CFN 107 Innovation Zone Application

Table of Contents

Letter of Interest.................................................................2
Network Application..........................................................4
Brooklyn High School of the Arts Application.........................13
City As School Application..................................................21
El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice Application.............47
Gregorio Luperon High School for Science and Mathematics Application........56
NYC Lab School for Collaborative Studies Application.............67
Children First Network 107

The Network of Dynamic Learning Communities

Nancy Scala, Network Leader
Sammi Oerlemans, Deputy Network Leader
Pema Latshang, Instructional Coach
335 Adams Street, 5th Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201

January 20, 2010

Innovation Zone
Office of Innovation
52 Chambers Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Innovation Zone,

Children First Network (CFN) 107 is pleased to apply, along with five high schools, for the Innovation Zone. Our application schools are:

- Brooklyn High School of the Arts (15K656)
- City As School Application (02M560)
- El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice (14K685)
- Gregorio Luperon HS for Science and Mathematics Application (06M552)
- NYC Lab School for Collaborative Studies Application (02M412)

Our first choice for a design partners is New Tech Network; our second choice is NYC iSchool.

This letter of interest represents CFN 107’s commitment to the iZone. As a network, we have:

- Worked with interested schools to select a model design partner
- Ensured that our application schools have a genuine investment in redesigning education around the needs of individual students
- Demonstrated interest in and commitment to leading schools through a process of organizing around the needs and motivations of individual students
- Established protocols for sharing practices across schools and a vision for building on these practices to become an effective community of practice
- Committed to participation as an iZone network, including maintaining the sustained commitment participating schools over three years

As a network, we will:

- Work with the iZone staff to hire a network Innovation Coach
- Work with our design partner to lead the process to help our school redesign around the needs and motivations of individual students
- Work with our design partner to lead the process of designing and implementing a three-year roadmap
- Work with our design partner to expand innovations to additional schools within our
This letter of interest also represents our schools’ commitment to the iZone. As application schools, they have:

• Come to consensus on selecting a model design partner
• Ensure that there is genuine community investment in redesigning the school around the needs of individual students
• Strong school leadership that has adopted inclusive, distributive leadership structures and practices
• Teachers who work as dynamic learning communities and have experience observing classrooms and collaboratively reflecting on teaching practices
• Collaborated with families and communities
• Have the intention to stay with CFN 107 for the duration of the three-year iZone process
• Have stable leadership and succession plans in place to ensure continuity throughout the iZone design process

Our application schools will:

• Contribute to a process by which schools agree on an iZone design for organizing education around the needs and motivations of individual students
• Contribute to a process by which schools agree on a three-year roadmap and plans to implement the design
• Create a detailed school-level implementation plan for the first year

Please find attached our network application along with our schools’ applications.

Sincerely,

Nancy Scala
Network Leader
CFN 107
INTRODUCTION: Why Us?

CFN 107 is thrilled to apply for the Innovation Zone partnership. We believe that our five application schools, Brooklyn High School for the Arts, City As School, El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, Gregorio Luperon High School for Science and Mathematics, and NYC Lab School for Collaborative Studies are perfect participants for the iZone. Our application schools have proven track records of success, both academically and operationally. They are able to successfully educate the majority of their students, while maintaining the complex, everyday operations required of an urban public school. Even with this success, our schools are looking for more. They share a common sense of purpose: they seek to address the varied needs of all their students by providing personalized mastery learning; in short, they desire to move from “good to great.”

CFN 107 is an ideal network to partner with the iZone. We have the structures, capabilities and capacity to support our schools through the significant organizational change necessary to redesign for the future. As a network, we believe passionately in helping all children in our schools succeed. We are flexible, open-minded, and feedback-driven. We work to personalize our relationships with our schools based on their varied needs. Knowing that there is a wealth of knowledge and experience within our schools, we have taken the necessary steps this year to create a community of practice within our network. The network and our application schools look to expand our current innovations through our partnership with the iZone.

OUR STRATEGY

CFN 107 intends to collaboratively engage with our iZone schools to focus on the instructional core. We believe that by supporting our schools in a synergistic way, we can best leverage school improvement, as measured by improved student learning for all, and continue to create dynamic learning communities that motivate individual students.
BACKGROUND: Who We Are and Where We Came From

The creation of Children First Networks (CFN) in New York City was an initiative designed to integrate operational and instructional support for schools. The goal was to expand the Empowerment Schools' philosophy of devolving as much decision-making power as possible to the people who know schools best: principals, teachers, and school staff.

CFN 107 was a network created out of the Empowerment/Autonomy Zone. We employ a small cross-functional team who are directly accountable to principals. We are dedicated to delivering personalized service to schools. Within the CFN structure, our network is able to streamline operations and build capacity within schools such that school-based staff can focus their time on instruction and accelerate student achievement. Our team’s expertise lies in legal issues, data systems, school finance and operations, teacher development, student support, instructional content, and academic accountability.

Children First Network 107 is a network of empowered, autonomous schools, most of whom have worked together for the past five years. Our self-affiliated schools are located in four of the five boroughs in New York City. They cover a wide range of grades, from early elementary up through early college; some of our schools screen their admissions by students’ past academic performance or by artistic audition, others are community schools or transfer schools. Several of our schools are members of the New York Performance Standards Consortium, while other schools offer their students Advanced Regents Diplomas with Honors. As varied as our schools are in type, they are all unified in their dedication to and passion in educating New York City’s children.

Although each of our schools have unique ways of achieving academic success for their students, as a network, schools also have the opportunity to learn and grow from one another.

NETWORK EVOLUTION: A Story of Organizational Change

As mentioned above, the CFN redesign was intended to support schools who shared the fundamental belief that decisions about how to educate students should be made as close as possible to those who work with them. Our schools, for many years have believed that key decisions such as educational programming and curriculum, discretion over budgets, the selection and evaluation of the dedicated team that supports each school, and the choice of customized professional development are best
made by the principal— in collaboration with his or her school community.

Our network, for several years, was the embodiment of empowerment, as we mostly “left schools alone” and only “bothered them” when something important was brought to our attention from Tweed. However, the network team realized that there was a growing disconnect between our schools, as we saw that our team members were all working incredibly hard to respond to schools’ needs but not working strategically. This revelation, coupled with a change in network leadership, allowed the CFN 107 team to reflect on our work and what we needed to do to improve.

Although our network still believes in the philosophy behind empowerment, we realized that the manner in which we were collaborating with schools was superficial. We developed a theory of action to guide our work to a deeper level for the 2010-2011 school year: “If the Network collaboratively engages with our schools to focus on the instructional core, then we can best leverage school improvement as measured by improved student learning.” The impact of this theory has been tremendous. We have reorganized our structures, our protocols and our relationships with schools to align with our new vision.

For instance, this year, CFN 107 has been dedicated to having an influential presence in our schools. We reorganized the instructional team into smaller teams of two to four liaisons, who are assigned to several schools. Each mini-team has a Lead Liaison, and each team member is Lead Liaison for 3 schools at the most. This allows schools to build genuine relationships with our team and our instructional teams to learn their schools more intimately. Liaison Teams observe classes, attend meetings, provide various Professional Development opportunities and instructional resources, and build teacher “toolkits.” We have been trustworthy and dependable by guiding our schools’ work—not owning it.

We aim to build capacity at all instructional levels by acting as thought partners to the entire school community. Acting as third-party outsiders/insiders, we can offer new point of views as well as help schools craft and implement action plans for continuous improvement and change.

CFN 107 has also established several protocols for sharing practices across our schools. Our interest in and commitment to leading schools through a process of organizing around the needs and motivations of individual students has been broadly addressed in our principals’ meetings. We host monthly principals’ meetings at various schools and dedicate a significant amount of time to showcasing that school as a
dynamic learning community, as defined by Richard Dufour (“What Is A Professional Learning Community?”, 2004). The host school shares with the rest of the network schools their innovations around one of Richard DuFour’s “Big Ideas”: ensuring that all students learn, creating a culture of collaboration, and focusing on results.

This development of a community of practice across the network has resulted in extremely positive feedback. Many schools within our network, some of whom had not worked together in the past, have since facilitated inter-visitations, started conversations, and designed projects as a direct result of our principal meetings.

As shown above, as a network we provide opportunities for experienced members of our schools to share their knowledge, lessons learned, and effective practices with less-experienced members, hence making the learning public to our network community.

Please see the chart below for further evidence of our theory of action:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Then and Now: Highlights from CFN 107’s Evolution</th>
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<td><strong>Then:</strong> CFN 8</td>
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<td><strong>Now:</strong> CFN 107</td>
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**Team Strategy & Organization:**
- Instructional staff worked in discrete functional areas; operational staff worked in discrete functional areas.
- There was a distinct division between the Student Services team, the Operational Team, and the Achievement Team.
- Instructional team worked in isolation with each person responsible for every school.

**Communication:**
- Sporadic, infrequent communication between team members

**Then:**
- Instructional liaison team shares instructional initiatives and responsibilities, regardless of functional areas.
- Instructional staff works in liaison teams with each individual responsible for no more that no more than 7 schools.
- Operational team roles have changed in order to create more cross-functionality among team members. The Operational Team even provides college guidance for our schools’ high school seniors.

**Now:**
- The team participates in weekly instructional meetings and monthly full team meetings. Protocols have been set for “checking in” with team members and a private Wikispace was created for the team as place for communicating outside of office days.
- Frequent, reactionary mass emails to principals; emails often reiterated compliance information from Principals’ Weekly

- Newsletters (released every two weeks) to principals and designees containing targeted, relevant information.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Professional Development:</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Infrequent professional development opportunities for teachers</td>
<td>- Synergy of Phase One, CEIS, CCSS, Instructional Rounds initiatives and instructional goals.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Ongoing, relevant professional development opportunities for teachers and administrators.</td>
<td>- Targeted support for teachers at their schools, focusing on Teacher Teams.</td>
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<th>Principals’ Meetings:</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Four Principals’ Meetings per school year, held at museums.</td>
<td>- Each month a different school hosts the Network Principals’ Meeting, showcasing their dynamic learning community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Agendas lacked focus and strategy; they were designed by one person shortly before the meeting.</td>
<td>- Agendas continue to examine Richard DuFour’s “Big Ideas” of Professional Learning Communities; agenda items are released to principals before the meeting and are responsive to their needs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our network’s evolution over the course of the past year from a disparate, reactionary organization to a strategic community of practice is important for several reasons. Our story is itself one of successful organizational change: employing strategies, creating structures and reflecting on the process, we used the very inquiry-action cycle that we preach to schools. This is key to our ability to lead our schools through multiple initiatives, including, hopefully, the iZone.

**EXPERIENCE: Not Another Initiative!**

CFN 107 has extensive experience in facilitating our schools through new initiatives, including the Special Education Phase 1 Reform (Phase 1), the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), Instructional Rounds in Education, and ARRA Response-to-Intervention (RTI). We plan to approach the iZone partnership in a similar way to how we are currently supporting our schools through these other major initiatives. We believe in the principal of synergy. To have the greatest impact on
supporting student achievement for all students, we must combine initiatives in a holistic, logical way that makes sense to both the network and our schools. We believe CCSS provides a universal framework for rigor, Instructional Rounds gives us the language for and understanding of organizational change, Phase 1 and RTI show us how to reach special populations, and iZone provides the space within which to innovate all of the above. The end result is student learning for all!

As a network, we approach initiatives with a broad introduction to all and then work closely at the school-level via a network presence at the school, while also providing opportunity for schools to work together via after-school or weekend workshops or per diem-covered inter-visitation. We differentiate our support to best suit what our schools need, so taking on an initiatives as lofty as the iZone feels natural to us. We are experts at calling upon our schools’ interest and expertise to help fill needs--we believe there is a wealth of knowledge and experience within our network schools and we always “tap” into that as we launch new initiatives. Using the knowledge and expertise of our team and schools has always been the cornerstone of our vision to help CFN 107 become a more effective learning community.

We have hosted Instructional Rounds study groups and inter-visitation. From January to June 2010, instructional coaches from CFN 107 conducted four parallel Instructional Rounds in Education (Elmore, et al., 2009) book clubs. These sessions were after school and attended by teachers, assistant principals and principals from 13 different schools in our Network. Resources from our session are archived on our website at: https://sites.google.com/a/nycempowerment.org/hurwitz-network/IR. Each of our participating schools developed Problems of Practice, Theories of Action, and designed a plan to conduct the actual Rounds inter-visitation in the 2010-2011 school year. Schools are also conducting observations and inquiry work around their Theories of Action. The network team continues to facilitate the Rounds work and we look forward to sharing the outcomes of our schools’ studies.

Instructional Rounds has allowed us to work deeper with our schools by providing the framework through which to examine school practice and culture and test out new ideas and innovations. It has given us the language for and the understanding of organizational change on both a micro and macro scale. We believe this to be the foundation for our team’s support to schools through not only the iZone but also any and all school improvement efforts.
CFN 107 believes that the iZone application and the Common Core State Standards are closely linked. The CCSS provides a universal framework of rigor while iZone provides the space in which to innovate to help all students reach these defined mastery levels/standards.

During the summer of 2010, we kicked off our CCSS with a two-day introductory institute for our schools and are continuing to offer workshops throughout the school year. Our goals for this year are help all our school “unpack” and understand the standards and begin to change their practices before they change their content. During October, the network provided differentiated in-school diagnosis and designed individualized CCSS roll-out plans for each school. In December, we hosted “Math Moves,” a workshop where we reviewed strategies for integrating discussion in math lessons. We also visited with schools’ various Professional Learning Communities and assisted them as they begin to create action plans to integrate the CCSS. In January we conducted a mid-year review where we revisiting the CCSS Milestone Document and identified where their schools where and where they want to be by June 2011. Our theme for February is the English CCSS and we will be working with our schools to tweak existing tasks to advance rigor. In March 2011 through the end of the school year, we will begin the daunting task of beginning to align curriculum to the CCSS as well as provide workshops for science and social studies teachers around the CCSS. In April the network will facilitate workshops around how to use the CCSS as an intervention tool; in May we will host workshops around how the CCSS can be used with schools’ VIP populations (ELL, Special Education and Lowest Third students). In June we will conduct an end-of-year review where we will discuss with our schools their next steps for implementing the CCSS.

All of our Network schools are Phase 1 schools this year. In alignment with the goal of flexible programming for Special Education students, schools have rewritten IEPs, where appropriate, to allow students to be placed in various settings based on educational need. Extensive PD and coaching has been offered as part of this reform movement.

With Network support, our schools have also begun implementing RTI systems in anticipation of the 2012 State deadline. Wilson reading intervention groups have been a popular choice for many of our schools. Additionally, developing school staff to see intervention as the response to educational difficulty, rather than Special Education
referral, has been the main push. This work is often closely tied to inquiry group work as well.

