



District of Columbia Public Schools

Partnership Schools Initiative

A Guide to Selecting a Partner

Office of Portfolio Management
825 North Capitol St., NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202)442-5177

April 11, 2008

Dear Community Members,

The District of Columbia Public Schools is about to make an important decision: How do we , help our ten neighborhood comprehensive high schools – each of which, for many years, have failed to meet the needs of all students– begin a significant turnaround effort?

I am required, by federal law, to choose from a limited set of restructuring options for these schools. One of the options we believe will best serve some of these schools is selecting a partner, a nonprofit school management organization with expertise in school turnaround, to lead the operations of the school. In fact, some of our schools have already started this process on their own, identifying and considering possible partners.

In the next several weeks, we will be setting up meetings between each of these high schools and their potential partners. Following those meetings, we are asking school communities, anchored by their Local School Restructuring Team, to come together and develop recommendations.

This document is designed to support that process. It includes a list of frequently asked questions as a guide for partner selection and summaries of all of the partnership organizations under consideration. I encourage you to read this closely. Choosing a partner that is a good fit, one that builds upon the many assets we find at all of our schools while addressing the challenges is very important.

After I receive recommendations from each school community, I will make final decisions so each partner can begin a year of planning before full implementation in School Year 2009-10.

Thank you for your participation in this process and I look forward to receiving your recommendations.

Sincerely,

Michelle Rhee
Chancellor

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a Partnership School?

Partnership Schools are schools, who, as a step on a path to dramatically improve student achievement, work with a nonprofit school management organization. These nonprofit school management organizations specialize in helping low performing schools become high performing schools.

2. Does this mean DCPS is privatizing schools?

Absolutely not. Every Partnership School will still be a DCPS school and report to the Chancellor.

3. Why are you choosing this approach?

The Partnership strategy is only being used for schools that are designated as in “restructuring” under the federal law, No Child Left Behind. This designation means that the school has not met its academic targets for five consecutive years. For schools in restructuring, the law requires school districts to take strong actions; one of these options is to work with an outside partner. Turning around schools is difficult work; it requires a special set of skills and strategies. We believe a small number of schools will benefit from partners who have that expertise.

4. How are schools being selected?

First of all, only high schools are being considered as Partnership Schools. Second, the schools have not yet been selected. While all ten of our neighborhood comprehensive high schools are in restructuring, we believe, based upon a careful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each school, that some are better candidates for the partnership approach than others. Each school will be offered the option of becoming a Partnership School and some will be strongly encouraged to choose a partner. The final decisions will be made by the Chancellor.

5. What does a Partnership look like?

All schools have many partners. The kind of partnership that satisfies the requirements of the federal law, No Child Left Behind, is very specific. The partner must have responsibility for school operations, managing all aspects of the school. Different partners approach this

task differently. Some largely work with existing teachers and administrators, helping them learn more effective ways of increasing student achievement. Other partners bring in their own leadership team. And some will ask for a fresh start, asking to hire teachers and administrators who have not worked at the school. It is important in thinking about a potential partner to understand how they will approach their management responsibility.

6. How were the potential partners selected?

Each of the potential partners was selected because they have proven track record that clearly demonstrates that, working in school districts similar to ours and with populations similar to that of DCPS, they have successfully helped students learn, achieve, and succeed..

7. How will partners be selected?

Schools will participate in a two-stage process. In the first stage, schools will meet with representatives from the potential partners to learn more about the organization. This is also an opportunity for the partner organization to meet those in the school and determine whether they think that their model can meet the school’s needs. In the second stage, there will be a meeting of the school community, anchored by the Local School Restructuring Team (LSRT), to develop a recommendation to the Chancellor. Once the Chancellor considers these recommendations, she will make the final decision.

8. Who will participate in the selection process?

DCPS will be working with the Local School Restructuring Team and other members of school community such as the PTA, alumni groups, teachers, administrators, and others.

9. How do I learn more about the potential partners?

DCPS has prepared descriptions of each of the potential partners. In addition, partners will bring materials to their meetings with schools.

10. What is the timeline?

Meetings with potential partners will occur during the last two weeks in April and the beginning of May. Meetings of the school community to develop a recommendation will occur immediately thereafter. The Chancellor expects to make a final decision by early May.

11. What kind of support is available?

This process is being supported by the Office of Portfolio Management. This office can assist with outreach and logistics and can be reached at 202-442-5177.

12. What are DCPS's goals for this effort?

Our goal is to move as quickly as possible toward a system of excellent and exciting schools that prepare our youth for success in a 21st century global economy. This means our students must have a rigorous curriculum that is aligned with what colleges and employers will require. It also means that all of us, parents, family members, teachers, administrators, and partners must believe that all of our students can achieve and succeed.

Partnership Selection Guide

This section offers some guidance on what to consider when meeting with potential partners.

Most importantly, when considering a partner organization for your school, you should look for organizations that will give the youth at your school a rigorous and relevant educational experience. Your students will benefit the most if you work with school transformers who both understand and can do what the best schools do. Those organizations should also know how to make big changes to meet the goal of helping our children learn.

Below, you'll find the kinds of questions to consider when meeting with a potential partner. Following each question are some ideas of what to listen for. Great partner organizations will be able to answer the following questions well.

1. Do you have a mission that guides your work in schools?

A good mission will clearly state the partner's main goals. Those goals should include ensuring that students learn the basic subjects well, have choices after going through the DCPS school system, and are taught by staff members who make decisions based on the best interests of students.

2. What are your expectations for students?

Partner organizations should expect a great deal from each student. Partners should understand that effective learning requires motivation that connects a student's work in school with success later in life and relevance so that students believe that what they are learning will be helpful to them later in life.

