

## **Schools that Work for Children: Hawaiian Elementary School ABC Unified School District, Calif.**

The ABC Unified School District is located in the southeastern corner of Los Angeles County. The small, urban district is home to one of the highest performing high schools in the state. However, for several years, six schools in the Southside section of the district—a pocket of poverty in the district—consistently underperformed. Rather than letting the district’s overall solid academic performance overshadow the six underperforming schools, the district, in partnership with the local teachers union, enacted an intensive literacy initiative, the Southside Schools Reading Collaborative.

Started in 2000, the Southside Schools Reading Collaborative aims to close gaps through regularly scheduled meetings of teachers and administrators from feeder elementary and middle schools and their respective high schools to develop plans addressing (1) assessment, (2) reading instruction, (3) use of instructional time, (4) instructional materials, (5) differentiated instruction, (6) professional development and (7) parent and community involvement.

Additionally, the collaborative’s components include:

- Monthly meetings with principals and teachers in the collaborative to visit members’ school sites, problem solve and collaborate;
- Teacher attendance at special district training sessions;
- Site visits outside the district to observe research-based school reform models;
- Annual full-day reading conferences; and
- After-school tutoring for students who needed additional reading instruction.

Within the first three years of the Southside Collaborative, sixth-grade test scores rose from 39 percent to 53 percent, and three of the schools were granted the governor’s Performance Award for

demonstrated growth in reading. All six schools have met their schoolwide growth targets—several have made double-digit gains. Moreover, all schools in the collaborative have shown improvement on the California Standards Tests.

Based on the success of the union-management collaboration, the Southside Schools Reading Collaborative has earned the California School Board Association’s 2002 Golden Bell Award, which honors exemplary curriculum and instructional programs in schools. And, in recognition of its commitment to meeting literacy needs in the community, the unique union-district partnership was granted the “Daily Point of Light Award” by the Points of Light Foundation and the Corporation for National Service.

Hawaiian Elementary School is one of the schools in the Southside Collaborative. The school is 97 percent Latino, 65 percent English language learners and 100 percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and 44 percent of parents report that they have not graduated from high school.

Prior to 2000, Hawaiian Elementary had experienced several years of high poverty, low student test scores, and a history of unsuccessful reading programs. In 1999, staff from Hawaiian Elementary visited successful school models in Texas to observe their reading programs and develop insight into research-based reform.

Subsequently, staff at the school conducted a self-audit and needs assessment. After much research, with particular attention to programs that would serve English language learners, staff unanimously voted to adopt the Success for All (SFA) reading model. Partly because the SFA program was new and required intensive training, and partly because of the staff desire to move from a culture of isolation to one of collaboration, staff began working together and frequently meeting with each other to discuss curriculum, instructional strategies and student work. Staff attribute Hawaiian Elementary’s steady

seven-year rise in test scores to the implementation of a solid reading program and to the teamwork required to implement the program.

Every eight weeks, diagnostic assessments are given, and staff meet to discuss results of these assessments and adjust instructional groupings for in-class and after-school reading instruction. Additionally, at Hawaiian, all students are provided free after-school programs until 6 p.m. as part of a state initiative. Enrichment classes in art, music, computer lab and physical education are offered. Tutoring and homework help also is offered to all students, and for those students who are not proficient in language arts or math, Hawaiian Elementary provides specialized, small-group instruction, aligned to the regular-day Success for All program.

Hawaiian Elementary serves a population in which nearly 50 percent of its parents have not graduated from high school. To address that need, the school offers a program called Raising Readers, which assists parents in developing their own literacy skills and provides them activities they can do with their children. The Raising Readers program brings the parents into the schools and also gives them books they can take home. Hawaiian Elementary also welcomes parents into the school to observe lessons, and has instituted a program to formally encourage good attendance and character development.

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## Schools that Work for Children: Grove Patterson Academy Elementary School Toledo, Ohio

Grove Patterson is a kindergarten through eighth-grade school in the Toledo public school system. The school serves students from throughout the city, and students are selected via a lottery. Closely reflecting the demographics of Toledo Public Schools, Grove Patterson is 50 percent African-American, 37 percent white and 13 percent Latino, and 40 percent of students are economically disadvantaged. Grove Patterson has made adequate yearly progress for each of the last seven years and is rated “effective” by the Ohio Department of Education.

