



Perspectives Charter Schools

Position: Chief Executive Officer
Organization: Perspectives Charter Schools (PCS)
Location: Chicago, IL

Mission Statement

The mission of PCS is to provide students with a rigorous and relevant education; based on A Disciplined Life© that prepares them for life in a changing and competitive world and helps them further to become intellectually reflective, compassionate and ethical people engaged in a meaningful life.

HISTORY

In 1993, Kim Dixon and Diana Shulla-Cose, two young Chicago Public Schools teachers, started Perspectives as a small "school within a school" at Dyett Elementary School, serving 45 students. They believed strongly in the advantages of a small school environment which offers students a sense of individual importance and belonging and affords teachers a greater opportunity to provide guidance, resources, and one-on-one time to students. With a \$1,000 grant and an idea for a cultural theme called *A Disciplined Life* they founded Perspectives.

When the Illinois General Assembly legislated charter schools in 1996, Dixon and Shulla-Cose jumped at the opportunity to build a new kind of public school from the ground up. Perspectives was chartered in 1997 as one of the first five charter schools in Illinois and became part of a growing national movement that has seen the introduction of over 3,600 charter schools in the last thirteen years. Illinois Charter schools are public schools governed by a not-for-profit board of directors and operating under the terms of a five-year performance contract or "charter." Perspectives is, therefore, a part of the Chicago Public School system. Its schools are publicly and privately funded, may not discriminate in their admissions, and must meet the same state standards and requirements that are in place for all other public schools. In the charter agreement, each school commits to meet or exceed ambitious goals and objectives for student performance. Schools are accountable for this performance, and a charter can be revoked if outcomes are not met.

Serving 150 students in their first chartered year, the founders continued to develop the principles of *A Disciplined Life*. In 2004, they moved the school into a brand new, award-winning, building in the South Loop which serves grades 6-12. This building has since been renamed the Rodney D. Joslin Campus, in honor of PCS's late board chair. In 2005, in a widely-publicized initiative called Renaissance 2010, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley announced plans to open 100 new schools to transform and improve public education in the city. With

encouragement from the Mayor, Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan, and coupled with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Perspectives decided to broaden its horizons and begin building a network of schools.

The PCS Calumet Campus opened in the Fall of 2006 in the Auburn-Gresham neighborhood of Chicago. It is comprised of Calumet Middle School (grades 7-8), Calumet High School (grades 9-12) and Calumet High School of Technology (also grades 9-12). Finally, In the Fall of 2008, PCS opened its fifth school in the Grand Boulevard neighborhood -- the Perspectives/IIT Math & Science Academy, serving grades 6-12. Both the Calumet and Math & Science Buildings are former CPS schools, and the buildings continue to be owned by CPS and leased to Perspectives.

Today, with nearly 1700 students spread across the campuses described above, Perspectives is nearing the end of this period of exciting growth. PCS expects these schools to reach full enrollment in the 2011-12 school year. At full capacity, over 2500 students will be served; with 350 students in the Joslin School, 500 students in each of the three Calumet schools, and 700 students in the Math & Science Academy.

As a result of the impact of these schools, Perspectives has earned a national reputation as a model of how a small school with innovative, effective education can transform urban schooling.

OVERVIEW OF THE ORGANIZATION

The organizational vision of PCS is to create a network of schools with aligned instruction, culture, business, operations and governance supported by a highly capable central management team and overseen by a highly engaged Board. In this context, PCS is committed to a set of guiding principles. They are:

- *Ethics: A Disciplined Life* (described in more detail below) is the foundation of everything at Perspectives for students, teachers and staff;
- *Academic Rigor*: Students are required to engage thoroughly and intellectually in the academic experience with an expectation of success and a “College for Certain” environment;
- *Community Engagement*: Perspectives connects students to the community and makes the city a classroom through internships, community action projects, field studies and social justice classes;
- *Parent & Family Involvement*: Partnerships with student families are a necessary component of student success at Perspectives; and
- *Professional Development*: Teachers learn from each other through instructional mentors and ongoing discussions of classroom best practices.

PCS ranks in the top 25% in Chicago among non-selective public schools for retaining freshmen through their senior year. More than 90 percent of students in its five senior classes have graduated and all of those students have been accepted to college. Compelling statistics like these are attributed in large part to the guiding principles above and, in particular, to one of Perspectives' most distinguishing features: *A Disciplined Life* curriculum. The principles of *A Disciplined Life* are designed to build a culture of success and to address each student as a whole person, understanding that character growth and academic progress are interdependent.

