



Mastery Charter Schools
Excellence. No Excuses.

2008-2009 Overview

MISSION

All students learn the academic and personal skills they need to succeed in higher education, to compete in the global economy, and to pursue their dreams.

Mastery Charter Schools is a growing network of middle and high schools that prepare underserved youth for success in higher education and the global economy. We believe that educational inequity is the most pressing social problem facing our country—the civil rights issue of our day. Mastery exists to solve the problem. We believe it is imperative that every child receives a quality, college-preparatory education. Mastery is creating a network of exceptionally high performing urban schools that demonstrate that all students—not just those attending selective schools—can succeed and achieve academically. Our purpose is to raise the bar for urban education and prompt system changes. We live by our motto: “Excellence. No Excuses.”

Mastery currently operates four schools in Philadelphia serving 1,750 students in grades 7 through 12. Three of the schools were conversions of low performing, violent District schools. After Mastery assumed management of these schools, test scores increased an average of 35 percentage points per grade and violence decreased 85%. Mastery is planning on opening six additional elementary and middle/high schools in the coming years.

Mastery integrates modern management and effective educational practices to drive student achievement. Our program is distinct in several ways. Most importantly, our teachers are outstanding and relentlessly committed to student achievement. Mastery instruction means teaching and supporting students until they learn. Our teachers continually improve their craft through frequent feedback, coaching, and collaborative support. Instruction is grounded by a common pedagogical model and guided by focused standards-based curricula. We align assessments to clear objectives and use assessment data to direct instruction. We utilize a mastery-based grading system and a scaffolded course structure that addresses students at their incoming skill level, yet holds all students to a single college preparatory graduation standard.

Mastery creates an achievement-focused school culture by sweating the small stuff while fostering meaningful, personalized relationships between students and adults.

To support the transition to a high expectations culture, we explicitly teach students problem-solving and social-emotional skills. All students receive workplace skills training and participate in internships to ensure they develop the real world skills required for college and the global economy. In short, Mastery insists on high expectations and high support so all students can achieve success.

HISTORY

Mastery's first school was founded in September 2001 by a coalition of business and civic leaders led by Scott Gordon. The original school opened as High Tech High Philadelphia with 100 ninth grade students in a rented North Philadelphia office space. The following year the school moved to its current location, the Lenfest Campus, in the heart of Philadelphia's historic district. Shortly thereafter, the school changed its name to Mastery Charter School to emphasize the focus on academic and personal skills achievement. In January 2005, the original Lenfest Campus was named an “Exemplar” charter school by the U.S. Department of Education, one of only 15 schools selected nationwide.

EXPANSION & PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP

Based on the success of the original school, the School District of Philadelphia invited Mastery to convert some of the most troubled District middle schools to Mastery Charter Schools. Through this partnership, the District aimed to turnaround failing schools and to convert them into small high schools serving grades 7-12. The first conversion, the Thomas School in South Philadelphia, became a Mastery Charter School in fall 2005. The Shoemaker School, previously the second most violent school in the District, converted in fall 2006. The Pickett Middle School, formerly one of the lowest performing District schools, converted in fall 2007. Under the conversion arrangement, the District leases their school buildings to Mastery and Mastery enrolls all the existing students. In addition, Mastery designs and supervises complete building renovations. The renovations occur while the school is operating and are completed within 18 months.

	Lenfest	Thomas	Shoemaker	Pickett
Year Opened	2001	2005	2006	2007
Current Grades & Enrollment	7, 9-12 435	7-11 450	7-10 430	7-9 345
Fall 09 Grades & Enrollment	7-12 475	7-12 550	7-11 525	7-10 455
Final Grades & Enrollment	7-12 475	7-12 570	7-12 640	7-12 670
Renovation \$ & Completion Date	Original School	\$8.2mm Mar. 2006	\$11.1mm Dec. 2007	\$14.2mm Mar. 2009

STUDENTS

Mastery recruits new students primarily at the 7th and 9th grade levels. Students are not screened on the basis of academic ability. Prospective students are recruited through community outreach and are selected by lottery. Our incoming students reflect the norm for Philadelphia District students, scoring at the bottom 20-35th national percentile on standardized tests. Median test scores are approximately 2-3 grades levels behind in reading and 2-4 grade levels behind in math. Over 10% of incoming 9th graders score at or below the 3rd grade level in math and reading. Approximately 75-80% of our students are eligible for free or reduced school lunches.