Eleven years ago, the administration of Toledo Public Schools and the Toledo Federation of Teachers wanted a way to demonstrate that Toledo schools were innovative and were meeting the needs of parents and the community. Part of the solution was to create a school that would offer a combination of programs that had been proven to support student achievement, which would be attractive to parents. The result was to open Grove Patterson Academy the following fall in a building that had once housed a school.

Grove Patterson’s success can be attributed to a number of unique features:

- **Extended school day and year.** Grove Patterson students attend school from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. for 192 days per year. The entire school participates in a 90-minute uninterrupted reading block, and some of the rest of the school day is dedicated to physical activities and the arts.
- **Foreign language instruction for all.** Beginning in kindergarten, all students study either German or Spanish for 30 minutes each school day, and they continue with the program throughout their time at Grove Patterson. The foreign language class focuses on teaching vocabulary and reinforcing the content curriculum from the other subject areas. For example, if students are studying measurement in math during a particular week, the Spanish or German lessons for that week will focus on the Spanish or German measurement-associated words, and will reinforce concepts taught during their regular math class. Principal Gretchen Bueter reports that, when students graduate from Grove Patterson and enter high school, they generally test into the second- or third-year level of their foreign language.
- **Looping.** Teachers at Grove Patterson follow their students for two consecutive years. In fact, when Grove Patterson first opened, teachers had to apply as a looping team—for example, a third-grade teacher and a fourth-grade teacher had to apply together to work at the school and had to agree to loop together through the years. (Now, though vacancies are few and far between, they are filled as they come up, and the looping partner participates in the interview.) The long-term relationships established through looping have been shown to support student learning.
- **Time for teachers to collaborate.** The extended schedule provides substantial time for teachers to plan and work together. The school is divided into two “ladders,” the Spanish ladder and the German ladder. Staff from each ladder meet once a week for two hours to collaborate across grade levels on curriculum and instruction.
- **A focus on curriculum.** Each K-8 ladder has a “ladder leader” who is elected by the other teachers in that ladder to serve a two-year term. The ladder leader is responsible for keeping up on curriculum trends and research-based practices, and for sharing with colleagues within the ladder. The ladder leader also researches, participates in and organizes professional development for other teachers. At the end of each school year, the ladder teams have five days without the students, to meet to review the year’s curriculum and instruction, and to plan for the next school year.
- **Labor-management collaboration.** With the school board, the Toledo Federation of Teachers

worked with the district management to plan for Grove Patterson's extended schedule, and to agree on compensation for the additional time worked and on allocation of time to engage in professional development.

- **Parental involvement.** Grove Patterson emphasizes strong parent-teacher collaboration. Parents commit to an agreement to eliminate late arrivals, to participate in homework sessions—including nightly reading and the signing of a reading sheet—and to volunteer 10 hours per family per year.
- **Data-driven instruction.** Students at Grove Patterson are assessed every eight weeks, and the data is available immediately to school staff so that instruction can be tailored to each classroom's and student's needs.

Principal Bueter and Kathy Sattler, the union's building representative, both have worked at the school since it opened 10 years ago. Sattler says Grove Patterson's strengths include teachers' commitment to working at the school; the unique program that meets the needs of the children; and the cycle of researching, implementing and assessing curriculum and instruction. Principal Bueter cites the collaboration among staff as integral to students' success. She says, "Sometimes we have to agree to disagree, but we can do that because we all know that the focus is rightly on what is best for kids."

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## **Schools that Work for Children: Hamline Elementary School Chicago, Ill.**

Hamline Elementary School serves 860 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Ninety-eight percent of its students are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch, and its student population is 86 percent Latino and 10 percent African-American. Thirty-six percent of students are English language learners.

Hamline Elementary School is a “Fresh Start” school. Fresh Start is a partnership between the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), in which a number of low-performing district schools are provided additional resources, granted some school-based decision-making autonomy, and supported as they select, plan and implement a proven, comprehensive school reform model. The premise of the Fresh Start program is that successful school reform requires the meaningful participation and endorsement of the administrators, teachers and staff who are ultimately accountable for student achievement. To that end, the Fresh Start program builds conditions and structures to foster labor-management collaboration, including:

- A role for teachers in leadership and decision-making at the school;
- Instructional support for teachers, including professional development and mentoring for new teachers;
- Clear and consistent accountability for teachers; and
- Structured remediation for struggling teachers.

