

## **Executive Summary**

The Executive Summary is an overview that concisely and effectively illustrates the school plan.

1. Provide an Executive Summary (in three to five pages) for the proposed school that describes the following:

- a. A clear statement of the mission, academic philosophy and values;
- b. An overview of the school structure, leadership team and governance;
- c. A description of the school's short- and long-term goals (academic and operational);
- d. An explanation of the research base that demonstrates the school model will be effective in improving student achievement;
- e. An explanation of how this model is appropriate for all students and will lead to higher levels of academic achievement for the target population; and
- f. An explanation of the school's core values about teaching and learning.

## **Executive Summary**

The New Beginnings Schools Foundation currently operates Gentilly Terrace Charter School through a partnership agreement with the Recovery School District by way of a memorandum of understanding. Because of our recent successes with turning around failing schools, New Beginnings strongly believes it possesses the necessary capacity to replicate its efforts. Since being the first institution to charter a failing school in 2004, New Beginnings has successfully lifted Medard Nelson Charter School in 2007 (67.3 School Performance Score) and Pierre A. Capdau Charter School in 2008 (61.3) out of failing status. New Beginnings' current management structure seems to be very congruent with the needs and demands of the state's reform efforts. As a charter we fully expect Gentilly Terrace to quickly join the honor roll (SPS over 60) within three years.

The mission of Gentilly Terrace Charter School is to produce lifelong learners who possess the skills to compete at accelerated, top-tier high schools and gain entrance into and complete four-year college programs. Gentilly Terrace's core values comprise hard work, achievement, respect, and perseverance. Gentilly's core behavioral values are honesty, empowerment, appreciation, responsibility and team work.

Gentilly students possess characteristics that too often predict low achievement. Over 95% of our current students qualify for free and reduced lunch. Because of interruptions due to Hurricane Katrina as well as inter- and intra-district mobility, many of Gentilly Terrace's students have not attended school regularly. These students perform well below grade level. We believe that traditional models of remediation do not lend themselves to high student

achievement. Rather, they perpetuate mediocrity and facilitate only moderate academic successes in a contemporary, results-driven educational landscape. Consequently, we seek to accelerate student learning by subscribing to proven, research-based strategies for teaching and learning.

Gentilly Terrace is an institution committed to educating and preparing the whole child to succeed academically and socially. Our belief is that all children have a natural ability to learn and achieve. We are mindful of children's natural curiosity and sincere desire to learn, and that intelligence is dynamic and multidimensional. In educating the whole child, several different areas need to be addressed; these include the cognitive, physical, artistic, and social/emotional aspects of learning. Our teachers integrate, embrace, and consciously teach to each of these aspects. In doing so, we maximize all opportunities for teaching and learning in an inclusive environment. These beliefs come out of a decade of research conducted on the Accelerated Schools Project which determined that "(1) all children can learn, that (2) all children are gifted and talented, and that (3) a school can only be a great place for all children if we consider it to be a great place for our own children." This model was spearheaded at the University of New Orleans for the benefit of students who were deemed "at-risk." Leaders, teachers and students that received this model helped form the type of learning community sought by Gentilly Terrace Charter School.

A corollary instructional philosophy and methodology is employed in order to access the rich talents of our diverse learners. *Differentiating instruction* involves providing students with different avenues to acquiring content; to processing, constructing, or making sense of ideas; and to developing teaching products so that all students within a classroom can learn effectively, regardless of differences in ability (Tomlinson, 2001). School leaders' academic programs must embrace these principles within their curriculum and instruction programs. Teachers are subsequently trained and assessed in the techniques of differentiated instruction. The proven approaches of *accelerated schooling* and *differentiated instruction* serve as the pillars of our philosophy of the teaching and learning of at-risk students.

In addition, we believe there should be a strong relationship between school, home, and the community that will foster the development of value systems and personal responsibility. In particular, we emphasize a strong relationship with postsecondary institutions as teachers and leaders make college attainment an ever-present and attainable goal.

New Beginnings was established in 2004 by members of the University of New Orleans's faculty, staff and administration with the purpose of proposing and managing charter schools in accordance with the Charter Schools Demonstration Programs Law. New Beginnings is ultimately responsible to the charter's authorizers and consumers, as well as the general public for its schools. New Beginnings assures that its schools operate in accordance with their respective charters, missions and visions. Included in the Board's responsibilities are the assurances that schools meet their academic and fiscal benchmarks.

Since the Holmes Group's trilogy pointed to the significant potential professional development schools (PDS) possess while creating the type of change sought in the Louisiana Charter Law, universities have used the PDS concept as a theoretical pillar to their reform efforts (Burton &

Greher, 2007; Holmes Group (1983- ), 2007; Valli, Cooper, & Frankes, 1997). Many definitions of PDS have been offered. However, the definition offered by Richmond (1996) provides the theoretical engine running New Beginnings' mission. PDSs are "sites at which staff is committed to educational reform, and where educational theory and practice are merged, and where these objectives are achieved *through partnerships between the school, community, and postsecondary institutions, particularly those with strong teacher preparation programs*" (Richmond, 1996). New Beginnings is not simply a governing board, it is a governing board that is grounded in the context of school-university partnerships.

Gentilly Terrace Charter School is led by a Principal/Assistant Principal team that supports a faculty of certified teachers and counselors who are committed to the principles purported in the charter. New Beginnings seeks to maximize leaders' and teachers' instructional time with students. To minimize the administrative tasks associated with running a school, New Beginnings contracted with The University of New Orleans College of Education and Human Development (COEHD) to provide centralized administrative support. In May 2006, Capital One made a \$1 million grant to help establish the Capital One-University of New Orleans Charter School Network. Through UNO's College of Education and Human Development, the center provides centralized administrative and educational support to a cluster of charter schools managed by UNO. The Network, like other Charter Management Organizations (CMO), supports New Beginnings' charter schools' needs in the areas of finances, professional development, technology, research and assessment, purchasing, human resources, as well as, grants management.

At New Beginnings' Gentilly Terrace Charter School, students come first. Our students deserve a safe and nurturing environment that is conducive to learning that promotes appropriate social interaction. Students need a comprehensive, rigorous, college preparatory program that embraces different aspects of learning and diversity. Leaders and teachers give students the level of attention and academic supervision that sets high expectations and encourages high achievement. This environment can and will accelerate learning, promote continuing education and cultivate an appreciation for different cultures.