

Prospectus for The Red Hook Charter School

I. Executive Summary

The Red Hook Charter School, founded by a group of parents and teachers in School District 15, seeks to serve the diverse population of southwest Brooklyn. This academically rigorous school will develop a curriculum that aligns National and New York State Core Curricula with progressive educational best practices. The school is founded on the belief that an inclusive program of the highest quality will significantly improve educational outcomes for at-risk students, many of whom reside in Red Hook, as well as attract students who are crowded out of nearby high-performing public schools.

Mission

The Red Hook Charter School will develop the social/emotional, academic and critical thinking skills of its economically, racially and culturally diverse student population in an inclusive environment. Graduates of The Red Hook Charter School will be competitive candidates for New York's highest performing secondary schools.

Key Design Elements

Collaborative Team Teaching supported by *Differentiated Instruction*: TRHCS will serve its diverse student population through a collaborative team teaching model (called Integrated Co-Teaching in New York City's public schools). Depending on the percent of students with special needs, one or both classes in each grade will have 25 students per class served by one special education teacher paired with a general education teacher and a teaching assistant if necessary. General education teachers will be trained in or will receive ongoing professional development in differentiated instruction. The founders of TRHCS believe strongly that an inclusive classroom is the most effective method of educating a diverse population to the benefit of all students, particularly those at-risk of academic failure, special education students (SPED) and English Language Learners (ELL). Co-teaching will create a supportive yet challenging academic environment while differentiated instruction will allow students of varied abilities to demonstrate understanding and skill development.

Assessment. Continuous ongoing assessment is vital for effective co-teaching and differentiated instruction. Teachers will use a comprehensive battery of assessment tools for diagnostic, formative and summative assessments. Using multiple assessments, the teacher will obtain a comprehensive picture of student achievement and use the data to inform ongoing instructional decisions such as adjusting activities to particular learning styles or providing additional support and/or intervention. Such data will also be used to gauge the effectiveness of the instructional program, and inform professional development and school progress towards meeting accountability goals.

Looping: Teachers will remain with the same class for two years (K-1, 2-3, 4-5). Looping has been shown to substantially improve reading and math achievement scores, particularly among the most at-risk students.ⁱ Looping is a strong program feature because teachers are able to monitor student progress over two years, instead of one year, and to tailor interventions based upon a working knowledge of the student's needs. Looping provides children with additional time to build the relationships that foster learning (between students and teachers, as well as teachers and parents); looping effectively adds an

additional month of teaching time at the beginning of the second year, and even more if the teacher works with the students on a summer program or develops a summer reading list/math activities/reading log, that must be completed by all the students.

Unique design characteristics include:

Project-Based Learning: In addition to rigorous math and English language arts instruction, TRHCS will integrate standards-driven, project-based units of study into the core curricula, particularly in the arts, sciences and social sciences. The school will utilize the unique historic waterfront and industrial/artisanal environment of Red Hook to enrich the children's educational experience by working with the many artisans, sciencespeople, urban farmers, and designers who live and work in the community. Research demonstrates that children need to interact with real objects, investigate and test ideas, and discuss what they've learned in order to integrate information and concepts, and that an integrated curriculum leads to deeper conceptual knowledge than traditional separate subject instruction.ⁱⁱ

Arts Education Curriculum. TRHCS will work with a unique arts education service called CREATE! to develop in-depth, customized arts programs utilizing world-class artists in theater, dance, music, and visual arts. This respected and well-established organization provides variety and flexibility in arts education; the artists work with the school's staff to create in-depth units that result in a performance or presentation by the children.

Documentation. TRHCS will implement "Making Learning Visible," a method developed at the Harvard Graduate School of Education that uses documentation to collectively analyze, interpret, and evaluate observations and solidify learning in group projects. "Quality documentation" is not just "what we did" but driven by a specific question or core standard to sharpen the assessment focus. This will give cohesion to the group project experience, particularly in diverse settings.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Founding group of The Red Hook Charter School

The capacity of the founding group to effectively launch, oversee and govern the school derives from the experience, knowledge, expertise and resources of its members. The group includes the lead applicant, the proposed instructional coordinator, an educator who has launched two successful charter schools, as well as an extensive parent/community advisory committee. It also includes the founding Board of Trustees, which currently consists of six members (eventually nine to 12 members) with a range of skills and areas of expertise, including (but not limited to):

- Ann Mellow has overseen two prominent schools in New York City, Poly Prep Middle School, and St. Lukes in the Fields, a K-8 school located in the West Village. She has overseen curricula development, budgeting, fundraising, administration, etc.
- Orray M. Taft is a senior policy analyst at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. He has extensive experience in the private sector as well, and will work closely with the planning team leader to develop a budget, as well as financial oversight mechanisms.
- Philip Hopkins is vice president of technology at Bank of America and has 10 years of experience testing educational software.
- Jill Crawford is the project manager for Civic Builders, the largest charter school developer in the Tri-state region.