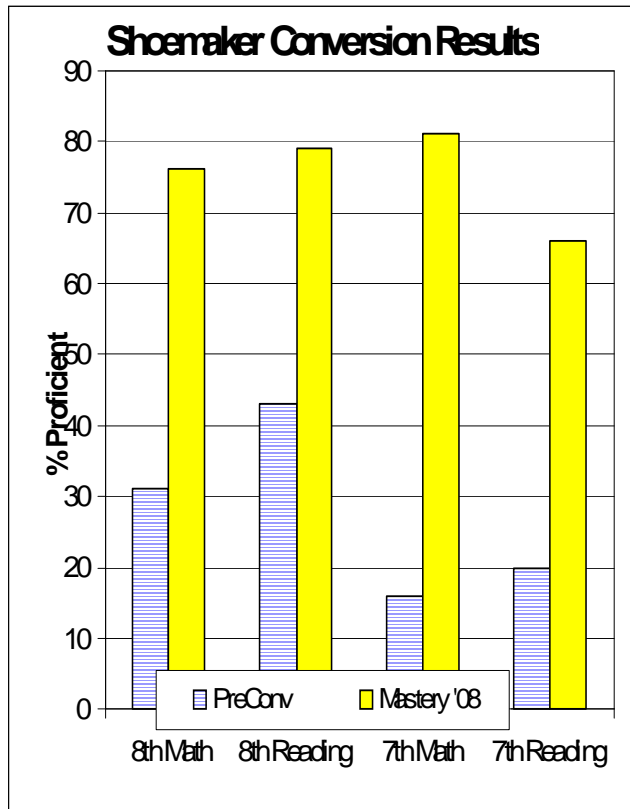
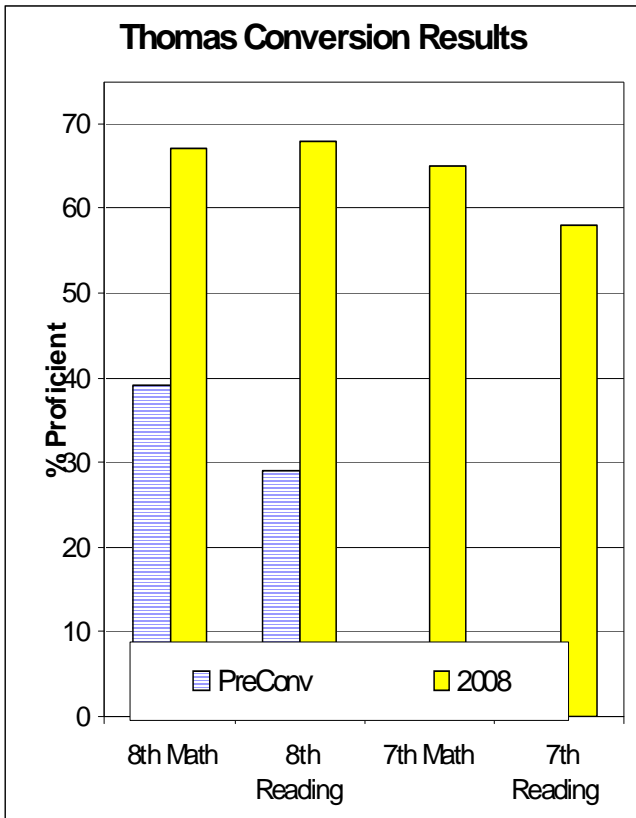
At the Lenfest Campus, approximately 92% of students are African American and the remainder White, Latino, and Asian. At the Thomas Campus, approximately 70% of students are African American, 15% Asian, 10% White and 5% Latino. At the Shoemaker and Pickett Campuses, approximately 98% of students are African American.

RESULTS

CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

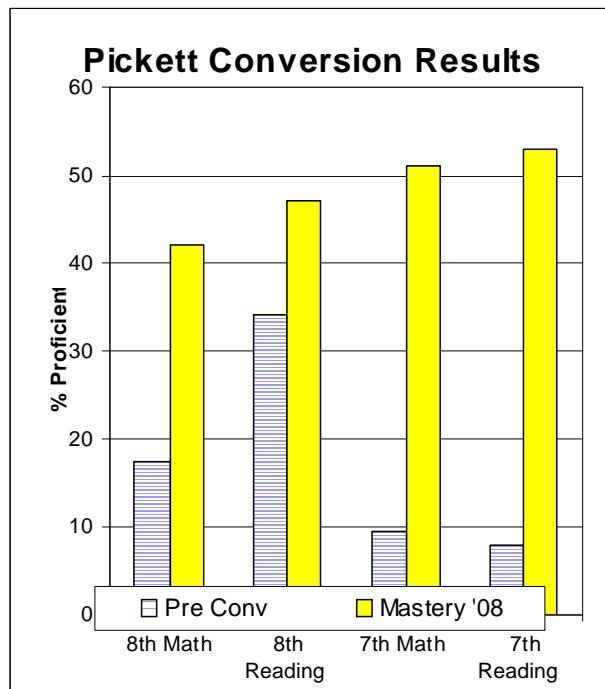
A stunning performance gap (approximately 30 percentage points) exists between low-income minority students and the State average on standardized tests. **All Mastery schools commit to eliminating this gap within three years of opening.**

We believe that the PA standardized assessments (PSSA) are basic skill assessments and as such should be a minimum expectation for all students. Thus within four years of opening, our goal is for 85% of students to achieve proficiency in writing, math, and reading. Mastery’s converted middle schools have made dramatic improvements – eliminating the achievement gap at the in Reading and Math at the Shoemaker Campus and in Reading at the Thomas Campus. Mastery believes a safe, positive, achievement-oriented school climate is a prerequisite for academic success. At all three conversion schools, violence incidences have dropped 85% while Student turnover dropped by nearly half.

