

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our mission is to bring the children of the Edgar P. Harney Spirit of Excellence Academy (the Academy) to academic mastery in all core subject areas. We envision the Academy as an environment that expects, supports, promotes, encourages and reinforces subject mastery and academic achievement for all students. From this educational platform the students of the Spirit of Excellence Academy will be positioned, not only for the rigors of secondary education, but will also have a solid foundation of academic expertise, social and cultural experiences, community support and critical thinking and decision-making skills to support long-term academic success. It is our belief that the students of New Orleans' public school are only "at-risk" in the absence of our commitment to provide a strong educational focus, experienced and committed staff, an environment that is conducive to learning, the support and engagement of parents and the embrace of the community.

A nonprofit Board of Directors will govern the school. The board gives instructions to the school leader officer by voting on policy and requests for information. Members of the Board are expected to serve on standing committees and contribute their expertise when appropriate. Board officers and members have overseen every aspect of the application and charter school planning and policy design process. Board members vary in backgrounds, ranging from education administration professionals to finance experts. With the assistance of consultants the board has used its expertise to design policy, procedures, curriculum for the new school. Board committees are charged with researching information and preparing recommendations for board decision-making. The Board Chairperson / President facilitates the work of the board by leading board meetings, assigning board tasks to committees and individuals, and monitoring board member accountability. Committees are responsible for verifying the validity of consultant information, providing multiple sources of information to the board and delivering options for board. Committee membership will be selected based on appropriate member background and expertise. It is the policy of the Spirit of Excellence Academy that each board director and employee of the charter school is subject to the Louisiana Code of Ethics Code LSA RS 42:11-2, et seq. All board directors will receive training in ethics via scheduled board training seminars. Any director, officer or key employee having a conflict of interest in a contract or other transaction must make a prompt, full and frank disclosure of their interest to the Board. All members of the Board and staff are required to report any perceived violations of the referenced code to the next highest authority or the Ethics Administration Program if the next higher authority is the suspected violator. If, after due process, the reported violations are determined to have substance, the Board will follow the recommendations of the Administration adjudicating authority to determine necessary disciplinary actions.

The Academy's short-term goals include an 85% average daily attendance rate and 80% teacher retention and meeting state standards on state tests. Long-term goals include a 95% non-LEAP passing rate. Monitoring and reporting the effectiveness of the curriculum, instructional methods and practices will involve both internal and

external processes building on the TargetTeach data management system and involving self-assessment tools, professional observation, and administrative, academic and financial auditing for compliance with state and federal requirements. As well, in addition to the TargetTeach diagnostic tests, 4th and 8th grade students will be administered LEAP tests. Grades 3, 5, 6, and 7 will be administered the iLEAP tests. Grades K through 3 will be administered Dibels. Results of these tests will be reported to the RSD as required in the charter contract. The Academy will utilize PowerSchool as the mechanized system for collecting and disseminating information on student performance. PowerSchool is a comprehensive student information system that will enable the Academy to easily manage student data including grades, tests results, transcripts, assignments and attendance. Additionally, PowerSchool provides parents with real-time access to student information as attendance, grades and exam and assignment results will be available to parents immediately upon posting.

The Academy will utilize the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum supported by the TargetTeach Curriculum designed by Fenwick English, Ph. D. to better ensure content alignment, diagnostic assessment, student-centered data and subject mastery. Evans Newton Inc. (TargetTeach) customizes its program components to meet the state's standards through a systematic review process. The company retrieves samples of the schools textbooks, workbooks, instructional tools, etc. and aligns the materials to the grade level expectations (GLE's). Relative to curriculum alignment, research presented by the American Educational Research Association (1999) indicates significant positive effect on student achievement in mathematics. Moreover, these findings were constant regardless of socio-economic status, race, gender or school size. As well, District Administration (2004) reports that international studies of curriculum alignment demonstrate a measurable impact of over 30 percentile points, here again canceling out such predictors as socio-economic status, race, gender and teacher effect.

The TargetTeach curriculum aligns the standards, curriculum materials and periodic assessments to ensure student attainment and proficiency, and is currently used effectively in two Louisiana charter schools – Lake Forest Elementary Charter of the Orleans Parish School Board (OPSB), and Lafayette Academy Charter of the Recovery School District (RSD). The Academy will employ a full-time curriculum coordinator who is experienced with the TargetTeach curriculum to analyze student data and assist classroom teachers with adjustments to individual student plans, as well adjustments to classroom teaching methods. As well, the Academy will utilize a Math and Language Arts Interventionist with specific responsibility for targeting learning for students needing focused assistance. Students are referred to the interventionists based on Incremental Assessment, LEAP and iLEAP scores if the assessments indicate weak or borderline skill mastery. Moreover, students that are poor test-takers, but who evidence skill mastery will be provided special instruction in test-taking strategies as opposed to skill intervention. With a mission of student mastery in all core subjects, instruction at the Academy will focus rigorously on the core, using curriculum alignment as the best practice model for efficacy. Beyond its theoretical underpinnings of

curriculum alignment, the TargetTeach process has a strong focus on the individual student through both diagnostics and monitoring which inform the student, the teacher and the parents.

