



The C3S Model for Community-based, Independent Charter Schools



The Coalition
of Community
Charter Schools

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The C3S Model for Community-based, Independent Public Charter Schools

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Executive Summary: Mission, Values & Practices

The Coalition of Community Charter Schools provides a voice for the many community-oriented public charter schools in New York City. The Coalition endeavors to grow and sustain a vibrant, collaborative, and high-quality independent charter school sector that meets the diverse educational needs of all students.

Values

The C3S Model for Community-based Charter Schools outlines an ideal public educational enterprise. The Model focuses on process rather than prescription in order to allow our schools to be innovative, entrepreneurial and responsive to their communities.

We believe that the way to create community-based public charter schools is to develop the capacity to oversee, administer and perform all school functions at the local level. This Model is a guide towards creating that capacity.

Assistance and encouragement is given to the development and maintenance of a high-functioning, autonomous Family Organization at our schools. Procedures are in place to assure that the Family Organization is able to function professionally in a mutually supportive relationship with the school.

Teachers have equity in C3S Schools. The workplace is democratic and collaborative, not adversarial. Procedures are in place to assure teacher input in all areas. The workplace is fair and transparent.

Professional development is a cornerstone of the educational policy at our schools. C3S Schools invest in their teachers so that they may invest in their schools.

C3S Schools are committed to integrating the cultural richness of their communities with the lessons of the classroom and the governance of the school.

C3S Schools are driven by mission, data and science. Our schools promote transparency and a process by which change can occur. We support the Open Source Model; our work should benefit as many people as possible.

C3S Schools are models of clear and open communication. They show a high regard for accuracy, literacy, and aesthetics in all communications. School leaders work proactively to resolve problems caused by miscommunication. Our schools honor collaboration and cooperation.

C3S Schools are entrepreneurial. Everyone in the school community is encouraged to learn new skills, take on new responsibilities, experiment and collaborate. Our schools are constantly reflecting and constantly improving.

Practices

Governance

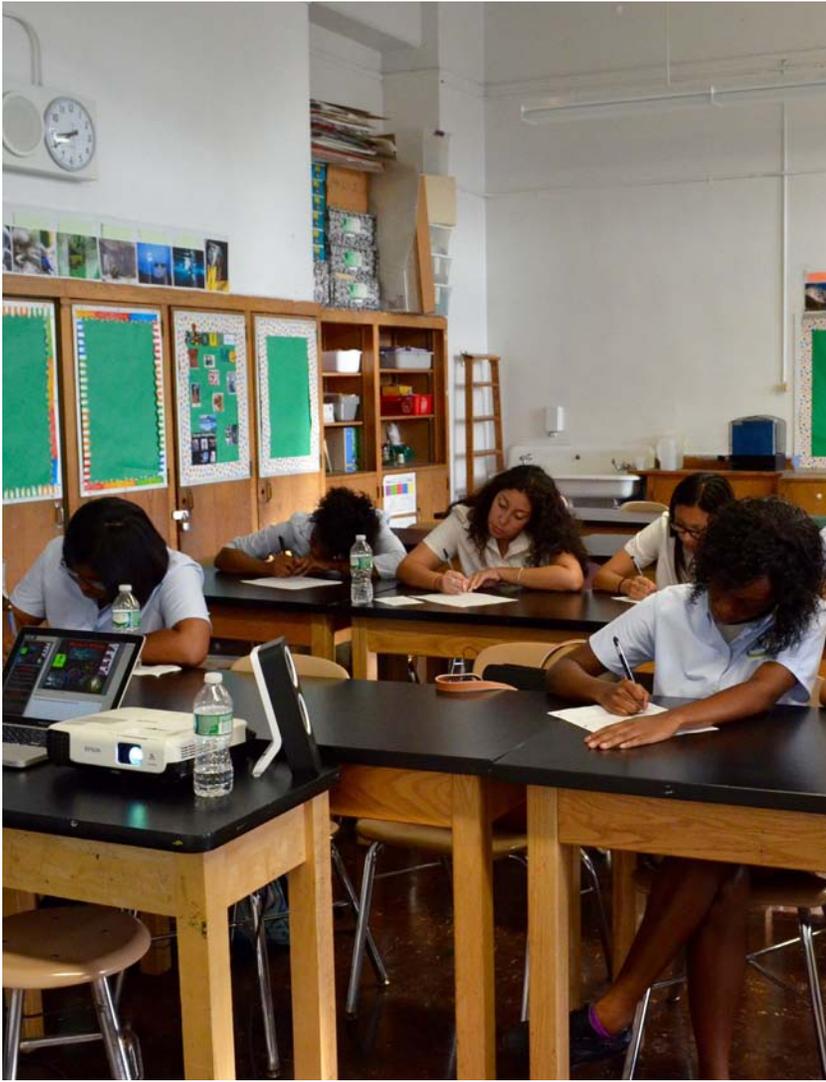
The C3S Model places high importance upon the development and maintenance of a strong and independent governing board that has the range of skills to oversee the school’s operations and to uphold its mission. Boards understand the difference between governance and management and fully entrust the administration with the daily operations of the school. C3S charter boards are committed to maintaining the energy of a startup enterprise and to resisting complacency. As founding boards evolve into sustaining boards the trustees continually rededicate themselves to embracing change and processes that foster innovation. Just as importantly, C3S Schools strive to integrate community in governance by reserving board seats for community members, leadership of the Family Organization or by other creative means that the School devises over time.



Leadership

Charter schools are not bound to a single organizational or leadership model. Accountability for school performance could be the responsibility of an executive director, principal or a well-defined school leadership team. School leadership, especially in a charter school, encompasses a wide range of skills and sensitivities. It is the responsibility of the Trustees to hire and nurture a relationship with school leadership that is mutually supportive and informed by regular and thorough evaluation. School Leaders at C3S Schools are given broad latitude in hiring and dismissal of administrators or any staff within established HR guidelines. In return school leadership must encourage and embrace constructive input and evaluation from key administrative staff and all stakeholders. School leadership is responsible for the smooth functioning of the school staff and is accountable for their success in implementing school policy and meeting the school’s mission.