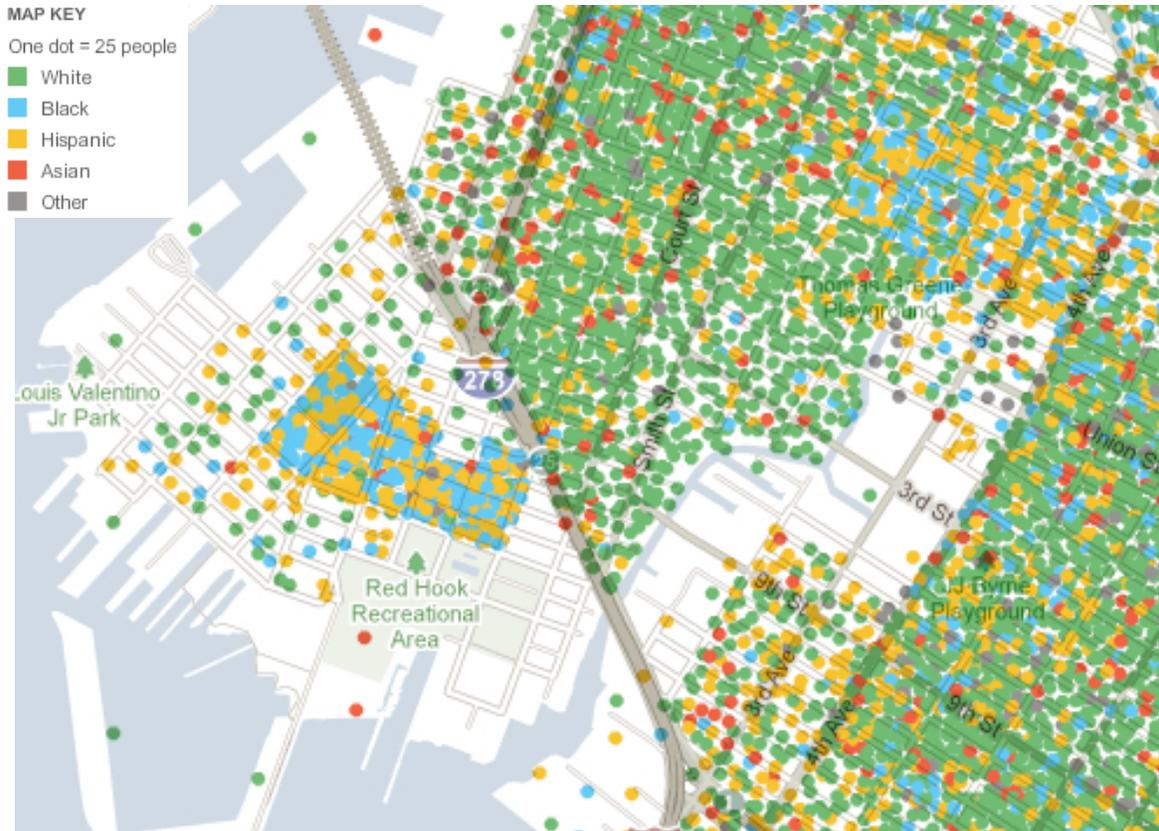
II. Student Population

A. Student Enrollment (taking into account attrition)

Grade	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Kindergarten	50	50	50	50	50
Grade 1	50	50	50	50	50
Grade 2		50	50	50	50
Grade 3			46	46	46
Grade 4				44	44
Grade 5					42
Total	100	150	196	230	282

B. Target Populations- General statistics and description

As compared to the rest of School District 15, Red Hook's population has a concentration of African American and Hispanic families (see map) who live in and around the Red Hook Houses, Brooklyn's largest public housing project just south of I-278 (this map includes most but not all of School District 15).^{iv}



The last census report states that 54.9% of the total population in District 15, where Community Board 6 is located, is of white non-Hispanic origin, 13.5% is African American, and 23.4% is of Hispanic origin. In District 15, 19% of students have an Individualized Education Program and 13% are English Language Learners (ELL).

However, of District 15, Red Hook contains a higher percentage of ELL and SPED,^v as well as the lowest median income census tract – all of whom qualify for federal FLRP.

Red Hook also has the widest income distribution living in close proximity. According to the most recent data, the median income of census tract 85 is \$14,000 (which encompasses The Red Hook Houses); households along the waterfront in tract 55 earn more than \$100,000 (a very small population), while tract 57 and 59 have median incomes of about \$50,000. The same data also shows a mix of race and ethnicities in close proximity. Taken together, census tracts 55, 57 and 59 are roughly 50 percent non-Hispanic whites and 50 percent a mix of other races and ethnicities, while tract 85 is about 50 percent African American and 50 percent Hispanic.^{vi}

Households with such a wide-ranging racial, ethnic and income distribution in close proximity will greatly influence the composition of The Red Hook Charter School.

Therefore, the school's mission to combine an academically rigorous program with progressive educational best practices is critical to attracting and serving a diverse student population in an inclusive environment. Standards-driven math and ELA curricula taught in an inclusive co-teaching environment will be combined with project-based units of study. Students of TRHCS will be taught and assessed according to National and New York State Core Curricula standards, as well as provided with unique hands-on learning experiences developed in the community of Red Hook. Children of all backgrounds can and will benefit from this integrated curricula.

In addition to providing families in Red Hook with an academically rigorous, progressive school model that doesn't currently exist, TRHCS will offer another option to students in nearby neighborhoods who are being crowded out of high-performing public schools. For instance, two highly coveted elementary schools close to Red Hook, PS 29 and PS 58, can no longer guarantee seats to children in their immediate zone. Two nearby non-zoned elementary schools – PS 372 (The Children's School) and PS 146 (The Brooklyn New School) – operate much like charters in that admission is by lottery. Because both schools are so desirable, many applicants are turned away each year. All of these schools are models for TRHCS; they are excellent schools that serve a diverse student body.

The reason these high quality public schools are in such high demand is two fold: 1) Many if not most of New York's non-selective public schools are under-performing. Despite a renewed emphasis on improving public schools, state test scores are still disappointing at best^{vii} while budget cuts and rising enrollment are increasing class size.^{viii} 2) Brooklyn is experiencing a baby boom. According to data provided by the New York City Department of City Planning, there were nearly 1000 more births in 2008 than there were in 2000 in District 15 (4821 up from 3832), a 26 percent increase. Census tracts including and immediately surrounding the area where we hope to locate all show increases in the number of births.

For these reasons, TRHCS should have no trouble attracting, serving, and retaining students in numbers comparable to that or greater than the existing school district. A well-founded charter school committed to a rigorous, inclusive public education would be in great demand in Red Hook and surrounding neighborhoods in School District 15.

Student Recruitment

TRHCS is committed to attracting, serving, and retaining a comparable or greater percentage of students with disabilities and limited English proficiency, when compared to the average for District 15 using a variety of approaches. The board and staff of the TRHCS will contact the local CSE, the Brooklyn Charter School Special Education Cooperative, Community Board 6, the Added Value Farm, Fairway Supermarket (where many Red Hook local residents work), the Red Hook public library, and local Head Start centers. The team will prepare information tables at its Saturday's farmers market at the Red Hook Community Farm beginning in June 2011.

TRHCS will create presentations of its school model, including accommodations and services that it will offer students with disabilities, ELL and families from lower socioeconomic means. TRHCS will also seek interviews with local newspapers, and set-up a website, as well as distribute fliers and postcards.

The team will reach out to families that are traditionally less informed about unique educational opportunities – which include non-English speakers or with limited English proficiency, parents of children not in daycare, and people with limited education – through a variety of existing organizations in the neighborhood. With help from the Red Hook Houses tenants association and the Red Hook Initiative (a social services non-profit), the founding team will make contact with families that are living within The Red Hook Houses. There are a variety of other organizations, such as local churches and civic groups, that will provide avenues of outreach. Additionally, our own parent/community advisory committee includes Hispanic families who are liaisons to the Hispanic community.

