

New School For Youth Empowerment

**Charter Board Packet
Submitted to Milwaukee Public Schools
February 20th, 2017**

Introduction

Our goal is to create a public school that awakens the consciousness of our youth and provides them with the skills to be successful and college ready. Through Social Justice education our students will be engaged in socially relevant content to outline tangible problems and propose solutions. Our Students will be actively involved in the community to emphasize the positive role students can play in bringing change to their communities. Our students will also develop Character through personal experiences both in the Classroom and in their Communities. Our mission is based on the premise that young people can and will become educated, active members of their community by integrating their high school learning experiences with meaningful participation in social justice and economic activities which benefit the students and the community.

- **We believe** a multicultural, multiracial, anti-racist, anti-bullying, embracing inclusivity and equity, learning environment best prepares young people for responsible roles in society.
- **We believe** that young people learn best when relevance and application of what they learn are an integral part of the education process.
- **We believe** that the social, personal, and academic goals of secondary education can be integrated into creative, productive, and rigorous program which will reflect both the needs of the individual learners and the school system's goals.
- **We believe** that young people will be responsible members of their community by interacting with community members and organizations that model positive attitudes and behaviors our young people can learn from.
- **We believe** that young people have a civic duty to become educated in social justice and develop strategies to help alleviate the social issues their communities face
- **We believe** in a shared governance with teachers, students, parents and community representatives playing active roles in the planning, functioning, and evaluation of the school
- **We believe** that a small, personable learning environment best serves the needs of young people.
- **We believe** that a teacher-led model will establish an intrinsic relationship where teachers, working with students, parents, and the community, can design, implement, and run effective and innovative educational programs.

This is supported by the work at Humanities Preparatory Academy in New York City that reported 100% graduation rate on their most recent state report card. According to work done at Humanities, "Education is an interactive one. Teaching begins with essential questions, teachers' questions, students' questions. Students and teachers embark together on learning projects, projects that involve seminar discussions, cooperative learning activities, field and library research; in general, a hands-on approach to learning." These factors have contributed to Humanities Prep Academy's success:

- Providing small classes. When teachers know students well, teachers can teach well—and students can learn well too.
- Classes are longer. During longer blocks of time a variety of activities can be accomplished.
- Schools should provide advisories. Small group sessions are important to discuss student and staff concerns. They also promote democracy and academic achievement.
- Practice participatory democracy through Town Meetings and smaller community meetings.
- Specifically designed theme-based classes that feature in-depth inquiry

In similar fashion, The New School for Youth Empowerment embraces many of their intrinsic values.

The New School for Youth Empowerment will empower students, families, and teachers to work together to create a new model of community education in which young people contribute in a meaningful way to the betterment of their community while receiving a quality education through the focus of the 3 C's: Character, Classroom, and Community

Character

Importance of Social Justice in Building Character

Social justice is defined as “recognizing and acting upon the power that we have for making positive change.” NSYE teachers promote social justice everyday, through personal relationships with students a culturally relevant curriculum. To address the academic and social-emotional needs of our students, we need to connect to the lives of our students. By bridging the student with the worldly view will produce a more civically engaged individual. Where larger schools struggle to produce students who are engaged in their communities and demonstrate academic and social-emotional success, our small-school program will make tremendous gains. This all starts with the building of student confidence, self-reflection, and engagement in forming positive relationships. Creating a culture and atmosphere that allows students to explore the social justice themes that their own communities face, the school will ensure they leave with the skills and strength to find their place within the community. When students are able to view the world with a critical eye, they are better equipped with the tools needed to advocate for their communities and find ways to address the injustice seen throughout society.

Restorative Practices

Recognizing the social issues that Milwaukee and our youth face, NSYE staff fully embrace the implementation of restorative practices - a proactive approach to addressing underlying social and personal struggles through positive, relationship and skill building experiences. NSYE does not view restorative practices as an “added-on” experience that students get once a month.