Regardless of the leadership model, C3S Schools have a detailed succession plan for School Leadership. The plan is overseen by the board and provides for input from all stakeholders.



HR, Business and Operations

Human Resources at C3S Schools is mission-driven. Procedures are in place to facilitate the hiring and nurturing of the best teachers who will bear the day-to-day challenge of teaching our children. A regular and thorough evaluation system is in place for all school hires. Terminations are done through a process that is fair, transparent and evaluation-based.

C3S Schools respect sound and accepted business management principles. We pay attention to trends and research in business and the wisdom of business visionaries, just as we pay attention to trends and research in education and to the wisdom of educational visionaries. Business and operations policies at our schools are aligned to the school's mission and its role in the community.

Program

C3S Schools embrace structures and processes that foster the development of each student's mind, character, and health, in each classroom, in the school as a whole, with their families, and within the community.

Our schools embrace educational technology and have internal processes to assure the school is technologically relevant. Children, from an early age, are taught digital literacy and responsible media use.

C3S encourages the implementation within every school of programs that help reinforce democratic and inclusionary values and community building. This might be done by means of school rituals and events or by the adoption of a character education program to provide a framework for exploration of ethics and personal and civic responsibilities. Having an overarching shared curriculum also provides a lens for exploring history, geography, and social studies, promoting inclusive discussion, and constructive social problem solving through community engagement. C3S provides several models of character education programs that have been used at our schools and encourages schools to adapt them for their own use.

1. Role of C3S

“Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education.”

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



C3S provides consulting and support services to help create and sustain high-quality community-based charter schools through the implementation of the C3S Model. We believe that the way to build a relevant and dynamic learning community is by creating capacity for critical skills and resources at the school and community level. C3S works with schools that are committed to the core values of reflective practice, equitable treatment of all students, community engagement and entrepreneurship.

C3S exists to “grow and sustain a vibrant, collaborative, and high-quality charter school sector.” C3S will consult with existing schools and community groups that wish to start a charter school to help them build and implement procedures that will lead to school improvement and mission realization. C3S is not a charter management organization. However C3S can, and will when requested, provide transitional management services to schools, with a clear timeline for those functions to be assumed by the school and its governing board.

C3S helps schools develop processes, practices and policies that will lead to well-balanced governance, a positive school culture, a collaborative and supportive work environment, a responsive and progressive administration and an overall environment of transparency, innovation and accountability. To achieve this end, C3S offers:

- Ongoing consultation with the Board of Trustees to ensure that
 - There is a healthy balance between robust oversight and administrative autonomy
 - A fair, thorough and informative evaluation of the School Leader is performed annually
 - There is adequate monitoring of the pulse of the school: climate and culture, parent and staff satisfaction, professional development, technology implementation, etc.
 - The overall climate of the school promotes change and growth
 - Trustees are able to maintain focus on policy and governance.
- Ongoing consultation with school leadership to ensure that
 - Teams are functioning as envisioned
 - Entrepreneurial initiative is being fostered at all levels of the school
 - The relationship with the Board is supportive and constructive
 - The School Leader has adequate support and authority for meeting the demands of the position.
- Staff Development
 - C3S will help schools develop a coherent and sustainable plan for staff development including identifying objectives for the school as a whole, as well as for individuals. C3S will help schools develop structures to ensure a collaborative positive working environment that promotes continual development of skills, substantive communication, and self-reflection.
- Community Engagement
 - C3S will help schools develop a comprehensive and sustainable plan for creating capacity and resources within the school community, including strategies for engaging families in the educational process and outreach to local institutions, businesses and organizations.
 - Collaboration and shared best practices with district, charter and independent schools in the community.

3. Charter Schools and Social Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurialism is germane to the charter school movement and must be encouraged at every level in the organization. Founding charter school boards are, by virtue of the energy and needs of start-up, entrepreneurial; they are doers. Over time, however, founding boards evolve into sustaining boards and sustaining boards are more often focussed on stability rather than entertaining new ideas. In order to maintain the dynamism necessary for growth and innovation, boards must continually be open to reflection and invention. The board must set the example for the kind of calculated risk-taking that is needed to ensure innovation.

The C3S Model proposes processes and incentives to make sure that schools cultivate innovation in both staff and students. Innovation has always been at the heart of the American vision.



“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

-Nelson Mandela

The C3S Model embraces the entrepreneurial spirit:

- We constantly evaluate ourselves; we seek better solutions and approaches to our work.
- Our schools cultivate innovation. The greatest source of innovation within a school is the teaching staff. A teacher who has come up with a new idea is given encouragement, advice and, wherever practical, a budget.
- We are not content with any proscribed curriculum; we are constantly developing our own in response to feedback from our staff, new discoveries in science, critical analysis and changing times.
- We are responsible for our failure or success.
- Educational Technology is not just something that we keep up with; it informs modern life and it informs our educational philosophy and our teaching.
- There are always ways to do things better; we are open to them; together we'll find them more easily than we can by ourselves.
- People work from their strengths and those strengths must be recognized.
- Everyone is encouraged to learn new skills, take on new responsibilities, experiment, collaborate.
- C3S Schools respect accepted business management principles as taught in our universities. We pay attention to trends and research in business and the wisdom of business visionaries, just as we pay attention to trends and research in education and to the wisdom of educational visionaries.

4. Governance



The C3S Model places high importance upon the development and maintenance of a strong and independent governing board that has the dedication and range of skills to oversee the school's operations and to uphold its mission. Charter school governing boards must understand the difference between governance and management and entrust the administration with the daily operations of the school. As a best practice, C3S recommends the [Carver Policy Governance Model for Non-profit Organizations](#). Many forward-thinking and dynamic nonprofits, such as the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) have adopted the Carver Policy Governance Model in order to clarify board responsibility and create a more strategic role for the board.

