

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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;

Pathways in Education (“Pathways”) empowers underserved, at-risk students in grades 9-12 to earn their high school diplomas and to achieve the knowledge and skills needed to successfully pursue meaningful post-secondary goals. Our mission is to provide academic recovery specifically for students who have dropped out of school, are at-risk of dropping out of school, or are experiencing academic failure in their existing high school environment, including special education students. This mission is rooted in the fundamental belief that all students, regardless of past academic performance, can be successful learners. Pathways believes that making this ideal a reality demands innovation at all levels, from instructional methods to scheduling to curriculum. By offering such innovation, our guided distance learning model allows at-risk students to reach levels of academic achievement and post-secondary success that many, including them, may have considered impossible.

Pathways in Education promotes four core values at every level of our organization: mutual trust, mutual respect, compassion, and integrity. These values undergird all aspects of our school, including interactions between teachers and students, interactions between administration and teaching staff, parental communication, instruction, discipline, and community relations. By comprehensively promoting these core values, Pathways in Education grounds its academic mission in broader humanitarian principles. We believe that this approach helps to create not only strong students but also strong people who will contribute meaningfully to society long after they earn their high school diplomas.

Several program components promote the Pathways educational philosophy:

- Extended school year of sixty-three additional days.
- Flexible scheduling that enables students to make progress toward graduation while still fulfilling their other life obligations (such as child care and work).
- Small learning community, including student to teacher ratio of approximately five to one during student appointments.
- Self-paced learning that permits students to tailor their work pace to meet their specific skills and goals (within minimum academic progress requirements).
- Individualized Learning Plans that set forth a customized curricular program for each student upon enrollment through collaboration among the teacher, student, and parent.

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

Pathways in Education will be governed by a Non-Profit Board of Directors. This group has several members that have very successfully governed charter schools for over

ten years. The Board will also employ an Executive Director who will oversee the day-to-day operations of the company. The Board will meet monthly in order to actively oversee alignment among the school's mission, educational philosophy, and instructional methods.

The Executive Director has two staff members who report directly to her and who manage the school and its administrative office. The Director of Programs is responsible for all educational programs. The Director of Operations is responsible for all administrative office functions, including Accounting, Human Resources, Information Technology, and Facilities. Each of these directors meets weekly with the Executive Director to assure that the school is running smoothly and objectives are being met.

School leadership will be led by the Principal in collaboration with the Director of Programs, teachers, parents, Board members, and a Local School Improvement Committee. Hiring teams will be formed to assure that Pathways hires staff who understand our mission and the students that we serve.

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

Pathways in Education intends to grow according to the following enrollment trajectory over the first five years of its charter: 300 students in year one (one site), 350 students in year two (one site), 700 students in year three (two sites), 900 students in year four (three sites), and 1,000 students in year five (three sites).

Pathways will operate in the areas of greatest need within Orleans Parish. By doing so, we will fulfill our goal of recovering students who have the highest risk of academic failure, displacement, and alienation. We are currently securing a lease at 1415 Teche Street (All Saints Church).

Specific short-term goals of the school include the following:

- At least 75% of the students in ninth grade will score Basic or above in the Math and English-Language Arts sections of the Integrated Louisiana Educational Assessment Program iLeap.
- At least 75% of the students in tenth grade will score Basic or above in the English Language Arts and Math sections of the Graduation Exit Exam (GEE).
- At least 75% of the students in eleventh grade will score Basic or above in the Science or Social Science sections of the Graduation Exit Exam (GEE).
- Students will maintain an attendance rate of at least 90%.
- Pathways in Education will maintain at least a 90% at-risk population.
- Pathways in Education will provide a sound accounting system for the operation of the school, which will include an annual audit.

Long-term goals include the following:

- To earn either the School Performance Score (SPS) Exemplary Academic Growth Label or the Recognized Academic Growth Label.
- At least 75% of graduates will enter colleges, universities, or vocational programs.