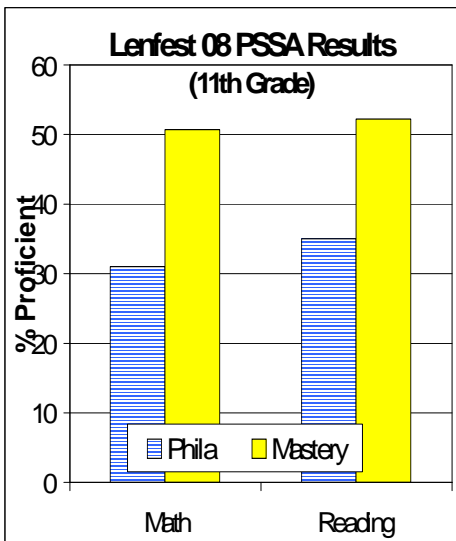


The Picket Campus made dramatic growth in its first conversion year.

	<u>2004-5 District</u>	<u>2007-8 Mastery</u>
# of Serious Incidents:	77 (14 per 100 students)	4 (1.5 per 100 students)
School police	2	0
Attendance	86%	92%
Student retention	79%	87%



The Lenfest Campus, which has enrolled students at the 9th (rather than 7th) grade, has strong results compared to peer groups but still has a significant gap compared to the State average. Lenfest 11th graders scored 13 percentage points higher in Reading, and 15 percentage points higher in Math than their School District peers but 13 percentage points lower in reading and 5 points lower in math than the Statewide average (2007 PSSA). To accelerate academic achievement, the Lenfest Campus has boosted academic rigor across the curriculum and enrolled its first 7th grade class in fall 2008.



Given our mission, we are most proud of our college admissions rate. Over 93% of Mastery's first three graduating classes enrolled in higher education—67% in a four year college. The class of 2008 received \$2 million in scholarships. Perhaps most importantly, our graduates' drop-out rate from college is less than 20%.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

GOALS

Our goal is for our graduates to succeed in higher education and be competitive in the global economy. Key goals include:

- 85% of students are proficient on the PSSA in math, reading, writing
- SAT scores are above the national average
- At least 85% of graduates enroll in higher education
- Less than 10% of students withdraw or transfer from our schools annually
- All students demonstrate workplace competency by successfully completing an internship

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Goal:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students learn the skills required for success in college & the global economy
High School Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple entry-level courses designed to meet incoming students at their skill level• Entry level courses designed to quickly remediate skills deficits• All students take same college preparatory courses at upper grades
Curriculum & Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skill-focused• Clearly defined, standards-based curriculum• Common assessments by course• Benchmark assessments every six weeks
Grading	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mastery or Incomplete• 76% is Mastery, below 76% students must repeat semester in summer school
Student Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extra hour of academic support from 3:00-4:00pm daily• Mandatory Saturday school & skills classes
Workplace Exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Workplace and personal skills explicitly taught• Internship is required to graduate
School Size	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approximately 200 students in middle & 400 students in high school
Class size	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 25 students/class average
School Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small, personal• A culture of high expectations – orderly & respectful school climate
Teacher Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early dismissal every Weds for collaborative planning & PD• Frequent (9+ /yr) instructional feedback• 15 PD days throughout year
Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers ensure students learn• Explicit instructional standards based on effective practice• Assessment data and curriculum drives instruction
Instructor Advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotion based on teacher performance• Bonus awarded to all staff based on student outcomes

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- **Scaffolded Course Structure: Multiple Entry Points, Single Exit**

Mastery's entire academic program is back-mapped to deliver the academic and personal skills required by colleges and the modern workplace. However, we recognize that students enter Mastery at dramatically varying skill levels – from functionally illiterate to above grade level. To effectively meet students at their incoming skill levels, we created multiple course options at the 7th, 8th, & 9th grades (the grades where most students enter Mastery).

Students with lower reading skills receive coursework that is specifically designed to accelerate reading skills. At the high school level, struggling readers also receive an extra period of reading support. By sophomore year, all students take the same English course and struggling students receive an additional reading support course. By 11th grade all students are engaged in the same rigorous pre-college coursework.

In Math, students who are significantly behind grade level take a year of pre-algebra and in their sophomore year move on to the same algebra course taken by all students.

To ensure students catch up quickly, these accelerated entry-level “ramp-up” courses are typically limited to 20 students per class, while upper level classes typically have 25-29 students per class. This structure ensures that all

students get the support they require and receive the college preparatory coursework they need.

Finally, to demonstrate that students are ready for college and the modern workplace, and thus ready to graduate, all students must:

- Master senior level, college preparatory coursework in English, Math, Science, History and Spanish.
- Attain Proficiency on the PSSA
- Complete an 18 week workplace internship
- Successfully present a Senior Mastery Project demonstrating their ability to manage a project and work independently

- **Mastery Grading & Promotion**

Traditional A thru F grading is not consistent with Mastery's goal of ensuring all students master skills and content. Instead, Mastery uses a "Mastery" and "Incomplete" system. Students "Master" a course by attaining a grade of 76% or above. Anything less is considered "Incomplete" and must be revisited.