Charter school boards must operate transparently under strict conflict of interest rules and are elected in accordance with bylaws established for each school and, generally, approved by the school authorizer. Charter boards are private nonprofit boards that are self-perpetuating and obligated to work in the public interest. It is critical that these boards are organized correctly from the start so that they can conduct business in such a way as to uphold the highest levels of transparency and competence. Charter school failure can often be traced to a dysfunctional relationship between the board and school leadership. Dysfunction can be easily avoided, but it is hard to correct.

C3S recommends that governing boards oversee no more than three schools. Ideally, every charter school should have its own governing board, but the creation of sustainable, effective nonprofit boards has shown itself to be a time-consuming and sophisticated task. Putting multiple schools under one board can result in diminished autonomy for the schools, and a stifling of innovation. Furthermore, the task of overseeing multiple schools can cause a disconnect between the board and the community served by the school.

C3S schools integrate the community in their governance. Some schools reserve board seats for parents, community members or leaders from CBO's that serve the community. A strong community voice on the board is a central component of the C3S Model but, in keeping with our commitment to school autonomy, C3S does not prescribe any single way to ensure community input. Our expectation is that each school will cultivate deep roots into their communities and continually strive to find better ways to integrate community in governance.

Parent Participation on Governing Boards

Family members have deep commitment to the school, have an intimate knowledge of school affairs, and are often able to commit more time than other trustees. Parent members may also bring fundraising, IT, facilities or other needed skills to help round out a board. However, parent-members must be able to see the school critically and holistically and not solely through the prism of their children's experience. Parent board members must, to the greatest degree possible, be able to segregate their responsibilities as parents and their responsibilities as a board trustee. Generally these responsibilities will not be in conflict, but when they are it is necessary that parent members are able to act for the greater good. C3S suggests, as a best practice, that parent members are recused from school leader evaluations.

C3S recommends the following practices:

- The Board follows the Open Meetings law of New York and its bylaws. The Board conducts a periodic review of its bylaws and requests changes, when needed, from its authorizer.
- Committees are established to oversee the critical areas of the school's functions and operations. In general these committees should mirror the administrative structure of the school: Executive, Education, Audit & Finance, Operations & Technology, Development & Advocacy, and Nominations. Committees may include non-board members such as school staff, parents, or others whose knowledge and skills better enable the committees to fulfill their functions. The School Leader is an ex officio member of each committee and may vote on all committees with the exception of the Executive Committee.
- Committees are responsible for creating and updating a memorandum describing their purpose and procedures.
- Committee chairpersons are responsible for creating agendas and for running meetings. Chairpersons may, with consent of their committee, ask an administrator, staff, or other committee member to handle that responsibility. Committee Chairpersons are responsible for reporting to the full board at public board meetings, the activities, recommendations and agendas of committee meetings.
- The Board is responsible for hiring, evaluating and determining the compensation of the School Leader. The Board is responsible for setting and clarifying the responsibilities of the School Leader as needs and times dictate. The Board must ensure that the School Leader has adequate support to meet the school's mission.
- The Board will review and approve any changes to the administrative or organizational structure of the school.
- The Board will create and periodically review the guidelines for school-based fundraising.





- The Board will conduct an annual review of the school disciplinary code and of all grievance procedures related to parents or to school staff members.
- The Executive Committee of the Board will conduct an annual evaluation of the School Leader. The Executive Committee will periodically review and update the rubric used for the evaluation to ensure that it is commensurate with the responsibilities of the School Leader as times dictate.
- The Board will review and adopt an annual budget as prepared by the School Leader and CFO of the School. The review process will be determined and led by the Audit & Finance Committee.
- The Board, through the Audit & Finance committee is responsible for selection of independent auditors and accepts their findings.
- The Board is responsible for ensuring compliance with all Federal, State and local government regulations as they refer to non-profits and charter schools.
- The Board shall receive timely notification from the School Leader of the following:
 - All reports from the charter authorizer, the NYC Department of Education and the NYS Education Department regarding school performance and operations
 - A copy of the annual Accountability Report when it is presented to the charter authorizer
 - An annual summary of evaluations of all teaching and non-teaching staff and administrators. Summary must include how evaluations were done, who conducted the evaluations and aggregate results of the evaluations. The Board shall not necessarily be privy to any individual evaluation unless the School Leader specifically wishes to share that information.
 - The annual School Improvement Plan/report, which includes the results of all surveys conducted by and within the school.
 - A parent or other party is threatening to take any legal action against the school
- The Board Chairperson shall be notified by the School Leader when any of the following occur
 - A serious breach of conduct occurs at school by student or staff.
 - Hiring/firing decision regarding a member of the school administration
- The Board will review its governance protocols annually with the School Leader and, as appropriate, other stakeholders, to make sure that roles and obligations are clear and that those protocols are serving the interests of transparency and accountability. It is expected that the boards of all C3S Schools will give constructive feedback to C3S regarding improvement of the governance model.

5. Educational Model

There is no single prescribed educational or curricular model for our schools. Independent charter schools may serve students at elementary, middle and high school levels and may be specifically designed for the needs of a vulnerable population or one with learning challenges or the general population. Schools may be focussed on performing arts, ecology, technology or STEAM programs. In all cases, however, the best independent charter schools will implement programs that address their mission and the needs of their students and will use their autonomy to create programming targeted to the community they serve.

C3S Schools are committed to integrating the cultural richness of their communities with the lessons of the classroom in the governance of the school. C3S schools adopt structures and processes to develop and build community, in each classroom, in the school as a whole, with the families of our students, and with our neighbors, including businesses and institutions.

*“Live as if you were
to die tomorrow.
Learn as you were to
live forever.”*

-Mahatma Gandhi

Within each classroom:

- C3S Schools value students as unique individuals. Classroom teachers, assisted by support staff, consider and address every student’s strengths, interests and motivations, and goals from that base. Our schools build on each child’s individuality. Each student has an equal opportunity to reach his or her greatest potential.
- Communication skills are key to all content areas. Students develop confidence in their ability to speak clearly, listen carefully, and contribute positively by taking an active part in conversation, debate, and analysis.
- C3S encourages the implementation of an overarching Character Education Program to provide a framework for addressing the developing social context for intellectually rigorous, positive, reflective learning environments.
- C3S Schools are encouraged to use a wide range of assessment tools, including teacher-developed assessments as well as state and national standardized examinations.
- Students are encouraged to contribute positively and to act as stewards of their classroom communities by speaking up, joining in problem-solving and conflict resolution, and acting as models for younger children.
- Teachers are sensitive to individual needs and different learning modalities,.