Like our rounds work, CFN 107 finds that initiatives are successful and sustainable when schools are given opportunities to work together as well as be supported in a very personalized and individual manner by the network. In alignment with our Network vision of supporting schools in a synergistic manner, we are combining our Instructional Rounds work with our schools by using the CCSS to examine practice during our rounds visits. Our iZone schools’ innovations around personalized learning perfectly compliment the hard work they are already doing around Instructional Rounds, the CCSS, performance assessment tasks, mastery/competency-based grading, individualized learning plans, multiple learning modalities and new staff/student roles among other things.

THE iZONE

As the network, we had a very democratic approach to facilitating the iZone application. We opened the application to all our schools and those who demonstrated interest we given the supports they needed to apply. From the start we have been very clear about the expectations and commitments to the iZone application and process, and though it may have seemed daunting, the network, through our close relationships with schools, has been able to facilitate “brainstorming” and “dream big” meetings at individual schools as well as in groups; the network also organized and arranged design partner meetings. The network developed a protocol for selecting a design partner, using four categories, “Known Innovations,” “Quality of Results,” “Skills Assessment/Experience,” and “Alignment to Your School’s Philosophy” to come to a consensus. The network feels this is an excellent representation of our democratic approach to organizing and managing our work collaboratively with our schools.

We will continue this approach as it has been successful so far, however, we are also a feedback-driven network and we are willing to amend our methods should the feedback show that our strategy is not working for our schools. We believe that this feedback-inquiry process is vital in our continued work to build a community of practice in organizing schools around the needs and motivations of individual students.

BUILDING CAPACITY: Areas for Future Development and Research
As mentioned above, CFN 107 is an experienced network with a set strategy for successfully guiding our schools through new initiatives. We see the iZone as the perfect opportunity to create synergy between the various Department of Education initiatives and the work the network already does to support our schools’ practices.

As a network, we are eager to tackle some of the larger issues that surround personalized mastery learning. Our schools are enthusiastic about creating systems that will allow them to follow student progress. However, our schools acknowledge that without valid, authentic assessments, these systems will not be able to display truly accurate student information or progress. Our schools are eager to design baseline assessments that accurately reflect where a child is in his or her learning and next steps for learning. Conversely, our schools worry about assessments not being granular enough or being too granular, as either type of assessment will not necessarily provide an honest portrait of a student. As a network, we are enthusiastic about the work to come around supporting our schools around assessment development. Our schools have also expressed concerns around data. They want to be sure they have a means of capturing evidence that a student is truly learning and engaging with the material at hand. Building capacity in this area would be our primary focus as we move forward with the iZone.

IN CONCLUSION

The network is excited about helping our schools strike that delicate balance between personalization of learning and preservation of the fundamentally human aspects of learning, such as communication and collaboration. We are proud to be considered for such a bold and ambitious opportunity like iZone. We are confident that our network and our application schools have the expertise and determination to bravely restructure the future of education in order to ensure that all students learn. Thank you for your time and consideration.
iZone at Brooklyn High School of the Arts

Introduction:

The Brooklyn High School of the Arts was founded on the philosophy that “when young people are involved with the arts, something changes in their lives”. At the center of this vision is a belief that today’s youth seek an active connection to art, dance, music and drama and it was imperative that we build an environment where students would encounter these activities on a daily basis. This includes district and school administrators, teachers, parents and community in providing and supporting a comprehensive, rigorous academic, arts-oriented curriculum that meets New York State and New York City standards. At the same time, this curriculum will encourage and nurture our youth to use their words and expressions, their rhythms and sounds, their impressions and designs, their movement and actions in fulfilling their potential, their dreams and their aspirations. Each student member of Brooklyn High School of the Arts is expected and encouraged to actualize his/her full potential in all academic and career pursuits.

The Brooklyn High School of the Arts is an academic, arts specialized, total audition high school that provides a broad range of educational opportunities for its students. All of our students are expected to graduate on time, attend college or conservatory or enter the world of work.

Our iZone Vision:

The school serves students who have a special interest and demonstrated ability in visual arts or performing arts. The school offers a full range of college preparatory courses, AP courses and curriculum aligned to the new standards. Learning is interdisciplinary, with knowledge gained in one subject area connected to learning across all other subject areas. We are hopeful if accepted as part of the iZone
experience we will be able to significantly increase our student’s access to technology that would support research and inquiry based study. Our students would have access to project based learning supported by technology, we could increase our flexible scheduling, extend class meeting time, offer off-site internships, enable us to have a longer school day, and possible even a longer school year.

The school is a two-building facility connected by a bridge. The building was built in the early part of the century (1929) and is an example of the Art Deco style of that period. The physical plant is very complex because in the 1970’s a second building was annexed. The building known as the “West Wing”, currently houses the students’ cafeteria, as well as the newly redesigned music wing, but there is still plenty of room for additional redesign. We are also well situated at the hub of the entire New York City Transit system, as well as the Long Island Railroad. We always host meetings for our network as well as many city-wide issues. If we are lucky enough to be accepted as an iZone school we would be happy to host Professional Development experiences, site visits anything that would help push the agenda forward.

We would like to involve iZone in many of our existing curriculum. We have a 9th grade Academy which includes all incoming 9th grade students. Our 9th grade students are wonderful talented young people and we have no difficulty engaging them around their arts strand. Our major challenges surround the core curriculum and motivating our 9th graders to achieve Mastery in their core academic subjects. The students enter our school with very decent standardized test scores, so we believe they are very capable to Master all of their academic subjects, but they begin to lose motivation and perhaps focus. We see a major disconnect, the work our students do around the arts is so student centered, so hands on at all times, it makes it difficult to change gears and entered a world (of academics) which at present is much more teacher dominated. We want to make the entire educational experience seamless, we would like our academic areas to be as student centered as the arts. We also need to meet the technological
needs of our students. Our students prefer to use computers; we have seen students do entire English papers on their cell phone, instead of writing in their notebooks. At this point our school does not have the capacity to offer this amount of technology to our students. We are hopeful if accepted as an iZone school we will be able to acquire the technology and adapt our lesson content to be project based and student centered. One of our goals is to engage the entire incoming 9th grade class in technology based Mastery Learning.

Our school community would also like to begin a Graphic Arts Strand to our Fine Arts Department. For many years we have wanted to increase our offerings to our students around Graphic Arts. Graphics is a wonderful art form, with great potential for College Study and Career Development. Parents, students, and teachers have constantly made this appeal and our inability to acquire the technology to support such a program has always been a major stumbling block.

For our students who are not 9th graders we would like to make technology and Project based instruction available to them as well. At this time we have very few elective classes offered at The Brooklyn High School of the Arts. Part of our challenge is our time schedule. If we could become more creative with class schedule, integrate more technology, and change the role for the teacher we believe we would be able to make additional options available to all of our students. Students could become involved in academic electives as well as internship opportunities which can increase the quality of the education at The Brooklyn High School of the Arts.

In every New York City Public School we have students with learning disabilities some have IEP’s. These students who attend the Brooklyn High School of the Arts are unique, they audition for our school, and in their art strand they are indistinguishable from their non learning disabled peers. Their IEP’s frequently demand that we place them in classes that are self-contained, and this does not always meet the needs of the whole child. To quote our Chancellor Ms. Black we believe that the iZone would
“empower our school to have greater curricular, instructional, and scheduling flexibility to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities.”

Our lack of technology has had an affect on our Instrumental and Vocal Music students. Our students are at a disadvantage because they lack the computers as well as the essential software for writing, composing, playing, printing and publishing music notation. If we were able to acquire this technology our students would have a much better chance of continuing their study of music in a college or conservatory of their choice.

iZone/Avid Connection:

For the past year and a half Brooklyn High School of the Arts has been firmly committed to the AVID Program, a rigorous college preparatory program for underserved students in the academic middle. The expectations are high for both students and staff as AVID reinforces positive academic behavior and instills efficient strategies for students in all content areas. AVID is an innate learning community that already encompasses strategies for enhancing student learning. The AVID Elective course is one that serves as major component of the student schedules as it enables AVID Elective “coaches” to fine tune and monitor the progress of AVID student binders. The AVID Student Binder is a mandatory component of the AVID program which incorporates the Cornell Notes system for all academic content areas, a planner for time management skills as well as weekly “AVID Binder Checks” which enforces a habitual organizational structure within the student’s educational psyche. With a technological grant via iZone, the AVID Program, which is currently serving 105 sophomores and juniors and an anticipated 60 more sophomores for the 2011-2012 school year (thus bringing the entire AVID cohort to roughly 165 students), would be able to elevate itself to a unique virtual college preparatory program. Through the use of “virtual binders” the AVID students, already drilled with a strong organizational structure under the AVID
methodology, would be able to thrive utilizing irreplaceable 21st century technology. Equipping each AVID student with an iPad / laptop would enable AVID and iZone trained teachers to dispense differentiated collaborative project-based assignments aligned to rigorous standards. AVID's mission of "closing the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society" melds lockstep with Brooklyn High School of the Arts vision for an intensive curricula that enables students to thrive in an environment where they learn best to become competitive life-long learners. Teachers that are AVID Elective trained go through an intensive summer institute with intermittent professional development throughout the year to fulfill the role of coach, advisor, content expert, and assessment expert. AVID teachers traditionally are the most progressive, nurturing, and dedicated pedagogical staff members who strive to ensure student success. Given the opportunity to implement iZone, AVID staff members already have ample experience in the type of personalized learning that students need.

This year is the first year at Brooklyn High School of the Arts where we have a junior AVID class that is currently researching colleges in preparation for next year’s application process. Figure 1 reflects the AVID senior college application / acceptance rate at four-year colleges and universities.
universities.\textsuperscript{1} A lack of technological resources in our school and at the students’ home has been a hindrance to the type of rigorous planning and meticulous insight the AVID team would like to provide its students. In order to build a 21\textsuperscript{st} century in which accountability can be self-driven by the students the technological tools necessary must be provided. By equipping students with the aforementioned technological devices teachers will be able to implement various modalities of learning in a single classroom.

AVID has been recently linked to College Board as a proven formidable bridge to enrollment in Advanced Placement courses. With an ever-increasing AVID cohort and hence the necessity to expand Honors (pre-AP) and AP courses, the capacity of iZone to accommodate multiple rigorous / college preparatory courses via Skype. Empowering students to be able to take elective courses with the proper resources creates an environment of endless possibilities. Figure 2 exemplifies the diversity of the AVID program yet also highlights a huge demographic at Brooklyn High School of the Arts: Hispanic / Latino and Black / African American.\textsuperscript{2} Working collaboratively with iZone would enable Brooklyn High School of the Arts to offer AVID, AP Electives, and

\textsuperscript{1} AVID Results, www.avid.org
\textsuperscript{2} AVID Results, www.avid.org
Brooklyn High School of the Arts unveiled its Advanced Placement courses this fall, AP World History and AP Literature and Composition. Due to scheduling, personnel, and fiscal restraints the school is limited to the amount of AP courses it can offer and hence curbs the menu of AP options that a student can select from. With the help of iZone, Brooklyn High School of the Arts will offer a myriad of AP courses to its underserved minority students and aim to achieve the outstanding data in Figure 3.

The school has already began its implementation of Common Core State Standards and last year had unprecedented success in its first year of AVID implementation which was anchored by not only the program’s own implementation process but also a massive, comprehensive curriculum-writing initiative. The staff at Brooklyn High School of the Arts has the ambition but lacks the technological resources...
to bring the school’s incessant growth to the next level to truly facilitate our students’ college and career readiness.

Brooklyn High School of the Arts Alignment to iZone Criteria

BHSA has several inclusive, distributive leadership structures and practices in place, such as strong Assistant Principals who support and mentor teachers, numerous coaching opportunities for teachers, and participation in an Instructional Rounds study group. The running of the school is equally shared between the principal and her five APs. Ms. Lacey-Berman, during her principalship at BHSA has created a culture of active collaboration with families and the school community. She and her administrative staff have created numerous opportunities for her students to received real-world arts and music experience. Parents and students feel they are a vital part of the school community and students often stay late at BHSA because they feel so comfortable and enjoy working on their arts projects.

The Children First Network 107 is one of the most dedicated and highest performing networks in the New York Department of Education. With unwavering and educationally progressive leadership, CFN 107’s network team provides a strong vision of sound educational practices geared towards preparing its students for the globally competitive standards of the 21st century. The CFN 107 has embraced the successes of AVID at Brooklyn High School of the Arts, and we intend to remain part of CFN 107 for, at the very least, the next three years.

Brooklyn High School of the Arts feels strongly that our school is in a place where iZone would compliment our current work and allows us to create innovations to personalized learning for our students. We are confident that participation in the iZone would give us the opportunity to move our school from “good to great.”
City As School High School

An iZone Personalized Mastery Learning Application
Submitted to the NYC Office of Innovation
January 19th, 2011
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Section 1: Welcome to City-As-School**
- Section 1.A Introduction to Our Students 6
- Section 1.B Our Educational Concept and Program 6
- Section 1.C Freedom, Trust, and Responsibility 7
- Section 1.D Our Heroes 8

**Section 2: Our Educational Goals**

**Section 3: Our Success and Our Capacity to Innovate**

**Section 4: Our Vision for Personalized Learning**
- Section 4.A Introduction 14
- Section 4.B Rigor 14
- Section 4.C Relevance 14
- Section 4.D Relationships 15

**Section 5: Our Areas for Innovation**
- Section 5.A Skills Assessment 18
- Section 5.B Data Sharing for Teachers 18
- Section 5.C Data Sharing for Students 19
- Section 5.D Deep Content Mastery 21
- Section 5.E Teacher Scheduling 22
- Section 5.F Student Scheduling 23
- Section 5.G Space for Innovation and Collaboration 23
- Section 5.H Student Engagement 24
- Section 5.I Community Engagement and Talent Utilization 25
# LIST OF FREQUENTLY USED ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AP:</td>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARIS:</td>
<td>Achievement Reporting and Innovation System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATS:</td>
<td>Automate the Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBO:</td>
<td>Community Based Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTT:</td>
<td>Collaborative Team Teaching</td>
</tr>
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<td>ELA:</td>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
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<td>ELL:</td>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSSSE:</td>
<td>High School Survey of Student Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSST:</td>
<td>High School Scheduling and Transcripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCLB:</td>
<td>No Child Left Behind</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEA:</td>
<td>National Education Association</td>
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<td>NYC:</td>
<td>New York City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLC:</td>
<td>Professional Learning Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLP:</td>
<td>Personalized Learning Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC:</td>
<td>Self-Contained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SETSS:</td>
<td>Special Education Teaching Support Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UFT:</td>
<td>United Federation of Teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 - Welcome to City-As-School
1.A  INTRODUCTION TO OUR STUDENTS

City-As-School was founded in 1972 with 15 students and 4 staff members and with funding from a Ford Foundation grant. We have grown over the past 39 years to a student body of 700 students and three locations: Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx.

We are, at our core, and alternative transfer school that serves disaffected youth by linking students with hundreds of learning experiences throughout the community. The students we work with come from a tremendous range of backgrounds and opportunities, but the one thing they have in common is that they have struggled in one way or another at their previous school. Many are homeless, have children, or are on parole—or all three. Some transfer to us from Island Academy on Rikers Island; some come from residential psychiatric institutions as far away as upstate New York; some have tangled with the foster care system their whole lives. A large percentage of students have suffered from abuse, whether physical or emotional, at the hands of friends and family. They travel from all five boroughs of New York City and are a unique and inspiring group of young adults.

