
- Administrators' meetings each month will run from 4:30 pm – 6:00 pm.
 - 45 minutes: Discussion of insights gleaned from Key Results that month and next steps as a result of these insights.
 - 45 minutes: Discussion of insights gleaned from 95/5 training that month and next steps as a result of these insights.

3. Evaluating Leaders

The coaching and other learning supports that principals receive should be paired with a meaningful evaluation process so that principals understand the performance standards that are expected of them and can gauge their progress toward meeting these standards. As Green Dot explains, “Everyone here works *hard*; we want them to use the evaluation process to work *smarter*.”

Set performance criteria

The first step in developing a principal evaluation system is to define performance criteria. When developing metrics for principal evaluations, organizations should consider the following:

- **Develop clear and explicit criteria.** Performance criteria should be understandable and clearly stated, and should be based on measurable and observable metrics rather than on subjective measures in order to ensure fairness in the evaluation process. Keep in mind that certain important criteria may be difficult to measure. For example, Achievement First has found that critical skills such as how principals run meetings, interact with staff, and facilitate professional development at the school can be challenging to measure, but important to include nonetheless.
- **Align criteria with your organization's mission.** A strong evaluation process should grow out of the values and mission of the organization. For example, Achievement First's organization-wide focus is on driving academic success, so its principal evaluation process emphasizes student and school achievement.

- **Ensure buy-in from each principal.** It is important that principals understand and are in agreement with the validity of the evaluation process. For this reason, each year at Green Dot, principals have the opportunity to get involved in developing the evaluation criteria and process and in providing feedback on the evaluation. At Achievement First, a principal's agreement with the evaluation criteria is viewed as an indication of his or her alignment with the organization's mission of focusing on academic achievement: if the principal is not bought into accepting full responsibility for the success of the school, they may not be a good fit for the organization overall.

Combine formal and informal evaluations

Once the performance criteria are set, principals should be evaluated regularly throughout the year, both informally and formally.

- **Informal observations provide frequent, detailed feedback.** As principals develop skills as instructional leaders and managers, they should receive regular feedback that assesses their performance in a variety of settings. This practice allows areas for improvement to be identified early on and for progress toward goals to be gauged. In addition, these evaluations can be used to provide more data points for the more formal evaluations, which carry higher stakes. Informal evaluations can take many forms. For example, after each co-observation day at an Achievement First school, the supervisor writes a letter to the principal of the school that summarizes areas of strength and areas for improvement. Green Dot uses school walk-throughs to regularly observe principal performance. After each walk-through and meeting with a principal, the supervisor sends an immediate email that summarizes feedback and next steps. Green Dot has found that the key to these informal evaluations is that the supervisor is frequently present in the schools, so that feedback is constant, specific, and trusted. New Leaders for New Schools integrates informal evaluations with professional development. During the residency year, coaches provide informal feedback to principals during weekly reflective meetings, and map this feedback to the individual development plan for each principal.
- **Formal evaluations carry more rigor – but also higher stakes.** By their very design, formal evaluations are more rigorous and can be high-stakes, informing contract renewal, the next year's salary, and the amount of a performance bonus. All of the organizations profiled here use specific rubrics to guide these evaluations, and all conduct at least two formal observations of each principal each school year. These evaluations often include the perspectives of others beyond the principal's supervisor. For example, as part of the evaluation process, principals at Achievement First and Green Dot complete a parallel self-evaluation, and at Green Dot, school-site staff, students, and parents also evaluate the principal twice a year. Since a consistent set of performance criteria is used for every evaluation, the formal evaluations can also be used to track principal growth over time, as they are at New Leaders. See Exhibit 8 for an excerpt from Green Dot's principal evaluation tool and Exhibit 9 for an excerpt from Achievement First's principal growth plan tool.

EXHIBIT 8**Sample: Green Dot's Principal Evaluation Rubric**

This is an excerpt from Green Dot's principal evaluation rubric. The full evaluation can be found in the Appendix.

Standard 1:

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Related GD Objectives and Administrator Goals:

- 97% of all 9th grade students are promoted to the 10th grade (students enrolled as of October 1st, 2006; excludes students that are confirmed to have moved out of the attendance area)
- All schools - Minimum 25% proficient and advanced in Algebra for 9th graders except that Animo Inglewood should be 38% Proficient and Advanced
- All returning schools (excluding Jefferson)
 - Minimum 15% proficient & Advanced in Geometry – 10th Grade
 - Minimum 10% Proficient & Advanced in Algebra II – 11th Grade
- All three schools with seniors - 95% of the senior class, as of the first day of the FY 2007 school year, graduate on time (includes summer)
- Animo Leadership and Oscar de la Hoya Animo – 70% of all seniors, as of the first day of the FY 2007 school year, are accepted into 4-year universities
- Animo Inglewood – 80% of all seniors, as of the first day of the FY 2007 school year, are accepted into 4-year universities
- All schools that achieved API scores at or above 700 in FY 2006 will need to achieve an API growth rate of 2.5% plus any unachieved growth target from FY 2006.
- All schools that achieved API scores below 700 in FY 2006 will need to achieve an API growth rate of 3.0% plus any unachieved growth target from FY 2006.
- All new schools will need to achieve API scores of at least 650 API

Indicators:

- Staff analyzes student achievement data once a quarter to draft plans for improvement.

	1	2	3	4	5
Area of Growth					Area of Strength

Reflections on Rating:

Next Steps:

EXHIBIT 9**Sample: Achievement First's Principal Growth Plan**

This is an excerpt from Achievement First's principal growth plan tool. The full tool can be found in the Appendix.

Leadership of People – OUTPUTS**Hiring and Retaining Great Teachers**

Benchmark / Excellent / Good / Fair / Area for Growth

Hires and retains outstanding teachers who share the AF core values and beliefs and are able to deliver on the promise of college for all our students; during the recruitment process, quickly responds to candidate and Team Recruit requests; inspires candidates and motivates them to work at the school (high % of offers accepted); participates actively in Team Recruit activities during the year

Metrics / Observables:

- Teacher survey results
- Observations during visits
- Offer acceptance rates
- Retention rates
- Feedback from Team Recruit

Chief Metrics: Percentage of Teachers Returning for Next Year: ____
Percentage of Job Offers Accepted: ____

Staff Morale & Attendance

Benchmark / Excellent / Good / Fair / Area for Growth

Staff morale, buy-in, and attendance are high

Metrics / Observables

- Teacher survey results
- Observations during visits
- Staff attendance rates
- Observations of staff meetings

Chief Metrics: Staff Attendance Percentage: ____

Instructional Leadership – OUTPUT**Student Achievement**

Benchmark / Excellent / Good / Fair / Area for Growth

Consistently meets/exceeds high standards for student academic achievement and character development; produces “breakthrough” student performance outcomes and ensures we deliver on the promise of college for all our students

Metrics / Observables:

- Student achievement results on state tests
- Student Work Examples
- Student achievement results on standardized tests
- AF School Report Card
- Interim assessment data (including Saxon and DI data)

Chief Metrics: State Test results, DRA, DRP, Terra Nova, Stanford 9, SAT, AP
College acceptance rates, college graduation rates, types of colleges accepted

CONCLUSION

It is critical for growing charter school management organizations (CMOs) to find and develop promising school leaders. In this tool, we have drawn from the experiences of three organizations – Green Dot Public Schools, Achievement First, and New Leaders for New Schools – to identify key strategies for principal selection, development and support, and evaluation. From these key strategies emerge four lessons learned, which are summarized below. Please see this tool’s Appendix for additional helpful supporting information and resources.

- ***Don’t compromise on selection.*** It is better to delay a school opening than to start with a principal who doesn’t have your full confidence that she or he will be successful. Be sure to invest time, effort, and resources to get the selection process right and don’t overlook the importance of cultural fit. Align your screening process with your organization’s core values and expected competencies.
- ***Use a 3-pronged approach to development – coaching, cohorts and training.*** A comprehensive approach to supporting principals – through individualized coaching, group problem-solving and targeted training – provides a scaffolding system that addresses the varied development needs of new principals. Each support fills a specific need for new principals. Be sure to protect time in the calendar and develop protocols to build these supports into the regular work of the school and organization. If left to chance, the everyday urgencies of leading a school will crowd out development needs.
- ***Align, align, align.*** Principal selection, support and evaluation should be aligned with your organization’s core values and mission. Principal competencies should grow out of these values. Resources, time, and support should be aligned to ensure they reflect the core values and mission. Aligning these competencies and skills with the school’s mission is also an important strategy for staying focused and knowing what not to do.
- ***Performance criteria should be clear, explicit and measurable.*** Principals need a clear vision of what success looks like, in a similar way to the clear vision students need for what is expected of them and what high-quality work looks like. Invest in the time to carefully flesh out a rubric describing the entire spectrum from exemplary to unsatisfactory performance.
- ***Provide honest and frequent feedback.*** Coaches, mentors, supervisors, and principals need to be willing to engage in candid, sometimes difficult conversations with one another. These conversations should happen frequently, in both formal and informal settings, so that problems are caught early and so that principal development is maximized.

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- Usdan, Michael, & McCloud, B., & Podmostko, M. (2000) *Leadership for Student Learning: Reinventing the Principalship*. Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL).
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APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

I. Selecting Leaders

- **1. Coachable vs. Personal Beliefs/Characteristics: Conceptual Framework**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-1.ppt>
This blank Venn diagram can be used to facilitate a thought exercise for delineating selection criteria for principal candidates.
- **2. New Leaders for New Schools: Selection Criteria**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-2.pdf>
This one-page document lists the criteria used to select Principal candidates.
- **3. Aspire Public Schools: Data Analysis Assignment**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-3.doc>
This data assignment is given to prospective principals so they can evaluate actual student data and develop an action plan.
- **4. Aspire Public Schools: Principal Performance Criteria Rubric**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-4.doc>
This is a full rubric of competencies deemed necessary to be a successful principal at an Aspire school.
- **5. New Leaders for New Schools: Principal Job Description**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-5.doc>
This document includes the position description, qualifications, and application procedures for becoming a New Leaders principal candidate.

II. Training Leaders

- **6. New Leaders for New Schools: Resident Core Competencies**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-6.doc>
This document lists the academic, technical and leadership skills New Leaders residents are expected to master during their training year.
- **7. Achievement First: Administrator Task List**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-7.xls>
This document delineates the summer training schedule for Achievement First middle school and elementary school staff, including specific tasks and the party responsible for each.
- **8. Green Dot Public Schools: Key Results Planning Guide and Protocol**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-8.doc>
This one-page document summarizes the “Key Results” meetings that take place once a month at Green Dot school sites. It also offers suggestions for schools to get the most out of the feedback offered at these meetings.
- **9. Achievement First: Principal and Superintendent Co-Observation Day Protocol**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-9.doc>
This protocol is used to structure co-observation day between principal and superintendent.
- **10. Green Dot Public Schools: 95-5 Model and Schedule**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-10.doc>
This document contains the rationale for and description of Green Dot’s 95/5 Model for principal coaching and development.

III. Evaluating Leaders

- **11. Green Dot Public Schools: Principal Evaluation Rubric**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-11.doc>
This evaluation form is organized around six standards of effective leadership. Each standard contains several indicators that help to quantify each standard.
- **12. Achievement First: Principal's Professional Growth Plan**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-12.doc>
This is a template for a professional growth plan for a principal at Achievement First. The measures of growth are organized into the three dimensions of school leadership at AF: people leadership, school culture leadership and instructional leadership.
- **13. Achievement First: School Report Cards**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-13.xls>
This dashboard shows the various measures that Achievement First collects at each grade level in each elementary school. This tool is used to focus principal evaluation and support on issues of school achievement.

IV. Other

- **14. New Leaders for New Schools: Resident Leadership Coach Job Description, New Orleans**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Principal-14.doc>
This three-page document presents the job description for the Resident Leadership Coach position in New Orleans. It describes the New Leaders for New Schools organization and mission, and contains a position description that includes job responsibilities, qualifications, and compensation.

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PERFORMANCE DASHBOARDS

Key Strategies From NewSchools' Portfolio Ventures

June 2008

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METHODOLOGY

This case study was prepared by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “promising practices” in use by our portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared with others in the portfolio. To complete this case study, NewSchools conducted background research on Aspire Public Schools, Leadership Public Schools, and Uncommon Schools, Inc. and interviewed management teams at each of these organizations. As a result, NewSchools compiled a variety of practices and approaches that nonprofit charter management organizations (CMOs) have put in place to implement performance dashboards across their schools.

About the Organizations

Aspire Public Schools (Aspire) establishes and operates public charter schools in California focused on providing low-income, urban youth with a high-quality education that will prepare them for college. Founded in 1998 to “enrich students’ lives and to reshape the public school system,” Aspire opened its first two charter schools in 1999 in California’s Central Valley, and currently operates 21 schools in six counties throughout California that together serve nearly 6,000 students in grades K – 12.

Leadership Public Schools (LPS) is a charter management organization (CMO) founded in 2002 to serve a diverse population of California’s students by operating a network of outstanding charter high schools. LPS schools serve ethnically and economically diverse student bodies and are located in or near low-income neighborhoods. The organization currently runs five high schools and nearly 1,400 students.

Uncommon Schools, Inc. (Uncommon) is a CMO that starts and manages outstanding urban college preparatory charter schools working to close the achievement gap in the Northeast. Uncommon manages nine schools in New York City, upstate New York, and Newark, New Jersey; these schools serve 1,350 students in grades K-12 across four geographic regions. The organization also has two associate member schools in Boston, Massachusetts.

About NewSchools Venture Fund

NewSchools Venture Fund is a national nonprofit venture philanthropy firm that seeks to transform public education – particularly for underserved students – by supporting education entrepreneurs and connecting their work to systems change. In order to maximize the impact of its ventures, NewSchools also connects the work of these entrepreneurs with one another and with the broader field through events and publications. By leveraging this collective knowledge, NewSchools’ ultimate goal is to empower these entrepreneurs to transform public education so that *all* children have the opportunity to attend a high-quality public school.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As you think about how the practices described here apply to your own organization, please consider these questions:

1. Has your organization engaged in conversations around what student, school, or organization-wide data you need to collect and measure over time?
2. Do you have a system in place for collecting these data? If so, what documents do you use to collect and analyze data? Is this system working for your organization?
3. Do you set goals on an interim basis for your organization's financial, academic, or operational performance? How are these goals tied to the metrics you collect?
4. How does the data you collect inform organizational decision making and the development of improvement plans over the course of the school year?
5. Do you share interim, quarterly, or monthly progress with your board of directors? How much or how little information do you present to them?

INTRODUCTION

A **performance dashboard** is a dynamic management tool that is used by an organization to gauge performance and progress toward specific goals. The dashboard is updated several times throughout the year, and its metrics may span several dimensions of the organization, including operations, finance, and academics. It provides timely data to the organization's executives, managers, and employees, who use the performance dashboard to identify problems in real time and to manage people, decision making, and processes to optimize performance. Additionally, dashboards serve as a helpful tool in providing boards with consistent and up-to-date information on how the organization is progressing against its goals.

While performance dashboards may resemble other data tracking mechanisms, dashboards tend to be more consistent, more frequently compiled, and more thoroughly integrated into the organization's work, providing information on a predictable schedule and in a consistent format. Also, it is important to note that while dashboards are used to track data, they are meant to be used primarily as management tools, rather than for accountability purposes. To this end, performance dashboards can streamline information collection and sharing, and, in turn, streamline organizational planning. As Wayne Eckerson, author of *Performance Dashboards: Measuring, Monitoring, and Managing Your Business*, put it, a performance dashboard functions as an "organizational magnifying glass."¹ In other words, by tracking progress over time, the dashboard illuminates trends, cycles or outliers that can inform an organization of the key factors influencing (or inhibiting) its success.

It is important to note that performance dashboards are only as effective as the structures that are in place to keep them populated and integrated into broader organizational strategy and activities. Overly complex or isolated dashboards will not inform – and may only confuse – the overall performance of any organization. However, organizations that create clear systems for information collection and that promote a culture of using dashboards to drive decision making find that these tools have a significant positive impact on performance.

