



# SCHOOL DESIGN BLUEPRINT

**FEBRUARY 7, 2016** 

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### **FOREWORD**

In spring 2015, the Rogers Family Foundation (RFF), in partnership with national and local funders, awarded 10 Oakland public schools planning grants as part of the Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) Regional Fund initiative to usher in a new wave of breakthrough schools. The goal of the grant was to give schools the time, money, and support to reimagine their schools for the 21st century and develop transformational visions for preparing all students for college and career success.

In addition to \$720,000 in combined grants for schools, the planning cohort received a diverse array of professional development services. RFF partnered with Mastery Design Collaborative (MDC), a local nonprofit, to provide all 10 planning grant winners an 8-month professional development program to train and support each school in a) designing personalized learning prototypes and b) developing a long-term plan for launching a breakthrough school over three years. The template for this long-term plan, called the School Design Blueprint, was created by MDC in partnership with RFF and OUSD project managers. Four-to-five member design teams from each school worked together to complete their School Design Blueprint, and each team solicited input from the rest of their staff to accurately reflect the interests of their entire school.

The School Design Blueprint is a design document that outlines the school's plan for transforming its current school model to one that better serves the unique needs of every student. The blueprint is structured to answer four main design questions:

- 1. What is our theory of action for solving our greatest systemic challenges?
- 2. What will the future student experience look like when we succeed?
- 3. What will we implement next year that gets us closer to our long-term vision?
- 4. How will we continuously roll out new features of our model and engage stakeholders in the work over time?

Once complete, each school will use their blueprint as a guide for collaborating with staff on implementing pieces of their new instructional model. Schools will also share their blueprints with their community stakeholders and update their blueprint with the feedback they receive. The blueprint may even serve as a recruiting and onboarding tool for prospective staff members. Most importantly, the blueprint will provide a roadmap for the next two-to-three years that students, staff, and leaders can follow to gauge the progress each school is making in adopting a comprehensive, next generation instructional model.

#### Enjoy!

- Rogers Family Foundation and Mastery Design Collaborative



### SCHOOL HISTORY

ASCEND began as a small autonomous Oakland public school in 2001; after ten years, we joined the Education for Change (EFC) charter network.

We are an arts-integrated K-8 school that emphasizes family and community partnerships. The mission of ASCEND is to close the achievement gap in Oakland and make a positive difference in the lives of young people. To do so, we offer engaging and rigorous instruction and we build strong relationships between parents, staff, students, and community. We are dedicated to developing leaders and mentors who create a more compassionate, equitable, and just society.

ASCEND, located in the Fruitvale area of Oakland, serves 444 students in grades K-8. Our

student body is 92% Latino, 4% White, 2% African American, and less than 1% Asian. 67% of our students are English language learners and 93% of our students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

We have a history of innovation in the pursuit of deeper learning. ASCEND started as an Expeditionary Learning school and students still actively participate and engage in semester-long project-based learning. We host biannual EXPO days where students present their learnings to our community. In addition, we were recipients of the Rogers Family Foundation Blended Learning Pilot Grant in 2012 and we have successfully launched and maintained blended learning K-8 for three years.







### School Challenges: What challenges drive our work?

While we are proud of our past successes, we have not yet achieved our primary goal: to increase the high school graduation rate of students in the Fruitvale neighborhood. We need to create learners who have the skills, work habits, and perseverance to succeed in the academic and social climate of high school in preparation for college and career readiness.

Our Common Core-aligned assessments show that the traditional schooling model is not meeting the needs of our ELL population. In math, a staggering 61% of ELLs scored Far Below Basic (FBB) 28% scored Below Basic (BB) on the Beginning of Year NWEA MAP taken in September 2015. ELA MAP results mirror those in math with 61% of ELLs scoring FBB and 27% scoring BB. This data indicates that Common Core Standards require a much more dynamic and agile knowledge base than what was expected before. Our educational model must rise to meet these demands.

Our current education model is very rigid and teacherdriven. As a result, our students have not developed the necessary agency when they enter ASCEND's middle school. Teacher Raj Kanani speaks to what is missing, "Something we need to improve is really making the learning at our school student-driven and community-driven."

In addition, the current class configurations and student-to-teacher ratios make it difficult to accelerate the wide range of learners in each class. With the exception of our school-wide guided reading program, we do not have vertical alignment around competency-based expectations and instructional strategies. We need to have a unified vision around our culture of learning and progression.

To address these systemic challenges, ASCEND launched several ambitious personalized learning pilots in the fall of 2015. Five teachers, four CAL teacher residents, and 130 students participated in the first pilot, which focused on multi-age guided reading and

social-emotional learning in first through fifth grades. Four teachers and 156 students participated in the second pilot, which focused on multi-age differentiated math in middle school with Teach to One (TTO). We have seen early signs of success with each of these pilots, and they have inspired a new, transformational vision for ASCEND that we believe will lead to radically improved outcomes for our students.

### Next Generation School Vision: What future do we want for our students?

We believe that our students are worthy of the highest quality of education and deserve the learning environment to develop themselves as individuals and as citizens of the world. This belief drives ASCEND's next generation school vision where:

- Multi-age classrooms provide a dynamic learning environment and a supportive community where students will be able to succeed academically and socially.
- Student-driven learning maximizes engagement, thereby fostering creativity, student agency, and respect for all learners.
- Students take ownership over their individual goals and make progress given their unique needs and strengths.
- Students deepen their academic growth and increase their socio-emotional skills by engaging in an authentic, natural learning environment that mirrors the real world.

As ASCEND community members, we have the shared responsibility to offer the best experiences for our students. This is a model of collaboration between students and teachers. We hope to nurture a community of learners where teachers and students explore, discover, and grow from each other.

What we are doing is complex. It requires a shift in paradigm of the traditional classroom setting and we are

redefining what success can look like and be for our students and teachers. We will make mistakes, struggle, and learn along the way. But our vision is guided by love and the desire for our school to resemble the world we wish to create.

#### Core Values: What values unite us?

It was important to us to create a shared foundation of common values amongst students and staff before launching into the more technical changes so that our vision would be meaningful and achievable. Therefore, the pilot strand at ASCEND successfully developed and implemented kid-friendly and actionable values that speak both to habits of mind and heart as well as habits of success. These values were derived from our original 6 Ways to ASCEND, Expeditionary Learning Design Principles, and the MOSAIC Project. We intend to instill these values school-wide next year. To learn more about these value systems, visit **Appendix A.** 

#### **Perseverance**

- I stick with a task until completion without giving up.
- I set goals, work towards reaching those goals, and reflect on my goals.
- I ask questions and use my resources to help me understand and complete a task.

#### Responsibility

- I am responsible for my own learning.
- I complete all my homework.
- I make responsible decisions.
- I stay focused.
- I keep my personal belongings and the community's belongings organized.