Chronically low-performing schools in CPS are eligible to apply to be Fresh Start schools. As required by the contract between CTU and CPS, 80 percent of CTU members at each school are required to vote affirmatively to participate in the Fresh Start model and to adopt a comprehensive reform model. In 2005, more than 80 percent of Hamline’s teachers voted to become a Fresh Start school and to adopt America’s Choice as its reform model. According to Hamline principal, Valerie Brown, America’s Choice

fit the needs of her school because it provided an appropriate balance of structure while allowing staff some instructional creativity. It also offered curriculum specifically for English language learners, a significant portion of Hamline’s population.

Each Fresh Start school has an instructional leadership team (ILT) comprised of the principal, a union professional-development specialist, and other school staff and community members. The ILT is responsible for developing and implementing the school’s performance and improvement plans, including the implementation of the selected school-reform model. Principal Brown credits the collaboration of the instructional leadership team with transforming all aspects of the school. For example, the ILT ensures that the governance work of the school is focused primarily on student achievement. Also, because decisions are made by a labor-management team, responsibility is shared, and real collaboration is essential.

Another unique feature of the Fresh Start schools, as stipulated in the CTU-CPS contract, is the role of mentor coaches and a peer evaluation governing board. Each Fresh Start school is assigned a number of mentor coaches to provide 40 hours of mentoring to all new teachers, and to evaluate these new teachers and make retention recommendations to a peer evaluation governing board. This peer evaluation governing board is comprised of an equal number of CTU and CPS representatives, and a neutral education specialist, and is ultimately responsible for making retention decisions.

Also, the CTU and CPS have agreed to a tenured teacher intervention program that began in the 2007-08 school year, in which veteran teachers identified as “in need of remediation” are provided coaching by the mentor coaches. The veteran teacher can choose to have the mentor coaches make retention recommendations to the peer evaluation governing board, or choose to have the principal make retention decisions.

According to Principal Brown, at Hamline, this peer mentoring and evaluation system has been an invaluable asset. She cites it as another example of the shared responsibility at the school. Brown says, when a teacher needs some assistance, that teacher is much more receptive to coaching by mentors, viewing it as actual assistance instead of punishment, than if the principal alone were to recommend assistance.

Student achievement at Hamline had been chronically low for a number of years, but since 2005 when the school became Fresh Start school, overall reading achievement has improved from 36 percent proficient to 52 percent proficient. During that same time period, math achievement has gone from 38 percent proficient to 66 percent proficient.

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## Schools that Work for Children: **John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School St. Paul, Minn.**

For decades, the Payne Phalen neighborhood that surrounds John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School housed generations of immigrants and provided solid factory jobs. However, between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s, the neighborhood lost more than 2,500 industrial jobs, and between 1980 and 1990, child poverty increased by 800 percent according to the U.S. Census.

In the late 1990s, the city of St. Paul began efforts to revitalize the Payne Phalen neighborhood through housing and business investment initiatives. St. Paul Public Schools decided to build a new elementary school in the spot where a high school had long been shuttered. In a partnership between the St. Paul Public Schools and a local philanthropy, the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, the John A. Johnson Elementary School was chosen to be one of three “Achievement Plus” schools in St. Paul. The goal of Achievement Plus is to develop and strengthen communities in St. Paul in order to improve children’s academic achievement. Each Achievement Plus school is a community school that integrates resources from the public and private sector to help the school, its families and its community. The main components of Achievement Plus Schools are:

- **A standards-based curriculum** that fully implements St. Paul Public Schools’ standards-based curriculum and assessments; provides consistent instruction and assessment from one grade level to the next in reading, writing and math; offers supporting resources and materials to teachers; establishes summer institutes in reading and math; and provides extensive professional development for teachers as they implement reader’s and writer’s workshops and math programs.
- **Extended learning opportunities**, including academic, enrichment and recreational after-school activities that reinforce and expand classroom curriculum. Special effort is made to provide services to academically

underperforming students. Each Achievement Plus school has an extended learning coordinator who works with school staff to ensure that the after-school program curriculum is aligned with the classroom curriculum.

- **Learning supports**, both at the schools and in the community. For Achievement Plus, “Learning Supports” refers to a network of activities, services and opportunities provided to the local community through the school, designed to improve the welfare of students, families and local residents. Achievement Plus works with the community to provide learning supports in the following six areas:
  - Personalized health and wellness services;
  - Home involvement in schooling;
  - Support for transitions (of the family and in school);
  - Crisis assistance and prevention;
  - Classroom-focused support; and
  - Community outreach.

