

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

a. A clear statement of the mission, academic philosophy and values;

Mission

The ReNEW Schools' Charter Management Organization will transform existing *academically unacceptable* K-8 schools into rigorous, college preparatory schools.

Academic Philosophy

ReNEW's academic philosophy is founded on one core belief: all children can learn. This belief infuses every aspect of ReNEW's design. By developing a strong culture that is anchored by high expectations, ReNEW will create an environment that motivates and compels all children to achieve. ReNEW will work tirelessly to ensure that it prepares every child for college. Our students will have the skills and knowledge needed to take advantage of our state's Tuition Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) which will assist our students with college tuition.

In order to execute our mission, we cannot blame parents, students, or societal conditions for poor performance. We are charged as educators to empower students to achieve excellent academic results. When students fail to master a standard, ReNEW educators will only consider one variable: how could the teachers and leaders of the school have served the student more effectively? This attitude will ensure that ReNEW is always doing everything it can to achieve academic excellence.

Too often schools focus on education inputs rather than student outputs. ReNEW will not fall into this trap: it will have an unwavering focus on results. ReNEW administrators, teachers, and students will all set end-of-year goals and will be evaluated based on their achievement of these goals. Value-added results will be looked at closely for each teacher within a ReNEW school. ReNEW will develop a culture of highly effective teachers and not just highly qualified. By focusing on results, ReNEW will hold itself accountable to its families, the city of New Orleans, and the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Values – REACH

The ReNEW community will uphold its commitment to the values of the organization and will create a culture that reflects these values.

Respect – Our students will be expected to respect peers and school staff members at all times. Consistent enforcement of school policies and discipline systems will demand a strong respect for a positive school culture. Every day within every class at a ReNEW school, a strong appreciation will be infused in K through 8th grade students towards successfully acquiring a quality college preparatory education.

Enthusiasm – Our students will be enthusiastic about coming to school, to learn, to take tests, to read, and in everything they do. Likewise, the staff at ReNEW will greet each day with the energy and enthusiasm to make continual academic gains with the students. It is through enthusiasm that many great things are accomplished and hard work becomes a joy.

Achievement – ReNEW teachers and School Leaders will achieve success by facilitating proficiency in ALL students. We will focus on results to inform and set ambitious goals for each student. Students will be aware of their learning targets and will be supported to develop agency for college readiness.

Community – We know that we grow with and learn from others. The strength of our school and our world depends on the vibrancy and cohesiveness of our diverse communities.

Hard Work – Each day our students will be reminded that hard work is the key to success. Hard work will be a daily expectation at ReNEW for all staff members and all students. We will expect our teachers to teach as if each *child were their own* and we will expect each student to achieve as if his/her *quality of life* depends on this education.

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

School Structure

ReNEW schools will be Kindergarten through 8th grade open enrollment schools. As a takeover school we plan to open for the 2010-11 school year with an opening enrollment based on the present size of the school. The Recovery School District (RSD) and the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) will determine the schools ReNEW will transform. Most schools eligible for takeover within the RSD are in the range of 350 to 550 students. All students presently within the building for the 2009-10 school year will be encouraged to remain. A lottery process that follows the Louisiana Department of Education's charter enrollment policies will be used to fill any vacant slots within classrooms.

Leadership Team

ReNEW's leadership team consists of a group of committed professionals dedicated to bringing a rigorous, college preparatory program to the students within academically unacceptable schools of New Orleans. Gary Robichaux, Executive Director and Colleen Mackay, Director of Human Capital and Development, are leading the effort to develop and submit a successful charter school application to launch the ReNEW takeover of two low performing schools.

Gary Robichaux, Executive Director of ReNEW Charter Management Organization, has been serving the students of Louisiana for 22 years as both a teacher and leader. Gary's career in education began in a high school classroom and has moved him into roles as a Louisiana State Distinguished Educator, the founding principal of a college preparatory charter school, and an executive of the Recovery School District. Throughout his tenure as an educator, Gary has maintained a steadfast focus on providing a highly rigorous academic environment for students with an expectation of achievement from students, teachers and leaders alike.

