Schools to Learn From Profiles

After reviewing 44 initial round applications, the review committee narrowed our list to 29 finalists. After an extensive analysis of finalists’ transformational vision statement, student academic achievement data, a multitude of pieces of core value evidence, a professional development plan and a school site visit agenda, our team is proud to present 4 diverse Schools to Learn From.

All four selected Schools to Learn From schools are:

- Providing students an excellent education that addresses all four components of what we at TFA believe constitutes an excellent education:
  - Students gaining strong academic skills and knowledge.
  - Students growing personally
  - Students developing social, political and cultural consciousness
  - Students gaining access to opportunities in ways that are aligned with their own strengths, interests and values

- Doing outstanding work in Teach for America’s Core Values of Diversity, Team: School Culture, Team: Adult Culture or Respect & Humility

- Achieving strong academic results

- Demonstrating immense capacity to teach and share their greatness through their Professional Development Plan and learning experiences outlined in their School Visit Agenda in a way that demonstrated that each of you would be able to transfer this knowledge back to your own role and context

Below you will find a school profile for our first ever Schools to Learn From including an overview of their transformational vision, core value, quotes from our selection committee, school demographics and their site visit dates.
Hiawatha College Prep

Location: Minneapolis, MN

School Type: Charter Middle School

School Leader: John Kaczorek (New York, NY, 2005)

School Demographic Details:
- 310 students in grades 5th-8th
- 99.3% of students identify as people of color
- 94.2% free reduced lunch
- 54% English Language Learners

Dates of Site Visit: November 20th–22nd, 2014

Summary of Diversity Core Value

Hiawatha College Prep has made a focused effort to enrich and enhance its educational philosophy by intentionally infusing and including concepts of identity formation, diversity and equity into students’ experience at the school. Teachers receive feedback and guidance on their curriculum planning and also tangible materials on different perspectives to include in lessons. Teachers use curriculum as a “window and a mirror” to include culturally relevant materials, dialogue and a focus on the unheard voices in all units. In addition, teachers have sought out training in critical pedagogy specifically about whose voices are being centralized and bringing in those voices often unheard. A library of academic and teaching resources with articles on topics such as race and differences is used to support teachers. These resources help teachers develop their own capacity to understand power and privilege and how that plays out in the classroom. Hiawatha actively recruits staff members and vendors that reflect the rich diversity of their students.

Transformational Vision for Students:

Hiawatha College Prep’s mission is to empower all Hiawatha scholars with the knowledge, character and leadership skills to graduate from college and serve the common good. They attempt to create a rigorous and joyful school culture filled with high expectations for every child and where every child gets to build relationships with caring adults. Hiawatha believes that for too long concepts of identity formation, equity, and culturally responsive curricular choices have been missing ingredients in middle school classrooms. Knowing that some of the many challenges that students face once they get to college are feelings of isolation or lack of preparation around questions of identity, equity and diversity, Hiawatha seeks to best prepare its scholars to meet their full potential and succeed in and beyond college through this work.

Compelling Words from Selection Committee:

“So incredibly impressed with the vision and outcomes of HCP! The diversity core value is incredibly strong and evident in their curriculum plans and adult PD which would be great to transfer to other participants.”
Breakthrough Magnet School

**Location:** Hartford, Connecticut

**School Type:** District Magnet Elementary

**What is a District Magnet Elementary in Hartford?**

Breakthrough is committed to serving Hartford students from low-income communities all over the city. Suburban students also live in low-income and lower performing districts. There are no additional requirements or testing for students to be accepted. All enrolled students participate in a lottery process run by the state department of education.

**School Leader:** Julie Goldstein (Los Angeles, 1990)

**School Demographic Details:**

- 355 students in PK-5th grade
- 74% of students identify as people of color
- 75% free reduced lunch
- 11% English Language Learners

**Dates of Site Visit:** January 22nd-24th, 2015

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**Summary of Team: School Culture Core Value**

Breakthrough Magnet School focuses much of their time, energy and resources on ensuring a strong school culture for all stakeholders. All students self-assess on BRICK character rubric throughout the day, as well as receive feedback from their teachers on how they are embodying their core values. With 355 students boasting heritage from over twenty-five countries who live in Hartford, and twenty-four surrounding towns, BMS is truly a "global community for students of character." Elementary students practice mindfulness training after recess and also for use prior to taking high stakes assessments. Middle school students have been trained to be mindfulness coaches for young students and in the past year. Steeped in best academic practices, all BMS staff are also well trained in our unique character education curriculum, emphasizing problem solving, personal responsibility, integrity, contribution and knowledge.

