

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;

Our Mission

Morris Jeff Community School will offer an education that is a source of freedom and possibility for children, permitting them to develop their talents fully, become contributing citizens in our democracy, and attain the foundation they need to excel at high schools, colleges, careers, and pursuits.

Our Values

OPEN-ACCESS – Holding this truth to be self-evident, that all children have the potential to learn at the highest levels and develop into life-long learners.

DIVERSITY – Creating a school where the students, parents and faculty reflect the racial and economic diversity of our City and our neighborhood.

RIGOR – Fostering practices that develop children’s capacity to master basic skills, think critically, engage creatively and develop intellectual confidence.

PROFESSIONALISM – Attracting the highest quality educators, by respecting their capacity as professionals and creating an environment in which teachers are supported to develop their full potential.

COMMUNITY – Engaging the talents, time and imagination of parents and community members to be co-creators in the vision and the work of our educational community.

WORLD LANGUAGES – Exposing children to language diversity from a young age to develop their linguistic capacity and global awareness.

ADVOCACY – Believing that it is our job to organize ourselves to be a powerful voice for the success of public education.

Our Academic Philosophy

Inquiry-Based Learning – Children are naturally inquisitive and eager to learn. They increase knowledge through self-initiated and teacher-initiated experiences and take risks when working in a safe, supportive environment. Morris Jeff Community School will follow the Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate Organization, which provides a curriculum framework built upon a pedagogy of inquiry and systematic assessment of student learning.

Development and Application of Critical Thinking Skills – All children must master basic skills necessary for reading and math, and all children must be provided the instruction and opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills to prepare them to be problem solvers and leaders of the future. The Primary Years Programme of the International Baccalaureate Organization offers a curriculum framework designed around the development and application of critical thinking skills for all learners.

Authentic Data-Driven Decision Making – Instruction must begin with a profound understanding of the readiness level of a child, including his or her capacities, knowledge, gifts and challenges, in order to be able to challenge that child to stretch to greater expectations while still building confidence in his or her ability to learn. Developing this understanding requires a nuanced attainment and use of student data. Morris Jeff Community School is committed to having student data inform instruction, with systems that get useful information about students into the hands of classroom teachers and assure that the intelligent and pervasive use of many kinds of student data drives decisions about teaching and learning.

A Community of Learners – Morris Jeff Community School believes that adults model learning for children as they commit themselves to being life-long learners. Faculty will model learning as they participate in year-round professional development opportunities to develop their craft as educators and inform their practice. Parents and community members will model life-long learning as they participate in volunteer activities throughout the school and attend school-wide workshops and training sessions. Morris Jeff Community School students will be supported in their learning by faculty, family, community members, and other volunteers who are dedicated to growing as a community of learners.

b. An overview of the school structure, leadership team and governance;

School Structure

Through a massive community organizing effort and with the support of the Recovery School District, the Morris Jeff Community School has become a reality and will open its doors in the Fall of 2010 as an RSD school for the first year, and, if this application is successful, as a charter school beginning in 2011.

Year one of the Morris Jeff Community School as a charter school will house pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade students. A grade level will be added each successive year until the school houses 490 students in pre-kindergarten through 8th grade.

Instructional Leadership Team

Morris Jeff Community School has a commitment to collaborative leadership. The school's instructional leadership team will be composed of the principal, the IB Primary Years Programme Coordinator, a lead teacher from each grade level, and support staff members as needed. The principal, with support from the PYP coordinator, will be responsible for monitoring and overseeing the school's curriculum, instruction, and student progress. Each teacher on the leadership team will be responsible for leading his or her grade level in the areas of curriculum, student academic progress, student well-being, parental involvement and communication, child study needs, and keeping the bar at the highest level for student achievement and teacher professionalism. The finance and operations manager will join meetings of the instructional leadership team, when it is necessary to report on matters pertinent to the operations or finances of the school. This leadership team will meet weekly and discuss the agenda for the week. The principal will chair the leadership team. Other staff members may be asked to attend the leadership meetings on an as-needed basis.

Morris Jeff Community School will have one school leader/principal who will oversee the educational program. Patricia Perkins, the founding principal, is an experienced and highly-qualified educator, with a record for improving student achievement. For the past 15 years, Ms. Perkins has taught, planned curriculum, and coached teachers in successful strategies for all learners by implementing a gifted curriculum for all students and providing targeted instruction

for students who struggle in reading, writing, and/or math to bring their skills sets up to and above grade level.

Governance

The Board of Directors of the non-profit corporation, Morris Jeff Community School, Inc., will govern the school and hold it accountable for student achievement, financial management, operations management, and legal compliance. The Board of Directors will hire the principal and provide broad policy direction, but will not micro-manage the operation of the school. Management of the school, all hiring and firing and instructional decision-making will be in the hands of the principal and the school leadership team under her direction. The Board of Directors is composed of high-capacity individuals, capable of governing a multi-million dollar operation. They possess expertise in a wide range of relevant fields and have worked together for the past two years to lay the foundation for the school. The principal will report directly to the Board of Directors.

c. A description of the school’s short- and long-term goals (academic and operational);

The following are minimum academic performance goals for Morris Jeff Community School:

Academic Measure	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Attendance	95%	95%	95%	96%	96%
% Students Basic or Above Math –LEAP	n/a	85%	95%	100%	100%
% Students Basic or Above ELA -LEAP	n/a	85%	95%	100%	100%
% Students Basic or Above Science – LEAP	n/a	80%	90%	95%	98%
% Students Basic or Above Social Studies - LEAP	n/a	80%	90%	95%	98%
SPS Score	-	Baseline	+10	+10	+10

Morris Jeff Community School will meet AYP goals annually.
 All students will leave MJCS capable of excelling at whatever high-school they choose.
 All students who leave MJCS will be able to communicate in a foreign language with a native speaker.
 MJCS students will love learning and demonstrate curiosity about the world around them.

