

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1(a) Mission, Academic Philosophy, and Values

#### MISSION

The mission of FirstLine Schools is to create and inspire great open admissions public schools in New Orleans.

Aligned with this general organizational mission, the mission of John Dibert Community School will be to ensure that our students are prepared for success in school and life.

John Dibert Community School (JDCS) will ensure all students are prepared for success in further education and fulfilling careers by:

- ensuring high achievement for all students.
- providing a rich variety of educational experiences to nurture students' social and emotional development, love of learning, environmental stewardship, sense of community responsibility, and strong sense of aspiration to achieve their educational and career goals.
- developing the skillfulness of faculty and staff and creating sustainable working conditions that facilitate their success and build on existing success.

#### ACADEMIC PHILOSOPHY

Our Academic Philosophy has three core components:

- 1) Providing an "Education for Life" that is underpinned by
- 2) a framework of practice we call the *FirstLine Educational Principles*, with successful implementation of these principles depending upon
- 3) highly effective teachers and school leaders.

#### Education for Life

As with all FirstLine schools, JDCS shares a vision of preparing our students to succeed in college (and college preparatory high school programs) and careers through an "Education for Life" that includes:

- College Preparatory Curriculum
- Classes that are Rigorous, Systematic, and Inspiring
- A Nurturing Community
- Enrichment Curriculum and Extended Day
- Environmental Stewardship

#### FirstLine Educational Principles

Within this "Education for Life" we have embedded the key levers of high performing open admissions urban schools, which we call the *FirstLine Schools Educational Principles*. These principles are:

#### **Teaching and Learning**

- Skillful instruction based on a shared vision of effective teaching
- Aligned curriculum with clear learning objectives for each unit

- Systematic use of formative assessment data
- Layers of learning interventions
- Rigorous and engaging curriculum
- Literacy and numeracy as priorities

### **School Culture**

- High expectations for achievement and behavior
- Calm, orderly culture where teaching, learning, and healthy relationships can thrive
- Aspirational identity and motivational environment
- Partnership with parents
- Time matters

### Highly Effective Teachers and School Leaders

Successful implementation of the above Principles will depend upon highly effective teachers and school leaders. Teacher effectiveness is promoted by the following practices:

- Continuous focus on improving instructional skills
- Comprehensive approach to professional development
- Rigorous teacher selection process that recognizes potential for growth
- Active teacher co-creation of curriculum through collaboration
- Aligned performance assessments and management, professional development, and compensation systems

### **VALUES**

The three values that will guide the work at JDCS are: **SCHOLARSHIP, INTEGRITY** and **COMMUNITY**.

### **1(b) Overview of School Structure, Leadership Team and Governance**

#### **SCHOOL STRUCTURE and LEADERSHIP TEAM**

JDCS will be organized as a single school. If in the future an annex is found to house the middle school, the school will be split into two academies, with Mr. Webb becoming the Principal of the Primary Academy and the School Director and a Principal will be added to the Middle School Academy, reporting directly to Mr. Webb. There will be one School Operations Manager for the entire campus and one Special Education Coordinator who will work with special education teachers dedicated in each school.

The School Director/Principal will report directly to the CEO of FirstLine Schools, who reports directly to the FirstLine Schools Board of Directors. The School Director/Principals will receive educational and operational support from the FirstLine Schools network as needed.

#### **GOVERNANCE**

JDCS will be governed by the board of directors of FirstLine Schools, a New Orleans based non-profit whose mission is to create and inspire high quality open admissions public schools in New Orleans.

### **1(c) A description of the school's short- and long-term goals (academic and operational)**

#### **LONG-TERM GOALS**

College Readiness: In Louisiana, the proportion of students in public colleges who attain a bachelor's degree within six years of entering college correlates much more closely with the proportion of students who achieve at Mastery and above on the LEAP and GEE than it does with students who achieve at Basic or above. Therefore, the long-term academic goal of JDCS

is for **70% or more of students to achieve at Mastery or above** on all portions of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade LEAP test, with more than **90% of the students achieving at Basic or above** on the LEAP test. This will ensure that most of our students are ready to enter and succeed in college preparatory high school programs. This is undeniably an ambitious goal, but the school will engage in a process of continual improvement in teaching, learning support, and school culture to achieve this goal.

Inclusive: While JDCS aims to ensure that most of its students are college ready, it will do this while working with a full range of special needs students, helping every student to achieve their potential whether or not this means college readiness. JDCS staff will work to provide the necessary supports for students who enter the school to achieve

Given the fact that JDCS will be a turnaround school, we have charted the pathway to achieving our long-term goals by first attaining the five year goals below:

<b>Achievement Goals</b>					
	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>
<b>Attendance:</b> average daily attendance	94%	95%	95%	96%	96%
<b>Performance on State Tests</b> (Grades 3-8)					
% Students Basic or Above ELA	50	59	67	74	80
% Students Basic or Above Math	50	59	67	74	80
% Students Basic or Above Science	50	59	67	74	80
% Students Basic or Above Social St.	50	59	67	74	80
SAI Score	65	74	82	89	95
<b>Formative Assessments</b>					
Quarterly Assessments % Participation	100	100	100	100	100
% of students achieving the equivalent of Basic or above on quarterly assessments	>50	>59	>67	>74	>80
DRA2 (Reading Assessment)	>40	>55	>68	>79	>88
<b>Promotion</b>					
>90% of 4 <sup>th</sup> graders pass LEAP on first attempt; 100% pass on second attempt					
>90% of 4 <sup>th</sup> graders pass LEAP on first attempt; 100% pass on second attempt					
>95% of students achieve grade level standards and attendance requirements to be promoted to the next grade each year					
<b>Matriculation:</b> student admission and attendance at rigorous college preparatory high school programs	>50%	>60%	>70%	>80%	>90%
<b>Teacher Retention</b> Voluntary annual attrition rate of teachers employed on October 1 and remain employed on Oct 1 of the subsequent year will be less than	>20%	>15%	>15%	>15%	>15%
<b>Student Retention:</b> Percentage of students enrolled on October 1 and remain enrolled on Oct 1 of the subsequent year	>75%	>80%	>85%	>88%	>90%
<b>Client Satisfaction</b> Students, teachers, and families will rate our school an A or B on the End Of Year Satisfaction Survey	>80%	>85%	>90%	>90%	>90%
<b>Operational Measures</b>					
<b>Financial Management</b>					
Successful Audit in Each Year of Operation					

All Financial Reports Submitted in Timely Manner					
<b>Operational &amp; Administrative Support:</b> Teachers, School Leaders, and Parents who rate operational and administrative services an A or B on the end of year survey	>80%	>85%	>90%	>90	>90%

These *FirstLine Schools Educational Principles* are drawn from the practices of highly effective open admissions urban schools serving low-income student populations in the United States and the United Kingdom. Three sources of evidence support the common thread of these principles as key levers in highly effective urban schools: the *Urban Excellence Framework*<sup>1</sup> developed by New Leaders for New Schools; the aligned instructional approach used initially by the Brazosport, Texas schools and now widely copied across the country<sup>2</sup>; and the effective schools research of Ron Edmonds, Larry Lezotte<sup>3</sup>, and others.

### **1(e) Appropriateness of Model for All Students, Leading to Higher Levels of Academic Achievement for the Target Population**

As described above, the school model JDCS will use is based upon the practices of highly effective open admissions urban schools. The instructional methods are primarily drawn from four aligned sources: the TAP Instructional Rubric, the LATAAP framework, John Saphier's *Skillful Teacher* framework, and Doug Lemov's *Taxonomy of Effective Teaching Practices*. All four of these frameworks draw upon proven instructional techniques. FirstLine Schools has created its own framework drawing by synthesizing the latter three sources along with drawing upon instructional practices from highly successful open admissions urban schools around the United States such as the Noble Street Charter School network in Chicago, the Edward Brooke School in Boston, and Northstar Academy in Newark.

*FirstLine* currently operates two, open-admissions charter schools in Orleans Parish: Samuel J. Green Charter School and Arthur Ashe Charter School. Their performance data provides data about the effectiveness of school models developed by *FirstLine*. In 2005 before Middle School Advocates, the organizational predecessor of FirstLine Schools, took over Green, only 11% of eighth graders passed the English Language Arts portion of the LEAP test. This year 55% passed. In Math the improvement of our 8<sup>th</sup> grade LEAP results has been even more dramatic. In 2005 before FirstLine took over the school, only 8% of the students passed the math portion of the test and the scores were 43 percentage points less than the state average. This year 72% of Green's eighth graders passed, 13 percentage points above the state average.

Just finishing its second year, Arthur Ashe does not yet have a school performance score, but has begun to establish a solid foundation for growth. In 2009 LEAP scores at Ashe improved by 71% over the previous year with fourth graders outperforming the state averages in English and Science on the LEAP test.

### **1(f) Core Values about Teaching and Learning.**

The core values of JDCS about teaching and learning are described above in our academic philosophy. They can be summarized as follows:

- Classes should be rigorous, systematic, and inspiring
- Student learn best in a school environment that is calm and orderly, aspirational, and motivational

<sup>1</sup> *Key Insights of the Urban Excellence Framework, Version 2.0*, New Leaders for New Schools, May 30, 2008. [www.nlms.org/documents/NewLeadersReport-Version3.0-FINAL.pdf](http://www.nlms.org/documents/NewLeadersReport-Version3.0-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> *Closing the Achievement Gap: No Excuses*, Pat Davenport and Gerald Anderson, American Productivity and Quality Center: Education Initiative, 2002

<sup>3</sup> "Correlates of Effective Schools: The First and Second Generation", Larry Lezotte, Effective Schools Products, Ltd., 1991. <http://www.effectiveschools.com/main/resources/resources-44-45.html>

- Teachers can develop increasing skillfulness through comprehensive professional development and collaboration
- Teachers deliver more effective and dynamic lessons when they are involved in the co-creation of the curriculum
- Students become more engaged in their learning through hands on activities.