How TRHCS will serve its students

We believe that an inclusive instructional program with a curriculum that meets students where they are and uses resources that are local and already familiar will be particularly engaging to our target population and lead to accelerated academic growth and retention of those students. Evidence indicates that students are more successful in school and are more engaged if they are taught in ways that are responsive to their readiness levels (Vygotsky, 1986), their interests (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), and their learning profiles (Sternberg et al., 1998). According to Tomlinson (2001, 2003), in adopting differentiated instruction, teachers address these three characteristics for each student.^x

While differentiated instruction has been shown to be particularly effective in diverse settings,^x it is also challenging for teachers to implement. Therefore, teachers at TRHCS will either already have experience implementing differentiated instruction and/or will be provided professional development in this method. Time will be built into the school calendar for teachers to collaborate with each other and share best practices.

Multiple entry points and outcomes are central to this approach, and therefore the curricula will contain standards-driven project-based units that are rigorously documented. Focusing on one "project" for an extended period will enable classes to build collective knowledge. Everyone develops an essential core vocabulary, information, understandings and a schema for studying. Further inquiry is pursued either by working individually or in small

groups to produce an abstract representation to solidify the experience. For instance, products resulting from a project from a kindergarten project focused around the Red Hook waterfront, and the essential question of “How do neighborhoods meet our needs?” might include writing and illustrating a group book, creating an accurate annotated time line, building an exact replica model, or creating precise overlay maps. Children will develop authentic expertise through these projects, which build self-esteem based on real accomplishment. Because children do not all learn the same way nor are at the same level, providing a variety of rigorous outlets over an extended period of time will allow all students to take ownership of their learning process and truly excel. For example, an in-depth unit of study would be working with Added Value, which runs the Red Hook Farm, to investigate plant biology, agricultural practices, urban development and environmental sustainability.

To address the needs of a variety of learners, and support the development of an inclusive school environment, we will focus on collaboration and co-planning. TRCHS will utilize the various models of co-teaching including : One teach/one support, Station Teaching, Parallel Teaching, small group, and Team Teaching. Co-teaching is essential in meeting the needs of our students. Teachers will receive ongoing professional development in co-teaching and specific strategies in working with students with disabilities, and ELL. In addition there will be a variety of related service providers. TRCHS will contact the local CSC and Brooklyn Special Education Cooperative for related services for students with identified needs that the school is unable to provide with its own staff.

The programs and learning strategies implemented by team teachers will play a significant role in the steady academic and social/emotional progress made by all students participating at TRCHS. *These efforts will be monitored with the expectation of achieving an increase in state exam scores as well as a decrease in the number of referrals to the Committee on Special Education.*

Finally, a founding team member is a NYS certified Special Education teacher and School Leader in a charter school in the Bronx. Through collegial connections, she has initiated contact with the Brooklyn Charter School Special Education Cooperative Chair, and plans further outreach to the Cooperative during upcoming events. She is also a member of the Arts in Special Education Consortium, a group of key stakeholders involved in arts education for students on the special education spectrum in New York.

Methods and Strategies for serving students with disabilities

Identification

All students who enter TRHCS in Kindergarten will be assessed before the school year starts. Using various assessments, including the Brigance, an early childhood screening assessment, teachers will be able to identify potential learning delays and giftedness in language motor, self-help, social emotional and cognitive skills. Results will support the school leadership team and teachers in identifying students who may need further evaluation in order to receive special services. For students who enroll at TRHCS with IEPs, our Special Education Coordinator and/or Instructional Leader, in collaboration with the CSE, will meet with families to review the student’s IEP, and ensure that TRHCS is able to be in compliance with the IEP as it is written. In the circumstances that TRHCS cannot

meet the requirements of a student's IEP then the school will work with the CSE to allow the school to meet the requirements of the IEP. In accordance with section 2853 (4)(a) of the Education Law, the school will provide special education services to students with disabilities according to their IEPs as developed by the Committee on Special Education (CSE) of the student's school district of their residence.

Curriculum and approach to instruction designed/adapted to students with disabilities

The inclusion program at TRHCS is based on the model developed by Jacqueline Frey, Director of Special Education at the Bronx Charter School of the Arts. Ms. Frey also leads Special Education based seminars at the NYC Charter Center with Dr. Arthur Sadoff. TRHCS has adapted this model to the unique characteristics of our school population. Our comprehensive approach to education – co-teaching supported by differentiated instruction and looping that is enriched by well-documented project-based units in the arts, sciences and social sciences – is particularly well suited to SPED and ELLs.

Our inclusion program will allow us to meet the needs of all students, including those students classified as students with disabilities, in the least restrictive environment. Through our unique inclusion model the school culture of TRHCS' administrators, teachers, and support staff embrace the belief that children with disabilities, to the maximum extent possible, belong in all classes, learning along side regular education students. At TRHCS, that will mean that delivery of services for students with disabilities will occur inside the regular classroom. As dictated by their IEPs, students with related services, will, to the extent possible that best meets the needs of the student, receive their modified work within their regular education classroom. Teachers will have access to copies of their student's IEPs, and will be provided with the technical assistance, supplemental materials, and equipment deemed necessary by the multi-disciplinary team for the student to be successful both academically, and socially in the inclusive classroom, in accordance with the students' IEPs.

In accordance with students' IEPs, TRHCS special education staff will provide services that are appropriate for the student to benefit from instruction. Services will be delivered to students in a general education setting. Our co-teaching model will ensure that at least one class per grade is staffed by one general education teacher and one special education teacher who will deliver instruction. If needed, the co-teaching team will be supported by a teaching assistant as well.

TRHCS inclusion program will ensure that its program will offer SPED students opportunities to engage in the full range of school-based learning. Being inclusive in all aspects of our school setting will allow for social and academic experiences that value all learners. Social inclusion is an essential element of successful inclusion and that children feel that they belong.

TRHCS encourages parent participation in the development and implementation of inclusion. Should the IEP of a student entering TRHCS require services that are beyond the skills and expertise of the school's staff, then TRHCS will work with families and the CSE to locate the specialized providers and offer their services onsite.