Courses are typically a year in length and comprised of two semesters. Each semester is worth one credit. Any credit that was not mastered must be made up in summer school. If a student misses four of the eleven yearly credits, or if they fail a summer school course, they are retained and must repeat the grade the following year. This mastery-based promotional structure is very effective in motivating students and conveying our motto: Excellence. No Excuses.

- **Academic Support & Intervention**

We consistently strive to develop a "success through hard work" ethic in our students. Students are told that they are expected to master all of their classes and that we will do anything necessary to support their success. Most supports and interventions are scheduled from 3-4pm. This extra hour is considered part of the regular school day. Supports include:

- a. **Homework Club & Guardian Angel:**

Homework is assigned nightly in all subjects and students are expected to complete every assignment. Typically students spend approximately two hours daily on homework.

In grades 7-8, students turn in their homework at the start of the day. These assignments are immediately delivered to teachers and graded by mid-day. Students who do not complete their homework, or completed it unsatisfactorily, attend the daily homework club detention at the end of the day.

In grades 9 & 10, students who are not mastering their courses are assigned a Guardian Angel three days a week after school. The Guardian Angel is a teacher who works with a small number of students and is responsible for ensuring that those students complete their homework.

- b. **After School Support**

All teachers meet after school with individuals and small groups of students who are in need of additional support.

- c. **Saturday School & Skills Class**

Assessment data is used to identify students who are not making sufficient academic progress. These students are scheduled for Saturday school (generally 9am-12:30pm) and/or skills classes after-school. Both of these interventions include direct instruction focused intensely on the major academic standards required by that grade level.

- d. **SAP:**

Students that are identified as having a barrier to their academic success are referred to the Student Assistance Program (SAP) team. The SAP team is responsible for evaluating the issues and identifying supports and services to aid the student in overcoming these barriers.

- **Special Education**

Mastery schools have special education populations of approximately 15-20%. Our services are varied and tailored to the needs of the students as described in his/her IEP. We place great emphasis on setting rigorous measurable goals and tracking progress.

At the middle school level, students with disabilities receive one or a combination of the following: in-class support by a special education instructor, after-school tutoring, and pull-out services.

At the high school level, students with significant reading disabilities are enrolled in a course designed to address reading deficits. This course includes a focus on phonics, decoding and fluency. The expectation is that students will make sufficient progress to take coursework in their sophomore or junior year at grade level. Special Education teachers lead or provide in-class support in these 'ramp-up' courses. In addition, the special education staff provides in-class and pull-out support to students with IEP's in most grade-level courses.

Third and fourth year high school students who are cognitively unable to go beyond the lower-level courses enroll in our "School-to-Career" (STC) program. The goal of STC is to prepare students for work. STC students take specialized in-school coursework and spend part of the school day in a workplace internship

INSTRUCTION & TEACHER SUPPORT

- ***Mastery Teachers:***

Mastery teachers know that all students can and must achieve. Our expectations are high, our desire for success is intense and our timeline is aggressive. We use clear and concrete measures to determine achievement. When we fail, we own it and look to develop better and more effective methods. We constantly explore new strategies to increase our effectiveness and we never get hung up on pedagogical fads or ideologies. We know that high expectations must be matched by high and efficient support. We are united by our shared mission, the urgency of the calling and our relentless pursuit of academic achievement for all.

- ***Standards-Based, Skills-Focused Curriculum & Assessments***

Mastery translates Pennsylvania state standards and the skills and knowledge we believe students require for college into clear and measurable standards. These standards are embedded in course curricula with each course strategically building upon the skills mastered in the previous course.

Each course is sub-divided into six week blocks that cover a specific set of skill standards. The scope and sequence is structured around these standards and lays out which standards students need to master by when. Students receive a report card at the end of each six week cycle.

All course details are documented in the course curriculum. Each curriculum outlines:

- The skills and content covered each 6 week report period
- References to curricular support materials (texts, novels, etc.)
- Description of achievement criteria. Achievement criteria are the assignments and assessments that determine the student's grade.

Mastery adopted this intentional, focused, standards-based approach because it clarifies for teachers and students what skills and content need to be taught and mastered. It enables coherence and consistency across classrooms to support student learning.

- ***Achievement Criteria***

Perhaps the most useful of these assessments are Mastery developed benchmark assessments that are delivered at the end of every six week marking period in core courses. Most major assessments such as unit exams and end of report period benchmarks are centrally developed to ensure consistency in measuring student progress. These benchmarks are intended to be the assessment tie between Mastery's curriculum and Pennsylvania standards. The benchmarks provide a clear measure of what students need to learn. Consequently, teachers use the results of the benchmarks to prioritize and organize their instruction, ensuring that they direct attention where students have need.

A full professional development day is dedicated after each benchmark so teachers can meet with the school leadership and colleagues to review their classes' data and develop plans for re-teaching and reassessment.