1.B  OUR EDUCATIONAL CONCEPT AND PROGRAM

We utilize the facilities of over 700 New York City businesses (we call them Resources) at which students participate in professional activities. These learning experiences may include internships, apprenticeships and mentoring by professionals in business and service organizations. They are not meant to be vocational in nature but instead are designed to help engage our students in developing critical thinking and questioning skills as they immerse themselves in new environments. Our students may spend several weeks as a veterinary technician working at the Animal Medical Center then move on to clerking with a criminal court judge, spend eight more weeks working on an urban farm with the Hudson Parkways and finish the year working as an assistant art restorer at the Metropolitan Museum. These resources along with classroom learning form the basis of learning in Math, History, English, Science and other academic areas.

The CAS school year is currently divided into four 8-week cycles. Each cycle students spend 16-32 hours per week at one or more of the community resources. An external-learning experience may require a student’s participation beyond the normal school day or on weekends. Rounding out the education-by-internship, CAS provides in-house classes, college courses, and a full range of guidance services. A student may devise a program comprised of any combination of CAS’s offering. Thus, the actual number of resources, classes or college courses will be different for each student during each cycle. In addition, CAS has a credit/no credit evaluation system. Students who successfully complete the requirements of each Learning Experience are granted credit towards a New York State Regents Diploma.
1.C  FREEDOM, TRUST, AND RESPONSIBILITY

City-As-School’s emphasis on freedom, trust and responsibility offers the first and most visible difference between our school and others. Students chose a combination of resources and classes that best fits their credit needs, interests, aspirations, and personal schedule. Students go out to resource placements directly, without stopping at school first, and have independent assignments to carry out, under the direction of the resource coordinator (from the school) and the resource person (from the place of business). In-house classes have a similar emphasis on freedom and responsibility. Most classes are held at City-As-School, but there are also options to register for courses at local colleges.

Using the experiential learning approach, the CAS students learn responsibility through experience. The freedom to travel throughout the city involves a great deal of trust on everyone’s part, from the parents to students to staff, but we have found that trust pays off in student performance.

City-As-School is geared toward fostering communication at all levels. We immediately lower the barriers between teachers and students by using first names in speaking to each other. All teachers and staff have phones and email accounts by which students may contact them. Internship coordinators visit the students onsite and are available at school. Advisors meet with their students several times a week.

Mutual respect is inseparable from the qualities listed above. There are no metal detectors; there is no tension in the halls, and no violence in our schools. Students are respected from the moment they join our community and they respond with respect for their school, their teachers, and their classmates.
1.D OUR HEROES

The City-As-School applicant team combined their values with the proven practices of schools that share a common vision and similar values of education to develop this proposal. The visions we have presented here is an accumulation of their work infused with research and innovative ideas derived from countless hours of brainstorming and collaborating. We believe that by expanding on the exceptional work done by visionary educators we will be successful in creating a school where students have access to an abundance of resources proven to be effective in improving academic achievement and graduation rates. The following institutions serve as our heroes.

**Generation Schools Network** is a Brooklyn-based nonprofit organization dedicated to whole-school and systemic innovation in urban education. The designers have developed an innovative and practical operation model that restructures the critical resources of a school, particularly human capital and time. The result is a model that allows schools to provide all types of educational and youth development opportunities that lead to academic achievement for a greater number of students.

**The MATCH Charter Public High School** in Boston, Massachusetts utilizes AmeriCorps and other federal work-study programs to bring tutors into the school. This innovative design allows students to receive additional academic assistance in core subject areas without the associated costs typically associated with providing this extra support. Work-study tutors are recruited from neighboring colleges and universities through an established partnership. MATCH has been successful – the number of students taking AP exams has increased and in 2005, 2006, and 2007 MATCH students made significant gains for English and math proficiency on Massachusetts state exams.

**NYC Outward Bound Schools** utilize the Expeditionary Learning model to, “...focus on engaging students in units of study that tackle real-world problems, use fieldwork and experts, and end in authentic products.” The school connects students’ experiences with intensive units of academic study. This network of public schools boasts a supportive community that focuses primarily on academic achievement and character development. NYC Outward Bound schools receive high ratings on NYCDOE Education Quality Reviews and through an innovative small-school design have the goal of 90 percent of graduates attending college.

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology** - The Independent Activities Period is a four-week long "term" offering hundreds of optional classes, lectures, demonstrations, and other activities throughout the month of January between the Fall and Spring terms.

**Urban Assembly New York Harbor School** provides a college-preparatory education built upon New York City's maritime experience. The instructional program is guided by the school's educational principals, which provide students with an opportunity to learn through a unique hands-on, inquiry-based learning model. The Harbor School model stimulates curiosity, critical thinking, and vision, all of which lead to improved academic performance.
NYC Service. “Service to your community is a core part of what it means to be an American.” NYC Service is a new effort to promote service and volunteerism in New York City. It includes an innovative set of initiatives that aim to achieve two overarching goals: making our city the easiest place in the world to volunteer, and setting a new standard for how cities can tap the power of their people to tackle our most pressing challenges.

2 - Our Educational Goals
2.A OUR STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO...

We believe in this age of educational accountability high schools in the United States are being measured and graded on the wrong things. Yes, graduation rates and standardized tests scores are important but to what end? Some would say that we should push further and the importance is in closing the achievement gap and ensuring college readiness for all students. We would like to push this even further and say that ultimately, our goal at CAS is to produce citizens that can:

**COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY**

College professors and hiring managers repeatedly say that the number one trait they look for in potential students and employees is the ability to communicate effectively.

Effective communication also means being able to synthesize other people’s ideas and combining it with one’s original thoughts. Simply knowing the material is not good enough. We expect our students to be able to communicate their ideas through well-developed written documents and through presentations to various audiences.

**WORK WELL WITH OTHERS**

We live in an increasingly interconnected world, yet our students are growing up in relative isolation, communicating primarily through electronic medium. Our citizens must have strong inter-personal skills to be able to facilitate and lead communities.

Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Carnegie Mellon have found that groups have a high collective intelligence when members of a group are good at reading each others’ emotions — when they take turns speaking, when the inputs from each member are managed fluidly, when they detect each others’ inclinations and strengths. Participating in a well-functioning group is really hard. Years of research have shown that these skills have to be explicitly taught to students and students need repeated opportunities to develop these skills.

**APPLY THEIR KNOWLEDGE**

Factual information, the kind that is tested on the Regents examinations, means little if the student cannot connect it to other information and apply it the world around them. Students need to be guided and challenged to use their knowledge through problem-based learning in the classroom and real-world applications in the City. The content means more when it is placed in context. We want our students to leave with the ability to not only quickly pick up new knowledge but know how to apply it in context.
3 - Our Success and Our Capacity to Innovate
We know that our current educational model works for many of our students even by traditional measures. Our ELA scores are among the top 10% of NYC transfer schools. Each year we help over 300 students graduate with a Regents Diploma. Over 80% of our graduates go on to 2 and 4-year colleges. Many of them come back with success stories of being artists, writers, doctors, lawyers and hedge fund managers.

In 1977, CAS won a title IV Validation Grant as an educational “model in excellence.” As a result of validate, CAS won a Title IV Demonstration Grant to promote awareness of and to replicate the CAS model in various school districts across New York State.

After 1983, CAS enjoyed three consecutive six-year validations as an exemplary model by the US Department of Education. In 1985, CAS was a recipient of a coveted National Diffusion Network Grant, providing seed money to disseminate its model across the country. The NDN grant provided CAS with funds to setup programs modeled after CAS in other cities and communities across the US. Despite recent cutbacks in Federal support for such program, CAS continues to disseminate the model on its own, most recently in Englewood, NJ; Corning, NY; White Plains, NY; and Minneapolis, MN. Many schools in Europe, organized under the aegis of the International Network of Productive Learning Schools (INEPS), continue to replicate the CAS model. This international association of 64 schools in 19 countries continues to replicate similar internship-based learning models.

For the 1994-95 school year New York State awarded CAS a School-to-Work Partnership Grant to provide NYC students, parents, educators and employers with the essential elements to ensure an integrated system of academic and vocational education, school and work based learning and post-secondary opportunities.

We are excited to be able to work with the iZone and the Innovation Team to enhance our model and expand our offerings to meet the needs of our students.
4 - Our Vision for Individualized Learning
4. A INTRODUCTION

We believe that these skills: communicating effectively, working well with others and applying their knowledge can be taught and can be taught in a setting that is student-based and community-oriented.

Our vision of individualized learning is grounded in the belief that all students must have access to a rigorous curriculum, relevant learning experiences and strong relationships with teachers. Below we will highlight some of our current work to individualize instruction and our visions for improving our work.

4. B RIGOR

CAS offers a rich academic curriculum where learning is meaningful, dynamic, and authentic. Instruction is carefully aligned with New York State frameworks and standards. Further, CAS meets the needs of the individual student and challenges every student with high academic and social expectations.

When we talk about rigor, we begin by meeting each student where they are at and then challenging them to achieve more than they thought was possible. As a transfer school, we admit students from over 100 different high schools throughout New York City and beyond. Some of our students are National Merit Scholarship Finalists and some are bound for musical conservatories. We have other students at 4th and 5th grade reading-levels and some struggle with emotional disorders.

We work with our students to develop their own schedules. We’ve set up an environment where our students have both the freedom and the responsibility of choosing academic offerings that are most appropriate for them. Four times a year, the teachers get together to develop a collection of classes that we think would most benefit the students. New classes are generated based on student interest and feedback. Descriptions of the roughly 80 classes and 500 internships are then published, and the advisors meet with each student to guide them in their selection process. Students at CAS are not in fixed grade-levels and are not locked into set schedules. Classes and internships are deliberately set to be only eight weeks long as to allow students to gain exposure to a multitude of fields and to find an academic schedule that fits their needs. This careful selection process allows us to help the students reflect on their strengths and areas of improvement.

We envision a future where we can not only increase our course and internship offerings but offer an innovative extended year scheduling, programmatic weekly professional development, increased cross-curricular teacher collaboration, and a unique tutoring program.

4. C RELEVANCE
The internship program is at the core of our effort to provide relevant learning experiences for our students. As soon as students sign up for one of the internship sites, our teachers begin to tailor the experience to fit the needs of each student. Even before students are sent out into the field, the student and the internship coordinator will both speak with the internship supervisor to setup an interview schedule. We then begin a process of adjusting the internship to fit both the student’s credit needs and personal interests. For example, we frequently send students to work at New Youth Connections, a NYC-based student-run newspaper. When students demonstrate interest in this site, we work with them to see whether their needs would be best served by working as a reporter, copy editor, photographer or even cartoonist for the paper. When we send students to intern at local Community Boards and elected officials’ offices, we have them attend committee meetings and meet with constituents to determine which of the pressing issues are most relevant to them and design a project around that issue. We may have several students each cycle at nursing homes but each of their final projects will be different because each student’s needs are different.

These internships are not meant to be vocational in nature, rather they are designed to bring our students closer to an issue and to surround them with experts who can help them dig deeper in their academic explorations. We explicitly design the environments so that students develop not only critical thinking skills but also critical questioning skills about the world around them.

We would like to expand the internship program such that additional explorations and immersions are embedded into the curriculum to make learning more applicable for students. Twice each year, CAS students will break from the traditional academic calendar to participate in two-week-long “Intensives” that immerse students in relevant experiences. Intensive Terms give students the opportunity to engage in in-depth content area projects, language programs, and experiential expeditions. We also would like to deepen our connection with the community by bringing in experts to present workshops and focus groups with students. Ultimately, we would like to blur the lines between “in-house” classes and external internships. Their careers at CAS will be spent utilizing the community as a classroom through academically oriented internships and self-designed service learning projects.

4.D RELATIONSHIPS

A student-focused learning environment ensures that each student develops the social and emotional capacity and character to be successful in college and beyond. With nearly 40 years of experience working with disaffected students, it is our belief that developing strong relationships with each of our students is critical to making all of it work. Research has shown that children who have at least one person that cared about their success are five times more likely to succeed in school. Each student is matched with an advisor when they are first admitted to the school. This advisor is the point person and advocate for that student. It is their responsibility to see to it that the
The student has everything she needs and that the student ultimately graduates. The advisor coordinates information exchange between the parents, internship coordinators, classroom teachers, social workers and guidance counselors. In the classrooms, our teacher to student ratio is often 1:15 or lower. Out at the internships, there is often a 1:1 supervisor to student ratio.

We would like to see our advisory program be extended to meet on a daily basis and become a place where teachers can work closely with students in small learning communities to build a culture of trust and respect. Likewise, we would like to see new “Intensive Terms” that will provide members of the community opportunities to build close and lasting relationships that transfer to the school setting. Lastly, we would like to work with NYC Service as a resource in recruiting our CAS Corps Fellows. The CAS Corps is comprised of college graduates recruited from universities. Each class at CAS is staffed with two Corps Fellows who will provide instructional support to students and teachers during the school day, tutoring after-school, and programmatic support during Intensive Terms. Recruiting of highly motivated fellows of strong character and a sense of mission common with CAS is essential to meeting the needs of every student.
5- Our Areas for Innovation
5.A SKILLS ASSESSMENT

Concern: Across education and industry, research shows the biggest predictor of success is a student’s conscientiousness, as measured by such traits as dependability, perseverance through tasks, and work ethic. Schools can teach and measure non-cognitive, college-readiness skills just as they do reading or mathematics—and they may be just as important. Most schools do not teach or measure nonacademic readiness indicators directly, though they do pop up through conduct reports, attendance, team-project evaluations, and other areas.

Possible Innovations:
More and more, research shows young people need the same cognitive and social-emotional skills to complete school and progress in the workplace, and, moreover, that those skills can be taught and tested like any other subject in school.

The Baltimore-based Johns Hopkins University Center for the Social Organization of Schools, known for its off-cited research on early-warning indicators of students at risk of dropping out of high school, has started to explore ways to find similar early-warning signs for students at risk of graduating high school only to drop out later in college. These are not traditional fact-based measurements of what students know. We currently assess and inventory these skills informally through orientation and through advisory but we need to find a better way of assessing these skills.

After that, we would like to begin creating personalized learning plans (PLPs) for each student. These would address the unique strengths, interests, and priorities of students with the guidance and support of their advisor, teachers and families. The PLPs will be dynamic and ideally will guide all students’ learning and educational plans. Student-led conferences provide a formal opportunity for the student, advisor, and parent to meet to discuss the students’ learning and ways to refine their Personal Learning Plan. Unlike most individualized education plans, a PLP is based on a student’s personal talents, interests and aspirations rather than deficiencies. We would design these personalized learning plans such that they can help students meet both the standards associated with specific content areas, but also help them accumulate evidence that they have met our core values.