DESIGN AND USE OF PERFORMANCE DASHBOARDS

This toolkit presents examples of three CMOs that use performance dashboards to better inform their work. Uncommon Schools, Inc. (Uncommon), Aspire Public Schools (Aspire), and Leadership Public Schools (LPS) each developed performance dashboards for distinct reasons. This tool includes (1) Uncommon's dashboard, which focuses on measuring student academic achievement, (2) a dashboard from Aspire that is strictly focused on tracking operational and financial performance, and (3) three separate dashboards created by LPS that are used to measure both academic achievement and operational metrics, and also to evaluate recruitment and track school-specific demographics. A more detailed look at the variety of metrics, design techniques and goals included in these dashboards is outlined in the table below. (See table below)

Each organization dedicated different resources to the design and use of these dashboards. At Uncommon, the managing director of one of Uncommon's five networks of schools, Paul Bambrick, led the development of the performance dashboard with additional support from a summer intern. To maintain the dashboard, data are filled in by Operations Directors at each school site. At Aspire, the performance dashboard was produced internally by the senior management team. The dashboard is populated by the assistant to the regional vice president. At LPS, the various dashboards were created by the departments at the home office that oversaw the particular areas being measured; these same departments remain responsible for populating the dashboards on a monthly or quarterly basis.

¹ Wayne Eckerson, *Performance Dashboards: Measuring, Monitoring, and Managing Your Business*, John Wiley and Sons, 2006.

Types of dashboards used by CMOs in this study

Each of the CMOs we surveyed uses its own approach concerning when dashboards are compiled and the audiences with whom they are shared. Since performance dashboards need to be integrated into an organization's culture in order to be effective tools, each organization designed its dashboard internally. It is important to note that each dashboard has multiple audiences and that the data may be presented differently to each audience. The following are the types of dashboards that each CMO shared with us:

	Type of dashboard	Metrics	Method	Frequency	Audiences
Uncommon	<i>Academic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interim assessments (compared to last year's cohort at same grade/subject; not disaggregated by specific subgroups) ▪ Student attrition (month to month) ▪ Enrollment & attendance ▪ Demographics (mostly for external audiences) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data are disaggregated by schools ▪ Results are not compared to specific targets but implicit goal is that measures will improve each year 	Quarterly	Home office management team, Board
	<i>Operational</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enrollment ▪ Wait list and attrition/transfers out ▪ Attendance ▪ Financial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data are disaggregated by schools ▪ Results are compared to targets set each quarter 	Every 1-2 months	Home office management team, Board
LPS	<i>Academic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interim assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data are disaggregated by schools ▪ Results are compared to targets set each quarter 	Every 1-2 months	Home office management team, Board
	<i>Financial</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Average Daily Attendance (ADA) ▪ Enrollment ▪ Free/Reduced lunch ▪ Supplemental hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data are disaggregated by schools ▪ Results are compared to target goals based on the previous quarter 	Monthly	Home office management team, Board
	<i>Operational</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff recruitment pipeline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Results are compared to target goals based on the previous quarter 	Quarterly	Home office management team, Board
	<i>Academic</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interim assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data are disaggregated across schools ▪ Results are not compared to specific targets 	Quarterly	Home office management team, Board, Principals

KEY STRATEGIES

Considering the range of dashboards across and even within these CMOs, these three cases demonstrate a valuable set of development techniques for and practical uses of dashboards. The materials in the appendices provide actual examples of the unique dashboards used at all three organizations. While these documents are noticeably distinct from each other, all three organizations shared similar challenges and insights related to creating and using an effective performance dashboard. The following list of six key findings from our interviews with these CMOs should inform how you develop and use dashboards in your own organization.

1. Determine what you need to know

Being clear about the purpose of your dashboard will simplify the design and implementation processes. Milan Sevak, Director of Instruction and Assessment at LPS, noted that the organization did not plan sufficiently before designing the actual tools: in his opinion, LPS should have “[gathered] the right people in the room and decided what we really cared about and what levers impacted those things,” and then designed the tools around that vision. Gloria Lee, a Regional Vice President at Aspire and the former Chief Operating Officer there, expressed a similar sentiment, and regretted that Aspire did not take time early on to plan the entire system of goals, collection, and action related to the dashboard before they designed the actual tool. In contrast, Uncommon’s team purposefully determined the premise for its dashboard system in advance, seeking feedback from the management team on the underlying goals and design of the dashboard. When selecting these measures, it is important to keep in mind which metrics are relevant to mid-course corrections and planning.

EXHIBIT 1

Taking time to consider what specific measures your dashboard will include and narrow your metrics down to only the most relevant

Uncommon Schools’ process of elimination

Since Uncommon wanted to use its dashboard as a real-time tool focused on interim academic data, the team determined that some metrics that are critical to collect and analyze at year-end are in fact less relevant to making mid-course corrections to the academic program. Other seemingly important metrics were filtered out for a variety of other reasons. For example, homework completion data was eliminated because completion does not indicate whether the work the students turned in was of high quality. Budget data were eliminated because these numbers do not tell a clear story of a school’s academic performance.

The team also decided that suspension and detention rates were not directly correlated with academic performance and therefore should not be included in the dashboard. Other metrics were left out because the team saw them as assumptions already embedded in Uncommon’s culture. For example, a strong norm about teacher attendance at every school eliminated the need for a measure of faculty attendance. Similarly, the disaggregation of special education data was not included because Uncommon considers itself responsible for all students and therefore did not want to break out certain groups’ data and risk holding these groups to a different, lower standard. Below is a snapshot of a portion of the spreadsheet that the Uncommon team designed to sort and evaluate which metrics to include.

Metric	X to include			Notes
	Year-End Report Card?	Monthly Dashboard?	Both?	
% at benchmark on DIBELS, by grade		X		
Average daily attendance rate			X	
% students with X or fewer absences				
Average daily homework completion rate				
Average persistence rate (% of students enrolled at the beginning of the year who are still enrolled at the beginning of the following year)			X	What we really need is for this to be broken down: #/% lost due to leaving city, #/% lost due to academic failure/risk of retention, #/% due to discipline/not liking school culture
Completion rate (% of students who enrolled in the standard entering grade level of the school who graduated within one year of their expected graduation year)	X			Again, this needs to be broken down like above. It also should be separated into MS and HS categories.

2. *Remember that less is more*

Each CMO emphasized the need for simplicity. There is a natural propensity among these organizations to collect an excess of data, and all three CMOs acknowledged the ongoing, powerful temptation to present more data than was necessary. In the case of LPS, where multiple dashboards are used, one challenge has been the need to balance the organization's desire to have as much information as possible presented in one place with the goal of ensuring that information is not duplicated across multiple dashboards. It is important to keep in mind the precise purpose for each tool when reviewing what data should be included. Uncommon's experiences illustrate this point. To determine which metrics to include in the performance dashboard, the team generated a list of possible ways to measure the performance of a school, creating a map of approximately 2,000 measures. From there, they determined which of these measures would be most useful in driving student achievement during the school year.

Having gone through this rigorous process of elimination, Uncommon created a short list of academic-focused measures for its dashboard (see "Uncommon Dashboard" in Appendix), including interim assessment data and comparison data to last year's cohort at same grade, subject, and point in the school year. They also took into account relevant non-academic student data, such as student attrition, enrollment, and attendance, along with some basic demographic information. Uncommon's approach highlights the importance of investing resources and thought up front, in order to narrow the set of metrics that are included in a performance dashboard. Uncommon's method of soliciting ongoing team feedback while developing the dashboards is noteworthy. Please see Exhibit 1 for more information about Uncommon's approach. Narrowing your organization's metrics in order to align them with what you ultimately want to measure – and recognizing how certain metrics are related to pre-existing assumptions -- is a significant undertaking, both from an operational and a philosophical standpoint. To make this process as thoughtful and thorough as possible, it is critical to get input and buy-in from across your organization.

3. *Schedule and assign data collection to maximize efficiency*

It is important to estimate reasonable timeframes for the production of the tools, especially if your organization will rely on manual data collection and updating of the tools, as was done by all three of the CMOs in this study. At LPS, for example, several individuals are responsible for obtaining the data to populate the tools. As the tools are mostly department-specific, each department updates its own tools (e.g., the Finance Department updates the Financial Dashboard, etc.). Data are manually pulled from various sources, including Data Director, PowerSchool, and various Microsoft Excel sheets that are populated through in-person discussions with counselors and principals. LPS' data, like that of the other CMOs, is collected at various times throughout the year and used to produce the dashboards. Both LPS and Aspire agreed that creating calendars that dictate when different types of data will be collected has made populating the dashboards less of a burden on schools and easier for those team members responsible for collecting and aggregating data. See Exhibit 2 for more information about LPS' data collection calendar.

EXHIBIT 2

Promoting a culture of expectations for populating your dashboard

LPS's data collection calendar

CMOs realized that to keep dashboards live and up to date, they needed to track data collection in parallel with academic calendars and assessment schedules. Setting clear expectations around deadlines ensures the performance dashboards are completed in a timely manner, which keeps them relevant and informative. LPS uses a straightforward academic data timeline to pace its data collection efforts and set expectations well in advance for when data will need to be collected.

LPS Academic Data Timeline 2006-07											
Data Collection											
Results Available											
July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June
Benchmark Assessments											
			Bnchmrk Assmnts	Bnchmrk Assmnts	Bnchmrk Assmnts	Bnchmrk Assmnts	Bnchmrk Assmnts	Bnchmrk Assmnts	Bnchmrk Assmnts	Bnchmrk Assmnts	
State Assessments											
CELDT (9-12)								CELDT (9-12)			
	CAHSEE (10-12)			CAHSEE (NP 11-12)		CAHSEE (NP 11-12)	CAHSEE (10 Census)	CAHSEE (10 make-up & NP 11-12)		CAHSEE (10 Census)	CAHSEE (10 make-up & NP 11-12)
	STAR (9-11)								STAR (9-11)		
								PFT (9 & 11)	PFT (9 & 11)		
State Accountability											
	API Growth & AYP							API Base & Ranks			
Surveys											
						School Staff	School Staff	Home Office Staff	Home Office Staff	School Staff Students Parents	School Staff Students Parents

Acronyms
 CELDT = California English Language Development Test
 CAHSEE = California High School Exit Exam
 NP = Non-Passing (for CAHSEE)
 STAR = Standardized Testing and Reporting
 PFT = Physical Fitness Testing
 API = Academic Performance Index
 AYP = Adequate Yearly Progress

4. Present data effectively

All three organizations agreed that the level of clarity of how data are presented corresponded to the level of effectiveness of these dashboards as management tools. At Uncommon, for example, a great deal of time has been spent on making the dashboard easy to read. Bambrick notes: "Half [of the time invested to create a dashboard] is the information you choose, and half is how you present it." CMOs agreed that the tool must be simple and quick to review, and that it must reliably impart the same information to all readers. Simply making sure that the graphics read the same way in black and white as they read in color is an important factor in ensuring that interpretations of the data are consistent, particularly across different parties such as management teams and boards. This, in turn, ensures a greater likelihood for consensus on actions that should be taken based on the results of the dashboard.

Using simple graphics, LPS has made its dashboards particularly easy to interpret. An upward facing arrow (strong), a horizontal line (medium) and a downward facing arrow (weak) populate the "status" column of

each dashboard summary. These quick references (which are accompanied by a column of data and a comments column) allow any reader to quickly assess where a given school or region is excelling and what areas need improvement. This “status” column has an added benefit: these symbols represent an implicit set of qualitative performance standards by which the metrics in the dashboard are evaluated. These evaluations provide guidance to readers from different levels of the organization on how to analyze and react to the information presented in the dashboard, which leads to greater consensus in how metrics are interpreted. Please see Exhibit 3 for more information about LPS’ use of these graphics to indicate quality.

EXHIBIT 3

Sending a clear message to all audiences

LPS’ use of graphics as summary indicators

As the following section of LPS’ financial dashboard shows, each metric is marked with a simple symbol or “summary indicator” to provide a clear visual of the organization’s satisfaction with performance against this metric. For each metric, the summary indicator is accompanied by the before displaying the actual data for the month. This approach allows senior management, board members, and staff alike to interpret and weigh data along the same scale. This type of consensus on what data means can facilitate better data analysis discussions, which keeps the organization’s staff and board focused on particular areas in need of improvement where specific action should be taken.

Summary Indicators
 ▲ on track
 ↔ neutral
 ▼ needs attention

Metric	Summary Indicator ▲/↔/▼
Cash Balance	▲
Revenue	↔
Expense	▲
Surplus/(Deficit)	▲
ADA	↔
ADA Percentage	↔
Average Enrollment	↔
Current Enrollment	▼
Supplemental Hours	▼
Free/Reduced Lunch	▲

5. Set goals

Once a dashboard is populated with data, the results should be held against your organization’s standards. This can involve setting specific targets for growth compared to previous quarters, or can simply mean being mindful of what you compare your data against. Uncommon compares interim assessment data for the current year’s cohort of students to the cohort of students who took the same test at the same point in time the previous year. Although there are no explicit goals set for progress on these comparative measures, the implicit goal is that each measure will improve each year and that attendance will be at least 95%.

Aspire’s dashboard is produced every one to two months. Aspire’s team decided early on that it would measure interim and annual data against specific quantitative goals, allowing any reader to compare actual

results to the relevant goal. At LPS, some metrics are measured against target goals, while for others those targets are under development. Specifically, goals have been set at LPS for the Recruiting and Finance Dashboards, but not for the Educational Dashboard.

A powerful approach to setting performance targets for dashboard metrics is to map each interim dashboard to your organization's annual goals, which are likely set by the management team and endorsed by the board through a rigorous strategic process. In the same way that interim assessments for students are most informative when they are aligned with the annual state performance exam, aligning your organization's dashboard targets to your annual performance targets is a way to ensure that the dashboards are gauging progress toward these overarching goals. This process requires careful work to track backwards from your organization's annual goals and evaluate the extent to which the organization needs to advance on a monthly or quarterly basis in order to reach that goal.

6. *Communicate and act on data*

Dashboard tools, while helpful, are not necessarily drivers of educational progress. Each organization emphasized that having a dashboard alone, no matter how timely and accurate, will not improve your schools. Rather, it is the interpretation and action taken place as a result of the information presented by the dashboard that is the lever for generating change. A first step toward acting on data is to make sure that your organization has a plan for effectively disseminating data across the various levels of the team. For example, at Uncommon, this process is laid out in a way that ensures that every level of the organization has exposure to the data. Once the data are collected by each school's operations director, the dashboard is passed on to the principal of that school and managing director of that school network. The managing director then passes data on to both the boards of trustees of each Uncommon network and to Uncommon's home office operations director, who shares it with Uncommon's senior management.

Once dashboards have been properly disseminated, teams must allot time to discuss the results and key findings. The Aspire team emphasized that those who use the data (the management team, for example) must make time within regularly scheduled meetings to fully review what the data says about each individual school. Aspire found that simply distributing the data without a group discussion was less powerful than when the group took the time to discuss the results together. Moreover, different levels of framing and analysis are appropriate for different audiences for the dashboard. For example, while there is likely some value for teachers, principals and home office staff in going through a group process of digesting the data and developing action plans, this type of exercise would not be appropriate for the board. Rather, a synopsis of the dashboard's most relevant findings, action steps that the organization will take as a result, and how the organization's current performance relates to its annual performance targets are all appropriate actions for the board. Please see Exhibit 4 for a description of how Aspire engages its board with its dashboard.

Productive conversations and actions plans that emerge from performance dashboard data are ultimately what keep these tools grounded in the real work of the organization and make the tools critical for driving an organization's success. Designing a tool from start to finish should involve careful consideration of how the tools will fuel such conversations, and which team members will facilitate the development of action plans around the findings that they yield.

EXHIBIT 4

Using dashboards to devise strategy

Aspire’s purposes and goals around sharing dashboards

Aspire is highly intentional about how data can best be shared with board members and around keeping their board members informed about data-driven decision making at the school and organizational level. What follows are two sample slides from the regular presentations that Aspire makes at board meetings around student data. While the first slide explains Aspire’s use of annual (versus interim) data, Aspire uses a similar method when presenting interim data.

Purposes

- To share the analysis done on the STAR results at the school level.
- To show a school plan based on its data
- To share the systems for monitoring the implementation of the plan and student achievement

Another slide illustrates how relevant data from Aspire’s dashboards are put to use: school action plans are developed to address the issues the dashboards bring to light, including negative trends or cycles and even stagnant or slow growth. By presenting the dashboards data to the board in this way, Aspire allows the board to focus on high-level, strategic issues related to the data, rather than simply looking at numbers and statistics.