3. How do you monitor school and student progress and make adjustments based on that monitoring?

A partner should understand how to use data to inform school decision making. School management should have clear and systematic mechanisms for tracking student progress. This ensures that when a student needs some extra help or support, the school management is not only aware of this, but responds. Similarly, effective school managers also track how well the school is doing, regularly monitoring school culture, the faculty, the support activities like building maintenance and cafeteria food, extracurricular activities and so on. Progress must be checked regularly and changes should be made when needed. All consequences, positive and negative, should be communicated clearly.

4. What do you focus on in your schools?

Good partners spend time learning about the interests and goals of students, parents and other community members to develop strategies and programs that make sense for that school. Good partners know what youth need to learn and use multiple strategies to support student learning. Good schools often offer choices, since youth may have a variety of interests.

5. What do you consider to be a safe and effective learning environment?

Partners should understand that students need to feel safe and valued in order to focus on learning. The physical school environment should be conducive for learning. Discipline must be appropriate, adequately addressing both small issues and significant disruptive behavior. Disciplinary strategies recognize that students should still be learning, even when they are being disciplined.

6. How do you make a connection between school and the home?

Partners should be able to address how interaction with the community, parents, and home life helps students learn. Partners must find new ways to connect with parents on all levels, and they should pay special attention to finding good ways to keep in contact with all parents, not just those who regularly participate. A strong partner also asks for and listens to parent suggestions.

7. What are your beliefs about school leadership?

Partners provide leadership that establishes a strong community spirit among students, teachers, staff, and other community members. Partners set goals and follow through, setting a good example for students. Partners understand that a strong staff is needed throughout a school and create an environment that attracts and keeps the best staff. Partners provide support so all staff, but particularly teachers and administrators continuously improve.

8. How are your goals for the planning year?

A good partner will have clear ideas on how to engage all members of the school community in a constructive and productive process that leads to a clear focus and plans for implementation.

Skills and Attitudes Focused on Success

A strong partner will be good at:

- Focusing on results

Strong partners will have clear goals and work creatively and diligently to achieve the goals. They will be willing to try new things to reach the goals.

- Solving problems

Strong partners will have plans that include a role for everyone. They will be determined to work through hard problems and not give up. They will not always complain about the lack of resources or make excuses; they will creatively figure out how use available assets to always make progress.

- Engaging and supporting others

Strong partners will have a plan that addresses how best to listen to parents, students, teachers, staff, and community. They will address all these needs. They help all to feel more comfortable with changes. They help teachers get better at teaching.

- Showing confidence

They stand up for the schools values and never give up on meeting their goals. They do not say “We can’t” or “It is too hard.” They believe in the students, your school, and DCPS.

Bedford Academy High School

Organization Summary

Friends of Bedford is committed to achieving high standards of scholastic excellence for all of our students. Effective instruction along with a conducive learning environment enables us to promote the development of citizens with normative values coupled with technological skills which will allow all students to prepare for careers in medicine, engineering, and law. Enhancing each student's academic repertoire helps them address their individual challenges in life and become positive role models within their communities.

Key Service Offerings

The vision of Friends of Bedford is to provide high school students with small learning environment designed to promote rigorous academic achievement by maintaining small class sizes where the teacher to student ratio is 1:20. Friends of Bedford gives students the opportunity to develop academically and socially through a variety of contexts. We offer diverse learning opportunities including, but not limited to postsecondary study, career awareness and community service. Bedford Academy's motto is "Academic Empowerment is the Birthright of Every Child!"

Friends of Bedford offers the following services:

All entering 9th-graders participate in Friends of Bedford Academy's Summer Bridge Program. The program is 4 weeks in July, consisting of an intensive academic immersion focusing on Living Environment, English and Math.

After the school term begins, all students are assigned to a teacher who mentors them. These teachers participate in weekly meetings to collaborate. Friends of Bedford Academy offers small-group instruction for students who may bring issues into the classroom that interfere with learning.

Friends of Bedford Academy also offers the following services:

- After-School Tutoring / Enrichment
- Saturday Academy
- PSAT / SAT Preparation
- Academic Intervention Services
- Guidance Services

- Freshman / Transition Seminar
- Junior Transition Seminar (College Process)
- Summer Bridge (Entering 9th Grade)
- Standardized Test Prep
- Mental Health Screening
- Youth Development (Mentoring)
- Budget Management
- Student Data Management
- Assessment Tools

Professional development is also a major focus. The professional development program covers:

- Instructional Modalities
- Leadership
- Student-Teacher Social Interactions.
- Lesson Plan Design
- School Community Cohesiveness and Culture
- Study Skills
- College Readiness
- Curriculum Development
- Safe Learning Environment
- Parent Workshops

Leadership and Results

Currently in its fifth full year of operation, Friends of Bedford Academy has elicited the critical acclaim of educational administrators, students and parents, and has become one of the most requested public high schools in New York City through its partnership with Bedford Academy High School. Bedford Academy High School is ranked as the 2nd best school in New York City by the Department of Education (DOE). This achievement is based on its ability to show student improvement despite the proficiency of its students upon entering the ninth grade.

With over 98% of its seniors graduating in June 2007, it has one of the highest graduation rates in New York State – New York City’s graduation rate is just above 50%. Each member of the Class of 2007 was accepted into a minimum of two colleges and/or universities with over a million dollars in scholarships and grants. The 2007 Quality Review Report submitted to the NYC DOE on Bedford Academy High School received a rating of “Well Developed” – the highest rating. In 2008 the New York City Council honored Bedford Academy with two Proclamations for outstanding academic achievement and exemplary commitment to the community through

academic excellence. The New York State Assembly presented the school with a resolution for educational leadership and academic excellence.