#### Collaboration

- I actively listen and learn from others.
- I help others when they need it.
- I ask for help when I need it.
- I can show evidence that I am a valuable member in a collaborative process.

#### Craftsmanship

I produce high-quality work (my best work) always.

- I use materials and resources appropriately.
- I can show evidence that demonstrates my learning and professional quality work.
- I use feedback to revise my work and to further my understanding.

# Learner-Centered Strategies: What core strategies will help us achieve our vision?

In order to achieve our ambitious goals and vision, we researched other models and practices as a team and then determined that these were our essential strategies:

**Developing Student Agency:** It is critical for students to build intrinsic motivation as they navigate the ever-growing pathways of the 21st century. Student agency will be developed over time at ASCEND through deep dives into content and intentional time for character building. Examples of supporting programs include Expeditionary Learning, multi-age Community Time, and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

**Teaching higher-order thinking skills:** In order for students to be prepared for the expanding technology-driven job market, we'll focus on higher-order thinking skills that support creativity, critical thinking, collaborative problem-solving, and innovation. Examples of supporting programs include Expeditionary Learning, Thinking Maps, and Creation Time.

Mastery-Based Grading: ASCEND transitioned to standards-based report cards four years ago. We now need to make the next step in moving toward competency-based grading so that students, teachers, and families can monitor progress. Examples of supporting programs include multi-age math and reading instruction, online competency-based programs, and the NWEA-aligned program, Skills Navigator.

Creating a flexible learning model: Students learn differently and it is important to provide a flexible learning environment in which students have choice over where and how they learn. With a wide range of learners, flexibility means creating differentiated, multi-age groups, using adaptive software, and offering a range of physical spaces conducive for learning. Examples of supporting programs include multi-age groupings in math and reading, blended learning, and Creation Time.

Providing multiple adult and peer mentors: As students develop agency, they need a team of mentors to support them in their growth. Students will checkin with multi-age partners on their goal progression and have designated data coaching with teachers and other supporting adults. Examples of supporting programs include Community Time, multi-age instruction, and Restorative Justice Circles.

Visit **Appendix B** to see a complete list of other programs and curricula that support our learner centered strategies.

### Expected Outcomes: If successful, what outcomes will students achieve?

Since our ultimate goal for students is college and career readiness, we believe that it is crucial to measure their academic performance consistently and thoroughly to evaluate our model's effectiveness. As part of Education for Change, we use Academic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are metrics that strongly indicate the degree to which our students are making academic growth.

We believe that all ASCEND students should either be demonstrating mastery or making accelerated growth to close the gap between their performance and grade-level mastery. To this end, we will continue to use the On-Track metric.

On-Track is roughly defined as either scoring proficient or making accelerated growth. Specifically for each measure:

- Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA)
  - Proficiency is defined as reading at a "Meets Expectations" or "Exceeds Expectations" independent reading level.
  - Accelerated growth is defined as
    - Student scoring "Below Expectations" at beginning of year (BOY): 1.67 years of growth by end of year (EOY)
    - Student scoring "Approaching Expectations" at BOY: 1.33 years of growth by EOY

- MAP
  - MAP proficiency cut-point = 65th percentile
  - Accelerated growth targets
    - BOY 51-64th percentile: 1.25 x Typical RIT Growth (TRG)
    - BOY 26-50th percentile: 1.5 x TRG
    - BOY <= 25th percentile: 1.75 x TRG

We know from experience that as schools improve in academic gains, growth becomes more and more challenging to achieve. Therefore, we can expect a logarithmic progression over time, not a linear one.

To this end, we have modeled what growth over time at ASCEND may look like if we reduce the proportion of "off-track" students by 10%, 20% and 30% annually.

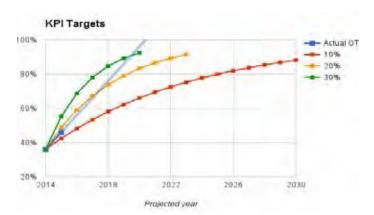


Figure 1: ASCEND KPI's Targets

As a school, if we continue to reduce the proportion of off-track students by 15% annually in math, then we will reach our goal of 90% on-track in math by 2026. This would be represented by a logarithmic line located somewhere between the 20% (yellow) and 10% (red) lines. If we reduce the proportion of off-track students by 30% annually, as represented by the green line, then we will reach our 90% on-track goal by 2020.

For the 2015-16 KPIs, we are naming a 20% reduction of the proportion of off-track students as a school target. By making such major design changes to ASCEND, we expect to meet our stretch goals by the end of 2016.

#### Achievement Goals 2016-2017

	READING	(3-8)		MATH	(3-8)		DRA	(K-2)	
	Minimum	Target	Stretch	Minimum	Target	Stretch	Minimum	Target	Stretch
ASCEND	47% (+6)	53% (+12)	59% (+18)	57% (+5)	62% (+10)	66% (+14)	37% (+7)	44% (+14)	51% (+21)





#### A Day in the Life of ASCEND in 2019

When we implement our strategies successfully and fully actualize our vision in 3 years, a typical day at ASCEND will look like the following.

When Atzin enters ASCEND, he feels at home. Walking through familiar halls, he waves to the other students and teachers on his way to his learning hall. Atzin pops in to see if his guided reading teacher, Ms. M, is there. Even though Ms. M isn't his homeroom teacher, she has been his data coach. Yesterday they had a mid-cycle conference about how he needed to persevere through his book by choosing two reading strategies. Atzin lets her know what strategies he tried at home just as the bell rings. It's Community Time!

Atzin walks over to the 1-2-3 homeroom class, eager to pick his seat for Community Time. The message on the whiteboard ask students to post how they are feeling this morning. He thinks about how his baby sister cried all night and he couldn't sleep, and moves his picture magnet to "tired." Space is filling up fast, Atzin spies a spot on the top row of the stadium seats -- his favorite! Atzin takes his seat and waits for the remaining 70 students to enter the room. Five teachers take their places around the room as the MOSAIC theme song begins to play. Atzin knows this is the signal to go to his multi-age tribe. In his tribe, Mr. W reminds them to pick roles. The group of 1st-to-3rd graders work collaboratively to complete the daily social-emotional learning activity. Mr. W scans check-in responses and comes back to talk with Atzin about why he is feeling tired. The daily rotation schedule is projected on the board and Atzin notes he will be spending his day in two different learning halls.