Implications for School Plan

TEACHER V

STRATEGY	STEPS TO IMPLEMENT	EVALUATION	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?
Monitor pacing of standards in language arts	Mandate Aspire pacing guide	Monthly walkthrough with pacing guide	Diana Alicia Elise
Increased assessment of students in language arts	Require interim assessments every 6 weeks based on the pacing chart	Analysis of interim assessment data	Diana Elise
Increase professional development	Aspirewide professional development in writing strategies	Cycle of Inquiries on writing strategies	Alicia Diana

Insisting that dashboards have implications for school plans ensures that data remain a driving factor for Aspire’s strategy and illustrates the dynamic role that a well-used dashboard can play in an organization that is focused on continuous improvement.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Beyond the methods presented in this study, there are other ways to further increase the usefulness of performance dashboards through more rigorous data analysis. All three CMOs in this study plan to improve their use of interim assessment data and performance dashboards to compare results across schools and across departments within schools. Rolling up data across schools can provide additional insight into how an organization is performing overall, and identifying where organization-wide successes and challenges have arisen. Moreover, by comparing data across schools or across departments within schools, successful strategies at one school can be identified and then applied to schools that are struggling in that area. Additionally, it may be useful to compare current performance trends with historical trends in order to track progress over time and with prior years' dashboards. Consider using data over time throughout the course the year – for example, comparing period 1 results with period 2 results – as a potentially useful way to analyze data and trace the progress of a student cohort, school, or entire organization. However, it is important to remember that these dashboards should serve as dynamic tools that inform the organization's decision making. As such, organizations should not shy away from adjusting them as needed, even at the expense of longitudinal data analysis.

CONCLUSION

The three CMOs profiled in this study use performance dashboards to compile, track, analyze, and react to trends in their academic, operational and financial progress. All three have demonstrated the importance of aligning performance dashboards with the overall strategy of their organizations. By doing so, dashboards become increasingly powerful tools that can drive decision making. As stakeholders begin to recognize the potential utility of dashboards in informing decisions, they are more likely to accurately and dynamically populate and use these tools, thereby further strengthening the dashboards' effectiveness. CMOs can use a variety of techniques to integrate dashboards into their organization's work. For example, Uncommon involves its entire team in deciding what to include in the dashboard metrics, LPS uses easy-to-understand graphics to ensure consistent interpretation of the data across the organization, and Aspire uses data to consistently inform decision making with their board. Activities like these are what build momentum for the design and implementation of performance dashboards and contribute to making them increasingly useful management tools over time.

Integrating dashboards into the culture and practices of an organization requires putting a deliberate emphasis on the importance of collecting data and the usefulness of these tools in driving decision making. We encourage you to consider developing and incorporating these tools for use in your own organization.

APPENDICES: SUPPORTING MATERIALS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Appendix I: LPS Academic Dashboard

LPS uses this dashboard to track not only proficiency based on quarterly benchmark assessments, but also college readiness and school culture metrics.

LPS Education Dashboard												April 18, 2007 Board Meeting				Last Updated: 4/12/2007					
												1		2		3		4		5	
ACADEMICS	3rd Benchmark Assessment Results																				
	English Overall	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+										
	Grade 9	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%								
	Grade 10	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%										
	Grade 11	x%	x%	x%	x%																
	Grade 12	x%	x%																		
	Math Overall	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+										
	Algebra	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%								
	Geometry	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%								
	Algebra 2	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%										
	Science Overall	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+										
	Biology	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%								
	Chemistry	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%										
	Soc Sci Overall	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+	% PRO+	% BAS+										
	World Hist 9	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%								
World Hist 10	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%											
US Hist 11	x%	x%	x%	x%																	
COLLEGE-READINESS	CA High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) Results - Cumulative																				
		% Passed		% Passed		% Passed		% Passed		% Passed											
		English	Math	English	Math	English	Math	English	Math	English	Math	English	Math								
	Grade 10	?	x%	x%	?	x%	x%	?	x%	x%	?	x%	x%								
	Grade 11	?	x%	x%	?	x%	x%														
	Grade 12	?	x%	x%																	
	Progress Towards Meeting UC (a-g) Credit Requirements																				
		% On Track		% On Track		% On Track		% On Track		% On Track											
	Grade 9																				
	Grade 10	In Process																			
Grade 11																					
Grade 12																					
Grade 12: HS Grad-Ready & College Admissions																					
% HS Diploma Ready	In Process																				
% 4Yr College Admitted	X%																				
CULTURE	Student Culture																				
	Clubs/sports % involved	X%		X%		X%		X%		X%											
		IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT	IN	OUT								
Transfers	?	y	y	?	y	y	?	y	y	?	y	y	?	y	y	?	y	y			

LPS also uses a dashboard to track recruitment efforts and new hires.

LPS Recruiting Dashboard as of 4/1/07									
Open Positions	Total Budgeted	Open Positions (FTE)				Hiring			Positions To Be Filled
		New Positions	Transfers Out	Attrition Estimate	Total Open Positions	Offers Pending	Transfers In	Hires	
Region 1									
Teachers	16.50	-	-	4.50	4.50	-	-	-	4.50
Admin	7.20	0.50	-	3.00	3.50	-	1.00	-	2.50
Total	23.70	0.50	-	7.50	8.00	-	1.00	-	7.00

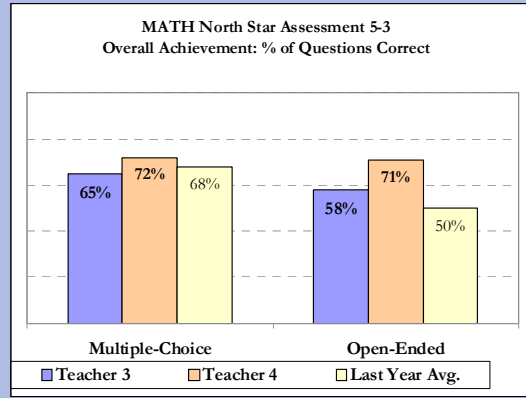
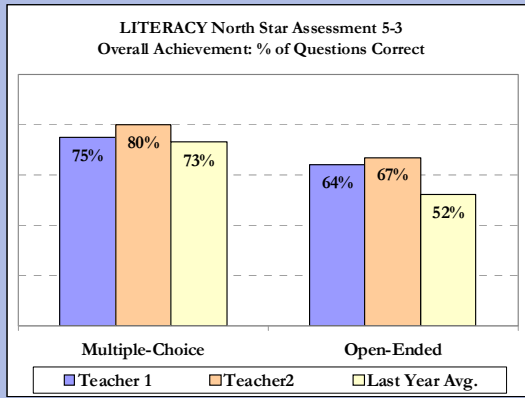
Appendix II: Aspire's Financial Dashboard

		Region 1					
		School #1	School #2	etc.			
		#	#	#	#	#	#
CURRENT ENROLLMENT							
Net change from 9/15/06		x	x	x	x	x	x
ADA	January	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%
	February	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%
	March	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%
Re-enroll	% of enroll	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%
	% from feeder	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%
Wait list	06-07						
	#	y	y	y	y	y	y
	% of enroll	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%	x%
Transfers Out	January-07	-	-	-	-	-	-
	February	-	-	-	-	-	-
	March	-	-	-	-	-	-
FFFL forecast (thousand)	05-06	\$X	\$X	\$X	\$X	\$X	\$X
	January	\$X	\$X	\$X	\$X	\$X	\$X
	February	\$X	\$X	\$X	\$X	\$X	\$X

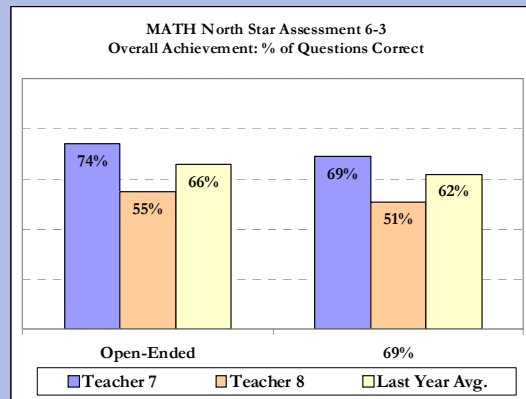
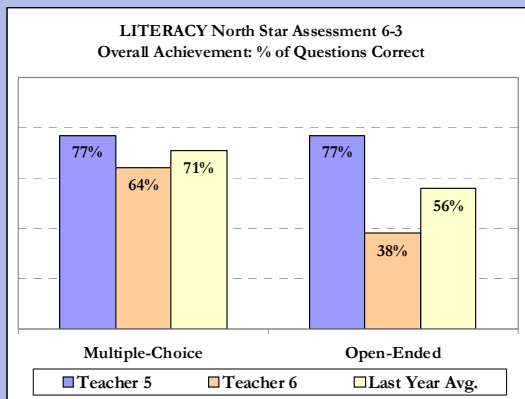
Appendix III continued : Uncommon's Academic Dashboard

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: INTERIM ASSESSMENT DATA

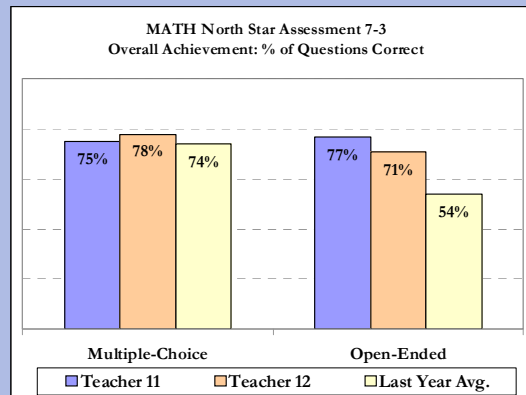
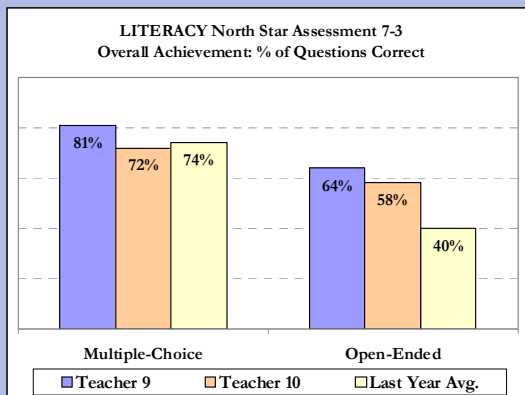
Grade 5



Grade 6



Grade 7



Appendix IV: Sample Performance Dashboard Measures

ACADEMIC DATA

- Percentage Proficient on standardized tests
- Number of Correct Scores on interim assessments (by question)
- Percentage Proficiency + and Basic + on interim assessments by subject
- Power standards (percentage correct, listed by standard)
- Percentage passing high school exit exam
- State rankings
- Progress toward meeting credit requirements
- Percentage high school diploma-ready
- Percentage graduated
- Percentage admitted to 4-year college
- Improved in writing (2 levels of growth)

ORGANIZATIONAL DATA

- Demographics
- Enrollment
- Average Daily Attendance
- Student Attrition/ Number of Transfers Out
- Staff Attrition (and reasons for)
- Average Class Size/Student Ratio
- Waitlist by month (year to year)
- Re-enrollment rate
- Percentage of students involved in clubs/sports
- Staff total open positions/offers pending/positions to be filled
- Staff diversity statistics
- Drop Outs
- Suspensions
- Number of Parent Volunteer Hours
- Community Service Hours
- Teacher Grade for school (teacher satisfaction)
- Parent Grade for school (parent satisfaction)
- Teacher performance (score created in teacher evaluation)

FINANCIAL DATA

- YTD Revenue
- YTD Expense
- YTD Income
- YTD Cash Balance
- Per Pupil Expenditures
- Per Pupil Income
- Variances to date
- Supplemental Hours
- Fundraising (School-based and central office)
- Facility Cost/Quality

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POWERSCHOOL STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

**Key Strategies From
NewSchools' Portfolio
Ventures**

June 2008

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METHODOLOGY

This case study was prepared by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “promising practices” in use by our portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared with others in the portfolio. To complete this tool, NewSchools conducted background research and interviewed management teams at Aspire Public Schools, Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools, and Uncommon Schools, Inc. As a result, NewSchools compiled a variety of practices and approaches that nonprofit charter management organizations (CMOs) have put in place to implement and run PowerSchool, a Web-based student information system, across their schools.

About the Organizations

The Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools (Alliance) is a nonprofit charter management organization that works to “open and operate a network of excellent, small, high-performing 9-12 and 6-8 public schools in historically underachieving, low-income, overcrowded communities in Los Angeles that will significantly outperform other public schools in preparing students to enter and succeed in college.” Alliance opened its first school in fall 2004, followed by three additional schools in fall 2005. Currently, the organization operates ten schools throughout the LA area, serving over 2900 students in grades 6-12 Alliance plans to open an additional 13 schools over the next four years.

Aspire Public Schools (Aspire) establishes and operates public charter schools in California focused on providing low-income, urban youth with a high-quality education that will prepare them for college. Founded in 1998 to “enrich students’ lives and to reshape the public school system,” Aspire opened its first two charter schools in 1999 in California’s Central Valley and currently operates 21 schools in six counties throughout California, serving nearly 6,000 students in grades K-12.

Uncommon Schools, Inc. (Uncommon) is a nonprofit charter management organization that starts and manages “among the most outstanding urban college preparatory charter schools working to close the achievement gap in the Northeast.” Uncommon manages schools in New York City, upstate New York, and Newark, New Jersey, and has two associate member schools in Boston, Massachusetts. Uncommon currently runs nine schools, serving 1,350 students in grades K-12 across four geographic regions.

About NewSchools Venture Fund

NewSchools Venture Fund is a national nonprofit venture philanthropy firm that seeks to transform public education – particularly for underserved students – by supporting education entrepreneurs and connecting their work to systems change. In order to maximize the impact of its ventures, NewSchools also connects the work of these entrepreneurs with one another and with the broader field through events and publications. By leveraging this collective knowledge, NewSchools’ ultimate goal is to empower these entrepreneurs to transform public education so that *all* children have the opportunity to attend a high-quality public school.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As you think about how the practices described here apply to your own organization, please consider these questions:

1. Does your organization have a coherent data system for tracking student and staff data?
2. Has your organization designed a strategy for how to implement data systems in new schools as it grows to scale?
3. How does your organization staff the collection, entry, and analysis of data at individual school sites and at your home office?
4. What resources can you put towards training your staff to use PowerSchool or similar software?
5. What security protocols or data scrubbing systems do you have in place to maximize the security and accuracy of your data?

INTRODUCTION

PowerSchool is a leading student information system that is currently used in almost 8,000 schools serving over 3 million students.¹ Formerly a technology developed by Apple Computer that was acquired by education publisher Pearson in 2006, PowerSchool allows schools and school systems to store, track, and synthesize student information. It has been implemented by a range of education organizations, including individual schools and public school districts as well as charter schools and charter management organizations (CMOs). The program is used by many charter schools to comply with the reporting requirements of the Walton Family Foundation, a leading contributor to early-stage charter schools.

Among CMOs, it is crucial to have a system for maintaining up-to-date, accurate student data, such as attendance, homework, teacher comments and grades, lists of class schedules, and lunch balance sheets. As a CMO grows to scale, it must manage an increasing amount of information each year. PowerSchool is a clearinghouse for managing this information. It stores data that teachers and administrators enter on a regular basis and synthesizes this information by creating standard and customized reports according to the organization's particular needs. These reports can provide summaries of student-level and school-wide data, helping a CMO track and improve organizational performance over time and facilitating the sharing of information and results with key parties, including teachers, students and their parents, the community, and funders.

This tool describes approaches and strategies used by three CMOs—Alliance Public Schools (Alliance), and Aspire Public Schools (Aspire), and Uncommon Schools, Inc. (Uncommon)—as they implemented PowerSchool, adapted the program to match the specific needs of their organizations, and created the necessary capacity within their organizations to maintain accurate, useful data. Implementing and managing PowerSchool requires a significant investment of resources by an organization, including both time and money. The experiences of the CMOs in this tool can inform other school management organizations that are planning to adopt PowerSchool or those that seek to improve their use of PowerSchool.²

KEY STRATEGIES

The following are five key strategies for PowerSchool implementation, staffing, training, and ongoing use. These strategies were highlighted by Uncommon, Aspire and Alliance and encompass a range of considerations, including the technical, operational, and even cultural aspects of PowerSchool adoption.