TRHCS Leadership will assist in the long and short term planning to address the individual needs of students, as well as the evaluation of students' progress, ensuring that progress notes are written accurately and quarterly, and that communication with families, teachers and the CSE is effective and documented. They will also represent TRHCS at CSE meetings and provide coverage as needed for teachers so they can attend CSE meetings, either in person or by phone conference. In addition, Leadership will ensure that all teachers are provided with constructive problem-solving strategies and a fair and accessible process in which the teacher can raise questions to the Leadership Team regarding students with IEPs.

Monitoring of progress

TRHCS will use observations from the general education teacher, special collected work samples, and formative assessments to determine if the student with disabilities has made progress towards mastering various IEP goals and to inform teaching strategies and interventions at home and school. Special education teachers and service providers will be required to complete an update of progress on each student's IEP each quarter (November, January, April, June). TRHCS Leadership will mail a copy of each student's IEP progress to the parent along with the student's report card.

Methods and strategies for serving students who are ELLs

In accordance with its inclusive education policy, TRHCS will ensure that students who are ELLs will not be excluded from curricular and extra curricular activities based on an inability to speak and understand the language of instruction, nor will they be assigned to special education because of their lack of English proficiency. The NYCMCS will use English Immersion and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model 14 (described below) to promote these students' English language development and make grade-level academic content more accessible to them.

Identification. TRHCS will use the SED's process for identifying students whose first language is not English and those who are English Language Learners as follows:

1. Screening: Upon enrollment, the school will administer the Home Language Questionnaire. If the initial screening indicates that the student speaks little or no English, he/she will be referred for initial assessment.
2. Initial Assessment: For this, the school will administer the Language Assessment Battery-Revised (LAB-R). A score below the designated cutoff score will determine eligibility for inclusion in the SIOP program and/or support services for ELLs.
3. Inclusion in the school's ELL program for eligible students and referral to special services where necessary.
4. Annually, the school will administer the NYSESLAT to determine a student's English performance level and determine continuation of services.

Language instruction program. The principal strategies that TRHCS will use for language instruction for ELLs are those suggested in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model. The goal of this model is to develop English language skills together with academic skills. Content instruction will be provided in English, and ELL students will be taught the same academic content as those who are native English speakers. The model

stipulates a specific method of lesson planning and delivery for these children. This includes multiple strategies for each of the elements of the model, such as:

- Preparation: identify the language demands of the content course; define language objectives for all lessons and make them explicit to students; pre-reading and pre-writing activities.
- Building Background: activate and strengthen background knowledge through activities with concrete objects, films, visits etc.
- Comprehensible Input: emphasize academic vocabulary development
- Strategies: use varied vocabulary techniques, e.g., in art projects, etc., repeat vocabulary in different contexts
- Interaction: promote oral interaction and extended academic talk; use vocabulary lists; give structures for discussions; encourage pair work
- Practice/Application: give multiple opportunities to practice using vocabulary orally and in print
- Lesson Delivery: present new lessons with links to prior knowledge; use physical activities, visual aids, word walls, and semantic webs
- Review/Assessment: review vocabulary and content concepts at the end of each lesson; give students feedback on language use in class.^{xi}

Differentiated instruction complements this model since it allows students to spend the amount of time needed on each stage of learning before moving on to the next. Project-based work in the arts and social sciences will give students opportunities to communicate in English with their peers. Finally, rigorous documentation will reinforce language acquisition.

When needed, the school will make referrals to appropriate support services in order to ensure that particular ELLs achieve and maintain a satisfactory level of academic performance. Such services may include individual counseling, group counseling, home visits, and parental counseling.

Evaluation. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires that the language arts proficiency of all students who are ELL be measured annually as part of school and district accountability. NCLB also requires that the English proficiency of all ELL students be assessed annually. The school will administer the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) to ELL students on an annual basis to evaluate their English proficiency. The scores on the NYSESLAT indicate the proficiency level the student has achieved each year, and whether the student's level of English proficiency is high enough to exit the ELL program or support services. The school will also evaluate each student's performance in academic content areas to measure their progress in core subjects.

Professional development for teaching ELL and students with disabilities

TRHCS will provide professional development to encourage striving to meet excellence when working with students identified as ELL and students with disabilities. Staff will receive training on how to apply the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)

model to meet the needs of English language learners. In addition, staff will learn and further develop skills in the areas of instructional planning, and delivery methods for teaching ELLs, determining progress through the use of observations, special collected work samples, and formative assessments, support services for ELLs and variety of ways to communicate with their families.

Staff will be provided with ongoing training in teaching students with disabilities. As an inclusion school, TRHCS teachers are expected and required to plan collaboratively with certified special education teachers in order to meet the needs of students with IEPs. Training in how to effectively collaborate and team teach, will be essential in ensuring that student needs are met in our diverse classrooms. Teachers will be trained in how to develop differentiated instructional strategies that target the needs addressed in student IEPs and how the strategies will be implemented, when and by whom. Our inclusion classrooms will utilize a variety of instructional methods that will include but not limited to: parallel teaching, small group teaching, station teaching, push in support services, heterogeneous grouping to enhance learning, arts integration, and multi-sensory approaches to enhance instruction- teachers will receive systematic and meaningful professional development that is directed on each of these methods to ensure success in planning instruction and accommodations as needed for students with disabilities.

Continued program assessment

Using data from academic assessments and ELL assessments, TRHCS Leadership will evaluate the ELL program annually to ensure students are making progress academically and in the acquisition of the English Language. Likewise, TRHCS Leadership will use data from assessments to evaluate teacher and school performance in working with students with disabilities and in meeting the compliance and satisfaction of their IEPs.

III. SCHOOL DESIGN/ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

a. How the proposed school design will increase student achievement and decrease student achievement gaps in reading/language arts and mathematics:

TRHCS educational design model is a comprehensive approach to increasing student achievement and closing achievement gaps in language arts and mathematics.

Recent experiences with charter school models show that an unstructured curricula and/or unfocused school culture will fail despite generous resources.^{xii} Yet recent studies also show that teachers who constantly drill students in preparation for tests get worse results than those who focus on teaching key concepts of literacy and mathematics.^{xiii} Therefore, TRHCS will adopt research-based approaches to math and language arts that have proven effective and build in interim formative assessments that will ensure that our students are “on-track” to perform well on state exams in language arts and mathematics.