The Principal of Bedford has assisted several other schools with significant turnaround efforts. These include:

Benjamin Banneker Academy for Community Development (BBACD) was the first high school in District 13 in Brooklyn, NY and was charged with serving the mostly African American students in Central Brooklyn. In its early years, the school was considered by its creators as a failing school. The then fledgling school had a wide range of problems including student discipline, poor instruction, poor instructional leadership and lack of a strategic plan for academic excellence. The local community, parents and teachers turned to George E. Leonard, then the President and CEO of the World Institute of Science and Technology, for assistance. Mr. Leonard, already recognized for his role in building the nationally recognized Science Skills Center program, assembled a team to reorganize BBACD. Mr. Leonard's 10 years involvement with BBACD has resulted in a premier college preparatory high school recognized for its academic excellence, high graduation rate and college matriculation for African American and Hispanic students.

Similarly, the Superintendent of District 16 in New York City turned to Mr. Leonard to assist **Middle School 324** in Brooklyn. Mr. Leonard provided curriculum design in science and mathematics to serve the needs of students in the inner-city, effective plan for maintaining a culture and learning environment which heightens staff morale and student performance, staff mentoring for all *Teacher Fellows* faculty members, community outreach to create a safe haven in the immediate area surrounding the school, and assistance to the administration in areas concerning classroom management and subject level advancement.

Best Fit

The Friends of Bedford Academy model is designed to work with urban high schools with low academic performance.

Friendship Schools

Organization Summary

Our mission is to provide a world-class education that motivates students to achieve high academic standards, enjoy learning and develop as ethical, literate, well-rounded and self-sufficient citizens that contribute actively to their communities.

Friendship holds an unwavering commitment to producing extraordinary results for every student through instructional excellence in every classroom and the individual accountability of every educator. Since opening in 1998, Friendship has grown to serve more than 4,000 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 12. Friendship currently operates five campuses in Wards 5, 6, 7, and 8 in the District of Columbia.

Through innovative, challenging standards-based classroom learning experiences and extended learning programs, Friendship instills an appreciation for education, high academic and personal standards in each student.

Key Service Offerings

Standards-Based Curriculum Framework:

Friendship's instructional model is focused on the workshop model and project-based learning. Friendship does not use a scripted curriculum, rather time, a wide variety of curriculum resources, and rewards and incentives are prioritized for teachers and administrators to work collaboratively to develop curriculum maps and unit plans that drive all student learning. Students are expected to *learn by doing*, with efforts guided by unit plans that are derived from *Essential Questions* pulled from the standards.

Accountability through Formative and Summative Assessment:

Friendship prepares all students to pass grade-level and high-stakes exams through a six-week interim assessment process. Tested subject-areas include English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Released items, test blueprints, and the Scantron Achievement Series are used to build interim assessments that are directly linked to curriculum maps. Thus, the assessments provide each teacher with real-time feedback on the extent of student mastery of standards taught. Teachers benefit from data talks each week where they collaboratively create or exchange strategies on implementing six-week data action plans to help increase the number of students demonstrating proficiency on interim exams. Standards that are identified as lowest performing are retested every six weeks.

Significant Resources for Students and Staff:

Students at Friendship are offered a number of support services which include the implementation of strategies designed to provide academic support to all students. Small Group and Individual Support Plans are initiated when students earn low scores on interim assessments, have failing grades in two or more classes, have more than three disciplinary referrals in a given semester, have more than six assignments to detention within a semester, demonstrates chronic absenteeism, or simply requests support services. In school and after-school intervention programs provide additional instructional support and structured academic time this includes direct tutoring in reading and math, SAT prep, test-taking skills and college application support. Friendship also offers Saturday Credit Recovery for high school students to provide the extra instructional time needed to help more students stay on grade-level and remain eligible for promotion.

For school faculty, Friendship offers continuous coaching and year-round professional development, delivering “job embedded” professional development for all staff through weekly inquiry-based data talks focusing on formative assessment data, summative assessment data, student work analysis, and weekly or daily class assignments. All Friendship principals receive on-going coaching centered on distributive leadership. Moreover, principals attend two summer national conferences and attend a three-day leadership institute. Principals also participate in the Friendship Teaching Institute, but follow a separate administrator track; and they attend Harvard University’s Institute on Educational Leadership. In addition, school leaders also participate in summer workshops in which they develop School Achievement Plans.

Friendship hosts an annual Teaching Institute for all teachers. Those with one or more years of experience take part in a four-day Skillful Teacher Institute. All Friendship teachers receive Responsive Classroom I training at the beginning and throughout the school year. Teachers also receive on-going professional development on Understanding by Design. Professional development is delivered on a daily basis, as opportunities are provided for collaborative planning, data talks, Student Staff Support Team discussion, student work analysis, and technology integration.

In addition, Friendship generously rewards teachers and administrators for performance and results above and beyond our standard, extremely competitive compensation. The bonus structure is also extended to recognize non-instructional staff as well with a once- per-year award based on overall school performance.

A Focus on the Whole Child:

Friendship respects the “whole child” and understands that children learn inside and outside the classroom in a variety of ways. Friendship schools feature after-school enrichment,

academic clubs, athletic clubs teams and a full complement of programs designed to create a love of learning and meet a wide of range of student interests.