John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary School opened its doors in 2000 and now serves 420 prekindergarten through sixth-grade students, 92 percent of whom are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The community is 45 percent African-American, 23 percent white, 13 percent Latino and 2 percent Native American.

John A. Johnson embodies the idea that schools should serve as centers of the community. The school’s goal is to be a one-stop shop for education, health and human services, as well as a family support and community gathering site. Following is a description of how the school specifically embodies each of the main components of Achievement Plus.

**Curriculum.** St. Paul Public Schools’ Project for Academic Excellence is a local version of comprehensive school reform that aligns high academic standards with high-quality curriculum, assessments and professional development.

The project's goals are to ensure that educators understand how to organize teaching and learning around the standards, and that parents understand what falling below, meeting or exceeding the standards means. At Johnson Elementary, bulletin boards in hallways and classrooms display the standards and real samples of student work that meets or exceeds the standards, accompanied by explanations of the work and the criteria.

Professional development is a crucial component for all Saint Paul teachers, and John A. Johnson hosts staff workshops during the summer for teachers from across the district.

**Extended Learning Opportunities.** The goal of Johnson's extended learning program is to provide a seamless transition from the school day's instruction to the program's additional tutoring and instruction, and to provide hands-on enrichment opportunities for all participants. The school's extended learning program operates Monday through Thursday from 2:30-5 p.m. The program begins with a snack in the cafeteria, then moves to classrooms in which K-3 students are tutored in reading, either one-on-one or in small groups; teachers work with students in grades 4-6 on academic subjects that they are struggling with during the daytime program. The second half of the program provides enrichment activities that students may not otherwise have an opportunity to participate in, such as theater, dance and service learning. The after-school program is staffed by a combination of Johnson classroom teachers, college work-study students and independent contractors. Staff members develop individual lesson plans and communicate with the classroom teacher to ensure that the school day's lessons are reinforced.

**Supports and Services.** Because the school was designed as a community school, space for community partners is located on the main floor of the building, providing easy access for families and community members. Community partners located on-site include a Family Resource Center that provides assistance to school families and community members who may be dealing with issues related to food, clothing and housing concerns. Other partners located at the school include: a health clinic, where volunteer doctors and nurses provide services to uninsured and underinsured families; mental health counseling for students and families, provided by the Amherst

H. Wilder Foundation; an on-site dental clinic that provides dental screenings and dental services to students, their families and community members; and a reading program that provides one-on-one tutoring in reading to students in grades K-3 during the after-school program.

The community school concept provides for the building to be open until 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday and until 6 p.m. on Friday. The school cafeteria, a large, easily accessible space, is also available for community meetings and events, both during evenings and on Saturdays. Attached to the school is a full-service, state-of-the-art YMCA, which provides physical education and swimming classes for Johnson students; it also houses a Head Start program, a daycare center and a teen center, and provides a variety of after-school and weekend recreational activities. Nick Faber, Johnson's building representative, says this means that, "While students are learning, their parents may be at the center looking for jobs or assistance. Or they may be with a housing specialist working on tracking down an absent landlord to do some much needed repairs."

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## Schools that Work for Children: **P.S. 30, Hernandez-Hughes Learning Academy** **New York City**

In 1996, then-New York City Schools' Chancellor Rudy Crew created a "Chancellor's District," a non-geographic improvement zone of chronically underperforming schools, with the goals of increasing these schools' instructional capacity and academic outcomes. Beginning with 10 schools and growing to 58 schools by 2002, the Chancellor's District schools were under direct control of the chancellor and received and implemented a number of capacity-building interventions, including:

- **Extended learning time.** The school day was lengthened by 20 minutes and the school year by one week in the Chancellor's District schools.
- **After-school programs, including tutoring.** The after-school program lasted until 6 p.m. each school day and was designed to enhance and enrich daily learning. Tutoring was offered for one hour per day in small-group settings for third- through fifth-grade students who required additional reading or math assistance.
- **Class size was reduced.** No more than 20 students were allowed in kindergarten through grade 3, and no more than 25 students in grades 4 through 8.
- **Prescribed instructional program, mandated daily schedule and required curriculum.** In elementary schools in the Chancellor's District, the schedule included two daily 90-minute literacy blocks. The first block used Success for All and the second used Balanced Literacy. A 60-minute math block using the Trailblazers program, and a 30-minute skills block, alternating between reading and math skills instruction, also were mandated.
- **Intensive professional development that was systematic, structured and aligned with the curriculum.** Every Chancellor's District school was assigned at least four on-site professional development specialists, focusing on language arts, math, technology and Success for All. Additionally, every school had a Teacher Center staffed by a teaching specialist who offered

coaching, co-teaching and modeling of instruction. Part of the extended time in the school day and school year was to allow for professional development.