Increase student achieve and close achievement gaps in reading/language arts: All strands of English Language Arts – reading, writing, speaking, and listening – are integrated with all academic areas. TRHCS will provide a rich range of activities and experiences with language, with the aim of developing strong reading comprehension skills in all academic areas and strong writing skills in a language rich environment.

Students will receive direct instruction in phonics, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency through the research-based Wilson-Fundations program for the early grades, which has been successfully implemented at PS 234, a high-performing elementary school that serves as a model for TRHCS and where one of our founding planning team leaders currently teaches. Fundations provides students of varying learning abilities with a foundation for reading and spelling. It provides teachers with the skills and tools needed to present a structured, sequential, and cumulative phonics/spelling program using multi-sensory teaching techniques. Fundations emphasizes systematic phonics and study of word structure, skills taught explicitly and systematically and instruction that is cumulative and scaffolds presented skills. Assessments monitor students throughout the program.

Classroom instruction will often be delivered within a balanced literacy framework as defined by Lucy Calkins and Nancy Atwell. The balanced literacy framework includes a mix of individual, paired, small group and whole group instruction. A balanced literacy framework works well within a workshop model, which will be a model of instruction at TRHCS. The workshop model is patterned after an apprenticeship model, where an apprentice learns first from observing, then gradually doing more and more of the work independently. A workshop model requires teachers to create opportunities in which students are receiving direct instruction, actively engaged in modeling, practicing a skill/strategy independently with a partner/or within a small group, and given the opportunity to show what they have learned. The model is based on the belief that the best way to encourage deep and enduring understanding is through "discovery learning" in a small-group setting, where students are given time to think about problems and acquire/create knowledge on their own.

Our Reader's Workshop will develop strong readers through an emphasis on word study, read alouds (including reciprocal teaching strategies such as previewing the book, scaffolding on prior knowledge, emphasizing elements of the story, asking purposeful questions, summarizing the story to bring closure), shared/interactive reading experiences, guided reading with small strategy groups, and independent reading. Reader's Workshop will begin with teachers making connections to a previous lesson taught before transitioning students into the specific teaching point. Modeling by the teacher demonstrates to the students how to apply the given strategy and how it helps understand text. Students then transition into their reading spots, or groups and apply the given strategy to their "just right" books (as determined by their F & P assessment). Individual conferencing with students will be ongoing throughout Reader's Workshop and be essential in documenting the progress of students in their reading development.

In grade 3 and up, teachers will utilize The 6+1 Trait® Writing framework. This powerful way to learn uses a common language to refer to characteristics of writing as well as create a common vision of what 'good' writing looks like. Teachers and students can use the 6+1 Trait model to pinpoint areas of strength and weakness as they continue to focus on improved writing.

Similar to Reader's Workshop, Writer's workshop will include a mini-lesson or whole class instruction of a specific writing strategy, interactive/shared writing, guided writing, independent writing and investigations in writing/centers. Writing will be a significant aspect

of TRHCS project-based integrated learning. Students will use daily journals to document their observations of the given study, integrating science, math and social studies. Students will respond to writing prompts, write research reports, texts, fiction and poetry in connection with their study at the farm, for example.

Increase student achievement and close achievement gaps in math:

TRHCS will implement Singapore Math, a system developed over the past three decades that has resulted in that country's students to achieve the highest math scores in the world.^{xiv} Schools across the United States that have implemented the program saw gains in math scores. A study of Singapore Math conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) for the U.S. Department of Education (released in January 2005) concluded, "What the United States needs overall are the sound features of the Singapore Mathematics system." In studying several different American school districts that were experimenting with the program, AIR researchers found that "Singapore Mathematics textbooks can produce significant boosts in achievement."^{xv}

TRHCS will align national and state standards with Singapore Math, which is taught sequentially and at a slower pace so that students can truly master concepts that will be built upon. Singapore Math works with TRHCS's mission by recognizing that children do not all learn the same way. Singapore math devotes more time to fewer topics, to ensure that children master the material through detailed instruction, questions, problem solving, and visual and hands-on aids like blocks, cards and bar charts. Singapore Math implements a balanced approach between traditional approaches to math instruction and more recent conceptual methods by melding old-fashioned algorithms with visual representations and critical thinking. Students at TRHCS will greatly benefit from having this program implemented from the very beginning, taught by teachers who will receive professional development in this method of math instruction.

Similar to our balanced literacy approach, TRHCS will also implement Math Workshop, a structure that allows individuals, pairs, or small groups of students to work on a set of related activities that focus on similar mathematical content. Because Math Workshop is often preceded and followed by whole class activities, students have many opportunities to discuss and synthesize the big ideas of the activities they have been working on. The purpose of Math Workshop is to provide students with repeated experience with the concepts being learned, and time to practice important skills and refine strategies. The workshop model also allows time for the teacher to work with individuals and small groups and to assess students' learning and understanding. Importantly, once routines are familiar and well established, students become more independent and responsible for their work during Math Workshop.

Finally, project-based units of study in the arts, sciences and social sciences will be implemented throughout the school year in conjunction with traditional classroom work. Reading, writing and math will be suffused throughout these units.

b. Increase high school graduation rates and focus on serving at-risk high school student populations (including re-enrolled drop-outs and those below grade level); N/A

c. Focus on academic achievement of middle school student populations and preparation for transition to high school (if applicable); N/A

d. Utilize a variety of high-quality assessments to measure understanding and critical application of concepts.

“Testing” has taken on a negative connotation in the progressive educational community, but the most recent research found that students who read a passage, then took a test asking them to recall what they had read, retained about 50 percent more of the information a week later than students who used other methods (repeatedly studying the material and drawing a detailed diagram). In other words, routine assessment *strengthens* the learning process, whereas “teaching to the test” does not.^{xvi} Therefore, routine testing will be interwoven throughout units of study, both traditional and project-based.

In order to meet the needs of all students and allow students the opportunity to show their mastery of content and skills, teachers must assess student knowledge and ability in various ways. For this reason, a wide variety of assessment tools and procedures will be employed to measure understanding and critical application of concepts, and the data provided by these tools and procedures will be analyzed, compared, and integrated. The weekly schedule will include time for meetings with staff and administrators to analyze data and plan instruction.

The performance indicators of the NY State Core Curriculum and The National Core Curriculum Standards will be used to establish benchmarks and ensure that our school specific assessment tools are aligned with State Standards.

