



PRACTICES FROM THE PORTFOLIO, VOLUME 1

By FSG Social Impact Advisors
& NewSchools Venture Fund

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INTRODUCTION

NewSchools Venture Fund is pleased to share this first installment in our new *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.

For this volume of *Practices from the Portfolio*, we asked FSG Social Impact Advisors to help us capture, synthesize and share this powerful knowledge residing within the NewSchools portfolio. We identified some of the most effective practices in use by the organizations in our portfolio, many of whom are working to create new systems of public charter schools. With FSG's help, we documented the details of how these practices were developed and implemented, and collected tools and templates used by these organizations along the way. The result is a set of case studies that we believe will inform practitioners who are looking to improve practice within their own organizations across three areas: human capital, organizational growth, and educational curriculum and quality.

Entrepreneurial education organizations consistently find that one of their biggest challenges is to recruit, train, and support the teachers and leaders they need to achieve at high levels. In **Section 1, “Human Capital: Recruiting, Training and Supporting Teachers and Leaders,”** we examine practices that are designed to meet this need, including both internally developed solutions and examples of high-leverage partnerships with external providers. This section includes the following case studies:

1. ***Achievement First: The Design and Implementation of a Highly Effective Teacher Recruitment System.*** Charter management organizations (CMOs) and schools are constantly working to find and recruit the best and the brightest teachers within a relatively limited talent pool. Achievement First developed a systematic approach to hire and retain great teachers resulting in a high number of quality applicants, a high acceptance rate for offers, and a high retention rate.
2. ***New Schools for New Orleans: Partnership with New Leaders for New Schools and The New Teacher Project.*** Recruiting excellent teachers and principals to urban schools is one of the biggest hurdles impeding CMOs from growing to scale. New Schools for New Orleans contracted with The New Teacher Project and New Leaders for New Schools to recruit and train effective teachers and principals. This case explores how CMOs or groups of charter schools in a region can partner with intermediaries to meet human capital needs.
3. ***High Tech High: Implementation of a Teacher Credentialing Program.*** In response to concerns that traditional university-based programs do not produce enough high-quality teachers prepared to teach in innovative schools, High Tech High developed its own state-approved teacher credentialing program.
4. ***DC Prep: Implementation of the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP).*** Many charter schools and CMOs do not have the expertise, time, or resources to develop an in-house professional development program from scratch. DC Prep implemented The Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), a third-party program that provides teachers with ongoing professional growth, evaluation, a career path in teaching, and performance-based compensation.

5. ***Green Dot Public Schools: Working in a Union Environment.*** Recognizing the key role a union could play in facilitating open dialogue around important issues and increasing teacher satisfaction, a group of teachers at Green Dot, along with Green Dot’s founder, formed their own teachers union as an affiliate of the California Teachers Association.

Managing growth while maintaining quality requires organizations to execute successfully a range of centrally-run practices. In **Section 2, “Home Office: Strategies for Managing Scaling Organizations,”** we examine these varied practices – including external relations, new school openings, and governance – and identify the resources needed to support these practices. This section includes the following case studies:

6. ***Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools: Board Engagement in Fundraising.*** Generating enough funding to sustain growth and manage day-to-day operations is a universal challenge for CMOs. Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools has developed a highly successful board-driven approach to fundraising.
7. ***Partnerships to Uplift Communities: Community Outreach.*** While most CMOs and charter schools recognize the importance of strong community ties, they don’t always know how best to go about the process of building them. Partnerships to Uplift Communities invests heavily in community outreach and has built a wide range of community partnerships to support the start-up and operations of its schools.
8. ***Aspire Public Schools: An Approach to Opening New Schools.*** For CMOs, opening new schools is a complex and challenging endeavor requiring an intense amount of work and the ability to manage a vast array of tasks over a relatively short period of time. Aspire has developed a detailed, systematic approach to opening new schools, which reduces the complexity and challenging nature of the new site development process.
9. ***Lighthouse Academies: Annual School Opening Survey.*** The opening days of school can be a chaotic, stressful time for school staff. Lighthouse developed and implemented an annual survey to continuously refine the process of school openings, and to ensure that the school year begins smoothly.
10. ***Aspire Public Schools: Board Management.*** A highly qualified board that is managed and engaged appropriately can be a significant contributor to organizational success. Aspire puts considerable effort into developing and managing its board, and has created structures and systems to ensure that the work of the board is informed, relevant, and impactful.

At the heart of the work of the organizations in NewSchools’ portfolio is providing every child with a high-quality education. In **Section 3, “Education Program: Curriculum and Quality,”** we examine several practices that organizations are using to advance the performance of schools, including curricular choices such as character education programs, partnerships with colleges, and mechanisms to review and ensure quality. This section includes the following case studies:

11. ***Mastery Charter Schools: The Design and Implementation of an Effective Social and Emotional Learning Program.*** Schools that would like to make social and emotional learning (SEL) a priority likely will need guidance to develop an effective program. Mastery created and implemented an SEL program that is integrated into its school curriculum and culture and is designed to develop the interpersonal skills students need to thrive in today’s global economy.

12. ***Perspectives Charter School: Character Education.*** Character education can be critical for success in today's world, but culling through the hundreds of available approaches to determine the best program is daunting. Perspectives developed its own character education curriculum, *A Disciplined Life™*, which has become a fundamental component of its schools.
13. ***Partnerships to Uplift Communities: College Partnerships.*** By increasing exposure and access to college from an early age, Early College High Schools are increasing the number of underserved youth who graduate from high school and go on to pursue post-secondary education. Partnerships to Uplift Communities partnered with local colleges to promote college readiness and enable students to take college-level courses for credit while still in high school.
14. ***New Schools for New Orleans: School Review Process.*** The Knowledge is Power Program and the New York Center for Charter School Excellence have implemented a school review process to assess school performance on instruction, operations and governance and to develop improvement plans. New Schools for New Orleans recently implemented a school review process based on these models.

When taken as a whole, these case studies exhibit the depth of knowledge and experience embedded in the NewSchools portfolio and highlight the value of sharing effective practices across these organizations as they work to transform public education for underserved students. We would also 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 case studies.

We are confident that this compilation will be a powerful resource for your organization, and we look forward to sharing the next installment of *Practices from the Portfolio* later this year.

HUMAN CAPITAL: RECRUITING, TRAINING AND SUPPORTING TEACHERS AND LEADERS

Entrepreneurial education organizations consistently find that one of their biggest challenges is to recruit, train, and support the teachers and leaders they need to achieve at high levels. In this section, we examine practices that are designed to meet this need, including both internally developed solutions and examples of high-leverage partnerships with external providers. This section includes the following case studies:

1. Achievement First: The Design and Implementation of a Highly Effective Teacher Recruitment System
2. New Schools for New Orleans: Partnership with New Leaders for New Schools and The New Teacher Project
3. High Tech High: Implementation of a Teacher Credentialing Program
4. DC Prep: Implementation of the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP)
5. Green Dot Public Schools: Working in a Union Environment

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ACHIEVEMENT FIRST

The Design and Implementation of a Highly Effective Teacher Recruitment System

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

This case study was prepared by FSG Social Impact Advisors. FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides guidance to foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and other public sector entities on issues of strategy, evaluation, and operations. FSG was commissioned by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “promising practices” of portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared across the NewSchools portfolio. To complete this case study, FSG conducted background research on Achievement First and interviewed Carla Seeger, Achievement First’s Director of Staff Recruitment, as well as several Achievement First teachers and principals. Beth Rabbitt of NewSchools Venture Fund provided additional context on Achievement First.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. What does teacher recruitment look like at your organization, and what are the areas for improvement?
2. Do you have measures in place to gauge the success of your recruiting strategies, such as the rate of return among previous years’ hires and the acceptance rate of offers extended to new teachers?
3. What are the primary messages you want to send to potential teacher candidates about your organization, and are these messages being delivered effectively?
4. How do you determine whether specific recruiting practices should be housed centrally or at the school sites?
5. What would you need to do to improve your own recruitment practices, and do you have, or could you put in place, the capacity to make these changes?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

An extensive body of research shows that teacher quality is one of the most important factors related to increasing student achievement. Teachers who are committed, engaged, and skillful in their approach to instruction have a powerful, long-term impact on students' lives. Educational leaders recognize the critical importance of teacher quality, yet they struggle with the question of how to find and recruit the best and the brightest within a relatively limited talent pool. From an organizational standpoint, tapping into this talent requires a significant upfront investment of human and financial resources. This case study focuses on one particular organization, Achievement First, that has invested heavily in its recruitment process and focused intensively on putting in place systems and processes that yield the highest quality teachers. Achievement First is a charter management organization (CMO) that runs high-quality schools in New York and Connecticut. Its mission is "to deliver on the promise of equal educational opportunity for all of America's children. We believe that all children, regardless of race or economic status, can succeed if they have access to a great education." In 2006-07, Achievement First served 1,704 students in 10 schools. Its experience has relevance to many other CMOs for which teacher recruitment is an ongoing challenge.

If we only took the simple step of assuring that poor and minority children had highly qualified teachers, about half of the achievement gap would disappear.

- Kati Haycock, President,
The Education Trust

Unique, Replicable Approach

One of the things I really admire about Achievement First's recruitment process is their ability to be transparent. They would say 'after you leave, we will talk about you and your positives and negatives and if you are a good fit. We will contact you in three days and let you know what the next step is.' They contacted me in two days and let me know what the next step was. This made me feel I could trust the organization.

- Recent Principal Hire

Achievement First has identified teacher recruitment as an organizational priority which drives decision-making around staffing and allocation of resources. As a result, the organization is highly systematic and proactive in its approach to teacher recruitment. This case study will provide an overview of Achievement First's recruitment system, as well as specific forms and checklists that other CMOs can use as the basis to design similar processes aligned with their own unique school model and recruiting

goals (see *Toolkit for Recruitment Strategy Planning Checklist*).

Key Success Factors

Achievement First has put in place a number of structures that underlie its effectiveness. These include:

- **Dedicated Staff.** Four full-time staff dedicated exclusively to teacher recruitment.
- **Centralization.** Achievement First's central office manages and coordinates recruiting activities for the network.

- ***Good Internal Communication Systems.*** Recruitment staff focuses on regular and systematic communication between the central office and school sites.
- ***Casting a Wide Net for Candidates.*** Staff employs a broad range of traditional and innovative outreach strategies.
- ***Investment in and Responsiveness to Candidates.*** Recruitment staff is committed to ensuring that candidates feel respected and treated as professionals. This commitment is integral to the way business is conducted at every stage of the recruitment process, from responding to calls and emails within 24 hours, to being clear about next steps, to providing in-depth feedback on sample lessons to prospective hires.
- ***Rigorous Evaluation and Selection Process.*** Achievement First uses a thorough process to assess a candidate's fit with the organization. Interview questions are designed to draw out a candidate's values, personality, style, and pedagogical approach in addition to testing their instructional skills and classroom experience.

RECRUITMENT, APPLICATION, AND SELECTION PROCESS

Communication System

- Regular phone communication between principals and the recruitment team
- Weekly half-hour phone calls with principals during the heavy recruitment season to discuss candidates in the pipeline
- A weekly email to principals with a list of "hot prospects" and notes about each candidate
- Site visits to the schools to assess recruitment needs

If I have a question, Carla will email or send me a text message within minutes. She is always immediate in her response.

- Achievement First Principal

Recruitment Team Roles and Responsibilities

Achievement First's recruitment team oversees all aspects of teacher recruiting, including conducting outreach to potential candidates, processing and reviewing applications, communicating with school principals about hiring needs and candidate prospects, and shepherding candidates through the application process. One key component of the process is the ongoing communication flow between the central office and school sites (see sidebar).

The recruitment staff is very conscious of respecting principals' time, only sending strong candidates to principals and actively pointing candidates toward schools where they will be a good fit. One principal interviewed said she has hired 100 percent of the candidates referred by the recruitment team.

Outreach Strategies

Recruitment staff invests a lot of time and energy raising awareness about Achievement First and generating interest in teaching positions. They employ a broad range of outreach tactics, from cultivating individual networks to implementing print and online advertising campaigns. They intentionally cast a wide net with the belief that a wider pool of applicants will ultimately result in the hiring of higher quality teachers. Primary outreach strategies include:

- Information sessions at colleges and graduate schools
- Partnership with Teach For America
- Advertisements through organizations such as the Peace Corps and Breakthrough Collaborative
- Newspaper and online advertising
- Cocktail parties and dinners with prospective candidates
- Staff networking with financial rewards for staff who recommend successful hires

Teach For America Partnership

Achievement First invests heavily in its partnership with Teach For America (TFA), which it describes as its most effective recruiting source. Achievement First hires TFA corps members for their two-year commitment and also hires alumni of the program. Recruitment staff travels to as many TFA regions as possible and presents free professional development sessions to corps members who will soon complete their two-year commitment. Additionally, Achievement First recently began partnering with Teach For America around its School Leadership Initiative, which involves providing TFA alumni with leadership training and multiple pathways to take on central office or school-based leadership positions.

Targeted Messaging

The recruitment staff is mindful of the specific audience they are targeting, and tailor their messaging to that particular audience. For example, when conducting an information session at a school of education in Connecticut, they frame the presentation around the achievement gap in that state to make the discussion more real and compelling.

They really understand what it means to inspire someone. Achievement First was by far the most motivating of all the schools I considered. One of the reasons I chose them was that their process just swept me up. I had turned down other offers because I did not want to move, but I was willing to relocate for Achievement First.

- Recent Hire

Recruiting Yield: In 2006, five percent of applicants were hired.

- 2000 candidates submitted resumes and applications
- About 500 applicants got a phone interview
- About 250 of those who got a phone interview were invited for a school visit
- Ultimately, 103 applicants were hired as teachers

Application and Selection Process

The central office staff manages the upfront end of the application and selection process, bringing principals in once strong candidates have been identified. They take an unusually “high touch” approach to working with candidates, which includes a policy of responding to applications within 10 business days and making themselves available to applicants at every stage of the process to answer questions and help them thoroughly understand Achievement First’s culture and approach to teaching. One recruit commented that Achievement First’s personal touch was paramount in her decision to accept its offer.

One person takes you through the whole process, which is different from other schools. You start to feel like you have a relationship with someone. By the end of the month-long process, I really trusted Carla. She had done everything she had promised to do, and I was getting to know her. This really helped me decide on Achievement First.

Achievement First has a rigorous and selective application process (see Toolkit for *Application and Selection Process Diagram* and *Teaching Candidate Selection Criteria*). The candidates begin the process by submitting a resume and an application (see Toolkit for *Employment Application*). The recruiting team reviews those documents and extends phone interviews to qualified candidates. Those who pass the phone screen are then invited to a school visit, which includes classroom observation, teacher meetings, teaching a sample lesson, and a group interview/feedback session (see Toolkit for *Teacher Interview Question*). The final step in the process is a reference check. Every step in the process is highly competitive and only a small portion of initial candidates are hired (see sidebar). While the recruiting staff is involved throughout the process, it is the principal who decides whether to extend a job offer to the candidate.

Hiring Timeline

Candidates are hired on a rolling basis. Some are hired as early as November or December, but most are hired between March and May. Achievement First strives to complete all hires by the end of its summer academy in late July (see Toolkit for *Hiring Timeline*).

Measuring Results

Achievement First reports that its recruiting system is producing positive outcomes, including increases in the number and quality of applicants. Other indicators of success include a high rate of return among previous years' hires and a high acceptance rate for extended offers to new teachers. The recruitment team recently developed measurable performance objectives that will enable it to more precisely evaluate the effectiveness of its efforts (see Toolkit for *Team Recruit Metrics*). The team is also developing a principal survey to capture qualitative data about the level of satisfaction with the recruitment process at individual school sites.

Challenges

Some of Achievement First's key challenges include:

- **Managing volume.** It is very hard to keep up with all of the candidates, especially during peak recruiting season.
- **Diversity.** Hiring more people of color is an ongoing challenge. In Connecticut, 30 percent of Achievement First's teachers are people of color. Given that only eight percent of teachers in the state of Connecticut are people of color, the CMO feels it is doing well but it wants to do better.
- **Managing competition.** In New York, Achievement First is in direct competition with other CMOs with which it has very positive relationships. It can be difficult to balance the desire for collaboration with the fact that the organizations are vying for a similar and relatively limited talent pool.

LESSONS LEARNED AND ADVICE TO OTHERS

Over the course of the past several years, Achievement First has learned a lot about what makes teacher recruitment work. For other organizations thinking about ways to increase the effectiveness of their recruitment efforts, the following pieces of advice may be helpful as they consider replicating aspects of this model:

- Hire a dedicated recruitment person
- Ensure principals and recruiters have consistent standards
- Good communication is key
- Cast as wide a net as possible
- Invest heavily in networking
- Be careful about not ramping up too quickly
- Make sure candidates feel valued and respected

Any CMO that wants to do this should make sure that principals and recruiters are on the same page about what makes a candidate a 'yes' and what makes them a 'no'. If the recruiters flag something that a principal might not, you can miss a group of people that might actually be a good fit for the school. Part of our training was to literally go through applications and say yes or no and see where we aligned.

- Achievement First Principal

ACHIEVEMENT FIRST RECRUITING TOOLKIT

Toolkit Contents

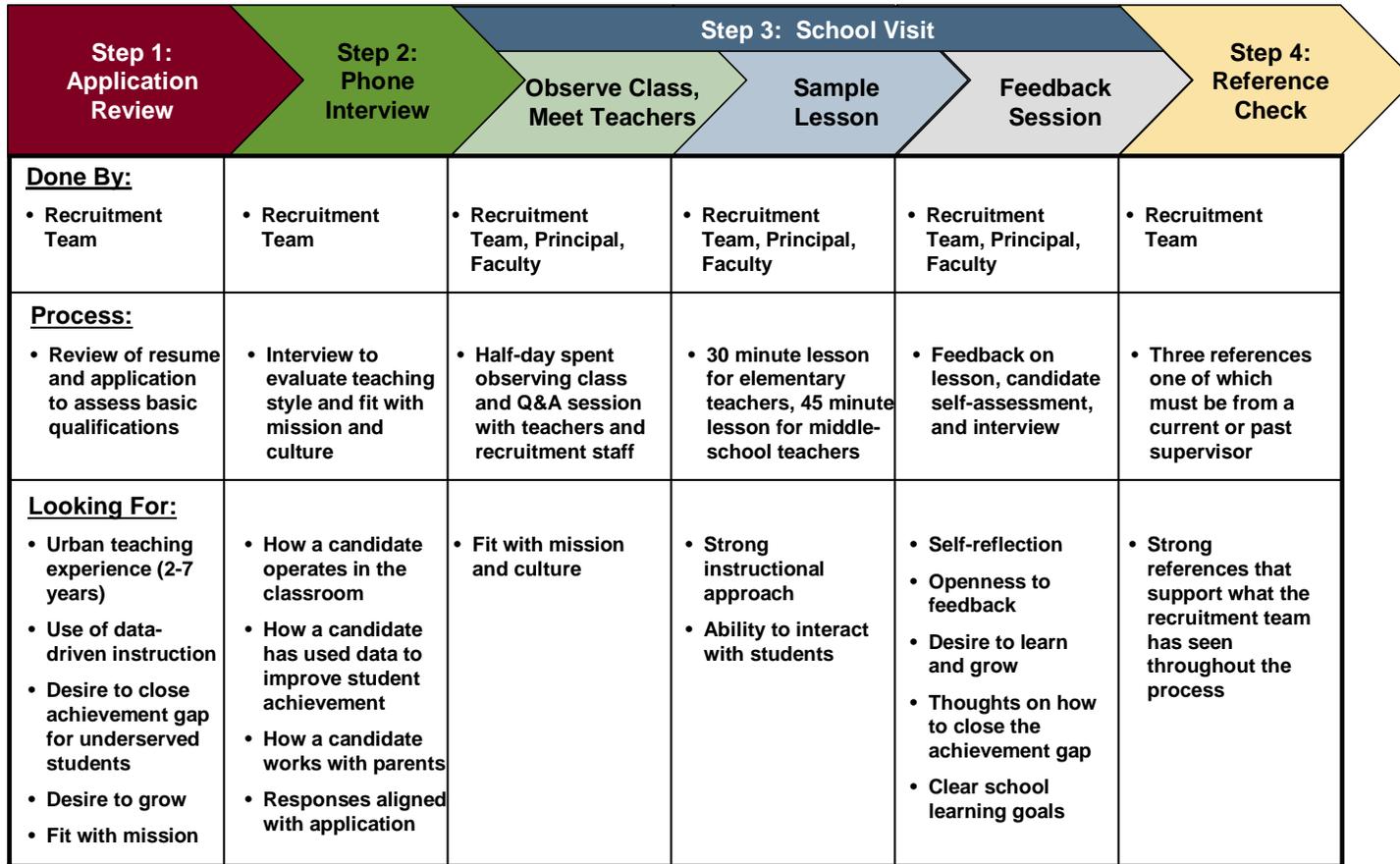
- **Recruitment Strategy Planning Checklist (Synthesized by FSG)**
- **Application and Selection Process Diagram (Synthesized by FSG)**
- **Teaching Candidate Selection Criteria (Synthesized by FSG)**
- **Employment Application (Achievement First Document)**
- **Teacher Interview Questions (Achievement First Document)**
- **Hiring Timeline (Achievement First Document)**
- **Team Recruit Metrics (Achievement First Document)**

Recruitment Strategy Planning Checklist

Achievement First has identified the following elements as key to its recruiting efforts.
Does your organization have these elements in place, or are they being developed?

Key Success Factors					
Planning Checklist Items	Yes	No	In Progress	Not Required	Comments
Dedicated Staff: Do you have a full-time Recruitment Director or recruitment team dedicated exclusively to teacher recruitment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Centralization: Have you centralized the recruitment function so that the home office is responsible for managing and coordinating recruiting activities for each school in its network?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Good Internal Communication Systems: Do you have the systems in place to ensure clear, ongoing communication between the central office and school sites? Information about hiring needs and teacher candidates shared regularly and in a systematic fashion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Casting a Wide Net: Are you reaching prospective candidates through a wide range of outreach strategies? In addition to common approaches (e.g. info sessions or recruiting fairs), other tactics might include advertising campaigns, networking events, and strategic partnerships.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Investment in and Responsiveness to Candidates: Does your staff work to ensure that each candidate feels respected and treated as a professional? Are they responsive to calls and emails, clear about next steps, and consistent about providing feedback to prospective hires?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Rigorous Evaluation and Selection Process: Does your organization use a systematic process to assess a candidate's fit with the mission and culture of the organization? Are selection criteria clearly established and aligned throughout all steps of the application process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Application and Selection Process Diagram



If a candidate makes it through the entire process, a job offer will be extended by the hiring Principal

Teaching Candidate Selection Criteria

Achievement First uses the following evaluation criteria to assess prospective teaching candidates at each stage of the process. *What criteria does your organization use?*

Characteristics of a Strong Teacher Prospect				
Selection Criteria	Yes	No	Potential for Growth	Comments
Initial Screen – Application and Resume				
2 - 7 years of teaching experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Urban teaching experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Commitment to teaching in underserved school systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Demonstrated use of data-driven instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Demonstrated passion for closing the achievement gap	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Alignment between vision of ideal teaching and execution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Phone Interview, Sample Lesson, and Feedback Session				
Openness to feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Desire and commitment to personal and professional growth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Demonstrated ability to be self-reflective	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Strong connection with kids	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Rigor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Strong execution of lesson	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



Employment Application

In our application process, we look for both skill and fit. That is, we want smart, talented, caring, passionate, skilled teachers and administrators, and we also want candidates who will be comfortable and successful at Achievement First schools.

If you feel that you have the knowledge and skills to be an Achievement First team member *and* feel that you would fit well with the mission, curriculum, and systems of the school, please take the time to complete an application.

Because we know that it takes time to thoughtfully answer the questions in this application, we promise that we will thoroughly read your application and get back in touch with you via email, phone, or letter within ten days of receiving your application. We would ask that you not call before this ten day period is over.

Thank you so much for your interest in Achievement First!

PART I – Candidate Information

For which position are you applying? _____

Name: _____ Phone Number(s): _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

Undergraduate college: _____

Undergraduate degree: _____

Undergraduate major: _____

Undergraduate G.P.A.: _____

Graduate school (if applicable): _____

Graduate degree: _____

Graduate major: _____

Graduate G.P.A.: _____

Number of years of full-time, in-the-classroom teaching experience (not including student teaching, internships, tutoring, or volunteer work) _____

Number of years of in-the-classroom *urban* teaching experience: _____



Employment Application

Are you a certified teacher or administrator? _____

Please list the states and subjects for which you hold or will hold certification:

State _____ **Subject** _____ **School Level** _____

Have you applied to work at an Achievement First school in the past? __Yes__No

For which location are you applying? __Connecticut__Brooklyn__Either

How did you hear about Achievement First? _____

Are you a current corps member or alumnus of Teach For America: __Yes__No

If yes, please enter: Corps year __ Corps region _____

Are you, or have you been, a New York City Teaching Fellow? __Yes__No

Have you ever been convicted of or plea bargained a felony? __Yes__No

*If yes, please explain _____

Have you ever been discharged from any employment or resigned under threat of discharge after being accused of misconduct or poor job performance? __Yes__No

*If yes, please explain _____

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Please include the names and phone numbers of three professional references.
- Please include at least one supervisor who has seen you teach.

Name	Relationship	Area Code & Telephone Number



Employment Application

PART II – Questions

Please prepare short written responses for the following questions. Cut and paste your answers below. We will use these responses as the basis for further interview questions.

- Why are you interested in working at an Achievement First school?
- What are your pet peeves about the educational system? What drives you crazy about schools, school districts? What about schools or school districts would you like to change with a magic educational wand?
- Rank the following (1 being the most important, 7 the least important) in terms of what you think are the most important aspects of a great urban school. Please explain your rankings. Please use each number only once.

- _____ A comprehensive approach to the needs of the whole child
- _____ A relentless focus on standards and having students meet them
- _____ Very high expectations for student behavior
- _____ Multi-modal, hands-on lessons to appeal to multiple intelligences
- _____ Use of technology in the classroom
- _____ Prioritizing each child's interests and passions in designing a curriculum
- _____ A focus on college and the skills and knowledge to get there as the ultimate goal

- How have you ensured high student achievement in the past?
- Describe how you would teach 20 students to line up and walk to lunch (on the first day of school).
- How has your classroom management evolved since becoming a teacher? Would your students consider you strict?

I hereby certify that the answers to the foregoing questions are true to the best of my knowledge.

Signature _____ Date _____

Achievement First is committed to a policy of equal treatment for all individuals applying to work at all of our schools. Achievement First does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, handicap, age, religion, sexual orientation, or national or ethnic origin.



Teacher Interview Questions

DEBRIEF OF Amistad / Elm City Visit

- What did you see? Was it what you expected?
- Why is Amistad/Elm City a successful school? What works?
- What isn't working?
- What are school culture plusses? Areas for growth?
- Do you have questions about anything you saw?

OVERALL / GENERAL

- What was/is your greatest challenge in teaching? What is your greatest success?
- What excites you about Achievement First?
- Are there any education thinkers who have influenced you? Who and why?
- What are your pet peeves about the educational system? What drives you crazy about schools, school districts? What about schools or school districts would you like to change with a magic educational wand?
- What are your strengths as a teacher? What are your areas for growth?

TEACHING

- What was/is it like to be in your class?
- Describe a typical day for students in your class (elementary)?
- Describe a typical lesson from start to finish?
- What sort of measurable student achievement gains have you posted? How could they have been even better?
- Go over rankings of 1-6 on application
- Why are a common, sequential curriculum and common instructional strategies important for a successful school?
- How have you ensured high student achievement in the past?
- Tell me about your experience with standards-based curricula. What does a standards-based curricula mean to you?
- How have you used data to drive instruction? What do you think the best ways to use data are?

CLASSROOM MANAGER

- How do you rate yourself as a classroom manager? Would your students consider you strict?
- Why, in many public schools, some teachers run tight classes and others are off the chain? What are the differences between successful and unsuccessful teachers?
- How do you build powerful, meaningful relationships with students?
- Marva Collins, a respected educator, believes that children don't fail, teachers fail. How do you respond to this statement?
- At Achievement First schools, students walk from class to class in quiet lines, sit with legs under their desks, and raise their hands to speak. There is also a high degree of supervision throughout the day. Why would we think this structure is important or necessary? Does this structure mesh with your style and philosophy?



Teacher Interview Questions

SCHOOL CULTURE

- Describe for me your vision
- How would you ensure a lunch duty that you ran was tight and structured?
- How would you ensure all teachers are on the same page?

PROFESSIONAL VALUES

- How do you solicit and receive feedback? Give an example of feedback you've received that has made you a better professional or person.
- How do you handle a disagreement (i.e. another teacher is allowing behaviors in the class before that you don't like, a teacher isn't following through on committee tasks) with a teacher or administrator? Give a concrete example from your professional life of how you have handled such a situation.
- At Achievement First schools, we talk about working harder and smarter. The hard work part entails a work day from 7:30 until 4:00 (with two prep periods). Most of our teachers find that to do the job well for the students, they need one to two additional hours a day on top of the regular work day. Are you willing to work this hard? Why?
- What do you want to learn in your next teaching job? How do you want to grow professionally?

ARE YOU COMFORTABLE WITH...

- Open doors ... very visible principal who helps kids in line, asks kids to sit up, helps out
- Walk-in-lines, sit up straight, sweat the small stuff school culture
- Clear scope and sequences and interim assessment system
- Direct Instruction reading (K-1) and Decoding program (5)
- Being the person responsible for the results of the kids in your class
- Following a proven curriculum ... not a close-your-doors-and-do-your-thing school

AT THE END OF THE DAY

- Describe back the AF model and mission to me ..
- Why do you think the AF model and mission are right for kids?
- Why do you think the AF model and mission is right for you?



**ACHIEVEMENT
FIRST**
Hiring Timeline

Timing of Hires for 2004-05 School Year

Sept/Oct/Nov	0
Dec	0
Jan	0
Feb	0
Mar	1
Apr	5
May	4
Jun	2
Jul	6
Aug	3

Timing of Hires for 2005-06 School Year

Sept/Oct/Nov	0
Dec	0
Jan	1
Feb	3
Mar	3
Apr	10
May	5
Jun	12
Jul	4
Aug	3

Timing of Hires for 2006-07 School Year

Sept/Oct/Nov	1
Dec	0
Jan	5
Feb	0
Mar	4
Apr	5
May	15
Jun	19
Jul/Aug	15



Team Recruit Metrics

- 100% of positions filled by the last day of summer academy
- 95% of previous year's hires get returning offer letters for a second year with AF (measure of principal satisfaction with the teachers that Team Recruit attracted and screened)
- 85% of offers made to candidates are accepted
- Applications received from 80% of Teach for America regions (excluding the expansion sites)
- Receive resumes equaling at least 50 times the total number of open teaching positions (ex – at least 5000 resumes received for 100 open positions)
- 100% of principals rate Team Recruit as a '5' or a '4' in terms of effectiveness on an annual survey to be given in September/October

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NEW SCHOOLS FOR NEW ORLEANS

**Partnerships with
The New Teacher Project
and New Leaders
for New Schools**

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

This case study was prepared by FSG Social Impact Advisors. FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides guidance to foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and other public sector entities on issues of strategy, evaluation, and operations. FSG was commissioned by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “promising practices” of portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared across the NewSchools portfolio. To complete this case study, FSG conducted background research on New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO), The New Teacher Project (TNTP), and New Leaders for New Schools (New Leaders). Interviews were conducted with Sarah Usdin, Founder of NSNO; Jackie Gran, National Director of Growth of New Leaders; Jonathan Schnur, Founder and CEO of New Leaders; and Ariela Rozman, VP of Cohort Programs of TNTP. Jim Peyser of NewSchools Venture Fund provided additional context on New Schools for New Orleans.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. In your current system, how is teacher and leader recruitment carried out? How is support and professional development provided to your new teachers and leaders? In what ways would you like to see these practices improve?
2. How would you weight the tradeoffs between partnering with outside organizations to aid in your teacher and leader recruitment and support efforts versus conducting these tasks in-house?
3. If you see benefit in partnering with external organizations, what funds could you allocate to broker these partnerships?
4. Are you in a district where New Leaders for New Schools (New Leaders) already has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)? If not, is there a local district or a critical mass of school management organizations with which you could partner to bring New Leaders to your city or state?
5. Do you have a local champion who can coordinate and drive the process of forming a partnership with an external organization such as New Leaders or The New Teacher Project?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

A recent study by Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)¹ found that the largest controllable factors in improving student achievement are teacher and principal quality. However, recruiting talented, dedicated, and qualified teachers and principals to urban schools remains a considerable challenge. The inability to locate this talent is one of the biggest hurdles impeding charter school management organizations (CMOs) from growing to scale.

In recent years, several nonprofits have emerged to address these human capital challenges. Equipped with the expertise and resources to recruit, select, train, and support high quality educators, organizations such as The New Teacher Project (TNTP) and New Leaders for New Schools (New Leaders) have successfully increased the number of high quality principals and teachers in our nation's public schools.

This case examines how New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) entered into a contract with TNTP and a partnership with New Leaders to access their pipelines of effective teachers and principals. Looking through a wider lens, this case discusses how CMOs or groups of charter schools in a given geographic area can best partner with intermediaries to meet essential human capital needs.

The New Orleans Context

While Hurricane Katrina devastated much of New Orleans, it provided an unparalleled opportunity to rebuild what was arguably one of the worst school systems in the country. In November 2005, the Louisiana Legislature placed 107 of 128 New Orleans Public Schools, all performing below the state average, under the control of the state-run Recovery School District (RSD). Of the 57 schools that had re-opened as of February 2007, five are traditional district public schools, 21 are state-run RSD schools, and the remaining 31 are charter schools. These charter schools serve 57 percent of public school students in New Orleans, and operate in an environment with little central authority or district support.

New Schools for New Orleans was created in March 2006 to *“provide public schools, with an emphasis on charter schools, with the support they need in order to succeed in the new world of New Orleans public education.”*² A critical component of this support is the recruitment and development of excellent educators who can drive student achievement.

New Orleans has historically struggled to recruit and prepare high quality teachers and principals. Before Katrina, the city *“invested very little in school leadership and had a teacher corps widely viewed as weak and low-performing.”*³ Katrina amplified these human capital needs. The storm left 7,500 district employees, including thousands of teachers, without jobs and scattered

So much of what holds us back is the need for more teachers and more leaders of the highest quality talent. As a result, when new schools were opening in the city, NSNO knew how vital human capital was. NSNO needed to stake out the human capital real estate and make sure we did everything possible to ensure New Orleans had the best possible teachers and principals in its schools.

- NSNO

¹ www.mcrel.org

² New Schools for New Orleans Business Plan

³ New Schools for New Orleans Business Plan

across the country. Schools faced a severe shortage of educators. As students continued to return to the city, the need for teachers and principals would only continue to grow. Realizing the urgency of the need, NSNO moved quickly to find a way to bring excellent teachers and principals to New Orleans in time for the reopening of schools in the fall of 2006. With much of the city’s population still dispersed across the country, there was little chance of locally meeting the immense need for educators. Thus, NSNO turned to two national organizations with expertise in recruiting high caliber educators: The New Teacher Project and New Leaders for New Schools.

PARTNERSHIP WITH NEW LEADERS FOR NEW SCHOOLS

New Leaders for New Schools Overview

Founded on the belief that great schools are led by great principals, New Leaders for New Schools is a national nonprofit that prepares cohorts of promising leaders to become outstanding urban school principals. Since its founding in 2001, New Leaders has placed more than 330 school leaders in some of the country’s largest cities, impacting 165,000 students.⁴ The New Leaders program consists of aggressive recruiting, a rigorous selection process, and intensive training and professional development. In the first year, participants build foundational knowledge about school leadership during a Summer Foundations Institute, and then complete a paid residency under a mentor principal in an urban school. After their residency year, participants are placed in a school as a principal or assistant principal, and are provided with support from New Leaders during their beginning years as a school leader.

New Leaders for New Schools has a highly competitive process for selecting partner cities. Districts who want to partner with New Leaders must complete a proposal detailing how they can meet New Leaders selection criteria (see sidebar). As districts advance through the city competition process, New Leaders strives to build broad-based local support of top education, government, civic, community, business, and foundation executives. After a partner city is selected, New Leaders sets up its own local office with full-time dedicated staff.

Selection Criteria for Proposed Partnerships with New Leaders

1. Overall Reform Plan: Quality and long-term plan for how school leadership improvement strategies will align with coherent education reform plan.
2. Private & Public Sector Coalition: Commitment from top private and public sector leaders to improve school leadership.
3. Recruitment & Admissions: Commitment and ability of district and state leadership and partners to support New Leaders recruitment and admissions process.
4. Residency Year: Ability to support a paid full-time residency.
5. Placement As Principals & Decision-Making Flexibility: Commitment and ability of district and charter schools to help place residents as principals in schools with site-based decision-making.
6. Financial Commitments: Ability to make a financially sustainable partnership.
7. Evaluation: Commitment to adopt clear goals and measurable indicators of progress.

New Leaders for New Schools’ Relationship with Charter Schools

New Leaders partners with urban school districts, CMOs, and charters. Generally, charter partnerships are formed in cities that have or are

⁴ <http://www.NewLeaders.org/NLWeb/Index.jsp>

developing a staffed office and a contract with a school district. This enables New Leaders to take advantage of economies of scale. New Leaders forms separate MOUs with the CMO or charter schools, but uses local staff resources to provide leaders for charters. New Leaders has partnerships with more than 30 CMOs and charter schools in Baltimore, the Bay Area, Chicago, New York City, and Washington, D.C.

Whether via district placements or CMO placements, New Leaders has experienced some of its best results when its principals are placed in charter schools. One New Leaders staff member remarked that *“Our partnerships with the best CMOs tend to be among our very strongest partnerships. We’ve seen strong New Leaders principals working with nonprofit organizations managing charter and other autonomous schools deliver some of our most dramatic improvements in academic achievement anywhere nationwide.”* These relationships are especially successful when charter school leaders have autonomy over staff and budget and the CMO offers targeted support to principals that surpasses the level of support typically provided by districts.

This case study provides a good example of how charter schools in given geography can work with New Leaders.

The New Orleans Partnership

NSNO actively recruited New Leaders to New Orleans and submitted an application with the Recovery School District. NSNO and New Leaders worked together to secure a broad coalition of support for the application, including the State of Louisiana, the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA), the city council, civic and community leaders, and leaders from the public and private sector. In January 2007, New Leaders’ board of directors voted to approve a partnership to recruit, train, and support 40 new leaders for public schools in New Orleans. NSNO and New Leaders established an MOU in which New Leaders committed to placing up to 25 of the 40 new leaders to serve as extraordinary principals for New Orleans charter schools over the next four years. New Leaders and NSNO will jointly sign separate MOUs with CMOs and charter schools for residency placements. New Leaders established an MOU with the Recovery School District to provide 15 principals over the next four years for RSD schools.⁵

Under the terms of the MOU between NSNO and New Leaders, New Leaders manages the selection, training, placement, and support of principals, while NSNO supports half the cost of the salary and benefits for charter school residents during training, and assists in fundraising, building a coalition of support, and providing advice on the local context, including recommendations on candidates and placements.

New Leaders can tap into national networks to bring resources, energy and excitement to bear.
- NSNO

NSNO and New Leaders have agreed to work collaboratively on many fronts, including ongoing fundraising, advocacy and community outreach so that families understand the charter school options available to their children. Both groups will also work with the Recovery School District to discuss and collaborate on a variety of issues, such as developing interim assessments for schools.

⁵ New Leaders seeks philosophically-aligned hiring partners that will provide maximum-decision making flexibility to high-performing principals. New Leaders placements are primarily slated for charter schools and the Recovery School District; New Leaders is also exploring placement through the Orleans Parish School Board.

Roles and Responsibilities (see Toolkit for graphic display)

	New Schools for New Orleans	New Leaders for New Schools
Building Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help build a local coalition of support through letter writing and meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a coalition of support
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help to identify and secure funding Pay half the cost of the salary and benefits for charter school residents during training Help raise an additional \$10K for each member of the first cohort of leaders (<i>New Orleans-specific</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with local coalition to identify and secure funding to pay for the local program costs Pay the national program expenses
Recruitment & Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help identify excellent candidates Promote the opportunity with charter schools, CMOs, and coalition partners Designate one person to serve on the selection committee 	<p><i>Lead and manage the admissions process:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop admissions criteria and materials Recruit candidates Review applications Select aspiring principals (“residents”)
Residency Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend mentor principals, faculty for summer and academic year courses, leadership coaches, and residency sites Help identify classroom space for summer and academic year courses Work with New Leaders to ensure that residents experience an array of leadership activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify, select, and train mentor principals Identify, select, and support residency sites Manage the matching between residents and their residency placement Develop and provide coursework for residents Select faculty for training courses Select, hire, and train leadership coaches Ensure residents are experiencing an array of leadership activities and progressing
Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with government entities to ensure that New Leaders becomes and remains an approved certification program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the State DOE and government entities to secure certification for New Leaders
Hiring & Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend charters to serve as full-time placement sites Recommend placements for principals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select full-time placement sites Manage the matching process between principals and their full-time placement Work with NSNO, charter schools, and CMOs to facilitate the hiring process
Ongoing Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide all New Leaders principals with access to any services provided by NSNO, such as business manager training programs, board development and training, and school reviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide ongoing support and professional development to new leaders
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide data needed to conduct evaluation Work with partners to ensure evaluations are effectively conducted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsor a formal evaluation of the program Use findings to modify the program

Cost

The cost of establishing and maintaining a New Leaders program varies by site. The local partner typically secures funding for local costs, including staff and leadership coach salaries, office costs, and program costs. New Leaders staff worked with NSNO, other local coalition leaders, and national funders to raise the first \$5 million in

New Leaders has done a great job at building a coalition of support and getting buy-in from the education world, senators, and other key groups...the evidence of the success of this was that the announcement of New Leaders coming to New Orleans hit the front page of the Metro section of the Times-Picayune [the local newspaper] and the Mayor and Governor were in attendance for the announcement.

- NSNO

support of local program costs to support the majority of costs for the first three cohorts of New Leaders. National funders played a larger role in fundraising than they typically do because, as New Leaders remarked, *“The money just wasn’t there locally.”* Of this \$5 million, New Leaders secured \$3 million from funders including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Doris & Donald Fisher Fund, NewSchools Venture Fund, and John and Ann Doerr. NSNO secured a total of \$2 million through local funders and from the state. In addition to the \$5 million, New Leaders will provide support for additional costs, such as national staff time and curriculum, and will continue fundraising to support overall long-term costs.

The fundraising target was higher for New Orleans than it has been in other cities. New Leaders set this higher target due to the additional resources and support needed to succeed in New Orleans as opposed to other geographies and to capitalize on the immediate opportunity for support from national funders post-Katrina. As one New Leaders staff member commented, *“The achievement levels in New Orleans pre-Katrina were far below other under-performing urban districts. Add to that the emotional trauma and a lost year of school, and this is an entirely different world. The skills a principal needs to be successful in New Orleans right now are different than in other places around the country.”*

Any New Leaders’ local hiring partner, whether a district or a CMO, is responsible for paying the salary and benefits of New Leaders residents during the summer training and residency year. In New Orleans, NSNO shares these costs equally with charter schools. NSNO has agreed to assist charters in covering these costs because the school in which the new leader completes his residency might not be the same school where he is placed for a full-time position. Residents will be compensated approximately \$90,000 in total salaries and benefits during the residency year.

Lessons for CMOs

If you are a CMO in a district where New Leaders already has an MOU, you can try to form a separate partnership with New Leaders that leverages the existing staff resources. However, if you are a CMO that is not an area where there is a New Leaders partnership already established, there are at least two feasible ways to partner with New Leaders:

1. Work with a local district to form a new partnership with New Leaders
2. Partner with a critical mass of CMOs and/or independent charter schools in a geography to partner with New Leaders

These lessons outline what districts or a group of CMOs and/or charter schools in a geography need to do to develop and maintain a successful partnership with New Leaders:

- **Build a strong local coalition of support.** While this is a time and labor-intensive process, it is critical in a partner’s ability to be selected by New Leaders and to ensure a successful partnership.
- **Be able to place a critical mass of principals.** If an organization is not operating in a city where New Leaders has a contract with the district, they will need to guarantee residency placements and the opportunity for New Leaders to be hired into principal positions at scale (typically, this means at least 40

leaders over several years). This means that a CMO or group of charters will need some commitment from charter schools that they need and can absorb a critical mass of principals.