1. Implement sooner rather than later, and implement more rather than less

It almost goes without saying: the earlier in its development a CMO can implement PowerSchool, the easier and more successful the process is. As Lindsay Kruse, Uncommon's Director of Operations, points out, early adoption allows a CMO to "establish discipline around data right away," building a culture in which the collection and analysis of student data is routine. Moreover, delaying the implementation of PowerSchool may drive individual schools within the CMO to develop their own data solutions, leading to conflicting systems, myriad processes, and data migration challenges that can hamper the successful adoption of PowerSchool down the road. In addition to starting early at the CMO level, PowerSchool should be rolled out soon after each school site opens—if not before. In fact, installing PowerSchool in advance of opening a new school is critical to having a fully operational system at the start of that school's first year.

¹ PowerSchool Web site, www.powerschool.com

² While PowerSchool offers a wide variety of applications, schools often implement PowerSchool with specific metrics in mind. All three CMOs use PowerSchool and PowerGrade. For those programs that these CMOs did not implement—such as PowerLunch, PowerSchool Teacher or PowerSchool Parents—each organization chose one or more supplementary programs that they felt better summarized the data and/or performed the analysis they desired.

Moreover, when a CMO's management team makes the decision to use PowerSchool, they should plan to adopt the technology fully from the beginning, rather than implementing the product gradually over a long period of time. While this key strategy may sound counterintuitive, if a CMO only adopts the PowerSchool features best suited to meet its current needs, it will have to add additional PowerSchool capabilities as the organization grows and its student information system needs change, which is a much more difficult and expensive approach. For example, if a CMO begins to use PowerSchool when it is serving elementary students only, it should consider its growth plan: if the CMO will eventually operate middle and high schools, it should consider implementing the platforms that host middle and high school data upfront in anticipation of future growth. By including data such as **class rank, GPA and graduation requirements**, these applications are already functional and integrated as a CMO grows and expands into secondary grades. CMOs can also follow Alliance's example of initiating an online Individual Learning Plan integrated with PowerSchool.

2. Incorporate management of the data system into organizational structure and staff responsibilities

Allocating the appropriate amount and type of staff resources to PowerSchool is vital. First, it is clear that the implementation of PowerSchool requires significant staff capacity, and a CMO should prepare for who on staff it will assign this work, and what capabilities that person or team needs. This capacity includes not only strong "process thinkers" who can envision how the system should be designed and managed so that it can be used successfully for end users, but also those with expertise in database management that will allow them to implement this vision. Given the complexity of implementation, Alliance found it helpful to outline this process ahead of time, developing a "PowerSchool Implementation Timeline." As per this plan, Alliance's management team and other staff members participated early on in the selection of product features to adopt and in the kickoff of the implementation process. See Exhibit 1 for more information on Alliance's implementation timeline.

Second, managing and maintaining the program, particularly in a growing organization, is an ongoing process: PowerSchool introduces a host of new, time-consuming technical support needs and resource-intensive data collection processes. For all three organizations, staffing PowerSchool to meet these needs involved splitting the responsibilities across multiple positions. The organizations used a variety of models to provide both technical and operational support for the technology. These structures are summarized in the table below.

Three organizational approaches to managing PowerSchool

	Uncommon	Alliance	Aspire
Central Office	<i>Director of Operations and the Chief Technical Officer</i>	<i>Director of Knowledge Management, working closely with Director of Operations. PowerSchool Administrator with advanced technical capacity and knowledge of PowerSchool design Also assisted by Director of Information Technology</i>	<i>Student Information System Manager, supervised by Director of Information Technology</i>
School Level	<i>School-Level Director of Operation is main liaison, working with School Office Managers</i>	<i>Assistant Principal serves as point person, assisted by School Office Managers at sites</i>	<i>School Office Managers at each school site are main liaisons, supervised by Principals</i>

As all three organizational structures show, it is important to delineate between school site and home office responsibilities. For example, Alliance makes a distinction between “front-end” and “back-end” data. Office Managers at the school sites are responsible for importing the majority of front-end data for school and student demographics, attendance and schedules. This process is supervised and augmented by each school’s Assistant Principal. Student outcomes data, including assessment test scores, is considered “back-end” data, and is carefully verified and entered by the home office. Similarly, Uncommon has mapped out the types of information staff at different places in the organization are able to view and modify. See Exhibits 2 and 4 for more information.

Assigning distinct responsibilities to different staff also effectively spreads PowerSchool workload and expertise across the levels of an organization. This way, if an issue arises, there are multiple stakeholders who can work together to address and help fix the problem. In addition, building expertise throughout the organization helps a CMO approach its use of PowerSchool more strategically: instead of merely reacting to challenges in the technology as they arise, a CMO can develop a more proactive orientation and ask, “What are the things that we want PowerSchool to do for us?”

Finally, beyond determining who is assigned to which tasks, the organizations profiled here all stressed the importance of integrating PowerSchool into the overall culture of the CMO. Given the time and effort that implementing and managing PowerSchool requires, a culture that embraces data is critical to ensuring that staff recognize the value of putting forth the nontrivial effort needed to maintain the quality of the system. One way to build such a data-centric culture is to make PowerSchool useful to stakeholders throughout the organization, so that both school site and home office staff are invested in having the most coherent and accurate information system. For instance, Uncommon is using PowerSchool information as part of its performance dashboard system, which is reviewed regularly by staff at all levels of the organization.

EXHIBIT 1

Implementing PowerSchool efficiently and effectively
Alliance's implementation timeline

Alliance designed a timeline to outline the work that needed to take place in the months prior to launching PowerSchool at its school sites. The timeline details when applications are implemented at school sites, as well as the staff required for each of these steps. In addition, it includes the training schedules for principals, teachers, and school site support staff.

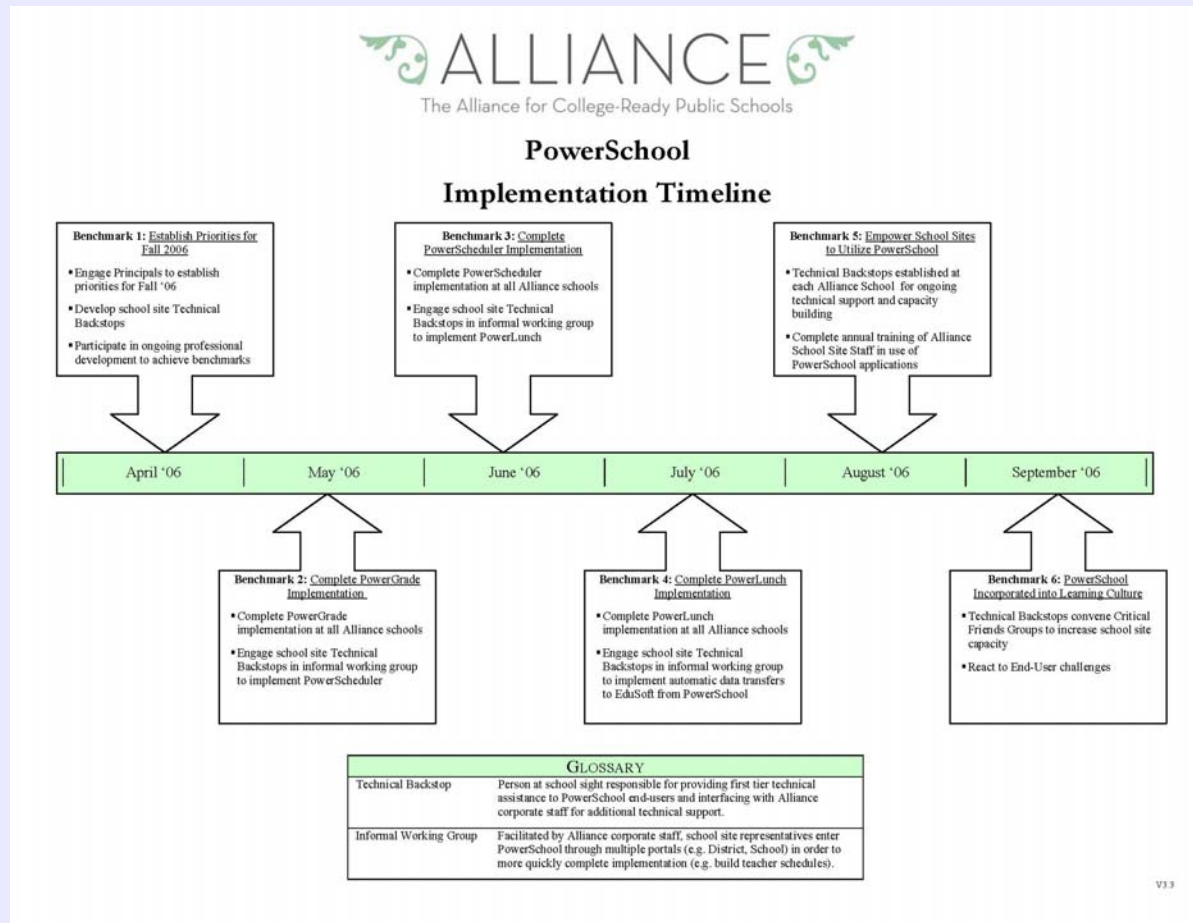
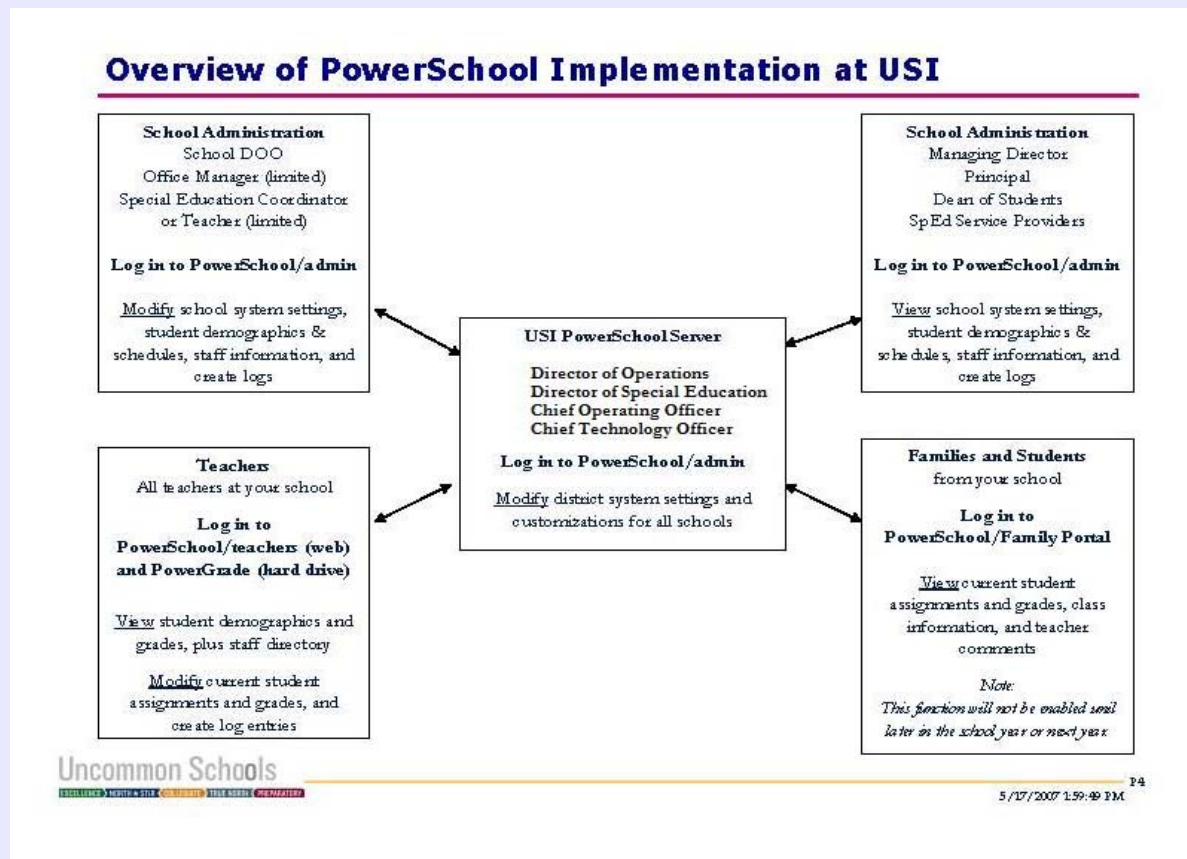


EXHIBIT 2

Creating a user strategy at your organization

Uncommon’s user strategy across the home office and school sites

This overview of implementation from Uncommon summarizes how staff is organized to use PowerSchool at the school site and at the home office, including details on each group’s roles when it comes to viewing and modifying data.



3. Provide robust initial training and ongoing technical support

It is critical to establish PowerSchool knowledge as early as possible, and the CMOs profiled for this tool have used a variety of approaches to train and support their staff on using the technology. All three CMOs believe that it is financially and operationally more efficient for an individual school to take advantage of the training that PowerSchool provides during the same time frame as that school site is adopting the software, rather than seeking out training later on. The advantage of timing the training this way is that school staff are able to ask questions that arise as they start to use the program. Aspire emphasized the importance of building this training into the initial contract with PowerSchool, particularly because hiring PowerSchool staff to do school site trainings post-adoption can cost up to \$1,500 per day.

The organizations we studied have different perspectives on the value of attending PowerSchool University (PSU), an intensive summer program that provides an in-depth orientation to PowerSchool at the cost of \$2,000 per person. Uncommon and Aspire have found that it is more useful to put these funds toward one-

on-one training from PowerSchool staff or private consultants. One benefit of this approach is that onsite specialists are dedicated solely to the school or CMO for several days, allowing them to focus on the particular needs of the organization, an emphasis that is difficult to provide in the summer program where staff from multiple school systems are being trained. In addition, these onsite trainers are more likely to be senior implementation specialists, and thus more qualified than summer contract workers. Alliance, on the other hand, encourages each of its schools to send 1-2 representatives to PSU, and covers the cost out of each school's budget. Several members of the central office have attended as well, including the Director of Operations and the Director of Knowledge Management. Alliance believes handling training this way has the added benefit of motivating a large group of staff at once.


Finally, all three of the CMOs we interviewed emphasized the importance of building ongoing PowerSchools support into the organization's structure and budget. As systems grow to scale and add more staff, more training will need to take place, and the responsibility for providing that training should be assigned to the school manager at the school site and to a knowledge management position or team at the home office. Please see Exhibit 3 for an example of this type of ongoing support.

EXHIBIT 3

Providing ongoing training and support

Uncommon's Quick Reference Cards for teachers

Beyond providing formal training for teachers at school sites, Uncommon also provides all teachers with reference cards with clear instructions and tips for entering data and creating reports in PowerSchool.



USI PowerGrade Quick Reference Card – Secondary Teachers

Create at least one category and complete Final Grades Setup before creating assignments.

Creating Categories

1. Choose Windows > Categories.
2. Enter a category name and abbreviation.
3. Enter a description and default points possible (optional).
4. Click Accept.
5. To create additional categories, click New Category and repeat steps 1-4.
6. Close the Categories dialog.

Completing Final Grades Setup

1. Choose Windows > Final Grades Setup.
2. Choose the grading term from the "Which final Grade" pop-up menu.
3. On the factor table, choose the weighting method from the Factor Type pop-up menu.
4. Except with Total Points, select the category, single assignment, or final grade and click OK.
5. Edit the factor weight in the Weight column.
6. To add more factors, click the plus sign and repeat steps 3-5.
7. Click Accept.

Note: Factor weights must add up to 100%

Adding an Assignment

1. Click the Assignments icon.
2. Choose the category and enter a name, abbreviation, points possible, date due, and description.
3. Optional: web link and standard alignment.
4. Click Accept.
5. Close the Assignments dialog.

Entering a Note or Comment

1. Double-click the number next to the student's name on the spreadsheet.
2. Enter a comment for the student or choose from the Comment Type pop-up menu and double-click the applicable comment(s) in the Comment Code list.
3. Click OK.