Within the school as a whole:

- The educational program and implementation is directly tied to and consistent with the school's mission.
- Curriculum is informed by the prevailing standards in all content areas and must provide a solid basis for academic achievement and benchmarks to attain and surpass.
- The scope and sequence of curriculum in each content area, is embedded in a coherent overall structure that allows for reinforcement and skill development across grade levels, promoting a deepening and enrichment of understanding of central concepts.
- Administration and support staff provides professional development for teachers including workshops and training, both in school and at other institutions, modeling, observation and discussion through the Teacher Organization.
- Reflective practice is a key element at C3S Schools, both for children and adults. Time is regularly scheduled for reflection and evaluation for both teachers and students to learn to identify and build on their own strengths.
- Teachers collaborate to develop curriculum that builds upon student experience from year to year.
- C3S schools provide a balanced education that addresses the physical and psychological well-being of its students and teachers.

Within the families of the students:

- C3S Schools recognize the importance of establishing shared understandings of and goals for students through strong support for parental engagement.
- Parents are welcome at C3S Schools, and are honored participants in developing the community context of the school.
- Character Education Programs should be developed with engagement of families and the greater community in mind so as to provide an avenue for sharing with and drawing parents and family members into the ethos of the school.
- The Family Organization plays a key role in engaging parents in school activities and provides a forum in which the ideas and concerns of parents can be addressed. The Family Organization takes the lead in establishing social as well as educational events for developing community between families.

Within the community:

- Connections are developed with other institutions and businesses within the immediate vicinity of the school and within the educational community. Community service activities are developed, offering models for engagement with our greater community from the solid base of our school community.
- Content area curricula include use of the resources in the neighborhood, city and state to place the academic goals within the context of the surrounding environment.

6. Discipline

C3S Schools create welcoming environments which are conducive to learning without being punitive. C3S Schools support the social and emotional needs of its students through restorative practices and character education programs. By aiding students in developing confidence, persistence, strategies for de-escalating conflict, respect of varying opinions, and the emotional support to take chances inside and outside of the classroom C3S schools will equip their students with the soft skills necessary to be successful throughout their lives.

The founders of C3S have made several character education programs available to member schools. These programs are available to all C3S Schools via a Creative Commons license and may be adopted or adapted as the school wishes. We also expect that all schools will freely share with the broader charter community character education programs that have been developed at their schools.

“Children must be taught how to think, not what to think.”

-Margaret Mead

- Every teacher is the teacher of every student. Every non-teaching staff member is also the teacher of every student. C3S Schools are a community; they function best when everyone supports each other.
- Every staff member models the behavior we expect from students.
- Students must follow norms of behavior as a matter of respect for each other and their learning community, not because such norms arbitrarily exist.
- We're all human. Situations get out of hand. Students become unruly and teachers yell or threaten. Yelling and threatening, however, is not the way we want to win compliance. A lot of yelling and threatening in a classroom or school indicates that the adults need help.
- The discipline code is published in the Student/Parent Handbook. Families and students should be encouraged to read them. C3S encourages schools to have a simple written “contract” with students in which the school pledges to provide students with an excellent education and safe environment and students reciprocate by pledging to participate in creating a respectful and exciting learning community.
- C3S Schools have a strong community mission. Students engage in processes that resolve conflict at all ages such as peer mediation.

7. Communication



Communication that is timely, proactive and accurate reflects the value we place on the meaning of words, improves morale and deflects gossip. It is critical that clear and open communication is maintained between the school and the community, between school leadership and staff, between the School Leader and the Board of Trustees and especially between school leaders themselves. Communication, via any media, that is thoughtful, compassionate and compelling reflects the value we place on appropriate use of media.

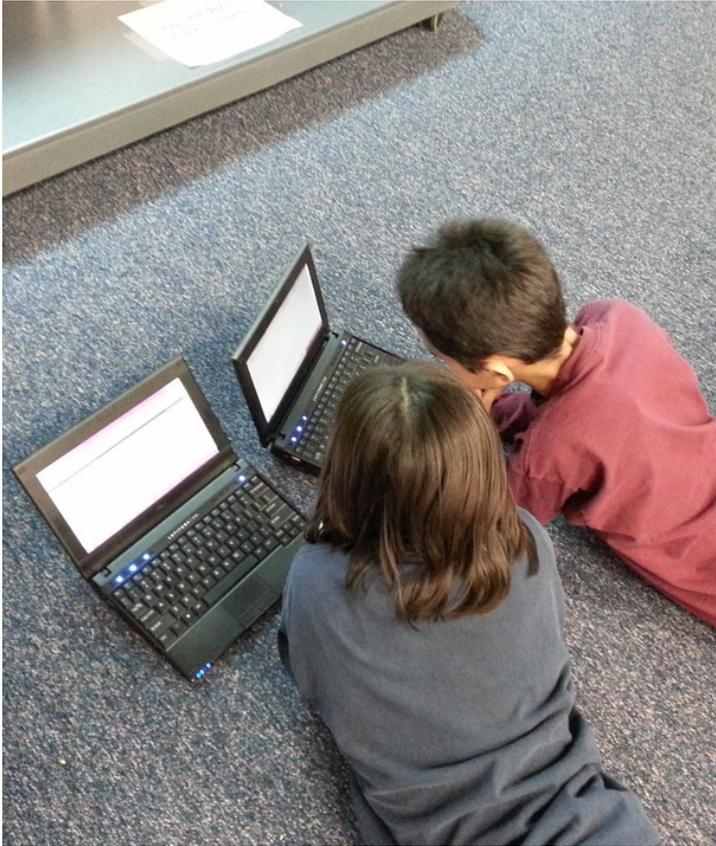
Digital media has led to a communications and information explosion that is compelling and exciting, but one that can be at odds with the reflective practice that we advocate. Digital media issues need to be addressed in each school community and revisited frequently.