MJCS will meet the following short-term operational goals:

- Apply and obtain candidate status for the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme.
- Achieve full enrollment, with a waiting list at each grade level.
- Run a budget surplus at the end of the first year of operation.
- Have a successful audit conducted in each year of operation
- Provide a clean, safe, orderly environment for learners
- Implement sound fiscal policies and multiple control points to guard against fraud and mismanagement.
- Submit all financial reports in a timely manner

MJCS will meet the following longer-term operational goals:

Move into the school's newly-developed building in Mid City sometime during the 2013 -2014 school year

Maintain a positive fund balance in each year of operation, building a healthy reserve fund

Operate with very low faculty turn-over

Create a model, health-food lunch program for students.

d. An explanation of the research-base that demonstrates the school model will be effective in improving student achievement:

Research shows us that when students are meaningfully engaged in learning, they acquire knowledge and mastery up to and beyond their grade level (Jones, Valdez, Nowakowski, and Rasmussen, 1994). The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme is based on inquiry and meaningful, engaged learning. By using the IB PYP, students will learn through an inquiry approach in which students are engaged in seeking answers to their natural curiosities and seeking solutions to problems. According to Phil Schlechty (1997), "Students are not products. They are people with motives, skills, capacities, needs to be satisfied . . . they are not clay to be molded or widgets on an assembly line. The work of schools is to produce work that engages students, that is so compelling that students persist when they experience difficulty and that is so challenging that they have a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction when it is complete." This approach to learning involves critical thinking, along with careful analysis and synthesis of information. The framework of the IB PYP enhances Louisiana's content standards with highly rigorous lessons, classroom materials, and teacher tools, helping students not merely meet standards but exceed them. Students participating in IB tend to make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), as defined under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), at much higher rates than their peers in non-IB schools, with three-quarters of all IB schools and two-thirds of Title 1 eligible IB schools making adequate yearly progress (*Washington Post* Review of IB Schools, December 2006). The research base around inquiry and engaged learning, along with the incorporation of best practices in instruction, assures that when applied consistently, student achievement improves and students actually enjoy learning.

The IB model also offers a Middle Years Programme and Diploma Programme that have a proven track record for student success. Once Morris Jeff has grown to a sixth grade, the Middle Years Programme will be implemented for students in grades six through eight.

Decisions around teaching and learning in this model will be data driven. In order to assure that students are progressing in their learning, a plethora of data will be considered when making decisions about instruction, including, but not limited to teacher designed assessments, state mandated assessments, benchmark assessments, and student portfolios and exhibitions. Morris Jeff Community School administrators and faculty will focus on value-added data for each individual student. Value-added progress will look at the academic growth of each individual student to better understand the support that Morris Jeff Community School is providing for students in an on-going manner, as opposed to one point in time and based on one high stakes assessment. Morris Jeff Community School believes that our effectiveness in closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged and/or minority children and those coming from more advantaged families depends on our ability to contribute to individual student progress, and to watch each individual student progress over his or her time at MJCS.

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

The IB program is designed to prepare all students to succeed at extremely high levels in college and has a proven track record of success internationally. In light of Morris Jeff’s commitment to academic excellence, high expectations for all learners, and its mission to prepare all students to excel in high school, college, and career, the IB Primary Years Programme will provide a successful pathway towards the achievement of these goals. Morris Jeff Community School is deeply committed to closing any achievement gap that may exist among its learners, and we believe that the PYP curriculum framework will facilitate an exciting, engaging model to facilitate closing that gap.

While many urban schools facing accountability demands have developed a “toxic culture” that seeks short-term improvement with little regard for sustainable growth (Deal and Peterson, 1999; Olsen and Sexton, 2009), there is significant evidence that the philosophical roots of the PYP help to foster a positive culture of collaboration and collective responsibility for student success. Redmond (2006), in a comparison of curriculum development practices at PYP schools with that of non-PYP schools, found a much more democratic process in place at the PYP schools. The PYP program places an emphasis on a planning, evaluation, and assessment cycle for teachers, which is of particular importance when educating a diverse group of students. This is significant in the international schools where the PYP was developed as well as in the Morris Jeff Community School, where the student population consists of children from a wide variety of backgrounds (Parker, 1999).

In addition to mastery of traditional academic content, it has been noted that the PYP program seeks to instill important “habits of mind” (Meier, 2002) that make not only the academic achievement of the child, but the entire *life* of the child, the object of education (Mackenzie 2000).

One would be hard pressed to find a more academically rigorous program currently in use than the IB Primary Years Programme. But this also is a program that aims to develop self-knowledge, cultural knowledge, and global understandings in a way that respects cultural diversity and local adaptation. Too often, educators of poor students have disregarded local culture in their attempts to “save” disenfranchised populations through education (Delpit, 1995). The PYP framework will be an important tool for our school as we seek to address the two-pronged challenge of ensuring mastery of basic skills as well as students who are self-confident, critical thinkers.

f. An explanation of the school’s core values about teaching and learning.

Morris Jeff Community School will operate based on the following values:

- All children can learn at the highest levels.
- Children learn best through inquiry, guided and structured by a highly-trained educator.
- High-order and critical thinking skills are the goal of education, and mastery of basic skills are required to accomplish that goal.
- The relationship between teacher and student is the bedrock for educational growth, driving a student’s motivation for learning.
- Good teaching must be informed by detailed, authentic and accurate assessment of children’s capacity and knowledge.
- Schools exist not only to develop academic skills, but also to cultivate the social and emotional development of children, their relationships with others, and their respect for world around them.
- Successful schools require the engagement of families and communities.
- All successful instruction is differentiated instruction.