

I-BRIC – Mission & Purpose Team

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Next Mission BRIC Meeting:

Friday, January 6th, 3:15 – 4:30

Goal:

Our goal is to engage in an inclusive process resulting in a mission people believe in and can develop a sense of community around, ensuring its viability as a guiding tool for the school.

Agenda:

- Outline our process – deliverables, deadlines
- Formulate our essential questions – 2 or 3 i.e.
 - What is ISAAC?
 - What is our main goal for our students?
 - What is the purpose of the mission?
- Proposed timetable 4 – 6 week process:
 - January - Meet with constituent groups – fact gathering:
 - Present our questions and process to the Board on Tuesday, Jan. 11
 - Meet with faculty & staff at faculty meeting Wed, Jan. 4, if available
 - Meet w/ students – Team meetings during CREW or by CREW?
 - Meet with parents – IPAT
 - Survey parents ... why ISAAC for them?
 - Committee meets to discuss results & collectively put together the elements of a mission statement that two members of the committee will wordsmith
 - Present the statement to the community for discussion/refinement/validation
 - Approval by the Board

Homework:

- Review attached resources
- Review documents from staff PD
- Come to meeting with two essential questions in mind
- Come prepared to discuss your view on your questions

Kickoff Meeting Notes
12-19-2011 ~ 3:15 to 4:35 PM

In attendance: Rose Clack, Heather DeLaurentis, Kate Fioravanti, Diana McMasters, Mildred Rivera, and Larry Roberts

Absent: Suzanne Bartels, Sheila Hofmann, and Christine Piazza

What is I-BRIC?

A special committee representative of current ISAAC community stakeholders charged with conducting a comprehensive internal review of strengths and opportunities and recommend focus areas for improvement.

Expectations:

Each team will meet bi-weekly. By the middle of February, each team will produce a draft document to present to the greater ISAAC community for review and feedback.

Vision & Mission Currently in Place

Original Philosophy/Mission as Stated in the Original Charter:

The Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC) will become a regional center for interdisciplinary learning in grades 6 through 8. ISAAC's holistic approach to education will feature an academically rigorous curriculum whose various disciplines will be integrated through the arts – both visual and performing – and through modern communication skills. The curriculum, based on a framework of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and awareness, will support a learning community that is both multicultural and multilingual. The three themes of art, communication and multiculturalism will be the foundation upon which the school's objectives and programs are built.

The multifaceted task of the school will be to promote this vision through a multicultural student population, a holistic approach to curriculum, collaborative school governance, and ongoing community outreach efforts. Collaboration, continuous assessment and renewal are the keys to carrying out the school's mission.

Vision ~ Created by the ISAAC Board of Directors ~ Spring 2011

ISAAC strives to be a model of interdisciplinary academic excellence, celebrating the unique qualities of each student while cultivating confident citizens through arts integration, evolving technologies, and experiential learning.

Mission ~ Current

ISAAC is dedicated to being an experiential learning community where students, families, and teachers are challenged to discover and express the best in themselves and each other while valuing the diversity in our school, our community, and the world.

Brainstorming Notes ~ What is Special, Unique, Best about ISAAC?

Examining the phrase: ISAAC is dedicated to being an experiential learning community

- Experiential vs. Expeditionary
 - People understand it
 - Non-proprietary
 - Hands-on, collaboration
 - Off-premises opportunities
 - Art, tech, collaboration/integration
 - It's the ISAAC way, it's every day
 - Connections constantly made (Other schools, teachers with closed doors – islands)
 - More team oriented – other schools talk this talk, but we do it to a greater degree ... wed ourselves to the community ... can walk off campus and become involved
 - What we do very well – we're small enough to make co-teaching work ... tech and arts
 - Experiential lends itself to the concept of experiences – DO what it is they are learning
 - What's missing – experiential isn't enough – but integration is strong
 - Must have the integration of the tools of art and communication – missing ... if in name of school, do we need it in our mission?
 - Work hard and behave yourself – motto became common culture of school

Examining the phrase: "ISAAC was founded by parents to reduce racial and economic isolation ..."