- Transparency is assured by frequent, active, and honest communication.
- The school displays a high regard for accuracy, literacy, and aesthetics in all its communications.
- The school has an editorial process in place for all public communications, from home letters and school announcements to web pages and event programs.
- The school is committed to developing a method to translate, as much as possible, important school communications in the home languages of the school families.
- Translations, when used, are accurate and as culturally sensitive as possible.
- The School Leader is the de-facto director of communications for the school unless he/she appoints someone else from the administration for this purpose. The school looks to the School Leader to model the standards for communication
- The school practices and teaches responsible media use.
- The school works to engage and educate the entire community to be responsible participants in electronic communications.
- The school encourages free and open communication.
- School leaders work proactively to resolve problems caused by miscommunication.
- The School Leader in collaboration with the administration will set procedures and monitor effectiveness of
 - The updating of the school website, the Parent-Student Handbook and other school publications
 - The process of who speaks for the school? Who speaks for a department?

Suggested reading for all staff:

Send: The Essential Guide to Email for Office and Home, by David Shipley and Will Schwalbe. Knopf, 2007

8. Technology



“Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today.”

-Malcolm X

Technology has changed the way we go about our activities, the way we think and the way we communicate. Every field has become increasingly driven by technological innovation, especially education. Technical literacy has become an indispensable skill. To demonstrate accountability, charter schools are increasingly data-driven in all operations. Proper collection, use and interpretation of large and diverse data is not possible absent a coherent and continually-informed technology plan.

Communication with parents is increasingly electronic. Families pay for lunch, access their children’s grades and portfolios and communicate directly with teachers online. Teachers who are comfortable with technology and who integrate it into their classroom instruction have additional tools to engage students. Remaining abreast of current educational trends helps us to connect with our students while maintaining a sophisticated work environment.

The process of exploring, evaluating and integrating appropriate technology and incorporating it into administrative and instructional functions is crucial for both streamlined workplaces and technologically literate students.

C3S Model Charter Schools should have a technology committee that meets regularly, stays abreast of educational technology, helps the Director of Technology implement the Technology Plan for the school and assists with the annual evaluation of the DT and IT staff.

- C3S Schools teach and embrace digital literacy for all: students, staff and families. Schools make every effort to provide on-site computer access and support for families who need it. WiFi is freely available throughout the school.
- Familiarity with educational technology is a consideration for all school hires and is part of the evaluation matrix used in determining staff performance.
- Teachers and administrators are incentivized to improve proficiency with technology and to share their knowledge and challenges with their peers. Technology staff members conduct Professional Development sessions on a regular basis.
- The school's website is its primary interface with the public and is a reflection of the value the school places on design as well as content. It is continually updated and evaluated.
- The School Leader appoints a Technology Committee from teaching and non-teaching staff based upon interest and technical competence. All staff are encouraged to apply for membership consideration. The System Administrator (if one exists at the school) is also part of the Tech Committee. Technology consultants from the Board of Trustees or C3S are encouraged to attend meetings of the Technology Committee and will receive minutes of the meetings.
- The Director of Technology is hired by the School Leader with approval from the Technology Committee and the Board technology consultant. The DT is the chairperson of the Technology Committee. In small or startup schools, the Director of Operations may also have the function of Director of Technology.
- The Technology Committee creates tech-related policies to respond to changing issues of technology and digital literacy. A sample *Staff Laptop Policy* is attached here as APPENDIX A. The Technology Committee will adopt policies and procedures by majority vote, subject to approval by the School Leader and the Board of Trustees.
- The Director of Technology prepares an annual technology plan before the beginning of each school year. The Technology Plan will be reviewed by the school Technology Committee, the Education Director and the School Leader and is presented to the Board of Trustees.
- The school Technology Committee will conduct an annual performance evaluation of the Director of Technology, which will be shared with the School Leader.
- Job descriptions for all IT staff must be created by the Director of Technology, Director of Operations or School Leader. Job descriptions should be reviewed and approved by the Technology Committee.
- Managerial procedures for IT support staff (including interns) should be determined by the Technology Committee with the understanding that the School Leader has the final say on all internal hires.

9. School Leadership

School leadership, especially in a charter school, requires a wide range of skills and sensitivities. There is no prescribed background for a School Leader of a C3S Charter School. She/he may come from education, business, social services, or any other field so long as she/he meets the requirements of the Board of Trustees. Schools should feel free to have a leader who exemplifies the values they hold highest.

Historically, the charter school movement was embraced by educational and labor visionaries who believed that charter models would provide leadership opportunities for teachers. In keeping with that vision, C3S encourages non traditional approaches to leadership provided they are developed and evaluated in a thoughtful way. Indeed, a number of C3S schools have, or are in the process of developing, collaborative leadership models, and this document will continue to be informed by lessons learned from new and innovative leadership models. As a general practice, however, nonprofit governance is simplified by the Board’s ability to hold one person responsible for the functioning of the institution. Therefore, even in cases where schools have flat, collaborative or other leadership models C3S recommends that the efficient functioning of that model be the responsibility of a single person—the “School Leader.”

It takes a collaborative effort to meet the mission of a community-based charter school and to be accountable to all stakeholders and authorities. As the chief administrator, it is the responsibility of the School Leader to create and lead an administrative team that is capable of this enormous undertaking.

The School Leader at a C3S School is given broad latitude in hiring and/or dismissal of the administrative and teaching staff within established HR guidelines. The School Leader, however, must be able to accept constructive input and evaluation from the Administrative Team regarding his/her performance.