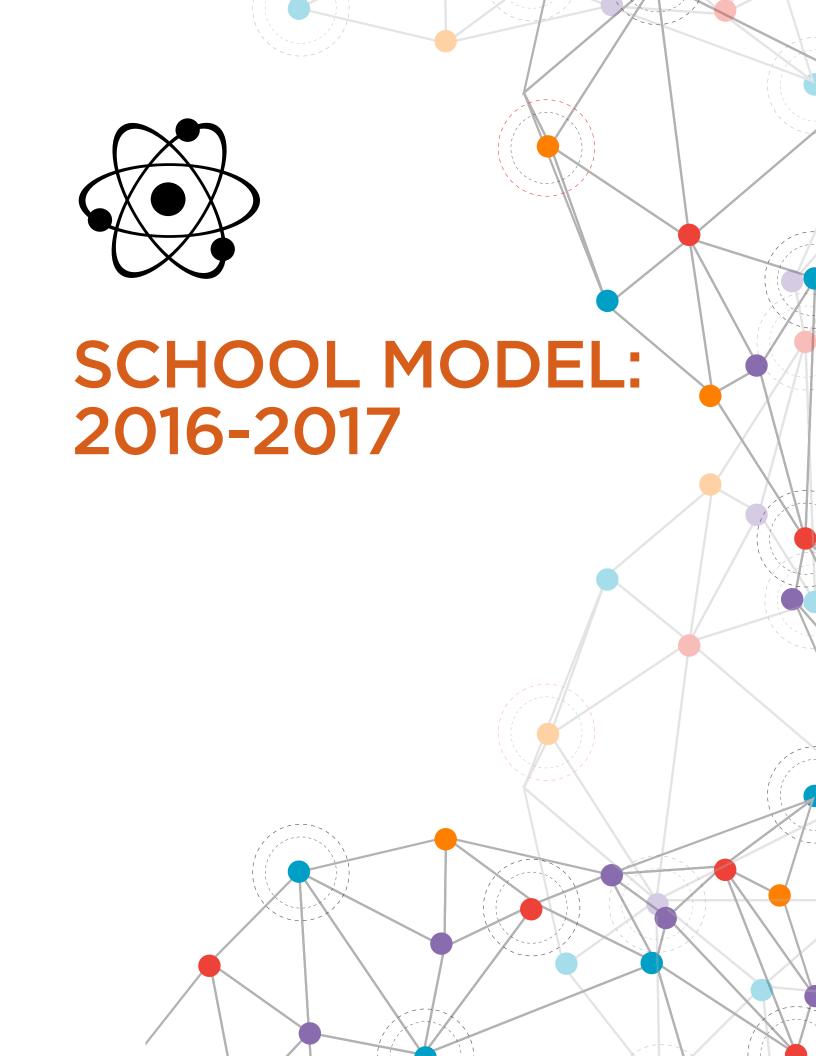
Atzin heads first to Readers Workshop. He goes to his cubby to grab his book bag, and walks with purpose through the connecting door to the learning hall. Even though it used to be a first grade classroom, Atzin thinks that it doesn't feel like that -- there are first, second, AND third graders all independently working on reading. Atzin surveys the room to see where he wants

to work. According to his dashboard, he needs to complete the next level on iReady by the end of the week. Atzin takes his computer to the carpet to complete his assignment. After 20 minutes, he hears a chime and sees Ms. M calling his group for guided reading! Ms. M asks him to reflect about how he persevered last night and Atzin proudly demonstrates a reading strategy with his book. After the lesson, his group moves to the couch to complete their independent reading.

At recess, Atzin looks for his new group of friends. He made some first and third grade buddies during a Community Time activity called 4 Corners, where everyone picked their favorite sport. Twelve other students loved soccer! Since then, they have been playing a game at recess. After recess, Atzin heads to homeroom for grade-level instruction. In science, they are learning about the life cycles of plants and animals. After grade-level content, lunch, and an art lesson on butterflies and symmetry, Atzin is excited for the afternoon. Even though he is usually tired by 2pm, the afternoons have become his favorite part of the day -- Creation Time!

During Creation Time, Atzin's group has been designing a skit to show the life cycle of a butterfly. His group analyzed a rubric, created a thinking map to brainstorm important details, assigned roles, wrote a script, and made paper puppets. Today they are finally going to film on the iPad and Atzin is the director! His group decides to work in the class library, where they use the futon as a puppet stage. Other groups are working at tables, sprawled on the carpet, or huddled on the stadium seats.

After Creation Time, the day concludes with multi-age math groups. Atzin is reunited with some multi-age friends as they do application problems to review math power-standards that needed to be re-taught. Before dismissal, the students huddle for an appreciation circle. Atzin thinks to himself, "I appreciate working with so many great friends."





During the 2015-2016 school year, we have had the opportunity to innovate, prototype, and ultimately, learn from our pilots; next year, we will use these insights to transform our entire school's instructional model as well as create the systems and structures necessary to support these significant changes.

# Data and Assessment: What assessment data will we use to personalize learning?

At ASCEND, data drives instruction. As a K-8 school, we use a multitude of formative and summative assessments to gather data and track student growth. Currently, we use these methods: daily exit tickets which include student self-assessments; data conferences; and student goal-setting. In ELA, teachers triangulate data from multiple formative assessments to create targeted reading groups. Qualitative rubrics will be used to evaluate project-based demonstrations of learning, such as community time and expeditionary learning. We also track social-emotional growth in students with SELscreeners that result in social skills group support from the Seneca, our school partner that provides special education and SEL services. Our **Appendix C** includes a complete list of assessments.

We believe ALL students need to receive targeted instruction for intervention, grade-level instruction, and extension for mastered standards. These student subgroups are determined using RIT Scores, Exit Tickets, and students' social-emotional goals. Learning paths change based on assessments, progress through adaptive programs, and choice of modality to demonstrate content knowledge. Students also choose how to demonstrate mastery in Creation Time, which is interest-based with teacher scaffolds and modifications based on data.

While ASCEND uses multiple measures for student growth in ELA, we have yet to find a comprehensive competency-based math assessment to use for math groupings and intervention across grades. This year, the 4th-5th grade teachers are piloting Skills Navigator, a NWEA MAP-affiliated online assessment tool, to see if the data points can help target students meeting per-

formance standards. If this pilot is successful, it will go to scale from 4th through 8th grades in ELA and math. In addition to piloting Skills Navigator, upper grades and middle school will be participating in data conferences about student RIT scores to group students by requisite skills in ELA and math this spring.

Currently, data is shared with parents 3 times a year with our standards-based report cards. These report cards are supplemented with biannual student-led conferences in which students share recent work and demonstrate their content knowledge to parents in a series of activities. Next year, we plan to research and pilot different data dashboards and portfolio tools to see what will meet the diverse data needs of our K-8 school. Throughout this pilot process, students, teachers, and parents will have access to data from formative and summative assessments. progress on adaptive programs, and student-made academic and SEL goals. This will allow us to track and celebrate student growth throughout the year as a team. In addition, we would like to develop a competency-based report card supplement for students and parents. This report would be available on the student-data dashboard and accessible throughout the year.

