

**CATALYST SCHOOLS CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER  
JOB DESCRIPTION**

**Title:** Chief Academic Officer (CAO)

**Reports to:** Chief Executive Officer

**Background:** Catalyst Schools Chicago is a non-profit 501c3 organization dedicated to transforming inner-city communities by developing highly educated, concerned, committed citizens of character. Since 2006, Catalyst has operated public schools committed to providing a quality educational choice for students and families in low-income communities of Chicago. Catalyst is searching for an academic leader to strengthen its original school model and to assist in managing its growth from a two campus operator into a multi-campus charter network.

Catalyst currently operates two successful charter and contract schools in the Austin and North Lawndale communities, serving grades K-8. The organization expects 2009 enrollment of 600 students with the expansion of its Austin campus. Catalyst anticipates opening additional charter and/or contract schools over the next three years.

The Catalyst methodology is an educational model rooted in the Lasallian tradition and its core values. In addition to a rigorous academic program which focuses heavily on math and reading, Catalyst promotes the Character Counts curriculum through which students learn core ethics and important character traits.

The Catalyst model incorporates an extended school day coupled with a rich program of extracurricular classes offered by community partners. As Catalyst Schools seeks to become an anchor as well as a change agent in its neighborhood, these community partners and student families are an integral part of the model, playing an active role in programming as volunteers, tutors and mentors. The organization also offers a graduate support program to prepare its 8<sup>th</sup> graders for a smooth transition into high school and to assist students through high school graduation.

As part of Renaissance 2010, a Chicago initiative to create 100 high-performing schools in communities of need by the year 2010, Catalyst schools are held accountable for performance while being given autonomy to create innovative learning environments. In 2008, approximately 70% of Catalyst operating revenue was provided through government sources with the remainder generated from private and corporate donors. The schools are non-tuition based and open to the public.

**Position:** The Chief Academic Officer will be responsible for leading the definition of the network's academic model and ensuring consistent implementation across schools. The CAO will be responsible for setting the network's academic goals and managing schools to those goals. The CAO will also manage the principals of the two schools and direct the overall network's human capital strategy and professional development programs.

## **Responsibilities:**

### **• Network Academic Strategy**

- Define the network's academic model, its core non-negotiable tenants and its instructional strategies
- Identify required improvements and drive their definition and implementation
- Supervise campus principals to ensure adherence to key academic policies/strategies of the network
- Create communities of practice with staff across the network
- Participate in organization's annual budgeting and strategic planning process to ensure adequate incorporation of academic priorities
- Establish, develop, and foster academic partnerships

### **• Culture Development**

- Articulate the Catalyst vision, mission and model to staff across the network
- Preserve and promote the Lasallian mission with associated core values, philosophy and culture
- Incorporate national and regional Lasallian programs and materials where appropriate
- Participate in Lasallian professional development opportunities, workshops and training sessions

### **• Curriculum Development**

- Drive network curriculum development and define required level of consistency/autonomy
- Ensure consistent implementation of established curriculum
- Ensure curriculum alignment to academic standards

### **• Performance Management**

- Set annual and five-year school and network programmatic performance goals
- Drive definition and implementation of data-driven network programmatic accountability and monitoring systems for teachers and students
- Ensure strong, consistent interim assessment systems, including assessment development and the process to analyze results and drive required improvements

### **• Human Capital Management**

- Set organizational staffing model priorities and requirements
- Set performance standards for network and school academic staff
- Oversee and direct the network's instructional staff evaluation process
- Oversee development and implementation of the organization's professional development program, including induction and ongoing development tied to staff evaluations and student interim assessment results
- Support, monitor, and maintain the quality of faculty recruitment

**Required Qualifications:**

- 7+ years of instructional leadership and classroom experience in urban schools
- Proven ability to drive significant academic gains at a school or network dedicated to underserved students
- Experience establishing and managing systems to build programmatic and cultural consistency
- Significant expertise in managing school performance, including setting academic goals, developing and/or implementing assessment systems and driving needed adjustments
- Experience in managing and coaching principals and teachers in varied instructional strategies
- Experience operating in a charter school network or extensive knowledge of new schools in urban environments
- Passion for education reform and a commitment to serving children in Chicago's underserved communities

**Preferred Qualifications:**

- Experience replicating successful school models
- Advanced degree in education or a related field
- Experience with Lasallian education philosophy

**Direct Reports:**

- Principal of North Lawndale campus
- Principal of Austin campus

**Compensation:** Commensurate with experience.

**Start Date:** Position currently available

**Application:** To apply, please email your cover letter and resume to [HR@Catalystschools.org](mailto:HR@Catalystschools.org). Phone inquiries are not accepted.