Another key component of our assessment system is the use of research based, nationally recognized tools that will provide data to support our educators in planning effective instruction to meet the individual needs of our students. TRHCS has identified several assessment tools that are aligned to our goals and will be further confirmed in our planning period.

TRHCS Instructional Manual will describe the curriculum for each grade and the student assessment system that will be used to measure understanding and application of key concepts, specify the assessment instruments and procedures for diagnostic, formative and summative assessment. Our Instructional Manual will be a ongoing reference tool in supporting teachers in their planning of student assessment that is fully aligned with the instructional outcomes, contains clear assessment criteria and standards. The following table reflects the possible assessment calendar of TRHCS. Not reflected in the chart: periodic assessments. Teachers will administer curriculum unit assessments throughout and at the end of units. Units will vary in length.

Month	Kindergarten		Grades 1, 2		Grades 3, 4,5	
	Formative	Summative	Formative	Summative	Formative	Summative
SEPT	Brigance Early Childhood Screener;		TC Literacy Assessment; Words Their Way		TC Literacy Assessment; Words Their Way	
NOV	Interim assessment	Authentic assessment: Portfolios	Interim assessment	Authentic assessment: Portfolios	ACUITY or Interim assessment	Authentic assessment: Portfolios
JAN	TC Literacy Assessment;	Authentic assessment: Portfolios	TC Literacy Assessment; Words Their Way	Authentic assessment: Portfolios	TC Literacy Assessment; Words Their Way	Authentic assessment: Portfolios
MARCH	TC Literacy Assessment; Interim assessment	Authentic assessment: Portfolios	TC Literacy Assessment; Words Their Way; Interim assessment	Authentic assessment: Portfolios	TC Literacy Assessment; Words Their Way; ACUITY or Interim assessment	Authentic assessment: Portfolios
MAY						ELA State Test; Math State Test
JUNE	TC Literacy Assessment	Authentic assessment: Portfolios	TC Literacy Assessment; Words Their Way;	Authentic assessment: Portfolios	TC Literacy Assessment; Words Their Way;	Authentic assessment: Portfolios

Use of each of the three following types of assessments, as indicated in our assessment table, will provide TRHCS with a knowledgeable view of the teaching and learning that is happening in each classroom and across each grade level. The following forms of assessment will be utilized by TRHCS:

- Diagnostic Assessment** will occur at the beginning of each school year and will support teachers in planning effective instruction to meet the individual needs of our students. Students entering TRHCS will be assessed prior to the start of the school to provide baseline data for each student and provide a diagnosis of the needs of each class as a whole. Entering kindergartners will be assessed using the *Brigance*, an early childhood assessment that allows teachers to identify potential learning delays and giftedness in language motor, self-help, social emotional and cognitive skills. 1st grade through 5th grade students will be assessed to detect individual reading levels. *Fountas and Pinell* may be used for this diagnosis of reading level. In addition, TRHCS specific assessments will also be used for diagnostic purposes, as well as state testing data from the previous year for grades 3-5. Within the first six weeks of school, our teachers and leadership team will meet to discuss the results of all these assessments and establish common academic interim goals corresponding to standards based benchmarks across each grade level.

- **Formative Assessments** will be ongoing throughout the school year and will take many forms. Formative assessments will include: checklists of performance indicators in the core academic areas, teacher observations, and rubrics. In addition, TRHCS will use the TC Literacy Assessment, and Words Their Way assessments, periodically throughout the year. There will be interim assessments in language arts and mathematics tied to a computerized data management system. These assessments will generate national norm-referenced achievement scores, criterion-referenced objective mastery scores, and performance-level data that will be used as predictor data to support TRHCS in informing instruction and gauge student progress in the fall. Students will maintain a portfolio that will include samples of their best work from core academic areas, to create a holistic perspective of their progress over the school year.
- **Summative Assessments** will be used at the end of units to determine mastery of core academic areas. There will be a variety of summative assessments used by TRHCS. At the end of units, grade level based Authentic and Performance based Assessments, designed by our teachers will provide students the opportunity to demonstrate their learning through performance tasks and show mastery of standards in ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies. In addition, end of year New York State tests will be given in accordance with state requirements, to grades 3-5 to measure achievement in ELA and math and in science to fourth grade students.

e. Increase implementation of local instructional improvement systems to assess and inform instructional practice, decision-making and effectiveness:

Because assessment is so important to the success of the students and the school itself, board member Philip Hopkins – a vice president of technology at Bank of America who also has ten years of experience testing education technology – vetted several software packages offering comprehensive school management and student/teacher evaluation. He and the educators looked for ease of use, configurability, stability, integration with the school's mission, and richness of features. The educators and Mr. Hopkins found that Innovation Teaching offered several key advantages over the others, as well as tight integration with The Red Hook Charter School's goals.

Innovation Teaching, successfully implemented at Harlem Success Academy and other schools, allows educators to seamlessly link student success criteria to specific modules of their lesson plans. In so doing, they can track student strengths and weaknesses daily, even hourly, allowing educators to recognize patterns of progress or lack thereof, and provide immediate intervention when a student needs additional support.

The software does not require educators to spend hours at the end of the day keying in data they collected during classes. Using a small, two-button scanner, the teacher is equipped to instantly record success ratings against criteria they have defined, and allows teachers to do so without stopping the lesson. At the end of each day, teachers receive a customized report indicating the areas of strength and development for each student based on data input in recent days.

Teacher evaluations flow directly from progress made by their students against state-standard criteria. The selected software allows administrators to participate in the progress of the teachers and students toward a common goal. Graphical, data-driven reports enhance understanding between the educators and administrators. The outcomes are contextualized, quantified, and enriched with specifics leveraging the educators' rubrics.

In weekly meetings, the teachers and administrators will analyze the data gathered continuously from ongoing formative assessments to determine which students are ready for more advanced instruction and which need additional support. This analysis will inform decisions such as the adjustment of class groupings or changes in the sequence or content of lessons presented to the students. The data will also provide information on the progress of SPED and ELL students. Finally, students will use data from some of these forms of assessment for self-evaluation, thus developing their meta-cognitive skills.

The results on summative assessments will provide useful data. The results of interim standards-based benchmark-tied assessments in ELA and math will help decide if there is a need for remedial action, and if so, what type of action must be taken. The information obtained from end of year state and national norm referenced assessments will be used to measure absolute achievement, and to track individual and group growth from one year to the next. It will also help to identify the program's strengths and weaknesses and determine where improvements should be introduced. Finally, instructional effectiveness, teacher performance, the professional development plan, and progress towards the schools goals will be evaluated using the summative assessment data.