Advanced Instructional Technology:

In facilities that Friendship manages, our schools are equipped with interactive whiteboards, classroom computers, wireless mobile laptop carts, special learning labs, libraries, computer rooms, and fully-equipped teacher resource rooms. Friendship SmartLab™ installations provide opportunities for students to participate in project-based learning activities through the use of technology-rich learning stations where students can explore pneumatics, sound waves, aerodynamics and wind tunnels. Friendship seeks to expose students at every level to the broadest array of opportunities that will prepare them to successful productive citizens in the ever-evolving information and technology age.

Organizational Structure

Friendship builds professional learning communities constantly focused on meeting high expectations for results. We believe in providing intensive support, enhanced staffing and comprehensive resources to school-based teams who have the authority and autonomy to make change happen. Friendship also supports each school with an external team that provides on-demand professional development, school improvement planning and evaluation, operations support and a host of other services necessary to ensure success.

Leadership and Results

Founded in 1997, Friendship established its first two schools in 1998. Today, Friendship has elementary, middle and high school campuses throughout the District of Columbia, serving more than 4,000 children and youth in pre-school through 12th grade.

The success of Friendship's model is illustrated by a dramatic increase in national percentile rank, significantly increased Advanced Placement participation and passing scores, and an overall cohort graduation rate exceeding 90 percent each year, with a college acceptance rate at 90 percent as well. As evidence, Friendship's first high school, the Collegiate Academy, was recently selected as one of three high schools in the nation for the College Board 2008 AP Inspiration Award. Friendship Collegiate Academy was also awarded the prestigious EPIC grant which provides a \$15,000 bonus to the Principal, \$10,000 to each Assistant Principal, and a pool of \$50,000 to be distributed among teachers. Collegiate Academy has also experienced record Early College enrollment and college scholarship attainment. One hundred twelve students over the last two years were selected as full Gates Scholars. Friendship also has the largest number of Posse scholars in the District of Columbia.

Best Fit

From its founding, Friendship has served children and youth of the Washington, DC community and demonstrated true gains in a traditional large, urban school setting. Our best fit is continuing to work with the students and community that we know best to set, support and meet high expectations.

Institute for Student Achievement

Organizational Summary

Focusing on improving academic achievement, the Institute for Student Achievement (ISA) is a leading school redesign partner that facilitates the transformation of low-performing high schools into small learning communities and small schools designed to prepare *all* students for success in college and beyond. Founded in 1990, ISA partners with school administrators and teachers to create and sustain intellectually rigorous and caring, personalized learning environments.

Key Service Offerings

All ISA schools are organized around seven key principles:

1. College preparatory instructional program
2. Distributed Counseling™
3. Dedicated team of teachers and counselors
4. Continuous professional development
5. Extended school day and school year
6. Parent involvement
7. Continuous organizational improvement

Each is elaborated on below.

College Preparatory Instructional Program

ISA encourages students to view themselves as future college students and, through the design of their four years in high school, to prepare themselves for admission and success in college. Through an inquiry approach to curriculum and instruction, ISA schools concentrate on such areas as the development of critical thinking skills and the work habits necessary for intellectual productivity, success in college and in a global economy. Achievement is assessed by multiple measures.

Distributed Counseling

ISA's model of Distributed Counseling ensures that all members of the schools have a role in making it a caring community. All adults are responsible for knowing students well and for making the school a safe, supportive, and caring environment. Counselors work closely with teachers to help them expand their role to include serving as advisors to small groups of students.

Extended School Year and Day

Because learning continues beyond the boundaries of the traditional school day and year, ISA has chosen to expand the structured learning time available to students. Students have time to get individual attention with homework and test preparation, as well as to pursue career-related activities, internships, and community service projects.

Parent Involvement

ISA embraces and encourages parent involvement because of its positive impact on student achievement and satisfaction. Parents are encouraged to share their knowledge of their child with teachers and counselors and to give feedback on their child's experience and progress. Teachers and counselors keep parents informed about student performance and strive to work together as a team.

Dedicated Team

Throughout their four years of high school, students work with a consistent team of teachers and a counselor. This structure personalizes the school environment, creates strong, long-term connections between students and staff, and ensures that the support network is engaged and knowledgeable.

Continuous Professional Development

ISA provides teachers and principals of small schools and small learning communities with continuous professional development opportunities, including ISA's own summer and winter institutes and individualized coaching. Teachers can strengthen their content knowledge and pedagogical skills through regularly scheduled, common meeting times for curriculum planning, problem solving, and review of student work.

The ISA Leadership Network provides principals and vice principals with a strong support network through interaction with other leaders of ISA small schools and small learning communities across the country.

Continuous Organizational Improvement

ISA teams meet regularly to ensure that the school's program is aligned with ISA's Seven Principles and is fulfilling its goals of creating an intellectually rigorous and caring environment. ISA schools use multiple mechanisms to assess their effectiveness, including critical friends processes, peer observations, reviews of student work, analysis of student data, surveys of student attitude and expectations, and documentation reports on the implementation of the Seven Principles.

Organizational Structure

ISA builds on schools' individual strengths and culture to ensure local ownership and sustainability, partnering with school administrators and teachers to facilitate the transformation of large high schools into small schools and small learning communities (SLCs). The creation of a new small school or the conversion of large comprehensive high schools into a campus of personalized SLCs committed to graduating all students college-ready fundamentally impacts the school's culture, structure, and instruction. These changes are guided by ISA's Seven Principles and reflect the individual schools' vision, interests and concerns.

The transformation is achieved through a four-year phase-in process, beginning with each incoming class of ninth graders. The existing school is redesigned to ensure that upper-grade students' educational experience is also enhanced.