The TargetTeach curriculum is designed to support introduction and mastery of all GLEs prior to LEAP and iLEAP test administration. It is anticipated that the target population for the Academy will be over 90% free and/or reduced lunch and predominantly African American, based on the current enrollment at Harney. Moreover, because Spirit of Excellence is proposing a takeover, it is also anticipated that a large portion of the student population will be performing behind grade level. Additionally, in a meta-analysis of the TargetTeach curriculum conducted in partnership with Arizona State University (Gorin and White, 2008) the effect of TargetTeach was tested from a random sample of four school districts. This study shows that student achievement after TargetTeach implementation was associated with a statistically significant increase in passing scores for students on standardized test in mathematics and reading in the Lorain City (Ohio); Red Bank Borough (New Jersey); Zion Elementary School (Illinois); and Tulsa (Oklahoma) school districts. The analysis indicates that aside from district-level variables associated with implementation, student demographics, or teacher characteristics, the TargetTeach tools made a difference in increasing student achievement.

MISSION AND VISION

1. Clear statement of the mission, academic philosophy and values

Our mission is simple – to bring the children of the Edgar P. Harney Spirit of Excellence Academy (the Academy) to academic mastery in all core subject areas. Toward accomplishment of this mission we will create the expectation of mastery for students, teachers, parents and the community. The Academy will utilize research-based best practices for both curriculum design and instructional methodology; ensure high performance teaching and learning through professional development; and build a base of community support for students through our partnership with the New Orleans Hornets.

With regard to our academic philosophy, we envision the Academy as an environment that expects, supports, promotes, encourages and reinforces subject mastery and academic achievement for all students. From this educational platform the students of the Spirit of Excellence Academy will be positioned, not only for the rigors of secondary education, but will also have a solid foundation of academic expertise, social and cultural experiences, community support and critical thinking and decision-making skills to support long-term academic success.

Relative to our values, Spirit of Excellence Leadership Academy, Inc. recognizes that all students are capable of learning, achieving and succeeding, and that the “predictors” of student achievement including race, gender and socio-economic status can be overcome through a focus on the individual student. It is our belief that the students of New Orleans’ public school are only “at-risk” in the absence of our commitment to provide a strong educational focus, experienced and committed staff, an environment that is conducive to learning, the support and engagement of parents and the embrace of the community. Regardless of background and past performance, every student of the Edgar P. Harney Spirit of Excellence Leadership Academy will be a master of the core academic subject matter. We make this pledge understanding that the impact of poverty, race, special educational needs and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina can be mitigated through high levels of individual academic and social attention.

Moreover, because our goal is to “raise the bar” so that our students, teachers and parents have high expectations of success, Spirit of Excellence Academy will utilize a curriculum alignment model with a demonstrated record of success of raising the performance of at-risk students. Research indicates the effectiveness of aligning standards, curriculum, and regular student assessment toward improved student achievement. By aligning the curriculum with the State standards or “expectations” for student performance,

Spirit of Excellence will provide a learning environment that prepares students for proficiency and ultimately builds a robust sense of self-esteem and self-confidence among the student body.

Like the New Orleans Hornets, our partners in this endeavor, our motto will be "*Passion, Purpose and Pride*". Through the professionalism and hard work of administration, faculty and staff we will work to instill in our students a love of learning and passion for education. Through the commitment of our Board and our partners we will engage parents and community in the purpose of education and the demands of the global economy for life-long learning. In the end, the students of Edgar P. Harney Spirit of Excellence Academy will hold their heads high with the pride of academic mastery building on the combined efforts of the, Board, administration, faculty, staff, parents and community.

2. Community of Students

As an open access public school, the Academy's community of students will mirror that of the average New Orleans Public School student body. The Louisiana Department of Education reports that an average 78.46% of public school students are African American. Accordingly, there is an expectation that the Academy will house a majority of African American students. American Indian, Asian, Hispanic and White students total 0.11%, 5.65%, 2.64%, and 15.14%, respectively, of the total Orleans Parish student composition. The gender ratio for the students is more or less even with 53.37% female and 46.63% male. Although the gender ratios are similar, there is a slight disparity in graduation rates. Male student graduation rates are notably lower than those of their female counterparts.

Students considered at-risk/receiving free or reduced lunch total 68.51% of the Orleans Parish student population. Given the high percentage of at-risk students, the percentage of students having limited English proficiency is relatively low, totaling 5.09% of the student body.

3. Complete Enrollment Projection Chart

Grade Level	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Pre-K					
K	40	40	40	40	40
First	50	50	50	50	50
Second	50	50	50	50	50
Third	50	50	50	50	50
Fourth	50	50	50	50	50
Fifth	50	50	50	50	50
Sixth	50	50	50	50	50
Seventh	30	30	30	30	30
Eighth	30	30	30	30	30
Total	400	400	400	400	400