Pathways in Education's overarching academic goal is to show demonstrable improvements in student performance over the term of its charter. The school is acutely aware of its obligation to the State Accountability Program, and in particular to our School Performance Score (SPS) (and consequent Growth and Performance Labels) and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Pathways uses these indicators to define its short and long-term goals. Specifically, Pathways intends to meet or exceed its Growth SPS Target and to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress every school year. The school will administer all state standardized tests and recognizes that these tests bear upon SPS and AYP results. The school is committed to making demonstrable improvements in these scores during each year of the charter. In addition, Pathways intends to reach attendance and graduation rates that meet or exceed the state average and dropout rates below the state average and to show yearly improvement in each of those areas. These school goals ultimately align with the State of Louisiana's long-term goals, namely, its 2014 Student Performance Score target of 120 and Performance Label target of Four Stars or above for all schools. By fulfilling each of the academic performance indicators described above, Pathways will do its part to support this state-wide effort.

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

Pathways in Education operates a guided distance learning educational model with supplemental small group instruction. Students at the school receive instruction under both direct and general supervision. The defining features of this model include flexible scheduling, subject matter concentration, and self-paced learning.

Substantial research shows that this model significantly improves student achievement. Over the past eighteen years, the proposed instructional model has been used successfully with at-risk students in two charter schools which operate over sixty sites in California. These schools adhere to the same instructional model and curriculum as Pathways proposes herein. Evidence of the effectiveness of this educational program include exceptional success in meeting state accountability requirements under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, high rates of graduation and/or matriculation for students who had formerly dropped-out of school, and overwhelming praise from parents, students, and staff in such categories as individualized attention, creation of a safe and nurturing academic environment, and quality of curriculum. In addition, the curriculum and instructional program have been evaluated regularly for over eighteen years by Dr. James Catterall, Professor and Assistant Dean of the UCLA Graduate School of Education. Dr. Catterall has found the curriculum and educational approach to be extremely effective and to promote student achievement greater than that within similar alternative programs operated by hosting districts.

The Pathways in Education academic model is accredited by AdvancED through the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

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;

The Pathways in Education model allows the school to make education accessible to students who might otherwise drop out of the school system altogether, including special education students. The students who enter our program very often require a more flexible academic schedule than most traditional schools provide. Indeed, in many cases our students have not succeeded in traditional high schools because such an academic schedule did not allow them to meet their non-academic responsibilities. A vast majority of our students come to us because they are credit deficient and/or truant yet still wish to earn a high school diploma. Many come from low-income households, many must work part or full-time jobs in order to help support their families, many are single mothers who are the primary caregivers to their children, and many have found that the traditional school schedule and environment are adverse to their social and emotional well-being. Pathways is rooted in the conviction that such life adversities should not force any student to surrender his or her dream of graduating from high school. We put this belief to practice by affording students individualized instruction, a flexible and customized schedule, and a self-paced credit accumulation plan. These and other program components allow students to fulfill their life obligations while earning their high school diploma and setting meaningful post-secondary goals.

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

Pathways in Education's core teaching and learning values are grounded in the belief that all students, regardless of past academic performance, can be successful learners. Pathways believes that to truly serve an underserved student population a school must offer a teaching and learning model that fits the individual student rather forcing the individual student to conform to a rigid model. Each aspect of our guided distance learning program advances this educational customization, from individualized instruction to self-paced academic progress to flexible scheduling. Further, Pathways believes that effective instruction supplements intellectual development with the social and emotional development that is so crucial to a meaningful and productive life. Such life skills are particularly crucial to the success of at-risk students, many of whom have had limited exposure to these valuable concepts. Pathways maintains that these core values about teaching and learning guide students toward high school graduation and meaningful long-term educational opportunities, employment, and citizenship.

Ultimately, these values about teaching and learning derive from our four core values: mutual trust, mutual respect, compassion, and integrity. These principles undergird all aspects of our school, and provide the humanitarian framework for the values described above.