To ensure the sustainable success of a partner school, ISA provides teachers and principals of small schools and SLCs with continuous professional development opportunities. Each school has a committed ISA coach – an experienced school leader specializing in small schools and small learning communities – who supports the implementation of ISA's Seven Principles. ISA's annual Summer and Winter Institutes bring the entire ISA network together with nationally recognized educators for intensive learning, planning and collaboration. Opportunities for customized professional development are also provided to support the challenging work of SLC conversion.

Leadership and Results

ISA serves approximately 15,000 public school students and has 57 partner schools, located in New York City, Westchester, Buffalo and Long Island, New York; Union City, New Jersey; Atlanta, Georgia; and Baton Rouge, Louisiana. ISA is supported by funding from a range of public, private and school partners and is the recipient of multiple grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, as part of its ongoing efforts to ensure that high school students are prepared for the challenges of higher education and beyond. ISA received its first grant from the Foundation in 2003 to develop 10 new small public high schools in New York City. This year, ISA announced its partnership with the East Baton Rouge Parish School System to create one of the City's first college preparatory small schools. ISA is also working with Atlanta Public Schools to transform two high schools, South Atlanta High School and D.M. Therrell High School, into eight new small schools and to continue to support redesign efforts that are already underway in the district.

The National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching's (NCREST), Teachers College, Columbia University, analysis of student outcomes found the following results across all ISA partner schools:

- Attendance. ISA schools demonstrated strong average attendance rates of 89%
- Performance Assessments in Writing and Math. ISA students made gains in key writing skills from the beginning of 9th grade to the end of 10th grade
- Core Course Passing Rates. Over 70% of students pass their math, English, social studies and science classes
- Grade Promotion. Across all grades, 83% of students were promoted to the next level

These findings are also supported by the 2006 study by the Academy for Educational Development (AED), a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit organization working to solve critical social problems throughout the world.

According to the AED study, students in ISA partner schools are benefiting from the Seven Principles in action. Overall, students reported “greater feelings of support from teachers, administrators and other students compared with non-ISA students.” They entered more positive responses than non-ISA students to survey questions dealing with academic support and engagement, especially in terms of “emphasis on providing helpful comments on student performance and on encouraging students to explore new ideas.” Moreover, ISA students reported slightly higher educational aspirations than students in comparison schools. These students maintained higher core course grades, which the report describes as “suggesting a positive impact on student achievement.”

School attendance was also improved among ISA schools in New York City, maintaining higher student attendance rates (attending nine more days per year), higher stability rates (3% more students remaining in the same school during the course of the year), and lower suspension rates (21 fewer suspensions per 1,000 students), in comparison to the rest of New York City’s public high schools. Impressively, this comparison paired ISA students, whose backgrounds match New York’s most chronically truant, against all other high school students throughout the five boroughs.

Overall, the report found that ISA teachers are sensing a unity of vision and purpose, and ISA’s Seven Principles are serving as a rallying point for faculty. In contrast to a national sample, ISA teachers have reported “higher levels of support for students, as well as a sense of community, parent involvement, a shared vision for the school and ongoing opportunities for teacher professional growth.”

Students at ISA partner schools begin achieving from the day they enter ninth grade. Rigorous, inquiry-based learning lessons require students to interact with their knowledge, helping them acquire the critical thinking skills that will assure their future academic and professional success, ensuring that by the time they graduate they are prepared for, and most often accepted to college.

High school graduation rates and college acceptance rates are soaring. In its first graduating class, ISA's partner school Bronx Lab expects a graduation rate of over 90%. In addition, five graduating Bronx Lab seniors received prestigious Posse Scholarships (4-year scholarships to top-ranked universities combined with a nationally recognized mentoring program)—the only time all five entrants from one school have been accepted. There are five other Posse Scholars from the graduating classes of ISA partner schools this year. Out of 3000 nominees in the New York metro, 140 students were selected—and 10 of them are from ISA schools.

Best Fit

ISA is designed to work with large, urban high schools with low academic performance.

Mastery Public Schools

Organization summary

Mastery Public Schools is a growing network of middle and high schools that prepare underserved youth for success in higher education and the global economy. Mastery schools are built around the belief that it is imperative that every child receives a quality, college-preparatory education.

Mastery is creating a network of exceptionally high performing urban schools that demonstrate that all students—not just those attending selective schools—can succeed and achieve academically. Their purpose is to raise the bar for urban education and prompt system changes.

Mastery integrates modern management and effective educational practices to drive student achievement. The program is distinct in several ways. Most importantly, teachers working in Mastery schools are outstanding and relentlessly committed to student achievement. Mastery instruction means teaching and supporting students until they learn. Teachers continually improve their craft through frequent feedback, coaching, and collaborative support. Instruction is grounded by a common pedagogical model and guided by focused standards-based curricula. Assessments are aligned with clear objectives and assessment data is used to direct instruction. A mastery-based grading system is used along with a scaffolded course structure that addresses students at their incoming skill level, however all students are held to a single college preparatory graduation standard.

Key Service Offerings

High School Structure

There are multiple entry-level courses designed to meet incoming students at their skill level. These entry level courses designed to quickly remediate skills deficits. All students take same college preparatory courses at upper grades.

Curriculum and Assessment

There is a clearly defined and standards-based curriculum that is skill focused. Benchmarks assessments are also given every six weeks.

Grading

Grading is done through a scale ranging from mastery to incomplete. Students scoring at least 76% are considered mastery, while students scoring below a 76% must repeat semester in summer school.

Student Support

An extra hour of academic support is offered from 3:00-4:00pm daily and mandatory Saturday school and skills classes are required for those students who need it.

Workplace Exposure

Both workplace and personal skills are explicitly taught in classes and an Internship is required to graduate.

