A New Health & Science Campus as part of an Arts Integrated High School.

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Introduction

Expanding on a good idea.

In 2006/07 school year we opened a new school with an arts and academics - integrated focus. In short, the belief was that if you could think like an artist you could act like an academic. In the succeeding five years that the school has been open, we’re stakeholders in our goal of 220 students (currently, 205) and we’ve achieved some remarkable success:

• Achieved AYP in 2009/10
• Solid performance on state assessment tests with meets & exceeds percentages consistently above district and state averages.
• 98% Graduation Rate
• 60% of the 2010 graduates enrolled in four year universities

In 2008, we received the Charter School grant and with those resources, we are choosing to expand the school and open an additional campus, focused on Health and Science. In a time where schools are typically “hunkering down”, we believe the opportunity is ripe to expand and take in more students in a new campus experience, yet still maintain our learning-focused, small school environment.

An Intriguing Idea

Where’s this coming from?

Initial anecdotal research with partner arts-based schools who have expanded to offer other areas of focus – specifically the Tacoma School of the Arts (SOTA) and the myriad of theme-based charter schools in the Portland area - have suggested that a science/health or science-based academy is a popular draw. A look at graduation data in Springfield - though incomplete, but at least informative - would suggest that few of the large high school graduates move on to high-end careers in the medical or science field, like M.D. or Ph.D., but many do enroll in health related fields at two year institutions, such as LCC, to prepare for careers in health, science, math, and health students to be successful beyond high school, they must develop values and practices around memorization of key content and how to actively and creatively apply it in a variety of problem-solving circumstances.

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The “Buckets of Concern”:

A Timeline for Implementation and Options

Year 1: 2010/11.

Bucket 1: WHY

Health & Sciences

Campus as part of the existing Arts-integrated school?

Though we have anecdotal data to support that a health and science focused school has appeal and there is an assumed match of community values, we don’t actually have any hard data that shows that parents or students would actually choose this option if it were available. Greater analysis of actual data is called for through surveys of actual district students and parents as well as offering opportunities for students to engage in a science/health mini-institute or summer workshop to see how many would actually actively choose that sort of work. Possible activities to explore:

• A web-based survey announced to 4th - 7th grade parents (ones mostly likely to sign up in the next three to five years) that would collect responses around what interest there is in a health & sciences focused academy as part of the existing campus. Such a survey would also invite respondent test input for ideas and questions.
• Information meetings and workshops for district science, math, and health teachers and district administrators. The meetings would be organized to gather staff input, as well as to calm fears that the program would not draw students away from exemplary science and health programs at the large comprehensive schools.

The goal would be to get input that is different and, rather than to replicate what’s already being offered.

Bucket 2: WHERE

would we locate

a science and health academy?

How many students do we actively and independently have to plan to have a good deal of marketing and out reach to get our start-up student body of 50 sophomores and freshmen. Possible activities to explore:

• Hold a week-long science and health based “day camp” during the summer. The program would be low cost or free for participants and would feature multiple hands-on learning opportunities for middle school students. The camp would mimic the existing arts school structure, but with a more academic, science/health, focus. At the end, each student would be responsible for publicly presenting either as a group or individually something that demonstrates their learning. Our original concept was to survey data about engagement in the work in the field and if they would be interested in continuing this style of learning in high school.

Conclusion:

Though it’s always a risk to initiate a new program, we believe that our research indicates that expanding our school to include a health and science campus would add up to 1/3 additional resource, but only cost 1/5 of our actual budget is a good move. As well, the program would fill a void in the district where there is no focused health and science job/career preparation program.

Some Results and Conclusions

The chart below plots the growth of the school since 2008/09 through a projected full enrollment of 320 students in 2014/15. The projection includes the additional 100 health and science students beyond our current capacity of 220, projected for 2011/12.

Some important notes:

• The school was funded at 115% of ADE in 2008/09, 105% in 2009 10 and, currently, at 100% in 2010/11.
• Though we have anecdotal data to support that a health and science campus is not some sort of elitist program for smart kids only, but is part of the general school philosophy, not all of the students who choose to attend, inegraded or of prior academic success or talent.

References