Taking Attendance

1. Click the Attendance icon.
2. Select the cells next to the names of the students who are absent or tardy. To select multiple cells, press and hold CTRL (PC) while clicking.
3. Choose the appropriate attendance code from the pop-up menu at the bottom of the Attendance dialog. You can also right-click (PC) a cell and choose the appropriate attendance code from the shortcut menu.
4. Click Save.

Viewing Student Information

1. Click Class Roster
2. Click the PowerSchool Fields Tab
3. Click the name of the student whose information you want to view
4. Note that there are 10 fields, scroll down!

Creating Seating Charts

1. Click Seating
2. Designate numbers of rows and columns sufficient to seat your students
3. If an error pops up that there is not enough room, decrease the size of each row/column to a smaller decimal
4. To maximize size, try 7x5 with seat size of 0.45
5. Click Assign Students to Seats tab at top
6. You can automatically assign students, or click and drag them as you wish
7. Click the "Edit seat layout" tab
8. Click and drag seats to appear in whatever layout you prefer
9. Seat assignment sheets can be printed

Submitting a Student Log Entry

1. Choose Utilities > Submit Student Log Entry.
2. Choose the student's name from the pop-up menu.
3. Enter a subject and the pertinent log entry information.
4. Click OK: the log will be emailed to the Dean of Students.

PowerGrade Power Tips

Power Tip	Do This
Logging in if you forgot your password	Notify the Director of Operations. He/she will give you a one-time use "key."
Changing a Score Back to "Unrecorded"	Replace the score with the letter U and press Return (Mac) or Enter (PC).
Getting a student's contact information updated	Email the office manager with "PowerSchool:" in the subject line
Manually Overriding a Student's Final Grade	Double-click the student's final grade, select the "Manually override this grade" checkbox, enter the letter grade and percent, and click OK. Double-click the student's name on the spreadsheet.
Viewing the Single Student Summary	Click the Preferences icon, then click the Display tab. Select the Hide Citizenship checkbox and click OK. Click the final grade column heading, deselect the "Show on spreadsheet" checkbox, and click Accept.
Hiding the Citizenship Column	Click the Preferences icon, then click the Notification tab. Select the Birthday Notification checkbox and click OK.
Hiding a Final Grade Column	
Showing Student Birthday Alerts	

Accessing PowerGrade Help

To access the PowerGrade Help, click the Help icon.

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4. Emphasize clean data

As with any data collection process, it is crucial to monitor the accuracy of the data collected and entered. To maximize the likelihood of collecting “clean data,” organizations can institute a variety of precautionary measures. For example, the Director of Knowledge Management at Alliance suggests creating protected data templates that schools can use to generate accurate spreadsheets. These templates can include drop-down boxes that provide specific entry options for each data point. This method enables end users to avoid typing data in directly, thereby reducing potential errors. Similarly, Uncommon Schools has developed an intricate system of security protocols that grants “modifying” rights only to those staff members who will be entering data and limits others to “viewing” privileges. See Exhibit 4 for more details about this protocol.

Clean data is also a byproduct of organized data entry schedules. Alliance stresses the importance of helping users to understand how long a given data entry task will take. This helps users budget the appropriate amount of time and avoid getting started too late, which can lead to users making mistakes under pressure when entering data in the templates.

5. Customize design and use

The ability to customize PowerSchool makes it possible to tailor the software program to a CMO’s particular needs, and the CMOs profiled in this tool have found it is worthwhile to expend the time and effort necessary for setting up customized programs. For example, Uncommon has created detailed standards-based report cards for its elementary school students. Organized around each grade’s performance standards, these report cards note absences, students’ abilities to live up to Uncommon’s creed and values, homework completion, interim reading progress, and a range of test scores, as well as extensive teacher comments. These report cards provide an incredible amount of information in a sophisticated format and the feedback from parents, teachers and state authorities has been overwhelmingly positive.

Alliance and Aspire have also taken advantage of the ability to generate specific reports in PowerSchool. Aspire has created special forms and fields for California’s immunization records and other student information needs. At Alliance, PowerSchool is used to generate reports that fulfill district, state, federal, and foundation reporting requirements. For example, attendance reporting is made easier through pre-loaded attendance reports and PowerSchool’s ability to run different attendance time frames (weekly, monthly and periodic attendance reports). Alliance also takes advantage of the technology’s communication tools for teachers and parents across the CMO’s network of schools. Whereas schools once used teacher mailboxes in the office, they now have the ability to post daily bulletins and send automatic emails to staff members through PowerSchool. At each school, the School Office Manager coordinates and posts the daily bulletin. Parents also receive updates on their child’s performance by accessing PowerSchool at home.

EXHIBIT 4

Limiting the access to data entry templates in order to maximize accuracy

Uncommon's security protocols

Uncommon carefully charts access and permissions in its PowerSchool Security Protocol spreadsheet. The roles to which each home office staff member and school site employee are assigned correspond directly to whether that position needs 1) to have the power to view, 2) to have the power to modify or 3) to have no power to view or modify each data point. Assigning these roles simplifies the data entry process by clarifying staff responsibilities and also by preventing incorrect data entry.

			Abilities in PowerSchool (power to view = v, power to modify = m, no viewing at all = X)										
			Accessible Log Types					Accessible Student Screens (as set from the Group Sec					
PowerSchool Level and Roles	Security Group Name	Default Access	SpEd Svc					All				Bell Schedule	
			Discipline	Provision	Homework	Conferences	Counseling	Activities	Addresses	Enrollments	Attendance	View	
"District"													
Director of Operations	USI DoO	v & m	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Chief Technology Officer	USI CTO	v & m	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Director of Technology (title)		v & m	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Director of Special Projects	USI Dir of Sp Proj	v & m	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Director of Special Education	USI Dir of SpEd	v & m	v	m	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Chief Executive Officer													
Chief Operating Officer													
Director of Development													
Grants Manager													
Director of Finance													
National Director of Recruitment	USI General	view only	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Director of Recruitment													
USI Office Manager													
Director of Human Resources													
Senior Accountant													
Director of Facilities													
School													
School Director of Operations	School DoO	v & m	m	v	v	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m
School Office Manager	Office Staff	v & m	v	X	v	v	v	m	m	m	m	m	m
Special Education Coordinator	SpEd Coordinator	v & m	v	m	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Dean of Students	Dean of Students	v	m	v	m	m	m	v	v	v	v	v	v
Principal	Principal	v	m	v	v	m	m	v	v	v	v	v	v
Managing Director	Managing Director	v	m	v	v	m	m	v	v	v	v	v	v
Social Worker	Social Worker	v	v	m	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Speech Therapist													
Hearing Education Services													
Occupational Therapist	SpEd Service Providers	v	v	m	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Physical Therapist													
Other Service Provider													
Teachers	Teachers	v	v	X	m	m	v	v	v	v	v	v	v
Librarian	Librarian	v	v	X	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v	v

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

While PowerSchool handily runs basic reports, all three organizations profiled here reported that the software's deeper data analysis capabilities are limited. As a result, all three have elected to import data from PowerSchool into Microsoft Excel or other programs for more sophisticated levels of analysis. While these programs facilitate of the kind of analysis that can better inform instruction or help meet particular reporting needs, they also pose a challenge: how to integrate the data that result from these deeper analyses back into PowerSchool.

- While there are many potential programs that CMOs can use to perform more detailed data analysis functions, these are some of the workarounds that the CMOs we interviewed have developed to compensate for this challenge in PowerSchool
- Uncommon exports data to Excel to track test scores by special education status, gender, ethnicity, as well as across time.
- Uncommon uses Datawise to create and score its interim assessments and then uses a model created by consulting firm Bain & Company to provide teacher and administrator reports.
- Alliance and Aspire both use Mealtime to manage the National School Lunch Program. The latter is used in place of PowerLunch, which organizations reported to be difficult to customize.
- Alliance uses DataDirector to manage their assessment systems and to link standardized testing results.
- Aspire uses Edusoft to manage their assessment systems. Edusoft is used to create tests and interim assessments that are linked to standards. Teachers can also use Edusoft to conduct question and standard analysis, by students, groups, or even across the CMO. Aspire currently uses PowerSchool to store scores from the California high school exit exam, the SAT, and Stanford English Language Proficiency (SELP) exams, and has linked PowerSchool to Edusoft for Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) and English Language Learner testing.

CONCLUSION

Implementing PowerSchool is an intensive process that requires advance and ongoing planning and staff resources, as well as the creation of new systems and structures. The CMOs we spoke to in order to create this tool all recommend adopting PowerSchool as early as possible in an organization's lifecycle, in order to ensure that the data system is well-integrated into the organization and that it is fully operational as school sites open and grow to scale. The PowerSchool implementation timeline must include a plan for how this process will be staffed. The organizations we interviewed also stressed the importance of involving staff from across the organization in the implementation and ongoing management of PowerSchool, which helps ensure both quality and buy-in. Investing in staff training, designing protocols, customizing PowerSchool to meet their own particular needs the outset in order to maximize the software program's usefulness and impact. Following these strategies will help an organization successfully implement PowerSchool or improve its use of the technology. See the Appendix for additional planning and management documents that Uncommon generously shared for inclusion in this tool.

APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Uncommon Schools, Inc. has generously shared their training materials to inform other organizations planning to implement PowerSchool.

- **1. PowerSchool Operations Manual**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-1.pdf>
This comprehensive 44-page manual was designed to assist Uncommon's school site staff in using PowerSchool and PowerGrade. It includes a rollout plan, processes in PowerSchool, and an implementation calendar. This document concludes with a very helpful list of additional resources.
- **2. PowerSchool Overview**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-2.pdf>
This two-page document presents a brief overview of the PowerSchool Student Information System. It describes the system's features, services, training, support, and hardware and network requirements.
- **3. Knowledge Manager Job Description**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-3.pdf>
This two-page document presents the job description for the Knowledge Manager position at Uncommon Schools. It summarizes the position, detailing essential duties and responsibilities, qualifications, compensation, and application procedures.
- **4. Training: Secondary Teacher Handbook**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-4.pdf>
This 19-page handbook presents a step-by-step learning guide for secondary school teachers to implement and use the PowerSchool, PowerGrade, and PowerSchool Teacher information systems programs.
- **5. Training: Primary Teacher Handbook**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-5.pdf>
This 10-page handbook presents a step-by-step learning guide for secondary school teachers to implement and use the PowerSchool, PowerGrade, and PowerSchool Teacher information systems programs.
- **6. Training: Attendance Reference Sheet**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-6.pdf>
This two-page document details each step and a timeline for taking, recording, and reporting student attendance.
- **7. Training: Special Education Coordinator Reference Card**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-7.pdf>
This one-page reference card was designed for Special Education Coordinators. It adapts PowerSchool reference materials into an user-friendly card that outlines how to access and search for students in special programs, discipline logs, Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and service provision sessions.
- **8. Training: Primary Teachers Reference Card**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-8.pdf>
This two-page reference card was designed for Uncommon's elementary school teachers. This document adapts some of the PowerSchool reference materials for the Uncommon context and adds additional helpful hints and commonly used procedures in PowerSchool (e.g. accessing teacher directory). This document is shorter and more concise than the version prepared for secondary teachers.

- **9. Training: Secondary Teachers Reference Card**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-9.pdf>
This two-page reference card was designed for Uncommon's secondary school teachers. This document adapts some of the PowerSchool reference materials for the Uncommon context and adds additional helpful hints and commonly used procedures in PowerSchool (e.g. accessing teacher directory).
- **10. Training: Dean of Students Reference Cards**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-10.pdf>
This two-page reference card was designed for Uncommon Dean of Students. It adapts PowerSchool reference materials into a user-friendly card that outlines how to access and search for student information and how to search, update, and make log entries.
- **11. Training: Office Manager Reference Card**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-11.pdf>
This two-page reference card was designed for Uncommon Directors of Operations and Office Managers. It adapts PowerSchool reference materials into a user-friendly card that outlines how to log into the system, search for students, enroll and discharge students, enroll staff, update the calendar, manage attendance system, and access log entries.
- **12. Training: Director of Operations Training Sessions**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-12.pdf>
This 15-page document outlines the three-day training for Director of Operations to learn how to use the PowerSchool information system.
- **13. Training: Managing Directors Training Meeting**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-13.pdf>
This 15-page document outlines a one-day meeting for Managing Directors to learn about PowerSchool and PowerGrade.
- **14. Training: Secondary Teachers Training Session**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-14.pdf>
This 17-page document details a training session in which secondary teachers learn about and how to use PowerSchool. Topics include how to open and navigate the system, create grades, access student information, take attendance, and get support.
- **15. Training: Primary Teachers Training Session**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-15.pdf>
This 17-page document details a training session in which secondary teachers learn about and how to use PowerSchool. Topics include how to open and navigate the system, take attendance, submit homework logs, submit family comments, access staff information, and get support.
- **16. Security Protocol**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PowerSchool-16.xls>
This Excel file details PowerSchool data-access permission by role.

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FACILITIES MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

Key Strategies From NewSchools' Portfolio Ventures

June 2008

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METHODOLOGY

This tool was prepared by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “promising practices” used by our portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared with others in the portfolio. To complete this tool, NewSchools conducted background research on Aspire Public Schools, Lighthouse Academies, and Mastery Charter Schools, and interviewed management teams at each of these organizations with the help of consultant Jim Ford. As a result, NewSchools compiled a variety of practices and approaches that nonprofit charter school management organizations (CMOs) have put in place to manage and maintain their school facilities.

About the Organizations

Aspire Public Schools (Aspire) is a nonprofit charter management organization (CMO) that establishes and operates public charter schools in California focused on providing low-income urban youth with a high-quality education that will prepare them for college. Founded in 1998 to “enrich students’ lives and to reshape the public school system,” Aspire opened its first two charter schools in 1999 in California’s Central Valley and currently operates 21 schools in six counties throughout California that together serve nearly 6,000 students in grades K-12. At scale, Aspire will operate over 60 schools serving more than 20,000 students.

The mission of Lighthouse Academies, Inc. (Lighthouse) is to “prepare students for college through a rigorous arts-infused program.” Founded in 2003, Lighthouse is a CMO that currently operates ten campuses in several states and cities, including Chicago, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Gary (Indiana), New York City, and Washington D.C. Together, these schools enroll more than 3,700 students in elementary grades; over time, Lighthouse will grow these schools into college preparatory schools serving grades pre-K-12.

The first high school run by Mastery Charter Schools (Mastery) was founded in 2001 with the mission to “prepare all students for success in higher education and the global economy.” A nonprofit charter management organization (CMO), Mastery seeks to create a network of exceptional schools in Philadelphia. Mastery currently operates four high-performing schools in Philadelphia. When it reaches scale, Mastery will operate seven schools serving nearly 4,000 students in grades 7-12.

About NewSchools Venture Fund

NewSchools Venture Fund is a national nonprofit venture philanthropy firm that seeks to transform public education – particularly for underserved students – by supporting education entrepreneurs and connecting their work to systems change. In order to maximize the impact of its ventures, NewSchools also connects the work of these entrepreneurs with one another and with the broader field through events and publications. By leveraging this collective knowledge, NewSchools’ ultimate goal is to empower these entrepreneurs to transform public education so that *all* children have the opportunity to attend a high-quality public school.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As you think about how the practices described here apply to your own organization, please consider these questions:

1. How does your growth strategy affect your organization's approach to facilities management and maintenance?
2. How does ongoing facilities management and maintenance affect your organization's facilities acquisition strategy?
3. What key facilities-related hires must a charter management organization (CMO) make? When should these take place?
4. What are the benefits and trade-offs that should be considered in determining whether the school site or home office "owns" responsibility for building management and maintenance?
5. How are facilities-focused staff members at the school site and in the home office trained and supported?
6. What role can technology play in the maintenance of your facilities?
7. How should ongoing facilities management and maintenance be integrated into your organizational planning?