The pillars and corresponding behaviors of *A Disciplined Life* are:

Self Perception

- Accept only quality work from yourself
- Take responsibility for your actions
- Seek wisdom
- Be open-minded
- Think critically and be inquisitive
- Love who you are
- Demonstrate honesty, integrity, and decency
- Be generous
- Be a life-long learner
- Live a healthy lifestyle

Communication

- Communicate effectively
- Challenge each other intellectually
- Show gratitude
- Solve conflicts peacefully
- Respect each other's differences
- Be positive and supportive of each other
- Show compassion

Productivity

- Demonstrate a strong work ethic
- Use your time wisely
- Listen actively
- Be punctual and prepared
- Be organized
- Be reflective
- Be reliable
- Take initiative
- Demonstrate perseverance

THE POSITION

In conjunction with a Board of Directors, the CEO implements the mission of Perspectives Charter Schools and manages its long- and short-term implementation. S/he is accountable for and has ultimate administrative, managerial, and operational authority over the central offices and campuses. In this context, the CEO must integrate educational priorities with operational realities.

Specifically, the CEO will be responsible for:

- Assessing the organizational infrastructure of PCS (staff, administrative systems, procedures, financial and programmatic reporting to the Board) and making substantive suggestions for change - if necessary - which will improve the overall operation and effectiveness of PCS;
- Partnering with the senior staff to prepare and implement multi-year programmatic, strategic, and financial plans, and ensuring that organizational efficiency is prioritized;
- Ultimate oversight and monitoring of an annual operating budget of \$26M and all budgeting processes;
- Ultimate oversight of an annual operating plan process and, with the help of the COO and Director of Finance, the development of monitoring/reporting systems to measure progress against the plan;
- Advancing the mission of PCS by aggressively identifying and securing new sources of funding from foundations, corporations, and individual donors and increasing the PCS Board's direct involvement in this process;
- Developing and managing senior staff and instituting strong accountability systems as well as professional support and development plans for PCS's 250 employees;
- Leading the staff in a manner that enables more integrated, collaborative and effective productivity throughout the organization and supports and empowers the work of both educational and administrative staff;
- Providing visionary leadership and support to the schools in the network, in part through fostering a success-oriented, accountable administrative environment at the central office;
- Identifying potential locations for future schools;
- Creating visibility and stature for PCS in the charter school community and in the broader educational arena - particularly locally where PCS schools operate in a competitive environment - by working closely with the Board to develop innovative partnerships, strengthen existing partnerships, and develop new alliances; and
- Serving as the key liaison to the PCS's Board of Directors.

REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The CEO will report directly to a 15-member Board of Directors. The CEO and the Board are supported by an 18-member Advisory Board whose role is to support the long-term, strategic growth of the organization and its mission. Reporting directly to the CEO are the President/Co-Founder, the Chief Education Officer/Co-Founder, and the Chief Operating Officer.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE NEXT CEO

The next CEO of PCS will inherit a vibrant and proud community of schools. The opportunity now exists for a tested leader to sustain what is working and successful, stabilize what is not, and, eventually, to support phased growth of the PCS model.

With this in mind, the CEO Search Committee has identified four priority areas for organizational focus which are summarized below:

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The CEO will need to be an aggressive, savvy and creative fundraiser who can tell the story of PCS's success in urban education to a wide variety of audiences and key stakeholders. S/he must be able to explore and capitalize on funding opportunities from new private and public sources—a task which should be eased by a new Federal administration committed to the growth of the charter movement but one which will undoubtedly be complicated by today's significant macro- and micro-economic challenges.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

At PCS, the curriculum includes two periods of math and literacy, a longer school day than traditional public schools, and daily tutoring and enrichment for all students. Graduates are expected to be informed, thinking, compassionate young scholars who are prepared to articulate their opinions, pose critical questions, solve problems and persevere towards their goals. These expectations are being met; PCS does significantly better at growing students on the Educational Planning and Assessment (EPAS) system (which provides a longitudinal, systematic approach to educational and career planning, assessment, instructional support, and evaluation) than other Chicago schools and charters. EPAS is, of course, not the only metric of importance. Much attention is given to the percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards. While PCS middle school students typically out perform traditional Chicago Public School students, the high school performance falls in the same range as is average for CPS schools that are not charters or selective enrollment. The next CEO will need to be able to effectively analyze the different variables which drive academic growth, communicate these factors to external and internal stakeholders, and advocate for meaningful metrics which better reflect PCS schools' progress.