Because the data is so easily compiled and shared, communication between the school and parents will be greatly enhanced. Rather than waiting for a report card or parent-teacher conference, weekly updates can be sent home indicating what was covered, how well each child is mastering lessons for the week or grasping key concepts of a project-based unit, if all home-works assignments were completed (or what was missing), etc.

Every week, the Instructional Coordinator will visit each classroom to carry out informal observations of the teacher, and will make several formal observation visits annually. There will be six domains in the Rubrics for observation of teachers: planning and preparation for learning; classroom management; delivery of instruction; monitoring assessment and follow-up; family and community outreach; and professional responsibilities. The IC will have a follow-up discussion with the teacher to analyze these observations and may propose collaborative ways of giving the teacher support or mentoring, or give other recommendations for improving instructional practice.

The IC will prepare a mid-year and end of year written report of findings which will be discussed with the teacher in a formal summative assessment conference at the end of spring to examine the teacher's results and determine renewal of contract.

Evaluation of the school's leadership is another important aspect of the instructional improvement system in TRHCS. The Board will carry out a yearly evaluation of the school leadership, using key operations benchmarks: staff satisfaction, progress towards goals in the charter, academic progress, and overall status of the school. At each meeting, the Board will review a report of performance indicators that integrates specific data elements

and goals. Yearly updates will ensure that this report reflects the most valid and reliable indicators of school success within key academic, financial, and operational areas.

Finally, student themselves will be asked to evaluate teachers and the overall experience at the school. The latest research indicates that students who agree with statements such as, “Our class is busy and doesn’t waste time,” or “In class, we learn to correct our mistakes,” are the same students who exhibit the best test scores.^{xvii} TRHCS will develop a questionnaire similar to the one used in this experiment developed by Ronald Ferguson, a Harvard researcher who has been refining student surveys for more than a decade.

f. Partner with low-performing, local public schools to share best practices:

The leadership team of TRHCS is committed to working with our local schools in any way possible. We have been in contact with parents active at PS 15 and, while charter schools have been controversial in this neighborhood, we hope to mitigate any concerns through continued dialogue as well as exploring avenues of collaboration. We have not yet directly reached out to local schools as that seems premature at this point in the application process; however we will open dialogue with the two locally zoned elementary schools as soon as our charter is approved.

One possible avenue of collaboration with The Red Hook Neighborhood School and PS 15, is through Added Value, which runs the Red Hook Farm. Added Value previously worked with PS 15 (but not PS 27, which was replaced with the Neighborhood school) on an in-depth study of urban agriculture until grant funding ran out. We would like to work with both schools to secure grant funding so that Added Value can implement the same in-depth unit they developed with Columbia University at all three schools. Given that urban agriculture has become an important component of environmental and nutritional awareness, and there is now a push to fund programs of collaboration between public and charter schools, we are cautiously optimistic this will be a very a fundable project.

g. Demonstrate the ability to overcome start-up challenges to open a successful school through management and leadership techniques.

Location: The planning team has known from the onset that we would in all likelihood need to secure private space rather than rely on space from DOE. We started building relationships to that end right from the beginning. We are working with The O’Connell Organization, one of the largest developers and property owners in the community, to locate an incubator space that will serve the school for two to three years. With the help of Jill Crawford, we are also working with The Pratt Center for Community Development and the National Development Council. Both of these non-profit development organizations are eager to explore a partnership with The O’Connell Organization to develop a mixed-use building with the school as an anchor tenant that will also serve the larger community, perhaps with artisan live/work space, mixed-income housing, etc.

Planning Team and Board: The planning team includes Ann Ledo-Lane, an educator who has successfully started two charter schools, one in New York and one in Washington, D.C. The planning team leader has been the editor-in-chief of a weekly newspaper, and the executive director of a non-profit based in New York City. Both positions required

leadership and management skills, as well as budgeting and financial oversight. Also on our planning team is an educator currently at PS 234 in Tribeca, a well-known public school that has successfully implemented project-based learning. She is currently attending the Principals Institute at Bank Street College of Education, and is the school's proposed Instructional Coordinator. Another team member is a public school teacher who has worked in the community.

Additionally, the board is actively involved in establishing the school and can bring to bear its combined expertise.

- Ann Mellow, Associate Director National Association of Episcopal School, has overseen two prominent schools in New York City, Poly Prep Middle School, and St. Lukes in the Fields, a K-8 located in the West Village. She is intimately familiar with overseeing curricula development, budgeting, fundraising, administration, etc. – indeed, everything that goes into running a school. Additionally, at the New York Interschool Association, Ms. Mellow has facilitated collaboration between school leaders and supervised the Faculty Diversity Search, a recruitment program for faculty of color and other under-represented minorities on behalf of the Interschool members and twenty additional NYC independent schools, which program is funded in part by the Altman Foundation.
- Orray M. Taft is a senior policy analyst at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. He has extensive experience in the private sector as well, and will work closely with the planning team leader to develop a budget, as well as financial oversight mechanisms.
- As previously stated, Philip Hopkins is vice president of technology at Bank of America and has 10 years of experience testing educational software at Scholastic.
- Another very important board member is Jill Crawford, project manager for Civic Builders, the largest charter school developer in the Tri-state region. She will be critical to helping TRHCS identify a temporary space and guide us in the process of securing permanent home.

Recruitment and hiring. The success of the school will depend more than anything on the recruitment, selection and hiring of highly qualified and experienced teachers. Ann Mellow's extensive experience overseeing schools will assist us in identifying top quality teachers with compatible training. Further, to attract highly qualified teachers to the school, TRHCS budget sets salaries commensurate with those offered by public schools. Plans for the recruitment process will begin first with colleagues and through professional connections, and expand with advertising in appropriate print and web media, and making contact with professional organizations, training programs and universities.

Teacher training. As indicated throughout the prospectus, professional development will be emphasized, particularly in our key design elements and unique characteristics. All teachers will be able to create project-based learning units that adhere to the school's ELL model, and practices for students with disabilities. They must also have the ability to apply the school's assessment system and classroom management techniques. Therefore TRHCS will plan professional development workshops in all these areas and provide them to the selected teachers during the preparation period, as well as a program of ongoing professional development throughout the year.

