Implementing

CAMPUS DISTRICT-CHARTER PARTNERSHIPS

A Case Study of Promising Practices

District-Charter PARTNERSHIPS

INTRODUCTION

District-Charter Partnerships (DCP) is an initiative that is part of the Equity and Excellence for All agenda established by Mayor De Blasio. Its goal is to support meaningful collaboration between the district and charter sectors in order to increase educator capacity and student learning in all New York City public schools. Campus District-Charter Partnerships (CDCP) is one of the principal programs under the DCP umbrella. Spearheaded by the NYC Department of Education's (DOE) Office of School Design and Charter Partnerships and the Office of Campus Governance, the initiative aims to create a stronger collaborative culture between district and charter schools that share a school campus. As part of CDCP, teams of co-located district and charter educators collaborate within three broad areas: improving campus-wide instruction, student engagement, and parent involvement. Participants are asked to develop goals to address these areas based on the data, needs, and culture of each campus.

Over the course of two years, CDCP participants engage in the following activities:

- **Campus Team Meetings:** Campus team members collaborate at bi-weekly team meetings with the help of their CDCP Director. During these meetings, they brainstorm ideas for improving instruction, student engagement, and parent involvement; determine goals; and develop plans for implementing partnership activities.

- **Inter-Meeting Collaboration:** Between campus team meetings, campus team members meet to continue planning or to implement partnership activities.

- **Principal Meetings:** Campus principals and the CDCP Director meet monthly to make decisions on campus goals and budgets and to review the progress of the work.

- **Share Fairs:** Select representatives from campus teams come together in the fall to share action plans and in the spring to share accomplishments.

CDCP believes that, by engaging in these activities, campuses will develop a stronger culture of cross-sector collaboration characterized by more meaningful interaction between district and charter educators, students, and parents.

To better understand how schools implemented CDCP, researchers in the DOE's Research and Policy Support Group engaged in a two-year qualitative investigation that involved observations of CDCP activities; interviews with principals, teachers, and CDCP Directors; and an analysis of artifacts from campus teams' work. The results from our research indicate that school teams effectively participated in CDCP by:

1. **Building community among campus team members**

2. **Determining a shared strategic vision and goals**

3. **Developing structures that promote collaborative planning among district and charter educators**

4. **Engaging the larger school community**

The following case study describes how one campus – K022 – implemented CDCP by engaging in these four elements, with a particular focus on how they built a culture of literacy across their Brooklyn campus. In addition, this case study documents how engaging in these practices helped K022 build an effective campus team and develop a strong culture of cross-sector collaboration.

AT A GLANCE: K022 CAMPUS

Explore Exceed Charter School (Exceed), a K-5 school, and P.S. 705 Brooklyn Arts and Science Elementary School (BASES), a PK-5 school, have shared a campus in the Prospect Heights section of Brooklyn since 2012. Since the outset of their co-location, the two schools have found ways to build community among students, teachers, and families through joint programming around campus safety, family fitness, and nutrition, and the two principals have collaborated around coordinating shared space. In fall 2016, the schools decided to join the CDCP program in order to formalize and strengthen the partnership between the schools. As the BASES principal said at the first CDCP meeting in the fall of 2016, *"[The campus is] already turning into one community. If CDCP can foster and strengthen that, it will be beneficial."*

School	Enrollment	Grades Served	Demographics				% English Language Learners	% Students with Disabilities	% Poverty
			Asian	Black	Hispanic	White			
P.S. 705 Brooklyn Arts and Sciences Elementary School	398	PK-5	4%	46%	30%	18%	13%	24%	63%
Explore Exceed Charter School	338	K-5	4%	70%	23%	0%	8%	25%	80%

Demographic percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding and because we did not include students who identified as other race categories.

K022 CAMPUS: DEVELOPING A CAMPUS-WIDE CULTURE OF LITERACY THROUGH CAMPUS DISTRICT-CHARTER PARTNERSHIPS

Building community among campus team members

With the help of the CDCP Director, the K022 campus intentionally built community among campus team educators by developing a set of norms. Campus team members used the norms to guide their collaboration as they worked together to plan and implement campus events. Specific norms included: active participation of all campus team members in executing campus action plans, transparency among team members to eliminate miscommunication, and an agreement to hold all team members accountable for their work between meetings. Because campus team members felt ownership in the development of norms, it increased buy-in and consistency in implementation. According to one participant, *"Taking the time to set norms; how we wanted to feel in those meetings; and establishing some agreements around how we would work…at the beginning [was critical]. You'd be surprised how many meetings in a school don't operate with formal agreements that would make them more productive."*

In addition to developing norms, the CDCP Director led the campus team through an exercise to build understanding around the purpose of the partnership. First, the CDCP Director asked the group to consider the current culture on their campus, which resulted in the group acknowledging differences across schools and revealed the lack of familiarity among staff and students. Then, campus team members were asked to think about what a successful partnership on their campus would look like. After discussing with a partner, participants shared with the whole group that success would involve achieving a set of specific, measurable goals around campus collaboration and the development of a more cohesive campus culture. Lastly, the CDCP Director asked the group to consider why partnerships between co-located district and charter schools are necessary. Campus team members discussed how it was critical to move past district and charter divisions that exist on campuses in order to improve teaching and learning for all children. By helping campus team members reflect on their current culture and goals for the work, this activity set the stage for the group to engage in meaningful collaboration.