INTRODUCTION

Charter school management organizations (CMOs) face significant challenges in effectively managing the growing number of facilities in which their schools operate. Increasingly, these nonprofit CMOs – especially those whose objectives include facilities ownership – address the day-to-day needs of maintaining and managing those facilities as part of a broader, organization-wide asset management strategy. Asset management is generally defined as the process of managing and guiding the acquisition, use, and disposal of real estate assets in order to maximize service delivery while also managing risks and costs over the lifespan of that asset. Facilities management and maintenance are integral to effective asset management: sound facilities management practices help a CMO preserve its facilities assets, ensure compliance with leases, and enhance the organization’s ability to secure the capital and financing terms it will need to acquire future sites.

While this tool touches on the acquisition of facilities, it focuses mostly on facilities management and maintenance, which is a critical aspect of CMO growth planning and rarely receives enough emphasis and or dedicated capacity. This tool will serve as a resource to CMOs that are looking to design, update, and improve their facilities management and maintenance strategies. The chart below summarizes the components of this complex work, which requires the coordination of many different activities and personnel.

Elements of Facilities Maintenance & Management		
	Description	Activities
Lease agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Understanding and staying in compliance with lease agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Effective negotiation of terms ▶ Understanding responsibilities of tenants and landlords
Janitorial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Maintaining clean facilities ▶ Immediate (e.g., spills) & regular 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Selecting a janitorial vendor ▶ Regular vendor relationship mgmt
Safety and security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Maintaining the safety and security of your students & staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Preparing comprehensive safety plans ▶ Assessing building security needs
Regular repairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Managing minor repairs ▶ Preparing for major unexpected projects (e.g. repair HVAC systems) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Developing and maintaining an effective work order system
Preventive Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Scheduling regular maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Properly assessing P.M. needs ▶ Implementation of plan
Cost saving approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Implementing energy/cost-efficient systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Assessing and evaluating opportunities ▶ Installing systems (e.g., lighting)
Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Compliance with gov’t requirements ▶ ADA, AHERA, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Detailed understanding of standards of multiple agencies for your geography (ies)
Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Risk management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Managing differing requirements for multiple school sites

This tool profiles the facilities management and maintenance practices at three CMOs: Aspire Public Schools (Aspire), Lighthouse Academies (Lighthouse), and Mastery Charter Schools (Mastery). Each of these CMOs is at a different stage of organizational evolution and therefore takes a distinct approach to overall asset management.

The following graphics summarize how the key elements of facilities management and maintenance are carried out at each of the three CMOs profiled here. (See Appendix I for more details on how these functions are performed at each CMO.)

Facilities Management and Maintenance Strategies of the CMOs in this Tool

Aspire Public Schools

Overview	Founded in: 1998
Number of schools: 21	Number of students: 6,000
Geography: LA, SF Bay, Central Valley	Grade levels: K-12

Facilities Management and Maintenance: Staffing

Description:	Building Owner: Principal
Principal of each school is responsible for managing and maintaining her or his building.	Home office roles: Director of Real Estate, Director of Property Management
	School site role: Facilities Manager who reports to Principal

Facilities Management and Maintenance: Planning and Execution

Lease agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ H.O. negotiates ▶ Principals consulted 	Preventive maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Moving toward School Dude to manage ▶ Minor tasks by Facility Mgr
Janitorial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Outsourced locally ▶ CMO-wide bulk supply purchasing 	Cost saving approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ PG&E energy audit ▶ Implement rec's (e.g. lighting system)
Safety and security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Collaborative safety plans developed ▶ Evening guards 	Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Through CCSA ▶ Coverages vary based on facility type
Regular repairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Work order process (SchoolDude) ▶ Most contracted out 	Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Uses SchoolDude for ADA and Certs of Occupancy

Lighthouse Academies

Overview	Founded in: 1998
Number of schools: 10	Number of students: 3,700
Geographies: Multi-state; 3 regions	Grade levels: PK-7

Facilities Management and Maintenance: Staffing

Description:	Building Owner: LFM in 2008
Lighthouse goal is to move to a wholly-outsourced affiliate organization: Lighthouse Facility Management, LLC	Home office roles: Director of Facilities (future shift to LFM)
	School site role: Regional Directors

Facilities Management and Maintenance: Planning and Execution

Lease agreements	▶ H.O. negotiated with clear facilities management roles	Preventive maintenance	▶ Reg. Dir. decided on a school-by-school basis
Janitorial	▶ Some landlord provided ▶ Others outsourced	Cost saving approaches	▶ Move to up front investment in upcoming facilities
Safety and security	▶ Collaborative safety plans developed ▶ Security school decided	Insurance	▶ Vary based on lease agreements ▶ Regularly shops around
Regular repairs	▶ Reg. Dir. decide school-by-school	Compliance	▶ Six month regular compliance inspections (AHERA)

Mastery Public Schools

Overview	Founded in: 2001
Number of schools: 4	Number of students: 1,400
Geography: Philadelphia	Grade levels: 7-12

Facilities Management and Maintenance: Staffing

Description:	Building Owner: Shared
Like Aspire, believes in school site authority; however, home office has a larger role. Ops manager also indirectly reports to home office.	Home office roles: Chief Operations & Finance Officer
	School site role: Operations Manager who reports to Principal

Facilities Management and Maintenance: Planning and Execution

Lease agreements	▶ H.O. standard lease with the district	Preventive maintenance	▶ Contracted out by home office
Janitorial	▶ Contracted out ▶ Evaluation tool used	Cost saving approaches	▶ Implementation of efficient systems
Safety and security	▶ Collaborative safety plans developed ▶ Deans for security	Insurance	▶ Group coverage provided by HO and allocated to schools
Regular repairs	▶ Contracted out ▶ Minimal due to recent renovations	Compliance	▶ Brought to compliance during recent renovations

KEY ACTIVITIES

While the CMOs profiled in this tool have distinct approaches to facilities management and maintenance, they share several common lessons learned and effective practices. These are described in detail below.

1. Accessing facilities

For growing CMOs – which often have limited time, money, and expertise – the first priority in facilities efforts is often to acquire facilities and get each new site ready for occupancy in time for the first day of school. These efforts may include negotiating leases, obtaining financing (in the case of real estate purchases or major renovations), and making capital improvements or overseeing new construction.

Each of the three CMOs profiled in this tool has accessed facilities in different ways. Most of Aspire’s schools are housed in leased facilities, with a small number in Aspire-owned or rent-free facilities provided under California’s Proposition 39 legislation. Only a few of the leased facilities involve regular commercial leases, including one facility leased from Pacific Charter School Development, a nonprofit real estate trust that finds and develops facilities for high-performing charter schools in the Los Angeles area. For the most part, Aspire rents its school facilities from Catholic Church dioceses and archdioceses. Similarly, Lighthouse accesses facilities in a variety of ways for its ten campuses: 1) by leasing space at minimal cost from an authorizing school district, as is the case for the two schools Lighthouse currently operates in the Bronx and in Chicago; 2) by entering into traditional commercial leases, which is the case for most of the schools Lighthouse operates; and 3) by purchasing a building.

Meanwhile, Mastery has entered into a unique partnership with the Philadelphia School Reform Commission and the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) by which low-performing middle schools are closed by the district, modernized by Mastery on behalf of the SDP, re-opened as small high schools managed by Mastery, and leased from the district at a negligible fee of \$1 per year (see Exhibit 1 for more information about this partnership). The benefits of this partnership for both sides are numerous. SDP retains ownership of the facilities and enables the opening of new, small high schools in modernized facilities, thus relieving some of the pressure on its overcrowded, run-down, and often dangerous large high schools. At the same time, the district is upgrading its inventory of school buildings with little or no upfront investment – and getting the renovations done faster and more cheaply than if SDP or the city of Philadelphia were managing the process. Mastery, in turn, is able to implement its growth plan and pursue its school reform goals by opening small high schools to serve the neediest of students in Philadelphia. And since Mastery leases each facility back from SDP at a low cost, the CMO can devote more of its revenues toward its educational mission, eliminating a factor that handicaps many charter schools: the diversion of significant financial resources from the education program to support facilities costs. Mastery was able to broker this deal with the district not only because of the enticing benefits for the district but also because the CMO was already operating one school in Philadelphia and had a track record of success there.

While CMOs should certainly be on the lookout for favorable partnerships and real estate purchase opportunities, in most cases emerging CMOs are likely to enter into lease agreements. As the CMOs profiled here will demonstrate, these leases can range from traditional commercial leases to nontraditional leases with various entities such as the Catholic Church, the local district, or a nonprofit facilities intermediary like Pacific Charter School Development or Civic Builders.¹

Given the range of lease options and the array of potential lease terms, a CMO that opens and operates schools in leased space should have expertise on staff (or at least on retainer) to help correctly interpret and negotiate lease terms that state fully and clearly the CMO’s facilities management and maintenance responsibilities under the lease. As a tenant, the CMO should understand exactly which responsibilities fall to the CMO and which fall to the landlord, so that the CMO can hire or contract out custodial and maintenance

¹ For more on nonprofit real estate intermediaries, see “Nonprofit Real Estate Trusts: Viable Solutions to the Charter School Facilities Challenge” at <http://www.newschools.org/about/publications/nonprofit-real-estate-trusts>

services accordingly. In addition, a CMO tenant should determine, negotiate, and plan for necessary improvements *before* executing a lease, particularly in cases where classroom reconfigurations or systems upgrades are or will become necessary. Depending on the length and terms of the lease, such improvements may be incorporated into the lease or financed and managed directly by the tenant CMO.

“For CMOs operating in leased space,” says Lighthouse Academies CEO Mike Ronan, “sound facilities management and maintenance practices begin with negotiating leases that clearly specify responsibilities owned by the landlord and [those owned] by the tenant.” (See the appendix for sample lease agreements.) Mastering the art of negotiating both favorable lease costs and clearly defined tenant responsibilities is critical for an emerging CMO early in its growth.

EXHIBIT 1

Establishing a unique asset management strategy

Mastery’s partnership with the School District of Philadelphia

Mastery’s approach to facilities development and management, which takes place primarily through its partnership with the School District of Philadelphia (SDP), is unique among CMOs. Here’s how it works:

- The SDP closes a large, low-performing, and often overcrowded middle school.
- The school site is designated as one that will house a new small high school.
- Mastery agrees to modernize the facility through its affiliated 501(c)3 nonprofit organization (see below for a summary of this process). Sources of financing for this work have included capital allocations from the SDP, tax-exempt bond financing, and conventional financing with entities such as The Reinvestment Fund and Wachovia Bank.
- The SDP agrees to reimburse development costs and award Mastery a charter to operate the new high school in the renovated building under a lease term of \$1 per year.

Mastery Facility Renovation Process

Develop a project scope, design and cost estimates



Submit a sources and uses summary to SDP



Negotiate total project cost and schedule, and Asset Purchase Agreement with SDP



Hire and contract with architects, engineers and construction managers



Negotiate or arrange for project financing

The Asset Purchase Agreement (APS) is key to the continued success and evolution of this model. The APS that Mastery enters into with SDP serves as a virtual guarantee from the district. An APS ensures that if the work is finished on schedule, meets project scope requirements, and is completed on or under budget, SDP agrees to purchase back the total cost of improvements. In effect, the APS serves as a reimbursement mechanism for the project costs. To date, SDP has a demonstrated track record for honoring the APS by reimbursing Mastery in a timely manner, allowing Mastery to access low-cost capital from a variety of lending institutions and other sources.

2. Hiring and training staff

Due to the wide variations in the amount and types of facilities managed by each CMO, not to mention each organization's distinct approach to school management and culture, the three CMOs profiled here all staff their facilities management and maintenance in different ways. For example, Aspire is committed to local school management autonomy, which therefore includes giving each school's principal responsibility for managing and maintaining his or her own building. Each school has a facilities manager who reports directly to the principal. The facilities manager is responsible for ensuring that buildings and floors are kept clean during the school day and for performing both routine and preventive maintenance under the supervision of the principal. In the home office, Aspire has a Director of Real Estate and a Director of Property Management, both of whom report to the Chief Financial Officer.

At Lighthouse, facilities management responsibilities are divided among five members of the senior leadership team: the CEO, Senior Vice President, Vice President for Midwest Operations, Northeast Regional Operations Director, and Northwest Regional Operations Director. All leases executed to date by Lighthouse have been negotiated by the CEO together with the Senior Vice President, who is also an experienced attorney. While Lighthouse contracts out all facilities management and maintenance responsibilities required under its leases, the three regional directors oversee the provision of other facilities services, such as routine maintenance, in collaboration with the school principals in their regions.

Finally, at Mastery, facilities development projects are planned, managed, financed, and executed by an affiliated 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. These operations are directed by the Mastery's Chief Operating and Finance Officer. Once buildings have been modernized and are up and running, responsibility for direct management and maintenance of facilities is turned over to the school. Each school employs an operations manager that reports to both the school principal and to Mastery's Chief Operations and Financial Officer. It should be noted that as a relatively small CMO that is still growing, Mastery is continuing to develop infrastructure and back-office capacity, and the Chief Operations and Financial Officer and the school-based operations managers have broad responsibilities in addition to facilities management and maintenance.

These CMOs identified a set of common qualities for facilities staff. At the home office of a growing CMO, a facilities hire is likely to focus on all aspects of facilities operations, including real estate acquisition and development as well as management of the school building(s). This person should be a generalist rather than a specialist and should be able to understand how facilities factor into the organization's overall strategy. In many ways, this job is equivalent to conducting an orchestra: in any given week, interaction occurs with city planners, zoning departments, politicians, lawyers, contractors, facilities management and maintenance contractors, service providers, and local school personnel. As a result, while an ideal candidate for the top facilities position in an emerging CMO would have prior experience with commercial real estate, residential housing or community facilities – so that he or she would be comfortable with and accustomed to taking the types of calculated risks that facilities acquisitions require – the most critical attributes tend to be patience, flexibility, and a commitment to providing support and guidance to principals and operations staff at the school site(s).

For example, in Aspire's home office, the Director of Property Management is a key resource for all school principals. He is in regular touch with all site-based facilities managers, helping to train them and direct their activities. He visits each school once or twice a month, on average. In addition to supporting the start-up of new campuses, which includes overseeing major capital improvement projects, the Director of Property Management plays a critical role at existing Aspire schools by working closely with principals and facilities managers at those sites to help them more efficiently manage their physical plant. This includes developing and implementing procedures for building cleaning, evaluating service contracts for cleaning supplies and maintenance service, and implementing preventive maintenance practices that can reduce replacement and major repairs costs. In addition, the Director of Property Management oversees safety and fire and security procedures. Finally, he assists principals in selecting their facilities managers.

At the school site, a facilities operations staff member should have many of the same characteristics as his or her counterpart in the home office: trustworthy, patient, adaptable, and willing to manage many responsibilities at once (especially because facilities management is likely one of many responsibilities included as part of this broader operations role). See the appendix for sample job descriptions and evaluation rubrics for these home office and school-level positions.

Once the right people are hired at both the home office and school site, they should be well-trained, so that they are set up to carry out their roles successfully. Aspire approached this task by training its Director of Property Management, who in turn trained school-site facilities operations staff. For suggested resources for training facilities operations personnel, see Exhibit 2 below.

EXHIBIT 2

Developing facilities operations expertise and training personnel

Facilities management and maintenance resources

- ***Educational Facilities: Planning, Modernization, and Management***

This book, by Basil Castaldi, is a comprehensive resource that lays out in precise detail “every possible component of schools facilities management,” according to CEO Mike Ronan of Lighthouse, whose organization has used this resource extensively in developing its own facilities management program. The lengthy publication describes the features of a sound facilities management program. It also contains guidance on negotiating leases and examples of leases, terms, options, and language. In addition, the book provides sample schedules for cleaning, systems inspections, and servicing, and offers guidance on bulk purchasing and procurement, developing vendor lists, and processes for selecting vendors.

- **The Council of Education Facilities Planners International (CEFPI)**

CMOs should consider joining CEFPI, a professional association that is a widely recognized resource for planning educational facilities. CEFPI provides its members with training and professional development on best practices in creative school planning and facilities management, and offers tools such as a Public School Facilities Manager Checklist. CEFPI also publishes the Educational Facility Planner (EFP) Journal, a quarterly, practitioner-based journal that contains articles on topics such as school facility planning, design, construction, and maintenance.

3. Developing and executing a facilities management and maintenance plan

A CMO should develop a coordinated, organization-wide approach to facilities management and maintenance. If a CMO knows how much and how quickly it wants to grow, it can align its plans to create facilities management capacity and systems with its annual and multi-year targets for new school sites. This allows the CMO to plan, in advance, when to bring on additional home office capacity or when it will make sense to implement other system-wide solutions.