- ***Establish alternative certification pathways for principals (as needed).*** Before residents are placed, there must be a pathway for participants in the New Leaders program to be certified as principals in the state. This might require advocacy in order to change state policy if the needed policies are not already in place.
- ***Secure funding.*** Partner CMOs must pay the salary and benefits of residents. Depending on the scale of the program, they may also need to help secure funding for local program costs. Therefore, it is important to have enough lead time to raise necessary funds and to be in a locale where the requisite funds can be raised.
- ***Guarantee continuity.*** New Leaders seeks an initial partnership to support at least three cohorts of New Leaders.
- ***Find a local champion.*** According to Jon Schnur, Co-founder and CEO of New Leaders, *“In every city, we have at least 1 – 2 people who are our champions. [They are] aligned with our philosophy, have connections, and can make things happen.”*

Challenges

- ***Placement in charters is a significant challenge.***
 - NSNO can’t guarantee placement for principals in charters. *“Charters’ greatest strength is also their greatest detriment — autonomy. Autonomy makes it more difficult for New Leaders because they recruit people to come here and give up a job but they might not be able to guarantee the New Leaders jobs in charter schools because charter schools can be picky about who they hire.”* - NSNO
 - *“Ultimately, we want the person who is the best fit for a particular school to be hired as principal. As such, New Leaders seeks partners that will ensure that residents can interview for principal positions through a merit-based hiring process. We do not ask for guaranteed placement. Instead, we expect that, given the training and support provided by our program, residents will be successful at proving their readiness for the principalship among candidates in a competitive pool.”* - New Leaders
- ***It is important, but challenging, to outline and understand the process, deadlines, and responsibilities from the outset.***
 - *“While we identified a timeline from the beginning of the process, the on-going challenges and changing circumstances in New Orleans required continued flexibility from both NSNO and New Leaders as we sought to establish the strongest possible partnership.”* - New Leaders
 - *“You need to understand what this relationship will require on your end, beyond just the expenses... It would be helpful on both ends to lay out expectations around communications and deadlines.”* - NSNO

- ***Building local support is challenging, time-intensive, and ongoing.*** “It needs to be clear to the entire community that we are partnering with the entire community and are not the one-time project of a superintendent, elected official, etc. In New Orleans, we allocated a full-time staff member to focus on coalition building because there were many leaders involved and the amount of outreach that needed to be done was extensive. This coalition building is critical to our success. We have to make sure our program reflects the needs of the community and that the community understands what we are about. This is always an ongoing process.” - New Leaders

PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NEW TEACHER PROJECT

The New Teacher Project Overview

The New Teacher Project (TNTP) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing the number of outstanding individuals who become public school teachers and to creating environments for all educators that maximize their impact on student achievement. TNTP has partnered with school districts, state education agencies, colleges and universities, and other educational entities to accomplish these goals. Since its inception in 1997, TNTP has recruited, prepared, or certified approximately 23,000 high-quality teachers, worked with more than 200 school districts, and established more than 40 programs in 23 states.⁶

The New Teacher Project’s Relationship with Charter Schools

While TNTP does not typically work with charter schools, TNTP has established contracts with charter schools in California, Houston, and New Orleans. In each of these relationships, TNTP has worked with an intermediary that helps facilitate the process and subsidize the costs. In California, it worked with the Fisher Fund to form regional partnerships in Los Angeles, Sacramento, and the Bay Area. In Houston, it partnered with the Houston Endowment to recruit teachers for KIPP and YES Prep Public Schools. In New Orleans, TNTP is working with NSNO to provide teachers to charter schools.

The New Orleans Partnership

New Schools for New Orleans sought to hire TNTP to assist in meeting the urgent need for teachers in New Orleans in the wake of Katrina. NSNO turned to TNTP because they have deep expertise in this area. As one NSNO staff member remarked, “*Very few people understand this complex game of teacher recruitment and placement – making sure you are recruiting for the right vacancies, at the right subject levels, when vacancies come available. TNTP has recruited in rural and urban areas and has spent lots of time thinking about how to do this. They rigorously screen people, have a high quality process, and do a great job of using data.*”

⁶ <http://www.tntp.org/whoware/overview.html>

NSNO began negotiations with TNTP in spring 2006 in order to recruit educators to teach during the 2006-07 school year. Although this was out of cycle with TNTP's typical timeline, which entails beginning the partnership in October, TNTP agreed to work with NSNO due to the critical need for teachers in New Orleans. In 2006-07, TNTP implemented a highly rigorous process that selected only 1 in 14 applicants and that provided 37 certified teachers to New Orleans. Although rigorous, principals found the process user-friendly and central to filling their need for highly qualified teachers.⁷

TNTP Success in New Orleans

Data from TNTP's 2006-07 contract with NSNO reveals considerable success against their goals:

Goal	Last Year's Result
25-40 certified teachers begin teaching	37
3.2 average undergrad GPA for referred teachers	3.2
85% of principals were very satisfied or satisfied with the teaching candidates referred to them	85%
90% of principals using the service strongly agree, agree, or somewhat agree that they have been pleased with the level of customer service that they have received	100%

The partnership was subsequently renewed, with TNTP agreeing to provide 25-40 additional teachers for the 2007-08 school year from outside the regional area. TNTP also has a separate contract with the Recovery School District to recruit 100-125 alternatively certified candidates.

Working with NSNO has been great because they know the local contacts and educational landscape.

- TNTP

Roles and Responsibilities (see Toolkit for graphic display)

Under the terms of the contract, TNTP manages the recruitment, selection and placement of new teachers, while NSNO assists TNTP in every step of the process, helps TNTP understand the local context, and provides TNTP with office space.

⁷ teachNOLA summary report, September 2006

	New Schools for New Orleans	The New Teacher Project
Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide TNTP with office space, facilities and services at NSNO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign a full time consultant to the project
Recruitment & Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide TNTP with access to school staff and principals to assist with recruitment and selection Assist in publicizing opportunities in local and national media Participate in TNTP selection training Assist in teacher selection Help TNTP locate space for selection events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a recruitment campaign, including a website (Teachnola.org), printed materials, and an online application Manage a proprietary rigorous selection process, including the communication and cultivation of applicants and the implementation of TNTP’s applicant tracking system
Hiring & Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide TNTP with access to school staff and principals to assist with placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage teacher placement events, including job fairs and school referrals Provide the RSD information on applicants who aren’t successful in the recruiting process but might be suitable for substitute teaching or to secure a temporary teaching certificate.
Evaluation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a summary of data on the results of the TNTP program and work with NSNO to evaluate progress and understand the local context Hold frequent discussion with NSNO to evaluate progress towards goals

Costs

The New Teacher Project is a revenue-generating nonprofit that maintains a vendor-client relationship with its partners. Clients pay for its services on a contract basis. In addition to providing office space for TNTP staff, NSNO pays consulting fees and expenses, which total roughly \$350-400K per year. TNTP’s consulting fees are upfront fixed costs to cover salary and project management. Expenses for recruitment and selection are invoiced as they are incurred up to a maximum of what is specified in the contract. Given the high fixed costs, it becomes less expensive per teacher as the number of teachers recruited increases. To make its contract as cost-effective as possible, NSNO built in an incentive system to encourage TNTP to bring in more teachers. Under this system, NSNO agrees to pay a marginal incremental cost for every teacher TNTP recruits beyond the target of 25-40 teachers.

Lessons for CMOs

What CMOs need to do to develop and maintain a successful partnership with TNTP:

- Understand the process.** *“Do your due diligence to understand what other organizations’ processes are. It’s important to very clearly listen to and understand exactly what the contractor will be able to do and really ascertain what they do well, what they don’t do well, and what you can expect. You literally have to walk through the whole process and make sure you are comfortable with that. You need to sign off on language and understand legal obligations. If you go in with your eyes wide open, it will make the relationship stronger in the long run.” - NSNO*

- ***Be concrete as to what the needs are as early as possible.***
 - *“The earlier you know your needs, the more time TNTP has to go out there and do this. Survey your faculty, and do this in a timely fashion.” - NSNO*
 - *“Different organizations have different timelines. TNTP likes to start a year before the opening of the school year when teachers are needed. You should know what your contractor’s ideal timeline is.” - TNTP*
- ***Have realistic expectations.***
 - *“Clients should push to get the highest results, but should be realistic in setting expectations. There is constantly a tension between having a far greater need for teachers than TNTP is able to provide. They have to deliver against the numbers outlined in the contract.” - NSNO*
 - *“We know there is tremendous need in New Orleans, so we set realistic expectations about what we can guarantee and then shoot for as many as possible.” - TNTP*
- ***Find a dedicated process “owner”.*** *“We need someone... who has autonomy and accountability over the placement and hiring process so we can ensure candidates participating in school level interviews are being followed up with in a timely manner by school leaders and we’re not missing opportunities... An intermediary with no ability to enforce anything is not helpful. We need someone, like NSNO, who can help structure the process, ensure candidates are moving through the process, work with the district, etc.” - TNTP*
- ***Reach economies of scale.*** *“There are fixed prices where TNTP sets up an office. In order to be of value and cost-effective, we need to place a critical mass of teachers – this is not affordable for a few teachers.” - NSNO*
- ***Carefully examine all contracts.***
 - *“Make sure you are engaged in the process of understanding all components of the contract.” - NSNO*
 - *“The legal process takes a long time. It’s good to get this going as soon as possible.” - TNTP*
- ***Prepare for ongoing dialogue and work.*** *“There is a misnomer in thinking that once you have a partnership set up, the work is done. Any contractor relationship needs to be an ongoing dialogue back and forth. NSNO and TNTP have weekly check-ins and reports. The amount of work depends on the terms of the arrangement, but it is a lot of work.” - NSNO*

Challenges

- ***Too many points of contact.*** *“When we work with charters, there is not one point of contact. This creates much more work for us and takes away time we can spend recruiting because we have to work with so many more clients. ... Our preference is fewer client stakeholders” - TNTP*
- ***Understanding that charters and TNTP recruit from the same pool of teachers.*** *“It is important for clients to understand that sometimes we are recruiting from the same places. Schools often times believe we have wholly different sources to recruit from – in reality, we may use many of the same sources – but we can just spend incredible*

amounts of time mining these sources, and then tracking the results real time so we can tell what is working and optimize the campaign accordingly. We are also able to dedicate resources to intense cultivation of candidates - to ensure that the strong candidates in the pool stay with the process until they can be hired.” – TNTP

- ***TNTP can add more value if it can oversee entire hiring process.*** *“We could add the most value if we could entirely pull the recruiting process off the school leaders’ plate. That way they don’t have to track candidates, and we can make sure the process is clear and streamlined, it is implemented in a prompt and timely manner, and all candidates are meeting eligibility requirements. We can do this, but school leaders have to be willing to turn the central process over to us. The dilemma for us is that we know that the reason school leaders are attracted to charter schools is to have more freedom and avoid these central processes, and we do not want to limit that freedom.” – TNTP*
- ***Competition between charter schools for candidates.*** *“[In cities where we have partnered with CMOs] there is competition between charters because they are trying to hire the same candidate, and many school leaders are uncomfortable with this. Despite this, we strongly believe in an open market to help facilitate the best matches between teachers and principals in order to ensure the most effective placement.” - TNTP*
- ***Placement of hires in charter schools.***
 - ***Matchmaking between a teacher recruit and a charter is challenging.*** With autonomy over hiring, charter schools can choose not to hire any candidates that TNTP selects, even if those candidates are highly qualified, teachers.
 - *“[In other cities] TNTP has tried to be the matchmaker between a teacher recruit and charter school, but we’ve found this does not work well. Charters know what they are looking for, so we may bring them an excellent teacher - but if this candidate doesn’t fit well with the composition of the rest of the team, the school leader is not going to hire them.” - TNTP*
 - *“With a school district, TNTP can guarantee placement of teachers or force the district’s hand to place them. But you can’t force a charter to take a teacher. NSNO can’t guarantee to TNTP that teachers will have placements, which makes it more challenging in negotiations. We overcame this by showing the immense need for teachers so even if we weren’t sure of the exact placement we knew there would be a job.” - NSNO*
 - ***Unplaced teachers hurt TNTP’s prospects of long-term success.*** *“If we hire strong candidates and can’t place them, the word gets out in the applicant pool and it can ultimately hurt recruitment efforts and weaken our talent pool.” - TNTP*

CONCLUSION

The relationships New Schools for New Orleans established with New Leaders for New Schools and The New Teacher Project reveal many lessons for CMOs that are interested in forming these partnerships:

- ***Reach economies of scale.*** Because TNTP and New Leaders focus on improving educator quality in a given geographic area, the first step charters or CMOs will need to take in order to work with these

groups is to partner together in a given area to ensure there is an adequate need for principals and teachers.

- ***Be able to fundraise.*** These relationships are expensive, so CMOs and charters will need to have the ability to build local support and secure funding.
- ***Be prepared for a substantial investment of time and resources.*** Maintaining a successful partnership requires ongoing work on both ends. Thus, once a partnership is established, charters and CMOs should be prepared for ongoing work and dialogue.
- ***Find a local champion.*** CMOs or charters should make sure there is a local champion who can coordinate and drive the process.
- ***Clearly outline the process and expectations.*** Before entering any contract or MOU, CMOs or charters should understand the expectations, legal requirements and roles and responsibilities of each party.
- ***Understand that placement in charters is an ongoing challenge.*** Because charter schools have autonomy over hiring, they will provide a challenge to organizations that are seeking to place principals or teachers.

As evidenced by the case in New Orleans, partnering with intermediary organizations in order to recruit the highest quality educators can be an excellent strategy for CMOs and charter schools in any geographic region.

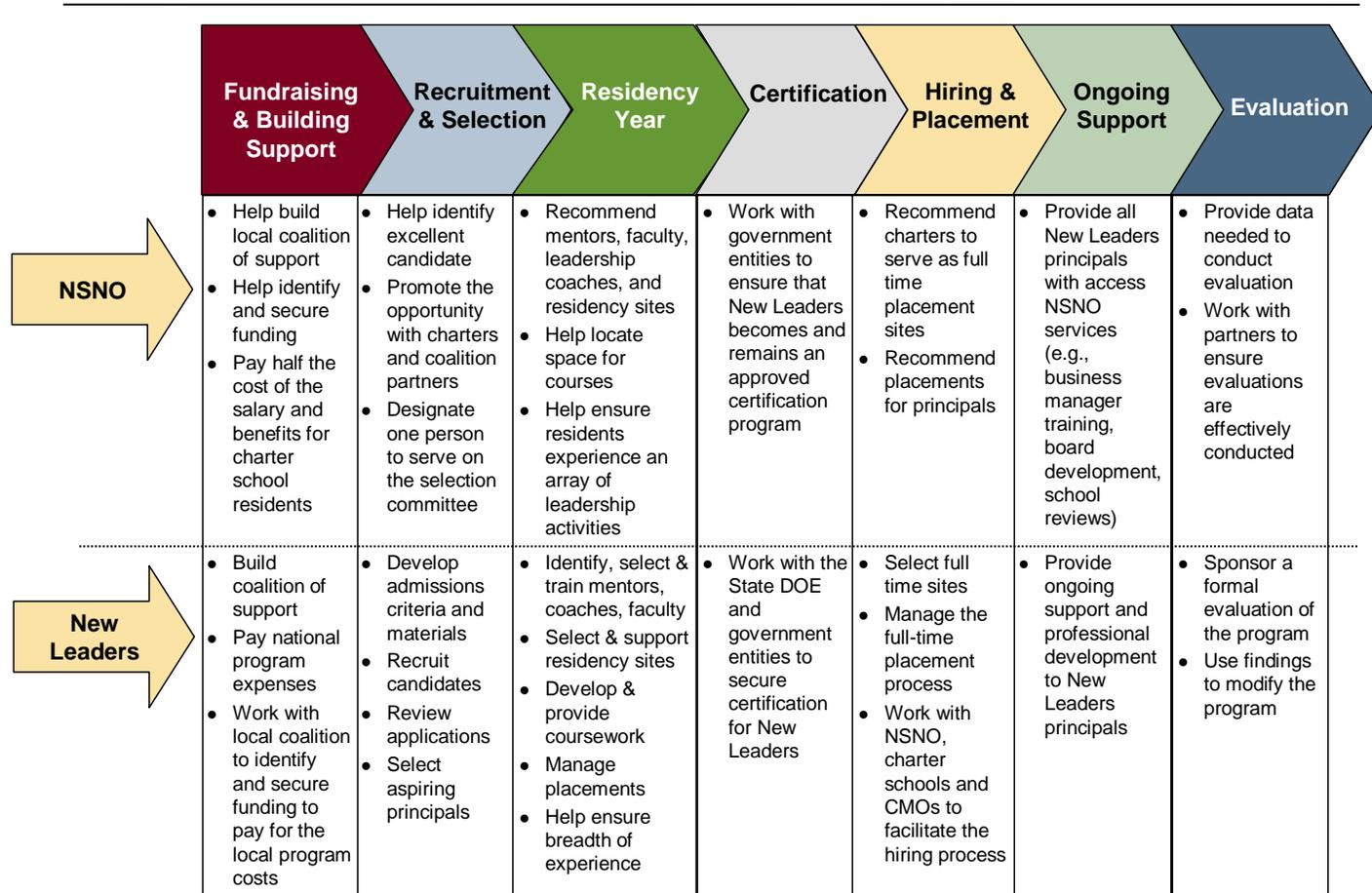
NEW SCHOOLS FOR NEW ORLEANS PARTNERSHIPS TOOLKIT

Toolkit Contents

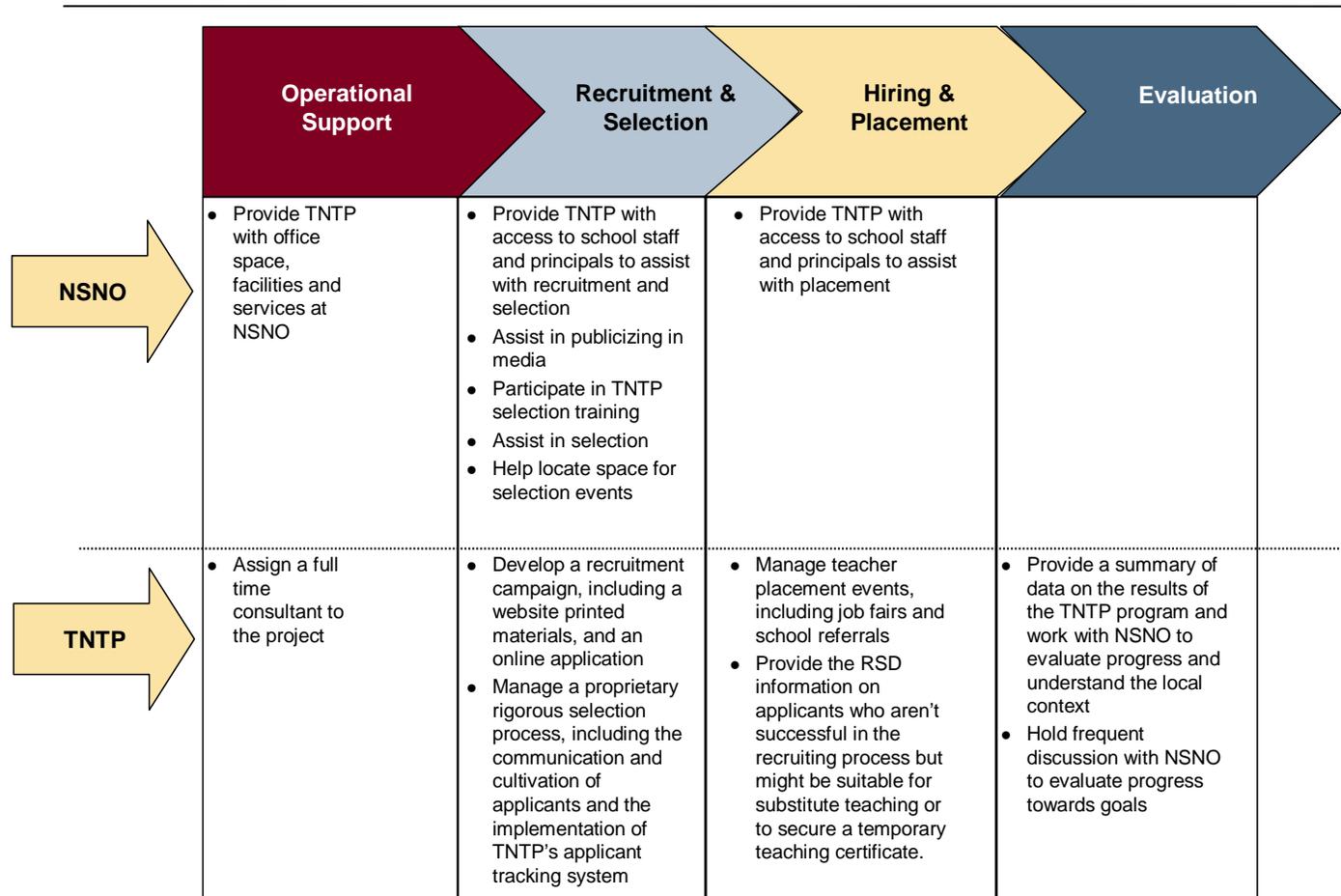
- **Summary of NSNO-New Leaders Partnership: Roles and Responsibilities (Synthesized by FSG)**
- **Summary of NSNO-TNTP Partnership: Roles and Responsibilities (Synthesized by FSG)**

New Leaders-NSNO Partnership: Roles and Responsibilities

As detailed in this case study, New Leaders and NSNO are working together as part of a broader partnership to recruit, train, and support 40 outstanding New Leaders for public schools in New Orleans. Each member of the city-wide partnership undertakes specific responsibilities; the MOU between New Leaders and NSNO commits each organization to the following:



TNTP-NSNO Partnership: Roles and Responsibilities



newschools
venture fund



HIGH TECH HIGH

The Implementation of a Teacher Credentialing Program

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

This case study describes the way in which High Tech High has developed its own state-approved teacher credentialing program.

This case study was prepared by FSG Social Impact Advisors. FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides guidance to foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and other public sector entities on issues of strategy, evaluation, and operations. FSG was commissioned by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “best practices” of portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared across the NewSchools portfolio. To complete this case study, FSG conducted background research on High Tech High and interviewed Jennifer Husbands, Director of the High Tech High Intern Program, and James Holmes, a teacher at an HTH school. Amy Yamner of NewSchools Venture Fund provided additional context on High Tech High.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. Do you believe the quality of your teachers would improve if you trained them yourself?
2. Do you believe there is an interest or demand among your teachers to be trained by your organization?
3. Do you have the capacity to undertake an effort like this one? How many additional team members would you need in order to execute a credentialing program? What other resources or infrastructure would you need to have in place?
4. Would the policies of your state allow you to do this? Do you know of other alternative providers in your state who could advise you on the feasibility of this type of work?
5. Is there a potential institution of higher education in your area with which you could create a credentialing program?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, passed in 2001, mandates that every public school teacher must be “highly qualified,” meaning they are certified and proficient in their subject matter. Certainly, schools of education and other existing teacher training programs are meeting the former requirement; but are they meeting the latter? Does having a credential ensure teacher quality?

Research has shown that many traditional teacher preparation and certification programs are not adequately training teachers for the realities of the classroom. Many of these programs are theoretical, lacking the field-based experience that is essential to training in so many other fields, such as medicine.¹

Teachers in innovative schools designed to integrate academic and technical education need more extensive preparation in project-based learning than is available in traditional training programs. The best place to prepare teachers for innovative teaching is in innovative schools.

- High Tech High Intern Program
Preconditions Statement

Frustrated by the inadequacy of traditional preparation programs, but under pressure to produce “highly qualified” teachers, many schools might feel at a loss for how to ensure the certified teachers in their classrooms are also well prepared and effective.

This case focuses on one school development organization, High Tech High, which decided to take matters into its own hands and develop a state-approved program to certify its own teachers.

High Tech High Background

High Tech High (HTH) was “originally conceived by a coalition of San Diego business leaders and educators who met regularly in 1996-98 to discuss the challenge of finding qualified individuals for the high-tech work force” who decided “to create a school where students would be passionate about learning and would acquire the basic skills of work and citizenship.” They founded the first HTH school in 2000, with the mission to “develop and support innovative public schools where all students develop the academic, workplace, and citizenship skills for postsecondary success.”²

Since its first school opened in 2000, HTH had become a school development organization with three high schools, two middle schools, and an elementary school in its portfolio. To date, 100 percent of its high school graduates have been accepted to college, 80 percent to four-year institutions.

¹ “Teacher Quality and the Question of Preparation,” *Education Week*, October 19, 2005.

² High Tech High Web site <http://www.hightechhigh.org/about/index.php>

THE HIGH TECH HIGH TEACHER CREDENTIALING PROGRAM

Gaining Approval to Certify Teachers

In response to NCLB's highly-qualified teacher mandates, the California State Legislature overhauled its credentialing system. A bill passed in 2001 required all charter school teachers to be credentialed, but included a stipulation enabling teachers enrolled in alternative certification programs to meet the NCLB definition of highly qualified (see sidebar for description of *Credentialing in California*).

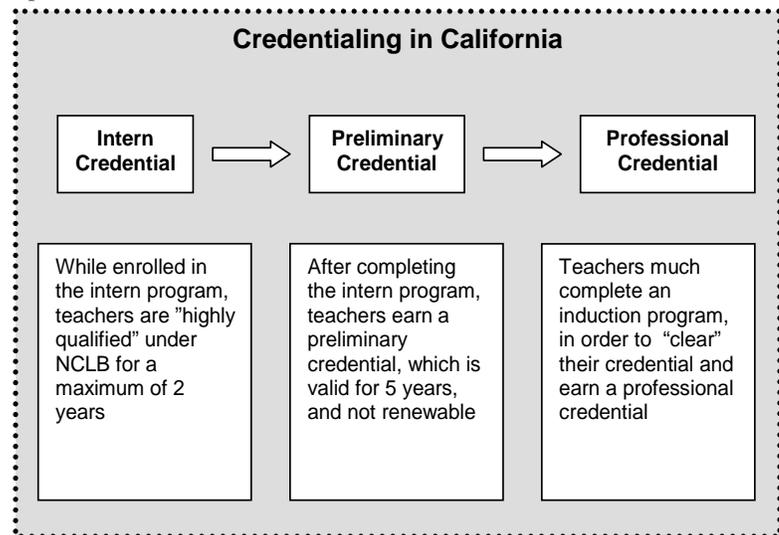
At that time, about 10 percent of California teachers (32,000) were uncertified, according to the state, and thousands more were working with emergency licenses or teaching out of their areas of expertise.³ High Tech High had five uncertified teachers. Instead of relying on existing teacher preparation

programs to certify these teachers, it wanted to develop its own in-house, tuition-free program because, as Jennifer Husbands, Director of the HTH Graduate School of Education, remarked, *"we questioned the value of traditional preparation programs, especially for HTH schools, which are not traditional schools."*

Thus, HTH submitted an application to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) requesting to be recognized as an alternative provider, one that was qualified to offer a program leading to a Preliminary Credential through an Intern Program.

In order to be recognized as an alternative provider, HTH's application to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing needed to show how the Intern Program met certain preconditions, common standards, program standards, and subject matter standards. According to Husbands, *"this was a 3-inch binder full of information on how our program could address the standards and went through a series of iterations before it was approved"* (see Toolkit for *Sample Precondition Statement, Sample Common Standard, and Sample Program Standards*).

In 2004, HTH was approved to certify teachers in its schools in mathematics, science, English, history/social studies, Spanish, and art through its Teacher Intern Program, making HTH the first charter school authorized to certify its own teachers. The goal of the program is to *"prepare teachers to work in an environment that integrates technical and academic education while creating a sense of community engagement and responsibility."*⁴ As HTH adds additional schools to its portfolio, those schools will also be able to certify teachers.



³ http://csmp.ucop.edu/cmp/comet/2002/09_20_2002.html

⁴ HTH Internship Program Preconditions

Program Components

Overview

High Tech High's Intern Program is a two-year commitment. Teachers first must complete the equivalent of 120 hours of training in child development, pedagogy, and the subject and grade they will be teaching. This intensive three-week training takes place during the summer before the program begins and is a combination of coursework and school-based professional development.

The next step is 600 hours of additional training and teaching over two years. During the program, teachers are granted their Intern Credential, and upon completion of the program, teachers earn the Preliminary Credential.

HTH interns are placed in grades 7-12, and they earn full-time salaries and benefits as teachers while working toward their credentials. The program is free for all participants. Both recent college graduates and "mid-career changers" are eligible to participate (see sidebar for full list of *Program Eligibility Requirements*).

In 2004, the program's first year, HTH enrolled seven interns, five of whom were already HTH teachers. The program has enrolled an average of 12 teachers each year.

University Partnership

In order to be approved to certify its teachers, HTH needed to partner with a university that administered state-approved teacher credentialing programs, and it decided to partner with the University of San

Diego (USD). HTH had a pre-existing relationship with the Dean of the School of Education and found working with a private university to be less administratively complicated than working with a large public institution. Furthermore, as Husbands notes, *"We felt they were moving in the right direction in teacher credentialing. They have a quality program and were committed to working with public schools, which we liked."*

USD staff provides HTH with ongoing advice and support on the teacher credentialing program. According to Husbands, *"We've learned a lot from USD about credential analysis and how to improve our understanding of the credentialing process."*

Additionally, a USD staff member serves on HTH's advisory board, an adjunct faculty member from USD teaches in HTH's program, and USD co-signs the documents for the grant the program receives from the state.

During this summer training, interns receive instruction on project-based learning, developing a classroom management plan, building an instructional calendar and preparing a syllabus, school safety procedures, and how to create a digital portfolio. Interns, newly credentialed teachers, and returning teachers work together to prepare for a successful school year.

- Jennifer Husbands, Director, HTH
Graduate School of Education

Program Eligibility Requirements:

All candidates must submit the following before being admitted to the HTH Teacher Intern program:

- Complete list of BA/BS courses completed
- Official transcripts
- Passing scores on the California Basic Skills Test
- Passing scores on the appropriate California Subject Examination for Teachers or a letter verifying completion of a course of studies waiver program upon completion of teacher internship program
- Certificate of Clearance
- HTH Teacher Intern Program application
- Letter of reference from current or previous employer
- Recommendation from the principal of a High Tech High Communities affiliated school

Project-Based Learning and Curriculum

The core component of the program is a two-year teaching practicum, during which interns teach using project-based learning and take courses on Tuesday evenings and one Saturday a month. Courses are taught by HTH teachers and administrators and one adjunct professor from USD. Administrators teach courses as part of their job duties, but HTH teachers and outside instructors are compensated \$100 per contract hour to teach these extra courses. Courses are held on the HTH campus.

The program focus is on how theories apply to what teachers are actually doing in the classroom. You have the opportunity to directly apply what you are learning in your credentialing class to your teaching.

- Teacher, HTH

The curriculum is based on California state standards and aims to “situate teacher training in HTH sites where candidates can experience a 21st century context for teaching and learning”⁵ (see Toolkit for *Internship Program Course List*, *Internship Program Short Course Descriptions*, and *Sample Course Syllabus and Description*).

The project-based program enables teachers to apply what they are learning directly in the classroom. As Husbands notes, “*Our training is more like a professional development school than a teacher credentialing program. Much of what our teachers learn comes out of their own on-the-job experiences. The training is so embedded in teacher practice: it is very discussion-oriented and draws on what they are doing in their classrooms, so it is relevant to what they are doing on a day-to-day basis.*”

It is helpful to be doing project-based learning. You wouldn't necessarily have that in another credentialing program.

- Teacher, HTH

Mentoring and Support

The HTH program provides substantial support to interns in the form of mentors, the program director, and a cohort of like-minded people. Each intern is partnered with a mentor who provides intensive ongoing guidance, support, and coaching. Mentors must be credentialed and have a minimum of two years of teaching experience, preferably at an HTH school. Mentors hold roundtables where they talk to interns about different challenges interns are facing, such as differentiating instruction, classroom management, communicating with parents, or self-reflection techniques.

Teachers also periodically check in with Husbands. In the first year, teachers meet with her every week and in the second year, they meet with her once a month.

The cohort element of the program creates a community of like-minded people. As one teacher notes, “*It creates a culture in which you can learn from each other. We are all using project-based learning and all using the same terminology, which is a benefit you wouldn't necessarily get in another credentialing program.*”

⁵ HTH Internship Program Preconditions

Intern Evaluations

Admission to the credentialing program does not guarantee employment. The intern program is two years long, but each intern signs a one-year contract, which ensures that teachers that complete the program are truly prepared and qualified to teach at HTH. HTH has asked about 10 percent of first-year interns not to return for their second year.

Ongoing evaluation is built into the program. Interns receive constant informal evaluations, are evaluated in each course, and are observed by their mentor and school directors. During the second year of the program, interns must pass a state-required teaching performance assessment (TPA) on content knowledge and pedagogy. Once they have completed their teaching requirements and coursework, and have received a passing score on the TPA, interns have a final “Presentation of Learning,” during which *“they present to a panel what they have learned, show a clip of themselves teaching and reflect on it, and describe their plans for continued professional growth.”* The panel consists of a board member, a school director, an experienced teacher, a community partner, and a student or parent. If interns pass this presentation, the HTH Teacher Intern Program staff recommends the teacher for their preliminary credential. The board of directors reviews these reports and makes credentialing recommendations to the state commission on teacher credentialing.

Costs

The state provides a \$2,500 grant per teacher to operate the program, an amount that HTH must match. HTH pays for the matching requirement out of the 5-8 percent school management fee HTH receives from each school for providing a suite of services, including teacher credentialing. However, the program director emphasizes that this amount is not enough to cover all program costs. Some program costs, like materials and the director’s salary, are underwritten by HTH and come out of its general professional development budget. So far, HTH has not raised separate funds to pay for this program. The program is free for participants.

Impact

Anecdotally, High Tech High has found the program to be an effective teacher recruitment tool. The convenience and affordability of the program attract teachers who wouldn’t otherwise enter teaching or who are willing to move from out-of-state to teach at HTH. Furthermore, the program allows HTH to hire whoever they see as best qualified for the job, whether or not they are already certified. As Husbands notes, *“We get career-changers or people who wouldn’t otherwise go into teaching because they don’t want to pay for a credentialing program.”* The program has also enabled HTH to recruit more math and science teachers. This year, 17 out of the 29 interns are in math and science.

Teachers see this as a great benefit: ‘I got a job at HTH and I get free credentialing. Are you kidding? That’s awesome!’

- Jennifer Husbands, Director, HTH
Graduate School of Education

It is too early to tell what impact the program will have on teacher quality because 2006-2007 is the first school year in which an entirely new cohort of teachers will be trained. Previously, the program was training teachers already employed by HTH. However, Husbands notes, *“anecdotally, I think the program is improving first-year teacher quality because interns have so much support in the form of mentors.”*

CHALLENGES

- **Gaining state approval to certify teachers.** Gaining state approval to certify teachers was a long process involving much iteration on proposals over many years. Additionally, because HTH was the first charter school to seek approval to certify its own teachers, it had to “*navigate the process for the first time.*”
- **Working with traditional university programs.** The university partner must be comfortable partnering with an alternative program that will likely have a strong focus on field-based curriculum. “*Your partner needs to see on-the-job experience as a legitimate part of the learning. When teachers are working so hard in the classroom, you can’t expect them to read two books a week.*”
- **Relying on school faculty to teach the program.** HTH faculty teaches the intern courses in addition to their normal job requirements. “*Our faculty is so busy already, and it can be challenging to work with people who are really busy, for whom this isn’t a full time job.*”
- **Significant time commitment.** This is a time and resource-intensive program to run. “*There are meetings, tests to coordinate, classes, data, finding space — a lot goes into managing this program.*”
- **The program is expensive to run.** “*This is not cheap and it is challenging to get the resources in place. The \$2,500 per intern is not enough to run the program. If we had just one or two schools, I don’t know if we could do this — you need enough schools to make it cost-effective.*”

LESSONS LEARNED

In order to effectively implement an in-house program to certify teachers, charter schools should ensure the following components can be put into place:

- **Organizational commitment.** It is important to dedicate sufficient staff and resources to effectively implement the program. Teachers and administrators must be willing to teach courses, serve as mentors, and provide ongoing support. A full-time director is essential to overseeing a coordinated program.
- **Field-based, on-the-job learning.** Structuring the program so teachers apply what they learn directly into their classrooms helps ensure that training is practical, useful, and relevant to the school’s model.
- **A university partner who can think out of the box.** “*The partnership requires people with a traditional mindset about teacher preparation to think more broadly.*”
- **The capacity to teach in-house.** The convenience of having the program on-site saves teachers valuable time because they don’t have to travel to another location to earn their credentials.
- **A tuition-free program.** This will make the program more appealing to teachers and can help the program serve as a recruiting tool.
- **Integration with existing professional development.** “*If you are a charter school that has a lot of professional development built into the school day, week, or year, like we do, you can integrate this into ongoing professional development and make it consistent with your more innovative practices.*”

CONCLUSION

High Tech High serves as an illustrative example of how a charter school can certify its own teachers in a state that has alternative teacher certification laws in place. Having an in-house certification program ensures teachers receive practical, on-the-job experience that aligns with the school's model while meeting state and federal certification requirements, and enables the school to recruit the teachers best suited to serve its students. As Husbands succinctly sums it up, *"While it is a lot of work, it is definitely worth doing."* HTH hopes that they have laid much of the groundwork for other charter schools in the state to gain approval to certify their teachers: *"we broke down the door and we want others to go through it."*

HIGH TECH HIGH TEACHER CREDENTIALING TOOLKIT

Toolkit Contents

- **HTH Internship Program Course List (HTH Document)**
- **HTH Internship Program Short Course Descriptions (HTH Document)**
- **Sample Course Syllabus and Description: Classroom Management and Assessment (HTH Document)**

Additional Documents (Available Separately)

- **Sample Precondition Statement (HTH Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/HTH-A.doc>
- **Sample Common Standard (HTH Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/HTH-B.doc>
- **Sample Program Standard (HTH Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/HTH-C.doc>



HTH Internship Program Course List

The HTH Teacher Intern Program will include **600 hours** of training and practice over the course of fifteen months.

HTH 101	How People Learn: Principles of Educational Psychology
HTH 102	Introduction to Teaching Methods and Content Standards
HTH 103	Equity and Diversity: Social and Cultural Foundations
HTH 104	Classroom Management and Assessment (Field Experience)
HTH 105	Teaching Methods, Curriculum Design and Classroom Settings
HTH 106	Teaching Practicum I
HTH 107	Professional Portfolio Development I
HTH 108	Technology in Portfolio Development
HTH 109	Teaching Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum
HTH 110	Teaching Practicum II
HTH 111	Technology in Instruction
HTH 112	Philosophy of Education: Teaching Performance Expectations
HTH 113	Preparation to Teach English Language Learners
HTH 114	Teaching Practicum III
HTH 115	Healthy Environments
HTH 116	Assessment and Evaluation
HTH 117	Professional Portfolio Development II



HTH Internship Program Short Course Descriptions

HTH 101. How People Learn: Principles of Educational Psychology

In this course, candidates learn major theories, concepts, principles, and research related to adolescent development and human learning. The course focuses on the physical, personal, intellectual, social and ethical development of adolescents. Candidates learn how to create learning opportunities in their subject area to support student development, motivation and learning.

HTH 102. Introduction to Teaching Methods and Content Standards

In this course, candidates will learn the skills and acquire the tools necessary to prepare for the beginning weeks of the school year. The course will focus on developing learning communities that promote student effort and engagement. Candidates explore ways to create an effective classroom environment, establish rapport with all students, and develop relationships with students' families.

HTH 103. Equity and Diversity: Social and Cultural Foundations

This course develops candidates' concept of culture and its implications for teaching and learning. Candidates learn about the background experiences, skills, languages and abilities of diverse student groups, and how to apply appropriate pedagogical practices that provide access to the HTH curriculum and create an equitable community within the classroom. Candidates study different perspectives on teaching and learning, examine various theories of education, and identify the inequalities in academic outcomes in American education. The course will focus on how teacher and student expectations affect student achievement.

HTH 104. Classroom Management and Assessment (Field Experience)

This course is a comprehensive, rigorous introduction to classroom management, lesson planning and assessment. This course provides candidates with the opportunity to work with their assigned Mentor Teacher and complete all requirements for their field experience report.

HTH 105. Teaching Methods, Curriculum Design and Classroom Settings

This course provides candidates with instruction and practice for planning and delivering curriculum in their specific content area (math, English, science, humanities, art, Spanish), and in using appropriate instructional technology in the content area. Candidates will review and analyze the state content standards in their specific content area as part of this course.



HTH 106. Teaching Practicum I

This course provides candidates with the opportunity to apply and practice the learning theories covered in HTH 101 in a classroom setting in their subject area. The course provides opportunities to identify and solve subject-specific problems inherent in clinical teaching, lesson planning, and classroom organization and management. This course runs concurrently with HTH 105 (Teaching Methods).

HTH 107. Professional Portfolio Development I

This course introduces candidates to the portfolio development process. Candidates learn about the Teaching Performance Assessment requirements and the final exit interview, and how they relate to the Teaching Performance Expectations. The course helps candidates identify the types and quality of teaching artifacts that should be collected and presented in the portfolio.

HTH 108. Technology in Portfolio Development

This course is designed to assist and guide candidates in the use of technology to complete and assemble their professional teaching portfolio. The course combines training in the use of appropriate technologies and portfolio advisement for each of the portfolio domains, which candidates will be expected to present electronically.

HTH 109. Teaching Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum

This course prepares candidates to teach content-based reading and writing skills to all students. Candidates review and analyze the *Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools*, and learn to use effective strategies and methods aligned to the framework. The course provides practical experience in content-based reading and writing.

HTH 110. Teaching Practicum II

This course provides candidates with opportunities to connect learning theories with subject-specific pedagogical practices in the classroom. Candidates work with their Mentor Teachers in their subject area. This course runs concurrently with HTH 109 (Teaching Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum).

HTH 111. Technology in Instruction

This course will focus on the application of teaching and learning strategies that integrate technology into the learning process. Candidates will learn to use technology tools to prepare teaching materials, to develop curriculum, deliver instruction, evaluate student performance, and assist in course management.



HTH 112. Philosophy of Education: Teaching Performance Expectations

In this course, candidates review the full range of Teaching Performance Expectations identified in the *Standards for Quality and Effectiveness for Teacher Preparation Programs*. Candidates will research prominent educational philosophies and learning theory, and will articulate in writing their own Philosophy of Education.

HTH 113. Preparation to Teach English Language Learners

In this course, candidates learn about issues pertaining to the special needs and considerations of English learners in secondary classrooms. The course emphasizes understanding English language proficiency assessment and placements, and how to address a range of fluency and proficiency levels in a single classroom.

HTH 114. Teaching Practicum III

This course provides candidates with the opportunity to apply and practice the learning theories covered in their teacher training sessions in a classroom setting in their subject area. The course provides opportunities to identify and solve subject-specific problems inherent in clinical teaching, lesson planning, and classroom organization and management. This course runs concurrently with HTH 113 (Preparation to Teach English Language Learners) and HTH 116 (Assessment and Evaluation).

HTH 115. Healthy Environments

This course is designed to teach methods and best practices in the physical education and health curricula. Candidates review and analyze the California Physical Education and Health Frameworks and supplemental readings to develop their understanding of a comprehensive physical and health education system that will prepare adolescents for a lifelong commitment to physical activity and health.

HTH 116. Assessment and Evaluation

This course is designed to teach candidates how social, emotional, cognitive and pedagogical factors impact students' learning outcomes. Candidates learn how a teacher's beliefs, expectations and behaviors affect student learning. The course provides a professional perspective on teaching that includes an ethical commitment to teach every student effectively and to continue to develop as a professional educator.

HTH 117. Professional Portfolio Development II

This course provides candidates with the opportunity to assemble their professional portfolio. Each candidate will work with a Portfolio Advisor to examine the materials they have collected during their supervised fieldwork to determine which will be the best examples to use as evidence of their professional growth.



Sample Course Syllabus and Description

Field Experience: HTH 104
2 Credits
Fall 2004

Course Description

This course provides candidates with instruction and practice for planning and delivering curriculum in their specific content areas. HTH 104 is an introduction to teaching in the secondary classroom that includes: observation of classroom management, lesson planning and assessment. The Field Experience is an opportunity for candidates to observe and work with a Mentor Teacher in their selected subject area. The assignments are designed to expose the intern to the rigor of the teaching experience. Each intern will submit a Field Experience handbook after a 30-hour observational assignment. This course will require meetings with instructors to orient the intern to the observation expectations, debrief about observations, and evaluation.

