

Community Day Charter School – Riverside/South

Questions as derived from Panel Review

Capacity

- 1. Please explain what board members perceive as the benefits of creating a network of schools.**
 - The history of successes in the present school gives us enough of a base to disseminate excellent education. We already have in place several important units – the board, teaching expertise, parents, goodwill of the community, financial structures, and services for the students.
 - We have 900 people on the wait list for the current school, so there is a need for more schools.
 - Want to disseminate best practices to new schools around working with English Language Learners and working with data at both the classroom and individual levels. It's important to sustain the success of the original school and to replicate best practices.

- 2. Who here are founders for these two new schools?**
 - 3 founders present; 3 board members present

- 3. In the application it states that the board and Executive Director were in the final steps of a recruitment process to hire a Director of Charter Schools. Which board are you referring to? What qualifications were you looking for? Why is Kennedy Hilario the best candidate for the position?**
 - The Community Group hired the Director of Charter Schools, but the charter board of trustees was very involved.
 - We were looking for overall excellence. Kennedy's education, work experience, and Spanish skills jumped out at us. This job is crucial to the organization, but it also requires taking a lot of delegation from the Executive Director. Kennedy has nonprofit and for-profit experience, charter school experience in California, and he holds a Harvard MBA.
 - Going forward, the Director of Charter Schools will be hiring our head of school and will manage the curriculum, operations and facilities. He will work closely with the E.D. and the charter school board.

- 4. Where are you in the process of recruiting new board members of CDCPS?**
 - One new member will be voted on.
 - We would also like to expand the board further.

Governance and Management

- 1. Please describe the existing relationship between the board of CDCPS and Community Day Care Center of Lawrence (dba Community Group).**
 - There's a management agreement in place currently. Community Day Care provides the central office services, and financial and property management

services to the school. It started out as a close and organic relationship, but this has been more formalized over the last 15 years. We no longer have people sitting on both boards.

- Some programs run by Community Day Care, such as the Latchkey Kids program, are uniquely suited to fulfill the charter school mission. They also have a good relationship with the district.

2. Who is on the board of the Community Day Care Center of Lawrence? What is the mission of that organization?

- Community Day Care has assets that supplement our charter school. The mission of Community Day Care is to provide day care for working mothers. We still do direct day care. In addition, we're the resource and referral agency for the voucher program, and we provide training and services to home providers of day care through the Latchkey Kids program. It's about taking care of kids and promoting the success of families.
- All the business, contracts and agreements between the Day Care and the charter school have been at arm's length. It has been clear that they are two separate entities, but with a shared mission.
- 9 people are on the board of Community Day Care.

3. How did the board of trustees determine that you wanted to contract with Community Day Care Center of Lawrence (Community Day Charter Management Organization) to provide leadership and management for the network of schools?

a. Will that not-for-profit organization be formally changing its name to the Community Day Charter Management Organization?

- This is not a formal proposal yet, but this is the role Community Day Care see ourselves fulfilling, trying to become a charter management org.

4. Please specify the services received from CDCMO.

- Management services, financial services (CFO and accountant), HR services (head of schools will have deep involvement with teacher hiring), data and technology services, coordinator of accountability, and fundraising and development services. Big foundations love the idea of doing early childhood and charter schools.
- Our data assessment capability at the network management level is something very excellent. CDCMO will add these 3 key things: work with standards and sub-standards, benchmark assessments and action planning, and real time formative data analysis.
- Educational leadership at the school level manages the day-to-day operations, curriculum development, teacher support, and data analysis.

a. What does the Executive Director do?

- Has general oversight. Will be moving away from working with curriculum.
- Will work with Kennedy to develop systems and procedures.

b. What does the Director of Charter Schools do?

- Kennedy will look at best practices to ensure replication by new schools. Hire administrators for the new schools. Convene meetings, workshops and trainings.
- Kennedy will be evaluating the instructional leaders. Will establish professional development trainings. Will make sure processes and trainings are in place.

c. How did you determine the management fee? 6.5% - Page 165.

- Have been trying to see what the management fee for Community Day Care would be. We looked at other organizations around the country and came up with a range of 6 to 15%. Then we negotiated.

d. What is the status of the contract?

- Management agreement in place.

e. How to hold CDCMO responsible?