- Who do we want our clientele to be?
- What are the defining characteristics of this school?
- Community and real world connections – CG, Garde
- How does learning in the classroom relate to real world & potential peek into the future career
 - Is it an expectation that we can promise?
 - Colleges are often defined by their internships/real-world experiences they offer
 - Helping students build character
 - How they act with adults and peers
 - How to advocate for themselves
 - Small community
- Recruitment:
 - Should the mission statement work to erase misconceptions?
 - Free, public charter school of choice
 - Need to imbed achievement
 - Don't come here unless you really want what we have to offer
- Audience:
 - Does the staff have a unified vision of what the mission is?
 - Some lost with turnover of staff
 - 2014 – Common Core
 - Pendulum swinging btw experiential/academics
 - New pressures – AYP, CMTs
 - As we grow we have to keep in mind that we have to have adult/student relationships
- Alumnae – what do they say?
 - Have a connection with their school once they leave
 - They remember the relationships
 - Excited to talk to us about what is going on with their lives
- Should the mission statement be descriptive or ?
- What kind of a school are we? – STEM? HOT?
- Do we waste the letter A on 'and' in ISAAC – achievement, creative piece to learning
- Current mission doesn't include 'academics'
- ***How to write a mission statement – no fluff and whatever it states must drive what we do. Must be simple and assessable.***

Developing your CSO's Mission, Vision, and Strategy

A strong mission, vision, and strategy will help guide your CSO's activities and communicate value to your stakeholders. Importantly, being able to clearly communicate your CSO's strategy will also aid in fundraising efforts.

| Checklist | ✓ |
|-------------------|---|
| Mission Statement | |
| Vision Statement | |
| Strategic Plan | |

Mission Statement

A mission statement clearly lays out (in 1-2 sentences) an organization's purpose, or reason for being, and role in achieving that purpose. Your CSO's mission statement may include:

- Issues your CSO is addressing
- Services provided to address those issues
- Theory of action leading to desired results (*how you will get there*)

Remember that your mission is a concise statement; specific action steps and measurable outcomes will be addressed in detail in your strategic plan.

Examples of CSO mission statements include:

- **Georgia Charter Schools Association:** The mission of the Georgia Charter Schools is to improve student achievement and promote educational choice by serving and advocating for public charter schools in Georgia.
- **Colorado League of Charter Schools:** The Colorado League of Charter Schools is a non-profit, membership organization dedicated to supporting the nearly 150 charter schools in the state. The League is committed to helping these schools reach higher levels of student performance and overall success by providing information and resources, including technical support, advocacy, public relations assistance, and much more.
- **Minnesota Association of Charter Schools:** The mission of MACS is to enhance the capacity, assure the quality and promote the choice of public charter schools in Minnesota. As a membership organization, MACS accomplishes this mission through: effective advocacy and outreach; innovative

leadership development and support; quality services and training; resource brokering and connecting people and ideas; and transparent accountability.

- **North Carolina Alliance for Public Charter Schools:** The mission of the North Carolina Alliance for Public Charter Schools is to advance quality educational opportunities for all North Carolina children by supporting and expanding successful public charter schools.

Mission Statement Template: *The mission of your CSO is to improve student achievement through the support of quality charter schools and the promotion of the charter school movement in our state. Your CSO will accomplish this mission through advocacy, outreach, and provision of technical assistance to new and existing charter schools.*

Vision Statement

Your CSO's vision statement will describe where you would like to see your organization and your state's charter school movement in the future (generally looking out 10 years). This may include ideas about the number of authorizers, quality of charter schools, legislative and policy progress, etc. The vision statement should represent what your organization hopes to achieve in the long-run through its mission and strategic plan.

Strategic Plan

A strategic plan explains why an organization exists, who it is serving, and how it expects to make an impact. The strategic plan can be used to describe your CSO's overarching goals and specific strategies which will be employed to reach measurable outcomes, helping to align your organization's activities with its mission.