II Required Text and Materials

Single Subject Field Experience Guide

III. Course Objectives

Interns will be able to:

- Demonstrate the ability to manage small and large group activities under the guidance of the Mentor Teacher.
- Demonstrate the ability to give directions and state expected student behavior for classroom activities.
- Explain how teachers use assessment to guide instruction.
- Use assessment information to identify individual student's needs.
- Record and reflect upon their observations and experiences in the Field Experience.
- Demonstrate professionalism and good judgment in assigned responsibilities.



IV. Teaching Performance Expectations

TPE 1: Making Subject Matter Comprehensible to Students

Activities:

Intern begins to examine and discuss the state-adopted content standards.

Intern begins to write project-based lesson plans.

Intern examines student work and discusses instructional changes.

Assessment:

Intern completes a case study of student work.

Intern submits written lesson plans.

TPE 2: Assessing Student Learning

Activity:

Interns write reflections after teaching each lesson plan describing how their instruction needs to be modified based on student work and products.

Assessment:

Written lesson plans with accompanying reflections.

TPE 3: Assessing Student Learning

Activity:

Intern analyzes and discusses student work.

Assessment:

Case Studies Project.

TPE 4: Engaging and Supporting Students in Learning

Activity:

Intern observes lessons taught by mentor teacher.

Intern writes lessons with modeled and independent options.

Intern writes lessons based on state adopted academic content standards.

Assessment:

Written lesson plans.

Mentor teacher observation.

TPE 5: Student Engagement

Activity:

Look at lessons plans with objectives clearly stated.

Analyze good lesson plans.

Intern writes and teaches lessons that have strong modeling and checking for understanding.

Assessment:

Written lesson plans and reflections.

Mentor teacher observation.

TPE 7: Teaching English Learners



Activity:

Intern writes reflection after teaching lesson to English Learner.

Assessment:

Written lesson plan and reflection.

Mentor teacher observation.

TPE 9: Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for Students

Activity:

Intern will discuss, and plan lessons based on state adopted academic content standards.

Intern will observe direct instruction teaching methods.

Intern will teach direct instruction lesson.

Assessment:

Written reflections and lesson plans.

Mentor teacher observation.

TPE10: Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning

Activity:

Intern will receive feedback on lessons taught during field experience.

Intern will write and reflect on lessons taught during field experience.

Assessment:

Written lesson plans and reflections.

Mentor teacher will observe lessons delivered in the field experience.

TPE 11: Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Learning

Activity:

Intern observes and reflects on teacher student interactions.

Assessment:

Intern completes reflection with includes script of conversation.

TPE 13: Developing as a Professional Educator

Activity:

Intern cycles through planning, teaching, reflecting, and applying new strategies.

Assessment:

Written lesson plans and reflections.

V. Program Strands

Program Strands	Learning Activity	Assessment
Problem Solving	Analysis of student work	Reflection Case Study
Reflection	Reflection of lesson plans	Written reflections on



(std. 4 & 6)	Reflective Journal Case Study Reflection Reflection of Observations Field Handbook assignments	lesson plans Reflective Journal Case Study Observations Field Handbook Assignments
Equity and Diversity (std. 5)	Observation about school, students, and neighborhood	Observation
Reading/Language Arts (std. 7)	Observation Analysis of student work	Case Study Field Handbook Assignments
Technology	Internet research assignment	Teaching resources for content area
English Language Students	Case Study	Case Study Field Handbook Assignment
Special Populations	Case Study	Case Study Field Handbook Assignment

VI. Grading Criteria

Teacher candidates will be graded at the completion of this course in accordance with the following criteria:

Exceeds Standards: Outstanding knowledge of course content demonstrated (90%-100%); attendance at every class session; all assignments turned in on time; professionalism, effort and application above and beyond course requirements reflected in class participation and outside written work.

Meets Standards: Good knowledge of course content demonstrated (80%-89%); attendance at every class session or not more than one class session missed and made up by completing an additional assignment approved by the instructor and the program administrator; professionalism reflected in class participation and outside written work.

Needs Development: Below average knowledge of course content demonstrated (70%-79%); assignments missing; or class participation and/or outside written work were below average. A grade of “Needs Development” must be made up and converted into a “Meets Standards” grade within three weeks.



Below Standards: Failure (69% or below). Any “Needs Development” grade that is not made up within four weeks automatically converts to a “Below Standards” grade. Candidates receiving a “Below Standards” grade may be dropped from the program.

Assignments: Compile all of the following into a three ring binder and submit to Instructor by December 17, 2004.

- Lesson Plans: Obtain copies of lesson plans from teachers being observed and submit your own intern lesson plan as well. (6)
- Observation Form: Complete an Observation Form during each observation. (6)
- Journal: Write a one page reflection after each observation. Make sure it is dated each time. (6)
- Classroom Management Plan: Write a classroom management plan.
- Final Exam: Turn in a two page reflection about the entire observational experience.

Grading

1. Class attendance and participation (20%)

Attendance and participation in class discussions. Submission of a classroom management plan.

2. Observation journal responses (20%)

The journal is designed to get you thinking about what you observe and what you bring to the experience. Your journal responses will be critical to our final class discussion so bring it with you. A 3-ring binder will be ideal for keeping all observational notes and activity responses. You will be responding to your journal after each observation.

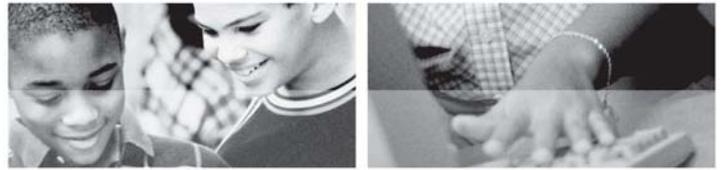
3. Narrative "progress report" (20%)

Your "final exam" will be a reflection on yourself as a student and future teacher.

4. Observation /Field experiences (20%)

You need to invest at least 30 hours of time in the schools for certification. You will keep a time verification record to be signed by your cooperating teacher(s).

5. Field Experience Observation by Instructor (20%)



DC PREP

Implementation of the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP)

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

This case study was prepared by FSG Social Impact Advisors. FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides guidance to foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and other public sector entities on issues of strategy, evaluation, and operations. FSG was commissioned by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “promising practices” of portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared across the NewSchools portfolio. To complete this case study, FSG conducted background research on DC Prep and interviewed Emily Lawson, DC Prep’s Executive Director and Founder; Natalie Butler, DC Prep Principal; Melodie Barron, National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) Senior Program Specialist; and Kristan Van Hook, NIET Senior Vice President of Public Policy. Jordan Meranus of NewSchools Venture Fund provided additional context on DC Prep.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. What teacher support, evaluation, and advancement processes does your organization have in place, and in what areas would you like to see improvement?
2. Do you think that performance pay would help drive performance in your organization?
3. How would you weigh the decision to implement a program like the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) as opposed to developing your own teacher support processes in house?
4. What do you see as the challenges of implementing TAP or a similar program?
5. What resources are you currently allocating toward teacher support, evaluation, and advancement? Is this sufficient? If not, are there other sources of funds?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

When done well, professional development links teachers into learning communities, enhances their job satisfaction, and, most importantly, improves their ability to deliver instruction and improve student performance. However, when done poorly, teachers often complain about mandated professional development, which can be disconnected from how they teach on a day-to-day basis and is not necessarily designed to allow them to interact with and learn from their peers. At the same time, schools find it challenging to build structured time into the day for professional development or for teachers to find time to reflect on their instructional practices. Given this, how can schools structure effective professional development so their teachers are engaged and can continually improve their craft?

Many charter management organizations (CMOs) develop their own professional development programs. However, others do not have the expertise or resources to create an in-house professional development program. Good models and providers of professional development do exist. This case study examines how DC Prep decided to implement one of these models, the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP)¹, in an effort to improve its professional development for teachers.

DC Prep Background

DC Prep is a charter management organization (CMO) founded in 2003 in Washington, D.C. that aims to *“provide students with an outstanding education that emphasizes rigorous academics and character development that will prepare them for success in college-preparatory high schools.”*² With 250 students in grades 4–8, its first school consistently outperforms the similar schools in the district. DC Prep students score double the proficiency rate in reading and triple the proficiency rate in math as students in neighboring D.C. public schools.³ DC Prep hopes to open nine additional schools in the next eight years, ultimately serving over 3,000 students in Pre-K through grade 8. DC Prep has 24 teachers for the 2007 school year.

Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) Background

First developed by the Milken Family Foundation in 1999, TAP is designed *“to attract, retain, develop and motivate talented people to the teaching profession — and keep them there — by making it more attractive and rewarding to be a teacher.”*⁴ TAP provides teachers with ongoing professional growth, evaluation, a career path in teaching, and performance-based compensation. To some, TAP is a performance pay plan with a great deal of support to teachers to help them to become more effective. To others, it is a professional development program that rewards teachers for their success. Now overseen by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), TAP is being implemented in more than 130 schools in 14 states and Washington, D.C. and impacts roughly 4,000 teachers.⁵

¹ The Teacher Advancement Program and TAP are trademarks of the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching.

² <http://www.dcrep.org/about/index.asp>

³ <http://www.dcrep.org/about/accomplishments.asp>

⁴ <http://www.talentedteachers.org/tap taf?page=whatistap>

⁵ http://www.talentedteachers.org/tap taf?page=tapschool_locations

Typically, district or state superintendents invite schools to apply to become TAP schools. When a school expresses interest, NIET will present to staff to explain the program, hold conference calls to answer individual teacher questions, and take teachers to visit other TAP schools. As one TAP staff member said, “*We want school staff to have enough information to make a good decision if TAP is right for them.*” Schools submit applications, and NIET selects schools according to the level of faculty interest in the program and the school’s ability to effectively implement, fund, and sustain the program.⁶

Key Components of TAP Model

TAP is based on four key elements:

1. **Multiple career paths.** TAP allows teachers to progress along a career continuum from career teacher to mentor to master. Along with the principal, master and mentor teachers are part of the school’s TAP Leadership Team, and are responsible for setting specific annual student learning goals. They provide professional development for teachers aimed at meeting these goals and also conduct teacher evaluations. Teachers must apply for these positions, and each level has increased responsibility and pay, providing an opportunity for real career growth.
2. **Ongoing, job-embedded professional development.** Teams of teachers meet weekly in “cluster groups” with a master or mentor teacher to learn strategies targeted at improving student skills in a specific area. Schools can design these clusters in different ways, but they are often formed by grade or content area. Through the cluster meetings, teachers identify areas of student academic weakness based on test data, determine specific strategies to address those areas, and develop an action plan on how to work as a team to address those issues over a given period of time. Professional support extends beyond the cluster as master and mentor teachers regularly team-teach, observe instruction, and model lessons in all classrooms.
3. **Regular teacher evaluations.** Teachers are formally evaluated by mentor teachers, master teachers, and administrators four to six times per year using a rigorous TAP-developed rubric and are evaluated informally on a regular basis. A pre-conference is conducted before each announced evaluation. A post-conference is conducted following each announced and unannounced evaluation to help foster self-reflection (see Toolkit for *Sample Pre-Evaluation Conference Questions* and *Sample Post-Evaluation Conference Questions*).
4. **Performance pay.** Teachers receive bonuses that are based on their classroom evaluations, value-added student achievement gains, and value-added school achievement gains (see Toolkit for *How Performance Pay Works*).

Why DC Prep Chose TAP

DC Prep’s decision to implement TAP was somewhat opportunistic. DC Prep’s leaders were looking to improve professional development for teachers at the same time that TAP had received government funding

⁶ <http://www.talentedteachers.org/tap.taf?page=facts>

to start TAP implementation in Washington, D.C. DC Prep was drawn to the TAP model because it provided resources and expertise that DC Prep did not already have in place and, as Founder Emily Lawson noted, *“We tried doing some similar things ourselves, but found it easier to start with a model. TAP helps you figure out how to implement an effective professional development model in your school.”* Furthermore DC Prep believed that TAP could be implemented much more quickly than if it were to develop an in-house professional development program from the ground up.

Thus, in the spring of 2005, after thoroughly discussing the program at staff meetings, DC Prep teachers voted to implement TAP. Trainings began that summer, and the program launched in the fall.

This program is useful if you want your teachers to operate as a team and if you want to attract people who are continual learners.

- Emily Lawson, Founder, DC Prep

DC PREP: IMPLEMENTATION OF TAP

NIET provides a model and expertise, but allows for some flexibility so that schools mold the program to most appropriately meet the needs of their teachers and students. As Natalie Butler, DC Prep Principal, noted, *“The great thing about TAP is that they provide a great structure, which you can meld to your school.”*

The Rigorous TAP Rubric looks at 4 components:

1. Designing Instruction
2. Implementing Instruction
3. Learning Environment
4. Responsibilities

Below are the categories evaluated in the category “Implementing Instruction”:

- Standards/Objectives
- Motivating Students
- Presenting Instructional Content
- Lesson Structure and Pacing
- Activities and Materials
- Questioning
- Academic Feedback
- Grouping
- Teacher Content Knowledge
- Teacher Knowledge of Students
- Thinking
- Problem Solving

Staff Structure, Evaluation, and Support

The ratio of master and mentor teachers in TAP schools varies based on resources and human capital. At DC Prep, there is one master teacher. This master teacher has a substantially reduced classroom workload in order to serve as an instructional coach for three mentor teachers, who also have a reduced workload to support career teachers. The TAP Leadership Team of master and mentor teachers and administrators meets regularly to discuss critical instructional needs. They might choose a teacher to focus on, giving him or her special attention. Or, they might pick a certain standard or objective that they want the school or team to focus on. These decisions are driven by student needs.

Each mentor teacher supports five to eight teachers and provides individual instruction in each content area. Master and mentor teachers focus on helping teachers improve their teaching strategies to drive student achievement. Serving as a critical support, these mentor and master teachers conduct regular classroom observations, evaluate teachers against a rigorous TAP-developed instructional rubric, help develop lesson plans, model lessons, co-teach, share strategies, and help teachers identify areas for improvement. Mentor and master teachers are constantly visiting classrooms

As a mentor teacher, you learn so much yourself, that you become an outstanding teacher. If you walk around a building, you could easily identify the Mentor Teachers.

- Natalie Butler, Principal, DC Prep

and leaving post-it notes and email messages with quick feedback on what they observed. More formal evaluations occur four to six times per year against a rigorous rubric and provide a structure to help teachers think about how to improve their practices. Master and mentor teachers are also evaluated by administrators or other mentor or master teachers so that they continue to improve. Master and mentor teachers also provide ongoing support to other teachers through modeling lessons, observing instructional practices and coaching on effective teaching strategies (see Toolkit for *Sample Questions to Coach Mentor/Master Teachers*). Because DC Prep employs a small school model, its master teacher has more responsibilities than master teachers at other TAP schools, including some testing and diagnostic responsibilities.

Cluster Groups

Every Friday at DC Prep, groups of five to eight teachers, known as “clusters,” meet to learn strategies targeted at improving their students’ skills. They identify areas of student academic weakness based on test data, identify specific strategies to address those areas, and develop an action plan on how to work as a team to address those issues over a given period of time. The teachers will give students an assessment before and after they implement a new strategy to determine if students have improved in that skill. Mentor or master teachers lead and support the cluster groups.

At DC Prep, all teachers, including physical education, music, and art teachers, are included in cluster groups. Clusters are organized by content area, so that teachers can focus on teaching strategies for that subject. For instance, the English cluster might decide that an area of student weakness is writing topic sentences, so they will focus on how to better teach that skill. This year at DC Prep, one cluster is working on math skills and the others are working on English skills, as those were identified as significant areas of student need.

Performance Pay

Although the TAP performance pay bonus is typically given after the first year of TAP implementation, DC Prep decided to wait until TAP’s second year because it wanted to ensure that the evaluation processes and supports for teachers were established and understood. Thus, 2007 is the first year that teachers at DC Prep will receive bonuses based on their average classroom evaluation scores, value-added student achievement gains, and school-wide value-added gains. At DC Prep, a pool of \$2,000 per teacher is established each year from which the performance is awarded. Nationally, bonuses range from \$400 to \$4,500 depending upon the range of scores received by teachers (see Toolkit for *How Performance Pay Works*).

DC Prep has tweaked some of the typical TAP performance-pay policies to better fit the needs and structure of its school (see *Implementation Costs* sidebar). While performance pay has not yet been awarded, according to Principal Natalie Butler, “People seem excited to be receiving a bonus at all. What will be hard is for those teachers who do not receive the maximum \$2,000 bonus — I’m sure those teachers will be frustrated. However, I’ve been having conversations with the staff about the bonuses since the beginning of the school year, and so far, everyone seems excited about it.”

Support from NIET

NIET develops and provides training for all TAP schools. In areas where multiple schools exist, the state department of education or the local school district hires a TAP director or coordinator to support the schools in their implementation. This individual, along with additional support from the NIET national training staff, trains the Leadership Team members and coaches mentor and master teachers throughout the school year.

At DC Prep, NIET Senior Program Specialist Melodie Barron has provided this support since the beginning of TAP implementation. Through monthly visits and regular phone and email communication, Ms. Barron supports the Leadership Team in determining areas in which the school needs more training and support. For instance, after a recent visit to DC Prep, Ms. Barron observed that the staff wanted to improve their ability to conduct teacher evaluations. Thus, she *“helped coach the teachers on how to observe and evaluate lessons, modeled how to conduct post-evaluation conferences with teachers, and debriefed with mentor and master teachers after they had conducted a teacher evaluation and modeled how to conduct post-evaluation conferences with teachers.”*

The support from TAP is outstanding. Because our coordinator works with other schools, she can help us figure out the best instructional strategies. She also knows our staff well and can help us solve problems.

- Natalie Butler, Principal, DC Prep

NIET provides annual feedback to schools through a formal program review process each spring. This review evaluates how well a school’s implementation of TAP aligns with the recommended model. Reviewers assess how well clusters are implemented, how much support teachers receive from mentor and master teachers, and how well new staff members are trained in the program components. Schools receive scores and written feedback from the review and the person who conducted the review debriefs with the school’s administrator (see Toolkit for *Annual TAP Program Review*).

I’m regularly on the phone or on email with DC Prep staff. I share ideas and strategies that I’ve seen at other schools and try to connect them with others who can help them.

- Melodie Barron, TAP Coordinator for DC Prep

NIET also makes use of its growing TAP school network to allow schools to support each other. An active TAP listserv is used by TAP schools across the country to communicate with each other and to draw upon their collective knowledge base. DC Prep teachers post questions and receive immediate feedback related to strategies, skills, and materials. As one staff member remarked, *“As the TAP program has grown, so has its knowledge base. You can throw out a question and get a million responses.”* In addition, NIET sponsors an annual TAP conference that provides education training and networking opportunities for those implementing or interested in implementing TAP. Finally, NIET also holds an annual TAP Summer Institute which provides intensive training workshops for existing Leadership Team members. NIET expects that over time, schools will be able to rely more and more on their internal expertise and the school network to continue to train new teachers and cultivate excellent master and mentor teachers.

Cost

The implementation of TAP requires schools or districts to incur costs associated with additional personnel,

Master Stipend	\$7,000-\$10,000 (currently 1 FTE)
Mentor Stipend	\$15,000 (3 FTEs, \$5,000 each)
Bonuses	\$50,000 (assumes school budgets \$2,000 per teacher for bonuses)

compensation, and training. There is not an additional fee required for a school to implement TAP. At DC Prep, due to a federal appropriation, TAP currently covers all the costs associated with trainings. In coming years, DC Prep will build TAP costs

into its budget. DC Prep hopes to pay for this cost out of a federal Teacher Incentive Grant, but if it does not receive this grant, financing for TAP will need to come from general funds.

The majority of costs associated with TAP implementation are related to personnel, such as additional staff, master and mentor stipends, and performance bonuses. At DC Prep, stipends are \$5,000 for mentor teachers and \$7,000 – \$10,000 for master teachers. At current staffing levels, the total annual cost for DC Prep is \$75,000 at a maximum. The costs of the program will increase as enrollment expands and additional teachers are hired. NIET works with schools to take those factors into account and create a budget that ensures financial sustainability within three to five years.

Impact

NIET conducts annual reviews to measure how well a school's implementation is aligned with the TAP model. According to Ms. Barron, *"We see the biggest student gains in schools that have structured the program most closely to the recommended TAP model."* While schools across the nation may vary in their level of implementation, DC Prep's program is very closely aligned to the TAP model.

TAP has raised the level of professionalism in our school community and created a culture of reflective practitioners who strive to be the best teachers they can be. Personally, the support and coaching which TAP has provided to me has allowed me to grow tremendously as a professional and has ultimately made me a more effective teacher as evidenced by the growth of my students.
- Teacher, DC Prep

I have learned to critically plan for and analyze instruction through a lens that focuses on a student-centered classroom rather than a teacher-centered environment.
- Teacher, DC Prep

DC Prep also continually monitors the progress teachers are making through teacher evaluations, ongoing feedback, interim assessments evaluating the progress of cluster groups, and student achievement. While results are still preliminary, DC Prep teachers have improved along the TAP rubric. DC Prep's founder also believes that TAP will have a positive impact on teacher retention,

although it is too early to measure that impact. According to Principal Natalie Butler, conversations have become much more student-focused since TAP was implemented. *"This program is wonderful because now teachers are always talking about how instruction connects to student learning rather than how they feel their lesson went that day."*

A recent study conducted by NIET found that in every TAP state, TAP teachers and schools out-performed similar non-TAP teachers and schools in producing student achievement gains. Furthermore, the study found

a positive impact on teacher motivation, teacher retention, collegiality, and teamwork.⁷ As a teacher at DC Prep remarked, *“Honest and open communication regarding instruction is rarely found in schools but is present throughout DC Prep. TAP creates a true community of learners amongst the educators in the building.”*

CHALLENGES

- ***Ensuring teachers are comfortable with frequent evaluations.*** Teachers in TAP schools are observed on a frequent basis, both through formal evaluations four to six times per year and more numerous informal evaluations. They are observed by mentor teachers, master teachers, TAP coordinators, and administrators. Many teachers find it challenging to have someone observing their classroom so often.
- ***Providing adequate support to evaluate and mentor teachers.*** Mentor and master teachers and administrators need to be available to provide support to help teachers improve on areas identified through evaluations. Administrative support is also needed to process additional TAP-related paperwork. This is particularly challenging at DC Prep given that there is only one master teacher supporting the faculty.
- ***Funding the program.*** Between the stipends and the performance pay, the program is expensive to implement. Schools need to raise additional funds or commit to funding the stipends and bonuses through their general per-pupil revenue. NIET works with schools that show an ability to fund and sustain the program.
- ***Finding highly effective master and mentor teachers.*** DC Prep initially hired the master teacher from outside the school, but hopes that master and mentor teachers will grow from within the faculty. In hiring mentor and master teachers, DC Prep is looking for strong instructional leaders who have the ability to build trust, cohesiveness, and a culture of continual learning among the staff.

We are looking for individuals who are open, warm, honest, and can build trust with the staff. This is a challenging role because you have to get teachers to understand it is OK to have weaknesses. A high level of instructional expertise is not enough. They need to be able to support other teachers. They need to be good instructors because mentees will observe their classrooms to learn about strategies

- Natalie Butler, Principal, DC Prep
- ***Lack of proximity to other TAP schools.*** Most districts have multiple schools implementing TAP. As the only TAP school in the area, DC Prep has found it challenging not to have nearby support. *“It would be invaluable just to have another master teacher in the area so my master teacher could call another master teacher. It is hard to do this by ourselves.”*

⁷ Lewis Solmon, J Todd White, Donna Cohen and Deborah Woo, “The Effectiveness of the Teacher Advancement Program,” *The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching*, January 2007.

CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE IMPLEMENTING TAP

- **Ensure staff buy-in.** Before you decide to implement TAP, make sure the staff understands the model, including aspects such as frequent evaluations and challenging rubrics. Many schools have an all-school faculty vote to determine if teachers will support TAP. DC Prep has made it a priority to conduct frequent trainings and individual conversations to ensure that teachers remain invested in the program. DC Prep is also very transparent about the expectations around TAP when hiring new teachers.

We tell new hires that people will question their teaching, observe them frequently, and they will have to provide weekly updates on student progress. If this doesn't sound good to you, then this isn't the place for you.

- Natalie Butler, Principal, DC Prep

- **Identify master and mentor teachers.** The ability to implement the program relies on the mentoring expertise and talent of the master and mentor teachers. Because filling these positions is challenging, it is important to identify if you have individuals to fill these roles before you implement the model or if you will need to

Having the conversations about the rubrics are some of the hardest conversations because many of our teachers are great teachers but, when compared against the rubric, they are just average. But, these conversations are great for learning because the rubric really exemplifies good teaching. People who score average or above average really are exemplary teachers.

- Natalie Butler, Principal, DC Prep

- look outside the school building to find qualified candidates. Once you have implemented TAP, you will need to continue to identify and cultivate staff who can eventually become mentor and master teachers.
- **Set expectations around evaluation.** The TAP rubric is rigorous, and many teachers who are accustomed to scoring at the top of teaching rubrics score around average. Talk to teachers ahead of time to set expectations about the scores and to emphasize a focus on improvement and not absolute scores. Showing averages across the country can help teachers understand their own scores.
- **Provide dedicated time for professional development.** You must be willing to make time during the school day for cluster meetings, evaluations, and debriefs. There needs to be sufficient time to provide ongoing support both in and out of the classroom.
- **Locate financial resources.** The program is expensive, so schools must be willing to raise funds or reallocate resources to implement TAP. This could mean shifting any existing professional development funds to TAP.
- **Implement it gradually.** There are many parts to the program, so it is essential to ensure you have each part down before you move to the next one.
- **Commit to integrating all elements of the model into the school.** This is not an add-on program and needs to be fully integrated into the school's culture.

- ***Support teachers.*** Frequent teacher evaluations need to be accompanied with strong support so that teachers feel they have the tools to improve. This will entail substantial administrative support to record the evaluations.

DC PREP TAP IMPLEMENTATION TOOLKIT

Toolkit Contents

- **Questions to Consider: Is TAP Right for My School? (Synthesized by FSG)**
- **How Performance Pay Works (NIET TAP Document)**

Questions to Consider: Is TAP right for my school?

Questions to Consider	Comments
<p>Reasons for Implementation. What do you want to accomplish by implementing TAP? What resources/components do you already have in place and what do you need to garner through outside support?</p>	
<p>Teacher Support. How can I present TAP to my staff in the most effective way? How can I ensure that the teachers will support and use the model?</p>	
<p>Talent. How can we develop a pool of people to staff the TAP Leadership Team? What resources can I access to find Master and Mentor Teachers?</p>	
<p>Scheduling. Can we alter our school schedule to make the time for regular professional development (evaluations, debriefs, cluster meetings)? If so, how?</p>	
<p>Financial Resources. How can we identify or develop the financial resources to pay for bonuses and Master and Mentor teacher stipends?</p>	
<p>Need. Will TAP meet the professional development needs of our school? If so, how?</p>	
<p>Evaluation. How will we define success? How will we determine if your program is successful?</p>	

How Performance Pay Works

According to NIET, "TAP Performance-Based Compensation means that teachers are compensated differentially based on the increased demands of the positions they hold, how well they perform in those positions, the quality of their instructional performance and by their students' achievement growth. Salary is determined by more than simply years of teaching experience and training credits. All teachers are eligible for financial awards based on these factors."⁸

For teachers with student achievement connected to his/her own teaching:

50%	Skills, Knowledge, & Responsibilities (based on rubric evaluations)
30%	Classroom Achievement Gains (based on value-added calculations)
20%	School Achievement Gains (based on value-added calculations)

For teachers without student achievement connected to his/her own teaching:

50%	Skills, Knowledge, & Responsibilities (based on evaluations)
50%	School Achievement Gains (based on value-added calculations)

⁸ <http://www.talentedteachers.org/tap.taf?page=element4>

newschools
venture fund



GREEN DOT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Working in a Union Environment

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

This case study explores the creation and implementation of a teachers union at Green Dot Public Schools.

This case study was prepared by FSG Social Impact Advisors. FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides guidance to foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and other public sector entities on issues of strategy, evaluation, and operations. FSG was commissioned by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “promising practices” of portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared across the NewSchools portfolio. To complete this case study, FSG conducted background research on Green Dot and interviewed Steve Barr, Green Dot’s Founder and CEO, as well as Green Dot’s COO and Union President. Joanne Weiss of NewSchools Venture Fund provided additional context on Green Dot.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. What specific working condition challenges does Green Dot’s approach to unions solve?
2. Is your organization facing similar challenges?
3. Can these challenges be solved with good human resources practices?
4. What impact could creating a union like Green Dot’s have on your teachers’ or principals’ job satisfaction? What impact could it have on your organizational effectiveness?
5. Do the priorities that guided Green Dot’s contract development resonate with your own organizational strategy?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Generally speaking, the relationship between teachers unions and charter schools has been contentious. Charter schools are typically perceived as direct threats to teachers unions because charter school teachers generally do not join collective bargaining units. As a result, there are examples of teachers unions trying to limit charter school expansion, block or repeal charter school laws, or sue school districts in which charter schools operate.¹ For example, both major teachers unions, the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, have opposed laws authorizing the establishment of charter schools. At the same time, teachers unions have historically played a critical role in providing a forum for teachers to come together around common areas of concern and raise a unified voice to improve their working conditions.

Recognizing the key role a union could play in facilitating open dialogue around important issues and increasing teacher satisfaction – yet not satisfied with the approach of the existing unions in Los Angeles – a founding group of teachers at Green Dot Public Schools, along with Green Dot’s founder, decided to form their own union. The result is a unique example of how charter school management organizations (CMOs) and unions can develop a positive relationship built on collaboration. The following case offers some valuable insights for other CMOs and individual charter schools who might consider taking this path or are looking for ways to work more collaboratively with teachers unions.

Green Dot Background

Mission and Vision

Green Dot Public Schools seeks to “*transform public education in Los Angeles so that all young adults receive the education they deserve to be prepared for college, leadership, and life.*”² Green Dot operates 10 charter high schools in low-income neighborhoods in Los Angeles. The organization seeks to catalyze education reform throughout Los Angeles by working to influence the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to transform its failing high schools into clusters of small successful schools and by helping the district reinvent itself.

History

Green Dot Public Schools was started in 1999 by former political and community organizer Steve Barr. Barr founded Green Dot in response to the low performance of the area’s public high schools. LAUSD’s high schools were not graduating more than 50 percent of their students, and those that were making it through were rarely prepared for college. The vast majority of the students falling out of the system were from low-income families. Barr started Green Dot with a vision of leveraging charter schools as a tool to show the school district and the public that there was a more effective way to provide public education to young adults.³

¹ Hill, Paul, Rainey, Lydia and Rotherham, Andrew. *The Future of Charter Schools and Teachers Unions*. National Charter School Research Project at the Center on Reinventing Education. 2006.

² Green Dot Web site, <http://www.greendot.org/aboutus/index.html>

³ Green Dot Web site <http://www.greendot.org/aboutus/index.html>

GREEN DOT UNION: ASOCIACIÓN DE MAESTROS UNIDOS (AMU)

The Los Angeles Teachers Union Landscape: UTLA and AMU

The United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) is the predominant teachers union in Los Angeles. With the exception of Green Dot teachers and other charter school teachers in Los Angeles, all LAUSD teachers are members of UTLA. UTLA is an affiliate of the California Teachers Association (CTA), a statewide teachers union with more than 1,100 affiliate chapters throughout California.⁴ As Green Dot opens more schools and brings more teachers into their union, UTLA's membership declines.

The Green Dot Union

When forming Green Dot, Barr was committed to the idea of establishing a teachers union because he sees them as an integral component of urban school reform. According to Barr, *“Creating non-union jobs in a union-dominated industry is difficult to think of doing. If you are going to reform urban education, you need a union component to do it.”*

However, he wasn't satisfied with the existing union models in L.A., because he felt they reflected an outdated values system and career trajectory. So in 2003 Green Dot set up its own teachers union called *Asociacion de Maestros Unidos* (AMU) which is Spanish for “Association of United Teachers.” AMU was formed as an affiliate of the California Teachers Association (CTA).

I felt that there had to be a better union than the one they have now, which has a huge generational gap between the values of older and younger members.

- Steve Barr, Founder & CEO

Union Formation Process

In 2000, Barr convened a working group of six founding teachers at Green Dot to talk about the idea of forming a union.⁵

I sat down with the first six young teachers, told them we wanted to do education reform AND union reform. They were mostly in their early 20s, just out of school, all Latino, all with social justice backgrounds. They all said, “Great.”

Developing the Contract

The contract was formed around a few key priorities that Barr felt would set AMU apart from other teachers unions. These included:

- A salary and benefits package that reflects how the school values teachers
- Treating teaching as a professional occupation
- Accountability for performance

⁴ CTA Web site <http://www.cta.org/about/>

⁵ It took from 2000-2003 to get AMU established because of the paperwork involved, as well as the fact that Barr and the teachers were busy getting other Green Dot schools opened.

These issues were fleshed out in a letter that was subsequently submitted to the State Labor Relations Board. The six teachers then went to CTA to apply for affiliate status. While Barr was the driving force, it was important to have the teachers at the forefront in dealing with CTA since they would become the initial union members.

Building the Partnership with CTA

Since CTA is the only statewide teachers union, affiliating with them was a logical choice. In addition, Barr had a pre-existing relationship with the organization from his past political organizing work. CTA responded positively to the request from Green Dot to affiliate with them. According to Barr, *“CTA said that we were doing what all schools should be doing. They liked the fact that we let teachers lead in the classroom and that we give teachers a lot of ownership over decision making at their schools.”*

CORE ELEMENTS OF AMU

The Contract

AMU represents a significant departure from traditional teachers unions and those differences are outlined in the terms of the contract (see Toolkit). The primary elements of the AMU contract (and how that compares with the UTLA contract) are as follows:

Terms	AMU	UTLA
Salary	Salary – 7-12% higher than LAUSD salary schedule	LAUSD salary schedule
Tenure	No tenure – “just cause” employment agreement (process to fire teachers with employee input)	Tenure after 2 years
Work Day	“Professional day” with no set expectations around hours	Specific minutes per day per activity
Accountability	Performance metrics and “just cause”	None
Healthcare	Better quality (e.g. PPO vs. HMO), but no lifetime benefits	Average, but lifetime benefits

There are several significant differences between the AMU and UTLA contracts that highlight some of the unique characteristics of Green Dot’s approach to unionization. Key differences include:

- **Lack of Tenure.** Whereas UTLA teachers are guaranteed tenure after two years, Green Dot teachers work under a “just cause” employment agreement that enables principals to fire teachers using “due process” if they are not performing according to standards. This is a major difference from most teachers union contracts, in which guaranteed lifetime employment plays a major role.
- **Professional Work Day.** Green Dot does not define the number of hours a teacher is expected to work, but rather lets teachers dictate their own schedules based on what it takes to get their job done. This is a

significant departure from the contracts used by UTLA and most other teachers unions, which lay out a very detailed set of guidelines around the length and structure of a teacher's workday.

- **Accountability.** Green Dot's contract places a lot of emphasis on accountability. Teachers are held accountable for high levels of performance through the "just cause" employment agreement, combined with a teacher evaluation process that identifies gaps in performance and creates a mechanism for enforcing high standards. In contrast, UTLA makes it virtually impossible to hold teachers accountable for underperformance. According to Marco Petruzzi, Green Dot's Chief Operating Officer, "UTLA's process is so complex that nobody ever gets fired because no one wants to deal with it."

Other important differences are the length of the contracts and the extent to which details are spelled out. AMU's contract is 30 pages, in contrast with UTLA's, which runs 363 pages. Whereas UTLA's contract outlines issues such as the length of a work day in great detail, Green Dot covers key issues more broadly in order to give schools autonomy over how decisions are made. As Petruzzi explains, "*The [AMU] contract doesn't spell everything out — it provides some broad guidelines and allows a lot of decision making to happen at the school site level. We think this is very healthy because it allows teachers to feel ownership over decisions at their school.*"

Green Dot signed a three-year labor agreement with AMU in May 2003, which expired in June 2006. The union membership is currently in negotiation with Green Dot's leadership over several key issues, including compensation, the definition of "professional work day," teacher evaluation, and site-based decision making. The negotiation process has been amicable for the most part, with the exception of some pushback from CTA over workday policies.

Leadership Structure

AMU is led by a president who is nominated and elected by the union membership. This president is always a teacher at one of Green Dot's schools and his or her responsibilities include keeping the membership informed of union activities, chairing membership meetings, and serving as the face and voice of the union to internal and external constituents, such as Green Dot leadership and LAUSD. The president is also available to mediate conflicts between teachers and school leadership if the need arises, though this is rare.

Other leadership positions include vice president, secretary/treasurer, and site representatives – the last of which has been difficult to fill given the demands the role places on teachers' time. In addition, AMU has five standing committees, each made up of three to six AMU members and chaired by a member of the AMU executive board (e.g. president, vice president, or secretary/treasurer). These committees include:

Committee	Responsibilities
Negotiations	Spearheads all contract negotiations with Green Dot leadership
Evaluation	Develops employee evaluation process and criteria
Website	Manages AMU's website, a primary communications vehicle with union members
Professional Development	Gathers information about professional development opportunities and sends teachers to professional development trainings
Budget/Calendar	Reviews school calendar and budget and provides suggested changes to leadership

Membership Involvement

Every teacher is a dues-paying member of the union, but only a few play an active role. Members find it difficult to get involved with the union because of the demands of working at a Green Dot School. In addition, AMU is a young union, and teachers are still learning how to get involved.

The high degree of teacher satisfaction is another factor leading to low member involvement. Teachers are drawn to Green Dot because of its schools' reputation for offering good salaries and working conditions, and according to survey data, the vast majority of teachers report that they feel positively about their school and feel that their needs are met. As a result, there is little incentive for teachers to engage in labor negotiations.

While it is possible to create similar working conditions without a union contract, having a union holds Green Dot accountable for ensuring that these good working conditions remain intact, since there is a mechanism in place for teachers to take action if their needs are not met. The union contract also provides a vehicle for teachers to give their input into labor policies, which helps them feel involved in decision making and therefore builds commitment and loyalty.

From the standpoint of AMU's President, the lack of teacher involvement is a challenge. Out of 146 teachers, only 15 – 20 people show up for monthly membership meetings, making it difficult to get input on issues under negotiation. Due to demands on teachers' time, it is also hard to fill leadership positions, such as Site Representative, which remain open at 3 of the 7 schools. Since AMU's primary objective is to provide a vehicle for all teachers' voices to be heard, AMU's President views the lack of representation as a concern.

Beyond monthly membership meetings, the primary means of communication between AMU's executive board and the general membership include a newsletter, emails, and a member survey, which is the main vehicle for gathering input on teacher concerns. The survey data is then used to pinpoint the issues that should be negotiated with Green Dot's leadership. The most recent survey generated 77 responses from among 146 teachers, which was considered a fairly high response rate.

Communication and Conflict Resolution Between AMU Members and Principals

AMU encourages teachers to address their concerns directly with school principals, and most teachers follow this recommendation. Principals also generally maintain open lines of communication with the union, which significantly reduces the escalation of conflicts. However, AMU will intervene to help resolve issues between teachers and principals if there are major disagreements. For example, AMU recently got involved in a situation where a teacher was at risk of being fired for failing to meet performance expectations. The teacher was placed on a discipline plan that mandated what skills needed to be taught over a specified timeframe. The teacher did not agree with the proposed plan, and AMU's president mediated a discussion between the teacher and principal that resulted in a modified set of expectations to which both parties agreed.

Most of our teachers hate UTLA and that's one of the reasons they come to our schools, but they don't come because they want to be union activists — they just want to work with the kids.

- Steve Barr, Founder & CEO

AMU'S IMPACT

In what ways does unionization benefit a CMO? What are the implications for teacher satisfaction, school principals, and organizational effectiveness? What about the impact on broader education reform efforts? Both the leadership and teachers at Green Dot point to a number of ways in which unionization has created some tangible benefits.

Benefits to Green Dot

Green Dot has experienced several important benefits as a direct result of the union.

- ***Helps build good working relationships with LAUSD/city officials.*** Green Dot has been able to “fast-track” decisions and projects that require city approval because of their affiliation with CTA.
- ***Attracts key partners.*** Green Dot has been able to attract powerful supporters, such as Service Employees International Union (SEIU), a major national union that has a seat on their board and has given Green Dot a substantial donation.
- ***Diversifies funding streams.*** Green Dot has received funding from donors who are union supporters and who would not otherwise support charter schools.
- ***Mitigates against conflict escalation and legal battles.*** The union contract clearly spells out policies and procedures around how to handle discipline issues and teacher firing, which substantially minimizes the risk that teachers will be treated unjustly or feel the need to take legal action for unjust treatment.

When you're a charter school maneuvering through a Democratic city, the union label really helps. We've gotten breaks that other charter schools didn't. We were opening a school in Boyle Heights in East LA and needed to rush a building safety zoning ordinance through. This action usually takes a year, and we needed it to happen in a month. The mayor made it happen because we're affiliated with the union.

- Steve Barr, Founder & CEO

Benefits to Teachers

AMU's president points out that unionization also has some important benefits for teachers. These include:

- ***Sense of security and control.*** According to AMU's president, the contract provides teachers with a sense of security, control, and comfort, by offering higher salaries and greater freedoms in the classroom than they would receive in LAUSD.
- ***Representation and respect.*** The union contract and mechanism for expressing concerns in a formalized way makes teachers feel that their opinions matter. Additionally, they receive support in any situation where they need to voice grievances with school or central office administrators.

Having a union gives Green Dot credibility as an organization, and provides a mechanism for teachers' needs to be recognized.

- AMU president

IMPLICATIONS FOR BROADER EDUCATION REFORM EFFORTS

In addition to the impact on Green Dot and its teachers, Barr sees clear signs of AMU having a broader impact on the education reform landscape in Los Angeles. For example, CTA is now trying to actively organize charter schools. Now that a working model exists, they are more amenable to the possibility of working collaboratively with the charter school community.

Green Dot's union formation has also stimulated a healthy debate among teachers throughout Los Angeles about what a union contract could and should look like, which opens up the door for union reform on a much broader level. The fact that UTLA perceives AMU as a threat to their membership is another indication that their presence is being felt at a broader level. UTLA has responded by launching "misinformation campaigns" about Green Dot. These campaigns involve spreading rumors such as "*Green Dot overworks its teachers,*" "*the organization is run as a for-profit,*" and "*Green Dot schools don't accept special education kids.*" According to Barr, these tactics have a positive impact on union reform, as teachers learn that the rumors are false, and therefore their loyalty toward UTLA is diminished. Barr sees this as one indication that a critical mass of reform-minded union supporters is beginning to form in LAUSD.

There is a vision starting to take hold now around creating a "competitive" union to stimulate an inter-generational conversation that will drive reform.

- Steve Barr, Founder & CEO

CHALLENGES

Unionization has not come without significant challenges, both for Green Dot and for the union itself.

Primary challenges for Green Dot include:

- ***Building buy-in within the charter school community.*** Barr encountered a lot of pushback from other charter school leaders when he first proposed the idea of forming a union. It took nearly three years to prove that the model worked and to overcome some of the skepticism.
- ***Eliminating certain funding prospects.*** A number of funders are unwilling to support Green Dot because of the existence of their union.
- ***Ensuring that the vocal minority of disgruntled members do not overtake the union.*** Having a union provides a platform for vocalizing concerns and imbues members with a sense that they have a right to speak out. However, the most vocal members tend to be a small group of disgruntled teachers who make demands that are not representative of the majority of the membership.
- ***Dealing with hostility from UTLA.*** UTLA and Green Dot have a highly contentious relationship because UTLA loses members to Green Dot's union.
- ***Encouraging greater union engagement as an accountability mechanism.*** An interesting challenge for Green Dot is keeping the union active enough so that teachers are taken seriously as collaborative partners and the administration feels a degree of pressure to continue to provide teachers with a good working environment.

Challenges for AMU Leadership include:

- ***Building awareness and engagement.*** It is difficult for AMU's president and executive board to recruit members to meetings, make them aware of their rights as members, and engage them in decision making. As a result, the president must take a more active role by visiting school sites, working closely with site representatives, and engaging in one-on-one meetings with members to disseminate information.
- ***Vagueness of contract.*** Certain aspects of the contract – such as teacher evaluation, school-based management responsibilities, and the definition of the work day – are vague in the contract, which means expectations are sometimes unclear. AMU is in the process of negotiating to clarify these areas.

ADVICE AND LESSONS LEARNED

Forming a union is not for every CMO and being a member of a union is not necessarily a priority for every teacher. Having said that, there are certainly lessons to be learned from Green Dot's experience that could benefit CMOs and teachers should they desire to explore the opportunity to create their own union.