- ***Mastery Instructional Model***

Mastery instructors are focused on student achievement. We teach until students learn. To enable the most effective instruction, Mastery has developed Instructional Standards.

At the heart of the model are a few simple themes:

- *Urgency:* Instructors teach with rigor and zest. Time is not wasted.
- *Objective-Assessment Alignment:* Instructors identify a clear and measurable objective and then assess whether students mastered that objective

- *Focus:* Instructors target the standards students need to learn. Assessment data is used to determine students' areas of need.

The Instructional model includes eight categories Objective, Introduction, Lesson Flow, Assessment, Student Engagement, Environment, Tone, and Effectiveness. The lesson flow follows Madeline Hunters' Direct Instruction → Guided Practice → Independent Practice format. While there are variations on this format, all instruction at Mastery maintains a tight connection between the standards and the assessment.

In general, we find that instruction at the earlier grades is quite focused on fundamental academic skills, while at the upper grades, the focus shifts towards critical thinking and analysis.

- **Professional Development**

Teachers are our greatest asset and therefore supporting and developing our teachers is a paramount priority. We do this through a number of forms:

- a) *Planning Time*

To be effective, we know that teachers need time to plan and work collaboratively with colleagues. Available time includes:

- *Planning periods:* Teachers have one or two planning periods daily
- *Wednesday Afternoons:* Students are dismissed early every Wednesday leaving approximately 2.5 hours for co-planning and internally driven professional development.
- *Benchmark Conference Days:* Every six weeks a full PD day is held to review benchmark data and plan for the upcoming report period.

- b) *Instructional Feedback and Support*

Mastery believes that to grow as professionals, we all need frequent, specific, thoughtful feedback. All Mastery teachers receive a minimum of nine informal and formal observations per year. Mastery's Instructional Standards provide a common language and observable data with which to provide constructive feedback and dialogue. The Principal, AP for Instruction and AP for Special Education take responsibility for supervising and supporting the teaching staff. In addition, most campuses have Master Teachers who provide non-supervisory coaching and instructional support. This leadership structure ensures that teacher support receives top priority. Mastery seeks to foster an "open classroom" culture of mutual respect and appreciation between administrative and instructional staff.

- c) *Professional Development*

In August before the school year begins, teachers receive 10 days of training and Professional Development focused on Mastery's Instructional Model, curriculum, and school culture programs. Sessions are delivered by outside providers as well as Mastery's Chief Academic Officer's staff. These sessions continue periodically throughout the year and at the semester break.

- d) *Continuing Education Reimbursement*

Mastery encourages staff to continue developing their instructional practice by taking coursework and workshops related to their field. Up to \$1,000 annually is available to all instructional staff to reimburse for educational coursework or certification testing and related expenses. Up to \$400 is available for education related workshops/seminars (and travel to those seminars). The total amount an employee can receive in any one year between coursework and workshop reimbursement is \$1,000.

- e) *Peer Visits:*

Throughout the year, teachers conduct peer visits in an effort to share strategies and get feedback.

- **Technology**

Mastery believes that technology can make instruction more active, engaging, and effective. At the high school level, we maintain a 3:1 student to computer ratio. In the middle school, computers are available for specialized reading and math remediation. Finally, all teachers receive a Mastery laptop and have a LCD projector available.

SCHOOL CULTURE

Because Mastery is a serious learning environment requiring productive academic and behavior habits, creating a safe, achievement-oriented school culture is critical. Mastery places a very heavy emphasis on appropriate behavior in the classroom and hallways. Our school culture strategy relies on institutional systems that support students to take ownership for the school and responsibility for their classmates. Key elements include:

- **School Culture Team**

An Assistant Principal of School Culture leads a team that includes Dean of Students (one for every 200 students), Social Emotional Learning Instructors, and school counselor(s). The team is responsible for school culture, serving as disciplinarians, student coach/guides, teacher supporters, community/parent liaisons, and services coordinators. The Deans work closely with teachers to identify struggling students, discipline problems, and general school culture issues. The team is proactive; building positive relationships with students, anticipating problems before they occur, mediating issues, and celebrating student achievements.

- **Code Of Conduct & Merit/Demerit System**

As a condition to enrolling in the school, each Mastery student agrees to abide by the code of conduct.

CODE OF CONDUCT
I choose to be here. I am here to learn and achieve. I am responsible for my actions. I come with a clear mind and healthy body. I contribute to a safe, respectful, cooperative community. This is my school... I make it shine.

A school-wide Merit/Demerit system supports appropriate student behavior. Students carry name tag lanyards where staff can record merits and demerits. When students receive six demerits in a report period they receive a detention. After multiple detentions, a parent-staff conference is held to identify the source of the student's problem. The merit system is used to acknowledge individual acts of character, growth and service. Students receive awards for accumulated merits including dress down privileges, pizza parties and field trips.

Teachers do not tolerate class disruptions. Students whose actions interfere with other students' learning are dealt with promptly. Students whose behavior is not redirected by teacher intervention are sent to a Dean.