- The School Leader is accountable for meeting the mission of the school.
- The School Leader is the primary role model in the school. School leadership sets the tone for the school culture.
- The School Leader is the de-facto director of communications for the school (see Communications)
- The School Leader is responsible for all reports that must be provided to the school’s charter authorizer or any other authority.
- The School Leader is responsible for leading a committee of teachers, board members, parents and other stakeholders in the creation of an annual School Improvement Plan. This plan should be informed by annual surveys measuring teacher and parent satisfaction, school culture and climate, success of professional development or technology plans and any other metric the committee may choose in order to get data on the efficacy of a school program.
- The School Leader sets the agendas for meetings of the Administrative Team. The School Leader is responsible for the smooth functioning of the Team and is accountable for their success in implementing school policy.
- As the school grows and evolves, the School Leader may propose changes to the administrative structure of the school. Such changes will be reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees.

10. Teacher Organization

The C3S Model emphasizes collaboration and reflection and is exemplified in the workplace by a commitment to the professional development and well-being of all staff. Schools operating under The C3S Model ensure that teachers have the opportunity to develop their professional interests.

C3S Schools invest in their teachers so that they may invest in their schools. Professional development of teachers cultivates leadership within the schools and helps establish a leadership pipeline for other community-based charter schools.

“Only a generation of readers will spawn a generation of writers.”

-Steven Spielberg

Creativity and innovation permeate all aspects of C3S Schools. Indeed, teachers choose to work at independent, community-based charter schools because of the freedom afforded to them to hone their craft and become the best teachers they can be. By providing opportunities for professional growth our schools can simultaneously address their human capital problems as well as create a means to develop new community based charter schools.

The Teacher Organization at a C3S School exists as way for teachers to support their peers and drive new and innovative practices across classrooms through peer classroom visits (intervisitation), Lesson Study, and other methods as decided by each school. TO work is based on the needs and interests of individual teachers.

The leadership of the Teacher Organization works in collaboration with the administration on Staff Development and the creation of a coherent and sustainable plan for identifying objectives for the school as a whole, as well as for individuals. C3S will help schools connect to opportunities which help to create a working environment that promotes continual development of skills, substantive communication, and self-reflection.

- The Teacher Organization (TO) is dedicated to the professional development of its members. All teaching staff are automatically members of the TO.
- The TO is an autonomous and voluntary organization whose leadership is independent of the school administration.
- Each TO adopts, and periodically reviews, its governing principles (or bylaws if it wishes to formalize its mission and governance). Such principles should be consistent with the school’s mission, The C3S Model, and the school’s character education program.
- The TO, operating under The C3S Model, aspires to conduct its affairs as a professional organization, according to procedures it develops and adopts.
- The leadership of the TO presents monthly reports of its activities and concerns to relevant instructional leaders.
- The school and the TO are mutually accountable. The school will provide the TO with space for regular meetings, access to Internet, photocopying and other amenities as mutually agreed.

11. Family-Community Organization



The mission of C3S Schools is to build capacity for all aspects of education at the school and community level, and it is germane to this mission that adequate assistance is given to the development and maintenance of a high-functioning, autonomous Family Community Organization at every C3S School. This organization is inclusive of all family and guardians of students at the school.

- The FCO is the organization through which the school community addresses its concerns regarding the education and socialization of its children.
- The FCO is an autonomous organization whose leadership is independent of the school administration.
- The FCO, operating under The C3S Model, aspires to conduct its affairs as a professional organization, according to its bylaws, policies and Code of Conduct.
- The FCO presents monthly reports of its activities and concerns to the Board of Trustees.
- FCO leadership has regularly scheduled discussions of issues with the School Leadership or a designated committee of the Administrative Team appointed for this purpose.
- FCO by-laws and policies are openly displayed at the school, on website, etc.
- The school and the FCO are mutually accountable. C3S Schools will provide for the FCO:
 - Space for regular meetings, an office and access to Internet, photocopying and other amenities as mutually agreed.
 - Assistance with by-laws and 501(c)(3) filing, banking, insurance, and legal advice.
 - Leadership training
 - Assistance and participation of administrators or teachers as requested to regularly inform the FCO on academic, social and other school issues
 - Technical assistance, as requested, such as financial auditing, website development, etc.
- The FCO provides for the school:
 - Support with community outreach efforts.
 - Support for appropriate school-based fundraising.
 - Support for its mission.
 - Support for individual teachers to whatever degree it is capable and elects to do.
 - Support for school instructional and enrichment programs.

12. Family & Community Outreach

The C3S Model stresses the community-based mission of its schools. Within the school, this means a commitment to developing the capacity to administer, implement and oversee all school functions at the local level. Community-based schools have structures and processes in place to ensure that lessons in community building stretch beyond the classroom, to include the families and neighborhoods in which our students live. The C3S Model embeds democratic principles, assuring stakeholders have a voice and that structures reflection, assessment and improvement.

C3S encourages the integration of support services to children and families with the school as the nucleus. The degree to which any individual school is able to provide expanded services, no matter how needed, may be dependent upon substantial philanthropy and may place that goal beyond the school's reach. Irrespective of a school's ability or wish to integrate wraparound services at the school, all C3S schools seek collaborative relationships with existing community-based service providers.



C3S Schools:

- Establish a welcoming culture that encourages family participation in the education of their children
- Provide space and technical support for an active family organization
- Provide support for family literacy programs and other community-building programs
- Make available computers and computer assistance for families in a space provided at school to increase family digital literacy and provide greater access
- Establish a clear grievance policy for families
- Proactively engage with their communities and develop processes to identify and utilize the strengths of the school and neighborhood
- Offer space for community meetings
- Support local enterprises and actively engage with the local artistic community.
- Develop connections with local institutions, such as colleges, museums and sheltered workshops and with municipal entities such as parks, libraries and farmers' markets.
- Maintain a high profile in their communities by inviting community members and elected officials to school events.

13. Administrative Team

The role of the Administrative Team is to implement the policies of the school, as set by the Board of Trustees and as directed by the School Leader. As the school's responsibilities towards the children and families cover nearly every aspect of personal and civic development, the administration must collectively act as the eyes, heart and conscience of the school in every area of its responsibilities towards its clients: academic performance, ethical and artistic development, special needs, safety, nutrition, etc. To do this well the administrative team must be efficient, collaborative, proactive, creative, flexible and supportive of each other and of the mission of the school. It is the responsibility of the School Leader to develop and lead this team.