5.B DATA SHARING FOR TEACHERS

Concern: When teachers, guidance staff and support staff get together every three weeks to do case-conferencing, we’re able to piece together the story of a child. We know about their experiences at the internship; we know from the advisor and social worker what the home life is like and what the challenges are; we know about their struggles in the classroom. We just don’t have the time to do this for each and every student and this data is not always readily available. In order for the next set of
teachers and internship coordinators to help the child they need this information at their fingertips. We would really benefit from knowing that Johnny is competent at leading small group discussions and dissecting historical documents but isn’t comfortable presenting in front of his classmates and incorporating scientific findings.

Possible Innovations: An online platform accessible from anywhere, such as an ARIS created solely for City-As-School. This “personalized ARIS” allows for communication between teachers, students, guidance, and support staff. This system will provide the opportunity to share assessment instruments and will create a platform for communication options. Ideally, this system will also allow for the creation of a library with project-based learning units. This technology can help teachers differentiate among a large group of students whom may be struggling with different aspects. Teachers can assist students to face a challenging task or master a difficult skill. Overall, the creation of such a program will give students the opportunity to experience a real individualized, personalized learning opportunity.

The role of an advisor is to follow through with a student from their admission to the school until their graduation. These advisors also teach the in-house classes, therefore having to manage between the students’ level of success, reasons for success and lack thereof, and preparation for classes. The assignment of advisors that are solely tracking the student, without other responsibilities creates an ideal tracking of individualized success. The current teacher roles are broken up into two categories—Advisor and Resource Coordinator. The creation of a third category, maintaining an Advisor serving as just that—an advisor, will provide the opportunity for a classroom teacher to focus on curriculum. A classroom teacher will enhance the curriculum in such a way that he will be able to focus on adapting the curriculum to the external learning experience. For example, a student working with a judge in the housing courts will be able to align her experience with her class on the judicial system involving housing laws.

Another possibility to improve communications and positive outcomes for our students would be to provide time for true case conferencing. Although we currently do case conferencing on a one on one basis with the students’ advisor we do not get the opportunity to have a true discussion between the RC, advisor, guidance link and social worker. Time to accomplish this would enable us to develop a strategy for helping the students (especially those who are struggling) enhance their strengths and improve on their weaknesses.

5.C DATA SHARING FOR STUDENTS

Concern: With students arriving from a myriad of learning environments, how can we provide them information about their strengths and weaknesses as a learner so they can choose the most appropriate path during their time here? How can students access complete pictures of their data discretely, independently, and with up-to-the-minute accuracy? As students leave high school, how can they best use the evidence from their time at City-As-School to compile a complete picture of themselves as a learner.
Possible Innovations: An online platform accessible from anywhere such as an ARIS, as mentioned above, but created solely for City-As-School. The framework for such a platform has existed in a school only format for over 2 decades at City-As-School, and this unique system allows staff to view the entirety of a student’s academic history in a very neat and concise sheet of paper. To allow students to access this material would require upgrading what we have now to include a layer of security and confidentiality with the student’s information. For such a system to then be allowed to transfer information over the web would require another layer of security and encryption that would protect student information from other types of online attacks. The existence of such a system would be very important for students as they arrive at the school, as it could allow students to easily navigate a path to graduation that is both efficient and appealing. It is equally important for parents who can be confident that their student made the right choice in applying to City-As-School as they could quickly see that their student’s academic record, including any relevant interventions or accommodations, are correctly reflected in our system.

As students begin their coursework and internships at City-As-School an online platform would be a must if we intend to prepare students for our changing world. In today’s colleges and universities, students are given email addresses, enroll for classes online, keep track of their grades through their schools website, and enroll in distance learning classes. The lightning fast pace of higher education can often leave students from our high schools in the dust, but our school is uniquely positioned to help students get up to speed before they step on campus. Because our school is already used to having students sign up individually for both classes and internships, we could easily switch our course scheduling to one that resembles a college framework. In today’s workforce, computers allow employers to hold their workers accountable for the slightest indiscretion. We need to have an online platform that allows teachers to share student information immediately with his other teachers and parents, and for that information to be stored for reference. In our experiences with online platforms such as Snapgrades and Thinkwave, we have learned that a solution to this process would greatly benefit students and that there are multiple solutions available. Based on our years of success with the current system, we understand that it is important that we invest the time and resources necessary to implement the best system for our students and our school.

An online platform for student data sharing is important for having transparent relationships between the school and home, and it is important for making our educator’s work relevant for the 21st century, but it is also important to document the rigor of the work we ask of students. As students work on graduation portfolios with their teacher or advisor, students work can be stored online into a digital portfolio. Students will know that these assignments can instantly be checked for plagiarism with technology like Turnitin, and will know they cannot copy papers off of the Internet, or from any of their peers. These can be graded by teachers online, students can make the corrections online, and with technology like Google Docs, all of the earlier versions of the paper can be stored online. This allows students the chance
to notice how their writing has matured over time, and they can reflect on this before their final portfolio presentation.

While technology does not define the main purpose of learning, it supports project-based learning, connects students to each other, to our school, and to the universe of knowledge beyond the school. These programs connect students with their teachers, their own portfolios and information beyond the school. The ability to have student data within and beyond the school provides for a systematical school-wide method of personal growth for each and every individual student, giving them the ability to view their own advancement. It provides a “spot-check” for the student at any given point in their time at City-As-School. Giving students the opportunity to view their progress at all times not only supports their current efforts, but also their future professional desires.

5.D DEEP CONTENT MASTERY

Concern: When we do our jobs well, students become fascinated with the details and really want to learn more. They develop critical questioning skills about the world around them and they start to want to dig deeper into a particular area. As a medium sized school with a staff of 55 we don’t have the resources to provide all the options for kids to go deep in any one subject area. We are providing some of this through in-person experiences with experts in NYC but it would be good for them to go through it with peers and people familiar with pedagogy.

Possible Innovations:
We would like to deepen our concept of community-based learning - using the student’s own neighborhood as a place to gather information and recommend changes. This has particular power for adolescents because they already know quite a bit about their community. To assist the students in digging deep, we would like to create an online directory of vetted information (articles, textbooks, podcasts, etc) about specific content areas related to resources/classes, perhaps indexed by reading level. This would be constantly reviewed and updated by our staff.

Another possibility for deep content mastery would be to develop “Institutes” in various subject areas and career fields. This would allow us to tap into a student’s passion and desire to pursue a specific area of interest by providing a concentration in certain areas of interest. For example the student who is interested in law might do a series of internships with a criminal attorney, the family court judge, a civil court judge, the police department as well as taking a college course in law.

We would also like to be able to offer online-based AP courses for our most advanced college-bound students. Student could also engage in distance video collaboration with faculty from across the country. For example, they could work with: iEARN (International Education and Resource Network), the world’s largest non-profit global network that enables teachers and youth to use the Internet and other technologies to collaborate on projects that enhance learning and make a difference in the world.
Research suggests that learning how and where information can be applied should be a central part of all curricular areas. As a founding member of the NY State Performance Standards Consortium, we strongly believe in performance based assessments and are working with other schools to strength the portfolio process. We believe that performance-based assessment may be a more valid indicator of student knowledge and abilities than traditional testing because it requires students to actively demonstrate what their learning. Additionally, students exhibit greater levels of interest and learning when they are required to organize facts around major concepts while actively constructing their understanding of the concepts in a rich variety of contexts. Performance-based assessment requires students to structure and apply information and thereby helps to engage students in this higher order learning.

We could use additional support from design partners to help develop measures of what students have accomplished, against their own hopes and the expectations of others, so they can set new goals and move ahead. The performance-based assessments also help expand public understanding of high school standards through presentations of student work and celebrates the many ways students can apply their knowledge.

5. E TEACHER SCHEDULING

Concern: The current UFT contract limits our ability to adapt to the students’ needs. There is a lack of true common planning time, in-depth internal professional development and the use of outside experts. There exists a need for “design time” for new units and projects. We feel that teacher schedules can be modified in such a way that they can lead student learning experiences outside of the traditional academic school day and school calendar.

Possible Innovation: At City-As-School, we are no stranger to innovative teacher schedules. Our school has allowed teachers to go days without teaching a traditional class since the school was first founded. What we have not been able to do is break free of the regular structure of an academic calendar to offer learning experiences that operate on the schedule of the world we live in. Models such as those used in Brooklyn’s generation schools have shown that altering teacher schedules can be made to allow for a school day that is both longer, and full of more engaging activities than the traditional school year. With City-As-School, we would alter our teacher schedules to allow students to engage in individualized learning experiences that may fall outside of the traditional days of the school year or even the traditional hours of the school day. Students could continue a learning experience into their summer vacation, or students could have an intensive learning experience that takes place during their April vacation. For this to happen teachers need to be confident that they can access school data, and input attendance information outside of school hours, or even outside of the school building. Teachers need to know that their school’s administrative structure can be flexible enough to allow for the most rigorous and relevant learning experience, even if those learning experiences occur outside of the traditional structure.
We also believe that there needs to be a tremendous increase in pedagogue flex-time. Two hours of collaboration time with colleagues every other week is not substantial. Pedagogues should be given the opportunity to establish retreats within the daily school environment. While many teachers already feel overwhelmed by demands on their time in the school day, offering stipends to teachers who are willing to design a project-based unit or an internship packet of the summer can begin momentum towards personalized learning.

We would also like to begin working with organizations like the Institute for Literacy Studies/NYC Writing Project and perhaps Metropolitan Center for Urban Education Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development at New York University might be worth our consideration.

Our teachers desire the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers globally on projects of international importance. For example, YouthCaN is an international, environmental, on-line conference held at the American Museum of Natural History that is interactive and student-led. This is something we’ve always wanted to get involved in but the timing and technology support were never quite there. There are other similar possibilities like Journey North, an on-line interactive program that involves classrooms mapping migrating animals, also a program called iLearn, mentioned above, through the Cloud Sustainability Center that uses an online platform to collaborate and communicate student-led sustainability projects in a six week structured project.

Much of this work is around building in flexibility in the teacher schedules so that teachers can have the time to work with each other, develop curriculum, and recharge after long months of working with students.

5.F STUDENT SCHEDULING

Concern: Student schedules are constantly changing, because students’ lives are constantly changing. As student master certain skills and discover new interests we need to be flexible enough to accommodate their needs.

Possible Innovations:
If our school was able to give students more academically flexible scheduling, we would be able to service our current population better in a variety of ways. Students come to our school with a variety of circumstances that affect scheduling. Pregnant students have a host of doctor’s appointments, and similarly for students with court cases who have to meet with lawyers. If our school could build these into their schedule, instead of forcing students to constantly fall behind, we expect that students will be more successful. An individualized scheduling system like this will have to keep track of the students’ credits hours and seat time with minute detail, while also being aware of what adjustments can be made for the students to have as full a program as they can handle.
Our school currently has a unique system for individualizing students’ schedules which has served us well for over twenty years. For us to be able to find programs for students whose situations require flexibility, we will need a more modern system that can include ways for students to stay on track. This system could involve online learning systems with videotaped lectures and computerized tests and quizzes.

**5.G SPACE FOR INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION**

**Concern:** Our current space produces numerous restrictions to free student movement and the needs of our academic cycle. We are prepared to use our space in more dynamic ways that can allow for more collaboration among students in a variety of ways.

**Possible Innovations:** For our school to learn we need a variety of multi-purpose spaces where it is possible to have meetings with parents, advise students through projects, and small group instruction. Currently our school is organized with a collection of spaces, called offices that we have successfully used for a number of years. We have recently upgraded a number of student workstations in the school, which has helped increase some access for students to computers. Yet, during the end of our cycles when students work on a number of different projects, there is a severe lack of machines available and the problem gets worse as teachers learn to incorporate more technology into their instruction. For these spaces to continue to be useful for staff and students, we need to have an upgrade of computers for staff, as well as a small cart of laptops that can be available for the use of small group instruction, individual students, or even to help show parents how to access their students’ information online.

Ideally, all classrooms should be “labs,” in the sense that they are laboratories for learning and creativity. These spaces need to become comfortable study rooms and interactive spaces. We envision dedicated environments where “loud” and “quiet” collaboration can occur.

For large group classroom instruction, our traditional current classrooms are a stark contrast to the collaborative world of today’s colleges and tomorrows careers. For our students to have more relevant instruction we will need to create more relevant spaces for that instruction to take place. We have taken the first step with this by having a number of classrooms outfitted with current technology and new furniture that is conducive to this environment. After seeing successes with our implementation of Smartboards and the new furniture, we have been unable to continue our efforts to renovate our space because of the recent budgetary concerns. Going forward we would like to create classroom spaces that can allow for students to learn in a collaborative manner that could include technology as much as it includes their own creativity and problem solving skills. We need spaces that can be easily converted into a variety of configurations while providing students access to online data stores, space for manipulatives and equipment, and the ability to engage in either loud or quiet collaboration.
5.H STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Concern: This way of learning is a shock to many students. When students get here, they don’t know how to adjust and how to build the trust with adults.

Possible Innovations: We know that strong support from advisors is essential to the success of each student. One of the areas that we would also like to work on is adapting our guidance intervention services. The way our students communicate with each other and with adults have changed dramatically. In this electronic age, students are much more comfortable communicating on their mobile devices than with in person counseling sessions. We would like to look into the current research and training on how to conduct safe & effective remote counseling or email based counseling.

We have had breakthrough experiences where students reveal serious concerns that they haven’t been able to say to anyone else. Because of our ongoing email exchanges, and the relationship and trust that form between staff and students, many of our students start to open up and start receiving counseling inside and outside of CAS. The emails started the communication and were the modality of counseling at different points. We would like more training in this approach; this would not be instead of face time, but rather in support of it, or as a way of initializing it.

We would also like to investigate an extended orientation session for all of our incoming students. We take in roughly 200 students each fall and another 100 each spring semester. Because of the limited time and fixed teacher schedules, we end up doing a “crash course on CAS” during our orientation. We do not have the time or resources to be able to do a full diagnostic to assess the student’s skill base. Nor do we have the time to get them to bond with each other and develop a sense of community within the cohort. We would like to partner with organizations to be able to take our students out for Outward Bound type of orientation activities.

We believe that we’ve been able to create projects and internships that are based on students’ identified needs and interest. Perhaps we could engage mature, “seasoned” CAS students to team-teach with faculty and help orient and advise newer students.

5.I COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND TALENT UTILIZATION

Concern: City-As-School is uniquely positioned to take advantage of the learning possibilities in New York City and helping to open up those possibilities for some of the most deserving students in our community.

Possible Innovation: For the members of our community that wish to provide services to our school they face a daunting task. First, they would have to become aware that our school exists and contact one of our resource people. Next, we would have to
determine the nature and appropriateness of possible learning experiences that would take place at their site. Finally, we would have to find students whose interests closely align with this experience. For us this process has regularly been done with a series of face to face meetings, and because of our success this process has rarely been altered. As we move forward, the changing role of technology in our world will force us to change the way we communicate with members of our community. As a school, we must be ready to apply to new technologies to this process of opening up resources. With an advanced and easily navigable website, we will be able to spread the word about our school without having to rely solely on word-of-mouth marketing. As we reach out to our community, it is important that we find ways to communicate with them at the current speed of business. This may mean incorporating video chats, document sharing, and other forms of online communication as we work to finalize details of the learning experiences, match students to the best site for them, and partner with the site to provide a quality learning experience for the student.
Technology induced change is nothing new. The real question is not, “What is the role of technology?” Rather, the real question is, “How do good-to-great organizations think differently about technology?”