## Student Agency: How will we empower students to own their learning?

Students are intrinsically motivated when the learning process is demystified and reframed in kid-friendly language. The fear of testing needs to be unlearned so that students can view their data as growth points. This process of taking ownership begins with goal setting.



We believe in teaching the whole child. Students will make academic, social-emotional, and personal/interest goals on a monthly basis. With a mentor, they will break their goals down into weekly learning targets and monitor them over time in a personalized learning plan. These goals will be reviewed in bi-weekly student-led conferences with adult mentors. In between conferences, students will check their growth goals with their "accountabilibuddy," a student partner. By year 3, students will design daily "work plans" using their online data dashboards. Students will reflect regularly to make adjustments and calibrate their goals. Families will also have access to these dashboards and be able to monitor and provide feedback on their child's progress.

In our multi-age pilot classes this year, we prototyped a student-driven goal-setting process. We prioritized this work for teachers by making it the core focus of our fall professional development cycle. During this cycle, teachers worked collaboratively to choose high-leverage data points, make them student-friendly, and then design a process for their classroom. In these processes, students would engage in a guided data analysis and coaching, learn to read the data and then goal-set around their growth areas (academic, behavioral, social-emotional, and personal). We learned early on that frequency in goal setting is key and teachers have created protocols for conferencing weekly with students individually on their progress or goal revision/reflection. Additionally, they have built in time for students to conference with one another. In our most recent iterations on the process. teachers are working with students to build in time during the school day to work towards their goals with the use of work plans, menus, and options that provide students the opportunity to truly exercise their developing sense of student agency. Visit Appendix D to see the current goal-setting template in our pilots.

In addition to modeling and teaching the skill of goal setting, we will simultaneously roll out work habits. Student work habits will be directly connected to ASCEND's Core Values: perseverance; responsibility; collaboration; and craftsmanship. These habits will be explicitly modeled and celebrated school-wide in advisory and K-8 community meetings. They will serve as the foundation for the character habits that students need to demonstrate for academic success.

When students make choices that harm the community, we will use a restorative approach to address the impact. In doing so, we will shift the mindset of accountability:

instead of merely assigning the student a consequence or punishment, we will help the student understand the impact of his/her actions and repair the harm.

# Curricula, Content, and Pathways: What curriculum pathways will support college and career readiness?

Our carefully chosen content and curricula are data-driven and research-based. We have shifted to curricula that are common-core aligned in order to better prepare our students for college and career pathways. Each curriculum serves a specific purpose, whether it be building requisite content knowledge or developing higher-order skills for the application of foundational knowledge.

#### **Expeditionary Learning**

After students have learned the requisite science and social studies content knowledge, they participate in semester-long deep dives as a culmination of this learning. In this Common Core-aligned model, students choose their own pathway: they become experts in self-selected case studies as they research informational texts and make connections to their own community. Students determine how they demonstrate their mastery from a menu of content-creation modalities and apps such as Popplet and Google Presentations. This enables students to demonstrate their content understanding with a focus on real-life application and higher-order thinking.

#### **Blended Learning**

Our adaptive software programs supplement instruction. Students are able to tackle rigorous content at their own pace and level while receiving frequent and automatic feedback. For example, in math and ELA, we have used Khan Academy and Skills Navigator to provide students with individualized content review, intervention, or acceleration by pre-teaching a lesson. Additionally, students use apps like Popplet, Show me, and WeVideo as tools to "show what they know" by creating their own content or demonstration of standards progress/mastery.

#### Math

The math programs and curricula at ASCEND serve the purpose of developing skills and content knowledge needed for higher-order thinking and application in expeditionary learning. In elementary grades, teachers choose from multiple curricula to meet the needs of students. EngageNY, My Math, and EFC math curricula are modified to plan targeted math units. Students

also use ST Math, a CCSS-aligned math software that provides independent practice for students.

In middle school, we are piloting the Teach to One (TTO) curriculum, which facilitates personalized learning through a multi-faceted instructional approach, providing agency for students with skills aligned to their individualized need. Students have an advisory with whom they begin each day, goal set, reflect, and receive feedback about their work ethic and academic performance. Curriculum is individualized to ensure students work within their zone of proximal development in the most fitting instructional format. Daily plans and materials are culled from a range of curricular materials, both printed and virtual, aligned to the particular skill sets students are working on to demonstrate mastery. Visit **Appendix E** to learn more about TTO at ASCEND.

#### **ELA**

ASCEND has two strands of ELA instruction to meet the needs of our students. Our first strand is Guided Reading, a differentiated approach to reading instruction in which students are grouped by skill level to receive targeted instruction in their zone of proximal development. While this provides great opportunities for remediation and acceleration, it is equally important for students to have access to grade-level, rigorous text. For this reason, our second strand of ELA is focused on teaching grade-level literature and informational text based on CCSS standards. ASCEND adopted the CORE Ready reading and writing curriculum in order to teach the requisite content and skills that will make learning expeditions more accessible.

#### **Social Emotional Learning**

At ASCEND, we believe in teaching the whole child. Every year, 5th grade students participate in the MOSAIC Project, a program that teaches acceptance and tolerance, and culminates in a week-long retreat. In grades 6-to-8, middle school students participate in Restorative Justice Circles to solve problems and make change. 7th and 8th grade students pick their own middle school advisory in which they take on leadership positions.

# Instructional Delivery: How will students receive needs-based instructional support?

Data-driven small-group instruction has been a core instructional strategy at ASCEND for many years. Teachers use data to create strategic learning groups with targeted objectives to pre-teach or re-teach content as needed. These groupings are flexible and change based on formative assessments. This year, our pilot classrooms expanded this model by making the small groups multiage. Student data is triangulated using multiple assessments so that groups are created based on academic need without grade-level constraints. In 2016-2017, we plan to implement this model school-wide.

Throughout our pilot process, there have been varying degrees of releasing to students. Over time, choice and voice in classrooms has increased as teachers have learned more about developing student agency. Moving forward, we will continue to release with the aim of having students make data-based, goal-based decisions about how and where they use their learning time.

While all grades have the flexible groupings, as mentioned above, most reading blocks still operate on a rotation model. This means that time is chunked down and students are moving through high-leverage instructional activities. Our multi-age pilots have begun to improve upon this more teacher-driven model by providing a menu of learning activity options and some level of student choice. These learning activities are differentiated by reading level. For example, while all students in the 1-2-3 pilot have the same menu choice of "Word Work," the content changes based on individual or small-group phonics objectives.