The composition of the school administration evolves as the school grows. The administration of a startup school of 100 children in early elementary grades is very different from an administration that serves 500 students in K-8. It is the prerogative of the School Leader to hire and dismiss administrators at his/her discretion following HR guidelines but our Model requires approval from governance to change the administrative organization. With the exception of the business officer, the School Leader does not need approval of the trustees to hire or dismiss any administrator but should, as a courtesy, inform the board and solicit input during the process.

As the School Leader has great discretion in the selection of the administration, he/she must also be willing to accept, from the administration, constructive criticism and evaluation regarding his/her own performance.

- The makeup of the Administrative Team is at the discretion of the School Leader but, at a minimum, includes staff members who are responsible for implementing school policy in the areas for which the Board of Trustees has standing committees (Education, Audit & Finance, Operations & Technology, Development & Advocacy) as well as the Director of Special Student Services, Dean of Students, Assistant School Leader, and Social Worker if such positions exist at the school.
- Every member of the administrative team has a job description, which is reviewed annually. Each administrator, in collaboration with the School Leader, sets annual performance goals that, along with the job description, provide the basis for an annual evaluation. Evaluations of the administrative team may be provided to the Board if so directed.
- The administrative team likewise performs an annual evaluation of the School Leader. The Board of Trustees will provide and periodically review the process and rubric that is used for this evaluation. This evaluation is provided to the Board and will help inform their own annual evaluation of School Leadership.
- The School Leader sets the agenda for and leads regularly scheduled meetings of the Administrative Team. Minutes of the meetings must be kept and made available to the Board of Trustees.
- Members of the Administrative Team whose roles correspond with a committee of the Board are encouraged to have open communication with the trustee who chairs that committee.

14. Business Office



The function of a charter school business office is to ensure the integrity of the school’s records and its fiduciary responsibilities and to ensure that business practices of the school are in accordance with the school’s mission. Every C3S School has a business office that is staffed in a manner that is commensurate with the size and maturity of the school. For example, the business office of a startup school serving 100 students might include only a “business manager/bookkeeper” (with some functions performed by the school secretary so that there is some segregation of responsibilities) with budget, tax and audit preparation overseen by a finance expert who thoroughly understands charter school compliance. Financial information, including full access to all records must always be available to the Board of Trustees or their designated assigns.

- The Business Manager or Director of Finance reports directly to the School Leader and to the Board of Trustees. The business manager is accountable for making sure that the Board has timely knowledge of any irregularity, financial or otherwise, that is a potential threat to the integrity of the school.
- The Business Manager reviews all vendor contracts on, at least, an annual basis.
- The Business Manager maintains and updates the school’s accounting manual, which provides guidelines for all business functions of the school.
- The Business Manager assures that the school’s business practices faithfully reflect the ethical, environmental and community-oriented standards inherent in the school’s mission and explicitly stated in the C3S Model.

15. Human Resources



The Human Resources department of a C3S School is mission driven: its policies and procedures are such that the right people are hired and treated in such a way that their collective performance enhances the entire learning community.

HR makes sure that staff are fully informed of their rights and benefits, understands the basis of their evaluation, are provided with ongoing professional development, and are continually given incentive to learn, improve and excel.

- The policies and procedures followed by HR are clear and transparent. HR will inform staff of any policy changes and will explain and clarify such changes. HR will make sure that the employee handbook is updated and distributed to all new hires.
- HR is responsible for keeping updated records on staff attendance (personal, vacation, sick days) and to be accessible to explain and guide staff.
- HR will guide and support teachers in terms of health benefits and retirement options.
- HR will ensure that staff receive any state or federal mandated training.
- All staff, teaching and non-teaching, will receive regular and full evaluations that are “aspiration-based” as well as performance-based.
- Professional development is a keystone of the school’s mission; HR carefully monitors professional development to ensure continual improvement of all staff.
- A clear and transparent process is in place for notifying staff of annual renewal or non-renewal of employment.
- Exit interviews will be held for all employees regardless of the reason for their departure. These interviews will be conducted by HR and will be provided to the School Leader and the Board of Trustees.
- A clear Grievance Policy will be developed by HR, approved by the School Leader and Board of Trustees and given to all staff.
- HR will assist the FCO and the Teachers Organization in their start-up and be available to consult with them as need arises.
- HR will take leadership role of scheduling meetings to address concerns of non-teaching staff.

16. Non-teaching Staff



The school employs many members of the community in non-teaching positions. These positions may include secretarial, custodial, HR, IT support and business office personnel. The people who do these jobs play important, though often overlooked, roles in the school community. The school honors the contributions of these members and fully integrates them into the learning community.

- Non-teaching staff are adult resources who should be appropriately trained and used to interact with students. One way this is done is through classroom visits to explain the functions of these people and to let students interview them.
- Non-teaching staff have regularly scheduled meetings with HR to discuss concerns.
- The school models free and open communication and encourages non-teaching staff to participate in the school improvement process.
- Non-teaching staff work proactively with School Leaders to resolve problems caused by miscommunication.
- Non-teaching staff receive full and frequent evaluations by their supervisors. These evaluations are available to the School Leader and the Board of Trustees.

17. Staff Evaluations

“Education is a progressive discovery of our intelligence”

-Will Durant

Evaluation is an essential process at C3S Schools; full and thoughtful evaluations help both the employer and employee. By ensuring that evaluations are relevant, professional, clear and supportive of the school's mission it can better be determined how the school and the teacher are meeting expectations and how everyone can remain on the path of continual improvement.

Reflection on the evaluation process can help the school focus on key questions regarding its own performance: what are we doing that is different or better? How do we acknowledge superior performance? How do we help teachers in need?