Jim Collins, Good to Great

For 17 years the mission of El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice has been to inspire and nurture leadership for peace and justice. To this end, the Academy is guided by four core principles that serve as the foundation for all administrative, academic, programmatic and institutional development. These are creating community, love and caring, mastery and peace and justice. The Academy strives to achieve its vision in these three ways: by transforming its members into a comprehensive community learning institution; by integrating the resources of both the school and those of our community based organization, El Puente; and by supporting the holistic development and the highest levels of achievement of Academy students, facilitators and adult members.

El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice is a four-year comprehensive high school, offering a rigorous integrated, project focused, academic program that affords its students the opportunity to:

- **Achieve Mastery** in core curricular subjects – Academy classes meet for 1 hour instead of the traditional 45 minutes.
- **Prepare for Regents examinations** – in addition to rigorous class work, we offer intensive Regents preparatory workshops and study groups.
- **Develop portfolios** and other forms of alternative assessment.
- **Engage in a variety of electives** called educational options including computer technology, public art, children’s books, stage design, SAT prep, chess.
• **Participate in local, national, and international internships and training** – CHE (community Health & Environmental Activists), EPIIC (a Tufts University project), Leadership training at El Puente and Clearwater Internships (a summer on a sailboat) plus many other sites in New York City and the United States.

• **Participate in international student study programs** – Academy students have gone to Italy, Thailand, Hungary, Finland, Japan, China and the U.K.

• **Prepare for college and the workplace** – Academy juniors receive intensive SAT preparatory classes, and internships that allow students to explore career paths.

• **Receive college credits for completion of college courses** – Academy students have the opportunity to take college courses offered in partnership with Hunter College, The New School, and New York University.

• **Nurture and develop artistic and creative abilities** through an extensive arts in education program supported by Projects Arts, and the Afterschool Corporation.

• **Collaborate with other community organizations** – in addition to our Community Based Organization partner, El Puente, the Academy collaborates with The Museum of Natural History, Teachers and Writers Collaborative, and 651, An Arts Center to develop and enhance class curricula.

• **Participate in an extended day program** that offers classes in visual arts, music, dance, video production and computer technologies, and also includes Liberation Hall, a program designed for students to enhance their learning skills, and /or catch up with their classes through intensive tutorial/homework assistance.
• **Community Presentations and Events:** Academy students design many community presentations, which grow out of their curriculum. Yearly events and presentations include the Unity Day, Three Kings Celebration, HIP HOP Showcase, FLY GIRL FEST, and an integrated arts in education project “The Price of Peace, The Cost of War focused around the issues of peace in a world fraught with violence.

• **Integrated Arts Projects:** Integrated arts projects are designed by a team of artists, students, academy facilitators and community organizers to develop student curriculum based on a topic that would integrate the arts, humanities, math and science, and end with a student exhibition and performance.

**CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INNOVATION**

The iZone has the potential to leverage our hedgehog concept of developing leaders for peace and justice that are highly skilled. We envision the technology to create curricula that can be tailored to meet individual needs and be accessible from anywhere there is an Internet portal. We see iZone as a great accelerator of change in how we deliver instruction, not as the replacer of teachers. We imagine the potential to use technology to create lessons, audio and video podcasts, webinars, and teleconferences that allow for rich and innovative ways to learn. In addition, we foresee new structures of scheduling and grade universality that comes with the development of thoughtful and multi-faceted learning units online. We are also excited about the capacity to use student data systems that clearly distill what students know and are able to do based on valid and reliable assessments developed by teachers.

**DATA SYSTEM**

We want to know what young people know and are able to do anytime, anywhere. We collect all types of data on our students: academic, socio-
emotional, attendance, demographic, you name it. The problem is that we have to go to all different kinds of systems to get it. Systems like HSST and ARIS provide a lot of information on our students, but they don’t capture the wealth of information that teachers know about their students, such as what students know and are able to do. At the Academy we have developed a data stream that generates a lot of information about how students are progressing. The Self-Directed Improvement System is the Academy’s operating system. It is the method by which we assess needs of students. The process begins by first setting up mastery targets. Mastery targets are clearly articulated curricular goals with regular periods of assessment. After every teacher wrote mastery targets for their subject area, they did a baseline assessment to see where students were in terms where we wanted to take them. We ultimately created a data stream in our school by developing quarterly assessments aligned to mastery targets, including regents based exams to measure progress towards the targets. Furthermore, in-class assessments were given daily, weekly, and monthly to monitor students’ acquisition of content knowledge and skills required for achieving mastery. The teachers meet at different intervals to review data and take corrective action in the classroom. These cycles of assessments occur every three, six, and nine weeks. Every three weeks teachers come together to assess students’ progress and give interim report cards. Teachers analyze the data and determine what areas they have to re-teach and what other additional support is needed to move students towards mastery. The cycle is repeated three weeks later at the end of the marking period. Every nine weeks teacher-teams administer practice Regents examinations to track the progress of knowledge and skills on a quarterly basis. The exams provide useful feedback to students and teachers. The data stream allows us to regularly generate feedback, that is, a clear understanding of what we must work on to improve. This feedback becomes the basis for strategies explicitly designed to get better results in the classroom.
We would like to have an integrated system that would tell us what skills the students has mastered as well as those that they need to work improve on. We would also want support in thinking about how we capture a student’s socio-emotional needs and the kinds of supports given to him or her. In short a system that can give us a holistic picture of student progress.

**SCHEDULING/NEW STRUCTURES**

At El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, we are deeply committed to heterogeneous education. Ours is a community-based program, which means that we believe in the power of communal learning and that everyone’s knowledge is increased when everyone’s voice is heard. Each human being has a unique perspective, individual talents and personal blind spots. We all grow by interacting with and sharing ideas with people who learn and think differently than we do. All of that said; this type of education can be more difficult than homogenous groupings. It means that we have, for example, in one classroom, students who have taken algebra and students who never understood division. Adding to the difficulties, we also have a number of students who either don’t have a quiet place to work at home or who do not know how to develop the habit of working at home. Finally, we have students who need emotional support, regular check–ins with adults they trust and anger management in order to be able to focus on their academics.

We would like to have more freedom to design alternate schedules to better meet the needs of our students. We are considering half days so teachers have more time to collaborate and create individualized education plans for students who need alternative assignments in order to reach mastery. Also, we would like to create special schedules during assessment time so that students can get attention from more than their regular classroom teachers. For example, we would like to have times when only freshmen and sophomores were in the
building so that junior and senior teachers could participate in giving them feedback on their presentations and projects. Another scheduling concern we have is we would like help in finding ways for those students who need one-on-one time with adults everyday to have those needs met without losing academic time and falling further behind.

One way that we honor different learning styles is by having whole school special events where students plan and run arts-based workshops for one another on a special theme like African American history, health or unity through diversity. These days are intrinsic to the way we build community and teach our values but they often feel separate from what happens in our regular academic classes. We would like some help in figuring out how to better connect these days to our course work and how to assess student learning through participation in these days.

DIFFERENT WAYS OF SHOWING MASTERY

In order to graduate from El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, a student must show mastery in each of six areas: math, science, history, English, human rights and personal growth. As it is now, students show this by doing research, writing papers and presenting their findings to a committee. This works well for many students and we are extremely proud of our graduation process, however, we feel that there are some limits. Creativity is one of our guiding principles and we have always wanted there to be more options for showing mastery in a particular area. We would love for students to have the option of writing a short story, making a documentary film, preparing and executing a workshop, designing a website or any other of a myriad of ways that exist to demonstrate learning in a way that is fulfilling to the student and useful to the community. Unfortunately, given limited time, resources and skills, we always fall back on papers because that is what we know how to teach and how to assess.
We see the iZone as a great opportunity to work with our design partners to expand the options for our graduation portfolio.

WORKING WITH SUBGROUPS

This is particularly important with certain subgroups of our population. Students with an Individualized Educational Plan and English Language Learners make up 30% of our student population. Many of these students struggle to succeed in the core academic subjects. In order for them to achieve mastery, we provide them with mandated services, such as Integrated Co-teaching, Speech, push-in or pullout Teacher Support Services, and Counseling. In addition to these services we provide them with morning and after-school tutoring in the classes that they are most struggling with.

The iZone would allow us to use technology as a powerful tool to provide these students with additional remedial and compensatory support services that they could access in school or independently anywhere that there is technology available to them. It would allow us to design an online curriculum that targets the development and acquisition of different sets of skills. In doing so we would reduce the student’s reliance on teachers as their only support and foster a sense of independence. This would also accelerate the work of our Special Education teachers allowing them to provide services to more students at a time

Here are a few thoughts on how we could use technology to support this work:

1. Design online activities that would provide them with immediate feedback on their writing and arithmetic skills. Homework would be more polished because they would have access to assistance at home.
2. Creating a drop down menu or pop ups that would provide students with guiding questions or strategies that will help them arrive at an answer as opposed to auto correcting a mistake.

3. Students could view the day’s lessons at home to support with homework and projects.

4. Students could access audio versions of readings and texts at home.

5. Create template and formats for students to organize their ideas; alternative colors on the computer screen, color coded text, graphic organizers, and outlining tools to help compensate for difficulty in organizing or sequencing thoughts and ideas.

**TIMELINE**

During the Summer of 2011, we would bring some teachers together along with our design partner to plan and post online units of learning that are differentiated to meet students learning needs.

**Year One- Gradual Roll Out**

We would roll out online curriculum options for our target population (Special education students and English Language learners.)

**Trimester One**

Curriculum and Activities would be posted online such as Regents Prep, writing, reading remediation courses, and language acquisition lessons.

**Trimester Two**

In addition to the above, we would like to roll out Incomplete Packets in English and History in the eleventh grade; these are packets of work for students who didn’t complete all the required assignments. These are offered whose grade average falls between a 45-64. These students would have the opportunity to
work after-school with the support of a teacher/coach or at home to complete their class requirements.

**Trimester Three**
In addition to the above: After school and night school for credit recovery and AP courses.

**Year Two**
Implement structural and curricular changes based on assessment of Year One. Add eleventh grade Math, Science, College and SAT Preparation to the online curriculum.

**Year Three- Expanding-turnkey staff development/implementation**
Eleventh and Twelfth Grade teachers lead the implementation of iZone curriculum options for the tenth grade, including students with IEPs and ELLs in grades 9-12, and students in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades. We would offer opportunities for students to take online courses, use technology to access resources and strategies from anywhere, multiple ways to achieve mastery through interactive and creative portfolio based presentations.
iZone Application

January 2011

Introduction

Charles Hamilton Houston, the famous civil rights lawyer, once stated, “A lawyer’s either a social engineer or he’s a parasite on society.” Teachers and the institutions where they serve must function in a similar fashion— as agents and architects of change. At a moment when public education is undergoing a process of profound changes, we at Luperón see our role as becoming the premier Bilingual Academy and a model of ESL education.

With an enrollment of 500 students, Gregorio Luperón, a high school located in the heart of Washington Heights, is a high school for new immigrants. Since September 2008 it occupies a state-of-the-art new building and serves newly-arrived youngsters, ages 14-18, who have completed 8 years of formal education in their native countries. We take students from Junior High and Intermediate schools that have been in the country for less than two years.

The school offers a strong curriculum in science and mathematics. The average daily attendance is above 90%. Our day consists of nine forty-seven minute periods. The students receive a program that increasingly moves them from bilingual classes to a more English-dominant environment.

Gregorio Luperón’s faculty is composed of 28 teachers, fully certified in their subject area. We have four full time administrators, two bilingual guidance counselors and a social worker.

We are an Empowerment School with the liberty and flexibility to tailor our own educational agenda. We promote the Children First initiative by adopting a daily model
that instills academic rigor, high accountability and continued student performance. Gregorio Luperón High School aims to nurture and challenge students to high standards of scholarship and leadership in both Spanish and English. We strive to foster an environment of academic excellence aimed at contributing to our society by producing and promoting highly competitive students with the abilities and skills to succeed in college and society.

It is with open arms that we embrace this new initiative, because we understand that “The Future” has arrived. Luperon as a small learning community understands the need to narrow the educational gap that separates Latino students from their White, Asian and Black counterparts by immersing them in the most diverse and rigorous learning system. A learning community like ours possesses some of the key elements needed to succeed. For instance, students are well-known and visible to their teachers allowing for their learning needs, talents and interests to be more readily ascertained and addressed. Our faculty size also empowers us to build consensus around a philosophy that values personalization.

The iZone initiative will find a team of people that will not walk away from the challenge, magnitude and scope of the work; it is a very passionate and very highly committed team that embraces this new venture knowing that they will spearhead this break from the traditional classroom and, therefore, welcome innovation and change.

The new learning instructional model that we are proposing to implement in our school will borrow from those districts and schools that have a history of promoting a healthy development of school success for all their students. We will adhere to Carol Lieber’s (2002) proposal of 10 core practices addressing four key goals:
1. Personalizing learning and the learning environment by strengthening the quality of relationships between and among students and teachers and shifting from teacher-centered to student-centered learning.

2. Co-creating a community of learners where everyone feels safe, welcomed, respected, and connected by establishing group agreements and guidelines; solving classroom problems as they arise; and participating in academic tasks that encourage cooperation, mutual support, and responsive listening and speaking.

3. Meeting the developmental and cultural needs of changing adolescents by insisting on high expectations for all and providing care and support so students can meet them; by recognizing adolescents’ growing need to develop autonomy, control, and mastery; and by affirming the range of differences among students through culturally responsive teaching and differentiated learning.

4. Modeling, teaching, and practicing life skills that enhance students’ self-management and self-discipline, interpersonal efficacy, and group participation and leadership skills.

**Needs Assessment**

- To increase the percentage of students earning 10+ credits per year.
- To enhance the flexibility of the 9 period bell schedule and coursework for:
  - 12th grade students needing to complete 10+ credits and 1+ Regents Examination.
  - accelerated track students.
  - non-college bound students.
- To engender and enrich opportunities for the accelerated track and the non-college bound student alike, including:
  - projects, inquiry learning teams, portfolios
  - internships, community service
  - distance learning
Gregorio Luperón High School
New York City Department of Education
An Empowerment School
Juan Villar, Principal

501 West 165th Street, New York, NY 10032
Tel.: (212) 928-1205, Fax: (212) 928-1309
http://www.LuperonHS.org

• experiential learning (educational excursions)

• To improve level of literacy across content area.

• To improve the reading skills of our students
  o Assess individual student literacy/numeracy using NWEA (or similar service)
  o Raise SAT scores above 500

• Introduce advanced research based skills to our students

• To increase the number of students graduating on time.