Financing and financial planning for the start-up period. TRHCS will apply for a start-up grant along with the submission of the final application. We will also call on our board to assist with financial planning, grant writing and fundraising. The planning team leader, in conjunction with Mr. Taft, is developing a sound financial management plan to monitor and control its finances. This plan includes the preparation of annual budgets and cash flow statements, beginning with the start-up of operations and continuing for ongoing years. Ongoing monitoring will include comparing budgets to actual results of operations, requiring periodic fiscal reports and retaining a licensed certified public accountant (CPA) to audit and report on the financial statements. A strong system of internal controls will ensure assets are protected, laws are complied with, and valid and reliable data are maintained and reported.

h. Demonstrate the support of the school district and the intent to establish an ongoing relationship with such district:

TRHCS has reached out to key community constituents to inform them of the charter school planning process and the particular model and services the school hopes to provide to enlist their support going forward. We have met Sonya Hooks at the Department of Education, and look forward to meeting with the President of Community Educational Council in District 15 in the coming weeks.

i. Provide access to viable education alternatives to students in regions where there are a lack of alternatives:

TRHCS's comprehensive model of inclusion – co-teaching supported by differentiated instruction and looping, enhanced by well-documented project-based units of study in the arts, sciences and social sciences – differs significantly from schools in the area. This model is rare in public schools. Some schools in the area serve as models in other ways – notably Brooklyn New School, which emphasizes an interdisciplinary curriculum and serves a diverse student body. However, the opportunity in Red Hook to provide an inclusive educational model with in-depth units of study that utilize the characteristics of Red Hook (the historical/industrial waterfront, the many artisans living and working here, and the Red Hook Farm – is a truly unique opportunity for parents, teachers and students. People live and work in Red Hook in order to make and design all kinds of things, from chocolate to bamboo bicycles to high-tech architectural materials to dresses to documentary films, and much more. We will be calling upon these resources to develop curricula – indeed, to integrate the school deeply into the community.

Research has shown many positive outcomes from looping: While co-teaching and differentiated instruction are somewhat more common, paired with looping, this will be an exceptionally strong educational model for serving a diverse student population, particularly SPED and ELLs. As stated in the Executive Summary, looping has not only been shown to increase test scores, but provide social/emotional support. Children in looping classrooms benefit from a reduction in anxiety, increase in confidence, and a sense of community, continuity and stability. The continuity of a looping classroom makes ELLs feel more at ease. They develop trust in their teacher through time and become more confident in practicing their developing English skills. Parents of looping students reported their children had better attitudes toward school. They gained confidence to become stronger students,

worked cooperatively, and took responsibility for their learning. The two-year classroom has additional benefits for struggling students. While looping is not a substitute for special education, special education referrals are typically less frequent in looping classrooms. Looping has also been found to reduce, but not eliminate retentions.^{xviii}

Documentation. Documentation of group projects is another method to create classroom cohesion in a diverse setting. According to Project Zero, the creators of Making Learning Visible at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, good documentation prompts questions and promotes conversations among children and adults that deepen and extend learning. Documentation is not just retrospective, but prospective; it shapes the design of future contexts for learning.^{xix}

Research demonstrates that the instructional strategies and procedures that make up standards-driven project-based learning are effective in building deep content understanding, raising academic achievement and encouraging student motivation to learn. Research studies have demonstrated that project-based learning can^{xx}:

- be more effective than traditional instruction in increasing academic achievement on annual state-administered assessment tests
- be more effective than traditional instruction for long-term retention, skill development and satisfaction of students and teachers
- be more effective than traditional instruction for preparing students to integrate and explain concepts
- ***be especially effective with lower-achieving students***

Finally, working with *CREATE!* will provide a unique arts curriculum that is custom designed for our school. While *CREATE!* works all over New York City, for whatever reasons, not many schools in District 15 have utilized this resource. Working with some of New York City's most talented artists in theater, dance, visual arts and music on in-depth projects, *CREATE!* will help TRHCS provide a rich yet flexible education in the arts.

ⁱ Looping: Adding Time, Strengthening Relationships, Daniel L. Burke, Eric Digest, December 1997, EDO-PS-97-25.

ⁱⁱ Lake, K. (1994). *Integrated curriculum*. School Improvement Research Series (SIRS), Close-up #16. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

ⁱⁱⁱ Katz, L. & Chard, S. (1996). The contribution of documentation to the quality of early childhood education. ERIC Digest. Champaign, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. ED 393 608.

^{iv} <http://projects.nytimes.com/census/2010/explorer>

^v <http://schools.nyc.gov/SchoolPortals/15/K015/AboutUs/Statistics/default.htm>

^{vi} <http://projects.nytimes.com/census/2010/explorer>

^{vii} http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/30/nyregion/30tests.html?ref=national_assessment_of_educational_progress

^{viii} "Class Sizes Rise, Mostly Due to Budget Cuts," by Sharon Otterman, The New York Times, November 30, 2009.

^{ix} Csikszentmihaly, M. (1990). *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: Harper & Row. Sternberg, R., Torff, B., & Grigorenko, E. (1998). "Teaching triarchically improves student achievement." *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90, 374-384. Tomlinson, C. (2001). *How to Differentiate Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Tomlinson, C., (2003). *Fulfilling the Promise of the Differentiated Classroom: Strategies and Tools for Responsive Teaching*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

^x Grant, J. (2003). *Differentiating for Diversity*. *Principal* (Reston, Va.) 82 (3). p. 48-51

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- xi Helping educators work effectively with English language learners. (2010). Retrieved from <http://www.cal.org/siop/>
- xii <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/07/nyregion/07closings.html?ref=charterschools>
- xiii <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/11/education/11education.html?scp=1&sq=ask%20the%20students&st=cse>
- xiv http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/01/education/01math.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=singapore%20math&st=cse
- xv <http://educationnext.org/miracle-math/>
- xvi Retrieval Practice Produces More Learning than Elaborative Studying with Concept Mapping, Jeffrey D. Karpicke and Janell R. Blunt, Science 1199327 Published online 20 January 2011.
- xvii http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/11/education/11education.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=teacher%20ask%20student&st=cse
- xviii http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/691965/is_a_looping_classroom_right_for_your.html?cat=4
- xix http://pzweb.harvard.edu/mlv/index.cfm?content_section=4&content_page_id=7§ion_page_level=2
- xx http://www.bie.org/about/does_pbl_work

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