Strategic planning is a challenging and demanding process, and will likely require you to dedicate significant amounts of time to the planning and writing of the strategic plan. You will also want to ensure your stakeholders are able to commit several hours to providing input and feedback. The process for strategic planning for your CSO will likely include several steps:

- Involve key stakeholders in your state to conduct a charter schools needs analysis (both short- and long-term)
- Assess the political (legislative and regulatory) and funding environment
- Identify capabilities within your CSO (or which you will build into your CSO) which can meet those needs and function in that environment
- Write strategic plan with input from key stakeholders throughout process

As a starting point, we have provided suggested goals, strategies, and outcomes in the table below. In addition to

these core components, your strategic plan may cover additional topics such as:

- Analysis of charter school environment in your state
- Organizational values (core beliefs, principles, and behaviors your CSO will exhibit)
- Overview of programs and services offered to charter schools in your state

Vision Statement Template: *Our vision is that by the year 2015, all students in your state have access to high quality public charter school options. We envision that your state will have a strong public charter school law which ensures no caps on the growth of public charter schools, multiple charter authorizers, clear processes for charter renewal and school closure, and equitable funding for charter schools including facility allowances. Charter schools and authorizers monitor school performance through comprehensive data collection on both academic and operational performance. Charter schools will have access to a robust and sustainable support network which facilitates sharing of educational best practices and provision of technical services. Your CSO has supported these developments through its advocacy, outreach, technical services, and leadership efforts.*

Source: www.charterschoolcenter.org
http://www.charterschoolcenter.org/sites/default/files/NAPCS_%20Master%20Class%20Critical%20CSO%20Activities_CS0%20Start-Up%20Manual.pdf

**What does it mean to be a charter school?
What are our responsibilities of fidelity toward this mission?**

Charter schools, sometimes called Public Charter Schools (PCSs), are publically funded but independently run. In Connecticut, they must be run by a non-profit (501(c)3) entity. As public schools, charters are required to accept any child that applies and to choose applicants by random lottery when demand exceeds supply – which is the case in every charter school in Connecticut and most nationwide.

Each charter school operates under the rubric set forth in its charter, which outlines the nature and mission of each school. The charter must be approved by the State Board of Education in order to receive state funding. If at any time a charter school fails to meet the standards of its annual review by the Board of Education, its charter can be revoked and the school shut down.

In exchange for this increased accountability, charter schools enjoy greater freedom when it comes to curriculum, hiring, governance, and other areas. It is this freedom which allows charter schools to be *laboratories of innovation within the public system* and offer valuable options for children who are not achieving their potential in district schools.

Connecticut Mastery Test results demonstrate that these schools have delivered not only a greater percentage of students performing at or above the “Proficiency” level than in their local host districts, but they also outpace local districts in year-to-year growth in student achievement. The longer students stay in these schools, the better they do on state tests. In fact, according to a 2005 study commissioned by ConnCAN and conducted by Gary Miron of Western Michigan University’s Evaluation Center, Connecticut’s results were “the most positive and promising for charter schools” out of the six states studied by the Evaluation Center. For more detailed information on charter school performance on standardized tests, see [Charter School Data](#).

Though Connecticut charter schools excel statistically, numbers do not capture their broad goals and accomplishments. Charter schools are by nature unique not only from traditional public schools but from each other. Many are located in urban districts where they provide a quality education for underserved children who would otherwise attend overburdened and struggling city schools. Other charter schools are designed for kids who struggle in traditional learning environments or have special learning needs. Still others offer innovative curricula, or focus on specialized subjects such as arts or the environment.

Despite demonstrated value to Connecticut students, charter schools still face policy and legislative challenges in the state. They are funded on average at only 70% of the rate other districts spend per pupil (rate varies by town). Last year a victory was won in lifting the enrollment cap on successful charter schools which had previously been in place. However, the educational options that charters offer to families in Connecticut are still limited by a funding bottleneck. We hope to work with our many allies and with the men and women in the Capitol, most of whom are sympathetic but have the unenviable task of allocating resources in today’s economy. The Connecticut Charter School Network asks only that our members are treated fairly and funded on the same basis as any other school. To find out how you can help, see [Support Charter Schools](#).