For CMOs

- Be proactive about creating good working conditions that will meet employees' needs and create a sense of shared ownership in the school community.
- Get the best and brightest teachers and principals on board.
- Agree on core values, principles, and the mission up front, before getting into the details. This helps to create common ground.
- Seek out a reform-minded union with which to affiliate.

For Teachers / Union Members

- Make sure to research different contracts. Don't start from scratch — build off of an existing contract.
- Establish that you want to work *with* management, not *against* them.
- Talk to management before you do anything else.

GREEN DOT UNION TOOLKIT

Additional Documents (Available Separately)

- **Union Contract (Green Dot Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/GreenDot-A.doc>

HOME OFFICE: STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING SCALING ORGANIZATIONS

Managing growth while maintaining quality requires organizations to execute successfully a range of centrally-run practices. In this section, we examine these varied practices – including external relations, new school openings, and governance – and identify the resources needed to support these practices. This section includes the following case studies:

6. Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools: Board Engagement in Fundraising
7. Partnerships to Uplift Communities: Community Outreach
8. Aspire Public Schools: An Approach to Opening New Schools
9. Lighthouse Academies: Annual School Opening Survey
10. Aspire Public Schools: Board Management

newschools
venture fund



ALLIANCE FOR COLLEGE-READY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Board Engagement in Fundraising

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools has developed a highly successful board-driven approach to fundraising. This case takes a look at what they have done to develop this competency.

This case study was prepared by FSG Social Impact Advisors. FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides guidance to foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and other public sector entities on issues of strategy, evaluation, and operations. FSG was commissioned by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “best practices” of portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared across the NewSchools portfolio. To complete this case study, FSG conducted background research on the Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools (Alliance) and interviewed Alliance’s Chief Development Officer, as well as Alliance’s CEO and COO. Misha Simmonds of NewSchools Venture Fund provided additional context on Alliance.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. What percentage of your organization’s revenue comes from government grants, foundations, corporations, and individual donors? What percentage comes from your board members?
2. Has your organization set targets for the percentage of revenue that should be generated from each funding source? Does your organization have a plan in place to diversify its funding base?
3. What is the current composition of your board? Is your board actively involved in your fundraising efforts?
4. What support systems do you need to create in order to effectively engage your board in this level of fundraising?
5. Do you have a staffing structure in place that allows you to effectively raise funds for your organization’s needs?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Raising adequate funding is a significant challenge for charter management organizations (CMOs), who often must identify funds to support general operating costs for the home office while simultaneously fundraising for individual school sites. Though funding requirements are different for every CMO, generating enough dollars to sustain growth and maintain day-to-day operations is a universal challenge, particularly in states where K-12 education funding is especially low. The following case provides an overview of the Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools' highly successful approach to fundraising. While much of Alliance's development work has not yet been codified into easily replicable processes and systems, their experience offers valuable advice and lessons that may help other organizations think about ways to strengthen the effectiveness of their fundraising efforts.

Alliance Background

The Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools (Alliance) is a nonprofit charter school management organization (CMO) 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.” Its goal is to “create a network of 20 high-performing schools over the next five years and ultimately create a network of up to 100 public schools that will serve as highly accountable models of innovation with highly qualified teachers guided by core principles based on what research has shown to be the best educational practices.”¹

Alliance opened its first charter school in fall 2004, followed by three additional schools in fall 2005. Currently, there are seven schools in operation throughout the L.A. area serving over 1,800 students in grades 6-11. Alliance plans to open an additional 13 schools over the next four years.

Effective Fundraising Approach

Alliance was identified for this case because of its highly effective fundraising capability. Some of the elements that distinguish them in this arena include:

- ***Dollars raised.*** Alliance has raised more than \$29 million since 2004.
- ***Significant support to schools.*** Each school site receives a start-up grant from the home office ranging from \$230,000 to \$800,000, plus significant additional support for facilities. The amount varies depending on the extent to which grant applications submitted on behalf of individual schools are funded. Schools have minimal fundraising responsibility.
- ***Strength/involvement of board.*** The board plays a key role in Alliance's fundraising efforts. Board members personally contribute more than 20 percent of all dollars raised, and are heavily involved in raising funds from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

¹ Alliance Web site, <http://www.laalliance.org/mission.html>

FUNDRAISING STRATEGY

Alliance focuses its fundraising on building and maintaining relationships with existing and prospective funders, rather than investing in events or fundraising campaigns. The organization's greatest asset is their board (see Toolkit for *Board Member Bios*), and they leverage these individuals heavily to contribute, make connections, and lend organizational credibility.

The vast majority of individual and corporate gifts can be traced back to board members.

- Jennifer Drake, Chief Development Officer

Funding Sources

The following chart shows sources of funding and the contribution of each source as a percent of the total budget (see Toolkit for *Donation and Commitment Totals* and *Alliance Supporters*):

PHILANTHROPY AND PUBLIC GRANTS

Funding Source	% of Revenue*				% Total Revenue* (1/04 - 6/07)
	Jan – June 2004	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	
Board Members	55.313%	19.924%	24.338%	21.903%	24.529%
Other Individuals	10.104%	0.625%	0.197%	0.331%	0.742%
Corporations	8.872%	0.576%	0.236%	0.129%	0.585%
Foundations	25.711%	36.348%	65.488%	75.564%	65.910%
Government Grants	0.000%	42.527%	9.741%	2.082%	8.234%
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,217,364	\$2,751,202	\$7,853,350	\$17,290,561	\$29,112,477

As the above chart illustrates, Alliance's funding composition is highly concentrated. Board member contributions and foundation grants constitute the vast majority of their funding stream. And a deeper look at these two sources reveals that this philanthropic funding is even further concentrated, as 79 percent of their revenue* comes from three board members and five foundations. While Alliance does not currently have set targets for the percentage of revenue generated from each funding source, their goal is to increase contributions from individual donors and corporations in order to diversify their donor base.

The steep drop in government grants from fiscal year 2004 to 2005 is due to the fact that the number of Public Charter School Grants awarded by the state has fluctuated. Alliance submits an application for each school, but fewer schools have been funded in the past two years. It is a highly subjective application process, and funding decisions vary from year to year depending on who sits on the grant review committee.

* In this case, revenue refers only to philanthropic grants and one-time public grants, not to public per-pupil funding that charter school management organizations like Alliance receive from federal and state sources.

Board Involvement

Alliance's board is highly effective primarily because of its long history together, and the extensive network that board members bring. Nearly half of Alliance's board consists of individuals who have worked together in the Los Angeles education reform arena for a long period of time, and therefore have a shared vision and a strong sense of cohesion. Many of them were part of Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP) and Los Angeles Educational Alliance for Restructuring Now (LEARN), two organizations formed in the early 1990s that ultimately evolved into Alliance. Because of their deep involvement and stature in the community, they all have colleagues whom they can draw upon for expertise or financial contributions. There is also a strong sense of momentum that deepens their commitment and motivates them in their work with Alliance. As CEO Judy Burton describes, *"We've hit a stride with opening three schools a year successfully without hitting major potholes. The board is energized by this success, and they appreciate being a part of an organization that is picking up steam."*

Composition and Role of the Board

The Alliance board is made up of 23 members and represents a wide range of backgrounds and skill sets, including education, business, politics, community development, and the law. The level of board engagement varies significantly. Certain board members are actively involved in fundraising efforts. For example, the chairman attends meetings with prospective donors once or twice a week, and meets with other board members to strategize about how they can support the organization's fund development activities. The chairman is also often asked by other board members to participate in donor meetings that they have set up. While most board members are less actively involved, there is an unspoken understanding that everyone is expected to support fund development efforts. In addition, board members cue off of one another when it comes to fundraising. There is subtle "peer pressure" at play as board members see what others are contributing to the organization either through personal gifts or connections to other donors.

Our expectation is that 100 percent of the board will give or get a certain amount. They don't have to give \$1 million, but we expect that every board member will give to the extent that they are able.

- Jennifer Drake,
Chief Development Officer

Working Relationship with the Board

The Chief Development Officer, Jennifer Drake, and Burton both make a concerted effort to stay in close contact with the board, and keep lines of communication open through regular phone calls and meetings. Drake says she is in touch with 60 percent of the board each week to share good news, inquire about a donor contact, or inform them about a future fundraising need. She speaks with the chairman almost daily. The board appreciates personal attention, and responds well to gentle reminders about commitments they have made. Transparency is a top priority—information about school outcomes is shared openly, even if the news is not favorable.

We're not proprietary. We share information. We want to have an open door policy and not screen what donors (and board members) should know. They like us being honest with them, and they know we are a growing and learning organization.

- Jennifer Drake,
Chief Development Officer

A primary focus for Drake over the next year is to get all board members on the same page around fundraising goals and expectations. There is discussion about having a board retreat, and Drake would also like to develop a more formalized training program for new and existing board members. Drake emphasizes that another key to increasing board member involvement is making them aware that there is a support structure in place, and that they are not out there on their own when it comes to soliciting funds. She emphasizes that Alliance staff, including she and Burton, are available and willing to accompany board members to donor meetings.

It is about finding a place for everyone and letting them be active to the extent they are comfortable.

- Jennifer Drake,
Chief Development Officer

BUILDING DONOR LOYALTY

Just as Alliance invests heavily in building and maintaining relationships with the board, they also place a lot of emphasis on ensuring that donors feel personally connected to the organization. One of the ways they do this is by offering naming rights. Every new school starts out with a generic name, such as “School #5”, and Alliance then seeks out individuals to sponsor a particular school by making a substantial contribution and having their name placed on a building or a campus. To date, four schools have been named after a donor. In each of these cases, donations were a minimum of \$500,000. The intent is to engage donors in the school community because Alliance recognizes that donors want to see and experience what they are getting for their contribution. Burton feels that this makes giving “*more tangible and more enticing.*” Name sponsors are invited to school events and kept informed about how that particular school is performing. Naming opportunities to date have all happened fairly spontaneously, but Alliance is trying to formalize the naming process so that they can offer it as an incentive to prospective donors. Moving forward, they have established a minimum contribution requirement of \$1 million in order for donors to be eligible for naming rights, and each board member has been assigned responsibility for identifying and cultivating three prospective school sponsors.

Another important way that they build donor loyalty is by reporting back about the impact the donors’ money is having (see Toolkit for *Sample Final Report to Funder* and *Sample Quarterly Report to Funder*). In cases where contributions are not earmarked for a particular purpose, this means sharing student outcome information or providing funders with an update on key milestones, such as successfully recruiting and training new principals for the upcoming school year. When gifts are designated for a specific use, Alliance will follow up with a letter or phone call that describes the tangible benefit of that contribution (see Toolkit for *Sample Thank You Letters*). For example, one donor made a \$15,000 contribution to fund a laptop cart for a particular school. The thank-you letter to that donor described how Alliance was able to move quickly to implement a math tutoring program as a result of the laptop cart.

FUNDRAISING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Home Office Staff

Alliance has a small development team, which consists primarily of Jennifer Drake, the Chief Development Officer, and CEO Judy Burton, who works closely with Drake. Drake oversees the organization’s fundraising efforts and personally handles the vast majority of all fund development activities, including working with the

board, cultivating and maintaining relationships with donors, and carrying out reporting requirements. Drake has an extensive background in fundraising and strategic communications. Prior to joining Alliance, she oversaw fund development efforts at several large national organizations, including the Elizabeth Glazer Pediatric AIDS Foundation and Alliance for Stem Cell Research. In addition to her background, Drake's strong communication skills and ability to learn quickly, along with her self-directed nature make her a strong fit for the position. According to Burton, *"Jennifer has the competence and capacity to immediately grasp core values and concepts that are important to the organization and can translate these when communicating with funders."* Ultimately, major funders want to interact directly with the CEO as the face and voice of the organization at some point in making their decision to support the Alliance.

What does Alliance look for in a Chief Development Officer?

- Clear communicator
- Capacity to write
- Capacity to understand key concepts about the organization and communicate the vision
- Well-organized and self-directed
- Understanding of/experience with successful fund development

When the organization was young, Burton was primarily responsible for fundraising, but her role has shifted over time. As the organization grew, she recognized that her role needed to change, and she needed to delegate more responsibilities to other people in order to focus on managing the organization and driving strategy. These changes were formalized recently when Alliance underwent a business planning process. This process involved a major overhaul of the organizational structure, which resulted in fewer people reporting directly to Burton and a higher degree of autonomy among senior team members.

The only other person within the organization who plays a significant role in fundraising is Parker Hudnut, Alliance's Chief Operating Officer. Hudnut is involved in developing and managing the budget, and he also plays a key role in soliciting financing for school facilities. This includes working with lenders, as well as foundations that provide facilities grants. Approximately 80 percent of school facilities are financed through loans and the remaining 20 percent must be funded through grants. Hudnut developed Alliance's school loan program, which provides a \$200,000 loan to each school to support its operating needs during the start-up phase. The loan is then repaid at a very low interest rate beginning in the third year a school is operating. The goal is to create a self-funding pool of money that allows capital to be continually reinvested in new schools as loans are repaid. Alliance has not yet activated this program, as they have successfully been able to raise enough grant funding to date. However, the program provides a fallback option in case grant funding drops significantly.

Delineation of Fundraising Roles Between Home Office and School Sites

Schools bear little to no responsibility for fundraising. The home office provides start-up support through grants ranging from \$230,000 to \$800,000, as well as support for facilities and operating needs. Balancing schools' funding needs with the organization's annual goals is an ongoing challenge, and decisions are made carefully based on the level and urgency of the need. For example, when interim performance reports revealed that schools' math scores were significantly lower than expected, the senior team got together and strategized about how to address this issue. Everyone agreed that working with math teachers was critical because they are typically not given proper instruction on how to actively engage students in learning math

concepts. They also felt that students needed a more hands-on vehicle for developing their math skills. Alliance identified two solutions — an intensive professional development program for math teachers and a computer-based supplemental instructional program. Alliance agreed to raise \$1 million over two years to cover the cost of the professional development program and another \$250,000 for laptop carts and software needed to implement the supplemental instructional program.

LESSONS FOR CMOs

While Alliance's current fundraising efforts have not yet been codified, their experience offers a number of valuable learnings that may help other CMOs think about ways to increase the effectiveness of their fund development efforts.

Success Factors

Alliance's success in fundraising can be attributed to the following key factors:

- ***Long-term board member relationships.*** Alliance has built relationships with people who commit to the organization as active board members and not just as donors to an annual fund. This results in funding that is highly durable and reliable and often unrestricted.
- ***Name recognition and credibility of funders and board members.*** Foundation funders and board members are well-connected and respected. Beyond their own funding, they act as “signalers” whose support indicates to other potential funders that Alliance is a high-quality organization.
- ***Clear vision and goals.*** A detailed business plan outlines the direction the organization is headed and the objectives that need to be met in order to achieve their goals (see Toolkit for *Business Plan Executive Summary*). When soliciting funds, the business plan is made available to prospective donors upon request and serves as a strong indicator of organizational strength.
- ***Consistent follow-up and communication with donors.*** Regular communication with board members and donors is a key part of Alliance's fundraising strategy. They invest a lot of energy in keeping donors informed, recognizing their contributions, and engaging them in specific activities that help them feel valued. As a result, donors tend to stay with Alliance and their contributions tend to increase over time.
- ***Accountability/reporting results.*** Alliance is diligent about tracking the performance of its schools and sharing outcomes with donors.
- ***Transparency.*** Information is shared freely, and staff is direct and open with donors about areas for growth.

CHALLENGES

Alliance's primary challenges include:

- **Funding facilities.** Alliance can only finance 80 percent of facilities through banks and the rest must come through grants. Raising this additional 20 percent is difficult because most donors view facilities as high-risk investments and are therefore reluctant to provide funding for facilities. In addition, donors typically want a project to be in an advanced stage of development before they will make a contribution.
- **Managing funding priorities.** There is a constant tension between staying focused on organization-wide fundraising goals, meeting the needs of individual school sites, and responding to unexpected organizational funding needs.
- **Keeping the board active and informed.** With such a large board, maintaining good communication and setting clear expectations with each member is challenging. There is recognition that a more systematic board development process needs to be put in place.
- **Codifying fund development practices.** A fundraising plan was developed several years ago, but it is now obsolete. Finding the time to revamp this is a major challenge given the small size of the development staff. However, there is a clear need and desire to codify all of Alliance's fund development practices into a detailed plan focused on cultivating new donors and stewarding relationships with existing donors.

There are always unexpected things that come up and need money right away, like supporting the math program or providing laptop carts. We recognize that we need to support these things because they are important, but we are already raising money for facilities, school openings, etc, so finding the right balance is challenging.

- Jennifer Drake,
Chief Development Officer

ADVICE AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Be strategic about the composition of your board.** If fundraising is a major priority, it is important to recruit board members with the capability to make substantial donations, to “signal” to outside funders, and to be active fundraisers themselves.
- **Set clear expectations with your board.** Establish the expectation up front that all members of the board will contribute at the level they are comfortable with and that giving will increase over time. Also, be clear with the board that while roles may be different for each board member, they all have a part to play in fund development. Finally, board members should also have expectations around the role of staff in providing the board with the training and support to be strong partners in fund development activities.

- ***Do not position your organization in competition with others who are vying for the same dollars, but instead focus on the scope of the overall problem.*** Do not fall into the trap of comparing yourself against other schools/CMOs, but instead focus on the fact that everyone is trying to achieve the same goal. Not only does this approach build goodwill with other CMOs and funders, but it helps the development staff channel time and energy in a constructive direction.
- ***Educate your board about the education landscape.*** It is important that the board has an in-depth understanding of key education issues in order for them to be effective spokespersons for the organization. This provides a significant advantage when selling the program to others.
- ***Be diligent about reporting back to donors.*** It is critical to share results with funders and to show them how their money is being used. It is also important to keep them informed about what the organization is accomplishing as a whole.
- ***Think about ways to diversify your funding base.*** Alliance raises the vast majority of its funding from a very small group of individuals and foundations. While this approach appears to work for them given their ability to maintain long-term relationships with donors, this may be a red flag for other organizations. It may be wise to think about ways to diversify your funding base so that your organization is not overly dependent on a few funding sources.
- ***Develop a good system for tracking donors.*** While Alliance does not yet have a formal system in place, they recognize the value in this and have recently contracted with an outside software firm to develop and implement a comprehensive donor management tracking system.

ALLIANCE FUNDRAISING TOOLKIT

Additional Documents (Available Separately)

- **Board Member Bios (Alliance Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Alliance-A.pdf>
- **Donation and Commitment Totals (Alliance Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Alliance-B.pdf>
- **Alliance Supporters (Alliance Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Alliance-C.pdf>
- **Alliance Fundraising Needs (Alliance Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Alliance-D.pdf>
- **Reports to Funders**
 - **Sample Quarterly Report to Funder (Alliance Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Alliance-E.pdf>
 - **Sample Final Report to Funder (Alliance Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Alliance-F.pdf>
- **Sample Grant Requests (Alliance Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Alliance-G.pdf>
- **Sample Thank You Letters (Alliance Documents)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Alliance-H.pdf>
- **Business Plan Executive Summary (Alliance Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/Alliance-I.pdf>

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PUC SCHOOLS

Building and Maintaining Successful Community Partnerships

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

This case provides insight into the community outreach efforts in place at Partnerships to Uplift Communities (PUC Schools). PUC Schools invests heavily in community outreach and has built a wide range of community partnerships to support the start-up and ongoing operations of their schools.

This case study was prepared by FSG Social Impact Advisors. FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides guidance to foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and other public sector entities on issues of strategy, evaluation, and operations. FSG was commissioned by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “best practices” of portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared across the NewSchools portfolio. To complete this case study, FSG conducted background research on PUC Schools and interviewed Jackie Elliot, PUC’s Co-CEO and Co-Founder; Leslie Chang, Assistant Principal of CALS Middle School, a PUC School; and Maureen Rubin, Director of Undergraduate Studies at California State University—Northridge. Misha Simmonds of NewSchools Venture Fund provided additional context on PUC Schools.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. Is working with groups and organizations throughout your community an explicit part of your organization’s model?
2. What are your primary organizational needs? How can your community outreach efforts help address these needs?
3. Who are the most important stakeholders in your community? Who are your key allies?
4. Who within your organization is responsible for community outreach efforts? Are these responsibilities included in his/her performance reviews?
5. Do you have systems and metrics that you use to track and maintain the progress and status of these relationships?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Schools are an integral part of the communities in which they operate, and as such, they are heavily impacted by the people and organizations that surround them. When opening and operating schools, charter school management organizations (CMOs) inevitably have a high degree of interaction with community stakeholders, and the success or failure of a school is often directly related to the ways in which charter schools and their parent organizations engage with these stakeholders. Building positive community relations can have many benefits for a CMO, such as identifying facilities, boosting student enrollment, and creating access to valuable resources such as volunteers or recreational spaces.

While most CMOs and charter schools recognize the importance of strong community ties, they don't always know how best to go about the process of building these relationships. Efforts are often haphazard and reactive, rather than strategic and proactive. As a result, most CMOs could utilize staff and financial resources more efficiently and effectively to build stronger, more sustainable partnerships. The following case study profiles the successful community outreach efforts of Partnerships to Uplift Communities Schools (PUC Schools), a Los Angeles-based CMO that invests heavily in community outreach and has built a wide range of community partnerships to support the start-up and ongoing operation of their schools. The community outreach efforts profiled in this case include informal efforts to build community goodwill through relationships with local residents and neighborhood councils, as well as more formal alliances with organizations geared toward meeting specific needs, such as facilities or instructional support.

PUC Background

PUC Schools was formed in 2003 as a partnership between Jackie Elliot and Ref Rodriguez, two longtime educators and charter school principals who shared a vision for providing high-quality educational opportunities for low-income youth in the Los Angeles area. PUC's mission reads "*We aim to develop and manage high-quality charter schools in densely populated urban communities with overcrowded and low-achieving schools. We create school programs and cultures that result in college graduation for all students. We focus on developing secondary schools partnered with strong feeder elementary programs. We uplift and revitalize communities through the development of educational and other supportive partnerships.*"¹

PUC currently operates seven charter schools in Northeast Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley, including one elementary school, four middle schools, and two high schools, serving more than 1,300 students. About 96 percent of PUC's students are Latino and 83 percent qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch.

¹ PUC Schools' Web site <http://www.pucschools.org>

Community Outreach Efforts at PUC

Working from within the community is an explicit focus of PUC's model, and is grounded in the vision and background of the organization's leaders. Co-founder/Co-CEO Ref Rodriguez grew up in Northeast Los Angeles, where several PUC schools are located, and PUC's other Co-Founder/Co-CEO Jackie Elliot spent more than 20 years working as a teacher and administrator in Los Angeles' public schools. Rodriguez and Elliott not only have deep ties to the community – they also have a firm belief in the importance of relationships and the power of community-building. PUC partners with a wide range of organizations and individuals, including colleges, local parks, neighborhood councils, schools, parents, and community members. These relationships fulfill needs such as facilities, transportation, student recruitment, academic program, and parent involvement (see Toolkit for *Summary of PUC's Community Partnerships*.)

IMPLEMENTATION OF PUC'S COMMUNITY OUTREACH EFFORTS

Laying the Groundwork: Grassroots Efforts to Build Community Goodwill

An integral part of PUC's community outreach work involves getting to know the communities in which their schools operate, and forming strong ties with stakeholders in those communities. Before opening each new school, PUC staff spend time walking through the neighborhood, organizing community meetings, knocking on doors, and handing out flyers about the school they plan to open. The goal is to not only raise awareness about the school, but also to gain insight into the kinds of issues and concerns that neighbors may have. They do this in order to proactively address any potential roadblocks, and to ensure that they have the buy-in and support they need to successfully move forward with opening the school.

One of the things that makes this work well is PUC's community-centered approach. PUC enlists parents, students, principals, and residents with whom they already have a relationship to do this door-to-door work and to help organize community meetings. This helps build buy-in with local community members because it sends the message that PUC already has a positive track record in the neighborhood. These grassroots efforts to build community goodwill are instrumental to the success of PUC's overall community outreach strategy and help lay the groundwork for many of their more formal partnerships.

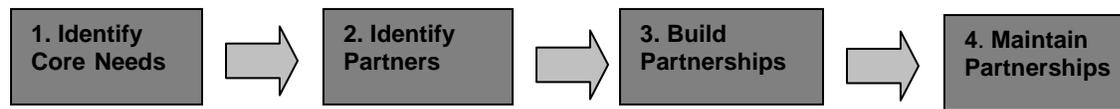
First and foremost, you have to be a good neighbor. You want to be respected by and familiar with members of the community. In the neighborhoods in which we open schools, we make sure we meet the people who live near the school and that our staff understands that certain things like parking that blocks them could be an issue — be respectful of the neighborhood folks.

- Jackie Elliot, Co-CEO, PUC Schools

Building Formal Partnerships

While the grassroots efforts described above are fairly organic, PUC's approach to building and maintaining more formal partnerships is well-structured. There are four basic steps that are integral to the establishment and management of each such relationship:

Key Steps for Partnership Development and Sustainability



Step 1: Identify Core Needs

PUC's partnerships are designed to address a very specific set of core needs related to the start-up and ongoing operation of their schools. While not all of PUC's partnerships fall into these specific categories, having a clear focus on their primary needs helps guide how they invest their time and resources.

PUC has identified the following two areas as core needs and has targeted their relationship-building efforts accordingly.

- **Facilities.** Getting buildings approved and opened
- **Academic Program.** Identifying resources to enhance teaching and learning

Facilities

Many of PUC's partnerships revolve around the acquisition and development of facilities. They think about the need for facilities in a broad way, not just in terms of classroom space. When Elliot – who heads up new site development and community relations efforts – thinks about what will be required to open a new school in terms of space, she looks at a number of factors, such as what support will be needed to address zoning issues or where to find space for graduation. PUC then seeks out partners to address each of these needs. For example, PUC is currently developing a new facility for 1,000 students in Lakeview Terrace, a quiet residential neighborhood. The building that will house the school is a former medical building, which means they need to apply for a conditional-use permit in order to convert it to a school. In order to acquire the permit they must build good relationships with neighbors, who may otherwise voice complaints at planning meetings and derail PUC's efforts.

I look to see if the facility will accommodate all of our programmatic needs. For example, is there space for lunch? Is there space for PE? Is there space for meetings? Is there temporary space to use for classes while the permanent facility is getting ready? Is there space for computer labs? If not, we seek partners to fulfill those needs.

- Jackie Elliot, Co-CEO, PUC

Other facilities-related partnerships have been built around finding temporary space to house students while a permanent facility is being completed. One of PUC's strongest relationships is with California State University—Northridge (CSUN), which began when one of PUC's first schools, Community Charter Middle School, needed to find temporary space. Elliott persuaded the Dean of CSUN's College of Education to accommodate the PUC students on campus for a few weeks and subsequently turned that relationship into a valuable ongoing partnership (see below).

Academic Program

PUC also has a number of partnerships that support and enhance its academic program. The CSUN relationship is one example of this. What began as a solution to a short-term facilities problem has since evolved into a multi-faceted partnership that enriches the teaching and learning environment at PUC schools. CSUN now hosts incoming PUC 6th graders on campus each summer to expose them to college, has been a source of mentors and tutors, and has also provided physical education, computer training, journalism, photography, and arts courses for PUC middle school students.

Another important way in which CSUN supports PUC's academic program is by offering concurrent enrollment courses for PUC high school students. As part of PUC's Early College High School (ECHS) program, students can enroll in college courses beginning in their junior year, which allows them to earn college credits and gain firsthand exposure to the college experience while still in high school. Some of these courses are taught by CSUN faculty. PUC has formed similar partnerships with other community colleges, including the Los Angeles Trade Technical College (LATTC), Los Angeles Mission College, LA City College, and Pasadena City College.

Step 2: Identify Partners

In addition to ensuring that partners fulfill a core organizational need, PUC staff is careful to identify partnerships in which there is a clear mutual benefit. The PUC team feels this is important in terms of building relationships that will be sustainable over time. An example of this is their relationship with Los Angeles Mission College. PUC approached the college about participating in the Early College High School program and learned that the college faced space constraints. As Elliott describes, *"We immediately told them that we had several middle schools and that they could hold classes at the middle schools in the evenings. They now hold classes in one of our middle schools several nights a week. In exchange, they offer lots of slots for our kids to take classes, send instructors to our sites to enroll our students, and they even teach some of the courses on our site. This has turned into a very good mutual relationship."*

PUC also thinks creatively and broadly about what kinds of partners to pursue in terms of the potential for sustainability and access to resources. In this way, higher education institutions make excellent partners for CMOs like PUC, because they can provide support in many different ways. They also typically have the infrastructure in place to maintain such a partnership over time, such as CSUN does with its Department of Service Learning, which has dedicated staff that can coordinate volunteers or fulfill requests for classroom space (see Toolkit for *CSUN Community Partner Guide*). In addition, service learning coordinators on college campuses often spend a lot of time seeking out nonprofits and other groups, so they are typically highly receptive to organizations who proactively reach out to them.

Colleges and universities are so valuable on so many levels, such as college visits, use of facilities, attending exhibits and shows, service learning opportunities and participating in science programs. I'm always amazed that every school doesn't take advantage of the resources that colleges offer. They are not as widely used partners as they should be.

- Jackie Elliott, Co-CEO, PUC Schools

Step 3: Build Partnerships

Building successful partnerships requires a clear, shared vision for the partnership and the capacity to work closely with partners on an ongoing basis.

Building Internal Capacity

Since community outreach is a high priority for PUC, the organization has dedicated significant staff resources to this function. Elliott and Rodriguez recently restructured their roles to enable Elliott to devote more of her time to this arena, and she now spends approximately 40 percent of her time on community outreach efforts. There are also three full-time staff members in PUC's headquarters who are dedicated to new site development, an activity that is primarily centered on building and maintaining community ties. PUC principals are also actively involved in these community-building efforts. For example, the Principal and Assistant Principal at California Academy for Liberal Studies (CALs) Middle School participate in monthly meetings hosted by Occidental College's Center for Community Based Learning in order to network with other schools and community groups, and to strategize about how to effectively engage community stakeholders. In addition,

Principals are central to our community building work. They walk the streets with me and go to meetings with me. Once a Principal is hired, we engage him or her right away in reaching out to the community.

- Jackie Elliot, Co-CEO, PUC

When we attend neighborhood council meetings, the people who will be allies will introduce themselves to us and ask how they can help. The ones who are going to object usually surface too. Build a relationship with the allies and then use their advice to help deal with the issues that arise and the opponents. We get input into strategy and relationship building from these allies — they know the players, they can speak to them, and they can help get votes. Find your allies early on.

- Jackie Elliot, Co-CEO, PUC Schools

these school leaders work closely with parents to involve them in community outreach efforts, such as speaking on behalf of CALs at local events and sharing their experiences with other parents in the community. PUC principals also attend neighborhood meetings, participate in weekly discussions about PUC's current and future community engagement activities, and hand out flyers to families to promote PUC's efforts. Elliott is in regular touch with PUC's principals to discuss partnership needs, and principals have an informal network through which they share community resources and opportunities.

Building External Capacity

In addition to dedicating staff resources to community outreach, PUC also strives to enlist the support of key allies in the neighborhoods in which the organization works. When they are in the process of opening a new school, PUC staff will attend neighborhood community council or improvement meetings to identify supporters and cultivate relationships with individuals who can help them navigate issues, such as getting zoning permits for a facility.

Recently, when we were trying to get approval on a building for a new school site, one supporter came to a planning committee and said, "I have lived across the street from that building for 47 years and this will be the best use that this building has ever had. This is the best thing that has ever happened to this neighborhood." We enlisted that person right away to attend meetings and speak on our behalf.

- Jackie Elliot, Co-Founder, PUC

Garnering the support of neighbors can make a big difference. PUC learned this lesson the hard way when it pushed through a zoning requirement that neighbors opposed – without engaging community members in the decision. While they could legally do this without neighborhood approval, the response was immediate and highly negative. Neighbors called City Hall to complain, which raised many issues for the school. PUC staff is now much more proactive about cultivating allies from the outset.

Making a Specific Pitch

Another important factor in building successful partnerships is the ability to make a specific, targeted request of prospective partners, and one that is mutually beneficial to both parties. Individuals and organizations will be much more likely to want to engage if they have a clear understanding of what is being asked of them, particularly if the request is aligned with their needs and the resources they can offer. For example, when PUC approached CSUN about participating in the Early College High School program, they had a unique and very specific role for the university to play, which was much more compelling than a generic request for academic support. Maureen Rubin, CSUN's Director of Undergraduate Studies and a key ally in forming the relationship with PUC, emphasizes the importance of making a directed request when approaching prospective partners: *"Don't ever just say 'send us students.' Be specific and be creative and think about what the university will get out of it."* She also recommends going in with a contingency plan in case the initial request is not a match.

Step 4: Maintain Partnerships

Successful community outreach is not just about building support, but also ensuring that such support is sustainable over time. One of PUC's core strengths is the way in which it reinforces partnerships by recognizing and supporting its allies in meaningful ways. For example, PUC formed a relationship with a local park near one of its middle schools. The school is highly space constrained, so it serves students lunch in the park and holds meetings in the park's gymnasium. In an effort to express the middle school's appreciation and cultivate goodwill, the principal arranged for students to sand and refinish all of the play equipment in the park and paint trash cans as a community service project. On another occasion, the principal presented the Director of Parks and Recreation with a framed poster of art by his favorite artist. These gestures went a long way towards solidifying the relationship and even resulted in a fee waiver for use of the park.

*Whatever you can do to show respect helps.
Little things can mean a lot in maintaining
these relationships.*

- Jackie Elliot, Co-CEO, PUC Schools

Building community partnerships comes naturally to the PUC's leaders and is done as a matter of course. However, they have not yet put in place a good system for tracking and cultivating these partnerships. They recognize the value in this and plan to do so, particularly as the number and complexity of relationships expand.

ADVICE AND LESSONS LEARNED

- ***Build partnerships around core organizational needs.*** Determine up front what your primary organizational needs are and use these to drive your selection of potential partners.
- ***Build partnerships with clear mutual benefits.*** Take the time to understand how you can help your partner meet their own goals, in addition to your own organization's objectives.
- ***Think creatively and broadly about whom to partner with.*** Focus on partners that can offer a variety of resources and those with the infrastructure to support an ongoing commitment.
- ***Identify dedicated staff resources to build and maintain relationships.*** Be explicit about who within your organization will be responsible for community outreach efforts and build this into job descriptions and performance reviews.
- ***Enlist the support of key allies.*** Look outside of your organization to identify well-connected supporters who can help build goodwill in the community.
- ***Make a specific pitch to prospective partners, but have a contingency plan in mind.*** Do not make a generic "ask," but be targeted in your request.
- ***Reinforce partnerships on an ongoing basis.*** Find creative ways to acknowledge partners that reinforce the sense of reciprocity.
- ***Develop systems to track and maintain relationships.*** PUC is highly relationship-based and operates organically in its approach to community outreach, but having some systems in place to keep track of and manage relationships can prove extremely helpful.

PUC COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS TOOLKIT

Toolkit Contents

- **PUC Partnerships Chart (FSG-Synthesized Document)**

Additional Document (Available Separately)

- **California State University-Northridge (CSUN) Community Partner Guide (CSUN Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PUCComm-A.pdf>

SUMMARY OF PUC'S COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Partner	Need Met	Description
California State University–Northridge	Academic Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in Early College High School Program • Hosts 6th graders for “college experience” summer program • Past courses taught to middle school students in computer training and arts
Fenton Charter Elementary School	Student Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages students to apply to PUC middle school and hands out applications
Laidlaw	Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided buses for first few weeks of school to one PUC campus
Las Palmas Park	Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides lunch and recreation space • Makes meeting space available in gymnasium
Los Angeles Mission College	Academic Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in Early College High School Program
Los Angeles Trade Technical College	Academic Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in Early College High School Program
Masonic Lodge	Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides meeting space
Neighborhood Community Councils	Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for getting zoning and permitting issues approved
Occidental College	Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates and facilitates community engagement initiative
Pasadena City College	Academic Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in Early College High School Program

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ASPIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

An Approach to Opening New Schools

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

Aspire Public Schools has developed a detailed, systematic approach to opening new schools, which they have found can reduce the complexity of the challenging process of new site development. This case will walk you through some of the systems and practices they have put in place.

This case study was prepared by FSG Social Impact Advisors. FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides guidance to foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and other public sector entities on issues of strategy, evaluation, and operations. FSG was commissioned by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “promising practices” of portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared across the NewSchools portfolio. To complete this case study, FSG conducted background research on Aspire Public Schools and interviewed Gloria Lee, Aspire’s Chief Operating Officer. Joanne Weiss of NewSchools Venture Fund provided additional context on Aspire.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. How does opening a new school impact your organization?
2. What systems could you develop to make opening new schools easier and/or more efficient?
3. Do you have rubrics that allow you to compare potential new school locations or geographies across a variety of dimensions?
4. Would a “location greenlighting” process like the one Aspire has developed help inform your decisions about whether to move forward with a school on a particular site or in a particular city/region?
5. Have you identified the organizational structure that best supports the process you use to identify and develop new school sites?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Opening new schools is a complex and challenging endeavor for charter school management organizations (CMOs). The process requires an intense amount of work and the ability to manage a vast array of tasks over a relatively short period of time. Even experienced charter school operators are often daunted by the complexity of managing parallel processes to identify and develop a new site, secure a charter, recruit students, and hire staff. Having a systematic process and the appropriate internal capacity in place can significantly reduce the level of risk and uncertainty involved.

Aspire Public Schools (Aspire), a CMO based in Oakland, California, has developed a detailed approach to opening new schools based on nearly 10 years of experience starting and operating charter schools in multiple geographies throughout California. What follows is an overview of Aspire's school opening process – a summary that is intended to provide a framework for other school management organizations that are considering how to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of their own new school openings.

Background on Aspire Public Schools

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,*”¹ Aspire opened its first two charter schools in 1999 in California's Central Valley, and currently operates 17 schools in six counties throughout California serving more than 4,900 students in grades K – 12. Aspire opens an average of three schools each school year.

ASPIRE'S SCHOOL OPENING PROCESS

Aspire has developed a highly effective approach to opening new schools that is driven by the following core elements:

- A well-conceived **strategy** that provides focus and leverages existing relationships and resources;
- An **organizational structure** that is well-aligned with the organization's strategy and that maximizes efficiency;
- An in-depth “**greenlighting**” **process** that guides site selection and helps mitigate risks and challenges leading up to the opening of the new school's doors;
- A detailed and rigorous **workplan** with a clear timeline and delineation of responsibilities; and
- Well-developed **tools** that provide a clear roadmap for each stage of the school opening process.

¹ Aspire Web site, <http://www.aspirepublicschools.org/about/about.html>

ASPIRE'S SCHOOL OPENING STRATEGY

A core part of Aspire's mission is to be a catalyst for change in California by reshaping the state's public school system. The organization does this by concentrating its growth in geographic areas in which Aspire can have a significant impact on a school district by serving a large percentage (at least 10 percent) of the student population within that district. The resulting implication is that Aspire's team chooses to open a substantial number of schools in a relatively limited number of geographies. Not only does this strategy provide a clear focus for the organization, but it also makes the school opening process go more smoothly, because Aspire is able to build upon existing relationships. For example, pre-existing relationships with superintendents and school board members facilitate the process of obtaining new charters for additional schools in those areas. In addition, Aspire can often re-use the same memorandum of understanding (MOU) in a district where a cluster of its schools already exist, saving a substantial amount of time and effort.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Given Aspire's focus on opening schools within specific geographic regions – as well as the rapid pace at which its new schools are opened, an average of three schools per year – the organization recently shifted its organizational structure to a regional model. This model consists of a small home office that provides oversight and support to three regional offices in key geographies. Each regional office is headed by a regional vice president and includes a support staff that is responsible for the implementation of new school openings. Whereas home office staff used to be involved in all aspects of opening new schools, many of these details are now handled directly by the regional offices, freeing up the home office team to focus on delivering high-level support across all of Aspire's schools in areas like academic performance and fundraising.

Greenlighting a School Location

Aspire uses what it terms a "greenlighting" process to determine where to open schools and, once those locations are chosen, to ensure that the school opening process remains on track.

Location Greenlighting Criteria	
Criteria	Weight
Mission: Student need	2 pts
Mission: Likelihood of catalyzing change	1 pt
Availability of suitable facilities	2 pts
Ease of quality control	2 pts
Availability of philanthropic funding	2 pts
Favorable chartering environment	1 pt
TOTAL	10 pts

The Aspire team has developed highly focused rubrics that allow them to compare prospective school locations or geographies across a variety of dimensions. When evaluating new sites in an existing region, they use an individual site rubric. A potential new site is given zero, one, or two points for each of six criteria, for a maximum of 10 total points (see sidebar). A similar rubric is used to evaluate whether to pursue a new geographic region or continue to grow in an existing region (see Toolkit for *Rubric for New School Openings*). This rubric uses the same criteria as the individual site rubric, and is based on a scale of one (poor fit) to three (attractive). These two rubrics are then used to guide

analysis and inform discussion with Aspire’s board of directors about whether to move forward with a particular site or geography (see Toolkit for *Prospective New School Summary* and *Growth Options 2007*).

The rubrics are also used to help Aspire’s management team decide whether to delay a school opening or find a temporary location. The organization has set up a process in which key milestones must be hit by specific dates (see sidebar). If the milestone is not met, there is then a discussion of whether the project should continue, and if it should, how to adjust the workplan to resolve any critical issues. This may occur in particularly difficult situations where key construction milestones are not on track, or when the organization encounters roadblocks with the process of securing a charter. According to the Aspire team, these rubrics have been highly effective in helping them detect and resolve issues as early in the process as possible. Thanks in large part to this approach, Aspire has not yet had to halt a school opening project once it has begun.

Factors That Would Lead Aspire To Re-assess a New Site

Facilities

- Lease not signed by nine months prior to school opening
- Occupancy costs exceed 10 percent of average daily attendance
- Failure to meet key construction milestones
- Failure to receive zoning or permits needed

Financials

- Enrollment configuration is off-model
- Projected scale-up costs exceed projected start-up philanthropy
- Anticipated grants are not received

Charter Development

- Separate charter deemed not likely before opening of school
- Failure to meet any chartering milestones
- District changes to terms of charter contract

School Opening Process Workplan

Aspire’s school opening process is organized around five primary workstreams (for a more detailed overview, see Toolkit for *School Opening Process Chart*):

Workstream	Key Steps
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify and secure site ▪ Secure financing ▪ Build or renovate site ▪ Negotiate daily operations with landlord (if leasing)
Charter development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare and obtain charter ▪ Apply for charter # and County-District-School (CDS) #
Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop financial model ▪ Secure start-up funding ▪ Develop annual school budget
Staff and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hire principal ▪ Hire teachers ▪ Enroll students
Governance and operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Governance ▪ Procurement

Most of these workstreams happen concurrently, although certain elements – such as facilities and charter development – require particularly long lead times. Securing a facility can begin as early as three years before a school is opened if new construction is involved, while the process for obtaining a charter ideally begins nine

months before a new school is slated to open. These two tasks are handled by home office staff. Once a principal is hired for the new school site, which typically occurs about six months before the school opens, that individual becomes the project manager and takes on primary responsibility for tasks that require a bit less lead time, including student enrollment, staffing, operations, and governance, with support from the home office as needed.

Aspire uses two primary tools to guide and monitor the development of a new school site. The first of these is a school start-up workplan, which is used to outline all of the key tasks involved in opening a school and is designed for the period after a facility has been identified and a principal has been hired (see Toolkit for *Sample School Start-up Workplan*). This workplan helps the principal understand the scope of responsibilities related to school opening for which he or she is responsible, while also clearly laying out the responsibilities of central office staff. (Note that at the time of the writing of this case study, Aspire was still shifting its model to the aforementioned regional structure; as a result, several of the roles in the attached document, as well as in the *School Opening Process Chart*, will likely change. It is also important to note that facilities acquisition is not part of the attached workplan because it occurs well in advance of all other components of the workplan.) A second important tool is the school opening status sheet, which is used to update the board on the status of projects that are underway, and to help the management team check in with one another regarding progress on key elements of the school opening (see Toolkit for *New School Opening Status Report*).

SUCCESS FACTORS

There are several distinguishing factors that enable Aspire to be particularly effective in its approach to opening new schools. These include:

- ***In-depth analysis around fit and feasibility.*** Specific site selection criteria and the “greenlighting process” provide a framework for sound decision making.
- ***Functional specialization.*** Specific tasks are assigned to either the home office, regional office, or school site staff based on appropriate knowledge and expertise.
- ***Tools and systems.*** Rubrics, workplans, and templates have been developed to guide decision making and increase efficiency.