• To broaden our students’ horizon in Math and Science.

• To increase the AP course offerings.

What can students and parents expect from an education at Gregorio Luperón High School?

• Multiple academic and social opportunities that will focus on preparing our students to excel at the college level and beyond.

• Students will be nurtured by a staff committed to your development as an individual and as a member of a community.

• Our goal at Luperón is to give our students the necessary tools to succeed while ingraining in them a sense of collectiveness and solidarity as to motivate them to be active in their community and contribute to its improvement.

• Students will read and write across content areas and will work on problem based projects that will challenge and engage you.

• Students will have the opportunity to participate in trips and after school activities such as dance, drama, film making, sports, community service programs, internships, and clubs. These extracurricular activities are intended to help you make connections between what you are learning inside and outside of the classroom and how that learning can be applied to various situations.
• At Luperón students will become critical thinkers who research ideas, solve problems, and who are able to make decisions that will positively impact them and those around them.

An education at Gregorio Luperón High School will turn our students into a well-rounded individual, who is not only academically knowledgeable in all subject areas and proficient in both English and Spanish, but is also a person who explores, debates, challenges, and produces ideas with the necessary skills to put them into practice for the service of others.

The tools, information, guidance and support necessary to turn these ideas into big projects are always at your disposal at Luperón. The sense of comradeship, commitment to their community, and cultural pride that they will develop as Luperonian, along with the solid educational formation obtained here, will assure numerous achievements in future academic, professional, social and personal endeavors. In an effort to accelerate this process, Luperón high school is eager to join the iZone as the most revolutionary vehicle to in-house educational reform and innovation. A team of teachers and administrators have concluded that the essential elements of this project are embedded in the following programs:

1. Distance Learning.

   a. The distance learning school is viewed, at Luperón, as a vehicle to promote alternative delivery methods of teaching and learning. It is the system and process that connects learners and instructors when they are “…physically separated by time or space…” as Susan M. Powers established. We fully accept and join Ms. Powers’ definition when she established that, “An asynchronous distance learning environment allows the instructor and student to interact according to their own time needs,
thereby allowing class participation among a disperse group of students who live in remote geographical areas or have differing time schedules.” Students will be able to use the newer technologies such as e-mail, web-based discussion forums, chats and courses delivered through the internet to complete their high school required course work and move on to college. This component will include:

- Research projects using virtual libraries
- Reading e-books and answering to problems and discussion groups
- Taking tests on-line
- Participating in workshops and conferences presented by a virtual guess speaker
- Registering for on-line college courses
- Completing credits and assignments on-line (Credit recovery)

b. The Gregorio Luperón Distance Learning success resides in how creative the faculty will be in providing an answer to the different learning styles of our students by exposing them to:

- Excellent materials presented to our students in the most flexible form. For instance, we must combine multiple short assignments in different styles to preserve course flexibility, reinforce key concepts and rigorously address different learning styles. Therefore, we will not attempt to provide all materials via the internet. Consequently, the iZone faculty will encourage students to engage in explorations, surveys, creative works and self-assessments as appropriate tools to strengthen their educational foundation.
- Excellent pedagogy is paramount to our students’ success regardless of the mode of instruction; however, it is essential when choosing a technology medium. Our faculty will be guided by clear objectives matched to crystal clear assessment tools; they will select appropriate discussion topics and the effective use of illustration and visuals.

- Quality assurance and delivery will be monitored by regular visits of the staff members to the online discussion sections and by providing critical feedback to the instructor. All courses will be revised annually. In attempting to provide the most rigorous setting, our faculty will adhere to The Concord Model (Hoadley and Pea 2001). They have “…found that course preview, monitoring, and assessment are essential from four perspectives: instructional design, content, delivery, and impact.” Instructional design, they proposed, is specified by an extensive course standards rubric against which all courses are judged.

c. Providing appropriate Professional Development to our staff. The World Wide Web notwithstanding, electronic media technologies offer educators the opportunity to rewrite and reconsider content and to think of ways to reach students and teach them as they never have before. Media as teaching tools “…have less to do with efficiency than with the way they alter conceptions of learning and instructing. Creativity (synectics), imagery, teaching strategies, learning styles, instructing models, and intellectual dimensions are issues to consider when developing computer-based learning media”. (Ronald M. Stammen and Mark A. Schmidt 2001).
2. Personalizing the school.

   a. Researchers have found that students from low-income families are less likely to have access to course assignment guidance both at home and at school. Moreover, they have established that students from upper socioeconomic backgrounds tend to have more exploratory interviews with their school counselors. At Luperón, we will seek to establish an Advisory Session for all incoming 9th graders. The guidance counselors and teachers assigned must address this matter by:

      - engaging our students in exploring the course assignments as a tool to increase or decrease educational opportunity
      - devising ways to clearly communicate to students and their parents the importance of academic choices
      - helping students register for appropriate courses
      - helping the students understand the relationship between curriculum choices and future economic success
      - raising awareness of higher education

   b. “All people, particularly those who have been marginalized in society, need more life choices.” (Lee and Walz 1998) At Luperón, we will provide our students with a flexible schedule that will allow them to:

      • Take several English classes to master your new second language, as well as Spanish classes to improve your native one. In both areas you will focus on written and oral communication and will develop critical thinking skills that will be essential for your success in all the other disciplines.
      • They will read several literary texts that will help to develop their own writing style while exploring the human condition and getting to know themselves better.
• In Art and Music classes students will study different artistic expressions and will be able to appreciate these two subjects in a historical framework and awaken their creativity and self expression.
• In Science classes they will perform laboratories through which they will be able to conduct scientific research and explore the different content areas such as Biology, Chemistry and Physics.
• In Mathematics they will develop logical skills by resolving equations and conducting both qualitative and quantitative research. This will allow them to use and master mathematical expressions as if they were your third language.
• In Social Studies students will learn about the history of the World. They will uncover the past through primary source documents that you will be able to analyze and apply to current trends and events.

Combining this personalized approach with a creative schedule, we are certain that our students will be able to benefit from a vast list of structural approaches that will combine –for sure- the school setting, colleges, evening school, project based instruction, field work and research based projects. Students will also be able to take advantage of internships, seminars, workshops, etc. provided these offerings meet the standards set forth to assess the learning and readiness of our students.

3. Literacy Development. “The ability of students to read, write, and communicate (a set of skills that by tradition are collectively referred to as “Literacy”) stands among the most current concerns pertaining to academic achievement in public education.”(Zipper, Worley, Sisson and Said 2002) In addressing this issue, Luperon high school faces a humongous task but, somehow similar to what has been reported nationwide.
Low literacy skills have been associated with an array of issues such as: lack of time devoted to reading instruction, number of hours students spent watching television each day, poor strategies used to guide young readers, the assignment of reading as a homework rather than using class time, and lately it is associated with the new accountability system and its dependence on standardized testing. In trying to provide a model to overcome these barriers, we will strive to implement the following:

- To improve reading instruction in non-English/ESL language arts courses.
- To provide teachers with in-service opportunities to acquire skills in reading instruction.
- To integrate reading in the school curriculum. We know that reading becomes more meaningful to students when it is seen as a critical part of all courses rather than as an isolated skill in one.
- Educator will model reading for pleasure.
- To promote small groups enhances learning. When students are encourage to work collaboratively with peers, productivity and achievement are increased.
- Integrating technology into the instructional process.
- To promote the strategy of using symbols, pictures, and other nonlinguistic signs to represent ideas from reading.
- Content teachers must become catalysts for learning by helping students in their efforts to read and learn from texts.

Summary

The iZone reaches beyond the present time to open the future for our students. The Distance Learning, Personalizing Instruction and Literacy development are all part of one goal: to foster an environment of intellectual growth that helps our students to be successful in both college and society. We understand the importance of celebrating individual ways of accessing knowledge, creating understanding, and uniquely expressing it.
The iZone will help our students cultivate imagination and creativity by connecting their educational process with a sense of ownership and pride. Students will be the architect of their own educational paths as they engage the school community in designing the course work needed for them to be successful. They will fashion their own futures with their own hands.

Paulo Freire wrote in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that, “True generosity lies in striving so that these hands — whether of individuals or entire peoples — need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world.” Our role as educators calls us to be the engineers of this transformation.

In the process we will reinvent teaching as an inspired, innovative, revolutionary and futuristic vehicle capable of transcending all myths tied to time, place, and accessibility. Mastering new instructional strategies and technology is the ultimate goal of every school; however, to obtain it we need the financial support to develop, sustain and promote best practices. Welcome to the future!
NYC Lab School for Collaborative Studies
Innovation-Zone Proposal
January 2011
Principal, Brooke Jackson

OVERVIEW

Who We Are: The Lab school challenges students to soar intellectually and to act bravely in our complex world community. We are a mission-driven school.

In living our mission, our signature strengths include:

• A community of students, teachers, administrators, staff, and families who honestly and deeply understand and value our mission and philosophy.
• A culture of care: explicit attention to Social Emotional Learning (SEL), students and staff alike.
• A broadly understood and wholly incorporated school wide rubric “Habits of Lab Learners” (HoLL) that that asserts, defines, explicates, and seeks to operationalize the process skills our community values (i.e. Persistence, Tolerating Ambiguity, Collaboration, Inquiry).
• A model, longstanding, Special Education Inclusion Program.
• Students and teachers who genuinely enjoy collaboration and know how to marry collaborative practices with academic rigor.

CURRENT CONTEXT

• Diagnostics/Assessments: We do not always know with confidence what students know, what they do not yet know, what’s getting in the way—gaps in academic readiness and affective self-awareness both, and what strengths may potentially be leveraged in support of these deficits. Meaningful, granular assessments of student needs remain difficult given limited time, capacity issues—physical space, staffing, and underlying funding—and student/teacher ratio in our current traditional configuration.

• Responsive Teaching: Despite many moves to respond to student-demonstrated needs, and to challenge every student appropriately, we find that select students—general education and special education alike—need more: remediation, formative assessment, guidance, and enrichment. Our shared grade derivation formula, shared writing rubric, common teaching planning time, aligned course curriculum guides, and broad-base Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) praxis have all been

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constructive, but have not yet fully allowed for the achievement of all students.

• **Differentiation at the Classroom or Program Level:** We experience the double-bind of working to both differentiate at the level of the program (offer remedial and accelerated courses to meet students where they are) and to differentiate within the heterogeneous classroom. These conflicting and often mutually exclusive programmatic choices in practice, when applied simultaneously, as they are currently at Lab, do not fully solve the problem of reaching all students. That is to say:
  o On the one hand, traditional tracking creates a socially/emotionally damaging school environment. It precludes the injunction that students take responsibility for one another’s learning, and also the educational merits of casting difference in and of itself as a site of learning.
  o Heterogeneous classrooms present their own set of problems. We experience a double injury: in an effort to avoid losing struggling students, good, caretaking teachers demand less of all students. They simplify content and skills instruction and slow the pace of delivery. These classes are therefore less rigorous and engaging for all than they might be. High achieving students are frustrated. Tragically, in this scenario, our CTT program and still struggling students get blamed by those alienated students more ready to take on challenge. We believe in CTT, but worry that 34 students with a range of needs and two teachers in 46 minutes is not an effective formula.

• **Student Initiative, Voice, Agency, and Passion:** All too often, students do not know how to employ the self-discipline to learn, or are not motivated to learn the civic and cultural content that we collectively value. Too many students walk into the room asking “What are we doing today?” or even worse – waiting for the teacher to perform, and resting easy in the fact that the teacher will work very diligently. Even great students know to wait for the instruction of the day.

**VISION**

• **Recasting Roles:** If we can define a required curriculum which students need to go through at their own pace, using various resources at home, and in school, and using regularly scheduled classes as sites of teacher support and collaborative learning, then the onus of responsibility for

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learning would move from the teacher to the student. This is the fundamental shift that needs to take place. Students must—as individuals and as members of a community of learners—take ownership of the curriculum and the learning environment. The role of the teacher then shifts: educators will introduce, model, support, and reinforce these skills of self and social awareness. Teachers and students together will then cultivate an ethos and expectation of collective responsibility. Our hope: authentic practice of these ways of being and learning here at Lab inspire our students’ incisive participation in the Universe of Obligation.

- **Free teacher-as-resource**: to be with those students who need individual attention, emotional support, and targeted instruction AND to create spaces in which those students who are ready to work more independently/collaboratively may work at the pace they need in order to be fulfilled intellectually and emotionally.

- **Reposition when/how students are introduced to, practice and are assessed for skills and content understanding**: We are proposing practice/praxis on projects during the day, and new lecture or demo-based skill/content/concept-upload at night, or off the grid of teacher instructional time. Consider the notion of “home schooling” at school. This conception implies the following:
  - Students are responsible for, and empowered to control the pace of their learning, and to solicit the support staff (teachers, as well as their peers) they need to gain mastery. Teachers decide flow and direction of content and skills, ultimately culminating in graduation requirements.
  - “Homework” as we know it and a correlative compliance-based assessment model, becomes de trope.
  - Teachers’ roles, time apportionment, and senses of self are shifted to be like conductors, coordinators, tutors, mental health care providers, parents, model students, and coaches, rather than simply bankers of content.
  - Make the shift from traditional teacher daily lesson plans, divorced from student self-awareness, drive, motivation to student action plans for their self-sponsored learning that the teacher supports.

- **Shift in skill and accomplishment awareness, from the teacher to the student**: Student self-awareness is far more vital than cursory teacher knowledge of a hundred students.

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Anything that can be formatively self-tested (math, science, any memorization or objective skill) can be self-graded in preparation for a teacher graded summative assessment.

For formative assessment of work that is more subjective (labs, essays, anything creative or more complex), students will need to solicit peer review from older students and revise based on that feedback before presenting to teachers. Teachers will need to give formative feedback on final portfolios, and grade summative assessments.

Seniors, as a part of their Keystone phase can be responsible for peer reviewing & guiding the work of 5 students through their National Core Standards phase. This peer review work would be creditable.

PROPOSED MOVES—PRIMARY:

• Individualized Educational Plans for all students:
  o Each week, each student meets one-on-one with her Faculty Advisor to craft, monitor, and revise the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) that addresses both affective and academic needs and goals and so personalizes and versions common curriculum and experience, accounting for choice, concentration, strengths and struggles in the context of a shared core Lab journey.
  o IEPs are digital for ease of sharing, revising, and archiving.

• Mixed Grade Advisory Groups:
  o Approximately 20 students (5 from each grade) assemble weekly for 100 minutes (sometimes in 20 minute blocks 5 times a week, other times for longer periods of time less often).
  o Advisory’s Dialogic Curriculum fosters:
    ▪ Conscious cultivation of collective responsibility.
    ▪ Conscious cultivation of meaningful membership: to Advisory Group, within Lab’s extra-curricular scene, belonging to Lab at large.
    ▪ Deliberate and personal storytelling (narrative exposure to the arc of Lab School: experienced students look back and share; newer students look forward and project).
    ▪ Teaching and practice of physical/spiritual health and well-being: meditation, yoga, stretching/breathing, physical activity, reflective journaling, healthy eating.