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**Compelling Words from Selection Committee:**

“This school looks like a truly special place to be. Racially and socioeconomically diverse, living into its values, and achieving at high levels”

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**Transformational Vision for Students:**

The mission of the Breakthrough Magnet School is for staff, families, and community members of diverse backgrounds to work in partnership, developing students as models of outstanding character. Breakthrough Magnet’s vision is that character development permeates our broad-based instruction, producing students with academic rigor, aesthetic appreciation, technological expertise, and physical expressiveness, aimed at contributing to others. Students learn problem solving, responsible choice making, and the value of keeping their agreements.
Liberty Elementary

Location: Baltimore, Maryland
School Type: District Elementary
School Leader: Joseph Manko (Baltimore, 2002)

School Demographic Details:
- 433 students in grades PK-5
- 99% of students identify as African American
- 93.5% free reduced lunch

Dates of Site Visit: February 19th–21st, 2015

**Summary of Respect & Humility Core Value:**

Liberty Elementary lives out the Respect & Humility core value through extensive partnerships with over 15 organizations whose programs range from mental health supports to technology instruction for adults to dental health services for students. Liberty created the Technology Outreach Program as a means of providing technology and internet at home to families. Liberty began the Parent University program 2.0, with a “course catalog” of drop-in sessions for parents targeted at enhancing awareness of academic priorities of the school including sessions on math in the home, Common Core 101, creating a literate environment, etc., but also includes workshop sessions centered around personal growth such as courses on personal finance, credit recovery, resume creation and interview skills, etc. Liberty works closely with the community center to provide senior programming, a food pantry and more services.

**Transformational Vision for Students:**

The uniqueness of the Liberty Elementary School vision is that while high levels of academic achievement are at the core of everything they do, there is also a wider focus on social emotional learning and development of soft skills, nested within the understanding that as teachers and administrators we cannot do it alone, and supporting our kids means supporting our families. Liberty works tirelessly to provide robust learning opportunities, both inside and outside the school building for students and families, that will provide them a fuller educational experience.

**Compelling Words from Selection Committee:**

“This is school is an absolutely inspiring example of what a free, open enrollment neighborhood school can look like. Joseph’s school and his partnerships should be a model for us all!”
Lighthouse Community Charter School

Location: East Oakland, California

School Type: Charter K-12 School

School Leader: Yanira Canizales

School Demographic Details:
- 750 students in grades K-12
- 96% students of color
- 85% free reduced lunch
- 72% English Language Learners

Dates of Site Visit: April 30th-May 2nd, 2015

Summary of Team: Strong, Adult Culture Core Value

Lighthouse Community Charter School embodies everything about our team core value. The Lighthouse Director of Talent has completed a comprehensive listening campaign with 7 key stakeholder groups to receive feedback and create opportunities for distributive leadership. Every instructional staff member is part of an inquiry group that meets bi-weekly to determine an area of instructional focus and develops a work plan together. Lighthouse works with other schools in the Bay Area through the dissemination of their best practices being developed through the Lighthouse Creativity Lab. Distributed leadership is also evidenced with the formal structure of Vision Keepers—a staff decision-making body who hear, evaluate, communicate, and decide upon proposals that will be in service to the Lighthouse mission. They have established the Lighthouse Pipeline Program, aimed at inspiring, developing, and challenging a new generation of Lighthouse teachers.

Transformational Vision for Students:

The vision for Lighthouse Community Charter School is that through powerful, rigorous education that focuses on the academic, social, emotional and physical development aspects of each child, we can enable students to reach their fullest potential and transform entire families and our community. We instill in our students a growth-mindset: that we are all constant learners, that mistakes are opportunity to do better next time, and that with persistence, they can achieve anything they set their mind to. We communicate that they are a distinct and unique individual who we want to know deeply.

Compelling Words from Selection Committee:

“This school has fantastic results and more of the “right stuff” - possibly because they have been in the game for much longer than many charters, but they don’t get comfortable. They continue to grow, assess and tweak what they are doing. I think they would be able to create a great experience for our visitors”

*Lighthouse Community Charter School is not a member of the national Lighthouse Academies network*