According to Gloria Lee, Aspire’s Regional Vice President for the Bay Area and former Chief Operating Officer, the systems and processes that are in place “help Aspire get to better answers quicker and with more certainty.”

Last year we opened up two new L.A. campuses and on the opening day of the bigger school, none of the senior management team from our home office was down there. It just happened. It was being handled by people who knew what they were doing.

- Gloria Lee, Regional Vice President, Bay Area, Aspire

ADVICE AND LESSONS LEARNED

- ***Implementing a multi-site model requires a high degree of coordination.*** Opening multiple schools in a given year is challenging given the number of elements that need to be put in place and the number of people involved in the process.

- ***Opening new schools is not a cookie-cutter process.*** Unlike a multi-site retail model, opening schools involves individual decisions that may vary from site to site. As Lee puts it, “*The community reaction, the enrollment process, dealing with the district and its politics, and the timeline based on facility availability all require a great deal of adaptation and customization to make it work.*”
- ***Enrollment is much easier in districts where an organization already has existing schools.*** There is less need for active recruitment in these cases because families hear about the new school through word of mouth.
- ***Building trust and relationships in the community is very helpful with facilities acquisition.*** Relationship-building is a key factor in locating and acquiring facilities. Community contacts can provide references and help identify prospective facilities. Good community relations are also important in terms of handling zoning hearings and responding effectively to community concerns.
- ***Finding a facility is the longest lead-time item, so begin this process as early as possible.***

ASPIRE SCHOOL OPENING TOOLKIT

Toolkit Contents

- **Prospective New School Summary (Aspire Document)**
- **School Opening Process Chart (Synthesized by FSG)**

Additional Documents (Available Separately)

- **Rubric for New School Openings (Aspire Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/AspireSchool-A.pdf>
- **Growth Options 2007 (Aspire Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/AspireSchool-B.ppt>
- **Sample School Start-up Workplan (Aspire Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/AspireSchool-C.xls>
- **New School Opening Status Report (Aspire Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/AspireSchool-D.xls>



Prospective New School Summary

This is a typical summary document that board members will receive when Aspire is considering opening a new school.

Basic Information		
Site Working Name:	Trinity Lutheran	Proj Opening: Fall 2007
Region :	Central Valley	District: State Charter / Stockton USD
Key Partners:	CDE	

Project Score		
Criteria	Score	Comments
Mission: Student Need	2 Of 2	In downtown Stockton
Mission: Likelihood of catalyzing change	1 Of 1	Aspire's 3 rd school in SUSD
Contribution to facilities portfolio target	1 Of 2	Neutral
Ease of quality control	2 Of 2	Within existing region
Availability of philanthropic funding	2Of 2	Sufficient: CDE, Walton
Favorable chartering environment	0.5 Of 1	Imposes state charter on SUSD
TOTAL	8.5 of 10	

Financials	
Projected facility occupancy costs as % of annual budget: 12 %	
Projected contribution towards Aspire facilities portfolio: \$ 0 per year	
Start-up funds required: \$575k (CDE grant to be received under statewide benefit charter); \$275k in renovations could be financed through CDE revolving loan or with a loan from LIIF or Raza Development	Philanthropy to be raised: \$300K
Scale up shortfall: \$0K	

Facility Description – Trinity Lutheran

Address: 444 N. American Street, Stockton CA 95210	
Description:	Currently used by Aspire as the temporary location for Rosa Parks Academy, which will be moving into a new Prop 47 funded building in the Fall. Church is open to providing Aspire with a long-term lease with options, and an additional building currently used as a day care center (1-2 classrooms) is also included.
Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> District building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parochial/Private school <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Reuse (former warehouse) <input type="checkbox"/> New construction
Lot Size: ~1.5 acres	Bldg Size: ~20K square feet total
Parking: 22 spaces of parking	Playground space: Small area w/ small structure
Neighborhood: 80% Residential 20% Commercial	
Safety/Security risk: High	Public Transit: Yes
Amenities:	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Library <input type="checkbox"/> Community Center <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Overall condition:	Building is about 80 years old and is in fair condition. Classroom spaces are spread out over three small buildings, with a total of 10-11 full size classrooms + admin office + multipurpose room. Would require some work to bring to Aspire functional standard: \$210k for HVAC, flooring, electrical, painting. Remodel of the current day care facility is estimated to be \$65k. Most of the renovations could be completed over the summer in time for school opening.

Projected Student Enrollment	
# Students at full scale: 200	Grade Levels: K-5
Ethnicity: 10% White 15% Black 60% Latino 15% Asian 0% Other	
Socioeconomic: 80% Free/Reduced Lunch	Language: 50% ELL

Nearby elementary schools	1 mile radius: 2,993 total K-5 students					
	Enroll	% F/R	% ELL	State API	SS API	Overcr d?
1. Parklane Elementary (Lodi USD)	603	82%	52%	1	1	
2. Clairmont Elem (Lodi USD)	595	83%	54%	4	4	
3. Westwood Elem (Lodi USD)	658	83%	57%	3	2	
4. Pulliam Elementary	662	91%	20%	3	6	
5. Sutherland Elementary	475	79%	36%	2	1	

Comments:

May draw from both Lodi and Stockton USD; neighborhood elementary schools are mostly large and poor performing.

Effects on Aspire and other Aspire schools

1. May cause some students to stay rather than moving when Rosa Parks moves into its new facility, thus requiring RPA to do even more recruiting to fill the campus (although there should be sufficient demand)
2. Will increase pressure on Aspire to open at least one additional secondary school in the Lodi/Stockton area
3. Will require Aspire to present a new charter to Stockton Unified (not a friendly district) for Langston Hughes Academy (the CSU partnership school, current a satellite of Rosa Parks Academy) and originally planned to be designated a state charter site

Start Up Risks

1. Very tight timeline for facility renovations over the summer (Aspire made no investment in the facility last year, as it was expected to be a temporary location only)
2. Fairly tight timeline to hire principal, recruit teachers and enroll students

School Opening Process Chart

The following chart outlines the key steps involved in each workstream, the timeline for completion, and the primary person or persons responsible for overseeing each step.

KEY STEP	TASKS	COMPLETION TIMELINE	PERSON (S) RESPONSIBLE
Workstream: Facilities			
Identify and Secure Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source potential facilities Ensure adequate space for program Negotiate and sign lease/contract 	9 months prior to school opening if leasing, 3 years prior to school opening if building a new facility	Director of Real Estate
Secure Facilities Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure financing Ensure occupancy cost of less than 10% of ADA revenue 	7 months prior to school opening if leasing, 30 months prior to school opening if building a new facility	Director of Real Estate
Build or Renovate Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sign contractors Develop construction documents Attain building permits Ensure key construction milestones are met Negotiate/coordinate daily operations with landlord (if leasing) 	2 weeks prior to school opening	Director of Real Estate, Principal
Workstream: Charter Development			
Prepare and Obtain Charter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine charter approach Submit application 	6 months prior to school opening	Chief Academic Officer
Apply for Charter # and CDS#	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow-up with California Dept of Education Disseminate CDS # and charter # to district, home office and principals 	2 months prior to school opening	Chief Academic Officer
Workstream: Financing			
Develop Financial Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure student demand Ensure scale-up is appropriate 	N/A	Chief Financial Officer
Secure Start-up Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for state and foundation funding Meet Department of Education benchmarks for grant funding 	3 months prior to school opening	Chief Financial Officer
Budget Development and Accounting Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop annual school budget Review finance/accounting policies and practices Meet with district/county re. flow of funds to school 	3 months prior to school opening	Financial Analysts, Grants Accountant

Workstream: Staff and Students			
Hire Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise openings • Screen and interview candidates • Conduct reference checks 	6 months prior to school opening	Chief Operating Officer
Hire Teachers (see Toolkit for <i>Sample School Start-up Workplan</i> for more details)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select and train site hiring committee • Advertise openings • Screen, interview and hire candidates 	1-2 months prior to school opening	Principal
Hire Office Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise openings • Screen, interview and hire candidates 	2-3 months prior to school opening	Principal
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct summer training • Identify key areas for coaching 	1 week prior to school opening	Chief Academic Officer
Student Enrollment & Registration (for more details, see <i>Sample School Start-up Workplan</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set enrollment deadlines and objectives • Refine and print collateral materials • Recruit students • Conduct lottery • Register students • Input all student info into power school 	1 month prior to school opening	Principal
Governance and Operations			
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure furniture, fixtures and equipment (FFE) • Order curriculum materials • Establish contracts with vendors 	1 month prior to school opening	Director of Real Estate and Principal
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish site advisory council • Complete memorandum of understanding (MOU) with district/authorizer 	1 week prior to school opening 2 months prior to school opening	Principal

newschools
venture fund



LIGHTHOUSE ACADEMIES

Annual School Opening Survey

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

This case study was prepared by FSG Social Impact Advisors. FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides guidance to foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and other public sector entities on issues of strategy, evaluation, and operations. FSG was commissioned by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “best practices” of portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared across the NewSchools portfolio. To complete this case study, FSG conducted background research on Lighthouse Academies and interviewed Jodi Tucker, Senior Vice President; Doug Thaman, Vice President of Midwest Operations; and Karen Poplawski, a Principal. Jim Peyser of NewSchools Venture Fund provided additional context on Lighthouse.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. Does your organization use data to track, reflect upon and improve its practices? If so, has your organization found the use of data helpful in driving performance?
2. What processes could be improved in your organization by creating a survey similar to the Lighthouse Academies Annual School Opening Survey?
3. If your organization were to adopt a similar survey, how would you ensure that it is seen as a priority at the start of the school year?
4. How would the results of the survey be used to improve practice? Who would be held accountable for ensuring that the results are acted upon? How would the survey results – and the resulting action steps – be relayed back to survey participants?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The opening days of school can be a chaotic, stressful time for school staff. Teachers scurry to complete lesson plans, organize materials, and prepare their classrooms. Principals rush to finalize enrollment, make sure the building is ready, and manage other operational and logistical challenges. But, to a large degree, that is no longer the case at Lighthouse Academies (Lighthouse). By instituting an annual survey to continuously refine the process of school openings, Lighthouse has learned how to ensure a smooth first day of school and set a positive tone for the rest of the year.

By surveying all staff on a wide variety of issues within the first two weeks after schools open, Lighthouse gleans information that the central office can use to determine what needs improvement across all of its school locations. This enables the central office to take small details off the plates of principals and staff, provide schools with the highest level of customer service possible, and help schools best prepare for opening day.

There are some simple things, like textbook delivery, that can bog you down at a late hour. But there is no need for that. Using the survey we can fix the process so everything is set when school opens.

- Principal, Lighthouse Academies

Background on Lighthouse Academies

Lighthouse Academies is a nonprofit charter management organization (CMO) founded in 2003 in San Francisco. Since its inception, it has opened eight schools in New York City, Chicago, Indiana, Cleveland, and Washington, D.C., serving 2,450 students in Pre-K through grade 5. CEO Mike Ronan has created a culture

Lighthouse is one of the most data-driven organizations I've ever seen. The protocol here is to use data to develop action plans and align resources. Here, we look at research and immediately act upon it.

- Principal, Lighthouse Academies

in which feedback is valued and regularly shared. The organization constantly uses data to reflect upon and improve its practices. It administers regular surveys to parents and staff, and all central office staff members meet together every two months for a full day to discuss how the organization can improve. The school opening survey fits in with this culture of continuous improvement.

This case is relevant for any school or CMO that wants to improve the process of preparing for opening day or is interested in learning how to survey staff to inform and improve school operations.

HOW THE SURVEY WORKS

Survey Overview

The survey aims to:

- Help schools prepare for opening day, ensuring a smooth first day of school
- Enable the central office to take small details off the plates of principals and staff
- Set a positive tone for the rest of the year

The survey is administered in the first two weeks of school, and the results are analyzed soon thereafter. Based on survey feedback, Lighthouse can immediately begin making improvements, such as changing vendors or the process for ordering textbooks, which will improve school openings the following year (see Toolkit for *Survey Timeline*).

Developing the Questions

Lighthouse has a full-time Director of Assessment who reports directly to the President. The Director of Assessment coordinates all assessment tools within the school network, including

School Opening Survey:

Areas of Focus

- Professional Development
- Furniture
- Fixtures & Equipment
- Student Transportation
- Food Service
- Textbooks
- Technology
- Staffing
- Finance
- Student Recruitment
- Facilities
- Legal Issues

standardized academic tests like the Stanford 10, as well as developing, implementing, and analyzing data from internal

The Director of Assessment develops the questions and then solicits feedback from principals before creating the final version. The survey asks staff to provide feedback on a variety of measures related to summer professional development and the implementation of various operational tasks related to the opening of school in the fall (see Toolkit for *Sample School Opening Survey*).

This survey allows us to look at where we need to improve. We want to look at as many facets of school opening operations as possible.

- Jodi Tucker, Lighthouse Senior VP

Administering the Survey

In the first two weeks of the school year, the central office sends the survey electronically to all staff, including principals, teachers, regional directors, and professional development coordinators. Giving the survey early in the year ensures immediate feedback about what needs to be improved while the lessons learned from the year's opening are still fresh in staff members' minds and provides schools ample time to make changes before the following year. The survey is administered online through Survey Monkey, an inexpensive, user-friendly service.

You need to convince people that it's worth it for them to take 15 minutes to sit down and fill it out. The most effective way we found to do this was to keep the computer lab open at the end of the day and encourage teachers to fill it out then.

- Doug Thaman, Lighthouse VP of Midwest Operations

Getting Staff Buy-In

Because all staff is so busy at the start of the school year, it can be challenging to convince them to find the time to fill out the survey. Lighthouse uses the following strategies to ensure a high response rate:

- ***Provide dedicated space and time.*** Set aside time for teachers to go to the computer lab to complete the survey.

- **Give teachers an appointment time to fill out survey.** Making an appointment with teachers to fill out the survey leads to better response rates than setting a deadline.
- **Have principals encourage staff to fill out the survey.** Principals play an important role in encouraging staff to complete the survey. Some principals will take over a teacher’s class for a few minutes to enable them to fill out the survey.
- **Track teacher responses.** Through Survey Monkey, the Director of Assessment can track which teachers have completed the survey, and he is in constant communication with principals about who at their school site has not completed it.
- **Ensure staff knows their feedback was heard and will lead to changes.** When staff sees that their suggestions lead to changes, they are often more likely to buy into the value of the survey and complete it in subsequent years.

Response Rates
 Response rates have been very good and continue to grow

- ~60% in Year 1
- ~80% in Year 2

These strategies seem to be working, as the survey response rate increased from 60 percent in the first year to 80 percent in the second year.

Analyzing and Using Results

Lighthouse ensures that the results of the survey are acted upon. The Director of Assessment compiles the data; then, all Lighthouse employees who provide service to the schools meet for a group analysis where they discuss and plan around the results of the survey. This group then shares results with each school’s principal and Director of Instruction. There is a quick turnaround on the results, with principals receiving the analysis within a few weeks of the survey being administered. So that it does not feel like a reprimand, all critical feedback is always accompanied with a statement, such as, *“This is how we are going to improve and move forward on this topic.”* Feedback is given through the lens that Lighthouse is a young organization constantly seeking to improve.

Teachers are thrilled about the changes at the Professional Development Institute and they feel validated about their feedback. The use of this survey is really refreshing!

- Principal, Lighthouse Academics

We want staff to know that we value their input and that their opinions matter. Providing positive feedback can go a long way in motivating people.

- Doug Thaman, Lighthouse
 VP of Midwest Operations

Some data is applicable at the school-level, while other information is more relevant for the central office staff. Principals examine the data to determine what needs to be changed at the school level, and they share this information with their staff. The central office’s Director of Professional Development also takes a close look at the survey results, using the data to improve the summer professional development that takes place for all Lighthouse staff. Throughout the year at monthly

meetings, Lighthouse staff continues to review progress on implementation of changes recommended from the survey results.

The survey has directly led to many improvements. In 2005, Lighthouse received the following feedback about the order and delivery of textbooks:

- Accuracy and delivery was fine, but it was the process once they arrived at the school that was neither well articulated nor well carried out
- There was a lot of disorganization of materials once they arrived
- Some companies do not provide a detailed packing slip, which slows down inventory
- There is not enough time to catalogue the textbooks before school starts

Based on this feedback, Lighthouse was able to make immediate changes. It shifted the responsibility of textbook inventory and refill orders from the Office Manager to the Director of Instruction, who is much more familiar with the materials. Lighthouse also changed the deadline for submission of refill orders to the end of April instead of the end of June, so materials can arrive over the summer providing teachers adequate time to inventory textbooks before classes begin.

Other survey data results in changes that will be implemented the following school year. Based on the 2005 survey, Lighthouse changed the furniture vendor for the opening of school in 2006. Lighthouse also made substantial improvements to the summer Professional Development Institute based on feedback it received from the prior year. Staff commented that:

- There needed to be different sessions for new and experienced teachers
- Many teachers enjoyed sessions but were not putting them into practice
- Teachers felt they did not have enough time to conduct home visits at the start of the school year

Based on this feedback, the Professional Development Institute now includes more differentiated instruction for teachers and provides time during the professional development training period for teachers to complete the required student home visits before the start of the school year.

We like all teachers to visit the homes of each of their students before the year starts. On last year's survey, we found out these visits weren't being conducted as readily as we intended. So the following year, we made sure we included time in our Professional Development Institute for teachers to visit student homes.

- Jodi Tucker, Lighthouse Senior VP

LESSONS FOR OTHERS

- ***Think through question design.*** Develop your questions based on your school's needs and stage of development. Involve principals in the process of designing the survey questions. According to one staff member, *"If you are a school in your 2nd year, it can be helpful to look at a school in their 3rd or 4th year to determine what to ask."*
- ***Use an online survey tool.*** Online surveys are inexpensive, simple to set up and administer, and provide for easy analysis of results.

If organizations do a lot of surveys, but do nothing with the information, then that will be seen as a waste of time. If you are going to ask people a question... then be prepared to act on the information you receive.

- Principal, Lighthouse

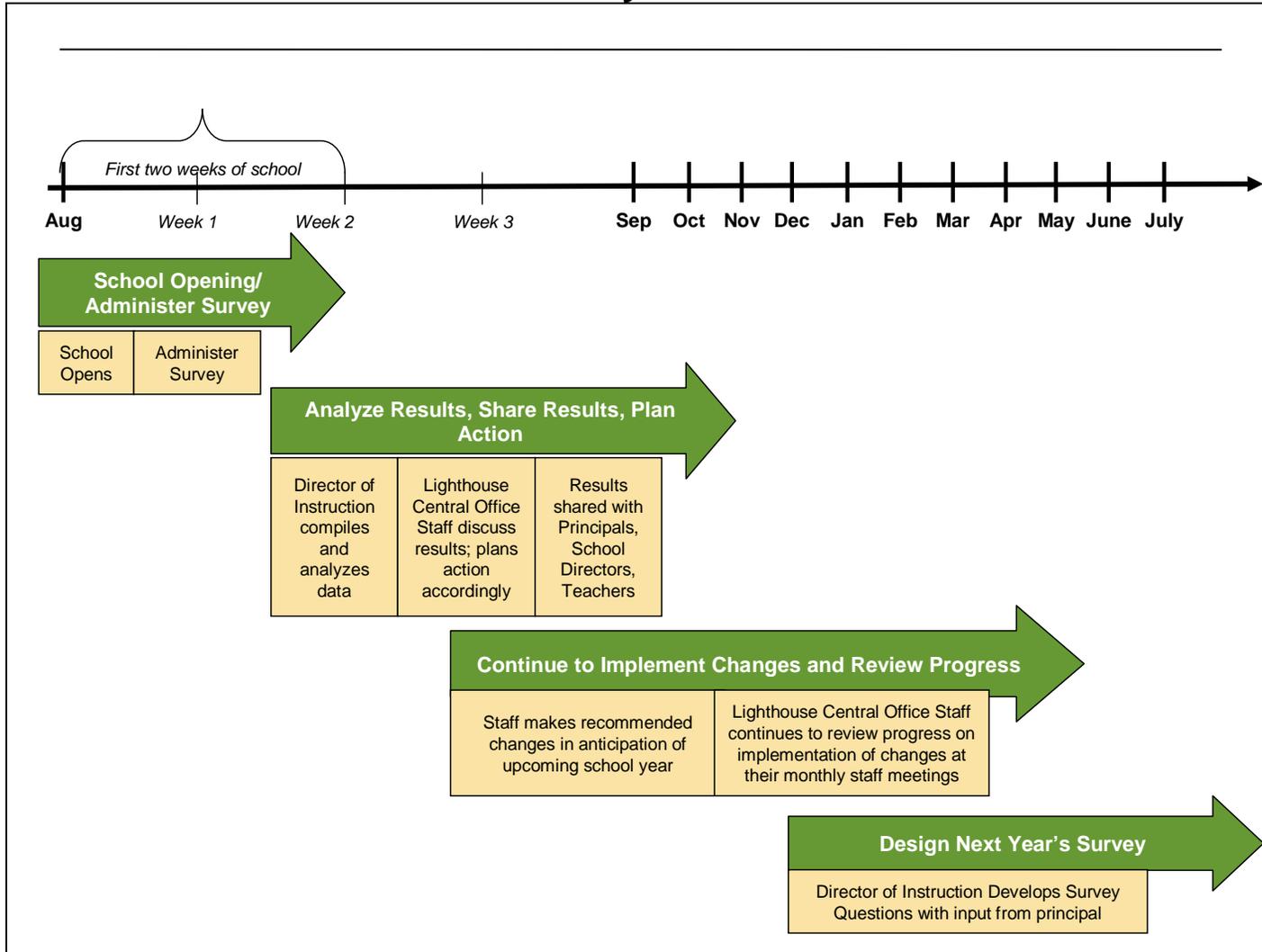
- ***Provide adequate guidance to school leaders.*** Involve principals in the process of designing and administering the survey. Giving direction to the schools will help ensure a healthy number of responses.
- ***Provide dedicated time for staff to complete the survey.*** It is an ongoing challenge to convince staff to fill out the survey. Lighthouse has found that providing a dedicated time and place for staff to complete the survey results in the best response rate, and is more effective than offering incentives for people to fill it out. This time is especially important for non-certified staff that might not have easy access to an online system.
- ***Be willing to face the facts.*** Seek honest feedback and be prepared to accept both positive input and suggestions for improvement. According to a principal, *“Some organizations don’t want to face the facts because they want perfection. It can be hard to accept the truth. But all organizations, no matter how long they have been around or what norms they have developed, can benefit from continuously learning how to improve their processes.”*
- ***Follow up on the results.*** Without follow-up, there is no value in conducting the survey. You will need to dedicate staff time to analyze results, discuss implications, and ensure follow-through on recommended actions.

LIGHTHOUSE SCHOOL OPENING SURVEY TOOLKIT

Toolkit Contents

- **Survey Timeline (Synthesized by FSG)**
- **Checklist: Resources Needed to Design and Implement a School Opening Survey (Synthesized by FSG)**
- **Sample School Opening Survey (Lighthouse Document)**

Survey Timeline



Checklist: Resources Needed to Design and Implement a School Opening Survey

Planning Checklist Items	Yes <i>We already have this</i>	No <i>We need to develop this</i>	Comments
Make a commitment to using data. Is your school a learning organization that is constantly seeking to improve?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Use an online survey tool. (eg. www.surveymonkey.com)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ensure Principal buy-in. How will you involve Principals in the survey design? How will Principals encourage staff to complete survey? How will Principals communicate results with staff? Are they willing to implement changes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Set aside staff time to design survey, analyze results, discuss implications, and ensure follow through. Can you allot central office staff time to create, analyze and follow through on the survey?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Provide dedicated time for staff to complete survey. How will you ensure the survey is seen as a priority during the start of the school year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Be prepared to face the facts and follow up on results. Who will be accountable to ensure results are acted upon?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Provide timely feedback. Who amongst your staff will provide feedback to school leaders? How will results be relayed back to survey participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



Sample School Opening Survey

Below is the survey Lighthouse administered in the fall of 2006. What questions would you want to include on your school opening survey?

Every day we strive for the relentless pursuit of excellence with humility and respect.

Congratulations on successfully opening another school year! As you know from Peter Senge's *The Fifth Discipline*, it is critical for us to pause, reflect, and capture both the best practices we developed and the lessons we learned from this process of opening schools.

The intention is to analyze the "systems" and processes we followed so that next year we can replicate the best practices and avoid the lessons learned. This is a mechanism for feedback, not accountability; so please be as candid as possible. Remember the notion that "all feedback is good" and help Lighthouse Academies improve its systems for the future.

The survey should take you around 15-30 minutes to complete, depending on your involvement in the school opening process.

At which school were you involved with school opening?

Bronx
Cleveland
Gary
Indianapolis
Potomac

What is your position?

Teacher
Professional Development Coordinator
Principal
Regional Director
Framingham Staff



Professional Development Institute

Please evaluate the quality and usefulness of each of the following workshops.

Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor N/A

Open Court
Saxon Math
FOSS
Core Knowledge/Pearson
Arts Infusion
Multicultural Awareness
Responsive Classroom
Technology
Curriculum Overview/Pacing Guides
Data Driven Instruction/Assessment
NWEA (Indiana)
New York Learns (Bronx)
Interactive Therapy (Bronx)
Meeting with Mike Ronan - founder of LHA
Team Building Activities
Overall PDI

Please describe at least two of the highest rated workshops from above, and explain why they were so useful.

Please describe at least two of the lowest rated workshops from above, and explain what you feel could be improved.

Was lesson modeling a part of your PDI?

Yes

No

If lesson modeling was a part of your PDI, did you find it useful? Do you have any comments about it?

How would you do things differently next year?

Did you make a home visit for each of the students enrolled in your class?

Yes

No

If you did not make a home visit for each of the students in your class, for what percentage of your students were you able to make a home visit?



Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment

Please evaluate the overall implementation for each of these tasks.

Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor N/A

Quality of suppliers
Delivery time
Accuracy of order
Installation
Inventory process
Overall

Please describe at least two of the highest rated tasks from above, and explain why they were so successful.

Please describe at least two of the lowest rated tasks from above, and explain the difficulties you encountered. Also, describe how the task was resolved.

How would you do things differently next year?

Student Transportation

Please evaluate the overall implementation for each of these tasks.

Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor N/A

Quality of suppliers
Day 1 transportation
Overall

Please describe at least two of the highest rated tasks from above, and explain why they were so successful.

Please describe at least two of the lowest rated tasks from above, and explain the difficulties you encountered. Also, describe how the task was resolved.

How would you do things differently next year?



Food Service

Please evaluate the overall implementation for each of these tasks.

Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor N/A

Efficiency of serving meals
Delivery of food
Accuracy of order
Day 1 food service
Reimbursement process
Overall food service

Please describe at least two of the highest rated tasks from above, and explain why they were so successful.

Please describe at least two of the lowest rated tasks from above, and explain the difficulties you encountered. Also, describe how the task was resolved.

How would you do things differently next year?

Textbooks

Please evaluate the overall implementation for each of these tasks.

Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor N/A

Accuracy of order
Delivery of textbooks
Ease of re-order process
Return policy
Quality of provider
Overall textbooks

Please describe at least two of the highest rated tasks from above, and explain why they were so successful.

Please describe at least two of the lowest rated tasks from above, and explain the difficulties you encountered. Also, describe how the task was resolved.

How would you do things differently next year?



Technology

Please evaluate the overall implementation for each of these tasks.

Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor N/A

Installation of telephones
Installation of computers
Installation of DSL/T1 lines
Installation of fax machine/scanner/printer
Installation of copier
Installation of PowerSchool
Quality of providers
Overall technology installation

Please evaluate the quality and utility of the following pieces of equipment.

Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor N/A

Telephones
Computers
Fax machine/scanner/printer
Copier

Please describe at least two of the highest rated tasks from above, and explain why they were so successful.

Please describe at least two of the lowest rated tasks from above, and explain the difficulties you encountered. Also, describe how the task was resolved.

How would you do things differently next year?



Staffing

Please evaluate the overall implementation for each of these tasks.

Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor N/A

Ability to fill positions with qualified and certified candidates
Ability to fill positions on a timely basis
Ample number of quality candidates
Ease of use of hiring systems and procedures
Training in hiring systems and procedures
Overall staffing

Please describe at least two of the highest rated tasks from above, and explain why they were so successful.

Please describe at least two of the lowest rated tasks from above, and explain the difficulties you encountered. Also, describe how the task was resolved.

How would you do things differently next year?

Finance

Please evaluate the overall implementation for each of these tasks.

Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor N/A

Access to financial information about the school
Ease of use of financial systems
Ease of use of financial procedures
Pre-opening training in finance systems and procedures
Availability of cash
Ease of obtaining line of credit
Quality of suppliers and providers

Please describe at least two of the highest rated tasks from above, and explain why they were so successful.

Please describe at least two of the lowest rated tasks from above, and explain the difficulties you encountered. Also, describe how the task was resolved.

How would you do things differently next year?



Marketing (Student Recruiting)

Please evaluate the overall implementation for each of these tasks.

Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor N/A

Quality of community partner
Quality of LHA recruitment materials
Open houses
Signature campaigns
Support from Framingham office
Support from Regional Director
Ease of recruiting students

Please describe at least two of the highest rated tasks from above, and explain why they were so successful.

Please describe at least two of the lowest rated tasks from above, and explain the difficulties you encountered. Also, describe how the task was resolved.

How would you do things differently next year?

Purchasing

Please evaluate the overall implementation for each of these tasks.

Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor N/A

Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment
Textbooks
Transportation
Food service
Overall purchasing

Please describe at least two of the highest rated tasks from above, and explain why they were so successful.

Please describe at least two of the lowest rated tasks from above, and explain the difficulties you encountered. Also, describe how the task was resolved.

How would you do things differently next year?



Facility

Please evaluate the overall implementation for each of these tasks.

Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor N/A

Ease of finding facility
Ease of securing facility
Ease of financing facility
Availability of general contractor
Overall facility

Please describe at least two of the highest rated tasks from above, and explain why they were so successful.

Please describe at least two of the lowest rated tasks from above, and explain the difficulties you encountered. Also, describe how the task was resolved.

How would you do things differently next year?

Legal

Please evaluate the overall implementation for each of these tasks.

Excellent Good Average Below Average Poor N/A

Ability to incorporate
Overall legal

Please describe the highest rated task from above, and explain why they were so successful.

Please describe the lowest rated task from above, and explain the difficulties you encountered. Also, describe how the task was resolved.

How would you do things differently next year?

General Feedback

If you have any additional feedback about anything we have or have not covered, please share it with us.

Thank you

Remember -- "all feedback is good" -- and we're very thankful for yours.

Thanks very much for your time.

newschools
venture fund



ASPIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Board Management

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

A highly qualified board that is managed and engaged appropriately can be a significant contributor to organizational success. Aspire Public Schools puts considerable effort into developing and managing its board, and has created structures and systems to ensure that the work of the board is informed, relevant, and meaningful.

This case study was prepared by FSG Social Impact Advisors. FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides guidance to foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and other public sector entities on issues of strategy, evaluation, and operations. FSG was commissioned by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “promising practices” of portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared across the NewSchools portfolio. To complete this case study, FSG conducted background research on Aspire Public Schools and interviewed Don Shalvey, Aspire’s CEO and Founder, and Beth Hunkapiller, Aspire’s Board Chair. Joanne Weiss of NewSchools Venture Fund provided additional context on Aspire.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. What is your organization’s approach to board recruitment and development? How do you factor into this approach elements like your organization’s stage of development or strategic needs?
2. Are there additional individuals you would like to add to your board? How will you cultivate them?
3. Do you have a specific set of selection criteria for prospective board members?
4. How do you communicate to your board about their roles and responsibilities, and about what is expected of them as effective and engaged board members?
5. Does the board engage in a process of self-evaluation?
6. Have you developed consistent systems and processes for sharing information with and receiving feedback from your board?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

For charter school management organizations (CMOs), governing boards can play a critical role in achieving success. A well-run board of directors provides an outside perspective and a new set of skills and ideas that can help CMOs think through important strategic issues, such as where and how quickly to open new schools, and how to build the right capacity to support those growth plans. To reach their full potential, these boards must be carefully developed and managed by the management team of the CMO. However, many organizations struggle with questions like what to look for in prospective board members, how to communicate expectations for board members' roles and responsibilities, and how best to work with board members in a way that fully utilizes their strengths and leverages the resources that they can provide. While many of the elements of effective board management may seem obvious, managing a board well is primarily a matter of how these elements are implemented, which requires a time, well-conceived processes, and an organizational commitment to keeping the board informed and engaged.

The following case study examines the board structure and governance process developed by Aspire Public Schools. It provides an instructive model for the management teams of other CMOs who are thinking about ways to manage their own boards more effectively.

Background on Aspire Public Schools

Aspire Public Schools 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,”¹ Aspire currently operates 17 schools serving more than 3,600 students in grades K – 12.

BOARD STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE PROCESS

Roles and Responsibilities

The primary role of Aspire’s board is to serve as a group of engaged thought partners for Aspire’s management and staff as they work to design and implement the organization’s strategy. One way the board does this is by helping to identify potentially “fatal flaws” in staff’s decision making that may not be apparent to the team itself. For example, when Aspire was first considering opening a cluster of schools in Los Angeles (after years of operating schools only in northern and central California), the board recognized that the team did not yet have the skill set in place to open schools so far away from the home office in Oakland. The board made a strategic decision to postpone geographic expansion until the organization reached a more mature stage of growth. Once Aspire had successfully opened more schools in Northern California and had sufficiently built up its home office staff, the board gave the green light for Aspire to expand into Los Angeles. This type of guidance and insight is critical to ensuring that Aspire stays focused and avoids potential pitfalls.

¹ Aspire Web site, <http://www.aspirepublicschools.org/about/about.html>

Specific areas of board responsibility are well-defined and clearly communicated to new members (see Toolkit for *Aspire Public Schools Board of Directors Job Description*). The three primary areas for board involvement are:

- ***School site expansion*** – deciding whether to pursue a new school site;
- ***Finance*** – budget oversight and fundraising; and
- ***Strategy*** – variations on the original business plan, such as geographic expansion.

Board Structure

Aspire’s board consists of 12 members. Nine of these members were appointed by the board itself, and the remaining three were appointed by the school districts in which the organization has charters (see Toolkit for *Aspire Board Members*.) Members bring to bear a wide range of backgrounds, including education, law, finance, management consulting, venture capital, politics, and philanthropy. Officers include a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. The Chair reviews and gives final approval to the board meeting agenda and moderates the quarterly meetings. The Vice Chair presides over board meetings in the absence of the Chair, and the Secretary works with the other officers to evaluate the CEO annually and to help them come to agreement on a CEO compensation recommendation for the full board.

Many board functions are delegated to the Executive Committee, which serves as the primary decision making body. The Executive Committee meets monthly and is responsible for making policy and budgetary decisions, as well as discussing strategic issues that require more immediate dialogue than the quarterly full board meetings permit.

In addition to the Executive Committee, the board includes three other standing committees, each of which has three members:

- ***Finance Committee*** – reviews budget proposals and year-to-date expenses and revenues;
- ***Audit Committee*** – elects an auditor, reviews the annual audit, and reports to the full board; and
- ***Governance Committee*** – responsible for board recruitment and development.

Terms

Board members are appointed for two-year terms and can opt to stay on the board for an unlimited number of terms. Most members have remained on the board indefinitely, and Aspire considers the stability this provides as a major strength. Only a few members have left, and in most cases this was due to a conflict of interest. For example, one early board member, Reed Hastings, was elected as President of the California State Board of Education and felt that he would not be able to remain impartial on either board in making decisions about Aspire’s state-level activities, such as its application for a statewide benefit charter.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

One of the particularly unique aspects of Aspire's approach to board management is the careful thought that is given to recruiting and selecting new board members. Aspire's senior team and board conduct extensive due diligence to ensure that new board members are a strong cultural fit with the organization and that they will add value in specific areas that are integral to the organization's growth and success.

Recruitment, evaluation, and selection of new board members typically involves the following six-step process (see Toolkit for *Board Recruitment and Selection Process*):

- **Step 1:** Solicit nominations and compile names
- **Step 2:** Initial meeting with nominating board member
- **Step 3:** Nominator reports back to full board
- **Step 4:** Prospective member meets with CEO, other board members, and staff
- **Step 5:** Visit schools and attend board meeting(s)
- **Step 6:** Final meeting with CEO or nominator

Once a candidate completes this process, a decision is then brought to the board for a final decision based on a majority vote.

At a high level, there are three broad categories that define what characteristics Aspire looks for in prospective board members:

- **Skill Set** – all board members must have expertise in either real estate, finance, multi-region business operations, or education
- **Wealth** – one-third of all board members must contribute at least a five-figure gift each year to annual fundraising efforts
- **Diversity** – geographic, ethnic, and gender diversity are important factors

At a more detailed level, Aspire’s recruitment efforts focus on identifying individuals with a very specific set of background experiences to ensure that key organizational needs are met:

<i>Professional Background</i>	<i>Organizational Need Fulfilled/Skill Set Provided</i>
<i>Real Estate/Facilities/Finance Professional</i>	Facilities sourcing and development, financial management
<i>Venture Capitalist</i>	Risk assessment and help with pattern recognition related to what things work/don’t work
<i>Public School Administrator</i>	Understanding of governance processes
<i>Entrepreneur</i>	Understanding of organizational structure, strategy, and design issues
<i>Statewide Education Leader</i>	Understanding of education politics in California
<i>Multi-Region Retail Professional</i>	Expertise and guidance on site expansion
<i>Higher Education Professional</i>	Help with Early College High School (ECHS) design
<i>Elected Official (Mid- to Long-Term Seated Democrat)</i>	Advice and support on navigating legislation affecting Aspire and charter schools in general
<i>Civic Leader with Strong Philanthropic Interest (in Key Geographic Regions)</i>	Local fundraising for Aspire schools

BOARD DEVELOPMENT

Expectation-Setting, Communication, and Goal-Setting

Aspire’s CEO Don Shalvey and its Board Chair invest a lot of time and energy in keeping board members engaged and well-informed, particularly as it relates to expectations for their role. Don Shalvey and the Chair each meet with new board members individually to discuss norms and to ensure that they have a clear understanding of what their role as a board member will entail. This helps orient them and sets guidelines for expected behavior, such as the importance of returning phone calls within 24 hours. There is also strong communication between Shalvey and individual board members on an ongoing basis. Shalvey interacts at least twice a month by phone or e-mail with each board member, and makes a point of getting together informally with board members to build rapport and reinforce the relationship. The Chair meets formally with Don three times a month, and is in regular phone and e-mail communication with him to discuss important issues. All members also participate in an annual board retreat, which provides them with an opportunity to reflect on the past year and to set goals for the year ahead.

Board Self-Evaluation Process

One of the most important board development tactics is a self-evaluation process in which the Executive Committee engages each year. Each Executive Committee member completes a self-evaluation in which they rate the full board’s performance in several key areas, including finance, fundraising, strategic planning, academic performance, school management, and board/staff relations. Members then rate their

own individual performance in nine specific areas. This data is then compiled and used to guide the development and prioritization of the following year’s board goals. The areas for which goals are established include leadership, adequate resources, strategic mission and strategy, and effective board processes (see Toolkit for *Executive Committee Self-Evaluation Process*.)

BOARD MEETINGS

Aspire’s board meetings are well-run, focused, and highly productive. While many factors contribute to this effectiveness, one distinguishing factor is the pre-work that Aspire’s staff does to plan for board meetings.

The Board Meeting Agenda
 Typical board meeting agenda items include:

- Achievement Update
- Budget Update
- Fundraising Update
- New Site Development Update

Pre-Work

Aspire staff puts a significant amount of work into preparing for board meetings and has found that this up-front investment in gathering and sharing relevant and meaningful information is critical in enabling the board to provide constructive guidance. Preparation for board meetings is focused on agenda-setting (see Toolkit for *Sample Executive Committee Agenda*.) assigning staff members to report on key issues, and developing the board packet. Steps in the process are as follows:

STEP	TIMELINE	WHO’S INVOLVED
Determine agenda for next meeting	End of current meeting	Full board
Refine agenda based on major topics of interest	Between end of current meeting and beginning of following meeting	CEO and Board Chair
Draft final agenda	2 weeks prior to board meeting	CEO and Board Chair
Assign team members to report on key issues	1 week prior to board meeting	CEO
Create board packet materials	1 week prior to board meeting	COO
Assemble board packet materials	5 days prior to board meeting	Executive Assistant
CEO reviews and distributes board packet	4 days prior to board meeting	CEO
CEO and Board Chair discuss agenda items and strategy for the meeting	2 – 3 days prior to board meeting	CEO and Board Chair

Board Packet

Aspire staff assembles a detailed board packet that is distributed four days prior to board meetings, which allows board members a chance to review background information and enables them to arrive at the meeting prepared to discuss agenda items in depth (see Toolkit for *Sample Board Packet*.) Standard elements of every board packet include: a student achievement report, a

Our board wouldn’t be so good if it weren’t for the quality of the staff and their focus on data and results. Aspire has the most talented, results-oriented staff I can imagine. Decisions are so research-based and executed by such energetic people that it makes the board’s job really easy.

- Beth Hunkapiller, Board Chair

finance report, and a fundraising report. Other items in the board packet might include an overview and analysis of a new school site under consideration (see Toolkit for *Prospective New School Summary*) or a PowerPoint slide deck outlining potential new sites under consideration (see Toolkit for *Growth Options 2007*). Aspire staff is diligent about providing board members with the relevant data and information they need to make informed decisions; board members feel that this contributes significantly to their ability to operate effectively.

SUCCESS FACTORS

There are a number of key factors that contribute to the effectiveness of Aspire's board management. These include:

- ***In-depth recruitment and selection process.*** Aspire's team has a very specific set of selection criteria for prospective board members, and invests a great deal of time and energy to ensure that they recruit individuals who will add value to the organization in key areas of need.
- ***Clear roles and expectations.*** The committee structure and written job descriptions both help provide members with an explicit understanding of roles and responsibilities, which helps board members stay focused on key priorities and makes them feel better able to add value.
- ***Ongoing communication.*** Shalvey makes a personal commitment to keeping board members informed and engaged, through regular phone calls, e-mails, and meetings.
- ***Evaluation and reflection.*** Through annual board retreats and a self-evaluation process, Aspire creates a structure that allows the board to regularly evaluate its performance and reflect on its goals for the year ahead.
- ***Well-developed materials.*** Aspire's staff makes a concerted effort to provide the board with meaningful materials that build their understanding of key issues and enable them to be effective thought partners.

I think we have an extraordinary board because they understand what boardsmanship is about. They have no special interests other than Aspire and are willing to work in whatever way possible to support the organization's success.

- Don Shalvey, CEO, Aspire

CHALLENGES

Though its process of board management has worked well, Aspire has encountered some challenges:

- ***Building an understanding of the education landscape.*** Since most board members are not educators, making them aware of key education issues requires a significant investment of time and energy.
- ***Operating as a unified entity.*** Given the broad range of backgrounds and personalities on Aspire's board, it can sometimes be difficult to get everyone in alignment about a particular decision or action.

- ***Focusing staff time on board preparation.*** For this young and growing organization, it remains an ongoing challenge for Aspire’s senior team and other staff to devote such a significant amount of time to creating materials for board meetings, preparing for board meetings, and interacting with board members.

ADVICE AND LESSONS LEARNED

- ***Invest in building the knowledge base of the board.*** Providing the board with the background information they need to make well-informed decisions results in much more effective board governance. In addition to providing the information that staff deems important, it is also important to be responsive to what the board says they need.
- ***Make sure you’re getting the right board members and the right skill sets.*** Develop a clear understanding of the skill sets and other characteristics that will add the most value and help your organization operate effectively. This will vary significantly across organizations, so invest sufficient time to think through what your organization most needs in general and from the board.
- ***Get to know your board well.*** It is important to invest the time to develop trust and a personal rapport with each board member.
- ***Encourage and model transparency.*** Share information openly and encourage candid dialogue, particularly around sensitive issues such as the organization’s financial health.
- ***Develop consistent systems and processes.*** Be explicit and consistent about when and how information should or will be shared with the board, such as by creating an annual calendar of agenda items and developing a standard board packet template.

The open transparency around what board members need is really good. We have become much more transparent about finance matters, which has led to a more robust budget.

- Don Shalvey,
CEO, Aspire

ASPIRE BOARD MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Toolkit Contents

- **Aspire Public Schools Board Member Job Descriptions (Aspire Document)**
- **Aspire Board Members (Aspire Document)**
- **Board Recruitment and Selection Process (FSG Document)**
- **Sample Executive Committee Agenda (Aspire Document)**
- **Prospective New School Summary (Aspire Document)**

Additional Documents (Available Separately)

- **Executive Committee Self-Evaluation Process (Aspire Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/AspireBOD-A.ppt>
- **Sample Board Packet (Aspire Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/AspireBOD-B.pdf>
- **Growth Options 2007 (Aspire Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/AspireBOD-C.ppt>



Aspire Public Schools Board of Directors
Job Description
Draft

Aspire Public Schools Board Responsibilities

The Board is a governing and policymaking board.