Many valuable metrics for evaluation have been developed in schools, nonprofit organizations and businesses. As our schools are unique and driven by their specific mission C3S does not prescribe any single tool but encourages schools to develop and implement metrics that are germane to their goals. Some best practices:



- An evaluation process is in place for all teaching and non-teaching staff. All employees understand the process and the metric upon which their evaluation is conducted.
- Evaluations are aspiration-based as well as performance based. Staff must feel that their professional needs are addressed in their work environment.
- Evaluations include goal-setting, regular review of goals, job satisfaction issues, job performance issues, and ways to address and improve job satisfaction and performance.
- In the event of an evaluation that is less than satisfactory, a plan for improvement will be developed by HR, the employee's supervisor as well as the employee. Plans may include additional mentoring or training. A follow-up evaluation should take place within three months of an unsatisfactory evaluation.

18. School Leader Succession



Change is always an opportunity for reflection and improvement. Regardless of the circumstances that require a change in School Leadership, C3S Schools have in place a succession plan to guarantee the smooth functioning of the school through any transition.

Selection of a School Leader must be a thoughtful process that includes participation of all the stakeholders of the School. Ideally, a departing School Leader will give at least several months notice to the Board of Trustees of his/her intention to leave so that there is a smooth leadership transition. If the Board, at its discretion, decides to change School Leadership, it is likewise ideal for that to take place over a protracted period that allows for a thoughtful search and transition.

C3S Schools follow this procedure for replacing their School Leader:

- The Board of Trustees informs the Administrative Team of the impending change in leadership and requests that the Team begin the search for a School Leader.
- The Board of Trustees notifies the School community, staff and parents, that a leadership search is taking place and assures stakeholders that the process is a positive one.
- The Administrative Team conducts a thorough search for a School Leader. The job description must be approved by the trustees and is informed by the school's charter application as well as principles outlined in the School Leadership of the Model.

- The Board of Trustees, with advice from the school's Business Director sets the starting salary for the position. The Board advises the Administrative Team of venues it feels are appropriate for advertising of the position and monitors the recruitment process. The Board also determines the role they feel is appropriate for the outgoing School Leader in this process.
- The Administrative Team selects candidates it wishes to interview and sends the Board of Trustees the resumes of those candidates. The Administrative Team may also consider, interview and recommend its own members for this position.
- The Administrative Team makes a final list, for the Board of Trustees, of four candidates, along with their recommendations.
- The Board of Trustees interviews and selects a new School Leader from the candidates presented by the Administrative Team.
- The Board of Trustees may, at its discretion, ask the Family Organization to interview candidates and offer their recommendations.
- Upon signing of the contract by the new School Leader and the President of the Board of Trustees, the Board notifies the school community of the selection of a new School Leader.
- C3S will support schools at all stages of the leadership search and selection as requested. The Foundation has developed specific guidelines for School Leadership search, interview and selection, which schools are encouraged to use.
- C3S Schools have a leadership contingency plan in place and approved by the Board of Trustees for emergency purposes.

19. Budget & Compensation

CS Schools make every effort to ensure transparency in operations, especially financial operations, as charter schools are largely, if not entirely, financed with public money. The annual budget which must be approved annually by the Board of Trustees is a public document that should reflect the priorities set by the Board and demonstrate thoughtful and equitable treatment of the various departments, academic and non-academic, working within the learning community, which will always have demonstrable and pressing needs.

- The Board of Trustees sets the compensation for the School Leader. Compensation is reviewed annually as a component of the School Leader's evaluation. The Board uses industry comparables as part of the compensation determination, but every board should be free to set executive compensation, and bonuses if desired, using a metric that that is commensurate with its mission and that rewards outstanding service.
- The School Leader has the authority to determine the compensation of all staff. This should be done using industry comparables, such as the DOE scale, as a guide, but School Leaders need flexibility to set wages as times and needs dictate. The annual compensation package that the School Leader wishes to offer staff shall be presented to the Board for approval at least 30 days before approval of the annual budget. As this information contains individual salaries, which, with the exception of the five highest paying positions, are not within the public purview, discussion of staff compensation may be done in Executive Session of the Board.
- The School Leader, with approval from the Board of Trustees, has the authority to institute an annual bonus policy for all employees or for selected employees. If the School Leader believes that a bonus policy is in the collective best interests of the school community he/she will develop the policy with input and approval from the Board of Trustees and present it to HR and the school staff.
- The School Leader, in conjunction with the Chief Financial Officer, develops and presents an annual budget to the Board of Trustees.
- It is expected that the School Leader communicate fully and openly with staff about budget issues and that all departments within the school, academic and non-academic, participate in the budget process. For internal purposes the budget should be broken down by departments, so that all stakeholders are assured that the process is reflective of the school's priorities.
- To the greatest degree possible school departments should be provided with discretionary budget line items, so that teachers and department leaders are given incentive to innovate, attend regional or national conferences and expand their capabilities.

20. Grievance Procedures

“Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence”

-Robert Frost

The C3S Model emphasizes collaboration and practices that encourage people to work in the collective best interests of the learning community. Nevertheless, schools are imperfect places and conflicts arise. How we deal with conflict is a good measure of our problem-solving skills and also serves as a model to the students of how to deal with discord.

Any act that is illegal or contrary to state education law or of that represents a violation of the school’s charter is obviously a matter of Board concern, and the school has a “whistle-blower policy” to help ensure that such acts are reported. There is, however, no absolute definition as to what minimally constitutes a “board-level concern” and the governing board has wide discretion to consider any matter it considers to fall under its purview.

The basic process for addressing grievances is fairly uniform across the school regardless whether the aggrieved is a teacher, non-teaching staff member, parent or administrator. The actual grievance procedure for parents against the school is detailed in the Parent-Student Handbook.

- HR is responsible for developing, implementing and updating a grievance policy for employees. Input from staff will be sought in the development of the policy.
- Grievance policies and procedures are rooted in our adherence to the concept of social justice.
- Most employee grievances are based upon the perception of unfairness. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that procedures are ethical, fair and transparent. Conflicts are less likely to arise in a respectful environment.