In the 4th and 5th grade pilots, students have the opportunity to pick and justify what helps them learn best. After reflecting on whether or not the selected method is working, they meet with their adult mentor (the teacher or CAL resident) at their weekly conference to identify what instructional supports are needed to further their development. These practices will be expected across grade levels and will become permanent features of our instructional model. As we move to scale, we hope to systematize and streamline this process of students building and reflecting on their own instructional needs and work plans across subjects.

In our Teach to One (TTO) pilot, students in grade levels 6-to-8 receive highly differentiated math instruction through personalized playlists and across multiple modalities on a daily basis. At any given time, 105 students are divided among 4 learning modalities that are determined based on need and frequency via an algorithm. These multi-age modalities include small-group collaboration, peer-to-peer learning, live investigations,

and virtual instruction. Over the course of a 90-minute block, students rotate through modalities, receiving instruction and feedback from multiple teachers and peers over the course of one class period.

TTO content changes daily. Each day, students have a personalized playlist based on their progress on exit tickets and other assessments. Students also engage in multi-week performance tasks that provide the opportunity for an extended dive into specific student-centered content with public performance and presentations of their learning. Students receive immediate feedback both directly from teachers and peers, and through blended instruction. Data from both formative and summative assessment measures allows teachers to facilitate students through a process of analysis and reflection about how they will improve.

Moving forward, formative checks for understanding will increasingly guide instructional delivery. Students already receive targeted instruction from online programs in ELA and math that differentiate using real-time formative assessment. Teachers will increasingly use this data as well as administer objective-based exit tickets to inform instruction for the following day.

There are many opportunities for student application of knowledge at ASCEND. Students dive deep into content standards in science and social studies through Expeditionary Learning units which last from a month to a semester. These are long and complete learning cycles. During long-term projects, students conference and receive real-time feedback from peers and teachers throughout each planning step to support the development of higher order thinking skills. Students ground their work in service learning and share their findings to the community in a public presentation at a school EXPO day.

In the 2016-2017 school year we will further this learning with Creation Time in grades K-to-5. Creation Time will occur three days a week and during this time, students will choose how to demonstrate mastery of content standards. Students will be able to choose from a menu of modalities such as a slide deck, a skit, or a Popplet presentation. Using Thinking Maps, students will map out their projects and work collaboratively to demonstrate content knowledge. Creation Time cycles will end with student presentations in and self-assessments on co-created rubrics.

## Learning Spaces: How will spaces will be used to support all learners?

A key feature of ASCEND's personalized learning environment are our pilot classes that include a lower student-to-teacher ratio, furniture that facilitates student voice and choice, 1.5-to-1 student-to-technology with a mix of iPads and Chromebooks. Each pilot classroom boasts big area rugs, mobile stadium seats, ball chairs, coffee tables, futons, reading nooks, wiggle seats, student cubbies, and more. These alternatives to traditional furniture allow for students to choose where to sit and provide some agency in their approach to learning.



Traditional classrooms have been replaced with flexible and fluid learning halls through which students move based on competency level and/or interest, rather than by rigid grade-level designation.

In our pilots, we have also taken down physical barriers (i.e., walls and doors) to truly have flexible learning halls. In our 1-2-3 pilot, two of the classrooms are adjoined by a door, the third classroom is blocked by a wall. It completely changes the dynamics of the third classroom to not have an adjoining door, both for student sharing purposes, and for teacher collaboration. We see the need to build connecting doors in classrooms where there are none. More structural changes to the learning spaces will continue as we scale our pilot programs to full-school level.

Our pilot learning halls were specifically designed to support daily multi-age instruction. This element was intended to encourage students to become role models, mentors, peer helpers, and leaders as they work with students from other grades. We have found that students feel engaged and comfortable when placed in individually appropriate groupings with the ability to choose how they

demonstrate content mastery. Therefore, based on this effectiveness of our pilot, we want all ASCEND students to have access to multi-age learning halls in 2016-2017.

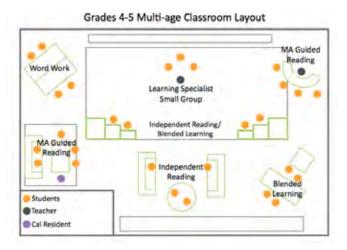


Figure 2: Grade 4-5 Multi-age Classroom Layout

We emphasize "wise choices" as we empower students to self-select their work space. Students were introduced to all the different learning spaces at the beginning of the year and reflected on which learning hall and furniture worked best for them. Students can choose from various learning spaces around the room. They ask themselves, for example: Do I need/want to work alone right now, with a partner, with a group, or with the teacher? Students must think about these various factors and make a "wise choice" as to where they will sit.

The rooms are also set-up to have multiple small groups, so more than one teacher can be meeting with a group at a time. Materials (paper, pencils, pens, erasers, etc.) are placed in various spots in the room so students can have access to them when needed. Students also have access to the laptop cart, and their own cubbies where they keep their personal materials and work.

Our middle school classes also have flexible learning environments. The Teach to One (TTO) math lab is a flu-

id lab with 4 different instructional spaces. As students walk into the TTO lab, there is a "big board" at the entrance with students assignments and groupings for the day. Students will rotate in cycles between a range of teachers and residents based on their skill library.

While we have laid significant groundwork in our elementary and middle school pilots, we still have much to do. When our technology ratio is 1-to-1, students will be able to leverage the spaces better and use these tools for collaborative projects not just adaptive software. We have the furniture for pilot classrooms, however we cannot currently scale up. While our TTO lab has 4 flexible learning spaces, they are identical in furniture and and expectations. We want all ASCEND students to have these space and grouping opportunities, not just those in the current pilots of the 1-2-3 and 4-5 multi-age cohorts.

# Scheduling: How will flexible learning time be used to support student needs?

Our scheduling conversations have evolved and we know the core elements we want to uphold: teacher collaboration and longer student learning periods. This year, despite schedule restrictions, we were able to create longer blocks of uninterrupted time for multi-age ELA instruction and align prep schedules for teams of teachers in order to increase collaboration opportunities. Next year, we are looking to use our creative staffing model to utilize residents, instructional aides, prep teachers, advisors, etc. to staff blocks of time used for Creation Time, and flex time in order to create additional collaborative time for teachers.

Below is a sample schedule of the day in the life of a student when we launch to scale. The green signifies multi-age learning blocks and the blue represents grade-level time.

20 min	75 minutes	40 minutes	65 minutes	50 minutes	60 minutes	90 minutes
Multi-Age Community Time	Multi-Age Guided Reading	Multi-Age Skills-Based ELA	Multi-Age Skills-Based Math	Prep Class Art, Tech, Music, P.E.	Grade Level Content Instruction	Expeditionary Learning and Creation Time

Figure 3: Typical student's day. Visit **Appendix F** to see the schedules of our Year 0 pilot strands.