School/Class size

In each Mastery school there are approximately 200 students in middle school and 400 students in high school. The average class size is 25 students. This creates a small and personal school culture with high expectations

Teacher Support

Teachers have one or two planning periods daily and on Wednesday afternoons, students are dismissed early. This leaves approximately 2.5 hours for co-planning and internally driven professional development.

Instruction

Teachers ensure students learn through explicit instructional standards based on effective practice. Data from assessments and the curriculum are combined to drive instruction.

Organizational Structure

Each Mastery School is a separate non-profit corporation. However, 80% of the board members at each school are common to all Mastery schools. Jeremy Nowak, founder of The Reinvestment Fund, chairs Mastery's Boards. Business and academic leaders from Brooks Capital Group, Susquehanna International Group, Preferred Real Estate Investments, University of Pennsylvania, Temple School of Business, Sage Financial, and others serve on the Board. Two parent representatives sit on each Board.

The Board of Trustees is ultimately responsible for the schools and must approve the strategic plan, curriculum strategy, budget, etc. The Board hires and reviews the CEO who supervises Mastery principals and is responsible for overall Mastery management.

All schools are supported by Mastery's central office. The office provides support for curriculum, programmatic design and oversight, leadership coaching, academic assessments,

staff recruitment, back office functions, technology expertise, fundraising, and strategic planning.

School Leadership

Each Mastery school has a leadership structure that includes: Principal, Assistant Principal for Instruction, Assistant Principal for School Culture, Assistant Principal for Special Education, and Assistant Principal/ Director of Operations. The Principal is responsible for overall student achievement and operation of the school. S/he has control over the school's budget and program. School staff are centrally recruited by the CMO and hired by each school Principal. Each school maintains Mastery's academic and school culture program, though individual sites are encouraged to innovate and improve the model.

Leadership and Results

Mastery's first school, the Lenfest Campus in Center City, was founded in September 2001 by a coalition of business, academic, and civic leaders. In 2005, 2006 and 2007 the School District of Philadelphia invited Mastery to convert three low performing District schools, the Thomas Middle School in South Philadelphia and Shoemaker Middle School in West Philadelphia, and the Pickett Middle School in Germantown into Mastery schools, eventually serving grades 7-12. Today, Mastery's four schools enroll nearly 1,500 students. Mastery plans to open additional schools in the coming years

The Lenfest Campus, which has enrolled students at the 9th (rather than 7th) grade, has strong results compared to peer groups but still has a significant gap compared to the State average. Lenfest 11th graders scored 13 percentage points higher in Reading, and 10 percentage points higher in Math than their School District peers but 18 percentage points lower in reading and 15 points lower in math than the Statewide average (2007 PSSA). To accelerate academic achievement, the Lenfest Campus has boosted academic rigor across the curriculum and decided to enroll its first 7th grade class in fall 2008. Given our mission, we are most proud of our college admissions rate. Over 93% of Mastery's first three graduating classes enrolled in higher education—67% in a four year college. The class of 2007 received \$3 million in scholarships. Importantly, our graduates' drop-out rate from college is less than 15%.

Best Fit

Mastery was invited to partner with the School District of Philadelphia to convert existing District middle schools into Mastery schools serving grades 7-12. Through the partnership, Mastery designs and supervises comprehensive renovations of the school facilities, enabling the District to replace low-performing middle schools with small, high-quality high schools. If invited to partner with DCPS schools, Mastery would leverage the best practices learned in its existing schools to radically improve the student achievement in its DCPS partner schools.

St. HOPE Inc.

Organization Summary

St. HOPE Inc. is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to revitalizing urban communities through public education, economic development, civic leadership and the arts. Since its inception in 1989, the organization has served communities and youth by operating charter schools, deploying volunteers, starting businesses, creating jobs and fostering the sharing of arts and culture.

In 2003, St. HOPE Public Schools was founded. St. HOPE Public Schools is a P-12 charter school system that provides youth with a continuum of high quality education from preschool through high school. The goal of St. HOPE Public Schools is to graduate self-motivated, industrious, and critically thinking leaders who are prepared for success in a four-year college. The college-going culture created is particularly relevant in light of the following national data: Of the poor and minority students who score in the top quartile on academic achievement examinations, less than 30% go on to graduate from college. Every student who graduates from this system will have choice, options and opportunities. The organization believes that giving students the exposure to and preparation for college are its fundamental responsibilities.

Key Service Offerings

St. HOPE Public Schools currently serves over 1,300 students in seven schools. Triumph Center for Early Childhood Education, a preschool, serves children ages 3 – 5. Public School 7 (PS7), an elementary school, serves students in grades K – 8 and Sacramento High School (Sac High), which houses four small schools on one campus, serves students in grades 9 – 12. St. HOPE Leadership Academy, a K-12 school, is scheduled to open in August and will initially serve students in grades 5 – 8. St. HOPE's school model is research-based and has evolved from the study, observation and implementation of successful practices from high performing schools across the country. The program features the following key components.

College Preparatory Focus

All students in St. HOPE schools are prepared to be accepted into and enrolled at a 4 year university without remediation. This does not happen by chance, however. To ensure students are ready for this challenge schools use the following strategies and structures:

- Rigorous, standards-based core curriculum;

- High-Impact, research-based instruction;
- More time (extended school day and school year);
- Themes;
- Focus on Math and English Language Arts; and
- Broad base of opportunities for students such as internships, extra-curricular activities, field lessons, and college courses.