• 9th Grade Critical Literacy Block:

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Each section (ideally with as few as 20 students; current class size is 35) works with/is supported by an ELA teacher, history teacher, and special educator.

Curriculum is interdisciplinary and project-driven encompassing the following strands:

- Media Literacy
- Critical Thinking
- Reading (workshop, independent, as a social act)
- Writing: Reflective, Expository (independent, workshop, writing circles)
- Research (library, online, citation)
- Technology: Online Portfolio Processes, (how to be an online learner)
- SEL, Facing History
- Current Events (“morning meeting”)  
- Ethics/Justice
- Organization/Executive Functioning

Break out space/multiple classrooms provided for strategic groupings/parallel “play”; 

Block of 150 minutes 4 times a week;

Art, Theater, Music, Technology teachers push in;

Special Educators/ELL Teacher/Guidance/Related Service Providers push in and pull out individuals and groups of students with the aim of refined diagnostics and continued targeted support;

“9th Grade Critical Literacy” provides instruction of Common Core skills and content understandings, as well as practice, assessment, intervention and course credit in ELA, Global Studies, Art/Music, and Health.

Orientation to Lab Elements:

- Habits of Lab Learners—our school wide rubric that asserts, defines, explicates, seeks to operationalize the process skills our community values (i.e. Persistence, Tolerating Ambiguity, Collaboration, Inquiry)
- Anatomy/Touchstones of Lab: mission, writing rubric, honor code, (human) resources, programs/offerings, (extra)curricular opportunities
- Communication (Lab TED; Lab Applications (aps); website; follow Lab on twitter; Lab-radio; publications)
• Responsible, socially appropriate use of technology/communication devices;
• Positive, safe, web identity.
  ▪ Health—recast as “how do I frame critical questions; how do I find the information/answers I need”—gets taken up in this context via:
    • Reflective Journal Writing protocol;
    • Skills to Access reliable information quickly/effectively;
    • Introduction to skills of Social Emotional Learning;
    • Research projects, current online content/curriculum;
    • Leadership role in multi-media HIV/AIDS ACTION Day;
    • Leadership role in bringing some of the “health” matter to mixed grade Advisory for further consideration.
• Art Workshop once a week for the 120 block: students choose to practice/make/engage music, art, theater, and/or dance.

PROJECTED GAINS:
  o As a school already always engaged in Action Research, we aim to more pointedly test and study our thesis: smaller class size, more intimate student access to teachers in CTT classrooms, heterogeneous student groupings, daily schedule (borrowing from Elementary Ed) within a long (critical literacy) program block, interdisciplinary studies, and an integrated visual/performing arts and technology program will provide for incisive diagnostics, ongoing formative assessments, responsive teaching, dynamic student groupings, meaningful teacher teaming, and subsequently, student progress, performance and overall academic achievement and social emotional intelligence and wellness. **In short, Personalized Mastery Learning is predicated on self reflection, social awareness and the human experience.**

PROPOSED MOVES—SECONDARY:
Alongside IEPs for all, Mixed grade Advisory and “9th Grade Critical Literacy”, we aim to implement and get smarter about how to further incorporate the following instructional methods and structures. The sites we have selected for exploration in Year One and subsequent development/further application:

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Entry level math and science (Algebra 1; Living Environment) “I-learn,” online skills development/lower level content treatment, online Lab work towards Regents preparation at student’s own pace.

I-Learn/other online coursework/course supplements/manipulatives/multi-media to augment the following courses: AP Environmental (accelerated Senior Science); Environmental Studies—multi-media/modality course for Seniors who may struggle with science (and underlying numeracy and literacy skills).

Computer Science Elective course—in development.

Music and art electives featuring technology.

Credit Recovery opportunities—all subjects—via online learning.

Improve current AP Spanish Language Course (currently Aventa) with audio/video Language Lab and more robust online curricula featuring discussion. Provide possibility for other foreign language study.

Explore distance learning possibilities—both offering out some of our courses and hooking our students into study opportunities without.

Building our own online curriculum data-base: projects, resources, lectures, links, trace/archives of lesson plans, assessments as they have been taught.

Electronic Student Profiles (supplement to online Student Portfolios of student-generated goals/work/progress reports and reflections) that help facilitate a) a horizontal look at each child across subject areas at a given moment b) the vertical progress a student makes as she moves through course sequence in a discipline c) the “pass-along” of students from teacher to teacher with effective sharing of ‘data’ not captured in ARIS—teacher comments/reflections about student progress, performance, learning styles and needs.

PROGRAMMING and SCHEDULING:
Having scaled the HSST wall, developed a brilliant program Chair, and successfully programmed all our students into a neat program that does not lend to personalized mastery-based instruction, we’ll need some help breaking it apart without falling apart.

We would like to:
• Allow for more deliberate co-planning/teacher teaming time.
• Consider 20 minute flexi-blocks of time that may be stacked and separated on a fluid, student-need-driven basis.
• Provide series of abbreviated courses (9 week seminars?) to provide for a broader base of student-exposure and to showcase teacher passion and expertise. Ideas/proposals from current staff include:
  o Genetics;
  o Conversational French;
  o Existentialism and Phenomenology;
  o Art History (various time periods/movements);
  o Garage Band;
  o Geography;
  o Gardening;
  o Japanese Language Study;
  o Modern Dance;
  o Robotics;
  o Cooking;
  o Greek Tragedy;
  o Marxist Theory;
  o Math Modeling;
  o Weight Training.

• Provide pilot alternative programming for those students (grades 10-12) whose struggles prevent them from succeeding in our current model. Build on these leanings and offer alternative creditable experiences to all students.
  o Begin with our “lowest 3rd” and select a smaller target group of 20 students in need of extensive diagnostics (what’s getting in the way, what strengths may be leverages to support struggles); innovative and varied modes of instructional delivery; intimate teacher coaching, support, targeted instruction, robust guidance support/intervention.
  o Saturday School/Evening School/Mentoring Intensive: Combine physical activity, eating a meal, group therapy, and studying. A core group of students (placed) at risk—first wave this spring includes 10 boys, grades 10 and 11)—meet regularly with a special educator to play basketball, share dinner, talk about school, identity, family and related social matters, and work together on projects, papers, exam prep.
  o Use existing alternate creditable programs—Hudson Sails, for example.

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o Hone a smart way to monitor, support, track Independent Study (for physical education, initially, then broadening the base) and Internships.
o Grow our existing Community Service Requirement to a true Service learning Program.
o Trips as experiential learning—to the Chelsea galleries, to the Catskill Mountains, to colleges across the nation, to the Mexican boarder, and abroad! How to arrange for this in a way that is safe, consistent with our “equity of access” value system, affordable, in compliance with regulations so as not to leave schools/principals so vulnerable. News media, critical incidents, culture of fear disincentivizes principals’ allowing for such (ad)ventures. How to trouble the risk/reward matrix?
ONGOING PROJECTS NEEDING ATTENTION (and likely, further innovation):
We are working to and welcome support in:

• Deliberately back-mapping those skills and understandings necessary for students to succeed in signature mission-driven culminating Lab engagements: Senior Keystone: self-directed qualitative research project re-presented to an authentic audience in a deliberately selected medium to convey message/finding/questions to incite action, and Human Rights Studies: interdisciplinary college level social studies coursework dedicated to a study of the vicissitudes of human rights matters: theoretical, practical, domestic and abroad (descriptions of both curricular pinnacles attached).

• Refine and systematize Professional Development Structures including:
  o Teacher education course: explicit skills instruction in Social Emotional Learning (SEL) including explicit anti-racist/anti-bias curricula.
  o Practice of Instructional Rounds through the lens of “Student Engagement”.
  o Teacher “IEP” or reflective goal-setting process.
  o Teacher (professional) Portfolio process.
  o Teacher praxis series—sharing and critiquing best practices.
  o Teacher (planning, community-building) retreat series.
  o Teacher reading series: next text, “Courageous Conversations”.
  o Teacher writing group: professional publications/personal narratives.

• Establish a strong, non-negotiable curricular, extracurricular, cultural through-line dedicated to our project of Social Justice and Social Emotional Learning.

• Develop our best practices in the face of Special Education Reform, providing targeted, personalized supports and programming with granular specificity—including mixed programs of SETTS, CTT, Resource Room (“skills” as we have called it, as needed. Note, often these provisions require staff (special educators especially) beyond the funding formula.

• Continue and refine our Accreditation Dialogue: What Counts as Creditable Work? How can we clearly, transparently and consistently apply our specs to a wide range of experiences—producing a play, planning and leading an action, building a bibliography for a course, “working…” and demonstrating understandings.

PHYSICAL PLANT, DEVELOPMENT:

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More Room, physical space in which to play, to come to know one another, to show what we have come to master in our time together. Twelve classrooms on one floor of a building shared by 3 school schools and a community-based organization make it difficult to expand the base of student opportunity. We would like a Commons, small rooms for break-out, conferring, and seminar-style/resource room and instructional opportunities and support, an Art Gallery, a Music Studio, an entrance/foyer that is uplifting! Now, students must leave a little piece of themselves at the door in order to weather coming inside…the building is so depressing.

o Authentic Work Spaces, designed not as classrooms, but as workshops, studios, ateliers, labs, libraries, gardens in which for learning to take place.

o Community Connections/Relations: adjacent to the Highline, Google, Hudson Guild, Chelsea Piers, Chelsea Market, a host of galleries and soon, the Whitney Museum of American Art, we aim to build on budding relationships and develop creditable learning opportunities for our students.

o Fresh Air/Bodies in motion: We need to move our bodies during the day. Walk the riverbank. Shoot some hoops. Stretch. Ride bikes. We know this. It is anti-intellectual—unenlightened—for students and teachers and staff to sit all morning, rush through a meal, sit all afternoon. Bad modeling, bad practice, setting a dangerous stage.

o Physical Safety: Our building is not secure. Between 1½ SSAs for 1500 students, the configuration of the lobby, lack of cameras and gates to block off unsupervised spaces after hours, we worry.

EXPLICIT TECHNOLOGY NEEDS:
• Individual Network—discrete from 02M312 and 02M414 with whom we share the building.
  o Wireless purposes – Allowing for a lot more freedom/speed with additional laptops for student and faculty use.
  o Connectivity in every classroom, office space, and public space – wireless and wired, general clean up and organization.
  o Bird’s eye monitoring of student online work by Technology Coordinator – allowing some freedom with a hand over the shoulder.

• Classroom Connectivity
  o Finish Eno installation in every classroom, including SMARTBoard classrooms for uniformity and consistency between teachers and classrooms.

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Webcam for each classroom for distance collaboration and multiple classroom lecture spaces.
- 15 laptops in every classroom.
- Teacher workstation in every classroom/laptop safe – again with consistency between classrooms and allowing for movement of teachers without boarders/restraints.
- Surround sound system in every classroom for viewing purposes of films and student projects.

**Faculty Connectivity**
- Laptop for every teacher – affording the freedom to move and “create your own office.”

**Technology Lab**
- Air conditioning to protect hardware.
- Increased Software Budget
  - In house Software
    - Adobe CS5 Software Suite School License
    - Final Cut Pro School License
  - Online Subscriptions

**Server Room**
- Air conditioning to server to protect overheating.

**Virtual Desktop**
- Student login.
- Print capabilities/monitoring—with an eye toward a paperless community.
- Access from anywhere.

**Newscast**
- Daily offering for students to explore professional practice of journalism.
- Green Screen or green wall.
- Professional Grade camcorder and sound equipment.

**Lab TED**
- Ability to record.
- Sharing of ideas and lectures online.

**Attendance**
- Electronic student attendance—swipe IDs as students move fluidly through the building (and beyond)?

**IN CLOSING:**
Our Ideal—Lab-topia!—would allow our mission-driven school to:

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o Actively Value the principles reflected in our school-wide rubric, including Collaboration, Inquiry, Self and Social Awareness, Personal and Collective Responsibility, and Social Justice;

o Teach what we value, using creative, critical pedagogy, responsive teaching, technology, our bodies and hearts as well as our minds, the world outside the classroom;

o Access (be a detective of the human soul) and tend to student need, passion drive, desire;

o Cultivate student (and teacher) voice, choice, agency, creativity, intellect, and responsibility;

o Support those who struggle to fully realize their best selves (academically and otherwise): guidance, differentiation of instructional approach, pluralism of ways of knowing/showing knowledge—health, care, safety at every turn;

o Assess for what we have taught in a way that provides ample and varied opportunity for all students to demonstrate deep, enduring understandings. “Grades” then, become indicators that all learners have been challenged, inspired, marked, and changed by the quality collaborative, recursive journey that is Lab;

o Know—in a deep way, that we have made clear to all our students, teachers, parents, staff what we are valuing, teaching and assessing for and why, and that we have provided a wide range of pathways of exposure, instruction, practice and assessment, reflection and (potential future) application for all.

Thank you for the invitation to dream.

Sincerely,

Brooke Jackson for the Lab School Community
NYC Lab School Attachment: Curriculum Letter

Dear 12th grade Students and Families,

Welcome to Human Rights Studies! Please read through this curriculum letter and sign the bottom to demonstrate your understanding of our course expectations.

Introduction

Human rights are universal. Human rights are local. Nations are the protectors of human rights. Nations are the violators of human rights. Since the end of the Cold War the ever-expanding pursuit of human rights has tightened the connection between individuals, groups, the media, non-governmental organizations and nations themselves. Yet the transition from rights-related dialogue to the realization of human rights has been and remains imperfect.

Building upon your knowledge of history and contemporary international affairs, this course seeks to expand your understanding of the complex intersection between those who view human rights from above (nations) and those who advocate for human rights guarantees from below (non-governmental organizations, groups and individual actors).

Central to this course is the enhancement of your communication & advocacy skills. This includes your ability to synthesize multiple and competing perspectives and to present understandings through persuasive writing, public speaking and multi-media presentations. This course uses contemporary news sources, scholarly articles, film, literature, guest speakers and technology to support your understanding of the theory and practice of human rights, and how we can transform from being human rights observers into human rights advocates.

Course Essential Questions:

• Unit 1: What does it mean to be human? What are the strengths and limitations of contemporary human rights theory and practice? Which Rights Are Most Essential for ensuring a Human Rights-Respecting Existence?
• Unit 2: At the Intersection of Human Rights Theory & Practice: Can the Human Right to Clean Drinking Water Eliminate Economic Disparities?
• Unit 3: More than Halfway There: How Will You Fulfill the Millennium Development Priorities?

Texts Studied in Course:

• The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
• International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights
• International Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights.
• PBS' Wide Angle Film: Back to School, 2008

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History Department Grading Policy:
Grades in this course are based upon the following:
10% Habits of Lab Learners
20% Homework & Quizzes
25% Major Projects
20% Exams:
10% Midterm Examination
15% Final Exam
Reminders:
• SnapGrades, Lab’s online gradebook of record will be used throughout this course. Be sure that you and your parents have an active SnapGrades logon.