Determining a shared strategic vision and goals

K022 leadership and campus team members worked together to define their vision statement: *K022 will create a unified campus where children, teachers, and parents will partner around literacy and the library to renew the joy of reading.* This vision statement supported a key priority for both schools – enhancing motivation and engagement around literacy – and fit nicely with the work that the campus had done over the past couple of years to develop a shared campus library. According to one participant, *"it made sense to focus all of our efforts around one thing that all of our students could benefit from and was aligned with the work that both schools were trying to do."* In order to accomplish this vision, the campus team set a goal of planning one event around literacy every few months over the course of the year that brought together educators, students, and/or parents from both schools. Because

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– Educator, K022 campus

staff from BASES and Exceed co-developed the campus' vision and goals, it increased ownership and buy-in among campus team participants. Also, aligning the campus team's vision and goals to schools' individual goals allowed the work to become a priority for each school and not an add-on. Lastly, setting a very specific vision helped campus team members when they brainstormed about ideas for collaboration. One participant shared that, *"once you have an established goal of a culture of literacy…it creates some boundaries that people can get creative within and come up with their own ideas."*

Developing structures that promote collaborative planning among district and charter educators

After developing their vision and goals, K022 engaged in a structured discussion where they brainstormed potential collaboration activities aligned to that vision. First, participants divided into two small groups with representation from both the district and charter schools. One group brainstormed activities to improve student engagement and family involvement around literacy on chart paper, while the second group brainstormed activities to improve teaching and learning around literacy. After this initial brainstorm, the groups switched. Then, the campus team came together to review all of the ideas and narrow them down to a manageable list of six literacy-based events and activities for students, teachers, and parents.

In order to facilitate effective planning and implementation of these literacy events, the campus team decided that one campus team member from the district school and one campus team member from the charter school would co-own each event. In pairs, they worked together in between meetings to complete an action planning document that set out goals for each activity, action steps to achieve the goals, and required resources. At bi-weekly meetings, each pair was held accountable for sharing updates about their progress.

By emphasizing co-ownership of event planning, K022 was able to equitably distribute the work across schools on the campus, build relationships between district and charter team members, and more easily hold each other accountable for effectively executing campus events. In addition, these structures shifted the onus for leading the work from the principal to team members and helped build the capacity of team members to continue partnership work in the future. One participant shared, *"I think the more people we get involved and the more we share the responsibility and ownership, then it became easier for people [to collaborate]."*

Engaging the larger school community

Lastly, K022 explicitly planned activities that engaged staff beyond the campus team, including campus literacy celebrations, a staff appreciation day, and cross-school intervisitations. Through these activities, K022 began to build relationships and sharing among all district and charter educators on campus. They also began to build norms and structures around campus collaboration that will continue after the initiative ends. The visual below highlights the full list of activities that K022 campus team members designed to engage educators, students, and parents across campus.

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– Educator, K022 Campus

CDCP ACTIVITIES AT K022: 2017-18 SY

DECEMBER

Campus Library Opening

- Student leaders from Exceed and BASES joined staff, parents, and city officials to open a new campus library, a project two years in the making. The day started with a formal ribbon cutting ceremony and followed with an open house. The library is now a shared space on campus for staff and students alike.

JANUARY

World Read Aloud Day

- World Read Aloud Day is an event that engages schools globally in reading aloud together and sharing stories to advocate for literacy as a human right. As part of K022's celebration of the day, students in similar grade levels from Exceed and BASES came together in the library to enjoy a "read aloud" from parents and participate in a "turn and talk" with one another. Parents told students why they loved to read and then students were able to reflect on the question for themselves – writing a "why I read" statement that was publicly displayed in the library.

FEBRUARY

For the Love of Reading

- For the Love of Reading brought students from across the campus together in a "drop everything and read" period. Younger and older students were paired together and spread out throughout the campus into hallways, classrooms, and other workspaces to read to one another.

MARCH

Dr. Seuss Day

- Dr. Seuss Day brought together students from grades K-2 across Exceed and BASES to engage in hands-on activities at learning stations connected to Dr. Seuss books. Stations included poetry writing, books on tape, and crafting, among others.