The Board of Directors as a whole is generally responsible for:

- Ensuring that by-laws and appropriate board policies are in place and followed to meet expectations outlined in the California Nonprofit Integrity Act and the IRS Intermediate Sanctions Regulations and other applicable laws.
- Monitoring the financial stability and integrity of the organization, through reports made by the Finance and Audit Committees to full board, by reviewing quarterly financial statements, approving the external auditor, and reviewing annual audited statements.
- Every year, reviewing and providing feedback on reports from the Executive on agency performance against the priorities as well as other objectives.
- Supporting the Chief Executive Officer (“CEO”) to lead the organization; and with the Executive Committee’s leadership annually reviewing his/her performance against annual objectives and organizational priorities, and approving his/her annual compensation package.
- Selecting and employing the Chief Executive Officer.

Individual Board Members are responsible for:

- Attending the quarterly board meetings, including reading the board briefing materials ahead of the meeting and participating in meeting discussions.
- Reporting to the CEO and Board President any potential conflicts of interest between what is in Aspire Public Schools best interests and what might be in the best interest of the individual Board Member or of other agencies with which he or she is closely affiliated.
- Keeping Aspire Public Schools finances, fund development, or business development strategy, and other information as requested confidential.
- Providing input and feedback to staff – in board meetings and between meetings as requested – on Aspire Public Schools publications and other program activities.
- Enhancing the organization’s public image, visibility and credibility.
- Bringing resources to the organization by making a personal annual donation, and by sharing personal contacts with foundation staff with the CEO.
- Connecting and networking the organization to constituencies, audiences, organizations, and influential individuals to which individual members have access.
- Identifying and recruiting strong Board Members who will contribute time and energy to the agency’s credibility, visibility, quality, and growth while ensuring a broad range of education perspectives consistent with Aspire Public Schools’ mission.
- Annually and candidly assessing one’s own participation on the board, and looking for opportunities to increase contribution over time.



Contributing Time to Aspire Public Schools:

- Attendance at quarterly board meetings is expected, and is important to ensure a quorum and full involvement. It is the single most important contribution a Board Member can make because it is the one time staff is able to hear the full board discuss issues and react to one another's ideas and questions. This exchange between Board Members expands the thinking and knowledge of Aspire Public Schools' staff, and thus improves the quality of work. With the consensus of the board, some quarterly meeting(s) or the triennial strategic planning retreat may include a retreat.

In addition to attendance at quarterly meetings, the majority of Board Members also contribute additional time by doing at least one or even all of the following at various times:

- Serving as an officer or as a member of a standing or ad hoc committee. Most meetings take place in the morning before a regular board meeting, or between quarterly meetings by phone, online, or in person.
- Attending events to cultivate funders and provide hospitality to speakers; or as requested by staff, to present or moderate at an Aspire convening.
- Review drafts of Aspire Public Schools publications and providing comments to staff in writing or over the phone.

Board Leadership and Committee Assignments:

The board has the following officers: Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. In practice, the Chair reviews and gives final approval to the staff-general agenda and moderates the quarterly meetings. The Vice Chair presides over board meetings in the absence of the Chair. The Secretary may be asked to preside over meetings in the absence of the Chair or Vice Chair, and works with the other officers to annually evaluate the CEO and to agree on a recommendation to the full board on CEO compensation.

The Board also delegates many of its functions to the Executive Committee, which is comprised by the officers and four additional members. The Executive Committee meets monthly. In addition to the Executive Committee, Aspire Public Schools has the following other three standing committees: Finance (reviews budget proposals and the year-to-date expenses and revenues; Audit (recommends auditor selection, reviews annual audit, management letters, and Form 990, and reports to full board on integrity, compliance, and solvency); and Governance (responsible for board recruitment and development). Some Board Members are needed to serve on these committees.

Bringing Financial Resources to Aspire Public Schools:

Aspire Public Schools' Board Members will be asked by the Chair in early December of each year to make a financial contribution, either personally or through their organization to Aspire Public Schools. The amount is not as important as is 100% board participation, an indication to staff and to funders of the board's commitment to Aspire Public Schools' mission.

Many Aspire Public Schools' Board Members have over time in their other roles developed professional or personal relationships with staff at private foundations or with individual



philanthropists. Board Members are asked to notify the CEO of these contracts and whether they may be potential sources of funding for Aspire Public Schools. If appropriate, the member will be asked to facilitate introductions, write letters of support, attend meetings, or advise on grant proposal strategy.

In Summary

The Aspire Public Schools Board of Directors is a dynamic group of individuals who are committed to the purpose of “Aspire Public Schools.” Board meetings are busy, focused, and lively with conversation. The board leadership ensures that board involvement is kept at the policy and governing level. Because the Aspire Public Schools staff is small and our mission is large, the active commitment of each Aspire Public Schools’ Board Member is welcomed and needed.

Recognition

The Aspire Board of Directors and CEO would like to recognize and thank Trish Williams, CEO of EdSource, and the EdSource Board for her willingness to guide and share EdSource documents with the Aspire team.



Aspire Board Members

Tom Changnon, Superintendent, Keyes Union School District (Chartering District for University Charter School and Summit Charter Academy)

Tom Chagnon has spent his career in education. For the past four years, he has been Superintendent of Keyes Union School District in California's Central Valley. Tom firmly believes in providing families with viable educational options and is a strong supporter of the charter movement; he was instrumental in opening the Keyes To Learning Charter School in Keyes eight years ago. Tom has also served as Assistant Principal, Associate Principal, Principal, and Assistant Superintendent, developing expertise in all aspects of school operations. Tom has served on ACSA's State Charter Committee and is affiliated with Association of California School Administrators, Phi Delta Kappa, Association of Professional Baseball Players, and Northern California Scouts Association. He has presented at numerous workshops and conferences, including the California School Boards Association Conference, and the National Charter School Conference. (Denver). Tom received his B.A. in History from Stanford University. He holds a Master's Degree in Education in addition to a Master's Degree in School Administration from University of San Francisco.

Linda Darling-Hammond, Professor, Stanford University School of Education

Linda Darling-Hammond is the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Teaching and Teacher Education at Stanford University, where she works closely with the Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP) and teaches courses on teaching and teacher education as well as education policy. Previously, she was William F. Russell Professor in the Foundations of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, co-director of the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools and Teaching, and executive director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. She began her career as a public school teacher and was co-founder of a preschool and day care center. She has also worked as senior social scientist and director of the RAND Corporation's Education and Human Resources Program. Linda earned her undergraduate degree from Yale in 1973 and her doctorate in urban education from Temple University in 1978.

Linda's research focuses on issues of school restructuring, teacher education reform and the enhancement of educational equity. She is the author of seven books, including *The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for School Reform*; *Professional Development Schools: Schools for Developing a Profession*; *A License to Teach: Building a Profession for 21st Century Schools*; and *Authentic Assessment in Action*.

Bill Hughson, Independent Consultant

Bill Hughson is an independent consultant providing strategic, financial and operational consulting to companies in the healthcare, corporate, and technology start-up companies. Prior to that, he demonstrated extraordinary results leading high-growth multi-site retail companies. As President of A.G. Ferrari Foods, he doubled the size of the organization in 2 years, realigned the company's strategy, improved retail sales per square foot by 25%, implemented new technology systems, and raised \$10 million in 3 series of preferred stock options. Prior to that, he grew Noah's Bagel



Company from 1 store to 39 stores, creating \$75 million in shareholder value in under 4 years. Bill has also been a management consultant with Bain & Company, and a financial analyst with Morgan Stanley. Bill has an undergraduate degree from Williams College, and an MBA from Stanford University.

Beth Hunkapiller, President, San Carlos School District Board of Trustees

Beth Hunkapiller has been an educator all her life. Currently, she is president of the San Carlos Board of Education. She has worked as a middle school teacher and administrator in the Mountain View School District in El Monte, CA, and in a parent cooperative nursery school. She has also worked at the Los Angeles Times.

Beth graduated from Oklahoma Baptist University where she majored in political science and English. She received her masters from USC in 1977.

**Bill Huyett, Superintendent, Lodi Unified School District
(Chartering District for University Public School and River Oaks Charter Academy)**

Bill has been an educator and administrator for the past 20 years. Since July 2000, Bill has been Superintendent of Lodi Unified School District in San Joaquin County, California. Previously, he was superintendent of Dixon Unified School District; he has also served as Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education, and principal at the middle and high school levels. He began his career as a math/physics teacher. Bill has been President of the Elk Grove Administrators Association, Director of ACSA (Association of California School Administrators) Region III, a National Workshop Presenter for Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development on Restructuring the High School, Chair of the Curriculum Committee for the California High School Task Force "Second to None." Bill graduated with Distinction with a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Virginia, and received his Administrative Credential from California State University, Sacramento.

Melvin J. Kaplan, Chief Executive Officer, Wellington Financial Group

Mel Kaplan has been a real estate investor since 1960. He is CEO of Wellington Financial Group, an entity that invests in commercial real estate nationally.

In 1988 Mel and his family founded the Harry Singer Foundation, a nonprofit educational operating foundation dedicated to youth development. He serves on Harry Singer's Board and advises various other 501c(3) corporations.

Mel is an alumnus of MIT and UC Berkeley where, in the 70s, he lectured at the School of Business Administration. His specialty continues to be problem solving and entrepreneurship. His biography has appeared in Marquis *Who's Who In Finance and Industry* and *Who's Who In The World*.



Steven L. Merrill, Venture Capitalist

Steve Merrill has been active in venture capital investing since 1968, and most recently was a Partner with Benchmark Capital. He was president of BankAmerica Capital Corporation in 1976 and managed this very successful venture activity until 1980 when he formed Merrill, Pickard, Anderson & Eyre (MPAE), a privately held venture capital partnership. MPAE managed funds of approximately \$285 million provided by a group of 50 limited partners, including major corporations, pension funds, insurance companies, university endowments, and prominent families. Some of the companies funded by MPAE include America Online, Aspect Telecommunications, Cypress Semiconductor, Documentum, and Palm Computing. MPAE stopped making new investments in 1996 and the partners founded Benchmark Capital and Foundation Capital. Steven is a limited partner in both of these firms but is no longer involved in the day-to-day management.

Currently, Steven is devoting more time to civic and non-profit activities as well as his private investments. He was chairman of the Board of Trustees of Town School for Boys, a member of the Committee to Restore the San Francisco Opera House, and he is a past director of the Children's Health Council.

Steven is also a past president of the Western Association of Venture Capitalists and a past director of the National Venture Capital Association, and has been a director of numerous privately held companies. He holds an MBA from the Wharton School of Finance and a BA in Sociology from Stanford University.

Steven Poizner, Philanthropist, Poizner Family Foundation*

Steve and his wife Carol created the Poizner Family Foundation to help improve public education in low-income communities. Steve serves on the boards of several innovative nonprofit organizations, including EdVoice and NewSchools Venture Fund. Steve also taught American Government to 12th grade students at Mount Pleasant High School in San Jose, where he received the "Rookie Teacher of the Year" award.

Teaching American Government gave Steve the opportunity to share with students his experience as a White House Fellow (2001-02). As a White House Fellow, Steve served for 6 months under Dick Clarke, the President's Special Advisor on Cyber-Security, and 6 months with the USA Freedom Corps, where he developed and presented two proposals to the President, who ordered their implementation. Specifically, Steve's work resulted in the creation of a White House Task Force for Disadvantaged Youth, to better coordinate and enhance the effectiveness of 100+ federal programs, and the creation of Youth Achievement, a three-year, \$300 million initiative to recruit and train mentors for more than one million disadvantaged youth. Youth Achievement was highlighted by the President in his 2003 State of the Union address.

Steve is the founder and former President of SnapTrack, Inc., which created the GPS-based technology that allows police and emergency medical services to pinpoint the geographic location of cell phone users in emergencies. Steve sold SnapTrack to Qualcomm Inc. in March 2000 for \$1 billion. He was also the founder and CEO of Strategic Mapping, Inc., and served as a management



consultant for the Boston Consulting Group.

Steve has been active in community service groups since 1980. As President of the Palo Alto Jaycees, he was deeply involved in bringing a lawsuit (ultimately decided by the U.S. Supreme Court) to open Jaycee membership to women.

Steve earned a B.S. degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Texas, and an MBA degree from Stanford University with the distinction of "Arjay Miller Scholar." He has also earned a black belt in Shotokan karate.

**Participation pending due to recent election as State Insurance Commissioner*

Don Shalvey, Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder, Aspire Public Schools

Don Shalvey has over 35 years of experience in public education, having served as superintendent, assistant superintendent, principal, classroom teacher, and counselor in all levels – primary, elementary, middle, and high schools, college and adult education. Prior to joining Aspire, Dr. Shalvey was Superintendent of the San Carlos School District in Northern California, a district of approximately 2,600 students and six elementary schools. Don has also worked in the Merced School District, a rural district of approximately 11,000 students and in the Lodi Unified School District, a district of approximately 28,000 students that includes a portion of urban Stockton.

Under Don's leadership, the San Carlos District sponsored the first charter school in California and began participation in the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative, the Hewlett-Annenberg Project and a federal Technology Challenge Grant. Don also co-founded Californians for Public School Excellence, the organization that sponsored the California Charter School Initiative that raised the cap on the number of charter schools. Don has been a member of State Superintendent Delaine Eastin's Charter School Committee as well as an advisor to the California Network of Educational Charters. Don earned a Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership/Administration from the University of Southern California, a Masters of Education in Counseling and Guidance from Gonzaga University and a B.A. from LaSalle College.

Richard C. Spalding, Founder, Thomas Weisel Healthcare Venture Partners

In March of 2003, Dick co-founded Thomas Weisel Healthcare Venture Partners, where he focuses on life science investing. The fund has been initially capitalized at \$120 million, and will invest in both the medical technology and life science sectors. Dick also co-founded the ABS Ventures Healthcare investment group in January 2000, again leading the firm's investments in life sciences.

Prior to joining ABS Ventures, Dick was a Chief Financial Officer of public and private companies, an investment banker with Alex. Brown, and a co-founder of the Palo Alto office of Brobeck, Phleger & Harrison. For his entire career he has worked with growth companies, primarily in the health care area, on corporate partnerships, financings and operations. He is currently a director of 3D Systems, a public company, and CBCA, Inc.



He received a BA degree with honors from Harvard College and a J.D. with honors from Columbia Law School.

Joanne S. Weiss, Partner and COO, NewSchools Venture Fund

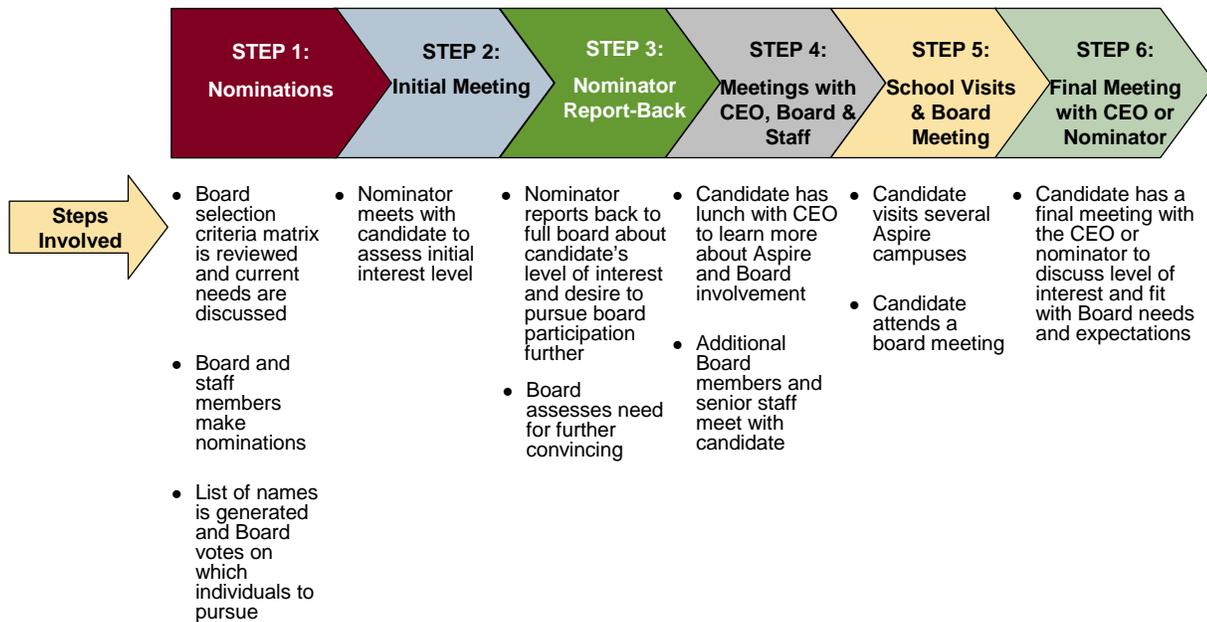
Joanne Weiss is Partner and COO at NewSchools Venture Fund, where she focuses on investment strategy and management assistance to a variety of the firm's portfolio ventures, and oversees the organization's operations.

Prior to joining NewSchools Venture Fund, Joanne was CEO of Claria Corporation, an e-services recruiting firm that helped emerging-growth companies build their teams quickly and well. Before her tenure at Claria, Joanne spent twenty years in the design, development, and marketing of technology-based products and services for education. She was Senior Vice President of Product Development at Pensare, an e-learning company that created business innovation programs for the Fortune 500 market. Prior to Pensare, Joanne was co-founder, interim CEO, and Vice President of Products and Technologies at Academic Systems, a company that helps hundreds of thousands of college students prepare for college-level work in mathematics and English.

In the early 1990s, Joanne was Executive Vice President of Business Operations at Wasatch Education Systems, where she led the product development, customer service, and operations organizations for this K-12 educational technology company. She began her career as Vice President of Education R&D at Wicat Systems, where she was responsible for the development of nearly 100 multimedia curriculum products for K-12 schools.

Joanne has a passion for education, and has spent much of her career pioneering innovative ways of using technology to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes. She holds a degree in biochemistry from Princeton University.

Aspire's Board Recruitment and Selection Process



Once a candidate completes this process, a decision is then brought to the board for a final vote.



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**Executive Committee Meeting Agenda
January 9, 2007; 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

- I. Approval of minutes from Executive Committee meeting of December 12, 2006
- II. Academic Report
- III. Audit Committee: 2005-06 Audit approval
- IV. Fundraising update
- V. Board Fund
- VI. Growth strategy
 - a. LA plan for Broad
 - b. Bridgespan project
- VII. Governance: Board Membership
 - a. Resignation of Marie Washington from Executive Committee
 - b. Board recruiting update
- VIII. Consent agenda:
 - Approval of Policy on Employees Retired from STRS
 - Resolution of Written Determinations and Findings for 66th Avenue site
 - Resolution Approving LIIF bridge loan for 66th Avenue site
 - Approval of Part II, Consolidated Applications
- IX. Public Comments
- X. Closed session: Personnel



Prospective New School Summary

This is a typical summary document board members will receive when Aspire is considering opening a new school.

Basic Information		
Site Working Name:	Trinity Lutheran	Proj Opening: Fall 2007
Region :	Central Valley	District: State Charter / Stockton USD
Key Partners:	CDE	

Project Score		
Criteria	Score	Comments
Mission: Student Need	2 Of 2	In downtown Stockton
Mission: Likelihood of catalyzing change	1 Of 1	Aspire's 3 rd school in SUSD
Contribution to facilities portfolio target	1 Of 2	Neutral
Ease of quality control	2 Of 2	Within existing region
Availability of philanthropic funding	2Of 2	Sufficient: CDE, Walton
Favorable chartering environment	0.5 Of 1	Imposes state charter on SUSD
TOTAL	8.5 of 10	

Financials	
Projected facility occupancy costs as % of annual budget: 12 %	
Projected contribution towards Aspire facilities portfolio: \$ 0 per year	
Start-up funds required: \$575k (CDE grant to be received under statewide benefit charter); \$275k in renovations could be financed through CDE revolving loan or with a loan from LIIF or Raza Development	Philanthropy to be raised: \$300K
Scale up shortfall: \$0K	

Facility Description – Trinity Lutheran
Address: 444 N. American Street, Stockton CA 95210

<i>Description:</i> Currently used by Aspire as the temporary location for Rosa Parks Academy, which will be moving into a new Prop 47 funded building in the Fall. Church is open to providing Aspire with a long-term lease with options, and an additional building currently used as a day care center (1-2 classrooms) is also included.	
<i>Type:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> District building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parochial/Private school <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Reuse (former warehouse) <input type="checkbox"/> New construction	
<i>Lot Size:</i> ~1.5 acres	<i>Bldg Size:</i> ~20K square feet total
<i>Parking:</i> 22 spaces of parking	<i>Playground space:</i> Small area w/ small structure
<i>Neighborhood:</i> 80% Residential 20% Commercial	
<i>Safety/Security risk:</i> High	<i>Public Transit:</i> Yes
<i>Amenities:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Library <input type="checkbox"/> Community Center <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<i>Overall condition:</i> Building is about 80 years old and is in fair condition. Classroom spaces are spread out over three small buildings, with a total of 10-11 full size classrooms + admin office + multipurpose room. Would require some work to bring to Aspire functional standard: \$210k for HVAC, flooring, electrical, painting. Remodel of the current day care facility is estimated to be \$65k. Most of the renovations could be completed over the summer in time for school opening.	

Projected Student Enrollment	
<i># Students at full scale:</i> 200	<i>Grade Levels:</i> K-5
<i>Ethnicity:</i> 10% White 15% Black 60% Latino 15% Asian 0% Other	
<i>Socioeconomic:</i> 80% Free/Reduced Lunch	<i>Language:</i> 50% ELL

Nearby elementary schools	<i>1 mile radius: 2,993 total K-5 students</i>					
	Enroll	% F/R	% ELL	State API	SS API	Overcrd?
1. Parklane Elementary (Lodi USD)	603	82%	52%	1	1	
2. Clairmont Elem (Lodi USD)	595	83%	54%	4	4	
3. Westwood Elem (Lodi USD)	658	83%	57%	3	2	
4. Pulliam Elementary	662	91%	20%	3	6	
5. Sutherland Elementary	475	79%	36%	2	1	

Comments:

May draw from both Lodi and Stockton USD; neighborhood elementary schools are mostly large and poor performing.

Effects on Aspire and other Aspire schools

1. May cause some students to stay rather than moving when Rosa Parks moves into its new facility, thus requiring RPA to do even more recruiting to fill the campus (although there should be sufficient demand)
2. Will increase pressure on Aspire to open at least one additional secondary school in the Lodi/Stockton area
3. Will require Aspire to present a new charter to Stockton Unified (not a friendly district) for Langston Hughes Academy (the CSU partnership school, current a satellite of Rosa Parks Academy) and originally planned to be designated a state charter site

Start Up Risks

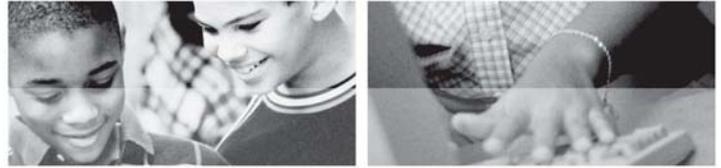
1. Very tight timeline for facility renovations over the summer (Aspire made no investment in the facility last year, as it was expected to be a temporary location only)
2. Fairly tight timeline to hire principal, recruit teachers and enroll students

EDUCATION PROGRAM: CURRICULUM AND QUALITY

At the heart of the work of the organizations in NewSchools' portfolio is providing every child with a high-quality education. In this section, we examine several practices that organizations are using to advance the performance of schools, including curricular choices such as character education programs, partnerships with colleges, and mechanisms to review and ensure quality. This section includes the following case studies:

11. Mastery Charter Schools: The Design and Implementation of an Effective Social and Emotional Learning Program
12. Perspectives Charter School: Character Education
13. Partnerships to Uplift Communities: College Partnerships
14. New Schools for New Orleans: School Review Process

newschools
venture fund



MASTERY CHARTER SCHOOLS

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

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

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

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

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

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

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

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

Mastery Charter Schools Background

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

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

THE MASTERY MODEL

Development of the Program

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

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

- Ali Caccavella, Assistant Director of SEL, Mastery

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

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

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

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

Key Components

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

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

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

SEL Curriculum

Direct SEL Instruction

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

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

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

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

Ninth Grade Seminar

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

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

The Five Steps

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

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

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

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

Eleventh Grade Internship Program

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

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

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

- Ali Caccavella,
Assistant Director of SEL, Mastery

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

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

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

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

- David McDonough,
Principal, Mastery

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

School Culture Systems

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

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

Mastery Code of Conduct:

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

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

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

- Laura Keane, Director of SEL, Mastery

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

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Dedicated Time

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

- Ali Caccavella, Assistant Director of SEL, Mastery

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

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

Dedicated Staff

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

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

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

– David McDonough,
Principal, Mastery

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

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

Connection to the Outside World

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

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

- Ali Caccavella, Assistant Director of SEL, Mastery

Impact of Internship Program – In-house survey results

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

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

Universal, Consistent Implementation

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

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

Accountability

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sample Weekly Scorecard Elements

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

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

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

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

CHALLENGES

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

CONCLUSION

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

MASTERY SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING TOOLKIT

Toolkit Contents

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

Additional Documents (Available Separately)

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



Mastery Internship Program Overview

(Page 1 of 2)

Purpose:

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

Internship Training Seminar:

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

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

Skills emphasized during Training Seminar:

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



Mastery Internship Program Overview

(Page 2 of 2)

Internship Site Placement and Practicum:

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

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

Skills emphasized during Practicum:

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



Internship Program – Intern, Organization, and Mentor Responsibilities

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

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

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



Mastery Non-Violence Contract

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

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

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

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

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

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



Mastery Code of Conduct

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

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

- safe
- professional
- based on strong quality relationships.

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

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

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

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

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

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



Mastery Community Rules

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

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

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

School Community Committee (SCC)

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



Code of Conduct Violations

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

A: Level III Violations:

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

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

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



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

- **Vandalism**

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

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

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

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

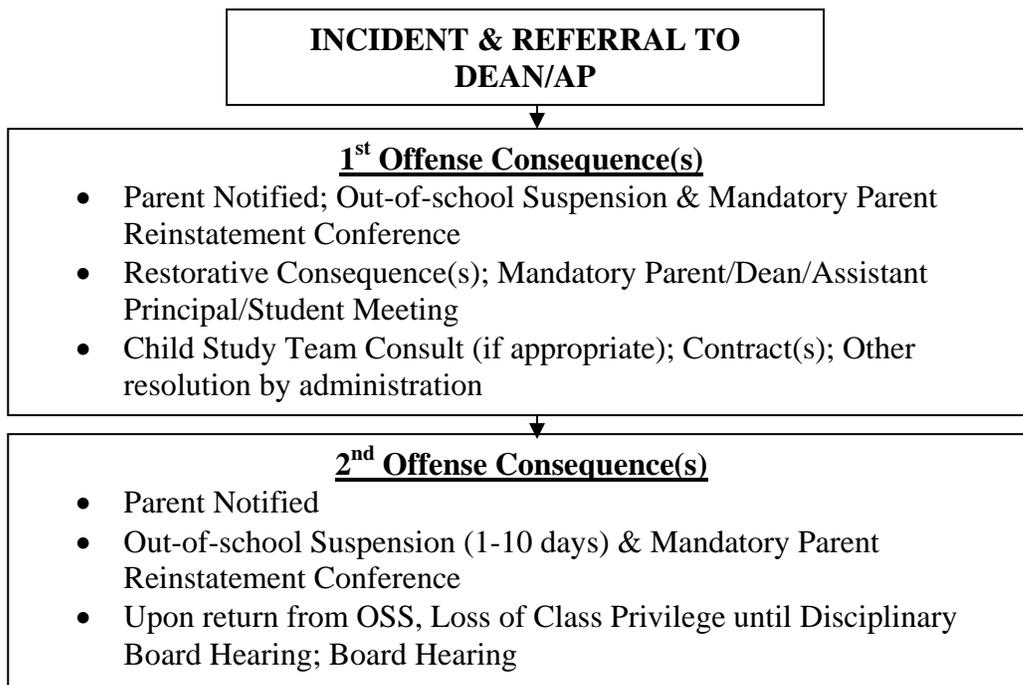
Violence includes physical aggression between two or more students that escalates into punching, wrestling, knocking down, or damaging or destroying property. Any aggression that includes use of a weapon or use of an implement as a weapon clearly falls into this category. In cases of violence with a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

- **Sexual Misconduct**

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

B: Level II:

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





Level II Violations include, but are not limited to:

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

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

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

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

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

- **Plagiarism**

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

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

- **Cheating**

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

- **Insubordination**

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

- **Harassment / Sexual Harassment**

Harassment means any behavior which is repeatedly and persistently annoying.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

- **Gambling**

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

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

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

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

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

C: Level I: DEMERIT SYSTEM

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

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

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



Level I Violations include, but are not limited to:

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



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

- **Disrespect / Body Language**

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

- **Integrity**

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



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

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

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

Sample Course Schedule (9th Grade)

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

Synthesized by **FSG**  SOCIAL IMPACT ADVISORS

from documents provided by



How Mastery Fits in SEL:

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

HS = Homework Seminar for students who need additional support

GA = Guardian Angel class teaches organizational and study skills

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



Mastery Minimum Graduation Requirements

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

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

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

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PERSPECTIVES CHARTER SCHOOLS

The Design and Implementation of an Effective Character Education Program

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

This case study was prepared by FSG Social Impact Advisors. FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides guidance to foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and other public sector entities on issues of strategy, evaluation, and operations. FSG was commissioned by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “promising practices” of portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared across the NewSchools portfolio. To complete this case study, FSG conducted background research on Perspectives Charter Schools and interviewed Kim Day, Perspectives’ CEO and Co-Founder, as well as several Perspectives central office staff, teachers, and principals. Jim Peyser of NewSchools Venture Fund provided additional context on Perspectives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. What curricular choices have you made that are a fundamental component of your school, in the way that this character education program is for Perspectives? How do these programs affect school culture and performance?
2. Do your students share a common understanding of behavioral expectations and cultural norms within your school(s)? If so, how has this understanding been cultivated and how is it reinforced? If not, would a character education program be useful?
3. Would your staff be excited about this type of character education program? Would your students? How would you weigh the benefits and tradeoffs of implementing such a program?
4. If you wanted to engage in this type of effort, would your organization have the capacity to design its own character education curriculum? How would you determine which principles ought to drive character education? Would you consider using an off-the-shelf program?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Schools want to produce students who can achieve in higher education and become productive citizens. However, many schools are realizing that academic skills alone are not enough to ensure success in today’s world. Research shows that developing social and emotional skills improves students’ grades, attendance, behavior, and attitudes towards school and reduces the likelihood of dropping out.¹ Stephen Elliot, professor of educational psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison states that, “As you facilitate social development, you are concurrently, for many kids, advancing their academic function.”² Furthermore, students who feel emotionally safe in school are less likely to exhibit problem behaviors.³

We really believe character education is the nuts and bolts of who we are. You can educate someone’s mind, but if you aren’t raising good ethical people, then it doesn’t really matter.

- Principal, Perspectives

It would seem that implementing a character education program would be a critical component of ensuring student success. However, in this era of standardized testing and accountability, many schools are grappling with how to prioritize character education or fit it into the school day. Furthermore, with hundreds of character education programs available⁴, schools might feel overwhelmed when trying to design and implement an effective character education curriculum.

This case study focuses on one organization, Perspectives Charter Schools, which developed its own character education curriculum that has become a fundamental component of its schools.

Perspectives Charter Schools Background

Perspectives Charter Schools (Perspectives) is a Chicago-based charter management organization (CMO) with a mission to “provide students with a rigorous and relevant education that prepares them for life in a changing world and helps them further become intellectually reflective, caring, and ethical people engaged in a meaningful life.”⁵ Character education is an integral factor that helps Perspectives achieve this mission. Perspectives’ unique character building curriculum, A Disciplined Life™, is infused throughout the school. It has become “the language of the Perspectives Charter Schools family and serves as [its] code of living.”⁶

¹ Perspectives Charter Schools

² Education Week Research Center, “Character Education”

³ Perspectives Charter Schools

⁴ Education Week Research Brief on Character Education mentions a study conducted on 242 positive youth development programs.

⁵ <http://www.perspectivescs.org/>

⁶ <http://www.perspectivescs.org/>

Perspectives opened its first school in 1997, followed by two additional schools in 2006. When it opens its fourth campus in 2007, Perspectives will serve a total of 1200 students in grades 6–12. Perspectives has the second-highest advancement rate among non-selective Chicago Public Schools. In its first school over 90 percent of students in its five senior classes have graduated, with 100 percent of those graduating receiving college acceptances.

Perspectives’ experience is relevant to other charter schools interested in designing and implementing a character education program for middle and high school students.

THE PERSPECTIVES MODEL

Development of the Curriculum

When founding Perspectives in 1997, Kim Day and Diana Shulla-Cose asked, *“How are we going to know if our students are prepared to succeed after graduation?”* The two were concerned that the measures of success traditionally used by schools, like test scores and college enrollment, were limited. They felt that academic rigor alone would not create *“the kinds of people we want to be leaders in our world.”*

Furthermore, as a former teacher, Kim had learned how to establish an achievement-oriented classroom environment and realized the difficulties of running an effective classroom in a school that did not share the same norms. Thus, based on their teaching experience and what they saw in friends, colleagues, and role models they admired and considered successful, the two developed a list of principles. The list included things like *“be reliable, seek wisdom, and support each other.”* If students could show growth along this continuum of principles, they would be more prepared for success in higher education and beyond.

This initial list of principles, called *A Disciplined Life™ (ADL)*, has expanded and evolved over the past ten years as students, parents, and teachers have made refinements.

Illinois has state standards for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and, although Perspectives’ founders did not intentionally

The 26 Principles of A Disciplined Life™

PRODUCTIVITY

1. Demonstrate a strong work ethic
2. Use your time wisely
3. Listen actively
4. Be punctual and prepared
5. Be organized
6. Be reflective
7. Be reliable
8. Take the initiative
9. Demonstrate perseverance

COMMUNICATION

10. Communicate effectively
11. Challenge your peers intellectually
12. Show gratitude
13. Solve conflicts peacefully
14. Respect others’ differences
15. Be positive and supportive
16. Show compassion

SELF-PERCEPTION

17. Accept only quality work from yourself
18. Take responsibility for your actions
19. Seek wisdom
20. Be open-minded
21. Think critically and be inquisitive
22. Love who you are
23. Demonstrate honesty, integrity, decency
24. Be generous
25. Be a life long learner
26. Live a healthy lifestyle

Illinois State Social & Emotional Learning Standards for Grades K–12:

1. Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success
2. Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships
3. Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts

develop the principles to align with these standards, they were fortunate in that their list of principles did ultimately overlap with the state’s goals (see sidebar for list of Illinois SEL Goals).⁷

Our schools have an exceptional feel to them because we have this curriculum. To me, it is the bridge between being ethical and intellectual people.

- Kim Day,
Perspectives CEO

In the early years, teachers wrote the *ADL* curriculum, working together to brainstorm guiding questions, lesson plans, and lists of resources. However, not all teachers felt comfortable teaching these principles without a formal curriculum. Thus, in 2006 Perspectives teachers, instructional leaders, the chief academic officer, and founders worked to develop a more formal curriculum with clear objectives and lesson plans.

Perspectives’ co-founders decided to develop their own curriculum rather than use an existing character education program because they believed that, *“At the point when we were creating Perspectives, the character education curriculum that existed had a lot of activities, but with no ultimate goal defined. So we approached this with the end in mind, with the principles we wanted our seniors to embody. Then, we backed out how to get there.”* However, Perspectives does use some activities from pre-developed programs. *“We have piecemealed lots of resources to create lessons that teach the principles we want. We definitely have picked some activities from these programs, but we don’t start from these programs.”*

When they were writing curriculum, Perspectives staff *“worked to develop a formal, deliberate curriculum so people would feel equipped to teach this — so they could have specific lesson plans for each grade level with clear themes and objectives.”*

A Disciplined Life[™] uses all positive language, focusing on the “dos” rather than the “don’ts.” Perspectives staff emphasize that the principles are relevant to all students and do not impose values. In fact, 80 percent of teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that the *ADL* lessons were free of racial, religious, and gender bias. Many teachers assess students at the beginning of the year to see what they want to gain from character education, what they need to work on, and what they don’t understand. The curriculum then enables teachers to determine the needs of each individual student.

What’s important is that you create something that is tailored to the needs of your school, your students, and your staff. You can’t necessarily use what is used elsewhere. It really needs to be your own and come from the people who will be using it.

- Teacher, Perspectives

HOW IT WORKS

Dedicated Class Time

The 26 principles of *A Disciplined Life*[™] are integrated into all aspects of the school, and students are expected to make progress along each of the principles. Students take a 45-minute *ADL* class 2–3 times per week. Each course focuses on a larger theme, such as communication or diversity, rather than an individual behavior, such as being reliable. The focus on themes makes classes more engaging and relevant to students. As one staff member noted, *“Most character education classes will take one principle and teach it for a month, but for high school students, that is just too boring. We come up with themes, and the principles get played out in the themes.”* Courses use tools such as articles, movies, and songs to engage students. Students might listen to music they bring in and

⁷ http://www.isbe.net/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm

discuss and debate the themes in class. Perspectives mandates that students participate in field studies, such as visiting social justice and political groups and participating in community service (see Toolkit for *A Disciplined Life™ Courses: 9-12 Grade* and *Sample 7th Grade 1st Quarter A Disciplined Life™ Lessons*).

To make time for the ADL classes, Perspectives does not have study hall and has a longer school day, running from 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m., whereas the standard Chicago public school day is 9:00 a.m.–2:30 p.m. The staff is committed to finding the time for ADL. As Principal Glennese Ray points out, “*We’re going to teach ADL one way or another. It is important to weigh character education as highly as the core academics.*” In fact, Perspectives would like to change the 2007 school schedule to be able to offer a daily ADL course. However, scheduling is an ongoing challenge and Principal Ray notes, “*We are trying to figure out where to cut corners so we don’t have to extend the school day further.*”

Because the curriculum aligns with state standards, Perspectives staff can teach ADL without feeling like it is time off task. As Kim Day notes, “*It is comforting that the principles of ADL are also state standards. That way schools aren’t faced with competing priorities.*”

School-Wide Integration and Constant Reinforcement

Perspectives staff emphasizes that *A Disciplined Life™* is much more than just a class. Its language and principles are reinforced from a myriad of angles. As one staff member remarked, “*ADL provides a common language for all teachers to use with students, whether it is in ADL class, in the hall, or another class.*” Teachers use *ADL* in the core subject classes, analyzing current events or novels based on how they fit with the principles, or using *ADL*’s teachings about communication styles when conducting an investigation for a science class. Seamlessly integrated into school culture, the principles are posted in the hallways, adults use the language and model the behaviors, and awards are given each month for students who are living a disciplined life.

Universal implementation is critical. It is hard to run an effective classroom in a school that doesn’t share the same norms. You can’t have inconsistencies.

- Kim Day, Perspectives CEO

ADL is also connected to behavioral expectations. If a student receives disciplinary action, school staff uses *ADL* language to discuss and resolve the problem. Kim Day notes “*We have less discipline problems resulting from bad behavior, like fights and violence, because we have high expectations for behavior communicated across our culture. However, we might have more infractions because we give suspensions for things other schools might not that are related to the character standard.*”

One year, as a joke, I told our seniors we would be getting rid of ADL. I expected them to say “Great! I’m tired of this!” but instead there was a spontaneous uproar. “You can’t get rid of ADL. That is what makes Perspectives work. That is why Perspectives is Perspectives.”

- Kim Day, Perspectives CEO

Perspectives tries to immerse parents in the language as well. Parents are informed about *ADL* at the beginning-of-the-year orientation, discuss it at 3-way conferences with teachers and their child, and hear the language used if a student ever receives disciplinary action. Perspectives sends the 26 principles home, and many parents post them on their refrigerators.

Since Perspectives does not enroll students after the 9th grade, by the time seniors graduate, they have had at least four years of continuous *ADL*. All new students must go through a summer orientation on the principles before school begins.

All Teachers Teach and Model *ADL*

Every teacher teaches an *ADL* course and integrates it into their subject area course. Teachers are all expected to live by and model the principles. Perspectives trains all teachers in *ADL* to ensure they are prepared to teach the content and are equipped to handle the difficult conversations and situations that can result when discussing complex issues such as race, class, and conflict resolution. Before the school year begins, all teachers attend “core and camp,” a three-week long professional development camp. Two days are devoted to *ADL* training, where teachers learn about the curriculum, model lessons, reflect how the principles apply to their lives, brainstorm teaching ideas, and discuss how to handle difficult situations. New hires receive additional professional development days on the curriculum and principles.

Teachers are provided ongoing support and professional development on *ADL* throughout the year. During regular *ADL* planning meetings and staff development meetings, teachers talk about strategies and brainstorm how they might address an issue that comes up in a class. Teachers constantly share lessons and best practices.

*It's counterproductive for a teacher not to teach *ADL* — they would feel removed from the entire culture if all they were teaching was English or math. Teaching *ADL* is a way to connect with students because you are talking about deep issues and trying to figure out some of the world's biggest challenges as a team.*

- Kim Day, Perspectives CEO

Accountability

All students receive a grade in *A Disciplined Life*[™], which is based not only on success in *ADL* class, but also on how well they exhibit the principles in the hall, in their field studies, in their academic classes, and in all of their other school activities. Grades are based on continuous improvement, which means that students receive bad grades if they do not show growth on certain principles. Teachers keep track of student behaviors and discuss each student with other teachers at the end of the marking period. Regardless of their GPA, if students earn a grade lower than a B in an *ADL* course, they cannot make honor roll. Furthermore, “*it is definitely possible for a student not to pass *ADL*. This will happen if they are not showing any growth in the principles.*”

Perspectives evaluates the effectiveness of its character education in multiple ways. Teachers are evaluated twice a year on both how well they teach *A Disciplined Life*[™] and on how well they model it and use its language (see Toolkit for *Teacher Evaluation Rubric* and *Teacher *ADL* Feedback Form*). Additionally, the school administers student, teacher, and parent surveys twice a year that ask a wide variety of questions about *A Disciplined Life*[™] and school culture. Students are asked if they feel supported and if teachers model *ADL*. Teachers are asked if they feel effective and supported teaching *ADL*. Parents are asked if they have heard about *ADL* at their house and if their child exhibits the principles. These survey results are reported to individual schools and Perspectives’ central office. Student survey results are also included on the External Scorecard, which is shown to board members, potential donors, and anyone else inquiring about Perspectives

(see Toolkit for *Student Satisfaction Survey*, *Parent Satisfaction Survey*, *Teacher Satisfaction Survey*, and *External Scorecard*).

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) conducts an annual survey of all students on their perceptions of safety, educational expectations, school support, and social and emotional skills. Perspectives’ *ADL* principles are spread across these four categories. According to the results of the 2006 survey, Perspectives outperformed the district on all measures (see sidebar for full results).

Results of the 2006 CPS Student Connection Survey
Note: ADL principles are spread evenly across these categories and are not all concentrated in the social and emotional skills questions

<i>Students were asked to rate their school as Needs Improvement, Adequate, or Excellent.</i>	% Adequate or Above	
	Perspectives	CPS
Safe & Respectful Climate: How physically safe and emotionally safe students feel	92%	71%
High Expectations: How much students perceive teachers encourage them to think, work hard, do their best, and connect what they learn in school to life outside of school	86%	76%
Student Support: How much students feel listened to, cared about, and helped by teachers/adults in the school	84%	75%
Social & Emotional Skills: Students’ perceptions of their social and problem-solving skills.	75%	74%

For full survey results see: http://www.perspectivescs.org/documents/Student_Connection_Survey.pdf

HOW TO IMPLEMENT CHARTER EDUCATION IN YOUR SCHOOL

- **Develop principles.** Develop a list of behaviors you want students and staff to exhibit. Keep it simple. Make sure the principles do not impose values and are applicable across gender, race, religion, and subject matter. If your state has standards for social and emotional learning or character education, try to align your school’s principles with those standards.
- **Develop a curriculum.** Your school can choose to adopt an existing program or develop a curriculum of its own. If you decide to create your own curriculum, work with teachers to develop a common definition of what these principles might look like in a classroom and how they can be taught. Develop lesson plans that focus on themes and that are personally relevant and engaging for students. Identify places for field studies and resources that can be used in class.
- **Train all teachers.** All teachers will need to be able to teach the principles, as well as model and use them outside of class. The school should provide adequate training for all teachers that includes lesson plan development and role playing. As one staff member remarked, “*Advisories were initially intended to give kids time to develop behaviors for the future, but with no professional development for teachers behind that, teachers just read announcements and give kids time to do homework.*” Teaching character education is difficult and should be taken seriously.
- **Allot time for teachers to collaborate.** Make sure to provide dedicated time for teachers to collaborate with colleagues to discuss challenging issues, develop and improve lessons, and identify what students need to work on.
- **Dedicate class time to character education.** Dedicate consistent time to teaching character education. Perspectives makes character education a priority, allocating 90 minutes of class time each week to *ADL*.