- **School Culture Rituals And Programs**

- *Uniform:* All students must be in school uniform (navy blue slacks/skirt and a tucked white Mastery shirt) at all times.
- *School-Wide Consistency:* All teachers enforce the rules and expectations outlined in the Mastery Student Handbook.
- *Community Meetings:* A community meeting (up to 100 students) is held weekly. At the community meeting, student accomplishments are highlighted, community problems are addressed and announcements are made.
- *Classroom Circles:* Classroom circles are held weekly for students and staff to discuss important issues facing the community. These structured but open forums support a culture of student engagement and community dialogue.
- *Awards:* Students who demonstrate elements of the Code of Conduct are recognized at Community Meetings. In the middle school, class cohorts receive a behavior rating from each teacher. At the end of the week the cohort with the highest rating receives recognition and privileges.
- *College Focus:* Mastery organizes college visits for all students beginning in middle school and continuing every year thereafter. Advisories are named after colleges and the advisors are encouraged to teach students the college's fight song, etc.
- *Teaming:* A staff member can call a *Teaming* for a student in need. At the teaming, the student and parent meet with all the students' instructors to discuss the students' academic performance and develop strategies for success.

- **Restorative Practice**

Restorative Practice is an approach to wrongdoing that emphasizes relationships and focuses attention on the harm done to victims, offenders, and the overall community. Restorative Practice means that individuals who hurt the school community must make amends and give back to the community for their infraction.

Significant code of conduct infractions such as vandalism or violence are dealt with as community issues in either morning circles or community meetings.

High School students who violate the Code of Conduct go before the *Student Community Committee (SCC)*. The SCC is a group of students and staff who discuss the infraction with the student. In some cases, the SCC will recommend an appropriate consequence to the Deans. The goal of the SCC is for students to take ownership of the school culture. The SCC also mediates peer disputes.

- **“Whatever It Takes” Contract**

Prior to enrolling, every student and parent must sign the Whatever It Takes Contract that outlines the responsibilities and expectations that families accept when they enroll at Mastery. These expectations include regular attendance, homework completion, and attendance at after-school tutoring and homework support.

- **Non-Violence Contract**

Prior to enrolling, every student and parent must also sign a non-violence contract stating that they will be expelled if they engage in a fight. Typically, minor scuffles result in extended in-school suspensions. Students who incur a second infraction or who participate in a fight of any consequence face immediate expulsion. As a result, school violence is not a major issue at Mastery.

- **Parent Involvement**

Parents are welcomed and encouraged to visit the school and sit in on classes any time. Each school has a Parents Association that meets regularly with the Principal. The Parent Association President of each school serves on the Mastery Board of Trustees.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Mastery’s Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program is based on a belief that all students can learn the personal and interpersonal skills required for life success—if those skills are explicitly taught and consistently reinforced. The SEL program has several objectives:

- 1) *Support a safe, achievement-focused school culture* by teaching students conflict resolution skills, organizational skills, and connecting students to each other and Mastery as a community.
- 2) *Promote personal well-being* by teaching students decision making skills and educating them on risky behaviors related to sex, drugs, and violence.
- 3) *Prepare students for the work world* by teaching workplace appropriate behaviors and supporting students through job shadowing and internship experiences.
- 4) *Facilitate students’ admission to college* by supporting students through the college admissions process and transition to life after high school.

The SEL curriculum is rooted in cognitive psychology and the pedagogy is very interactive. SEL coursework is taught by dedicated SEL instructors and selected traditional subject instructors. The program includes:

7th & 9th Grade Seminars All incoming 7th graders take a twice weekly seminar that orients them to Mastery’s culture and teaches conflict management, violence prevention and sex education. Ninth grade students take a single-sex class with 16 students who meet daily. The course orients students to Mastery culture and supports their academic organizational skills. In addition, decision making skills and reflective thinking are taught so students make healthy life choices and avoid violence, drugs, and risky sexual behavior. Peer-to-peer sessions prompt students to apply what they’ve learned to the real situations facing them throughout the year.

All teachers are encouraged to reference the decision making framework that students learn in 9th grade seminar. The frame has four steps:

- Frame – *Determine the question*
- Evidence – *Gather facts*
- Perspectives – *Examine multiple viewpoints & your own*

- Reason Logically – *Think through options*

Workplace Skills Seminars & Internship Placement: In students' sophomore year, they are introduced to workplace skills and go on several field trips to develop their career interests and learn about the professional workplace. In students' junior year, they receive instruction on workplace culture, beginning with how to shake hands and ending with interviews with real employers. Students are then placed in an 18-week internship that occurs each Wednesday afternoon at a variety of professional workplaces throughout the city.

Senior Seminar: Seniors take a twice weekly seminar that supports them through the college admissions process and teaches financial literacy.

SCHEDULE

ADVISORY

The regular school day begins with an advisory period. Advisory includes:

- Independent Reading – 2-3 days per week
- Grade level community meetings – 1 day per week
- Advisory “classroom circles” – 1 day per week

MIDDLE SCHOOL SCHEDULE

The middle school schedule is comprised of six 55-60 minute periods and includes:

- Reading, English, and Language Arts (RELA) (double periods daily)
- Math (single period 3 days/week, double period 2 days/week)
- Science (8th) or History (7th)
- Art, Music, or Physical Education (rotates each semester)
- SEL or Technology (2 days per week)

HIGH SCHOOL SCHEDULE

The High school schedule also has six 55-60 minute periods.