- By looking at the MCAS scores. Most of us have good relationships with parents and teachers, so we will know if anything comes up. High quality has been our standard. We understand that just because Community Day charter school is excellent, it doesn't mean the other two schools will automatically be of the same quality, so we have to work hard to make sure this happens.
- The board president evaluates the Executive Director. There's a form that we use. Four to six months before evaluation, we would meet every other week to talk about school priorities. All those meetings will comprise part of the final evaluation. It's a long process to match up both our expectations and standards.

5. Please explain the organizational chart.

a. What do the Operations Managers do (2 each person school)?

- 2 operation managers at each school. Each of them takes on different responsibilities. For example, our operation manager takes care of coordination with the data team and manages the lunch count; the other person coordinates transportation and works with parents.
- Big role for them is to provide translation services for families. They are the front-line community and parent interaction.
- Also includes typical functions of office manager as well.

b. Where is the CDCMO Chief Financial Officer?

- Heads up the finance team.

c. Where is the Director of Accountability and/or Data Analysis at the school level?

- This is at the management level.
- At the school level, we all do data analysis too.

Mission and Vision

1. What do the proposed schools plan to do to support parents and families?

- We have a parent advisory board in place for the existing charter school. We will replicate some of these functions.
- The parent advisory board meets at least once a month. We try to plan events for parents to socialize. Because of the Latino population, we now have two parent boards, one Spanish speaking, so that Latino parents can participate.
- Parents have asked for two-hour workshops around: how to help your children do homework, how to talk to them about sex, how to discipline your children in another culture. We get speakers from community or classroom teachers or parents to talk about these topics.
- We always have a member of the parent advisory board serves on the board of trustees. The parents were actually the ones to push for uniforms and to extend to the 8-hour school day. Going forward, it'll be interesting to see which aspects of culture will be preserved and which will be transformed.

Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction

1. Who participates on the curriculum committee? How does it operate? In collaboration with teachers?

- Committee is made up of teachers across grade levels. Their work is driven by data analysis. They recently worked with formative assessments, driven by what we see as needs in the school. In the past, they have deal with issues like a gap in the math curriculum. Another initiative is reciprocal teaching.

2. Please describe the development and implementation of the proposed K-8 project for Formal Assessment and the Reciprocal teaching program for grades K-5.

- Reciprocal teaching – we did well with phonics, but we saw gaps with third graders in comprehension. We tested reciprocal teaching with pilot classrooms. As a school, we took on this initiative from K to 4th grade. We had peer observations, meetings, and trainings. Reciprocal teaching is present in the day to day teaching.
- The upper school was taking on the formative assessment initiative. Met every 6 weeks, and then roll out the initiative.
- We did a lot of surveys with teachers after the formative assessment roll out. Teachers asked for more time to digest the formative assessments, so we implemented early release days for professional development and training. We have yearly goals for formative assessments.
- Goal of all these initiatives is to promote the culture of high expectations, better teaching practices, and to have our students involved in creating their own pathways.

a. How would you replicate?

- The professional development we offer will be brought to the new schools.

- Research is important to us. We have people at the CMO level to look at the research.

3. You report that “values education” is integrated into the school program on every level. Please explain. Do you have a character education curriculum?

- In the lower school, for 45 minutes every Friday, we meet as a school community. Students are then taught a lesson in character education. This year, we added a community service learning project.
- In the lower school, we also have the Spartan spirit award where we try to honor students showing improvements. We also have model student awards.
- In the upper school, we work hard to make sure our students head to high school and college and to make them into well rounded human beings. There will be a skills development class on Fridays, covering topics on kindness, pregnancies, etc. During the school day, we provide opportunities for partners to involve our students, such as Neighbors in Need food distribution, or anti-bullying work. Also have community service learning clubs.
- From the founder perspective, we recognize replication will be tricky; that’s why we requested a 2012 start date to do more planning.

4. How are teachers supported? How does mentoring work? When do teachers visit other teachers?

- Mentoring is done by volunteers working with small groups of students. For example, as a mentor working with the younger students, I would bring in math problems to solve together. With the 7th graders, I would spend a whole year going over the SSAT book, which covers everything, with 3 to 4 students. With the 8th graders, we chose a topic to explore together, such as astronomy.
- Early learning and lower school students have access to mentors too. We just hired a mentor coordinator to help us recruit members from the community. Also bringing in high school students to mentor.
- Replication would require finding more mentors.