# Staffing: How will staff work together in supporting each student's needs?

The "people" element of personalization is such a critical one. In all of our research, we saw that the most successful models thus far have reduced the student-teacher ratio and have been creative about staffing in order to best meet the needs of students While the NGLC planning grant dollars were a huge help, they were not enough to fully pilot the model we hope to scale next fall. In order to meet those needs, our team agreed to build our site budget based on 24 students per classroom, and then increase the pilot class sizes by 1-to-2 students. This was done as a means to create a buffer of dollars that could be used to facilitate the emergence of a different staffing model.

This year, we decided that the best way to move in this direction was to find a way to staff the multi-age classrooms with at least 2 teachers. We capitalized on our relationships with UC Berkeley and Mills Teacher Education Programs to design a Residency Program that would fulfill this need. Through this program, we pay student-teachers for an extended, more comprehensive student teaching placement, while creating a pipeline for highly-trained teachers to join our teams both within ASCEND and EFC. Our 1-2-3 pilot classes have 78 students and 5 teachers/residents, lowering the student-to-teacher ratio to 16-to-1. Our 4-5 pilot classes have 52 students and 4 teachers/residents which brings the student-to-teacher ratio to 13-to-1.

Thus far, this model has been really fruitful in that it has allowed us to go multi-age in our ELA block and serve more students with personalized, data-driven instruction. This model taught us that we want to increase our high-leverage teachers' time to maximize these multi-age blocks.

Next year, we plan to minimize our newly designed Residency Program in order to allocate more funds to a staffing model where each strand team has a Lead Teacher. This position would teach at a 0.5, and then coach and coordinate for a 0.5 FTE. We have learned that when collaboratively teaching, there is a great need for teachers to share routines, practices, plans, and ways of being. By having this Lead Teacher, our strand teams will have an easily accessible point person who can help to navigate both challenges and innovations that come with our work. The Lead Teacher would be coached by the Instructional Coaches and

then be responsible for supporting and coaching their strand to develop their individual and shared practices.

This shift means that a 1-2-3 multi-age classroom would go from having 3 teachers full-time and 3 residents half-time to having 3.5 full-time teachers, and 2 residents half-time. While this wouldn't change ratios as drastically across the day, it would bring the overall ratio down to 22.2 students to 1 fully credentialed teacher and 14.1-to-1 when residents are present as well. Teachers will share the load even more equitably thus making practices like goal-setting, conferencing, advising, or small-group instruction more sustainable and effective. Ideally, with this model, we would have some residents in order to maintain our pipeline, but we may have them rotate through classrooms more frequently to offer more diversity in their placement and create equity for students.

In addition to increasing the number of credentialed adults in classes, we are also planning to create a parent-leader pipeline. ASCEND is a school founded by community members and has a history of partnering with parents from our community. Once pilots are launched, we plan to coordinate with the Family Resource Center and develop a training program for parents to be goal-setting mentors for students. Not only will this help shift our education paradigm by bringing more parents to the classroom, it will also free up teachers to do more targeted instruction while sustaining the new accountability structures in place.

Lastly, ASCEND is able to capitalize on our "All-In-Partnership" with the Seneca Family of Agencies to serve all students. Beyond accessing SPED services for our IEP students, we also leverage this intervention team to support at the Tier I and Tier II levels in order to proactively keep students out of Tier III. As our school transforms toward personalization, our entire staff mindset shifts: now we are all "intervention" teachers, serving all students on the individual level and meeting their needs to accelerate learning.

As we move through the design process, we are continuing to hold two things in mind with regards to staffing: 1) we will continue to reduce ratios in order to maximize time and focus with students to provide dynamic instruction, and 2) we will continue to work collaboratively to think outside the box as a means to utilize all people on campus when it comes to creating advising/mentoring relationships for our students and

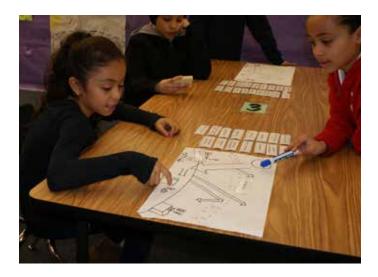
connecting them to adults that can consistently help facilitate their journey.

# Professional Development: How will we support our staff in executing our school model?

One of the mantras we have latched onto during our design journey is that we need to "do for adults, as we want them to do for students," in order to truly change practice and mindsets. Over the summer, we spent significant time at our school retreat designing and visioning for our model. Initially, our staff wanted time together to talk, think, and plan. After a few sessions, a new trend emerged. We learned that the core value of our design was to develop a foundational sense of student agency in our students to empower them to make responsible, effective choices and exercise their voice in helping to define their educational journey. Shortly after, we learned that our teachers did not have a sense of what it looks like to develop this agency, nor the classroom practices to foster it.

We determined that we could couch the idea of student agency within personalization and create a PD cycle for teachers that incorporated time to maintain our existing, amazing practices, while offering some choice around path for teachers to determine their own zones of proximal development and urgent needs. Our current cycle focuses on Supporting Language Learners and Developing Student Agency with our whole staff. Then teachers break out into specific Student Agency learning strands groups by either focusing on academic discourse or goal-setting with flexible grouping. Each strand provides 6 sessions that include: collaborative input, practice sharing, structured planning time, classroom implementation, and application of new learning.

Additionally, we know that the collaboration time for teachers who are sharing students is critical. Similar to the NGLC school model of CICS West Belden in Chicago, we would like to build our schedule so that we can back K-to-5 preps up to the lunch block, thus



creating a bigger, overlapping window for teachers to meet and plan. Another element we piloted this year was to have an additional minimum day built into our schedule for students. This allowed for structured intentional collaboration time for teachers to meet and plan together in a shared space. This time has been extremely fruitful and is absolutely something we want to prioritize next year moving forward because it allows teachers to be in alignment and "in it together" during a time of great transition.

Moving forward we want to continue with these trends of collaboration of whole-staff alignment. We believe this creates a shared common language and keeps the shared vision at the forefront of the work. While currently we have been able to offer multiple strands of PD for teachers to select, we would eventually like to use online mediums or playlist-like opportunities for teachers to develop their practice as well. We intend to continue engaging in lesson study-like cycles, inquiry groups, and data analysis days as a means to developing practice as well.





### Implementation Roadmap: How will we roll out our vision over the next 3 years?

In order to actualize our vision, we plan to implement each component strategically and incrementally over the next 3 years so that all stakeholders are invested and all shifts are meaningful and well-supported.