MAY

Staff Appreciation Day

- Staff from Exceed and BASES had an opportunity to socialize over breakfast in the campus library and to sign up for relaxation treatments throughout the day.

JUNE

Campus Showcase

- Both Exceed and BASES opened their classrooms to staff from each other's schools to observe instructional practices: differentiation at BASES and literacy centers at Exceed. Before the observations, visitors had the opportunity to learn a little about the practices they were viewing, and, after observations, they were able to debrief about their takeways.

SUMMER

Summer Reading Initiative

- The CDCP team worked together to ensure that students had 2-3 books to take home over the summer, reinforcing the literacy activities they had participated in throughout the year.

One activity that K022 campus team members developed to engage educators from across the campus was the campus showcase, an initiative that allowed educators to observe each other's practice in action.

SPOTLIGHT
Campus Showcase

At the end of the school year, K022 organized a campus showcase where both Exceed and BASES had the opportunity to share best practices for teaching and learning through classroom observations. BASES kicked off the showcase by highlighting strategies for differentiation – an area where Exceed teachers wanted to learn more. Following an introduction of the school's guiding principles, the BASES principal explained what Exceed visitors could expect to see in each of the two classrooms. She also shared example lesson plans. Exceed participants then visited two different classrooms: a 12:1:1 classroom and an ICT classroom. After the classroom visits, visitors and the BASES principal had an opportunity to debrief the practices they had seen. A participating teacher from Exceed said that it was helpful *"to see how the differentiation can take place in the classrooms and how some of the systems and routines…play out in this school a bit differently"* and left the showcase excited to implement the strategies in her own classroom.

The next week, Exceed hosted BASES visitors in two kindergarten classrooms to showcase literacy centers. BASES staff floated back and forth between two adjacent classrooms where students from both classes had joined together to engage in centers aligned to student needs. Following the visits, teachers shared their impressions of the classrooms. Visitors, once again, left the showcases energized to implement new practices to better serve their students. As one teacher said, *"It's a great opportunity to see other schools….we want to grow and we want to employ different strategies...seeing what other teachers are doing gives us inspiration."*

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– Educator, K022 campus

OUTCOMES

By engaging in each of the key elements of successful collaboration –
(1) building community among campus team members, (2) determining a shared strategic vision and goals, (3) developing structures that promote collaborative planning among district and charter educators, and (4) engaging the larger school community – the K022 campus was able to build an effective campus team, foster a strong campus-wide culture of collaboration, and build a culture of literacy on campus.

Build an effective campus team

Through CDCP, campus team members built a strong sense of camaraderie. Campus team discussions were characterized by open and respectful dialogue that helped surface creative ideas among participants. Both district and charter participants, leaders and teachers alike, felt like they had an equal voice in setting the direction for the work. Campus team members also felt accountable to the team for completing their assigned responsibilities. After working with the team over the course of the year, participants indicated that they now feel comfortable reaching out to one another for resources and advice in the future. According to one participant, *"last year, we were like ships passing in the night and, this year, we know people that we can talk to."* CDCP also helped the campus team formalize structures for district-charter collaboration such as bi-weekly meetings and inter-meeting communication that they can continue to use moving forward.

Foster a strong campus-wide culture of collaboration

By creating new and expanded opportunities for staff, students, and parents from both schools to interact and collaborate, the campus team was able to begin to build a collaborative and supportive campus culture. Participants noted that there was more meaningful interaction among campus educators, students, and parents this year than in years past and that campus educators were developing a greater understanding of each other's practices. Also, the campus team's work helped to illustrate the value of district-charter collaboration. As one teacher on the campus said, *"I believe that the relationship needs to remain positive between both schools and [focused on] how we can help all students. We're both here and we're both goal-oriented toward the same things."*

Build a culture of literacy

Lastly, K022 made headway on their common goal – to expand student excitement and engagement around literacy – through a series of well-executed literacy events. In reflecting on the outcome of this year's work, one participant remarked, *"for the amount of time that we've put in, we have spread the joy of literacy. There is still more to be done in growing the culture of literacy in the building, but kids are leaving this year with a positive feeling about books and sharing books together."*

For more information on District-Charter Partnerships, visit the DOE's Equity and Excellence for All webpage and read our first report, Collaboration to Advance Teaching and Learning in New York City: Year 1 Evaluation Results.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was effective about K022's approach to CDCP work?

- How can your campus team engage in each of the key elements of successful collaboration: **(1)** building community among campus team members, **(2)** determining a shared strategic vision and goals, **(3)** developing structures that promote collaborative planning, and **(4)** engaging the larger school community?

- What challenges might your campus experience?

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