Gary's expertise in classroom instruction, curriculum development, assessment, data analysis and organizational leadership allowed him to open one of New Orleans' highest performing charter schools, KIPP: McDonogh 15, in 2006. In the summer of 2007 Gary was recruited by Superintendent Paul Vallas to oversee all PK-8 RSD direct-run schools. His task was to bring many of the successful best practices implemented at KIPP: McDonogh 15 to the RSD direct-run schools. In spring of 2007 most RSD PK-8 direct-run schools had an Assessment Index (AI) in the 30's and 40's. By the spring of 2009 most RSD PK-8 direct-run schools had an Assessment Index (AI) or School Performance Score (SPS) in the 60's and 70's. In his new role as Executive Director of ReNEW, Gary will utilize his leadership skills to not only build a new nonprofit organization, but also to continue in the quest to provide the students of New Orleans with the best education possible. ReNEW's goal is to transform the lowest performing schools using less

bureaucratic, more autonomous charter school polices as its form of governance.

Colleen Mackay, Director of Human Capital and Development of ReNEW Charter Management Organization, comes to New Orleans with 14 years experience in education. Colleen's experience includes working as a special education teacher, an assistant principal and director of leadership training. These experiences provided Colleen with the background necessary to serve as the Director of the KIPP School Leadership Program and successfully train, coach and develop 56 of the KIPP Foundation's most successful school leaders who have opened and are now leading many of the highest performing charter schools across the United States. In this work, she facilitated partnerships among schools, principals, teachers, executives and partner organizations for continued excellence in education.

Colleen's experience in special education, leadership training and human capital development have permitted her to work in some of the most innovative and reform-minded organizations in the country at both KIPP and the Recovery School District. In her new role as the Director of Human Capital and Development, Colleen will continue to push academic excellence to the forefront of education in seeking the most highly qualified individuals and organizations with whom to partner at ReNEW.

Governance

The founding Board of Directors is a high-capacity group possessing the wide array of professional skills necessary to launch and govern a highly successful group of charter schools in New Orleans. All founding Board members are dedicated to the mission and vision of ReNEW and are uncompromising in their mission to deliver schools that fulfill the promise of academic achievement for every student. Each member of the founding Board has committed his/her professional experience and expertise to ReNEW, and is prepared to execute his/her duties as a member of the governing Board of Directors. Resumes and a brief bio of the current founding Board of Directors' are found in Appendix VII-b.

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

Academic Measure	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Attendance	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
% Students Basic or Above Math	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%
% Students Basic or Above ELA	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%
% Students Basic or Above Science	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%
% Students Basic or Above Social St.	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%
SPS Score	80	90	100	110	120
Meet AYP Goals Annually					
Operational Measure					
Successful Audit in Each Year of Operation					
Positive Fund Balance in Each Year of Operation					
All Financial Reports Submitted in Timely Manner					

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

ReNEW 's model is heavily influenced by the "No Excuses" school model, a model that has proven to be extremely effective in raising student achievement levels in at-risk student populations. Many of our nation's highest performing charter groups – including KIPP,

Achievement First, and Uncommon Schools – implement some form of this model. Abigail and Thernstrom’s landmark book, *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning*, (2003) details several proven elements, which these successful schools have used to close the achievement gap. Throughout the charter application, this research and others will be used to support the effectiveness of the chosen model. Specifically, the core values of teaching and learning are all based on sound research, and this research is cited in the body of the section.

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

There is clear evidence that the “No Excuses” model can raise the level of academic achievement in at-risk student populations. It is important to reiterate that the model embodies the idea that *all* students will be successful, go on to college, and have the opportunities that follow academic achievement. By focusing on the mastery of literacy and cognitive ability, these schools are unquestionably successful in raising the achievement levels of all students. Perhaps most notably, many of the highest performing open-enrollment charter schools in New Orleans model themselves off the aforementioned model; including KIPP: McDonogh 15, KIPP: Believe, KIPP: Central City, New Orleans College Prep, Miller McCoy, and Science and Math Academy. These schools have clearly demonstrated that the model is appropriate for the children of New Orleans.