5. Please describe the teacher training program that you propose for your ELL curriculum.

- I come from a literacy background and have done lots of work with teachers in the past. To tackle ELL, we would look at language elements in reading, math, science. Selecting vocabulary is part of every training. We have done targeted training on oral language. We’ve worked with a consultant.
- Students attending the summer program have focused in-depth time to practice speaking. We have reciprocal teaching strategies in place – students read and then discuss, write and then discuss. Have students engage in debates. Make sure students have constant practice with the language. The summer program is free, but is offered through a teacher’s recommendation. Attendance is very good.

- We do work with parents to help them understand that proficiency in the first language helps with students developing proficiency in the second language.
- Will implement these strategies in the full K-8 spectrum. Our teachers now know to do vocabulary development with students as a second nature.

b. How is professional development determined and when does it take place?

- For new schools, it's going to depend on professional development. We'll have a week-long training for teachers before the schools open. Two extra days before that for new teachers.
- We're thinking about differentiation for students, but also for the teachers. We'll provide the opportunity for current teachers to work with the new schools as well.

Assessment, Promotion, and Graduation Standards

1. Please describe the promotion policy.

- It is based on standards. We're looking for students to maintain a 2 average in language arts and a combined 2 average in other subject areas. That's the academic piece. We also consider other components - is the student is ELL or has special education needs or has social emotional problems. No decision for promotion is taken lightly or done in one meeting. A lot of progress monitoring in the beginning. If a student is not making adequate progress, we would turn the microscope on us.

2. How do PEGS interact with grades? How are they connected with report cards?

- PEGS are our report cards.

3. What do you mean by 'social emotional qualities' (that indicate level of maturity) – page 24 regarding criteria for retention. What are you using to assess these qualities?

- I have retained some students in the past for the social emotional aspects. The rationale is that if we can get our children ready mentally, they can handle the academics of higher grade.
- Summer school is a space to bring in kids to deal with social emotional maturity as well.

4. Who has primary responsibility for each school's assessment system?

- This is done in conjunction with the head of school and curriculum mapping with teachers. The curriculum map is a roadmap for us – very dynamic document. The first benchmark period is in October.
- The accountability manager will create a test for us to see if we're hitting our benchmarks. The test will be vetted by the school leaders. The accountability manager has responsibility for data management and grading the multiple choice section of the test; teachers will help

evaluate open responses. There is a 24 hour turnaround period for the results.

School Characteristics

1. When do elementary school teachers have planning time?

- They have 45 minutes four days a week. Lunch time is divided up so that one day a week, they can meet with a co-teacher to plan. One day a week they meet with their team to plan. In total, there are six 45-minute planning sessions.

2. When do students have PE, art, etc.?

- They have PE twice a week for 45 minutes. Music class for grades K – 4 is once a week, 45 minutes. Spanish class is also once a week for 45 minutes.
- No separate arts time during the school day, but arts is integrated in the other classes.
- We have an afterschool sports program for 2-3 times a week, each session 1.5 hour long. There's a minimal activity fee depending on the sports. Basketball is \$50, and other sports are \$30 for the season. No students are turned away because of lack of ability to pay.
- Homework clubs are free. For other activities, it's \$25 per term. No students turned away because of lack of ability to pay.

3. How does flexible student grouping work? How often are changes determined and coordinated across classes?

a. How does the advance track for math work?

- The only case that we use tracking for is the opportunity to take Algebra I in 8th grade. We use data, formative assessments and MCAS scores to make this decision. Flexible grouping could be done once a week or every six weeks. 3 tier model – there's one group that can do independent practice, one group that needs more remediation, and another group that needs the entire lesson to be explained again. We have generalists, specialists, math specialists to help with these. Data is important to help us figure out where the needs are.
- Flexible grouping can be based on unit tests. Specialist staff will pull in regular students even to meet the needs of all students. We review groupings every two weeks.
- Lesson plans are on-line, and so can be sent to every teacher. Nice for teachers to know what's being taught too.

4. Describe the school's student behavior philosophy and plan.

- We have a level system for behavior, Level 1 to 5. Our four basic school rules are to respect property, peers, adults, and the learning environment. We role play to highlight examples of these rules. All students start out their day on green, and are raised up in level as they violate a school rule. Level 1 means you miss your break; Level 2 means you miss your recess; Level 3 means you do an office visit

with the principal. The principal will then debrief what happened with the student before integrating the student back into the classroom.

- For students who stay on Level 1 and 2 the entire week, they get the reward of a special period, such as arts. During that time, the other students will stay with the head of the school to talk through again why they not rewarded.

a. How to replicate in new schools?