• All students should be familiar with our schoolwide expectations as expressed in the Lab School Honor Code, Lab School Family Online Handbook and the Department of Education Bill of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

• According to the NYC Department of Education, scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: Cheating, Plagiarizing and Colluding with others. It is considered Seriously Disruptive Behavior. All instances of Scholastic Dishonesty will be reported to the Dean's office and will be met with a range of possible disciplinary consequences in addition to guidance interventions

Class Supplies:
• A single-subject binder that will be used exclusively for Human Rights studies. This binder will be your site for storing numerous class handouts.
• A folder to hold additional classroom handouts.
• Pencils, pens and a variety of markers of different colors
• Highlighters; a small pair of scissors and a glue stick.
• Computer and internet access for word processing, web-based research and email.

Other:
“Inspired by the power of collaboration, the Lab School challenges students to soar intellectually and to act bravely in our complex world community.”
• We are deeply excited to be launching an online School-2-School partnership with the Kisumu Boys School and Kisumu Girls School in Kisumu Kenya. We will be using a Ning network established for this purpose, and will be having 1x per month postings. This is the first time that Lab’s Human Rights Studies course will be generating rights-based discussion with an authentic audience. This partnership has been facilitated through the Millennium Cities Initiative, a project of the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

• Lab’s first-ever Human Rights Studies Film Series features a dynamic lineup of domestic and international feature films and documentaries. All Lab School students are welcome to attend; 12th graders must attend 2 out of 4 Semester 1 films and to write a Film Series reflection for each. All films will be shown between 3:30 pm and 5:30 pm on designated Wednesdays.

• Human Rights Studies students will be visited by journalists from the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting as part of our inquiry into water access, reporting and media literacy.

• We will check homework the day that it is due and collect your Human Rights Studies notebook during each unit. Homework will be assessed for completion and to gauge your content understanding and skills development.

• We respect those who respect themselves, their classmates and their community. In order for us to have lively classroom discussions where opposing viewpoints are expressed and examined we expect that you will respect and support your classmates.

Sincerely,

The Human Rights Studies Team
Mark Berkowitz: mberkow5@schools.nyc.gov; Lisa Cocchi: licocchi@schools.nyc.gov
Deborah Taylor: dtaylor7@schools.nyc.gov;

Student Signature: __________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature: ____________________

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NYC Lab School Attachment: Senior Keystone Letter

Dear Seniors,

As you begin your senior year and we begin our semester together, I want to share my thoughts on Senior Inquiry--on what I think this course means, on what we'll be doing, on why we'll be doing it. And because I've always agreed with Joan Didion when she said, "I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking," I decided to write this to you.

Here's what I'm thinking:

Putting It in Context

Last summer, I went to a workshop with a group of teachers. On our first day, we were asked to introduce ourselves, to say "what our deal was"--where we taught, grade, subject--the usual. It should have been an easy task. I was one of the last to speak. Teacher after teacher said, "9th grade English, 10th grade English, 12th grade English AP, World Literature, American Literature..." and on.

And then it was my turn: "New York City Lab School, 12th grade, Senior Inquiry." Blank stares all around the circle. Silence.

"What?" one teacher finally said, "What does that mean?" They all continued to stare.

"I'll explain later," I said. So I explained later. I told them that Senior Inquiry was a fall semester class designed to prepare students for their Keystone Projects, a class meant to give them the tools to successfully complete their projects in the spring. "Students choose a topic they feel passionately about for some reason, then they research the topic, and then they make something. They decide which medium would be best to convey the information they've gathered," I would say, "We study the media options in Senior Inquiry and that ultimate medium project is their Keystone. Keystone is sort of like a Senior Thesis Project."

They would nod. We would sigh, relieved. That made sense. That was like a senior thesis in college, a master's thesis in graduate school. We all understood what that meant. And so every time someone asked about the course, I would describe it that way. But something about that description didn't feel quite right. Because Keystone isn't sort of like a Senior Thesis Project. It's a Senior Inquiry Project. And that's something different.

Thesis vs. Inquiry

"Inspired by the power of collaboration, the Lab School challenges students to soar intellectually and to act bravely in our complex world community."
A "thesis" project implies that you have an argument to put forth; you have a specific agenda, and you have chosen and presented research in support of that agenda. Maybe you began your research with a thesis in mind, discarding all material that didn't support your initial idea. Maybe you have included research in opposition to your overriding argument...only to disprove it in favor of your thesis, of course. Or maybe you listened to the books (I'm thinking particularly of The Craft of Research here) and allowed your thesis to emerge organically from your research. Bottom line: you explored a question and have arrived at an answer.

Our "inquiry" project, by contrast, begins and ends with questions. From the start, you put forth not an argument, but a driving question. Then you see where that question leads you...and as you research, you look not for the answers, but for more questions. You are, as Anne Fadiman puts it, "gnawing on the question." As you gnaw, the question becomes more multifaceted; you begin to see dimension. Rather than shying away from complexity, trying to reduce your topic to more simple, digestible terms, you embrace that complexity. Because in your Senior Inquiry Project, your Keystone Project, your task is not to present answers; your task is to re-present the driving question.

**How do I re-present a question?**

Any great question is the beginning of a conversation. So, in a way, you can think of your Keystone Project as the catalyst for a conversation. As you prepare for your Keystone Project, then, ask: *How am I going to get people talking about my topic?*

In your Keystone Project, you will re-present your question through a chosen medium. Your medium is the "bearer" of both your passion for your topic and the research you have accumulated. Because it has specific conventions, each medium has the capacity to re-present information in specific ways. When you select a medium, you determine the way in which you want to--in which you need to--re-present your particular question. The way you will get people talking.

**What does it mean to re-present a question?**

To re-present means, quite literally, to present again. So the question becomes: why present a question again? We present something again in order to experience it in a new way--to see something we never noticed before, hear something we never heard. In re-presenting your question, your goal is to enable your audience to have this new experience.

How do you make this new? How do you make this re-presentation "fresh"?

“*Inspired by the power of collaboration, the Lab School challenges students to soar intellectually and to act bravely in our complex world community.”*
1) **Passion**: Your passion for your question will be apparent in your project. The more you love this question, the more you think it's fascinating, the more your audience will think it's fascinating and exciting and new. Your passion will be contagious.

2) **Scholarship**: The more rigorously you investigate your question, the more roads of inquiry you travel, the more likely you are to unearth information to which your audience has not yet been exposed. New information will require your audience to reconsider your question.

3) **Medium**: You might want to select a medium not immediately associated with your topic, a medium that doesn't seem to lend itself to your question. The novelty of the medium will necessarily shed light on your topic in a new way.

**PASSION + SCHOLARSHIP + MEDIUM = ACTION**

The Keystone Project is meant to be the synthesis of all your work at Lab. It's your moment to draw on all of the skills you have honed over the years now in service of your passion. It's your opportunity to show the Lab community that you are ready to leave. In its mission statement, Lab "challenges students to soar intellectually and act bravely in a complex world community." In your Keystone Project, you will meet that challenge. As you immerse yourself in the inquiry process, you will "soar intellectually." But what about that second part: how will you demonstrate your ability to "act bravely in a complex world community"?

Keystone is about taking action. When you go public with your scholarship, when you start those conversations through your project, you are taking action. You are acting bravely. It's active to make others do, feel, or understand something. It's brave to share what matters deeply to you.

As you consider how to share your inquiry process, you will maintain a constant awareness of audience. You will always ask, so what? Why should other people care about this question? How will I encourage other people to care? Why does a conversation born of this question need to happen in our community? And you will also ask: Why wouldn't people care about this question? Why might people be resistant to this conversation? How will I engage those who are resistant? And as you ask these questions, you acknowledge the complexity of the world community you are about to enter.

**Our Class**

This is your inquiry process. This project belongs to you. Every person in this class will go on his or her own journey through the course of this semester and year. The journey isn't linear; it's messy. You will have moments of clarity, when you think you know exactly what

"Inspired by the power of collaboration, the Lab School challenges students to soar intellectually and to act bravely in our complex world community."
you want to do, and you will have moments of frustration when you think this project will never happen. That's okay. It will happen.

This class is designed to support you as you begin your Keystone work:
PASSION

Some of you know exactly what you want to do; great. Some of you have a vague idea; great. Some of you have absolutely no idea. Great! No matter where you are right now, we challenge you to be open to possibility. Remember, you don't need to put together a formal proposal for your Keystone Project until the END of the semester. Allow our work in this class to inspire, change and shape your ideas; enjoy the messiness.

SCHOLARSHIP

You are expected to employ your research skills from Junior Inquiry throughout Senior Inquiry. Using The Craft of Research, we will analyze the inquiry processes of Anne Fadiman, Anna Deavere Smith, and others as models for our own inquiry.

MEDIUM

This class is about going public with your passion and research through a medium. To that end, much of the course will be devoted to media studies. As a whole class, we will examine a model medium (playwriting) and then you will have an opportunity to explore the potential of one other Keystone medium in depth.

Action vs. Activism

As part of this course, we will be studying the work of some people who have been defined by others--or self identify--as activists. The term "activist" is a tricky one. We might think of activists as those who advocate on behalf of a particular cause. We might think of activists as those who push a specific agenda. It would seem, then, that "activism" would have no place in our course. Pushing a specific agenda is precisely what we don't want to do in our Keystone Projects! So why include activists on our syllabus?

The first reason is simple: activists are passionate. Their ideas might give us ideas. Their work may provide us with inspiring questions.

Second: activists act bravely. Activists share their passions with the larger world. We can learn much about how to successfully (and unsuccessfully) engage an audience by studying their work. And we will be able to distinguish between re-presenting a question and pushing an agenda only by examining both those who do the former AND those who do the latter.

A Final Note

“Inspired by the power of collaboration, the Lab School challenges students to soar intellectually and to act bravely in our complex world community.”
Senior fall is rife with questions: Where will I be next year? Who am I now? Who do I want to be? What do I want to do in the future? What will it mean to graduate from Lab? On and on. Those questions can be stressful. And then, we add one more: what, oh what, am I going to do for my Senior Inquiry project?

We invite you to see this project not as yet another source of stress, but as an opportunity; this is a taste of intellectual freedom. Give yourself room to experiment this semester. At this point—and at many points during this semester—you might want to sit back. You might want to disengage, to back off. It's so easy to be cynical, right? It's so comfortable--no one can make fun of you when you don't care. When you do care, when you care deeply, when you care about something that others don't necessarily "get," well, that's difficult. That can be lonely. But that's acting bravely. You need to be brave.

We are here to support you, always, and your classmates are here to support you. Your classmates are your colleagues. Trust that everything we do in this class is meant to help you create your Keystone. If you're not sure why we're doing something or how it's relevant, ask.

So I leave you with the words of Rainer Maria Rilke:

*Have patience with everything that remains unsolved in your heart. Try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books written in a foreign language. Do not look for the answers. They cannot now be given to you because you could not live them. It is a question of experiencing everything. At present you need to live the question. Perhaps you will gradually, without even noticing it, find yourself experiencing the answer, some distant day.*

-Letters to a Young Poet

We are thrilled to be part of your inquiry process.

All the best,

Ms. Bruni, on behalf of the Senior Inquiry Team (Ms. Aggarwal, Ms. Fabricant and Ms. Slatkin)
### Habits of Lab Learners

**Achieving Goals Through Inquiry and Collaboration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Questioning/Being Curious</th>
<th>Observing Closely</th>
<th>Thinking Flexibly/Seeing Multiple Perspectives</th>
<th>Tolerating Ambiguity</th>
<th>Persisting</th>
<th>Reflecting</th>
<th>Connecting</th>
<th>Taking Responsible Risks</th>
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<tr>
<td>Philosophy Behind Habits</td>
<td>Promotes authentic inquiry: actively following your interests and passions, meaningful engagement, living the questions. Allows us to value process, not just product.</td>
<td>Enhances awareness of details in the environments we inhabit; honors multiple intelligences and diverse expressions of learning—visual, vocal, auditory, etc.</td>
<td>Sparks imagination, originality, innovation, creative thinking.</td>
<td>Allows us to dwell in uncertainties of process &amp; not just rush to a “product;” enables us to take on increasingly challenging tasks.</td>
<td>Sustains inquiry and meaning-making; important for seeing tasks through, overcoming self-doubt and other obstacles; tolerating frustration in order to meet goals.</td>
<td>Personalizes our learning experience: metacognition helps us become more successful learners.</td>
<td>Recognizes that knowledge is interdisciplinary and interdependent; helps us reinforce and synthesize learning.</td>
<td>Encourages students to move beyond comfort zones by problem-solving in creative, innovative ways.</td>
<td>Nourishes students socially, emotionally, and academically; gives them opportunities to listen to all voices, prepares them to contribute to the complex world community.</td>
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To make meaning and create deep understanding, Lab learners develop Habits of…

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<td>Students have opportunities to foster their natural curiosity about self &amp; others, to recognize, identify and analyze their feelings and question how our feelings impact others.</td>
<td>Students can identify their interests, strengths, values and emotions, and the factors that cause their emotions. They can identify others’ feelings from a variety of cues, and evaluate their own ability to empathize.</td>
<td>Students recognize &amp; appreciate individual and group similarities/differences. Through seeing, apering and engaging with diverse points of view, they can empathize with others.</td>
<td>Students recognize their own uncertainties and ambiguity; they can expect and tolerate non-closure while continuing to move towards a resolution.</td>
<td>Students can assess their feelings and moods, and articulate their patterns of thought. They can evaluate their uses of communication skills, and understand that how they express their feelings can affect others.</td>
<td>Students find commonalities, establish and maintain healthy peer relationships, manage &amp; resolve conflict, and engage fully and with focus in learning situations.</td>
<td>Students “risk” independent thinking &amp; actions to resist teamwork in negative peer pressures. They show a spirit of constructive, mutual support, respect &amp; compassion, feedback about recognizing the others’ work.</td>
<td>Students demonstrate cooperation and collaboration.</td>
<td></td>
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Examples of how Habits manifest in social and emotional competencies (such as Self-awareness; Self-management; Social awareness; Relationship skills; Responsible decision-making)

Explanation: Students apply inference about “how, why, what does it mean?” as they build understanding, offering systemic theories and illustrations which provide knowledgeable and justified accounts of events, actions and ideas.

Interpretation: Students transform perceptions & understandings to make meaning; interpretations & narratives test accounts of data, texts or experience which may be inherently ambiguous.

Perspective: Students think more critically and insightfully by looking at familiar ideas in a new light or from different vantage points.

Empathy: Students’ openness to views different from their own promotes the ability to get inside another person’s feelings and worldview.

Self Knowledge: Students think beyond and are able to think beyond “either-or” dichotomies, showing the wisdom to know one’s ignorance and how one’s patterns of thought and action inform as well as prejudice understanding.

Application: Students use knowledge effectively in new situations and diverse, realistic contexts, demonstrating the ability to accomplish tasks successfully while negotiating different constraints, social contexts purposes and audiences.

Examples of how Habits connect to Facets of Understanding (UbD)