- **Data-driven instruction.** Regular benchmark assessments were embedded into the curriculum and designed to provide feedback to classroom teachers. Staff received professional development on differentiating instruction and remediation based on results from the assessments.

These capacity-building reforms were not inexpensive. Chancellor's District schools received \$5,700 more per pupil in 2001-02, the last year of the initiative, than they did in 1998-99. The average New York City school received only an increase of \$2,200 per pupil during that same time period. The only large-scale study of the Chancellor's District concluded that "the Chancellor's District intervention improved these schools' instructional capacity and academic outcomes, both relative to where these schools would have been and relative to comparable schools."

P.S. 30, Hernandez-Hughes Learning Academy, is a kindergarten through sixth-grade school with 395 students in East Harlem. Seventy-six percent of students are eligible for free lunch, 62 percent are African-American, 35 percent are Latino, and 6 percent have limited proficiency in English. P.S. 30 entered the Chancellor's District in 1999. For at least a decade prior to 1999, P.S. 30 had performed poorly on standardized assessments and had been identified by the state as a school in danger of closing. The school implemented all of the prescribed Chancellor's District reforms and, in 2000, hired a reform-minded principal. Student achievement increased over time, and although the Chancellor's District program ended in 2002, that initiative provided the foundation for the academic success that P.S. 30 has been able to sustain. Today, the school consistently makes adequate yearly progress and has received an "A" grade on the city grading rubric, which is based on student progress and performance as well as parent, teacher and student opinions of the school.

According to a January 2008 New York City Department of Education Quality Review Report, in P.S. 30, “instruction is contextual, practical and highly engaging.” The school has established a highly organized, rich and engaging curriculum that includes the use of metacognition and contextual learning, and provides opportunities for practical exploration. Teachers strive to make students responsible for the direction of their own learning, and beginning in kindergarten, students are expected to tell the teacher exactly what they have learned from a particular lesson. By sixth grade, students must explain “What I did. How I did it. Why I did it,” at the end of every project.

P.S. 30’s Teacher Center director, Johnnie Mae Russell, credits principal Karen Melendez-Hutt with establishing a culture of collaboration, respect and high expectations for students and staff. As a result, there has been very little staff turnover during her eight-year tenure as principal. This stability in staffing has allowed each year to build upon the last in terms of professional development and staff collaboration.

P.S. 30 uses a wide range of carefully selected assessment tools to track students’ progress, including diagnostic reading and writing assessments. From the assessment results, a team of school staff sets specific and challenging targets for every student and plans differentiated instruction accordingly. Teachers at P.S. 30 receive excellent training and ongoing support in the use of specific assessments and tracking the mastery of specific skills. The school prioritizes professional development by compensating staff—both teachers and paraprofessionals—for attending after-school “learning academies” that focus on specific curriculum areas. Teachers are given extensive opportunity to observe others teach, both in the building and at other schools.

The Teacher Center that was established at P.S. 30 as part of the Chancellor’s District is still an integral part of the school. The center is staffed by a literacy coach who provides individual mentoring and support for all beginning teachers, and for veteran teachers as needed. This can include modeling a lesson, co-teaching a class or working with a teacher one-on-one to plan instruction. Teacher Center director Russell believes that professional development, including that provided by the Teacher Center,

is integrally responsible for the school’s success five years after the Chancellor’s District initiative officially ended.

Using the various performance data, P.S. 30 has highly effective systems in place to identify students in the greatest need of improvement. A family support team recommends appropriate interventions, including mental health support, extended day provisions, intensive academic interventions and support for parents. The school offers after-school tutoring, Saturday academies and a “holiday academy” for a week in December, all of which provide intensive academic tutoring. Students are grouped for instruction based on the need for remediation in specific skills, as identified by the school’s assessment team. Incentives are provided to students who attend these academies and their families. There are also subject-specific after-school clubs. For example, this past school year, the after-school Science Club made a trip to the Pocono Environmental Education Center for a week of learning and camping.