- ***Start in the earliest possible grade.*** The earlier you teach students the language and expectations of the character education curriculum, the better. At Perspectives, *“Starting with high school students is more challenging. Our 7th graders are making up songs about ADL and are grasping it more quickly.”*
- ***Build in accountability.*** Hold students and adults accountable for exhibiting the principles and continuing to improve. Use frequent surveys and teacher evaluations to ensure students are learning and using the principles, teachers are teaching them, and all adults are modeling the ideal behaviors.
- ***Ensure school-wide integration.*** Character education cannot stop at the classroom door. It must be reinforced in the hallways, in conversations, in disciplinary proceedings, in conversations with parents, and in all interactions students have with adults. Students should be given character education grades based not only on their classroom performance, but also on how they exhibit the principles on an ongoing basis.
- ***Be unwavering in applying the principles.*** Be clear, deliberate, and steadfast in upholding and enforcing the principles. *“Begin teaching it on day one and don’t back down. Kids are always trying to push the envelope, but staff needs to stick to ADL and follow through on it.”*

PERSPECTIVES CHARACTER EDUCATION TOOLKIT

Toolkit Contents

Planning Tools

- **Character Education Planning Checklist (Synthesized by FSG)**
Perspectives identified the elements that are key to its character education program. This checklist can help your organization think through whether you have these elements in place or whether they need to be developed.
- ***A Disciplined Life™* Courses: 9–12 grade (Synthesized by FSG)**
This document lists the focus of the quarterly *A Disciplined Life™* (*ADL*) course for grades 9–12. This serves as an illustrative example of possible course content and sequencing.
- **Sample 7th Grade 1st Quarter *A Disciplined Life™* Lessons (Perspectives Document)**
This document includes the first four lessons from the first quarter 7th grade *ADL* course.

Evaluation Tools

- **Teacher Evaluation Rubric (Perspectives Document)**
This rubric is used to evaluate teachers twice a year on teaching and learning, classroom environment, and basic duties. The teaching and reinforcement of *ADL* is one component of this evaluation.
- **Teacher *A Disciplined Life™* Feedback Form (Perspectives Document)**
This feedback form is used by principals and other school administrators twice a year to evaluate teachers on how well they model and use the *ADL* principles.
- **Student Satisfaction Survey (Perspectives Document)**
A survey is administered to students twice a year. This part of the survey asks about the impact of *ADL*. The results are reported to individual schools and Perspectives' central office.
- **Parent Satisfaction Survey (Perspectives Document)**
A survey is given to parents twice a year. This part of the survey focuses on *ADL*. The results are reported to individual schools, Perspectives' central office, and parents.
- **Teacher Satisfaction Survey (Perspectives Document)**
A survey is administered to teachers twice a year. This part of the survey asks questions related to *ADL* and school culture. Results are shared with Perspectives' central office.
- **External Scorecard (Perspectives Document)**
This document is shown to board members, potential donors, and anyone outside of Perspectives who is inquiring about its scores. The Scorecard ranks Perspectives on *A Disciplined Life®*, family involvement, community engagement, professional development, and academic rigor. This sample scorecard shows sample ratings for the *ADL* component.

Character Education Planning Checklist

Perspectives identified the following elements as key to its character education program. *Does your organization have these elements in place, or are they being developed?*

Planning Checklist Items	Yes	No	In Progress	Comments
<p>Develop principles. What behaviors do you want your students to exhibit? Can you tie these to state standards? Can you keep the list simple?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Develop a curriculum. What will these principles look like in the classroom? How will you teach them? How will you assess them? What resources (field study locations, books, articles, music, etc) will you need in order to make the courses relevant and engaging for students?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Train all teachers. All teachers will need to be able to teach the principles, as well as model and use them outside of class. How will you train all teachers? What supports will you provide?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Allot time for teachers to collaborate. Can you make time in the schedule to have meetings devoted to character education? Is there ample time for teachers to discuss issues they are having and to discuss student progress and needs?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Dedicate class time to character education. Where in the schedule can you make time for a specific character education course? How will you ensure this course does not migrate into study hall or advisory?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Start in the earliest possible grade. Can you start teaching the curriculum in your school's earliest grade?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Build in accountability. How will you measure success? How will you ensure students are making progress and teachers are modeling the ideal behaviors?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>Ensure school-wide integration and be unwavering in applying the principles. How will you ensure character education does not stop at the classroom door? How will you communicate with parents? How will you integrate the principles into the school culture, hallways, conversations, and disciplinary procedures?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A Disciplined Life™ Courses: 9-12 Grade

Perspectives created the following courses as part of its character education curriculum. *What courses would you want to implement as part of a character education curriculum? How would you sequence them?*

High School: 45 minute class, 2 days a week

9th Grade:

QUARTER	COURSE FOCUS
Quarter 1	Community Building and The Perspectives Way
Quarter 2	Transitions and Personal Growth
Quarter 3	Effective Communication
Quarter 4	Making Good Choices

10th Grade:

QUARTER	COURSE FOCUS
Quarter 1	Community Building and The Perspectives Way
Quarter 2	Diversity
Quarter 3	How to Pursue and Attain Excellence
Quarter 4	The Ripple Effect

11th Grade:

QUARTER	COURSE FOCUS
Quarter 1	Community Building and The Perspectives Way
Quarter 2	Independence
Quarter 3	Friendships and Relationships
Quarter 4	Planning for the Future

12th Grade:

QUARTER	COURSE FOCUS
Quarter 1	Community Building and The Perspectives Way
Quarter 2	Morality and Ethics
Quarter 3	Giving Back
Quarter 4	Beyond These Walls



Sample 7th Grade 1st Quarter *A Disciplined Life*[™] Lessons

These are the first four lessons from the 7th grade 1st quarter ADL course. *What would you want to teach as part of your school's character education curriculum? How would you teach these lessons?*

Lesson 1: What is a community?

Essential Question: How can I identify my individuality within the community?

Theme: 7th Grade Community and Identity of Individual

Guiding Question: How do we (7th grade) define community?

A Disciplined Life Principles: Be open-minded, think critically and be inquisitive, listen actively, be reflective

Objectives: Students will draw from their previous knowledge of community and will create a unified definition of community as a community.

Skills (Quarter 1): Speaking, organizing, perceiving, empathizing, self advocating, decision making, prioritizing, confronting, planning, evaluating, assertiveness, negotiating, presenting, interviewing, reflection, questioning, listening, initiative, and critical thinking.

Materials: 3 index cards per student, container to place index cards in, Post-it Easel Pad

Time Needed: 45 minutes

Lesson:

- Step 1: Each student is given 3 index cards. On the first index card they will place 1 word that means community. On the second index card 1 word that does not mean community. On the third index card a sentence or phrase that means community.
- Step 2: Students fold the index cards in half and place them in the container. The teacher then shakes up the container.
- Step 3: On the first sheet of the Easel Pad label the top **Words That Describe Community**, the second sheet says **Words That Do Not Define Community** and the third **Phrases That Describe Community**.
- Step 4: Teacher walks around and has each student to pull 3 index cards from container. Each student will then read what is printed on each index card and say which category they would place the word or phrase in and why they would place it in that category.

Closure: Have students to review items that they thought defined a community or did not define a community. Discuss how we define community similarly and differently. What shapes our definition of community? Students return index cards. Teacher keeps Easel Pad Paper responses for next lesson.



Sample 7th Grade 1st Quarter *A Disciplined Life*[™] Lessons

Lesson 2: What are the guiding principles for our community?

Essential Question: How can I identify my individuality within the community?

Theme: 7th Grade Community and Identity of Individual

Guiding Question: How do we (7th grade) define community?

***A Disciplined Life* Principles:** Be open-minded, think critically and be inquisitive, listen actively, be reflective, communicate effectively

Objectives: Students will draw from their previous knowledge of community and will create as a community a unified definition of community.

Skills (Quarter 1): Speaking, organizing, perceiving, empathizing, self advocating, decision making, prioritizing, confronting, planning, evaluating, assertiveness, negotiating, presenting, interviewing, reflection, questioning, listening, initiative, and critical thinking.

Materials: *ADL* Journal

Time Needed: 45 minutes

Lesson:

- Step 1: All students are asked to answer the following questions in their journal, “What rules do you have in your community?” “Who makes the rules in your community?” “What happens when you break a rule?” “How can you create/change a rule?”
- Step 2: After discussion from previous questions teacher writes on the board, “What *ADL* rules are we going to have in our 7th grade community?” “How are we going to implement and follow these rules?” “What happens in our community when someone breaks the *ADL* community rules?”
- Step 3: Students meet in triads to discuss the questions and write down solutions.
- Step 4: Triads share with the class.

Closure: Students discuss the role of community members and how it is important for each community member to follow the guidelines that are set by that community. Collect sheets from triads to be used for next lesson.

Sample 7th Grade 1st Quarter *A Disciplined Life*[™] Lessons

Lesson 3 and 4: What are the guiding principles for our community?

Essential Question: How can I identify my individuality within the community?

Theme: 7th Grade Community and Identity of Individual

Guiding Question: How do we (7th grade) define community?

A Disciplined Life Principles: Be open-minded, think critically and be inquisitive, listen actively, be reflective, communicate effectively

Objectives: Students will draw from their previous knowledge of community and will create as a community a unified definition of community.

Skills (Quarter 1): Speaking, organizing, perceiving, empathizing, self advocating, decision making, prioritizing, confronting, planning, evaluating, assertiveness, negotiating, presenting, interviewing, reflection, questioning, listening, initiative, and critical thinking.

Materials: Easel Pad Responses (lesson 1), sheets from triads (lesson 2), blank sheets of Easel Pad paper.

Time Needed: 2 - (45 minute classes)

Lesson:

- Step 1: Place Easel Pad response from first lesson on the board.
- Step 2: Write the student responses collected from lesson 1 & 2 on EaselPad. Place on board/wall.
- Step 3: Have students get into triads, read the posted responses on the wall to find a common theme.
- Step 4: The students write down the common theme. In their triads create, they will a definition of community that will be used in the 7th grade classroom. Students will also include *ADL* Principles and guidelines in their definition.
- Step 5: Each triad will write their definition of Community (along with the *ADL* Principles/Guidelines) on the Easel Paper.
- Step 6: The students will create 1 definition that incorporates all the ideas that are posted.
- Step 7: Once the class has agreed on 1 definition of community that includes *ADL* Principals and guidelines the teacher will write the FINAL definition of community on the Easel Paper.
- Step 8: Teacher type copy of 7th grade def. of community. Students place a copy in *ADL* folder.
- Step 9: Students create a life-size poster with the 7th grade definition of community. Each student will sign their name to the poster as a contract with the other members of the community.

Closure: Students discuss the role of community members and how it is important for each community member to follow the guidelines that are set by that community. Students work together to derive a definition of community that can be appreciated by all that are in the 7th grade class. Students will discuss how they worked together and the importance of coming to an agreement and signing their finished work. Student will also discuss the process to creating a definition.

Teacher A Disciplined Life™ Feedback Form

Perspectives teachers complete this form in April. Principals, the Chief Education Officer, the Chief Academic Officer and HR use it to evaluate staff. Some teachers have students fill them out, but Perspectives does not require it. *How would your school evaluate the degree to which teachers model and reinforce the principles of your character education curriculum?*

NAME: _____ DATE: _____ FEEDBACK FROM: _____

SELF-PERCEPTION	Needs Improvement ← → Excellent				
	1	2	3	4	5
Accept only quality work from yourself.					
Take responsibility for your actions.					
Seek wisdom.					
Be open-minded.					
Think critically and be inquisitive.					
Demonstrate honesty, integrity, and decency.					
Be generous.					
Be a life-long learner					

List top **2 strengths** in the area of self perception:

List top **2 behaviors requiring change** in the area of self perception:

COMMUNICATION	Needs Improvement ← → Excellent				
	1	2	3	4	5
Communicate effectively.					
Challenge each other intellectually.					
Show gratitude.					
Respect each other's differences.					
Be positive and support each other.					
Show compassion.					

List top **2 strengths** in the area of communication:

List top **2 behaviors requiring change** in the area of communication:

PRODUCTIVITY	Needs Improvement ← → Excellent				
	1	2	3	4	5
Demonstrate a strong work ethic.					
Use your time wisely.					
Listen actively.					
Be punctual and prepared.					
Be organized.					
Be reflective.					
Be reliable.					
Take initiative.					
Demonstrate perseverance.					

List top **2 strengths** in the area of productivity:

List top **2 behaviors requiring change** in the area of productivity:



Student Satisfaction Survey

Perspectives administers a student satisfaction survey twice a year. The results are reported to individual schools and Perspectives' central office. Below are questions pertaining to *A Disciplined Life™* from a recent student survey. *How would you gain insight into students' perceptions of character education and culture? How would you use these survey results to change practices?*

Note: Starting in 2006, Perspectives replaced this survey with Chicago Public Schools' biannual Student Connection Survey, which surveys students on their perceptions on things such as safety, school support, social and emotional skills, and extracurricular participation. For a sample of last year's survey please visit:

http://www.perspectivescs.org/documents/Student_Connection_Survey.pdf

Please circle a number from 1 – 3, where 1 = do not agree, 2 = agree, 3 = strongly agree

1. My teachers care about me.
1 2 3
2. My teachers are willing to give me extra help if I need it.
1 2 3
3. My teachers expect me to work hard.
1 2 3
4. My teachers believe I can do well in school.
1 2 3
5. My teachers treat me with respect.
1 2 3
6. My teachers grade fairly.
1 2 3
8. When I am upset, there is always someone I can talk to.
1 2 3
9. I feel safe inside of the school.
1 2 3
10. I feel safe outside of the school.
1 2 3
11. Students at this school treat each other with respect.
1 2 3
12. Perspectives helps me be a better person.
1 2 3
13. *ADL* is something I take seriously in my life.
1 2 3
14. We have a good variety of after-school activities.
1 2 3
15. The after school activities seem well organized.
1 2 3



Parent Satisfaction Survey

Perspectives administers a parent satisfaction survey twice a year. The results are reported to individual schools, Perspectives' central office, and are also included in reports to parents. Below are questions pertaining to *A Disciplined Life™* from a recent parent survey. *How would your school gain insight into parents' perceptions of character education and culture? How would you use these survey results to change practices?*

Please read each of the following questions. Circle the number that best describes your satisfaction: 1= Needs Improvement; 2= Meets Expectations; 3= Exceeds Expectations
If you answer "needs improvement", please specify a possible solution.

A Disciplined Life® and Social Development

1. Are you satisfied with how *A Disciplined Life®* impacts your child? 1 2 3
If answered needs improvement please indicate improvement suggestions

2. Are you satisfied with the number and types of after-school activities? 1 2 3
If answered needs improvement please indicate improvement suggestions

3. Are you satisfied with how your child's unique gifts are celebrated? 1 2 3
If answered needs improvement please indicate improvement suggestions

School Culture and Discipline

4. Are you satisfied with how safe your child feels at school? 1 2 3
If answered needs improvement please indicate improvement suggestions

5. Are you satisfied with the school's expectations regarding behavior? 1 2 3
If answered needs improvement please indicate improvement suggestions

6. Are you satisfied with the consistency of disciplinary actions? 1 2 3
If answered needs improvement please indicate improvement suggestions

Additional Comments



Teacher Satisfaction Survey

Perspectives administers a teacher satisfaction survey twice a year. Below are questions pertaining to *A Disciplined Life™* from a recent teacher survey. *How would your school gain insight into parents' perceptions of character education and culture? How would you use these survey results to change practices?*

Directions:

Please read each of the following questions. Circle the number that best describes your satisfaction: 1= Needs Improvement; 2= Meets Expectations; 3= Exceeds Expectations
If you answer "needs improvement", please specify a possible solution.

A Disciplined Life™ and Social Development

- 1. Does teaching *A Disciplined Life™* help change student behavior? 1 2 3

- 2. I see evidence that *A Disciplined Life™* is supporting student growth 1 2 3

- 3. Is *A Disciplined Life™* a tool to redirect students? 1 2 3

- 4. Rate the variety of after-school activities. 1 2 3

- 5. Rate the quality of after-school activities 1 2 3

- 6. Describe how well students' unique gifts are celebrated. 1 2 3

- 7. Does teaching *A Disciplined Life™* foster an inclusive environment? 1 2 3

- 8. Do we meet the social/emotional needs of our kids through social service? 1 2 3

School Culture and Discipline

- 9. Rate the school's level of safety. 1 2 3

- 10. School clearly defines expectations regarding behavior? 1 2 3

- 11. Are disciplinary actions in the best interest of the students? 1 2 3

- 12. Are the disciplinary actions & procedures reasonably consistent? 1 2 3

- 13. Are we consistent in addressing student behavior? 1 2 3

- 14. Are expectations consistent among the staff? 1 2 3

- 15. Do kids feel safe to be intellectuals? 1 2 3



External Scorecard

This External Scorecard is shown to anyone outside of Perspectives who is inquiring about its scores. It is also given to potential donors and to Board members. It is intended to share data, but not anything that might infringe on student privacy. The Scorecard ranks Perspectives on *A Disciplined Life™*, Family Involvement, Community Engagement, Professional Development, and Academic Rigor. The sample scorecard below only shows sample ratings for ADL. *What tool can your school develop to show external stakeholders progress made on character education? What metrics would you measure? What targets would you set?*

		School 1			
	TARGET	2005-2006	2006-2007	Meets goals? x / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Gains ↓ / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<i>A Disciplined Life™</i>					
Attendance Rate	96%				
Grade 6					
Grade 7					
Grade 8					
Grade 9					
Grade 10					
Grade 11					
Grade 12					
Student Retention Rate	96%				
Student Persistence	96%				
Extra Curricular Participation Rate	51%				

Note: The scorecard also includes data from the student survey. However, Perspectives recently changed its survey and scoring process. These new survey methods have not yet been incorporated into this version of the scorecard.

Scorecard Measures:

- Attendance Rate:** The average monthly attendance rate for all students. Percentage reflects the average YTD attendance rate.
- Student Retention Rate:** The average monthly retention rate for all students. Percentage reflects the average YTD retention rate.
- Student Persistence:** Students who were enrolled at the beginning of the prior school year and who still live within a reasonable commuting distance, that remain enrolled at the start of the current school year.
- Extra Curricular Participation Rate:** The percentage of students that were in at least one full quarter after school activity. Percentage reflects the average YTD participation rate.

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PUC SCHOOLS

The Design and Implementation of an Early College High School Program

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

This case demonstrates how Partnerships to Uplift Communities (PUC Schools) has partnered with local colleges to promote college readiness and to enable students to take college-level courses for credit while still in high school.

This case study was prepared by FSG Social Impact Advisors. FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides guidance to foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and other public sector entities on issues of strategy, evaluation, and operations. FSG was commissioned by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “best practices” of portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared across the NewSchools portfolio. To complete this case study, FSG conducted background research on PUC Schools and interviewed Ref Rodriguez, Co-Founder and Co-CEO; Darryl Adams, Principal, CALS Early College High School; Michael Kinnaman, Assistant Principal, Community Charter Early College High School; Amanda Malagon, College Counselor at Community Charter Early College High School; and Veronica De Leon, a senior at CALS Early College High School. Misha Simmonds of NewSchools Venture Fund provided additional context on PUC Schools.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. How does PUC Schools’ Early College High School (ECHS) program prepare students for college?
2. Are there local colleges or universities with which you could partner to develop a similar model?
3. How can you create a full college-focused experience that is about more than earning college credits? Are there other ways to create similar experiences for your students?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Despite widespread agreement about the importance of college, access to higher education is not a reality for a large number of low-income and minority youth. Just 60 percent of low-income youth in the United States graduate from high school, one in three enroll in college, and only one in seven earn a bachelor's degree. High school dropouts are four times as likely as college graduates to be unemployed, and if they do find employment, they will earn nearly 60 percent less than their college-educated counterparts. Even worse, these youth are far more likely to wind up incarcerated; approximately four out of every five prison inmates did not graduate from high school.¹

Research indicates that a successful college experience prior to high school graduation significantly increases the likelihood of college matriculation and graduation. These positive outcomes appear to be greatest for low-income and minority students.

The James Irvine Foundation

While these statistics paint a grim picture of the future many youth have in store, an increasing number of schools are undertaking sustained efforts to reverse these trends and get low-income youth into college. One approach is the Early College High School (ECHS) model. By increasing exposure and access to college from an early age, the ECHS program is increasing the number of students who graduate from high school and go on to pursue post-secondary education — an opportunity that can fundamentally transform the lives of low-income youth.

The following case study profiles the use of the ECHS model by Partnerships to Uplift Communities (PUC Schools), a charter school management organization (CMO) based in Los Angeles. PUC's program can be instructive for other CMOs interested in promoting college readiness, creating a college-going culture in their schools, and providing students with the opportunity to take college-level courses while still in high school.

PUC Background

PUC was formed in 2003 as a partnership between Jackie Elliot and Ref Rodriguez, two longtime educators and charter school principals who shared a common vision for providing high quality educational opportunities for low-income youth in the Los Angeles area. As stated in PUC's mission, the organization's aim is *“to develop and manage high-quality charter schools in densely populated urban communities with overcrowded and low-achieving schools. We create school programs and cultures that result in college graduation for all students. We focus on developing secondary schools partnered with strong feeder elementary programs. We uplift and revitalize communities through the development of educational and other supportive partnerships.”*²

PUC currently operates seven charter schools in Northeast Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley, including one elementary school, four middle schools and two high schools, serving more than 1,300 students. About 96 percent of these students are Latino and 83 percent qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch. According to PUC, more than 95 percent of students come from families in which no member has attended college, and more than 60 percent of students will be the first members of their families to graduate from high school.

¹ Bedsworth, W., Colby, S., Doctor, J. *Reclaiming the American Dream*. The Bridgespan Group. 2006.

² PUC Schools' Web site <http://www.pucschools.org>

The Early College High School Model

ECHS programs help prepare students for college by offering an honors-level core curriculum for all students, college-level courses taught by community college and university faculty, intensive academic advising, and college counseling. Remarkably, despite the intensity of the ECHS model, its implementation can actually save schools money, since paying for students to enroll in community college courses can be significantly less expensive than paying for full-time staff to teach those same courses.

Both of PUC's high schools, California Academy of Liberal Studies (CALs) and Community Charter, are designed as Early College High Schools. Both schools received start-up funding through a Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation initiative to convert existing schools into ECHS models designed to increase college access for low-income youth. CALs ECHS, located in downtown Los Angeles, opened its doors in 2003 with 84 9th graders, most of whom came from CALs Middle School. CALs ECHS originally formed a partnership with the Los Angeles Trade Technical College (LATTC) to provide college courses to its students and has since built similar partnerships with other higher education institutions nearby. The school graduated its first 12th grade class in 2007. Community Charter ECHS, located in the Northeast San Fernando Valley outside of Los Angeles, is PUC's second Early College High School. This school opened in 2005 with 130 students and has partnerships with Los Angeles Mission College and California State University—Northridge.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION ELEMENTS

The program design at CALs ECHS and Community Charter ECHS includes several key features that differentiate these schools from typical high school programs; these include:

- ***College partnerships.*** Each high school has established ongoing partnerships with colleges and universities to offer college-level courses taught by faculty from these educational institutions.
- ***College-focused curriculum.*** The core curriculum is designed to prepare all students for entry into a four-year university while also providing students with the opportunity to earn significant college credits during their high school years.
- ***College-going culture.*** PUC faculty instills an awareness of and excitement about college in students and their families.
- ***Intensive academic guidance and support.*** Students have access to a variety of resources to help them plan for and apply to college, including academic advisors, college counselors, workshops, and college visits.

College Partnerships

CALS ECHS and Community Charter ECHS have established the following partnerships with local colleges and universities to deliver college courses:

<i>CALS ECHS</i>	Pasadena City College	Los Angeles City College (LACC)	Los Angeles Trade Technical College (LATTTC)
<i>Community Charter ECHS</i>	California State University—Northridge (CSUN)	Los Angeles Mission College	

Building and Maintaining Relationships with College Partners

The identification of strong partners and the creation of mutually beneficial relationships have both been integral components of the program’s success. PUC uses the following criteria to identify prospective college partners:

<i>Concurrent Enrollment Agreement in Place</i>	A concurrent enrollment agreement spells out which college courses count for what type of high school credit, and provides assurance that college credits earned by PUC students meet both California college and university requirements, known as “A-G requirements” (see Toolkit for LAUSD <i>Concurrent Enrollment Agreement</i> and <i>Concurrent Enrollment Consent Form</i>).
<i>Geographic Proximity</i>	Partners need to be close enough so that students can easily travel between the high school campus and colleges where they are taking concurrent enrollment classes.
<i>Common Vision and Goals</i>	It is critical that partners understand PUC’s mission and culture and are invested in the relationship.
<i>Dedicated Point of Contact</i>	It is extremely helpful if college partners have an internal champion who can help launch the program and serve as a consistent point of contact for ongoing coordination and management of the partnership.
<i>Experience With High School Students</i>	Though not essential, colleges that have a history of working with high school students make great partners, because they understand the unique needs and challenges of serving this population.
<i>Clear Mutual Benefit</i>	In order for partnerships to be sustainable, it is critical that the terms of the arrangement meet the needs of both parties.

Creating a “Win-Win” Relationship

PUC ensures that each college or university with which it partners has a vested interest in maintaining a long-term relationship with the school. This is accomplished by understanding the needs of each prospective partner and creating a dialogue around how those needs might be met. For example, community colleges in Southern California have a poor track record of retaining students, particularly those who are low-income and minority. More than 75 percent of community college students drop out before graduation, and most students never transition into a four-year college. Since community college funding formulas are based on enrollment numbers, these institutions are significantly penalized by their high dropout rates, and therefore struggle to meet student enrollment quotas. LATTTC, Los Angeles City

We must come to the table as equals. We won't partner with anyone whose attitude is "let's help those who can't help themselves."
 - Ref Rodriguez, Co-CEO, PUC Schools

College (LACC), and Pasadena City College benefit substantially from the partnership with CALS ECHS because it provides them with an opportunity to capture a new cohort of students. Furthermore, given the amount of support that CALS ECHS students receive from PUC, retention rates are expected to be much higher than average when these graduates go on to college. Also, the partnership creates a valuable marketing opportunity for community colleges, which can highlight the unique arrangement in their promotional materials and tout the successes of students who have participated in the program.

How Colleges Benefit from the PUC Partnership

- Creates a pipeline of college-ready students to support the college's growth plan
- Raises the local and national profile of the college, which helps increase its attractiveness to students and faculty
- Provides access to additional classroom space

In addition to creating access to a new pipeline of students that will theoretically help boost enrollment and retention rates, the PUC Schools partnership also benefits one of its partners by providing them with classroom space. Since affordable classroom space in the city of Los Angeles is limited, CALS ECHS makes its classrooms available to LATTC for evening, weekend, and summer use. CALS Middle School also makes its classrooms available to the college during off hours. This arrangement is a huge advantage to LATTC, particularly as it plans to increase the size of its student body from 13,000 to 15,000 students over the

next few years as part of the Los Angeles Community College District's master plan. Finding appropriate and affordable space to accommodate this aggressive growth is a significant challenge.³

College-focused Curriculum

The high school curriculum at PUC Schools is designed to ensure that all students have completed University of California "A-G" admission requirements⁴ by the end of senior year. Additionally, most juniors also enroll in University 101, a seminar that is designed to equip students with skills they will need to be successful in college and beyond, such as research, time management, and financial literacy.

Beyond the college preparatory curriculum, CALS ECHS offers courses that are aligned with the University of California System's requirements and a number of these courses earn college credit. These concurrent-enrollment courses also fulfill high school graduation requirements and satisfy lower-division requirements at UC or California State University schools if a student receives a grade of "C" or better (see Toolkit for *CALS ECHS Sequence*).

Beginning in 10th grade, CALS ECHS students meet their foreign language requirements by taking a three-year sequence of Spanish courses taught by community college professors. Spanish classes are taught on the

³ Goldberger, Susan and Haynes, Leslie. *Designing and Financing an Integrated Program of College Study: Lessons from the California Academy of Liberal Studies*. Jobs for the Future. 2005.

⁴ The "A-G" requirements are subject area requirements that students need to fulfill in order to be eligible for admission to University of California campuses. Subject areas include: (A) History/Social Science, (B) English, (C) Mathematics, (D) Lab Science, (E) Language Other Than English, (F) Visual and Performing Arts, (G) College Preparatory Elective.

CALS campus in grade 10 and on the LATTC campus in grades 11 and 12. Starting in grade 11, students meet their English and Science A-G requirements through community college coursework.⁵

Though college readiness is a major emphasis at both CALS ECHS and Community Charter ECHS, individual needs and ability levels are taken into account. Students have a variety of paths they can pursue throughout their time in high school. At each grade level, students are given a choice about the number of college courses in which they enroll (see Toolkit for *College Course Options for CALS Students*.) In 9th grade, for example, students can opt out of college courses altogether, or they can choose to enroll in up to three college courses. Students are also given a 5th year study option, in which they can take remedial high school courses or continue concurrent enrollment in college courses. At the end of the fifth year, they will receive a high school diploma and transferable college credit.

A College-going Culture

The PUC Schools model is designed so that the students in the organization's middle schools feed into its high schools. About 90 percent of CALS ECHS and Community Charter ECHS students come from the PUC middle schools, which allows PUC to develop a strong culture of expectation around college attendance beginning in middle school. Beginning this education process early helps build a strong and cohesive culture centered on the journey toward college. As early as 6th grade, students are introduced to college life by spending several days at CSUN, one of the ECHS partners. Students live in the dorms, eat meals in the dining halls, and have access to a variety of recreational and academic resources on campus. PUC's middle schools also organize "college days," on which faculty wear sweatshirts from their own college or university and talk with students about their alma maters. At the high school level, this college-going culture is continually reinforced through college course offerings, field trips to colleges and universities, and workshops led by college admissions officers.

Parent Education

Another important way that PUC creates a college-going culture is by engaging with parents. Counselors, administrators, and faculty meet with parents individually and in groups in order to educate them about the realities of college and the steps they can take to help their children be successful. Workshops cover topics such as eligibility requirements for admission into the state's public university system and the concurrent enrollment process. Parents also participate in an orientation session and a series of seminars designed to acquaint them with PUC's culture, help them understand the importance of college, and walk them through important fundamentals of college preparedness, such as the processes for applying to college and applying for financial aid.

However, perhaps the most powerful tool for educating and motivating parents is the one-on-one dialogue that takes place on a regular basis between PUC's staff and the parents of its students. Ref Rodriguez, PUC's Co-CEO, hands out his cell phone number to parents and encourages them to call him if they have questions

⁵ Goldberger, Susan and Haynes, Leslie. *Designing and Financing an Integrated Program of College Study: Lessons from the California Academy of Liberal Studies*. Jobs for the Future. 2005.

or concerns. He is also not shy about coaching them about how to support their children's college ambitions. *"I tell parents that kids should have eight people looking out for them. It can't just be a husband and wife – you need grocers and neighbors asking 'Hey, what college are you going to?'* This needs to be an ingrained belief parents have for their kids." Teachers are also in regular contact with parents. In addition to informal conversations that take place before and after school, teachers are expected to call each parent at least twice a year to congratulate them about what their children are accomplishing and to reinforce the importance of college.

When kids first enroll in the program, we don't talk at parents and just give them policies and procedures. We put them in circles and ask questions like "What do you aspire for your child?" or "What was your experience like in school?" or "What was your experience of immigration in your family?" We do this because we want people to get to know each other in a personal way and connect with each other and say "Hey, that's my story too" and build trust that extends beyond the traditional way parents relate to their child's school.

- Ref Rodriguez, Co-CEO, PUC Schools

Intensive Academic Guidance and Support

Many students enter PUC's high schools with a strong awareness of college and an academic foundation that will help them navigate the honors and college-level curriculum. However, PUC faculty and administrators recognize that ongoing academic support and college guidance are both critical to the overall success of the ECHS model. Both high schools provide the following resources to help students succeed academically and prepare for entry into a four-year college.

College Counseling

Each school has a full-time college counselor whose responsibilities include:

- Holding advising sessions with students to map out a college plan and monitor progress towards achieving the plan's objectives;
- Helping students navigate college classes, including guidance on which classes to take and support with the registration process;
- Helping students register and prepare for college entrance exams (SAT and ACT);
- Supporting students as they complete college applications and scholarship forms;
- Coordinating on-campus college information sessions and college visits; and
- Educating parents about how to support their children in preparing for college.

Counselors meet once with the 9th graders as a group, hold individual meetings twice a year with 10th graders, and meet three times a year with each 11th and 12th grader. These meetings involve mapping out an individualized course of study, discussing college goals, and developing a plan to help students think through the steps involved in preparing for and applying to college. Counselors keep close track of students' goals and progress related to college applications through various tools, including a college advising form and an individualized college plan (see Toolkit for *College Advisement Form* and *Individualized College Plan*.)

Advisories

Each student is enrolled in an advisory group, which provides guidance around college readiness issues. Every high school faculty member runs an advisory class for 12-15 students, staying with the same group of students from freshman year through graduation. As students progress toward 12th grade, the content of advisories shifts from establishing college goals to navigating the admissions and financial aid processes.⁶

Support Classes

Eleventh and 12th grade students attend support classes taught by English and science high school faculty. These classes provide students with assistance on homework assignments, guidance on how to grapple with difficult readings or concepts, and coaching on important research or study skills, such as note-taking and reading for understanding.⁷

If we see that kids are really struggling but have the interest and willpower to overcome the challenges they're facing, we wrap around support for them.

- Ref Rodriguez, Co-CEO, PUC Schools

Tutoring

Tutors are also available for students who are struggling academically. Tutoring support is provided through a combination of high school and college faculty, high school seniors, and college students. PUC recently established a partnership with Occidental College's Center for Community Based Learning to provide a pipeline of undergraduate tutors for PUC Schools students.

Summer Intervention Program

For students who are not performing at grade level, PUC offers an intensive summer intervention program in math, reading, and literacy. Students participating in this program are given a California standards-aligned diagnostic test, called the MIP Assessment, which identifies their current performance level and helps faculty design an appropriate intervention plan.

College Academic Resources

Students enrolled in college courses also have access to a variety of academic resources on the campus of their partner colleges and universities. For example, CALS ECHS students attending courses at LATTC can use the college's learning skills and computer labs, and can also tap into other academic support, such as study groups and individual tutoring. Students enrolled in English 101 at LATTC also receive writing support at the LATTC Learning Skills Lab, a required component of that course.⁸

⁶ Goldberger, Susan and Haynes, Leslie. *Designing and Financing an Integrated Program of College Study: Lessons from the California Academy of Liberal Studies*. Jobs for the Future. 2005.

⁷ Goldberger, Susan and Haynes, Leslie. *Designing and Financing an Integrated Program of College Study: Lessons from the California Academy of Liberal Studies*. Jobs for the Future. 2005.

⁸ Goldberger, Susan and Haynes, Leslie. *Designing and Financing an Integrated Program of College Study: Lessons from the California Academy of Liberal Studies*. Jobs for the Future. 2005.

Staffing Roles and Responsibilities

Individuals responsible for managing the Early College High School program include PUC's Co-CEOs, Ref Rodriguez and Jackie Elliot, along with a program coordinator, the principals and assistant principals at each ECHS high school, and the college counselor at each campus. Rodriguez and Elliott are primarily responsible for designing the program and building relationships with college partners, while principals and assistant principals are responsible for selecting college courses and working with college faculty to coordinate schedules. These school leaders are also responsible, along with the college counselors, for developing and implementing the academic and college guidance support for students. Each college partner has a point person responsible for building and managing the relationship. Typically a senior person at the college or university, such as the Vice President of Academics or Enrollment, will initiate the partnership and help to build buy-in, and then hand off the ongoing management and coordination to someone else. Maintaining a consistent point of contact has been a challenge for PUC Schools.

Funding Model

One of the key considerations in designing PUC's ECHS program was financial sustainability. When operating at full capacity (320 students in grades 9-12), the high schools are able to cover expenses through existing state and federal funding sources. Rather than being a drain on resources, PUC staff note that the college component actually results in significant cost savings, because the high schools are able to reduce the number of full-time faculty they hire and pay, because they are substituting some classes for courses taught by community college faculty. This savings is due in part to the low enrollment fees charged by California's community college system. For example, at \$28 per credit or \$84 per student for a three-credit college Spanish course, it will only cost CALS \$20,000 a year in enrollment fees for all 240 of its 10th through 12th graders to take college-level Spanish, plus an additional \$23,320 for textbooks and paid tutoring support. This is significantly less than the \$127,050 it would cost CALS ECHS to hire two full-time Spanish teachers (see Toolkit for *Funding Chart: Potential Savings from Substituting College for High School Courses*.)

OUTCOMES

PUC's ECHS program is achieving significant positive results in terms of student achievement and college access. Though there is no longitudinal data yet on how students perform once they enter college (since PUC just graduated its first class of 12th graders in summer 2007), the impact on high school students' self-perceptions, goals, and academic accomplishments suggests that the model is working and worthy of replication.

Student Impact

Being at CALS has made college seem like more of a possibility as opposed to a dream, and has been a big influence in terms of my desire to go to college. I never really saw college as a possibility before attending the Early College High School program. It has really opened my eyes to new possibilities.

- CALS ECHS Senior

This student received multiple college acceptances, and chose to attend Occidental College where she received a substantial scholarship. She is the first person in her immediate family to attend a four-year college.

Specific outcomes include:

- Over 50 percent of PUC's high school students are enrolled in college courses.
- By the end of 12th grade, PUC students earn up to 35 college credits and fulfill all state university admission requirements.
- 100 percent of students in CALS ECHS' first graduating class applied to four-year colleges (see Toolkit for *2007 Sample List of College Applications and Acceptances*).
- Students demonstrate increased motivation, as well as a greater level of academic and emotional readiness to attend college, as self-reported by students and observed by teachers and principals.

CHALLENGES

- ***Lack of continuity in college contacts.*** It has been difficult to maintain consistent points of contact at partner colleges due to regular staff turnover at these higher education institutions. Since the success of the program is based largely on relationships with individuals, this can cause coordination and communication problems.
- ***Navigating the state's instructional minutes requirements.*** In order for California public schools to receive full funding, they are required to provide a certain number of instructional minutes taught by full-time high school faculty. Since college faculty teach a number of courses, many of PUC's classes do not count toward instructional minute requirements. This means that the leadership needs to be highly strategic about how courses are designed and how the high school faculty is deployed.
- ***Helping students choose the right courses.*** It takes a lot of time and energy to help students become savvy consumers when it comes to selecting appropriate and interesting courses. Many students base decisions on course titles or short descriptions without fully understanding the nature of the course, and therefore can end up disappointed.
- ***Instilling a sense of responsibility and accountability in students.*** The independence and self-management that comes with taking college courses can be a challenge for many students, and faculty must invest time in helping these students develop focus and self-discipline. This is particularly true for the 10 percent of PUC high school students who have not come from PUC feeder middle schools, and thus have less exposure to the college-going culture.
- ***Educating parents about college.*** While parents have the best of intentions for their children, there is often a cultural disconnect that makes it difficult for many of them to fully understand what it takes to be successful at PUC and prepared for college. PUC faculty and administrators view parent education as a critical priority and invest a significant amount of resources into working with parents.

ADVICE AND LESSONS LEARNED

- ***Create a full college-focused experience that is about more than earning college credits.*** Students need resources such as college counseling, academic advising, tutoring support, and college preparation workshops in order to help them navigate the college selection, application, and enrollment process.
- ***Know your students and what they need.*** The small size of PUC's schools enables teachers, principals, and counselors to stay in close touch with each student and customize support to meet individual needs.
- ***Develop an effective system for tracking students.*** In order to provide effective support to students, it is critical to have a good system in place for keeping track of details, such as what college courses a student is enrolled in, what their long-term goals are, and where they are applying to college.
- ***Create a college-going culture as early as possible.*** It is much easier to work with students in an early college program who have been exposed to the concept and benefits of college from an early age. PUC's feeder model creates a significant advantage in terms of ensuring students' success in the high school program. While students coming from middle schools outside of the PUC network have been successful, staff does acknowledge that working with these students does present a bigger challenge. It is important for other school systems to be mindful of this as they think about whether this model makes sense for them.

PUC EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL TOOLKIT

Toolkit Contents

- **Concurrent Enrollment Consent Form (PUC Document)**
- **CALS ECHS Course Sequence (PUC Document)**
- **College Course Options for CALS ECHS Students (PUC Document)**
- **College Advisement Form (PUC Document)**
- **2007 Sample List of College Applications and Acceptances (Modified from PUC Document)**
- **Funding Chart: Potential Savings from Substituting College for High School Courses (Document Recreated from *Jobs for the Future* article)**

Additional Documents (Available Separately)

- **LAUSD Concurrent Enrollment Agreement (PUC Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PUCCollege-A.pdf>
- **Individualized College Plan (PUC Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/PUCCollege-B.xls>



CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT CONSENT FORM

College Application for Admission by a Student in Grades K-12

Admission: Any college in the Los Angeles Community College District may admit as a special part-time or full-time student, anyone who is in the age group of Kindergarten to 12th grade (K-12), who has completed the admission requirements set forth in Administrative Regulations E-87, and who in the opinion of the College President (or designee) may benefit from instruction (Board Rules 8100.05, 81000.07; and Education Code Section 48800; 48800.5; 76001).

Fee: For part-time K-12 students, who are California residents, and who are subject to college enrollment fees, the fees will be waived pursuant to Board Rules 8100.07 and Education Code Section 76300(f). K-12 students attending a community college on a full-time basis are required to pay enrollment fees. Residents of other states and foreign students are subject to nonresident tuition. The Los Angeles Community College District charges a Health fee and, where applicable, a student representation fee.

Conditions: The student is expected to follow regulations and procedures established for all college students. Students shall receive credit for community college courses which they complete.

This enrollment approval form must be presented when **the student files an application for admission to the College**. A separate approval must be provided for each semester or summer session in which the student wishes to enroll.

Student Personal Information (Please Print)

Student Name: _____ Birth Date: _____
Last First MI Mo. Day Yr.

Student Address: _____
Street and Apt. # City State Zip Code

Telephone Number: (_____) _____ Soc. Sec.#: _____ - _____ - _____
Area Code and Number

I authorize my son/daughter to enroll in a college-level course in the Los Angeles Community College District:

Printed Name Signature Date

College Information

College: _____

_____ Fall Semester _____ Spring Semester _____ Summer Session _____ Year

1. _____ 2. _____
Course Title and Section Number Course Title and Section Number

3. _____ 4. _____
Course Title and Section Number Course Title and Section Number

School Information

This portion must be completed by the School Principal or designee for students attending public or private schools.

I have met and counseled the student and recommend the courses listed above to be taken for credits as shown above.

Print Name and Title Signature

If the student is enrolled in K-8, please enclose the student's transcripts and a letter describing how, in your opinion, the student will be able to profit from instruction at a Community. In the case of summer enrollment please confirm that there are no courses available for the student at your school.

School Name: _____ Telephone No.:(_____) _____

School Address: _____
Street City State Zip Code

Approval

Students must have the approval of the Chief Instructional Officer (or designee) of the college where they are applying.