Instead, the school's culture and relationships formed within and outside the school is established with restorative practices. As a school, we believe that the missing component between personal and academic success lies within emotional intelligence - the ability to recognize one's feeling, as well as others, in order to develop communication skills, motivation, empathy, and working to build healthy and successful relationships. To achieve this, the entire school embraces restorative practices to educate the whole child. Restorative practices encourages non-violent conflict resolution. The NSYE program is structured so that students are exposed to restorative practices through their entire high school career. Starting in their first year, students will be required to take the Restorative Practices course. Within this course, we create a foundation for students to begin their journey in bettering themselves, so they can better their communities and futures. While some schools have already implemented this discipline, NSYE will provide an entire curriculum focusing on restorative practices and social justice. By adding 9th and 10th graders to our program, this gives us the opportunity to grow them and catch them at an early age to engage them in the importance of community, school, and developing self-worth. Recognizing our students aren't always provided the support they deserve to be successful, NSYE addresses this through forming trusting and empowering relationships through restorative practices.

Classroom

Importance of Social Justice in the Classroom

Social justice in the classroom emphasizes active participation in socially relevant issues through research, analysis, discussion, empathy, and action. By making students aware of voices and issues that are often not recognized by mainstream culture, students are exposed to new solutions and schools of thought. It is our goal to make students aware of how systematic change can occur and implore them to create and pursue it. The emphasis of education should be to give value to proficiency by ensuring that it also empowers students to create real, positive change. The impact of culturally relevant instruction engages students in a social-emotional learning experience, directly impacting their academic performance. When a student is presented with a topic, subject, or theme that they can connect to on a deeper level, their academic success will increase.

Monthly Themes

In order to produce a coherent curriculum school-wide, we will implement monthly themes in empowerment and social justice. Implementing these themes of empowerment serve the purpose of 1.) Providing students the opportunities to build character, 2.) Connecting these themes to the social ills our students face daily, 3.) Creating a coherent, social justice curriculum that reinforces thematic instruction throughout the school.

Monthly themes of empowerment include:

- Community
- Leadership
- Activism
- Voice
- Empathy
- Environment
- Cultural Relevancy
- Equity
- Service to Others
- Ownership

Literacy Rollouts

These themes will be addressed in all content areas, culminating in Literacy Rollouts - all school reading/writing events that place a focus on meeting students' social-emotional and academic needs. Throughout literacy rollout, we are planning to provide direct instruction in literacy strategies in writing and preparation for the ACT exams. Students will be presented a three-perspective prompt, similar to the ACT format. These prompts address the monthly, social justice themes, as a way for students to engage in the writing and social aspects seamlessly. Students will research these social justice themes, as well as actively engaging in information texts that are annotated to help them formulate their own stances on social justice issues. Students will be given mini-lessons within the literacy rollout to focus on specific areas to strengthen: organization, mechanics, voice, paragraph structure, etc. At the end of the rollout, students will then follow up with strategies for self and peer editing, reinforcing the writing process of self-evaluation.

Specialty Classes

In addition to school-wide curriculum, NSYE will offer courses that are specifically focused on empowering the student. We will offer: Men's and Women's Empowerment, Leadership, Restorative Practices, Senior Service Seminars - with an emphasis on internships and civic engagement. These courses will be required of our students, in order to create the "better citizen," an overarching goal of NSYE. We want to be able to build up students' self worth and confidence to become more worldly individuals. Specialty courses will help students explore their identity and roles in the greater community, building upon self-confidence and empowering the individual to overcome daily challenges. These courses help students build relationships, while exploring universal themes of social justice that affect all of our communities and our responsibilities as global citizens. In addition to the goals of empowering students, these skills

will prepare students to take on the challenges of AP courses and become college and career ready.