9th grade:

- English 9 or Remedial English I (double periods daily)
- Algebra or Pre-algebra (single period 3 days/week, double period 2 days/week)
- Introduction to Physics
- Freshman Seminar (SEL)
- Physical Education & Technology (2 days per week)

Students who require additional reading support take an extra reading course in lieu of Science.

10th grade:

- English 10
- Modern World History
- Geometry (single period 3 days/week, double period 2 days/week)
- Biology
- Art or Music
- Sophomore Seminar (workplace skills) or Technology (2 days per week)

Students who require additional reading support take an extra reading course in lieu of History.

11th grade:

- American Literature
- US History
- Algebra II/Trig (single period 3 days/week, double period 2 days/week)
- Chemistry
- Spanish I
- Junior Seminar (workplace skills) & Internship (2 days per week)

12th grade:

- British Literature or AP Language
- Government and Economics
- AP Statistics or Pre-Calc (single period 3 days/week, double period 2 days/week)
- Physics

- Spanish II
- Senior Seminar (2 days per week)

EXTRA-CURRICULAR

Mastery schools offer a variety of extra-curricular activities. Some activities are supervised by Mastery staff while others are operated by outside community agencies. Activities include: boys and girls basketball, track, student council, entrepreneurship club, literary club, newspaper, robotics team, technology club, cheerleading, drill team, and chess team.

TEACHING AT MASTERY

Teaching Load

An instructional day runs 8 hours and includes:

- A daily advisory (approximately 22 minutes)
- Four to five sections of their subject (one 55-60 minute period each). All teaching staff receive at least one planning period per day.
- After-school Homework Club, Guardian Angel or Office Hours (approximately 55 minutes, 4 days per week)

Finally, interested teachers can also be assigned an additional course daily and receive up to an additional \$6,000 a year.

Parent Outreach

Teachers are expected to regularly contact students' parents/guardians by phone or email and log at least 8 phone calls per week.

School Management Committee (SMC)

Teacher participation in the ongoing management of the school is valued at Mastery. Mastery leadership has an open door policy and teachers are encouraged to raise any concerns and propose new ideas. The SMC is comprised of one representative from each department and typically meets biweekly to address concerns raised by staff, review policy, and problem-solve issues. Any issue that impacts teachers' schedules or work flow must be discussed by SMC.

Salary, Promotion, and Contracts:

We know that only with outstanding teachers will we be able to achieve our mission. To attract high quality teachers, Mastery typically matches or exceeds the School District of Philadelphia starting salaries. Mastery's benefits are equivalent to those provided by the Philadelphia School District (including free medical, dental, and vision benefits).

Mastery has also created an Instructor Advancement System to support, retain, and reward quality teachers. The principles underlying the Advancement System are:

- Advancement is based on instructional quality and student achievement, not seniority;
- Instructional quality is clearly defined (by Mastery's Instructional Standards);
- Professional development and coaching supports teachers in meeting the Instructional Standards and advancement criteria;
- The evaluation process provides clear & frequent feedback to teachers; and
- High quality teachers advance relatively quickly and earn additional income. Alternatively, other teachers receive smaller annual increases.

The system works as follows:

- All Mastery instructors are employed on annual contracts.
- Instructors are employed in one of four instructor categories, each with specific advancement criteria and a salary range. The categories are:
 1. *ASSOCIATE INSTRUCTOR* – an instructor who is developing his/her practice. Most teachers are hired into Mastery at this level.
 2. *SENIOR ASSOCIATE INSTRUCTOR* – an established, effective instructor.
 3. *ADVANCED INSTRUCTOR* – a model instructor.
 4. *MASTER INSTRUCTOR* – an instructional leader and coach. Master teachers typically have a reduced teaching load.
- Instructors receive regular instructional feedback throughout the year.
- In April, teachers receive a final summative evaluation and are offered a contract for the following year. For the 2009-10 school year, there will be three criteria areas that determine advancement:
 1. *Mastery Instructional Standards*

2. *Mastery Responsibilities, Values, & Contributions*

3. *Student Performance Data*

- The new contract will contain either; a promotion to the next instructor level (and related salary increase), a salary increase within the current instructor level, or a cost of living increase.

This structure has the effect of quickly increasing the pay for star teachers and limiting the salary potential for other teachers. Note that in the uncommon instance that a teacher is not offered a contract, a warning and improvement process must have been offered.

Bonus

A bonus of up to \$1,500 is available to the entire staff. By tying the bonus to student performance for the school as a whole, Mastery intends to engender cooperation among teachers and a continuous improvement ethos. The bonus is based on a formula that includes the following criteria:

- Standardized test scores increase
- Student grades
- Attendance
- Student retention

Calendar and Work Year

Mastery schools have a slightly longer school year than traditional schools (187 vs. 180 days). However because we have more professional development days than traditional schools, teacher's school year begins in mid-late August and extends through late June. As a result, our summer is typically 7-8 weeks long, 2-3 weeks shorter than traditional schools. Teachers at Mastery work a 207 day year (up to 212 for first year teachers).