Structured, Orderly and Personalized Learning Environment

St. HOPE believes that all students can and will rise to the level of expectations set for them. As such, the schools hold students to high standards for achievement and conduct. School culture is characterized by clear academic and behavior norms; an orderly, structured and disciplined learning environment in which students wear uniforms; and a genuine caring and concern for students. Hard work is expected. Excuses are not tolerated.

Through small learning communities, advisories, smaller class sizes and Individual Learning Plans St. HOPE schools create a learning environment in which students are known by name, have a sense of community, and develop meaningful relationships with adults in order to individualize education based on student needs and strengths. St. HOPE schools are committed to creating an inclusive learning environment that supports the needs of all students to thrive academically and socially, including special education students and English language learners. St. HOPE schools use a series of specific and targeted interventions to quickly accelerate the learning of all students, having a particularly positive impact on those who are furthest behind grade level. This is done without lowering academic expectations for any child.

Data and Accountability Structures

Through the use of regular interim standards-aligned benchmark assessments and sound data reporting and student information systems, St. HOPE schools constantly monitor the progress of students and modify practice based on data.

Leadership and Service

St. HOPE believes that strong character is a pre-requisite of high academic achievement. Through community service, leadership courses and character education students at St. HOPE schools learn life skills critical to success, develop a strong sense of civic responsibility and establish the foundation for a lifetime of meaningful community involvement. Students also are empowered to become leaders and will benefit the community in which they live.

Strong Adult Supports for Student Learning

Schools will not be effective unless adults put what is in the best interest of student learning above all else. St. HOPE builds strong supports for adults so that they can best serve the needs of students. For teachers and staff this includes high quality professional development, an

additional time commitment, being available to students 24/7 and recognition and rewards for effective practice. For parents this includes signing a Commitment to Excellence Contract, 40 hours of school service yearly and a parent liaison on campus to ensure effective two-way communication and active involvement. This also means establishing community partners to provide internships, serve as mentors, teach classes, and more.

Organizational Structure

St. HOPE schools are overseen by a Board of Directors, who delegates day-to-day school management to the organization's senior leadership team and principals. Each school has a School Site Council comprised of educators, parents and community leaders that provides input on school operations to the Board through the principal. In order to encourage participation and shared responsibility in the educational process across all stakeholder groups, St. HOPE schools also have a number of advisory councils such as a Student Senate and a Parent Association.

St. HOPE's high school transformation model melds the best of two worlds; the opportunities, efficiencies and consistency afforded by large, comprehensive schools and the personalization, sense of community and continuity afforded by small schools. Schools operate as one school organized into theme-based small learning communities (SLC). The primary purpose of SLCs is to ensure all students are well-known by a group of adults on campus and cared for academically and personally. While students typically take the majority of their courses within their SLC, curriculum, assessment, discipline, the advisory structure, student activities and athletics and key operations are centralized across the campus.

Leadership and Results

Since opening its charter schools five years ago, St. HOPE has provided significant value-added academic achievement to its students. St. HOPE's elementary school is one of the highest performing elementary schools in the area, posting significant gains in ELA and math proficiency rates and a 111 point gain over four years on California's Academic Performance Index (one of the largest gains of any school in the region). Likewise, St. HOPE's transformation high school is eliciting significantly improved academic and college-going results over the former school, the high school which a large number of the students would have attended had it not been closed in 2003 and re-opened as under St. HOPE's leadership the next year. Specifically, exit exam passage rates have increased 17% in ELA and 27% in math, 82% of 2007 graduates met the University of California college entrance requirements, compared to just 38% four years ago and 73% of the 2007 graduates were accepted to a four year college, compared to roughly 20-30% of students before St. HOPE began management of the school.

Both charters were recently awarded five-year renewals by Sacramento City Unified School District (the authorizing entity), validating St. HOPE's ability to implement an educational program that produces academic results and operate charter schools that are viable fiscally, legally and organizationally.

Best Fit

Given St. HOPE's experience in Sacramento, they have been approached by cities across the country that would like the organization to help transform their high schools. With the NCLB mandates for schools in restructuring status, districts are increasingly searching for options to turn around failing schools. This dynamic creates even greater demand for organizations that can implement transformation or turnaround models that will result in significantly better learning outcomes for students.

Talent Development High Schools

Organization Summary

Talent Development High Schools envisions widespread transformation of our nation's high schools into respectful, caring and motivating learning communities that challenge all students and adults to develop their unique gifts and realize their highest academic and human potential. Developed at the Johns Hopkins University, TDHS is a research-based reform model with a track record of transforming high schools that face challenges with student attendance, discipline, achievement scores, and dropout rates. Working in partnership with teachers, students, parents, administrators and community members, Talent Development transforms high schools in three key areas. The program:

- Organizes buildings into academies, staffs and students into teams and the school day into four flexible blocks to foster personal relationships in a safe, supportive and academically focused environment.
- Provides curricula and engaging learning activities that promote active learning, close skill gaps, develop mature thinking and improve achievement so that all students can succeed in a common college- and career-preparatory curriculum.
- Builds adult knowledge and commitment among educators by providing opportunities during planning and implementation to tailor reforms and enable staff members to respond to the needs of each student. Professional development and coaching give teachers the support they need to be effective.

Key Service Offerings

In operation since 1994, Talent Development High Schools currently works with more than 100 schools in cities, suburbs, and rural areas across the country.

The key components include:

Ninth-Grade Success Academy

The Success Academy is a school within a school. It is housed in its own wing or floor, has a separate entrance and its own administration. The academy supports ninth-graders with counselors, social workers and interdisciplinary teams of teachers who work with the same students throughout the school year. These teams focus on creating a welcoming atmosphere with high expectations, plus intensive academic and social support for students.