Priorities	Year 0: 2015-2016	Year 1: 2016-2017	Year 2: 2017-2018	Year 3: 2018-2019
Flexible Learning Model	Year 0 Pilots -1/2/3 Multi age Community Time and Guided Reading -4/5 Multi age Community Time and Guided Reading -TTO Math in 6-7-8 -Creation Time where students pick their modality	Scale Year 0 Pilots New Pilots: -multiage math -Creation Time -TTO as 7/8 and 5/6 PD on flexible groupings and data sharing *Full-Time TTO Team	Scale Year 1 Pilots to be K-8 New Pilots: -multiage reading block in middle school PD: math power standards intervention and Creation Time	Scale Year 2 Pilots -sustain model  PD: personalized learning profiles
Multiple Adult and Peer Mentors	Year 0 Pllot -CAL teacher residency program created -pilot class sizes increase from 24- 26 to fund resident program	Scale Residency Program -create a Lead Teacher position for 1-2-3 and 4-5 to teach and coach multi-age classes -Hire Expeditionary Learning coach -class sizes increase from 24-26 to fund high quality staffing	New Pilot -develop a parent mentor program where parents are trained in goal setting/data conferencing with students	Scale Year 2 Pilot train and hire parent leaders as goal setting/data conference mentors
Student Agency	Year 0 Pilots: -scaffolded student goal setting around academic and SEL goals -students choose their learning spaces and what modality they choose -spring pilot of paper version of PLP  PD: Goal Setting and Academic Language/Student Agency	Scale Year 0 Pilots New Pilots: -student-generated rubrics -research and create a PLP prototype -new tech prototype of PLP PD: expeditionary learning and expert groups	Scale Year 1 Pilots Roll Out: Students have choice over independent learning pathway in multiage reading block, use PLPs to make a work plan PD: choice in expeditionary learning expert groups launch PLP dashboard	Scale -students use dashboards to develop Math/ELA work plans
Mastery Based Grading and Flexi- ble Group- ings	Year O Pilots: -multi-age reading groups based on data -Skills Navigator in Math and ELA in 4th and 5th grade -TTO in middle school	Scale Year O Pilots -teachers use the Learning Continuum and RIT scores to group students and plan instruction PD: NWEA/MAP results and the Learning Continuum	Scale -org-level support around development of competency-based grading and the use of PLPs -develop competency-based supplemental report card	Pilot: -pilot competency-based report card supplement

## Potential Barriers: How will we overcome potential barriers?

ASCEND is poised to bring the first stage of our personalized learning pilots to scale in fall 2016. Since half of the school has been participating in a range of personalization pilots, we have had the opportunity to troubleshoot and creatively resolve many barriers throughout this process. Even so, some potential roadblocks to scalability and sustainability still remain. These financial barriers include hiring support staff in order to lower the student-to-teacher ratio, upgrading our physical spaces and furniture to actualize our new model, and increasing planning time for greater staff collaboration across grade levels. The other obstacles are centralized assessments and report cards.

Many of these hurdles can be addressed under ideal conditions for scalability. At the district level, we are hoping for autonomy with our CMO, Education for Change, in piloting competency-based grading and adapting assessment measures. In order to address the barriers of our staffing model, we have developed a 5-year sustainability plan for increased staffing based on the allocation of this grant money with measures in place to secure those positions beyond 5 years. In order to make our learning environments truly flexible, we need to add adjoining doors to 3 other classrooms in the building. This is a one-time fee that would be paid for by the grant and contribute to more open and fluid learning spaces. In order to address the need for extended planning time, the administration is planning multiple schedule options to bring to the Advisory Team to review. Some of the schedule options are influenced by site budget and grant funding to hire specials teachers.

If these ideal conditions can't be met, there are opportunities to de-scale some pilots, slow down our roll-out, and creatively work around budget challenges. Regarding assessments and report cards with our CMO, if we can't be granted autonomy, then we will ask for a compromise of affording us a pilot strand to do inquiry around competency-based assessments and report back to the organization with findings and a proposal for scalability both school-wide and organization-wide. In order to have a more fluid physical space, we can move around a couple of classrooms and connect with local nonprofits to get support in purchasing dynamic furniture. We have creatively problem-solved around the staffing model in creating a teacher residen-

cy program with Cal students. If we increase class size, we can try to scale or replicate this program at Mills to get more adults in the building.

# Stakeholder Engagement: How will we build staff and community investment in our vision?

ASCEND was founded by families, community members, and teachers who wanted to provide an excellent education for children in Oakland. Just as parent, teacher, and student voices created this school so have these voices been a part of the revisioning process. Since the planning stage, we have intentionally engaged school, district, and community stakeholders throughout the process so that their perspectives would be represented in our new vision.

Staff have been an invested part of the design process since day one. After an open invitation to all staff, a design team of interested teachers, coaches, and administrators began to do the initial research. Throughout this R&D phase, staff received monthly updates and introductory PDs on personalization and the 4Ps: pace, path, people, and place. Following NGLC Design Days, the design team facilitated the same processes with the whole staff to create a uniform vision. Over the summer, nearly half our teachers participated in a design retreat. Meanwhile, the administration attended national conferences on Expeditionary Learning and NWEA MAP Fusion.

This inclusive process has built a strong foundation in our professional learning community and staff buy-in and interest is high. Now in Year 0, all staff are participating in a weekly professional development series on student agency that is anchored in the Expeditionary Learning text Leaders of their Learning. In addition, both pilot and non-pilot teachers have visited schools in different stages of personalization. Throughout the spring, teachers will visit pilot classrooms and continue personalization PD in preparation for our launch in the fall.