THE MASTERY ORGANIZATION

GOVERNANCE

Each Mastery Charter School is a separate non-profit corporation. However, 80% of the board members at each school are common to all Mastery schools. Jeremy Nowak, founder of The Reinvestment Fund, chairs Mastery's Boards. Business and Academic leaders from Brooks Capital Group, Susquehanna International Group, Preferred Real Estate Investments, University of Pennsylvania, Temple School of Business, Sage Financial, and others serve on the Board. Two parent representatives sit on each Board.

The Board of Trustees is ultimately responsible for the schools and must approve the strategic plan, curriculum strategy, budget, etc. The Board hires and reviews the CEO who supervises Mastery principals and is responsible for overall Mastery management.

CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION (CMO)

The CMO is Mastery's central office that provide services to Mastery schools including curriculum, programmatic design and oversight, leadership coaching, academic assessments, staff recruitment, back office functions, technology expertise, fundraising, and strategic planning.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Each Mastery school has a leadership structure that includes: Principal, Assistant Principal for Instruction, Assistant Principal for School Culture, Assistant Principal for Special Education, and Director of Operations. The Principal is responsible for overall student achievement and operation of the school. S/he has control over the school's budget and program. School staff are centrally recruited by the CMO and hired by each school Principal. Each school maintains Mastery's academic and school culture program, though individual sites are encouraged to innovate and improve the model.

FUNDING & FACILITIES

As a public charter school, Mastery receives a per-child allocation from the School District of Philadelphia. For 2008-09, our allocation is \$8,087 per student, approximately 20% less than the School District funding and half of what many suburban schools receive. To achieve our results, Mastery runs a very tight ship where dollars for instruction are prioritized above all other uses. Mastery does not employ teacher aides, security guards or full-time janitorial staff.

To ensure sufficient dollars are directed to the instructional program, Mastery is committed to spending public dollars on our program, not on facilities. Consequently, the Board privately fundraised the entire cost of the Lenfest Center City facility. The Board partners with the School District to receive discounted rent for the Thomas, Shoemaker, and Pickett school facilities.

WHY OPEN NEW SCHOOLS?

Ultimately, Mastery's mission is to prompt systems change by operating a network of extraordinarily high performing schools. We want to demonstrate that our model can operate at scale—that our success is not a result of extraordinary circumstance at one particular school, but instead is a replicable model that can be implemented widely. In addition, by operating a system of schools, we can support the curriculum design, instructional support, financial oversight, and back office support that great schools need. But most importantly, we want to raise the general expectation that quality schools can be possible for every child. We believe that when we provide a superb education to a child, that child's parents and community become catalysts for change—and we want to create thousands of catalysts for change.

FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Each new Mastery school requires approximately \$1.5 million in funding for start-up cost, equipment and furniture. Each school becomes self-sustaining by its fourth year of operation. Once each school reaches full student capacity, it pays 6% of their revenue to the CMO for services. Until Mastery's new schools reach full capacity, funding for the CMO is provided by a grant from the New Schools Venture Fund, a charitable foundation sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Broad Foundation and others. New Schools conducted a year-long national search before awarding Mastery a grant to replicate in low-income communities. Mastery is one of just a dozen charter schools selected.

FACILITIES

Mastery believes a school's physical environment significantly impacts learning. Mastery has developed a signature design that incorporates best practices from the education and business worlds. Mastery' Lenfest Campus facility received a prestigious American Institute of Architects award from Schools and University Magazine. At all our facilities, classrooms are designed around a common area—a design that encourages frequent interaction and eliminates long, unsupervised hallways. Classrooms have large windows to the outside and inside, encouraging an open atmosphere. Technology is readily available throughout the building. Bright colors, high ceilings, and exposed ductwork create a modern, professional look.

MASTERY VALUES

1. Student Achievement – Above All

Student achievement is the reason we exist. All our efforts must be judged by how they further student achievement. What works to strengthen student achievement dominates all other values and beliefs.

2. The High Road

We take the high road in our decision-making and personal standards. We do the right thing. We strive to operate with fairness and treat folks with respect. We model the adult behaviors we want to develop in our students.

3. Accountability and Straight Talk

Every Mastery staff member is accountable for the results we produce. To succeed we face reality and deal with each other honestly and directly. We don't waste time.

4. Joy and Humor

We believe that students learn better, and staff are more effective, when there is a positive, caring culture. We like fun. And we love to laugh and try to do so as often as possible.

5. Open Doors

Our school and management culture must be open and engaging to staff and students. We are more effective when we share information and gather diverse points of view.

6. Initiative and Continuous Improvement

To succeed, all staff must be consciously engaged in a continuous cycle of goal setting, action, measurement, and analysis. Our mission is ambitious. We need proactive staff to be successful.