Schooled: Lessons from opening a new urban academy

Sam Franklin
Pittsburgh Public Schools
February, 2009
From research to reality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original research by 10 graduate students at Heinz College</th>
<th>250 students admitted to the Academy in grades 6-9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review of secondary sources, site visits, benchmarking, community forums, and parent focus groups</td>
<td>Nearly $3 million in support from local foundations including Buhl, DSF, and US Steel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

August, 2006 | September, 2009

Schooled

Lessons from opening a new urban academy

- About the Academy
- Key accomplishments
- Lessons about project management
- Lessons about other stuff
A new way to think about school

• Every day opportunities to Dream. Discover. Design.
• Extraordinary support systems
• Four custom-designed academic focus areas
• Special advanced courses for a unique honors diploma
Students may complete the upper levels of the program in three, four, or five years.

- 6th grade (Novice): 1 year
- 7th and 8th grade (Apprentice): 2 years
- 9th grade (Associate): 1 year
- 10th and 11th grade (Manager): 1, 2, or 3 years
- 12th grade (Executive)
Key accomplishments

- Integrated a middle school program
- Obtained Board approval for key innovations
- Negotiated MOU with teachers’ union
- Implemented a new system for magnet school admissions
- Created a new approach to high school science
- Developed curriculum through a wiki site
- Raised nearly $3 million to help with start-up costs
- Hired principal and project assistant one year early
- Recruited and admitted a diverse group of students
## Lessons about project management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A bold, well articulated goal</td>
<td>Adequate time and capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of demand</td>
<td>Defined tasks and due dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Crisis Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support of key influencers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People like you and want to help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas and input are included</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Dream. Discover. Design.*
Lessons about other stuff

- Embrace navigational leadership
- Include outside expertise
- Be pragmatic
- Finish
- Perceive possibilities
Schools have failed to keep up with a changing society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Mix of skilled and unskilled professions</td>
<td>Mostly skilled professions, especially at a family wage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>Social inequality, especially by race and gender</td>
<td>Progress towards social equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>Computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>Sorting mechanism</td>
<td>Sorting mechanism</td>
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</tbody>
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