Career Academies

Many students drop out because they are bored and see little connection between school and the real world. All students in grades 10-12 are placed in a career academy, based on their interests and choices. By grouping 250-350 students in each academy, TDHS ensures the formation of a close community where teachers and students know each other well. Each academy integrates a career focus into its core courses and offers electives and opportunities, such as job shadowing and internships.

Specialized Courses

Talent Development High Schools offers targeted courses for students who enter high school with weak academic skills and are two or more years behind grade level in reading and mathematics. Taken in the first semester of the ninth, tenth and eleventh grades, these courses provide a “double dose” of English and mathematics. They are developed for adolescent learners, engaging students with high-interest materials while identifying and building the skills students need. The model also provides computer-assisted lab courses in reading and mathematics that can be built into the schedule to provide a “triple dose” for students who need even more help.

The courses include Strategic Reading (9th), Reading and Writing in Your Career (10th), College Prep Reading and Writing (11th), Transition to Advanced Mathematics (9th), Geometry Foundations (10th) and Algebra II Foundations (11th). Freshman Seminar is a popular course taught in the first semester of ninth grade to help students adapt to high school and master study and personal skills they will need to succeed.

Extended Class Periods

A typical daily schedule has four classes of 80 to 90 minutes each. This allows for in-depth instruction and active, interactive and differentiated instructional strategies that meet students’ differing learning needs. The schedule allows students to complete a year of coursework in one semester, while providing time for extra-help courses and educational opportunities off-site. Some schools build in a fifth period for classes in the arts and career development.

Multiple Opportunities to Learn and Advance

Many Talent Development High Schools offer opportunities outside the usual school day for students who are not succeeding in traditional classrooms or for those with special scheduling needs. Flex-school, Saturday School and Twilight School are alternative, school-based programs. Some meet for three or four hours in late afternoon; others meet during the school day, but on a separate schedule and in their own, dedicated space. The programs often include counseling and social services. To meet students’ non-academic needs. These programs’ primary goals, however, are credit completion and recovery for struggling and non-traditional students.

Support for Principals and Teachers

Extensive, on-going professional training for principals, leadership teams and faculty is a hallmark of Talent Development High Schools. Once a partnership is established, a four-person team—an organizational facilitator and instructional facilitators in mathematics, English and Freshman Seminar/teaming—works in the school to support planning and implementation

The organizational facilitator supports the school’s leadership team through an extensive, participatory planning process that creates the ninth-grade academy and career academies, and continues to work with the school through initial implementation. The facilitator works with a leadership team to analyze data, establish a positive school climate and encourage effective leadership and teaming practices, including optimal use of common planning time.

Instructional facilitators work with subject-area leaders to align TDHS curricula with local standards. They provide initial training for all TDHS transition courses and for teaching in the extended class period. These facilitators provide professional development and in-classroom support; they also customize training and workshops, help assess the needs of the school and contribute to the development of site reviews and technical assistance plans.

In addition, TDHS identifies and trains local teachers to act as curriculum coaches in mathematics, English language arts and Freshman Seminar/social studies. These coaches are usually veteran teachers who work with their colleagues in a non-evaluative relationship: co-teaching, modeling lessons and fully implementing TDHS strategies.

Sites typically collaborate with Talent Development High Schools for three to six years depending on the type of implementation. During the partnership, the model provides structured feedback through quarterly site reviews. The goals and status of the partnership are reviewed annually. As schools achieve their goals and institutionalize reforms, they may scale back support.

Leadership and Results

Schools committed to implementing TDHS reforms see immediate, measurable and often dramatic gains in student engagement, achievement, advancement and graduation. Survey data show that students and adults consistently report that their schools are safer, calmer and more respectful learning environments as a result of TDHS reforms. Teachers know students’ names; hallways are clear, and students report higher levels of engagement in core academic classes.

When students attend schools where teachers and coursework are responsive to their needs, they achieve. Independent evaluation finds that Talent Development produces substantial gains in academic course credits and promotion rates and improvements in attendance. According to a 2005 study by MDRC that compared TD schools to demographically matched

comparison schools in Philadelphia, the percentage of ninth-graders in TD schools earning an algebra credit doubled—increasing by 28 percentage points. Ninth-graders completing a core academic curriculum increased from 43 percent on average before the implementation of Talent Development to 56 percent after implementation. This increase is typically about three times the level of increase in similar schools in the district. Promotion rates in the Talent Development schools increased by more than 6 percentage points, while they fell by 4 percentage points in the comparison schools. One TD high school in the study, which was named one of the two lowest-performing high schools in Philadelphia in the late 1990s, went on to post the highest achievement and graduation gains in the district. Over the past six years, the percentage of students proficient in mathematics has grown by 51 percentage points, and those proficient in reading by 35 percentage points. By 2005-06, the school's graduation rate was 75%, up from 50%, and the school made Adequate Yearly Progress.

Other high schools in the TDHS network, including Bridgeton HS in New Jersey, Westinghouse and Lincoln high schools in Brooklyn, NY, and David Starr Jordan HS in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, have recently posted double-digit gains in the number of students passing core academic courses as well as significant improvements in test scores. The Baltimore Talent Development High School, an innovation high school TDHS started in partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools, promotes more than 90 percent of its students each year with students passing the Maryland State High School Assessments at nearly double the rate of students in demographically similar high schools in Baltimore. In 2007, Talent Development High Schools was identified as an effective research-based plan for preventing dropouts and keeping students on-track for graduation by the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse.

Best Fit

Talent Development High Schools is a comprehensive reform model for large high schools that face serious challenges with student attendance, discipline, achievement scores and dropout rates.