As the largest CMO profiled in this tool, Aspire provides the best example of this kind of planning and execution. Between 2001 and 2005, the organization rapidly opened new schools, growing its portfolio of campuses from three to ten. However, its approach to and capacity for facilities management and maintenance did not change substantially during this time. Eventually, the organization encountered maintenance needs that could have been avoided with preventive maintenance. They also failed to carry out some tenant responsibilities mandated by leases and implemented inconsistent strategies across campuses. Further, individual school principals were responsible for managing their buildings but often had little knowledge of or experience with real estate, with managing leases, or with meeting lease requirements. In some instances, the amount of time principals were devoting to facilities management needs was distracting them from their primary educational responsibilities.

Recognizing this issue, Aspire decided to implement SchoolDude, a Web-based facilities management technology system used by many school districts and private school networks throughout the country. Aspire believes that SchoolDude is an effective and cost-efficient tool for helping the organization to systematize its facilities management across its growing network of schools, which will ultimately total more than 60 schools. Aspire officials estimate that when SchoolDude is fully implemented across the Aspire network, the shift from deferred maintenance to systematic preventive maintenance will result in cost savings in the hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. (See Exhibit 3 and the appendix for more information about SchoolDude.)

Any well-conceived CMO facilities management solution must have buy-in at the school level, and the CMO must provide the resources and training necessary to support the implementation of the system at the school sites. Aspire highlights the importance of involving the individuals who will have to implement a facilities management system in crafting the solution, both so that they will be more likely to be supportive of the new system and also to incorporate into the new system the lessons they have learned about facilities management and maintenance from their experiences on the ground. In addition, the home office must have sufficient capacity for managing the implementation of a sophisticated facilities management system, especially if it is technology-reliant. For example, Aspire's home office provided SchoolDude training to school office managers, who then coordinate with facilities managers – some of whom have language barriers that make it difficult to access the platform directly – to use the system effectively. In addition, Aspire's Director of Property Management works regularly with school-site leadership and staff to ensure that the system is running smoothly.

EXHIBIT 3

Adjusting practices to manage a growing system

Aspire's use of SchoolDude, a Web-based facilities management system

SchoolDude is a Web-based system that can manage regular custodial and janitorial services, as well as both routine and preventive maintenance. In addition, it can manage scheduling and contracting for specialized repairs and maintenance. SchoolDude allows Aspire's home office staff and its school principals to schedule regular facilities maintenance and repairs, monitor the performance of on-site facilities managers, track the status of work orders, and otherwise keep tabs on building conditions throughout the Aspire network. The system is designed to be user-friendly, and as a Web-based platform, the program can be accessed from anywhere. School Dude offers twelve components, about half of which are currently being used by Aspire:

Component	Implementation Status
Work order management	In use
Preventative maintenance	In use
Help desk management	In use
Capital planning	In use
Facilities Scheduling	In use
Wireless Work Orders	In use
Wireless IT incidents	*
IT asset management	Not in use
Trip management	Not in use
Peer networking	Not in use
Inventory control	Not yet in use
Utility management	Not yet in use

* The Aspire Home Office IT Department, which has four-full time employees, features an Intranet Help Desk to which all IT-related issues go and from which they are addressed. Wireless IT incidents are covered by this department.

Once this Web-based system is fully integrated across the CMO's network of schools, Aspire expects to realize significant savings by shifting from deferred maintenance to systematic preventive maintenance, thereby sharply reducing the need for major replacements and repairs.

4. Evaluating practices regularly

In addition to developing a system-wide plan for facilities management and maintenance and fully implementing it, a CMO should regularly assess its facilities operations staff, tools, and practices. This will allow the organization to gauge what is working well and to identify areas for improvement. For example, Mastery conducts regularly scheduled operations walk-throughs that include an evaluation of facilities management and maintenance. There are two sets of inspections. First, the school site operations manager does a weekly walk-through and inspection of his or her facility. Using a School Operations Walk-Through checklist developed by the home office (see Appendix II), the operations manager assigns numerical rankings to nine broad operations categories and numerous sub-categories, and provides written comments on each. In addition, Mastery's Chief Operations and Financial Officer does a monthly walk-through and grades each site. Then, he and each school-based operations manager meet to review and compare their findings, paying particular attention to broad categories or specific items where their evaluations differ substantially. This walk-through process effectively ensures that problems are addressed in a regular and timely fashion and has been useful across Mastery's campuses.

EMERGING INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

1. Outsourcing operations

Lighthouse has designed a unique approach to developing a system-wide facilities solution. In its first several years, Lighthouse's approach to facilities management and maintenance was to place a premium on negotiating the most favorable lease terms possible and then to contract out nearly all of the necessary management and maintenance services. However, as it continued to expand, these tasks grew and intensified – from acquisition to management and maintenance – and Lighthouse recognized the need for a more comprehensive, system-wide facilities management strategy. It recently created Lighthouse Facilities Management (LFM), a subsidiary nonprofit organization that will eventually manage this work. While still in early stages, Lighthouse anticipates that LFM will: 1) secure permanent facilities; 2) preserve the life and value of facilities by keeping systems in good working order; and 3) develop and implement core facility maintenance systems – such as heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC), life safety, cleaning, waste removal, communications, and technology – in order to avoid or reduce the cost of capital improvements arising from deferred maintenance, which can drain vital financial resources away from the organization's educational mission.

LFM was designed as a subsidiary organization rather than simply as an in-house division of Lighthouse because eventually, LFM plans to serve as a fee-for-service facilities management provider for other CMOs and individual charter schools with which LHA forms direct partnerships or other relationships (through funders or investors) in common geographic locations. See the appendix for more information about LFM.

2. Energy conservation

In recent years, considerations about protecting the environment prompted Aspire to begin focusing on utilities costs and to investigate potential savings through energy-efficient measures. Two years ago, Aspire asked Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) to conduct energy audits of selected school sites, which were generally the older buildings in Aspire's inventory. Once it realized the scale at which Aspire was operating and growing in California, PG&E agreed to do an energy audit of all Aspire schools, and proposed ways to cut costs.

One recommendation was to replace lights in all older school buildings with energy-efficient fluorescent lighting fixtures. Aspire estimates this change alone has cut energy costs by 8-10% annually across its schools. Aspire's experience underscores how scale impacts this work: the substantial one-time cost of replacing light bulbs would not have been affordable just a few years ago when Aspire much smaller, nor could it have garnered PG&E's attention. Aspire now realizes it can leverage its scale with external service providers (including facilities financing institutions) in other ways.

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

This research has revealed three major areas for development for CMO facilities operations. These needs become increasingly acute as CMOs grow larger and weave together more complex systems of schools and facilities. As they grow, CMOs need to move away from a reactive approach to facilities – in which buildings are acquired just in time for school openings and maintenance is delayed until a problem appears – and toward a proactive approach in which they follow a carefully planned and coordinated asset management strategy.

1. Align facilities plans with organization's strategic objectives and plans for growth

Ideally, a CMO should design facilities plans that are aligned with its growth plans and strategic objectives, so that facilities management can keep up with the organization's overall development. However, CMOs at all stages have found it difficult to allocate sufficient capacity toward managing existing facilities and planning for new buildings. This challenge arises because other priorities at these scaling organizations with limited resources tend to take precedence. All three CMOs profiled in this tool indicated that they do not have sufficient home office staff in place to manage and maintain their existing inventory of school facilities, let alone to accommodate planning for the next wave of growth. Going forward, it will be important for CMOs to figure out how to address this lack of capacity.

2. Build restricted reserves

Another critical component of an effective asset management strategy is planning for and building restricted financial reserves. Such reserves allow a CMO to respond to facilities-related operating contingencies – such as the immediate need to replace a roof – and ensure that the necessary equity is in place to purchase real estate, particularly when a unique opportunity emerges suddenly. In general, it is challenging for both new and growing CMOs to set aside funds for this purpose to direct as much of their limited funds to their programs as possible. One way to create adequate reserves is to budget on a cash-flow basis and set aside amounts equal to facilities depreciation expenses (which are a non-cash item for accounting purposes) on an annual basis until a specified cash reserve target has been reached.

3. Invest in preventive maintenance

Preventive maintenance is critical because as facilities age, school enrollment peaks, and school entitlement revenues flat-line, it is inevitable that costly replacement or emergency repair needs will arise. Failure to pay sufficient attention to preventive maintenance will do nothing to slow the deterioration of facilities and will surely have a negative impact on the bottom line for both the school and CMO.

CONCLUSION

Effectively managing an increasing number of school facilities is a critical yet challenging task for both new and growing charter school management organizations (CMOs). In this tool, we have drawn from the experiences of three such CMOs to identify key strategies for facilities management and maintenance. As your organization develops its strategy to facilities management, we hope that you find these strategies and areas for development instructive.

Please see this tool's appendix for helpful supporting information and resources.

APPENDICES: SUPPORTING MATERIALS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Supporting Materials

- **Appendix I: Analysis and comparison of facilities management and maintenance components at each CMO**
Aspire, Lighthouse, and Mastery have taken different approaches to developing facilities management and maintenance systems, leading to both similarities and distinctions among their current and planned approaches. This chart describes and compares the ways that each of the three CMOs currently addresses each component of facilities management and maintenance.
- **Appendix II: Mastery Charter Schools: School Operations Walkthrough Checklist**
This document, from Mastery Charter Schools, offers a comprehensive checklist for school operations. Areas addressed include customer service, custodial service, facilities, finances, information technology, human resources, purchasing and security.
- **Appendix III: Aspire Public Schools: Job Description: Manager of Facilities Plant Operations (now called the Director of Property Management)**
This job description, from Aspire Public Schools, summarizes the duties of the Manager of Facilities Plant Operations. This position is responsible for the facilities needs at all of Aspire's school sites. Duties include supervising ongoing maintenance, vendor contracts, and capital improvements.
- **Appendix IV: Aspire Public Schools: Building Manager Evaluation**
This one-page evaluation form, from Aspire Public Schools, is designed to help supervisors evaluate the job performance of their building managers. The performance review is separated into six categories: cleaning, maintenance, building management, professionalism, team performance, and Aspire values.

Additional Resources (Available Separately)

The following materials are templates and documents used by the CMOs profiled in this tool to manage and maintain facilities. They are available separately on the NewSchools Community. These resources are divided into three general areas: (I) Sample Purchase-of-Assets Agreements, Lease and Purchase Agreements, (II) Sample Operations Documents, and (III) Sample Job Descriptions and Evaluation Forms.

I. Sample Purchase-of-Assets Agreements, Lease, and Purchase Agreements

- **1. Lighthouse Academies: Sample Lease**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Facilities-1.pdf>
This 33-page lease details the facilities agreement between Civic Builders, Inc., the landlord, and Bronx Lighthouse Charter School, the tenant.
- **2. Aspire Public Schools: Sample Lease**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Facilities-2.doc>
This four-page lease template details the facilities agreement between Aspire Public Schools, the landlord, and one of its school sites, and includes a one-page school site usage calendar.

- **3. Mastery Charter Schools: Purchase-of-Assets Agreement**

<http://www.newschools.org/files/Facilities-3.doc>

This purchase-of-assets agreement negotiates the conversion of Shoemaker Middle School into a new charter school, Shoemaker Mastery Charter School. The conversion involved the purchase of assets by the School District of Philadelphia from the High Tech High Philadelphia Foundation. The agreement details improvements made to the site, and the purchase of these improvements.

II. Sample Operations Documents

- **4. Lighthouse Academies: Sample Daily Cleaning Schedule**

<http://www.newschools.org/files/Facilities-4.pdf>

This document, from Lighthouse Academies, details the daily cleaning schedule and responsibilities for the Cleveland Lighthouse Community School.

- **5. Lighthouse Academies: Model School Safety & Emergency Response Plan**

<http://www.newschools.org/files/Facilities-5.doc>

This 35-page document, from Lighthouse Academies, offers a template that can be adapted by specific Lighthouse charter school sites. It includes risk reduction, security protocols, emergency procedures, fire drill processes, and evacuation procedures.

- **6. Preventive Maintenance Schedule**

<http://www.newschools.org/files/Facilities-6.xls>

This chart, from a private school campus, lists different types of preventive maintenance (e.g. heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) and plumbing), specific tasks for each type (e.g. check fan belt), and includes a monthly checklist for maintenance staff. The chart also estimates the annual maintenance hours needed for each task.

- **7. Aspire Public Schools: Break-in and Vandalism Policy**

<http://www.newschools.org/files/Facilities-7.doc>

This one-page document, from Aspire Public Schools, outlines school policies and guidelines for preventing break-ins and for reporting both break-ins and vandalism.

- **8. Aspire Public Schools: School Disaster Plan**

<http://www.newschools.org/files/Facilities-8.doc>

This 118-page document, from Aspire Public Schools, offers guidelines for Aspire's in establishing a School Disaster Plan for each school site. The document outlines the Standard Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS). After brief guidelines for adapting these systems and procedures at each school site, the majority of the document contains a sample disaster plan in use at one school site.

- **9. Aspire Public Schools: Site Facilities Annual Inspection Checklist**

<http://www.newschools.org/files/Facilities-9.doc>

This eight-page checklist, from Aspire Public Schools, is designed to ensure that Aspire facilities are maintained in good repair. The checklist assists the CMO in the following tasks: (1) identifying necessary repairs, (2) completing a safety checklist, (3) planning and budgeting for necessary maintenance, and (4) providing the information necessary to prepare a Deferred Maintenance Plan.

- **10. Aspire Public Schools: SchoolDude FAQ**

<http://www.newschools.org/files/Facilities-10.doc>

This document, from Aspire Public Schools, summarizes SchoolDude, a Web-based school facilities maintenance program created for schools. SchoolDude gives the CMO's staff the power to produce, track, approve, and assign costs to work orders. SchoolDude also allows staff to create preventive and recurring maintenance schedules, plan upcoming capital projects, and track utilities and maintenance spending.

III. Sample Job Descriptions and Evaluation Forms

- **11. Mastery Charter Schools: Job Description – Director of Operations**

<http://www.newschools.org/files/Facilities-11.doc>

This job description, from Mastery Charter Schools, summarizes the duties of the Director of Operations for the CMO. This position oversees all issues of home office operations, which for Mastery Charter Schools includes facilities, regulatory compliance, staff recruitment, and human resources.

- **12. Mastery Charter Schools: Job Description – Assistant Principal for School Operations**

<http://www.newschools.org/files/Facilities-12.doc>

This job description, from Mastery Charter Schools, summarizes the duties of an Assistant Principal for School Operations at one school site. This position is responsible for issues of school site operations, including compliance, facilities, human resources, and schedules.

- **13. Aspire Public Schools: Job Description – Director of Real Estate**

<http://www.newschools.org/files/Facilities-13.doc>

This job description, from Aspire Public Schools, summarizes the duties of the Director of Real Estate. This position is responsible for developing and executing long-term strategy for the acquisition, development, and management of Aspire's facilities in support of its growth and financial goals.

Appendix I: Analysis and comparison of facilities management and maintenance components at each CMO

Aspire, Lighthouse, and Mastery have taken different approaches to developing facilities management and maintenance systems, leading to both similarities and distinctions among their current and planned approaches. The chart that follows describes and compares the ways that each of the three CMOs' currently addresses each component of facilities management and maintenance.