Community

Importance of Social Justice in Community

Building on and enhancing the civic engagement in the classroom directly influences the students' experiences out in the community. When a student participates in the internship program, they are utilizing the skills developed in school to find success when on internships. Social justice issues all around us - personally, locally, globally. The internship program gives students a voice and platform to address these issues, through giving back and volunteering their time to meet the needs of others. Before going out to internship sites, students will go through several courses that will prepare them to think in restorative ways. This allows civic engagement, hands on experiences, and college/career readiness in a way that connects students with social justice themes. For example, if a student is out on an internship mentoring at a school site, a possible theme the student could research and connect with might involve the disproportionate education system. Through these engagements with social themes that directly impact communities, students will address the question of "why do some communities have certain obstacles that others do not." Through research and the internship experience, students will study the cause and effect of worldly issues on their community, developing a global perspective and be proactive citizens.

Internship Program

The goal of the internship program is to ultimately have students get a realistic view of what is expected of them as citizens, preparing them to take risks on their career paths. Starting in their first year at NSYE, students will be exposed to the internship program. Each year, the students will progress through a series of courses that prepare them for their community experiences. During their freshman year, students will engage in building restorative outlooks and become aware of the experiences of others through the year-long Restorative Practices course.. In their following year, students will take courses in empowerment to give them a voice and further their understanding of their relationship between themselves, others, and their community. By the time students enter their third and fourth year, they will have the opportunity to participate in the internship program. Students are selected by their academic performance and their ability to demonstrate restorative and social justice awareness. As the program requires independence, responsibility, and ownership of actions, students will need to show these skills throughout their high school career. The program will establish relationships with community organizations and provide them with students that are dedicated to the NSYE mission. Community partners and NSYE will engaging in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the academics and social experiences at the site. The program asks students to questions themselves and look within, "What do I want to become?" "What do I want to go to school for?" "How can I better myself and the community around me?" Students engaged in community activities will have

experiences that can serve as resume builders, but the benefit of the program is to create people of social and community advocacy.

List of Confirmed Partnerships

NSYE has already established a variety of community partners, with more eager to assist in our internship program. As a school, we have the vision of growing our program throughout our existence. As a staple of the program, we must nurture these sites and establish reliable and engaging internship sites. We have a list of over 20 active sites with students currently participating in the internship program:

- St Luke's - Emergency Room Assistant
- Discovery World - Docent and Office Assistant
- Hartford Elementary - Teacher Assistant
- O.W. Holmes - Teacher Assistant
- Legal Action of Wisconsin - Legal Aide
- Penfield - Teacher Assistant
- St. Ann - Resident/ Activity Assistant
- Brides of Milwaukee - Teacher Assistant
- Calvary Christian Academy - Teacher Assistant
- Hampton Elementary - Teacher Assistant
- New Life Community Center - Youth Mentor
- Catholic Home - Activity Assistant
- Milwaukee Public Library - Librarian
- TruSkool - Program Assistant
- Discovery World - Design It Lab
- Lighthouse Youth Center/Garden Homes Lutheran Church - Youth Mentor/Teen Basketball Coach
- Veterans Resource Center - Office Assistant
- Tender Care Child Care - Teacher Assistant
- Promise to Care - Home Health Aide
- Alexian Village Adult Day Care - Resident Assistant
- Growing Power - Field Assistant
- Happy Ending Animal Shelter - Veterinary Assistant

Importance of a Small School

NSYE has to be a small school. With a shrinking list of small schools in the district, students who learn better in smaller settings need the appropriate learning environment. According to several studies, small schools have proven to enhance learning and provide avenues for academic success that large schools can not.

The following is a list of four targets that small schools are able to effectively address (Small Schools: Great Strides; Patricia Wasley). So they ask, "Why create small schools?"

1. to create small, intimate learning communities where students are well known and can be pushed and encouraged by adults who care for and about them;
2. to reduce the isolation that too often seeds alienation and violence;
3. to reduce the devastating discrepancies in the achievement gap that plague poorer children and, too often, children of color,
4. to encourage teachers to use their intelligence and their experience to help students succeed.

In Howley's study from 2000, small schools are able to raise student achievement, increase attendance, elevate teacher satisfaction, and improve school climate. With a small school setting, educators are able to focus heavily on their instructional practices, increasing the quality of student performance (Darling-Hammond 2002). In addition to providing stronger instructional time, teachers are able to see uniqueness of each individual student, ensuring students don't feel lost like they would in a large school. If students are more visible and have a stronger voice in their school, their relationship with staff improves. This also allows educators to notice individual needs of each student, providing more options within the classroom for students who learn in a variety of ways: physical, reading and writing, visual, auditory.