_____ Approved to Attend _____
Signature Date

_____ Not Approved to Attend _____
Signature Date

Reasons for refusal: _____



**CALS Early College High School
Course Sequence for All Students**

Subjects Required (to meet and exceed UC admission)	Years Required/ Recommended	9 th Grade	10 th Grade	11 th Grade	12 th Grade
A. History/ Social Science	3 Required		World History	U.S. History	Government and Economics
B. English/ Composition and Literature	4 Required	English 9	English 10	English 101	English 103
C. Mathematics (Algebra II required; further courses are recommended)	3 Required 4 Recommended	Algebra I/B Or Geometry	Geometry Or Algebra II	Algebra II Or Trigonometry	Trigonometry Or Pre-Calculus
D. Laboratory Science	3 Required 4 Recommended	Earth Science	Biology	Physical Science or Biological Science** (Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, etc.)	Physical Science or Biological Science** (Physics, Chemistry, Astronomy, etc.)
E. Spanish	2 Required 3 to 4 Recommended		Spanish I/ Spanish for Spanish Speakers**	Spanish I/Spanish for Spanish Speakers** Spanish II**	Spanish II** Spanish III** Spanish IV** Alternate Language**
F. Visual and Performing Arts	2 Required	Drama, Art, or Music			Drama, Art, or Music
G. College Preparatory Electives	4 Required	Advisement 9 (college goals and research)	Advisement 10 (college research, application, entrance and test preparation)	Advisement 11 (college application, entrance and acceptance, and counseling)	Advisement 12 (college acceptance, articulation, counseling)
Physical Education	2 Required	Health and Fitness Yoga		Health and Fitness Activity	
College Entrance Exams and Placement Tests	PSAT Required SAT Required CAHSEE Required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSAT Writing Placement Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSAT Writing Placement Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAT • CAHSEE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAT • CAHSEE
UNITS EARNED	220 Required	50	60	60	60

Courses coded in **color denote classes that will or may be taken as concurrent enrollment at the community college. Courses will fulfill high school graduation requirements and satisfy lower division general education requirements at CSU or UC campuses. All courses must be completed with a grade of "C" or better.



College Course Options for CALS ECHS Students

** Students will take college courses when developmentally and academically ready, as decided by students, parents, advisors, and school faculty. The following options are available in an individual student's course of study at CALS Early College High School.

<p>9th Grade</p> <p>Student takes up to three college courses 1 each semester and 1 during the summer. These three courses are chosen in collaboration with the student's advisor and meet criteria for UC/CSU transfer and/or the Associates degree.</p> <p>College Units Earned: 9</p>	<p>10th Grade</p> <p>Student takes between three and five college courses. At minimum two of the courses will be dual enrollment courses which provide the student with both high school and UC/CSU transfer credit and/or the Associate's degree.</p> <p>College Units Earned: 9 to 15</p>
<p>11th Grade</p> <p>Student takes between three and five college courses. At minimum two of the courses will be dual enrollment courses which provide the student with both high school and UC/CSU transfer credit and/or the Associate's degree.</p> <p>College Units Earned: 9 to 15</p>	<p>12th grade</p> <p>Student takes between four to six college courses. At minimum three of the courses will be dual enrollment courses which provide the student with both high school and UC/CSU transfer credit and/or the Associate's degree.</p> <p>College Units Earned: 12 to 18</p>
<p>5th Year Study Option: Students may take remedial high school courses and/or continue concurrent enrollment during a fifth year of study, after which they will receive a high school diploma and transferable college credit.</p>	



College Advisement Form

This form is used by PUC College Counselors to track student progress and goals related to college applications and admissions.

Name of Student: _____
First Last

Grade: _____ Date: _____

Goals after high school: _____

Community College: _____

UC campuses: _____

CSU campuses: _____

Private colleges: _____

Counselor

Recommendations: _____

SAT _____

ACT _____



CALS ECHS 2007 Sample List of College Applications and Acceptances

COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

Public Universities

- CSU Chico
- CSU Los Angeles
- CSU Long Beach
- CSU San Bernadino
- CSU Monterey Bay
- CSU Northridge
- Humboldt State University
- San Jose State University
- Sonoma State University
- San Diego State University
- Cal Poly Pomona
- Cal Poly Long Beach
- UC Davis
- UC Irvine
- UC Los Angeles
- UC Riverside
- UC Santa Barbara
- UC Santa Cruz

Private Universities

- Albion College
- Beloit College
- Boston College
- Cal Arts
- Dartmouth College
- Duke University
- Embry Riddle Aeronautical University
- Florida Southern College
- Georgetown University
- George Washington University
- Harvard University
- Harvey Mudd
- New York University
- Occidental College
- Pomona College
- Stanford University
- St. Mary's College
- University of Dallas
- University of the Pacific
- University of Redlands
- Whittier College

COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES

Public Universities

- Cal Poly Pomona
- CSU Northridge
- CSU Los Angeles
- San Diego State University
- Humboldt State University
- Sonoma State University
- UC Davis
- UC Irvine
- UC Los Angeles
- UC Riverside
- UC Santa Barbara
- UC Santa Cruz

Private Colleges/Universities

- Beloit College
- Cal Arts
- Embry Riddle Aeronautical University Florida Southern College
- Occidental College
- St. Mary's College
- University of Dallas
- University of the Pacific
- University of Redlands
- Whittier College

Students Applying to a Four-Year College: 100%

Students Accepted into a Four-Year College (as of April 2007): 70%

Funding Chart: Potential Savings from Substituting College for High School Courses

	Cost if CALS Offered as High School Courses	Cost as Concurrent Enrollment College Course	Potential Savings to CALS/Community Charter
Grade 10-12 Spanish for 240 students	<p>2 FTE Spanish = \$127,050</p> <p>Books, materials (\$25 per student) = \$6,000</p> <p>Total Cost = \$133,050</p>	<p>Enrollment fees for 240 students for 3 credit class = \$20,160 (240 x \$84)</p> <p>Tutoring Support (24 hours per week @ \$15/hr for 36 weeks) = \$12,960</p> <p>Books, materials (\$25/student regular CALS book, materials fee plus \$30 per extra student for college books) = \$13,200</p> <p>Total Cost = \$46,320</p>	<p>= \$86,730 (\$133,050 minus \$46,320)</p>
Grade 11 and 12 English for 160 students	<p>2 FTE English Teachers = \$127,050</p> <p>Books, materials (\$25 per student) = \$4,000</p> <p>Total Cost = \$131,050</p>	<p>Enrollment fees for 160 students for 3 credit course = \$13,440 (160 x \$84)</p> <p>1 FTE CALS teacher for support class = \$63,525</p> <p>Books, materials (\$25/student for support course at CALS plus \$30/student for college books) = \$8,800</p> <p>Total Cost = \$85,765</p>	<p>= \$45,285 (\$131,050 minus \$85,765)</p>
Grade 11 and 12 Lab Science for 160 students	<p>2 FTE Science Teachers = \$127,050</p> <p>Books, materials (\$25 per student) = \$4,000</p> <p>Total Cost = \$131,050</p>	<p>Enrollment fees for 160 students for 4 credit class = \$17,920 (160 x \$112)</p> <p>1 FTE CALS teacher for support class = \$63,525</p> <p>Books, materials (same as English) = \$8,800</p> <p>Total Cost = \$90,245</p>	<p>= \$40,805 (\$131,050 minus \$90,245)</p>
Total cost and potential savings	\$395,150	\$222,330	\$172,820

Source: Goldberger, Susan and Haynes, Leslie. *Designing and Financing an Integrated Program of College Study: Lessons from the California Academy of Liberal Studies*. Jobs for the Future. 2005



NEW SCHOOLS FOR NEW ORLEANS

School Review Process: Lessons Learned from the Knowledge is Power Program and the New York City Center for Charter School Excellence

June 2007

INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOOL

This case study was prepared by FSG Social Impact Advisors. FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides guidance to foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and other public sector entities on issues of strategy, evaluation, and operations. FSG was commissioned by NewSchools Venture Fund to document “promising practices” of portfolio ventures in a format that could be shared across the NewSchools portfolio. To complete this case study, FSG conducted background research on New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO), The New York City Center for Charter School Excellence (The Center) and the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP). Interviews were conducted with Matt Candler, CEO of NSNO, Glenn Liebeck, Director of School Leadership Development at The Center, Heather Caudill, Director of Quality and School Assessment at The Center, Jeff Rutel, Director of Instruction and Evaluation at KIPP, and three school leaders who have participated in The Center School Review. Jim Peyser of the NewSchools Venture Fund provided additional context on New Schools for New Orleans.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. How do you assess the performance of individual schools within your organization? Do you have a way of finding and fixing problems?
2. Who oversees the assessment of schools within your organization?
3. Is there a forum for teachers and principals to discuss the results of these assessments? Is there a mechanism in place to develop improvement plans based on the assessments’ findings?
4. If you were to implement a school review process, would you do this in house or would you outsource the development of such a program? What are the pros and cons of each approach?
5. What resources would be required to develop such a process in house? What resources would be required if you chose to outsource the development? Are these resources available?

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

With the advent of high-stakes testing and No Child Left Behind, schools are under increasing pressure to meet student performance and school improvement goals. Charter schools have the additional need to meet their authorizer requirements to ensure their charter is renewed. For these reasons, charter management organizations (CMOs) need to ensure schools in their network are operating effectively and that instruction is of the highest quality. However, many principals and CMO central office staff do not have the time, expertise, or access to an independent third party that can thoroughly assess school performance on a regular basis and develop plans to address what needs to be improved.

We want to have a third party measure what we do against accepted benchmarks so it's not just our school saying we're the best. It is also our goal as an organization to teach our schools and staff to be self-evaluative.

- KIPP

In response to this dilemma, some CMOs and third-party organizations have developed review processes to help schools continuously improve. This case explores two different models of conducting school reviews: The New York City Center for Charter School Excellence (The Center), an independent nonprofit that conducts reviews of charter schools in the New York City area and the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), a network of charter schools that conducts reviews of its own schools.

It's unhealthy to get feedback only once a year from an authorizer, but it is very helpful to get regular feedback from outside eyes once you are a school leader.

- Principal, NYC

Both The Center and KIPP contract with education consultancies that help them develop the evaluation tools and conduct the evaluations:

I think having as many people evaluate you as possible is key. Different people see different things.

- Principal, NYC

- SchoolWorks: A small Boston-based quality review consulting firm that works with charters, authorizers, school districts and departments of education to “measure current performance, explore strategies for improvement and implement the solutions best suited to local needs.”¹ SchoolWorks has helped both The Center and KIPP in their review processes.

- Cambridge Education LLC (CE)²: A US based -division of a consulting firm based in England that provides many services, including conducting school reviews. It has helped develop the review tools for both The Center and KIPP. Consultants from CE participate in some of the KIPP reviews.

While there is not conclusive research on whether or how school reviews lead to improved student achievement, school reviews are believed to be an effective school improvement practice. This case is relevant

¹ <http://www.schoolworks.com>

² <http://www.camb-ed.com/school-services/school-services.asp> Note: In 2003, Cambridge Education Associates (CEA) and Cambridge Education Consultants (CEC) merged to form Cambridge Education LLC (CE).

to any CMO interested in conducting reviews of schools in its network, or any charter school interested in how an external review might help it improve practices to drive gains in student achievement.

THIRD PARTY EVALUATIONS: THE NEW YORK CITY CENTER FOR CHARTER SCHOOL EXCELLENCE

Overview

The Center was founded in 2004 to “stimulate the supply of high-quality charter schools and support ongoing student excellence in all NYC charter schools, impacting the effectiveness of public education.”³ The Center has conducted 40 charter school reviews since 2005. The reviews currently focus on school culture, school leadership, and teaching and assessment, and will eventually expand to incorporate governance and operations reviews.

The low-performers that we work with fall into 2 categories – those ready to go through organizational change, and those where there’s some kind of resistance to change. We want to work with the former.

- New York City Center for Charter School Excellence

The Center’s focus is on low-performing schools. However, staff emphasizes that they only work with organizations willing to change. The Center conducts two reviews per year for new schools and anywhere between one and three reviews per year for existing schools. The first review takes place in the fall and is designed to establish a baseline for growth and improvement. Subsequent reviews explore areas that have not been mastered or that the school indicated it wanted to revisit.

School reviews are conducted by Center staff and consultants, all of whom have experience in charter schools. Each consultant serves six to seven schools and is responsible for building support for the process, collecting documents, and customizing and overseeing the reviews. To prepare for the role, each consultant attends three to four training sessions run by The Center staff.

Relationship with Authorizers

These reviews are designed to be distinct from authorizer reviews, with a focus on collaborative coaching that helps schools improve rather than a formal visit that could result in a revoked charter. The Center works closely with authorizers, several of whom have reviewed the Center’s tools. Matt Candler, current CEO of New Schools for New Orleans and formerly at The Center notes that “*the ability to do reviews was tied strongly to having credibility with the authorizer. As a middle man, we have access to more information than either the school or the authorizer, which gives us more credibility with schools. Schools are willing to have us do friendly, developmental reviews because they know we know what the authorizer will look for in formal reviews, and they trust that we won’t share all of their weaknesses with the authorizer.*” Building relationships with authorizers remains a challenge, however, and The Center staff admits, “*We haven’t done as good a job as we would like of building relationships with authorizers.*”

³ <http://www.nycchartercenter.org>

Customizing Reviews

In each review, The Center staff works with school leaders and staff to evaluate school culture, school leadership and teaching and assessment. Within each category, the staff has defined three levels of priorities tied to student needs and achievement. As The Center staff explains, *“If you can’t get kids to sit in a seat, you’re not going to be able to work on high-level questioning. Level 1 would be getting kids to sit in seats.”* The Center has rubrics that clearly define each level (see Toolkit for *Level 1 Teaching & Assessment Rubric and Level 1 Leadership Rubric*). Most baseline reviews focus on Level 1.

The Center has developed hundreds of standard evaluation tools, many of which are “non-negotiable” baseline tools. For example, for the tool that measures student engagement, a “non-negotiable” is time spent on task. About 85% of each review uses the same tools. The other 15% of the review is customized to meet the school’s individual needs.

The Center staff spends about 20 hours preparing for each review. They talk to school leaders, collect documents, and customize tools. They will ask schools for areas that authorizers have highlighted as trouble spots, noting that *“anything the authorizer has nailed them on goes into the review.”* If it is a follow-up review, it will be based on areas previously identified as growth areas.

Little preparation work is required of the schools. As one principal commented, *“We don’t have to do a lot to prepare for reviews. Last year we did not have to do any preparation work for the review. This year, we had to send some documents and I helped create observation tools.”* Another principal remarked, *“No real work is required to prepare. The Center just needs to know our schedule and I need to determine who will participate in the review.”*

How Reviews are Conducted

Each review lasts six hours (see sidebar) and is conducted by a team of three to four staff from The Center and three to four school staff.

Conducting short reviews minimizes disruption at the school site (see Toolkit for *Sample Agenda/Schedule*). The day begins with a 45-minute session, where staff from The Center interviews the leadership team and explains the tools (see Toolkit for *Sample Interview Questions*).

Time	Item
8:00	NYC CCE Team Arrives
8:15 – 9:00	Interview Leadership team and explanation of tools
9:00 – 11:00	Observe classrooms
11:00 – 11:30	Complete rubrics without teacher input – collect and total data from observations
11:30 – 12:15	Interview teachers and lunch
12:15 – 12:30	Complete rubrics – collect and total data from teacher interviews
12:30 – 1:30	Debrief

Then teams of two reviewers, one from The Center and one from the school, conduct 25-30-minute

Team	Focus Areas
1	Consistency/ tone and language/ clear objectives/ displayed work
2	Behavioral expectations (in-room and hallway)/ student accountability/ systems and routines
3	Rigor (lesson and overall)/ transitions (hallway and in-room)/ safety

classroom observations. The number of observations depends on the size of the school and the number of classrooms. Each team uses the same observation tools in each classroom and focuses on collecting specific, targeted data (see

sidebar). In teaching and learning, reviewers will look at things such as the amount of time students spend on task or the number of seconds a teacher gives a student to answer a question. In the cultural assessment, reviewers might count the duration of hallway transitions (see Toolkit Additional Documents for *Sample Observation Tools*).

After the observations, each team spends 30 minutes completing rubrics without teacher input. Then, The Center staff spends 45 minutes over lunch asking teachers the same questions they asked the leadership team in the morning. *“This helps us understand if there is a disconnect. We also ask them if there are any issues they’d like us to bring up with the leadership team.”* After lunch, the reviewers spend 25 minutes completing the rubrics, filling in information from the staff interviews, and discussing where they want to push the leadership team. The last hour of the day is a debrief with the leadership team, where The Center staff works with the school staff to go through the entire rubric and color code each element to signify which areas need improvement and which areas have been mastered (see Toolkit Additional Documents for *Sample Completed Rubrics*).

About 10 days after the review, the Center sends the school a written report identifying strengths and areas for improvement with evidence and recommendations (see Toolkit Additional Documents for *Sample Full Report*). In the conclusion, the report identifies three to four “big rocks,” or areas to focus on (see sidebar).

Culture	Leadership	Teaching and Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Academic Rigor</i> – Define and monitor academic rigor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Collaboration and Integration</i> – Increase support and structure of teacher collaboration sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lesson Objectives</i> – Deepen lesson plans and make lesson objectives explicit in teaching • <i>Level of Engagement</i> – Challenge students at their appropriate developmental levels • <i>High Academic Expectations</i>- Pair this with the focus on rigor

Acting on Results

The Center tries to conduct targeted reviews that will enable it to identify specific interventions. The Center provides grants of up to \$25,000 to help schools implement changes, will conduct follow-up reviews, and often provides informal ongoing support. Based on a school’s individual needs, The Center sometimes pays for a SchoolWorks consultant to provide coaching assistance on issues such as improving leadership or how to implement components of a school improvement plan. Beyond this, The Center is working on creating a menu of follow-up interventions.

One piece of feedback we received from the review was that all our classes and teacher prep times were at the same time. The reviewers recommended that students have opportunities to learn different subjects at different times because some times of day are better for them. So we have now implemented a rotating schedule in middle and elementary school.

- Principal, NYC

The reviews often result in school-level changes. As one school leader remarked, *“They gave us a grant to implement a data collection process, which enabled us to pay for teacher leaders to do assessments.”* There have been occasions where the review reveals very poor leadership. In that case, The Center staff will recommend to the

board that the principal be let go.

For some schools, the value lies in the observation tools themselves. As one principal remarked, *“Our school has found the tools really helpful in providing a framework for thinking about the technical aspects of teaching and leadership – this has permeated our school. This year we did peer evaluations using the same tool.”*

EVALUATIONS OF SCHOOLS WITHIN A NETWORK: THE KNOWLEDGE IS POWER PROGRAM

Overview

The Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP) is a network of free, open-enrollment, college-preparatory public schools in under-resourced communities throughout the United States. The first school opened in 1994, and there are currently 52 KIPP schools in 16 states and Washington, D.C., serving more than 12,000 students.⁴

KIPP conducts three tiers of reviews.

- **Tier 1.** *New Schools Visits* focused on development for schools that are opening or have a change in leadership. These reviews have been conducted for two years.
- **Tier 2.** *Formal Second-Year Inspections* that evaluate operations, instruction, alignment with the KIPP model, and school culture. These reviews have been underway for many years and have more codified elements.
- **Tier 3.** *Fifth-Year Inspections* that are a developmental self study focused on sustainability. This specific review protocol was first implemented in the 2006-2007 school year.

First and foremost, the purpose of these reviews is to help school leaders improve their schools in ways that lead to higher student achievement. However, KIPP also uses the results from the evaluations in many other ways. KIPP staff uses review data to inform staff training. Results also inform resource allocation, enabling KIPP to provide additional support or interventions to struggling schools. Finally, some school leaders have used positive review data in grant applications.

KIPP conducts first year reviews using foundation staff, school leaders and Fisher Fellows (KIPP Principals in training). For the second- and fifth-year reviews, KIPP contracts with Cambridge Education, LLC (CE). KIPP has a full-time Director of Instruction and Evaluation, Jeff Rutel, who plays a critical role in the evaluations. Jeff spends a substantial amount of time on school visits and works with KIPP superintendents in cluster districts (where there is a group of KIPP schools in a given geography) to ensure they are on board with the process. Jeff also has regional directors to ensure that the review takes into account the individual characteristics of a cluster. In addition to Jeff's team, many other staff members are involved in the review analysis.

⁴ <http://www.kipp.org/>

At the school summit every August, everyone involved in the review process undergoes training, whether they have previously conducted a review or not. Participants discuss their own experience being inspected and try to tease out any biases they might have when conducting reviews. They also discuss confidentiality because, as Jeff notes, *“It is critical that what happens at a school visit stays at that school. It is essential that school leaders know the feedback is staying in-house.”*

Customizing Reviews

KIPP generally approaches every school review the same way. However, for schools that are really struggling, KIPP conducts additional evaluations with a committee comprised of veteran school leaders. *“That’s a slightly elevated process that is separate from our other reviews.”*

KIPP will also scale the review based on whether a school is the only KIPP school in a geography or whether it is in a cluster with other KIPP schools. *“If there’s a cluster structure in place, the issues will be very different because we know they have a lot more support than an isolated school.”*

How Reviews are Conducted

Tier 1: New School Visits

These reviews are conducted when a new school opens or when there is a change in leadership. They take place within the first 16 weeks of a school’s fall opening so *“we can be proactive about what is happening.”* These reviews are designed to be more developmental than evaluative. *“There’s usually a huge disconnect between what a school leader believes is going on and what’s really going on. These visits are designed to tease out the gaps and calibrate what the school leader wants to happen.”*

The school leader fills out a self-evaluation beforehand, ranking the strengths and weaknesses of his leadership and school. Reviewers will look for evidence of what the school leader indicated on the self-evaluation. For example, *“If he says he has a high-functioning board, we go and talk to the board to ‘pressure test’ whether this is true.”*

It’s great for Fellows to see what a new school looks like. It’s a very humbling experience for them. It’s very eye opening for them to see what’s actually involved in starting a school.

- KIPP

The reviews are 2½ to 3 days long. The review team consists of three people, who are all practitioners: a veteran school leader, a Fisher Fellow (KIPP principal in training), and a regional director. The review team talks to the school leader about any issues he is having, takes a tour, and conducts classroom observations. The team might split into different classrooms based on areas of expertise. Or, if the team is in a new school with only one grade, it will conduct a group observation of the same class. *“We often have many people watch the same teacher so we are triangulating.”*

We won’t say “your English instruction is terrible.” Rather, we’ll ask about the delivery of English instruction: “Why did you decide to use this delivery structure?” Asking questions is less intense, doesn’t put leaders on the defensive, and forces them to think at a high level about the decisions they have made.

- KIPP

The review team looks for evidence of student learning and rigorous instruction. While it doesn’t use a consistent note-taking format, the team does meet several times during each visit to debrief on what

team members are observing and discuss what else they should look for. The team uses this time to calibrate across team members. *“I want to be sure that what I think of as excellence is the same as what everyone else on the team thinks of as excellence.”*

On the final day, the review team holds a two-hour feedback session with the school leader and, if the leader chooses, with a top teacher or academic dean. The district superintendent also attends the feedback session if the school is part of a cluster. This debrief is conversational, and all questions are based on the evidence collected during the observations.

The review team discusses what the school is doing well and why, helps the school staff identify two to three areas to focus on, makes recommendations about what resources might be helpful, and plans whatever follow-up might be needed. Although they ask school leaders what help they need, they note that *“many new leaders don’t know what they don’t know. So we might suggest another leader for them to shadow, or we might ask if they want us to come back in a couple weeks to help with strategic planning.”*

The review team leaves it up to the principal to decide how to give feedback to teachers. *“We ask the principal if he wants us to give feedback directly to teachers. This can be tricky in new schools because we don’t know what the issues are with staff.”* About three to four days later, the review team gives the school a brief written report that summarizes the feedback discussion. *“New leaders are already so busy that they don’t have time to read a ten-page report.”*

We try not to give them a laundry list of things to improve. We say ‘here are two to three things that we’d like you to focus on that will give you the biggest bang for your buck.’

- KIPP

Tier 2: Formal Inspection

In a school’s second year, KIPP conducts more formal evaluations. It contracts with Cambridge Education LLC (CE) to conduct these evaluations. A few weeks before the formal inspection, a team from KIPP conducts an operational review to help the formal inspection team develop hypotheses about what they should focus on. *“The operations report helps inform our inspection and helps us develop a more overarching report. We ask, ‘Are the places you are putting your money where you will get the most impact for teaching and learning?’”*

One elementary school was having huge issues around communication. The visiting team picked up on this within first hour at the school. They voiced this concern to the staff, and were able to help the principal move this issue forward. We were able to communicate with staff in a way that the principal wasn’t able to do.

- KIPP

The formal review is very intensive, and the review team spends almost an entire week at the school, conducting about 80–100 hours of observation in total and speaking with parents, school leadership, teachers, board members, and students. The review team consists of two people from CE, one veteran school leader from another school, and one person from Jeff’s team.

This review has evolved from being completely evaluative to focusing on continuous improvement. The review team looks closely at the criteria aligned with KIPP’s operating principles, which are known as the Five Pillars and include metrics such as students’ readiness for college and the overall excellence of the

school.⁵ They try to gather specific data points and use that evidence to rate schools on each criterion, on a range from “*very poor*” to “*excellent*.” Schools rarely receive a rating on either extreme. The team only occasionally gives an “*excellent*” rating because it holds very high expectations of excellence, and it rarely gives a “*very poor*” rating because struggling schools are identified early on to undergo a separate evaluation process.

The review team always tries to leave the school with specific information on areas of strength and areas for growth. The final report includes information from both the operations report and the on-site review and is designed to lead to improvements. “*The report can be used to trigger additional support measures or interventions if things aren’t going well. We can identify what supports the foundation needs to provide to that school and what the school needs to focus on itself.*”

Tier 3: Fifth-Year Inspection

When three KIPP schools reached their five-year anniversary in 2005, KIPP conducted reviews that were identical to the second-year process, with a focus on operations, instruction, culture and alignment with the KIPP model. However, this review protocol did not adequately meet the needs of mature schools. Staff realized they needed to help leaders think about sustainability.

Sample questions asked

- Are test scores good? If so, why? Is the reason systems-dependent or people-dependent? How do you know?
- Do you have a long term financial plan? Do you need facilities? If so, is the board aware of this?

Thus, in 2006 KIPP worked with Cambridge Education to develop and implement a third type of inspection geared towards helping leaders think about long-term planning. This two-day review is conducted by one person from CE, one person from Jeff’s team, and one peer school leader who is from the same cohort as the leader being evaluated.

We recently listened to a team interview the principal, who had a huge, unwieldy strategic plan. One of the things the principal thought they were doing well was literacy. But I saw they’re only teaching writing to one grade level and probed the principal about the logic behind this.

- KIPP

Before the review, the team looks at test data for the past four years, as well as financial and operational data, student attendance and retention data and strategic planning documents.

The review consists of many ongoing conversations with the leader about what he needs, and discussions focus on things related to expansion, sustainability, and succession planning. According to one staff member, “*The bar is higher with these third tier visits. We push harder if we don’t see important pieces in place.*”

Cost

The KIPP reviews are expensive. Consulting fees and travel comprise the majority of the costs. A first year visit is the least expensive because no consultants are used, costing about \$3,000, primarily to cover travel. The second-year review costs about \$20,000, but KIPP is working to lower those costs by reducing travel expenses, using CE staff located in the U.S., and using more of its own staff. The fifth year visits cost about \$10,000 in total, including \$7,000 in consulting fees. No cost information is available on The Center reviews.

⁵ KIPP’s Five Pillars are: 1) High Expectations, 2) Choice & Commitment, 3) More Time, 4) Power to Lead, and 5) Focus on Results. See <http://www.kipp.org/01/fivepillars.cfm>

COMPARING THE MODELS

	KIPP	The Center
Getting Buy-in	Schools must participate, reviewers still work with leaders to gain buy-in	Conversations with school leaders – schools must opt in to voluntarily participate
Elements Observed	Instruction, operations, financial sustainability, alignment with CMO model, and school culture	Culture, Leadership, Teaching & Assessment <i>(plans to look at operations and governance in the future)</i>
Length	2-5 days	½ day
Frequency	3 reviews: first year, second year, fifth year	2-3 reviews per year
Who Conducts	3-4 people: 1 school leader, 1 KIPP staff, and depending on review, 1-2 CE consultants	6-8 people: Center staff and school staff

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Build a credible team.**
 - **Use practitioners.** Having practitioners conduct the reviews builds credibility. Every KIPP and Center reviewer has worked in schools. According to KIPP, “*Everyone on the review team is a practitioner and that is VERY important because they know what they’re looking for and they are credible.*”
 - **Use third-party evaluators.** This ensures findings are unbiased. The Center is a third party, and KIPP brings in external consultants for its intensive second- and third-tier reviews. According to KIPP, “*Bringing in an external set of eyes is critical. We have two people from Cambridge Education and because they are external and their model been tested throughout the world, this system has credibility with school leaders.*”
- **Use a coaching model.** Schools want a model that allows them to reflect on their progress and will be more open to a review that is framed as developmental rather than evaluative. Use the review as a forum to provide feedback.
 - “*Inspections used to be really frightening: ‘the men in grey suits are coming’ – people thought they were going to get fired. We’ve changed the process to be less evaluative and more developmental. We look at it as coaching. We provide feedback and help school leaders reflect process.*” –KIPP
 - “*We realized that schools wanted a model that allowed them to reflect on their own process, so we developed a coaching model.*” – The Center
 - “*My staff feels like this is an evaluation that we do for our own benefit. No one else needs to look at it, and I think that makes teachers more open to the process.*” – Principal, NYC
- **Involve school leadership in a collaborative process.** Involve the school’s leadership team before, during and after the review so they buy in to the process and act on recommendations.
 - “*The school leader must be brought in for this process to be effective. We ask members of the school’s leadership team to participate in the review so they feel a part of the process. By working with the school leader upfront to customize our existing tools, the school can really be a part of developing what the process should look like.*” – The Center

- **Reviews for individual charter schools work best when initiated by a school leader.** This must be a voluntary process and schools must be willing to change.
 - *“We’ve had times when a board member has asked us to come in, sees an unfavorable report and then fires the principal. Or, a board member coaches teachers on what to say, and this lack of honesty is a complete waste of time.”*
– The Center
 - *“When the review is asked for by a school leader it’s powerful and change happens.”* – The Center
- **Establish a baseline review against which to measure progress.** KIPP conducts a review when a school first opens. The Center conducts a baseline review which serves as the benchmark to measure progress.
- **Focus on a few priorities.** Don’t overwhelm schools with a laundry list of areas for improvement. Both KIPP and The Center identify three to four areas of focus for a given school.
- **Use clearly defined rubrics and measurable data.** This evidence will bring credibility to your recommendations and will help ensure buy-in from school staff.
 - *“The information is useful, very data-driven. For instance, by counting the number of times students makes eye contact, I can judge the level of student engagement.”* – Principal
 - *“It is important that you gather specific examples to give to a teacher.”* – KIPP
 - *“When deciding what to evaluate, clearly define priorities.”* – The Center
- **Take advantage of the in-person debrief.** School leaders are busy and don’t have time to read long, unwieldy reports. Both The Center and KIPP use the end of review debrief to work with the school leader to develop priority areas for improvement, and both try to keep the final written reports under ten pages. In following up, KIPP has found *“face-time to be the most effective.”*
- **Take the time to develop tools appropriate for your review.** As KIPP advises, *“Any organization going into this should not rush. Doing the groundwork upfront and developing the tools is extremely important.”*

ONGOING CHALLENGES

- **There are few providers of these services, and those that exist are expensive.** Both The Center and KIPP have relied on services from SchoolWorks and Cambridge Education LLC to develop their tools and conduct the reviews. However, these services are expensive, and it is not clear how many other options are available.
- **Reviews are complicated, requiring lots of planning and resources.** Each organization devotes a substantial amount of time to planning and conducting the reviews, and still struggles with how to allocate enough resources to ensure adequate follow-up and support. The organization conducting the review does as much preparation as possible so as to minimize the preparation work and disruption at the school level.

- **Short reviews have limitations, but longer reviews are hard to implement.**
 - *“In one to two days, how deep can you really get? This year we asked them to come back for a two day review because we didn’t think a half-day snapshot was enough.”* – Principals
 - *“New schools are really hungry for feedback and often want more time.”* – KIPP
 - *“Intensive, multi-site process only really works when you have a lot of credibility with the schools.”* – Matt Candler
- **Providing adequate follow-up.** Both organizations are still struggling with how to provide the best post-review follow-up to schools.
 - *“After a week visit, the leader’s head is spinning. We would love to go back and help the leader implement changes. This is a huge gap.”* – KIPP

APPLYING LESSONS LEARNED: NEW SCHOOLS FOR NEW ORLEANS

New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) was created in March 2006 to *“provide public schools, with an emphasis on charter schools, with the support they need in order to succeed in the new world of New Orleans public education.”*⁶ Matt Candler, CEO of NSNO, applied the lessons he learned from his time at KIPP and The Center to help develop a school review process to use in New Orleans. Using practices developed by those organizations, NSNO is implementing a review process to help charter schools evaluate and improve their operations, instruction, and governance. Paid for by NSNO, these reviews are not as intense as KIPP or The Center’s reviews and include a half-day of reviews followed by the development of an action plan for improvement. This action plan may be accompanied by funding to help schools implement suggested changes.

Ultimately, NSNO plans to conduct four types of reviews:

- **Operational review.** These would be half-day visits and would likely occur every two to three years. Reviewers would ask to see policies and rate schools against a checklist of certain internal controls that the CMO or authorizer will be looking for in their review. NSNO hopes to align this process with authorizer renewal and *“expects that more schools will undertake school evaluations as they are getting closer to renewal.”* NSNO hopes to begin these reviews in 2007.
- **Instructional review.** These half-day visits would focus on alignment with the school’s instructional model rather than student achievement data or specific pedagogy. Reviewers would meet with the instructional leader to ask, *“What should we be seeing in a classroom?”* Then, they would determine whether what they observe is consistent with the school leader’s expectations. The reviewers would all be educators. NSNO estimates that this visit will cost about \$500-\$1,500. Matt Candler notes, *“Instructional reviews will require more trust than the operational assessment. We’ll have to be sensitive to the philosophy of instruction and tweak the process based on this.”* NSNO hopes to begin these reviews in 2008.

⁶ New Schools for New Orleans Business Plan

- **Legal review.** NSNO staff will evaluate a school's documents (e.g. handbooks, employee contracts, hiring procedures) against a matrix to see if they meet certain legal requirements. NSNO plans to begin these reviews in the summer of 2007.
- **Governance review.** These reviews would involve evaluating board compositions to ensure they have representative skill sets, high-quality meeting procedures, and appropriate subcommittees with specific action plans. NSNO hopes to begin these evaluations in the fall of 2007.

Establishing these relationships works best with schools that have not yet opened. Once a relationship is established, it's easier to maintain.

- Matt Candler, NSNO

All reviews would be aimed to help schools identify one or two discrete areas for improvement and also to share best practices. The reviews will target weak and mid-performing schools, and will not focus on high-performing schools. NSNO staff notes that it might be more difficult to get schools to participate in instructional reviews than the operational and legal reviews because *"instructional reviews require a lot more trust-building than operational reviews."* For these, NSNO hopes to entice schools to participate with the lure of funding available to help schools implement changes, but will not *"invest in schools that aren't invested in their own destiny."*

CONCLUSION

As evidenced by KIPP and The Center, conducting school reviews is a good way to gather data-based information on how a school is performing on multiple operational and instructional levels and help schools identify and address areas for improvement. While KIPP and The Center have had great success diagnosing areas of school strengths and weaknesses, each organization is still trying to figure out the best way to provide support and follow-through to its respective schools to ensure that recommendations are implemented.

Furthermore, in the scope of the research for this case study, there was not enough evidence to conclude that the practice of conducting school reviews leads to student achievement gains. Additional research is necessary to confirm the link between this promising practice and academic improvement.

SCHOOL REVIEW TOOLKIT
(THE NEW YORK CITY CENTER FOR CHARTER SCHOOL EXCELLENCE)

Toolkit Contents

- **Level 1 Teaching & Assessment Rubric (The Center Document)**
- **Level 1 Leadership Rubric (The Center Document)**
- **Sample Schedule/Agenda (The Center Document)**
- **Sample Interview Questions (FSG Synthesized from The Center Document)**

Additional Documents (Available Separately)

- **Sample Observation Tools (The Center Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/NSNORevs-A.pdf>
- **Sample Completed Rubrics (The Center Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/NSNORevs-B.pdf>
- **Sample Full Report (The Center Document)**
<http://www.newschools.org/files/NSNORevs-C.pdf>

Level 1 Teaching & Assessment Rubric

Rated on scale of 0-2

<School Name>

<Date>

Level 1 Teaching and Assessment

2

1

0

Clear objectives	<u>Across the Board</u> , teachers' learning objectives are clear to students and observers, purposeful, evident, and returned to.	<u>In Many</u> classrooms, teachers' learning objectives are clear, purposeful, evident, and returned to.	<u>In FEW or NO</u> classrooms are teachers' learning objectives clear, purposeful, evident, or returned to.
Time-on-task	Educational time in the classroom is <u>completely</u> maximized with at least 70% of time spent on instruction.	Educational time in the classroom is <u>generally</u> maximized with <u>LITTLE</u> time wasted.	Educational time in the classroom is <u>not</u> maximized with <u>much</u> time wasted.
Data Driven Intervention	Instruction includes re-teaching that is driven by student performance data.	Instruction includes re-teaching that is driven by teacher instinct and student input.	Instruction does not include re-teaching of material.
Level of Engagement	75% of the time or better, students are engaged and challenged at their appropriate developmental levels.	60 - 74% of the time, students are engaged and challenged at their appropriate developmental levels.	Less than 60% of the time, students are engaged and challenged at their appropriate developmental levels.
Informal Assessment	Teachers <u>consistently</u> assess student understanding in the course of their lessons in order to inform next steps in instruction.	Teachers <u>often</u> assess student understanding in the course of their lessons in order to inform next steps in instruction.	Teachers <u>rarely</u> assess student understanding in the course of their lessons in order to inform next steps in instruction.
Consistency	Set/stated consequences/rewards are followed through and consistent among all kids in ALL classes.	Set/stated consequences/rewards are followed through and consistent among MOST kids in classes.	Set/stated consequences/rewards are NOT followed through and consistent among kids in classes.
High Academic Expectations	Teachers <u>universally</u> hold all students in their class to high academic expectations.	Teachers <u>often</u> hold all students in their class to high academic expectations.	Teachers <u>rarely</u> hold all students in their class to high academic expectations.
Classroom Environment	Classrooms meet all 3 of the Bronx Arts classroom expectations for general space, furniture, and wall use.	Classrooms meet 2/3 of the Bronx Arts classroom expectations for general space, furniture, and wall use.	Classrooms meet 1/3 of the Bronx Arts classroom expectations for general space, furniture, and wall use.

Level 1 School Leadership Rubric

Rated on scale of 0-2

<School name> |

<Date of review>

Level 1 School Leadership

	2	1	0
Curricular Planning	All teachers have/ understand the year-end goals for their students, and are planning and adjusting accordingly to get there.	Roughly 60% of teachers are planning and adjusting to get to year-end goals, OR all teachers understand their year-end goals but are not adjusting accordingly.	Less than 50% teachers are planning or adjusting for year-end goals.
Curriculum Alignment	Curriculum is <u>fully</u> aligned with state standards, and all teachers know and understand this.	Curriculum is <u>partially</u> aligned with state standards, OR only some teachers know and understand the full alignment.	Curriculum is <u>in the process of being</u> aligned with state standards, OR teachers have a vague understanding of partial/full alignment.
Structure to Support Learning	The school's schedule includes: * sufficient time for core subjects * uninterrupted learning blocks * timing of subjects based on student needs (and/or research)	The school's schedule includes two of the three elements named at left.	The school's schedule includes 1 or none of the elements named at left.
Teacher Collaboration	Teachers have 2+ hours each week of in which they collaborate on planning and discuss practice. More than half of teachers take advantage of this.	Teachers have more than an hour each week for collaboration and planning, but it lacks buy-in from more than half of teachers.	Teachers have an hour or less each week for collaboration and planning, OR there is no teacher buy-in for use of the time.
Measurement of Teacher Effectiveness	Teacher effectiveness is measured at least five times a year using a consistent objective criteria, and teachers have a clear understanding of the ways in which they will be measured.	Teacher effectiveness is measured several times a year, BUT the consistent criteria is not fully-developed OR teachers have only a vague sense of the ways in which they will be measured.	Teacher effectiveness is measured, BUT there is not a consistent criteria AND teachers only vaguely understand how they will be assessed.
Staff support	Staff members whose practice is in need of improvement are receiving observations, feedback, and coaching to improve instruction. Non-struggling staff members are acknowledged and applauded.	Staff members whose practice is in need of improvement are receiving some mix of observations, feedback, and coaching to improve instruction. Non-struggling staff are not being assessed.	Staff whose practice is in need of improvement are not recognized, or do not receive extra attention and support.
Classroom Observations	Combined, the Instructional Team allocates an average of 30% of time to being in classrooms & giving feedback.	Combined, Instructional Team allocates 15-29% of time to being in classrooms & giving feedback, OR 30% of time is allocated but feedback is not being given.	Combined, Instructional Team allocates less than 15% of time or less to being in classrooms and giving feedback, OR 15-29% of time is allocated but feedback is not being given.
Data-driven instructional program	There is a school-wide process to guide teachers in using data for determining what needs re-teaching.	There is a school-wide process <i>in development</i> to guide teachers in using data for determining what needs re-teaching.	There are plans to create a school-wide process to guide teachers in using data for determining what needs re-teaching.

NEW YORK CITY CENTER FOR CHARTER SCHOOL EXCELLENCE

Sample Agenda/Schedule

<School Name>

<Date>

				AGENDA											
Time	Item	Room(s)	<School> Staff Involvement												
8:00 – 8:15	Center Team Arrival														
8:15 – 8:30	Tool Review	Center team reviews how to use tools with Bronx Arts team	All leadership team members who will be conducting observations												
8:30 – 11:00 (2 hr 30 min)	Classroom Observations	Varies (see below)													
	<i>Review Team Pairs</i>														
	<School name>		Center	8:30–8:50		8:50–9:10		9:15–9:40		9:45–10:10		10:10-10:35		10:35-11:00	
	A	B		School Staff A						School Staff B					
1	<>	<>	Jessica	Pair 1					Pair 3						
2	<>	<>	Glenn				Pair 2								Pair 4
3	<>	<>	Cate		Pair 1										Pair 2
4	<>	<>	Chris						Pair 4						
				Pair 2							Pair 3				
							Pair 1								
					Pair 4									Pair 3	
									Pair 2						
				Pair 3							Pair 4				
									Pair 1						
					Pair 2		Pair 4								
							Pair 3								Pair 1
				Pair 4			X		X		Pair 2				
					Pair 3		X		X		Pair 1				
11:00 – 11:45 (45 min)	Leaders Interviews	<Leaders> space	All directors												
11:45 – 12:30 (45 min)	Teacher Interviews Center Staff supplies lunch	Teacher interviews – (Cate & Glenn) - <Leaders space>	Teachers from 1, 2, 5, and Dance												
12:30 – 12:45 (15 minutes)	Rubricize Fill out rubrics reflecting findings	Wherever able <i>on your own</i>	<School> Staff complete by 12:45 (any time during the day, e.g. while Center staff interviews teachers)												
12:45 – 1:45 (1 hour)	Debrief	TBD	<School> Leadership Team												

Sample Interview Questions – For Teachers and Leaders

School leaders are interviewed during the first 45 minutes of the day. School teachers are asked the same questions during lunch.

School Culture: Level 1

- (For leaders) What are your non-negotiables for expected behavior?
- (For teachers) Do your non-negotiables differ from those of your fellow teachers?
- How are your and the school's expectations communicated to parents and families?
- Are students learning from their poor decisions? How do you know?
- What is the grading and promotion criteria and how it is implemented? How is this criteria communicated to the students and families?
- On a scale of 1-10, ten being maximum capacity, how hard are students working academically here? How hard to you want them or do you expect them to work?
- Ob a scale of 1-10, ten being maximum capacity, how hard are teachers working here?
- On a scale of 1-10, ten being maximum capacity, how hard are leaders working here? How are they monitoring their work and progress?

School Leadership: Level 1

- Curriculum: Is your curriculum fully aligned with the state standards? How do you know?
- Teacher Effectiveness:
 - o (For leaders) How is it measured? What type of scale? How often is it measured?
 - o (For teachers) How is teacher effectiveness measured here?
- Staff member weaknesses
 - o (For leaders) Are the weaker staff members identified? Are they supported? How are stronger faculty supported professionally?
 - o (For teachers) How do you know if you are doing well or not in the eyes of your school leaders?
- Observations: How often are leaders in classrooms observing? Do they offer feedback? What form does that feedback take?
- Structure of day: Does the structure and schedule of the day support the achievement goals? Are there any better ways to structure the academic day?
- Data driven intervention: How do teachers figure out what needs re-teaching? How have your school leaders helped you create/refine the process?

Teaching and Assessment: Level 1

- How do teachers know when to asses student performance levels How often is assessment occurring?

Curricular Planning: What should students know by the end of the school year? How are you planning on reaching that goal?