The school has entered into several partnerships to support learning, including one with City Year that supplies in-school and extended-day tutoring. Also, the school shares a building with a special education school, which P.S. 30 staff feel is mutually beneficial for both schools in terms of sharing expertise and providing students “citizenship education.” The school is part of a Community Learning Support organization in New York City, and has applied for and received numerous grants to maintain the resources that were provided by the Chancellor’s District, such as high-quality school libraries and classroom libraries.

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## Schools that Work for Children: TechBoston Academy Boston, Mass.

In 1995, the Boston Public Schools, the mayor of Boston and the Boston Teachers Union collaborated to develop schools that would serve as models of educational innovation and attract families who might otherwise choose to attend charter schools. The result was the pilot schools, which are part of the Boston Public Schools but which are governed by a local governing board that has considerable autonomy from district policies and mandates. Each of the 21 pilot schools' local governing boards is comprised of at least four teachers, the principal, parent representatives, community members and, for high schools, students. Faculty, parent and student members are elected by their peers; community members are selected by the overall governing board.

Pilot schools' local governing boards are responsible for each of these five areas:

- **Budget.** Pilot schools have a budget that allows the school nearly total discretion to spend in the manner that provides the best programs and services to students and families.
- **Curriculum and assessment.** While pilot schools have to administer state- and district-required tests, they are given the flexibility to determine the school-based curriculum and assessment practices that will prepare students for these mandated assessments. Additionally, graduation requirements are set by the school, not by the district, with an emphasis on competency-based performance assessment.
- **Policy and governance decisions.** The school's local governing board is responsible for setting rules regarding principal selection and supervision, and with respect to areas such as student promotion, attendance and discipline policies.
- **School calendar.** Pilot schools set their own school day and year for both students and faculty, including the organization of the school

day and the time allotted for planning and professional development for faculty. Most pilot schools have a longer school day and school year. Under an agreement between the union and the district, teachers in pilot schools are compensated for hours worked in excess of 100 hours beyond the required contract hours.

- **Staffing.** Each pilot school's local governing board makes staffing decisions, including hiring and excessing staff, to align with the school's goals and structures. Teachers who work in pilot schools are exempt from terms of the collective bargaining agreement except for their base salary, benefits and the accrual of seniority within the district.

In order to convert to a pilot school, at least two-thirds of the faculty must vote to convert, and the school must submit an application to a steering committee made up of representatives from the union and the district. The steering committee makes a recommendation to the school board as to whether the school has the capacity to become a successful pilot school.

The rationale behind the pilot schools is that the increased autonomy will spur increased student engagement and performance. In 2006, a comprehensive study of pilot schools found that students in Boston's pilot high schools perform better on the state tests, are suspended less frequently, attend class more often and graduate in higher percentages than students enrolled in the city's regular public high schools.

One such pilot school is TechBoston Academy. TechBoston enrolls 375 students; 57 percent are African-American, 29 percent are Latino, 7 percent are white and 6 percent are Asian. Seventy-five percent of TechBoston's students are classified as low-income. The school made adequate yearly progress in 2008, and has a higher graduation and attendance rate than the district average, and a lower suspension rate.

TechBoston provides all students a college preparatory curriculum, with an interdisciplinary project-based learning component that integrates technology. This means that—in addition to four years of science, math and English; three years of social studies; and two years of a foreign language—all TechBoston students must complete two years of either Digital Art or Web Development. Technology is integrated into all classes at TechBoston, offering students multiple ways to learn. All students use a laptop throughout the day to promote the view of technology as a tool rather than a toy.

TechBoston operates on a seven-hour academic day (as opposed to a six-hour day for the rest of Boston Public Schools), with an additional eighth hour for academic support programs or extracurricular activities. Tutoring and SAT preparation are built into every student's schedule, and throughout their four years, TechBoston students are provided community service, job and internship opportunities that let them apply the skills they are learning to real life situations. Beginning in the 11th grade, students may elect to participate in dual enrollment programs at local colleges. Many TechBoston students graduate having passed industry certification tests in a range of Internet technology areas such as Web design and networking.

Collaboration and capacity are key to the success at TechBoston. In addition to summer professional development, the TechBoston staff dedicate five hours per two-week period to common planning time and professional development activities. Additionally, through a program called Technology Goes Home, the school offers technology classes for parents and provides them opportunities to earn computers, printers and Internet access for their homes. Parents also are offered college and financial aid workshops throughout the school year.

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