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

Excellent Teachers are Essential for Excellent Results

Educational researchers indicate that teacher quality is the most important determinant of student success.¹ Recruiting and training great teachers will thus be one of ReNEW’s foremost priorities. ReNEW will only hire teachers with the highest expectations and a firm belief that all children can learn. Once hired, ReNEW will further develop teachers through frequent classroom observations and peer collaboration.

Extended Learning Time for All Students

We recognize that the majority of our students will come to us significantly below grade level. As such, ReNEW will provide students with a systematic schedule of additional learning time. Research has consistently shown that an educational program utilizing additional hours of carefully planned, engaged academic learning is directly correlated to increased student achievement.² Our schedule reflects our belief that literacy and numeracy skills are the gateways to college preparatory learning.

High Expectations for All Students

Every aspect of the ReNEW’s design is grounded in our mission to ensure every one of our students is receiving an education that will make them college ready. Research on high-performing schools serving low-income and minority populations has consistently demonstrated that a culture of no excuses and a belief in the ability of *all* students to achieve at high levels is of paramount importance to securing positive student outcomes.³

¹ Brewer, Dominic, Eric Eide and Dan Goldhaber. “The Teacher Labour Market and Teacher Quality.” Oxford Review of Economic Policy 20 (Summer 2004): 230. Ferguson, Ronald F. “Paying for Public Education: New Evidence on How and Why Money Matters.” Harvard Journal on Legislation 28 (1991): 465-498. Hanushek, Eric A. “The Failure of Input-Based Schooling Policies.” The Economic Journal 113 (February, 2003): F64-F98.

² WestEd, “Improving Student Achievement by Extending School: Is it Just a Matter of Time?” PACE Media/Education Writers Seminar, April 20, 1998, accessed via WestEd Web site: http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/timeandlearning/TAL_PV.html

³ This philosophy is informed by: Samuel Casey Carter, *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools*, The Heritage Foundation (2000); U.S. Department of Education, *Successful Charter Schools* (2004); and Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom, *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Learning* (2003).

A Structured and Orderly Learning Environment

Successful urban school leaders echo the same core belief about building a successful school: a highly disciplined culture is integral to establishing an environment where students can achieve at high levels. We will build structure through explicit processes, procedures, rituals, and routines that are consistent in every classroom and hallway.

Curriculum and Instructional Systems with Proven Results

Teaching and learning at ReNEW will be aligned to the Louisiana state standards and Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs), which we believe all students must master in order to be fully prepared to succeed in a selective college. Our instructional approach is not rooted in experimentation with respect to curriculum and pedagogy; rather, we will implement an instructional program that is informed by successful practice of urban public schools.

Using Data to Drive Instruction

ReNEW's constant data-analysis will foster a culture where success is defined only by student learning. Scope and Sequence assessments will be modeled after the LEAP format and will examine content mastery strand by strand. The instructional team will disaggregate school-wide data and use results to re-teach and continually gauge the effectiveness of teaching methods. TAP's (Teacher Advancement Program) use of value-added data will help drive a teacher's retention and selection.

Increased Parental Involvement

Parents are an essential resource to any school; stronger parent support will result in increases in student achievement. All ReNEW teachers and administrators will build relationships with parents; this relationship will begin with home visits to every child who enrolls in the school, and it will be maintained through constant communication.

Daily Sustained Physical Activity

Students at ReNEW will have two recesses and physical education classes on a daily basis. In addition to benefiting students' physical health, physical activity is also key to cognitive health and development. Experience from ReNEW's leadership team as well as a plethora of recent research support this value.⁴

⁴ See John J. Ratey, *Spark: The Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain*, Little, Brown, and Company (2008); John Medina, *Brain Rules: 12 Principles for Surviving and Thriving at Work, Home, and School*, Pear Press (2008)