Source: http://ctcharterschoolnetwork.org/?page_id=2

Sample Vision & Mission Statements Connecticut Charter Schools

Achievement First

<http://www.achievementfirst.org/our-approach/achievement-gap-and-mission/>

Our Mission and Vision

Achievement First is a non-profit charter management organization (CMO) that operates a growing network of high-performing, college-preparatory, K to 12 public charter schools in Connecticut and New York. The mission of Achievement First 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. Achievement First schools will provide all of our students with the academic and character skills they need to graduate from top colleges, to succeed in a competitive world and to serve as the next generation of leaders for our communities.

Achievement First was established in 2003 by the founders of Amistad Academy, a nationally acclaimed public charter school in New Haven, CT. Amistad Academy, which was founded in 1999 to prove that urban students can achieve at the same high levels as their suburban peers, enabled its students to achieve at such extraordinarily high levels that the founders were asked to use Amistad Academy's knowledge and best practices to have a greater impact. Achievement First has grown into a network that includes 19 academies under 10 charters in four cities.

Achievement First will continue to create public charter schools that close the achievement gap, while also looking to partner with other like-minded, reform-oriented organizations to maximize our collective impact. Our theory of change is that by creating the equivalent of an urban public school "district", Achievement First can serve as proof that closing the achievement gap is possible at district scale and inspire broader reform. Achievement First is focused on continuing to close the achievement gap in a manner that is replicable for other charter schools and traditional public school districts. We will continue our work until every child is given access to a great education and enjoys the real freedom that flows from that opportunity.

Explorations High School - Winsted

<http://explorationscs.com/>

EXPLORATIONS Charter School is one of Connecticut's first charter schools. Located in rural Winsted, Connecticut, EXPLORATIONS was founded to meet the needs of bright high school sophomores, juniors and seniors who were not being motivated in the traditional public school setting, but were full of potential for greater academic achievement. EXPLORATIONS reaches out to its students by providing personal attention, a curriculum that fosters high levels of motivation, and an environment in which students can derive ownership in their future. We believe that educational success is more attainable when the student is personally invested in the choices that will direct his or her future.

It is the mission of EXPLORATIONS Charter School to provide an environment that cultivates a positive attitude toward life long learning in an experiential, non-traditional educational setting.

EXPLORATIONS' program emphasizes activities which foster the acceptance of responsibility and the development of positive decision making and problem solving skills. We encourage students to develop a healthy attitude toward their school, community, work, family, and, most important, toward their own sense of self. Through family and community involvement, our students realize how each of us takes ownership in contributing to a better future for all.

It is the goal of EXPLORATIONS Charter School to develop students into adults who will be good

citizens, good and productive role models, and giving individuals who will make a positive contribution to society.

Highville Charter School

<http://www.highvillecharterschool.com/aboutus.html>

Highville Mission Statement

The Highville Charter School, an enterprising and caring community with strong parent and community involvement, prepares and instills a desire for all learners to confidently use technology, think globally, develop globally conscious citizenship, utilize world languages and the study of various world cultures as the basis for launching learners on their voyage as responsible navigators, to discover their potential and chart their course through an ever-changing, interdependent and global future. Such a globally-conscious citizen will be values-oriented, wellness conscious, career directed, competent in communications and problem-solving, skillful in creative and critical thinking, culturally sophisticated, and acutely ware of global interdependence.

Highville Vision Statement

Our learning community seeks to promote and advance the intellectual, physical, social, and moral development of students in becoming responsible, contributing world citizens. Students learn to work and live together constructively respecting, honoring, and appreciating their own uniqueness and that of others. As we strive to implement our vision to provide a challenging, supportive and comprehensive educational program for our students, the foundation of our program is our Mission Statement and Program of Studies.