Small staff sizes allow stronger communication between educators. This allows the staff to enhance their instructional practices by working directly with peers. Educators are able to get support from staff members, which increases staff morale. With a smaller, teacher-led school, the staff holds itself to higher standards, improving the responsibility and ownership of the educators. The administrative barrier is removed, allowing staff to recognize learning needs of their specific students and working independently to address those needs. Teacher-led settings directly connect the staff with parents, and informs them of student performance. The small-school model ensures that students and staff succeed in creating positive futures, during a time where we need these skills the most. With a social atmosphere of uncertainty, small settings where those students who feel forgotten, underrepresented, and voiceless can be given the confidence to succeed in the classroom, community, and within them

Addressing Needs of the MPS District

While NSYE is established as a program to create a dialogue around social justice, restorative practices, and creating equity in our lives and communities, we have identified the specific needs of our district and our children. We are certain that our students will achieve success through this innovative, engaging, challenging, and much needed program. Closing achievement gaps, improving attendance rates, and showing our students that New School for Youth Empowerment is here for them. For their success. For their ability to take on the world and advocate for their own needs, in addition to the needs of others. Below are some notable challenges our district faces, along with solutions NSYE will provide:

Graduation Rates

- Advisory programming model, where students are working with teachers throughout their high school experience
- Advisory data checks to ensure students are aware of their academic progress, with a focus on credit status and requirements for graduation
- Help filling out college forms, such as applications and the FASFA creates an atmosphere where academic success is fostered and encouraged
- This all leads to the student finding meaning in academic success, as it directly affects the future of our young people

Attendance Rates & Absenteeism

- Start young (freshmen) and build our school environment from the ground up to increase student accountability and bolster our internship program
- Attentive and involved staff in a small, teacher led environment
 - Every teacher knows every student and every student has an advisor sharing the responsibility for their success.
 - A small school population allows us to know every student individually, their families, future plans, academic standing and hopes & dreams
 - Teachers take on the roles of extra staff and take ownership of the success of the program - complete buy in from staff that isn't always the case at larger schools
- PBIS incentives for attendance rates
 - Monthly events celebrating attendance over 90%
 - Student recognition through raffles and after school events

Parental Involvement

- Parents of freshmen are more likely to get involved early in a student's high school career. When the social justice and restorative atmosphere is visible to families, they'll want to participate in our program
- Parental contact through monthly after school activities geared toward school, family, and community involvement
 - Cooking
 - Volunteer Opportunities

- Banking/Finance Event
- Parenting Workshop - address common questions through guest speakers, our social worker, nurses, and our school psychologist

Test Scores

- Add freshmen or sophomores to increase growth and strive for proficiency
- Incorporate heavily scaffolded, social justice curriculum designed to engage students in academics spanning from 9th to 12th grade level, in order to make gains on test scores
- Utilize literacy rollouts of schoolwide literacy programs to increase cohesion and further reinforcing the ACT test experience

Behavior

- As a small school our staff has strong relationships with students and can defuse situations through restorative practices, training students are circle keepers to instill non-violent conflict resolution
- Adding younger students to a stable, older population means that our positive environment will be present from the start, through mentorship opportunities

Rigor

- Maintain active and engaging partnerships with community organizations around Milwaukee
- We would be one of two schools to participate in Marquette Law School's mock trial program.
- We would like the opportunity to become AP certified.
- All classes will follow the common core state standards

The NSYE program is the only school in the district to take on the challenge of incorporating social justice, restorative practices, internship program, truly be a small school, teacher led, and creating better citizens for our communities. With this in mind, the MPS district needs a program like ours to find success for our young people. Education should be about facilitating the learning, growth, and engagement of our students. They will establish their character. They will establish their classroom. They will establish their communities. We have one unique vision, where the community is the classroom.