Component	Aspire	Lighthouse	Mastery
Lease (or Use) Agreements	<p>The Home Office is responsible for generating and negotiating all lease terms and documents. School principals are involved and consulted in lease negotiations only to the extent necessary as determined by the Home Office. One example of principal involvement is negotiating leases for Catholic-Church owned properties.</p> <p>Aspire uses SchoolDude to manage timely lease (and insurance) payments and to monitor lease, charter contract, or statutory code, compliance, or operating requirements.</p>	<p>All leases executed to-date by Lighthouse have been personally negotiated by the CEO and the Senior Vice President, who is an experienced attorney, along with additional counsel when needed.² Lease terms, and responsibilities imbedded therein, determine what facilities management capacity the school will need and guide contracting out of property managers and other facilities services providers.</p>	<p>Mastery's unique partnership with PSD has led to a standard lease agreement between the CMO and the school district for all schools Mastery modernizes and then occupies. A separate lease is executed for each school property; terms and conditions vary property-by-property, but not significantly. The terms of the boilerplate lease agreement – spelling out district as landlord and Mastery as tenant responsibilities – inform design and development of each facility Mastery modernizes and subsequently operates.</p>
Cleaning and Janitorial	<p>Aspire breaks down cleaning into two categories: (1) immediate – such things as routine spills that are taken care of by the on-site facilities manager; (2) regular daily cleaning, which are contracted out to local providers on a school-by-school basis or on a multiple school basis in locales where Aspire operates clusters of schools.</p> <p>Aspire buys cleaning and other facilities supplies in bulk from a single contracted vendor.</p>	<p>Except for landlord provided cleaning services, Lighthouse contracts out custodial services and regular cleaning to external providers (the foremost of which, in due time, will be Lighthouse's wholly-owned subsidiary, Lighthouse Facilities Management.)</p> <p>As this study was being completed, Lighthouse was in the process of interviewing vendors for bulk purchase of cleaning and other facilities supplies.</p>	<p>Mastery contracts out cleaning and janitorial services, though local schools have the discretion to hire in-house staff to clean buildings.</p>
Regularly Scheduled Maintenance	<p>Regular maintenance is (now or soon will be) scheduled using SchoolDude. Principals (with the assistance of facilities managers) develop regular</p>	<p>Lighthouse contracts out all routine maintenance – everything from inspecting fire extinguishers, checking the levels of oil tanks, fixing shades or</p>	<p>Mastery schedules and contracts out all regular and preventive maintenance on a school-by-school basis.</p>

² For example, leases placing responsibility on the tenant for tenant improvements, or otherwise requiring securing financing by the tenant, warrant the involvement of experienced legal counsel in reviewing, if not negotiating, lease terms and financing terms in tandem. Separate legal expertise may be needed to protect the multiple interests of a CMO for all aspects of acquiring, assuming responsibility for, and managing a facility. Lighthouse was the first CMO to tap into a charter school facilities financing bond bank established in Indianapolis. Bond counsel was retained to help make this very complicated transaction come to fruition.

	<p>maintenance schedules – which vary building by building. Aspire is also moving toward scheduling all preventive maintenance using the SchoolDude Preventive Maintenance Program. Depending on the facility and the skills of a facility manager, regular or minor preventive maintenance tasks are either performed by the on-site facilities manager, by a facilities manager sent from another Aspire school, or contracted out.</p>	<p>pencil sharpeners – and preventive maintenance, though both are scheduled and negotiated on a school-by-school basis.</p>	
<p>Compliance Requirements – (For Example, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Asbestos Hazard Emergency Abatement Requirements (AHERA) Inspection)</p>	<p>Aspire uses SchoolDude to manage ADA and other compliance requirements. Aspire was unfamiliar with AHERA but will look into its application to California and the facilities it is operating. AHERA is a potential issue for all CMOs.</p> <p>Aspire uses SchoolDude to ensure Certificates of Occupancy are kept current.</p>	<p>Lighthouse performs regular six month inspections in accordance with an AHERA plan developed for each school. The inspections, performed by independent contractors, and focus on encapsulation in boiler rooms, tiles anchored to floors, etc. If abatement needs arise, the contractor develops a work plan which is performed by specialists or contracted maintenance providers, depending on the severity of the situation.</p>	<p>Mastery has no AHERA plan. Mastery has undoubtedly addressed and abated, if necessary, any potential asbestos hazards during the course of modernizing facilities.</p>
<p>Emergency Repairs / Irregular maintenance</p>	<p>All emergency and irregular repairs are contracted out. Emergency needs are entered into SchoolDude and processed routinely. Each principal has emergency numbers for vendors that can perform emergency/immediate repair needs. After ordering such repairs, a principal posts scope of work details on SchoolDude.</p>	<p>All emergency and irregular repairs are contracted out.</p>	<p>All emergency and irregular repairs are contracted out.</p>
<p>Systems: Heating, Cooling, Electrical, IT</p>	<p>Aspire uses SchoolDude to monitor maintenance of systems. Facilities managers change blower filters, for example, but only one facility manager in Aspire’s network has the skills to repair compressors. The “more complicated” systems require quarterly service and maintenance, which along with other necessary repairs, are bid and contracted out. IT needs, however, are handled by Aspire’s Home Office</p>	<p>Lighthouse schedules and contracts out systems needs on a school-by-school basis.</p>	<p>Mastery schedules and contracts out systems needs, if and when such arise.</p>

	IT Department.		
Utilities and Effective/Sustainable/Cost-Saving Practices	Aspire strives to put into place utilities-related sustainable, cost saving practices. For example, Aspire requested and received from PG&E a comprehensive energy audit, which included recommended savings options – one of which, replacing energy inefficient light bulbs, was implemented and has cut energy costs annually by 8% to 10%.	Lighthouse, a it builds the infrastructure and capacity of LFM, and takes down and develops new school properties through school and site-specific LLCs, is cognizant of the importance of investing up front in the most cost effective energy systems in order to hold down or reduce utilities costs over the longer-term, and avoid or delay expensive retrofits.	Mastery’s approach to modernizing facilities has emphasized installing energy efficient systems as a design principle to lower (or control) utilities costs.
Insurance	Aspire procures facilities and comprehensive liability insurance through the California Charter School Association (CCSA), which has negotiated group rates for its member schools and CMOs at reduced costs. Coverage per school differs depending on the type of facility, lease or ownership status, and charter contract requirements. For example, the three facilities Aspire owns require fire and catastrophic coverage, a key element of which is earthquake protection. For leased facilities, insurance requirements and responsibilities are spelled out by the terms of the lease. CCSA also performs operations and physical plant audits for its member schools, including Aspire. According to Aspire officials, these audits identify corrective actions that can or should be taken in physical plant maintenance and plant operations that can avoid lawsuits or cut operating costs.	Lighthouse’s insurance needs and requirements are different site-by-site and depend on the charter contract (and statutory requirements) and specific lease terms. Lighthouse engages in ongoing reviews of insurance packages, coverage, and pricing by a wide variety of vendors, because few companies issue full and comprehensive policies for all the insurance needs of charter schools. Lighthouse bids out and shops around insurance coverage.	Mastery has a group coverage insurance policy for its schools, though each school is allocated and directly pays the costs for its specific coverage. The CMO Chief Operations and Financial Officer determines all insurance requirements and execute contracts for coverage. All insurance related responsibilities reside at the CMO level. Mastery feels that insurance is too esoteric to involve school leaders, though Mastery otherwise strives to place ongoing facilities management decision making responsibility at the school principal level.
Safety & Security	Aspire has a school safety plan in place for every school it operates, in accordance with requirements for all schools receiving federal funds under	Lighthouse, like Aspire, has a school safety plan in place for every school it operates. Responsibility for reviewing school safety plans is shared between	Mastery also has a school safety plan in place for every school it operates. , Responsibility for reviewing school safety plans is shared between the

	<p>the Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Act.³</p> <p>Responsibility for reviewing school safety plans is shared between the leadership at the school site and the Home Office. The Home Office is ultimately responsible for ensuring that an up-to-date plan is maintained for each site. Aspire manages these reviews using SchoolDude.</p> <p>Aspire does not have security guards inside schools during the instructional day, but campuses are guarded at night. During the day, campuses are closed; all doors and means of egress other than emergency exits are locked from the inside; campuses are configured so that visitors or persons coming on school grounds must report to the main office. Screening and use of metal detectors vary school-by-school.</p>	<p>the leadership at the school site and the CMO Leadership Team levels, respectively, though the Corporate Office.</p> <p>Lighthouse-operated schools have many of the same security related characteristics as Aspire schools. Some Lighthouse schools have security guards – provided by the landlord school district, by the commercial landlord, or contracted out directly by Lighthouse and individual schools. Security related needs, including personnel, are determined largely at the local school level, though off budget needs must be approved at the Regional level.</p>	<p>leadership at the school site and the CMO.</p> <p>Mastery has an unequivocal philosophy about security: guards inside a school would be an acknowledgement of failure. Mastery schools also do not screen entering students or use metal detectors. Mastery’s design provides for hiring a dean for every 100 students. Deans are responsible for building individuals relationships with each student assigned to them. They deal directly with discipline issues and work with social workers to provide appropriate supports and counseling to students. The deans meet and greet students at the school’s entrance each morning. Mastery believes that the best way to keep schools secure is to model responsible behavior and work with the surrounding community to make schools safe harbors.</p>
Service agreements	<p>Responsibility for managing and scheduling ongoing service agreements (i.e., maintenance and servicing HVAC systems and equipment, maintaining septic pumps, regularly replacing air filters etc.) rests with the Home Office, though is coordinated through Regional Directors by Aspire. Service agreements for Aspire schools can be accessed by school principals and facilities managers via SchoolDude.</p>	<p>Responsibility for managing and scheduling ongoing service agreements rests with the Management Leadership Team, and is coordinated with school principals. Copies of all service agreements are on file at the Corporate Office and at each school site.</p>	<p>Responsibility for managing and scheduling ongoing service agreements is carried out at the CMO level. Copies of all service agreements are on file at the CMO Office and at each school site.</p>

³ These plans address fire drills, lockdowns, and emergency situations warranting evacuation or school shutdown. The plans include contact information for the parents or guardians of each student and the name(s) of the adult(s) responsible for picking up a student in the event of an emergency. As a derivative of the plan, each school maintains emergency survival kits that would allow schools to keep all students in the building and take care of them for a limited number of days, if need be.

Appendix II: Mastery Charter Schools: School Operations Walkthrough Checklist

This document, from Mastery Charter Schools, offers a comprehensive checklist for school operations. Areas addressed include: customer service, custodial, facilities, finances, information technology, human resources, purchasing and security.



School Operations Walkthrough Checklist

Name of School _____

Review Date _____

Reviewer _____

Category/Item	5 = Exceeds Standard 4 = Above Standard 3 = Standard 2 = Below Standard 1 = Inadequate	Comment
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Customer Service

Staff are attentive to student, parent, guest and other staff requests/needs

Custodial/Cleaning

Outside of building is clean and free of litter

Hallways are clean, free of litter, graffiti and dirt

Category/Item	5 = Exceeds Standard 4 = Above Standard 3 = Standard 2 = Below Standard 1 = Inadequate	Comment
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Bathrooms are clean, fully stocked and in working order
Classrooms are clean and orderly

Facilities

All building furniture and equipment is in working order and well maintained
Bathrooms are in working order

All lighting is in working order

All building systems are functional and working at appropriate efficiency
Ceilings, walls, floors and doors are functional and display no signs of damage

Finance

Budget is tracked and staff is aware of financial position of school
Budget is within spending parameters and over spending is documented
Payroll files are accurate, neatly maintained and all

Category/Item	5 = Exceeds Standard 4 = Above Standard 3 = Standard 2 = Below Standard 1 = Inadequate	Comment
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backup is documented
 Petty cash is tracked and back up for expenditures is accurately filed
 Tokens are safely locked and all cash and inventory is accounted for
 Student activities accounts are tracked and backup exists for deposits/spending

Information Technology

(shared responsibility w/ IT Department)

Computers, servers, peripherals and phones are all functional and in use
 Uptime of network and phone system is at 95% or better
 Technology is being used for appropriate purposes

Software systems are up to date, appropriately licensed and fully functional
 Technology is well cared for and neatly used in offices and classrooms

Category/Item	5 = Exceeds Standard 4 = Above Standard 3 = Standard 2 = Below Standard 1 = Inadequate	Comment
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Human Resources (shared responsibility w/ CMO)

Documentation for staff is current and shared with CMO
 HR policies and procedures are accurately followed at all times
 Teacher certifications are up to date and on file with school
 All classrooms are staffed by appropriate personnel at all times

Purchasing

Purchasing procedures are accurately followed and documented
 POs are in order, up to date and filed with invoice and receiving receipt
 Purchasing is done cost effectively and with a focus on student achievement

Security

Security system is functional and in use

Category/Item	5 = Exceeds Standard 4 = Above Standard 3 = Standard 2 = Below Standard 1 = Inadequate	Comment
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Building appears
secure in all
aspects

All students and
staff are wearing
Mastery
identification

Overall Impression

Overall impression
of walkthrough

Total Score

Appendix III: Aspire Public Schools: Job Description: Manager of Facilities Plant Operations (now called the Director of Property Management)

This job description, from Aspire Public Schools, summarizes the duties of the Manager of Facilities Plant Operations. This position is responsible for the facilities needs at all of Aspire's school sites. Duties include supervising ongoing maintenance, vendor contracts, and capital improvements.

Title: MANAGER, FACILITIES PLANT OPERATIONS

Department: Operations

Reporting to: Director of Real Estate

GENERAL SUMMARY:

Develop and implement a long term strategy for the efficient operation of a safe learning environment for all of Aspire's school to support the organizations growth and financial goals. The DFO, is to be responsive to the facilities needs of each Principal. The DFO is also responsible for the oversight of facilities operation and physical condition within the approved budget of each facility. The DFO must assure the highest possible standards of building maintenance, cleanliness and safety. Uphold the mission and values established by Aspire Public Schools.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Develop and implement plans and procedures covering building cleaning operations.
2. Evaluate service contracts for cleaning supplies and maintenance service.
3. Assist principals in evaluating the selection of the onsite facilities managers.
4. Develop and implement plans and procedures for preventive maintenance of facilities' systems.
5. Develop programs for corrective action and reduction of any waste or unnecessary costs.
6. Develop building safety and fire procedures and training programs.
7. Establish and maintain building security procedures with input from individual school principals
8. Oversee major capital improvements: Coordinate planning with architect, obtain competitive bids, obtain required permits, coordinate and supervise for satisfactory job completion, obtain certificates of liability insurance lien waivers and obtain certificates of occupancy.

9. Develop and implement plans and procedures for the operation and maintenance of playgrounds, playground equipment and surface parking areas.

10. Oversee the School Dude Facilities Maintenance Program.

11. Train Facilities Managers, Principals, Teachers and Office Managers on SchoolDude.

12. Maintain files relating to:

- a. SchoolDude
- b. Vendors for each facility
- c. Trade Contractors for each facility.
- d. Monthly Status Reports
- e. Preventive Maintenance Schedules
- f. Facility Site Plans
- g. Facility Floor Plans
- h. Facility Building Plans
- i. Service Requests
- j. Purchase Orders

13. Implement other directives as may be given by the Director of Real Estate.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Degree from four-year college or university (or related experience).
- Minimum of 3-5 years of Facilities or Property Management experience.
- Computer literacy.
- Proficient in Microsoft Office.

Appendix IV: Aspire Public Schools: Building Manager Evaluation

This one-page evaluation form, from Aspire Public Schools, is designed to help supervisors evaluate the job performance of their building managers. The performance review is separated into six categories: cleaning, maintenance, building management, professionalism, team performance, and Aspire values.

Bldg Manager: _____ Evaluator: _____ Date: _____

Aspire Public Schools Building Manager Evaluation

Criteria	Score (1-4)				Comments & Suggestions
1. Cleaning					
• Cleans interior rooms efficiently and completely					
• Sets up and cleans up multi-purpose room efficiently and completely before and after meals					
• Maintains litter-free and orderly grounds and exterior					
• Respond quickly and appropriately to emergency cleanups during the day					
2. Maintenance					
• Completes routine maintenance proactively and as requested in a timely manner					
• Proactively identifies and addresses safety and security hazards and major repair needs					
3. Building Management					
• Works in a well-coordinated way with night cleaning service and other vendors					
• Office and storage areas are well maintained and orderly					
• Works with staff to ensure building is secure					
• Orders appropriate building supplies in a timely manner					
4. Professionalism					
• Interacts in professional way with students, teachers, parents and visitors					
• Makes good decisions					
• Demonstrates initiative and follow-through					
• Manages time effectively					
• Has good attendance record					
5. Team performance					
• Works effectively with other Aspire team members					
• Is willing to take on new and challenging responsibilities					
6. Aspire Values					
• Collective responsibility: Holds self accountable for own actions, decisions and results					
• Quality: committed to excellence and continually improves in a disciplined way					
• Customer service: serves internal and external customers					
• Purposefulness: focused on Aspire's goals & priorities					