Education is more than a direction or a destination; it is a process which recognizes, enhances, and celebrates individual accomplishments. Highville Charter School, in the breadth of its curricula and the variety of its approaches to facilitate learning, provides an environment which nurtures and stimulates the intellectual development, insight and curiosity of all individuals.

Highville's synergistic atmosphere reflects the blending of tradition with the reality of an interdependent, interconnected world. Our program is propelled by a committed and experienced staff and supported by an involved parent community.

Integrated Day School

<http://www.idcs.org/>

Mission Statement

Our goal at the Integrated Day Charter School is to facilitate the development of students who will be thoughtful. These students will care and will independently seek knowledge. With a strong sense of self-awareness and respect, our graduates will be able to adapt to an ever-changing world.

Jumoke Academy

http://jumokeacademy.org/?page_id=7

Jumoke Academy Charter School was established in 1997 by our founder Thelma Ellis Dickerson. We are charged with the sacred duty of closing the academic achievement gap that puts urban and minority children behind their more affluent peers and perpetuates historical inequities in our society. We have come remarkably far in this mission.

**Odyssey Community School Grades 4-8
Park City Prep**

<http://parkcityprep.org/Home.html>

Building a Culture of Excellence

Our Mission

The mission of Park City Prep is to promote academic excellence, foster interest and competence in math, science and technology and improve the level of achievement of middle school students from communities historically under-represented in the fields of science, technology and math.

Civic and personal responsibility are emphasized throughout an integrated curriculum that highlights the social, economic and political ramifications of scientific research and discovery while students develop an appreciation for the contributions that science has made in shaping history and improving our lives.

Side by Side Charter School (Nice web page model-informative)

<http://www.sbscharter.org/>

Mission Statement

The mission of Side by Side Charter School is to ensure that every child has the opportunity to succeed and every voice is heard. We engage our students in a challenging and relevant curriculum of the highest standard that will reflect and enhance their diversity and promote their unique gifts and talents.

We build character and responsibility through a commitment to community, social justice, and tolerance towards others. We will also support the needs of our families. We will strive to perfect the art and craft of teaching and promote excellence in our profession.

We offer parents the freedom to choose a public school that is safe, and affords the highest quality education in a racially and socio-economically integrated setting. Our school attracts both urban and suburban families.

Side by Side has a strong connection to our community. We thrive in the heart of downtown SONO, offering a wonderfully diverse and urban setting. Our location enables our students and faculty to partner with surrounding art centers, museums, Long Island science studies, festival performances, and neighboring commerce. Through challenging and enriching hands on activities, SBS focuses on high academic standards, respect, tolerance, and success.

Our Philosophy

Our philosophy at Side by Side is based on the developmental and constructivist theories of Jean Piaget, John Dewey, and others. Our curriculum is carefully designed to coordinate with children's developmental stages and include many opportunities for children to experience things first hand. We believe that children gain a deeper level of understanding when they have the opportunity to: engage in first hand experiences reconstruct their experiences in the classroom in a variety of ways (ie writing, talking, block building, painting, museum shares) reflect on their learning express and support their ideas and understandings

We have an interdisciplinary curriculum organized around a social studies and science core. Our units are designed to build upon each other so that children can use prior knowledge to construct a meaningful understanding of the subject studied. For example, the third graders study the Long Island Sound and the surrounding woodlands, *before* they study the Native Americans who lived in this area, and *before* they study the colonists who settled here.

In the younger grades, the units begin with the study of things central to the young child's world, such as themselves, their home, and their family. The focus gradually widens to include their school, their neighborhood, and their community. The focus of these units is on our interdependence with each other and the environment, what the community needs and how those needs are met.

Trailblazers Academy

<http://trailblazersacademy.org/>

The mission of Trailblazers Academy is to successfully transition students to high school on track to go to college. While maintaining small classes and fostering positive relationships, the school builds a strong academic foundation for each student by emphasizing core subjects, high academic standards, life skills, and character development.