FACILITIES

PCS has access to several long-term facilities which are generally in good condition. The PCS Math & Science Academy is, however, in need of significant renovation to serve its unique programmatic needs. Working with senior staff, the CEO will be challenged to find a solution for financing this renovation, likely to be a combination of CPS contributed funds, lending, and fundraising.

GROWTH

The current focus and commitment at PCS is to fully enroll the five operating PCS campuses. As noted above, full enrollment will be 2500 students and this goal is projected to be met by academic year 2011-2012.

Beyond 2011, the hope and intention of the leadership of PCS is to continue the steady and sustainable growth trajectory currently underway. Fortunately, the efficacy of the PCS model was recognized early in the organization's history by city leaders. Although Illinois state law allows Chicago to issue no more than 30 charter school licenses, former Chicago Schools CEO Arne Duncan selected PCS as one of the city's only 15 original charter schools licensed to operate multiple school sites under their single charter. With that unique replicating opportunity in mind, the new CEO will need to have the ability to identify opportunities for the organization's expansion, scout new locations in accordance with a growth plan, and negotiate contracts to secure new facilities. Most importantly, s/he will need to work with the Board and senior leadership to develop a plan to make the network sustainable on public funding.

At this time, however, there are no approved plans to open new PCS schools. Together, with a committed Board and a formal plan, the new CEO may choose to continue the growth of schools, but this will depend on multiple variables. First and foremost, the PCS leadership must continue to believe that there is a good educational product to build on. Second, PCS must be confident that there is local political support for replication.

Last, but hardly least, there are significant financial challenges ahead – particularly over the next two years – of which a new CEO must be keenly aware. Specifically, PCS will not be supported entirely by public funds until the schools reach full enrollment. Until then, PCS will need to rely on finding new and alternative sources of funding, including budget cuts, to compensate for that gap – a challenge only exacerbated by the economic recession.

REQUISITE QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

This is an outstanding opportunity to play an integral role in public education reform. Therefore, first and foremost, the CEO must be committed to the mission of PCS and working with diverse communities in under-resourced neighborhoods. Almost equally as important, the CEO will have an understanding of charter schools and a professional background comprised of credentials and experiences that will validate their stated readiness to lead a complex, urban, educational organization with an ambitious, reform-oriented mission. A bachelor's degree is required. Additionally, candidates for the position will be able to demonstrate:

- Effective managerial experience measured against performance benchmarks and outcomes;
- Experience with identifying new sources of funding from foundations, corporations, investors, and/or individual donors, and a successful track record of securing those resources through relationship-building and nurturing;
- The ability to motivate and lead a team of distinguished professionals in their fields of expertise;

- Personnel management skills that include an ability to prioritize, provide feedback, delegate and make decisions in the face of aggressive deadlines;
- Senior-level financial management experience;
- Excellent critical thinking skills;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills;
- Setting a tone of inclusiveness and consensus among diverse constituencies; and
- Ability to lead meetings, deliver presentations, give speeches, and represent PCS to external audiences.

DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no one person will possess all of the qualities below, the ideal candidate will also possess some combination of the following professional and personal characteristics:

- Professional experience which spans multiple sectors—such as the nonprofit, business, and education communities—resulting in a hybrid perspective on how to manage and fulfill the mission of a multi-faceted organization;
- Advanced degree or equivalent experience, ideally in the fields of education and/or or business;
- Professional, board-level, or significant volunteer experience working with high performing public schools serving low income children or K-12 public education reform;
- Proven success at leading strategic planning and forming strategic partnerships;
- a track record of successfully working with distributed organizations, especially those undergoing growth;
- The ability to articulate a sense of urgency and passion about issues; and
- Demonstrable success in effecting change through outreach within a community;

COMPENSATION

The CEO salary will be commensurate with experience and includes the potential for a performance-based bonus. Benefits include health and dental insurance, employer-paid life and disability insurance, parking, and 403 b.

IDEAL START DATE

Strongest consideration will be given to candidates who could lead the organization by July 2009 (or earlier).

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION

The CEO Search Committee is soliciting nominations and expressions of interest **immediately**.

Applications should include a current resume and a letter of interest, *sent electronically*, and addressed to Paul O’Kelly, Chairman, Human Resources Committee *before May 1, 2009*.

Confidential nominations for the position or questions about the position and/or the search process should be directed to the Executive Recruiter who is assisting the Search Committee with this search:

Monisha Lozier
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To learn more about Perspectives Charter School visit www.perspectivescs.org.

PCS has a proven commitment to diversity and actively seeks a diverse pool of candidates in this search.