- We can have people do observations, have psychologists do trainings, have experienced teachers support the new teachers.
- We have developed a training model for this system. New teachers will probably want to do it by the book in the first year, so they'll be more consistent. The school psychologist will come to staff meetings once a month to see how it's going.

5. What specific strategies will you use to establish your school culture with new students, their families, and the new staff at the beginning and during the school year?

- It starts after parents win the lottery. We talk to them about their hopes and dreams. When we do faculty hiring, we screen for people who share our beliefs. We talk to the children about our values at the beginning of the year. We reinforced these values through our community service learning program.
- Our reputation is out there, so parents know what they sign up for when they come into the school.
- Even in the fact that families win the lottery, they have a sense that they have to step up to the plate.

Special Student Populations and Services

1. Please clarify when during the school day students will receive English language development instruction.

- Our school started out as a language immersion school in 1995. We were ahead of the state as an English immersion model and standards-based curriculum. We're an inclusive classroom school, so students who are at all levels of English proficiency are in the same classroom with students who are proficient in English so that they are learning from each other.
- We have 1 teacher licensed in ESL. We have teachers completing Master's programs and pursuing ESL licensure.
- We have hired a consultant to do category 1 training for the whole school. Each year that the Department has offered category 3 training, which is relative to the MELA-O testing. We have MELA-A and QMT qualified staff.
- We haven't been selected to do the free category 2 and 4 trainings with the Department, since we're small.
- We have hired a consultant to work with staff (K-8) on the ELL curriculum with our teachers who have a strong literacy focus.

2. What is your staffing plan for ELLs?

- Our staffing model is based on guidance from the Department with respect to low incidence schools. We have over 100 LEP students, so we have on staff specialists in the ratio of 30 LEP students to 1 specialist. We have a planning structure within our entire K-8 for the delivery of English language development instruction throughout the day that varies based on the grade and proficiency level of the student.
- We have multiple adults come in to do pull-aside instructions within the classroom for students who need them.
- We have special education teachers, but we don't distinguish where we have ELL teachers in the staffing plan. We have two teachers in the classroom all day long, so one of the teachers is designated as the ELL teacher.

3. How will general education teachers collaborate with both special education and ESL teachers?

- Every two weeks, we have team meetings, and special education teachers working with those groups will meet as well. Debrief on curriculum and how groupings have run and then a planning forward step such as changes to the instructional groupings - that's formal time. But because all teachers are constantly interacting, they do talk during lunch, and in hallways there is constant discussion about how students are doing.

Enrollment and Recruitment

1. Why do you intend to open both schools in FY13?

- Starting out, we would only have 3 grades in each school. It's about economies of scale.

Facilities and Transportation

1. Why have you decided to not utilize LPS provide transportation?

- We want our kids riding with bus monitors. It's a logistical issue for us; for instance, if the district closes for inclement weather, it doesn't mean we will.

2. What is your ideal vision of how the three schools will be located and connected within the city of Lawrence? Have you targeted specific neighborhoods? Why or why not?

- Ideally, we want three separate buildings, but the decision will be driven by what's available to us. We are talking to the archdiocese and a developer about potential space. In a year's time, we can be ready.
- Rationale for opening the two schools together is that they can share specialists and other staff, such as a psychologist.

Accountability and Dissemination

1. Please explain the school's connection to Community Partners Initiate (CPI)?

- CPI comes out of wanting to disseminate best practices. When the MCAS first came about, there was a lot of demand for knowledge of how we teach our kids. CPI came out as the consulting branch of Community Group. Community Day Care thus paid the charter school folks to do some training & consulting.
- Teachers have the opportunity to conduct these trainings and can take a personal day off to do training.
- We have 7 to 9 principals out in the community who have worked with us in this way.
- We have done a lot of work through CPI to roll out professional development and training to other schools. This prepares us for replication.

Other

1. How was the decision reached to partner with MATCH and not move forward with the CDCPS Boston charter application?

- Was a difficult decision for us. When we were doing strategic thinking, we felt strongly that we wanted to move into the Boston area, which has a large Hispanic community. However, we also recognize it is going to be difficult to do things simultaneously in Lawrence and Boston.
- We haven't given up on Boston yet. We see the MATCH collaboration as the test case for it.

2. What services will you provide MATCH?

- The school will be in a contract with MATCH. It will be a serious collaboration – not in name only. Two of us will be serving on their board. Will support them in picking curriculum and trainings. Will provide trainings, our data methods, and knowledge about what has worked for us with ELL.
- Not yet determined who will sit on the MATCH board yet.