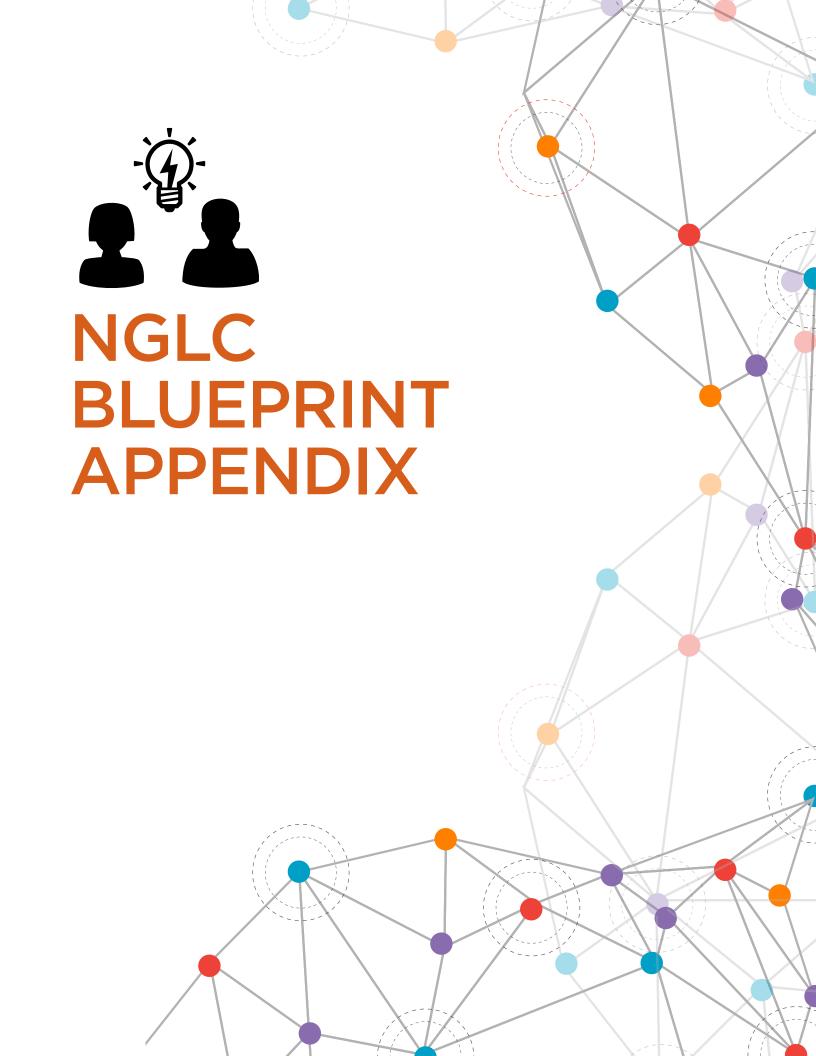
Student voice has been present throughout our design process. From our student interviews during the planning grant stage to classroom pilots now, students have been at the center of our work. In middle school, through restorative justice circles, students have brainstormed ways in which they would like to help their school community. As a result, many middle schoolers participate in leadership roles including

school event planning, mentoring in lower grades, and parking lot drop-off duty. Throughout this grant process, middle school students have attended school advisory meetings to give feedback on our work around student agency. Students have the opportunity to reflect on the pilots and what is working in reflections, surveys, and goal-setting conferences. Furthermore, students are proud that their discipline referral data has decreased so tremendously with this new model and they are motivated to continue this positive momentum. See **Appendix G**.

As a school founded by families, we know and value the importance of parent engagement. Throughout our initial planning grant stage, we presented progress and research at monthly parent-leader meetings. We showed videos, read articles, and opened the floor for input and feedback. In addition, at the highly attended "Coffee with the Principal" meetings, the administration shared out grant and pilot progress. Families have had many opportunities to learn about personalization and give input throughout the process. This fall at Back to School Night, the administration presented on the 4Ps to the whole school community. Following that kickoff, we hosted an "Academic Ownership" workshop series for parents, led by the principal and anchored in our design work. Parent responses have been generally supportive and a majority of parents are excited that personalization leads to more targeted support for their children. We plan to continue these workshop series, report out at school events, and consistently inform parent leaders as we bring our pilots to scale in 2016-2017.

Throughout this design process, we have been intentionally transparent with Education for Change. EFC initially supported our grant application and we are receiving organization-level support in our pilots. Teachers and leaders from other schools in our organization have come to observe our pilots. EFC encouraged and financed more ASCEND staff to visit other NGLC recipient schools. We plan to continue this partnership of transparency and support as we move to scale next year.







#### **Appendix A: Core Values**

ASCEND's Core Values were derived from the following value systems:

The 6 Ways to ASCEND - A set of principles created when ASCEND was founded in 2001.

- 1. Take charge of your own learning.
- 2. Be kind and considerate.
- 3. Help each other.
- 4. Persevere.
- 5. Be responsible for yourself, your family, and your community.
- 6. Be reflective.

<u>MOSAIC Project</u> -The Mosaic Project teaches people the skills they need to build the communities they envision. The Mosaic values are: Mutual Respect, Open Mindedness, Self Respect, Attitude, Individuality, and Community. To learn more, visit http://www.mosaicproject.org/.

<u>Expeditionary Learning Design Principles</u> - Expeditionary Learning has 10 design principles. Read more about these principles at http://eleducation.org/resources/design-principles.

### Appendix B: Learner-Centered Strategies & Curriculum

	Preparing Students for College and Career Readiness						
Curriculum	Developing Student Agency	Teaching higher order thinking skills	Mastery- Based Grading	Providing multiple adult and peer mentors	Creating a Flexible Learning model w/ targeted, data-driven instruction		
Teach To One Math 6-8		x		x	x		
CORE Ready ELA and Writing Curriculum that is vertically aligned		х		Х			
Common Core SS and Next Gen Science Standards		X	X				
Guided Reading/Literature Circles		x		x	x		
Blended Programs (Reading Assistant, Reading Plus, iReady, ST Math)		X			x		
Expeditionary Learning	x		x				
Playlists	х				×		
Content Creation apps	х		x				
FOSS Science	Х	Х					
MOSAIC Project Curriculum	X			X			

### Appendix C: Data and Assessments

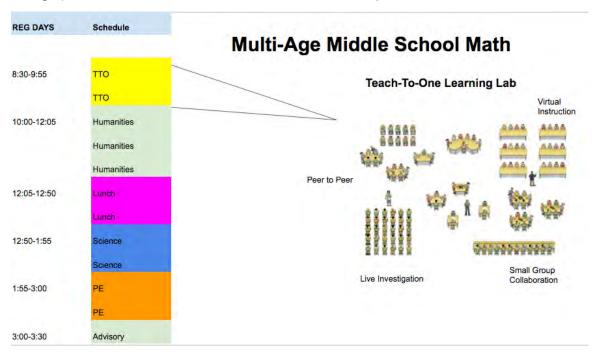
Assessment	Frequency given	Type of assessment	Competency- Based	Standards- Based	Grade	Subject
Reading Plus	daily	formative	Х		4-8	ELA
Developmental Reading Assessment	4x/year	formative/ summative	X		K-5	ELA
K/1 diagnostic	3x/year	formative		X	K-1	ELA
Words Their Way (WTW)	BOY	formative	X		K-5	ELA
Quick Phonics Screener	BOY/ as needed	formative	X		K-5	ELA
ELA Benchmark (EFC)	3x/ year	summative		X		ELA
Performance Writing Assessment (PWA)	1x/ year	summative		X	K-5	ELA
NWEA/MAP	2x/ year	summative	X		3-8	ELA/Math
SBAC	1x/year	summative	X		3-8	ELA/Math
Math Benchmark (EFC)	3x/ year	summative		Х	K-8	Math
creation time	weekly/ bi- weekly	formative/ summative	X		K-5	interdisciplinary
expeditionary learning presentations	2x/year	summative	X		K-8	science social studies
Exit Tickets	daily/ as needed	formative		X	K-8	All subjects
ADEPT/CELT	1x/ year		X		K-8	interdisciplinary

### Appendix D: Student Agency

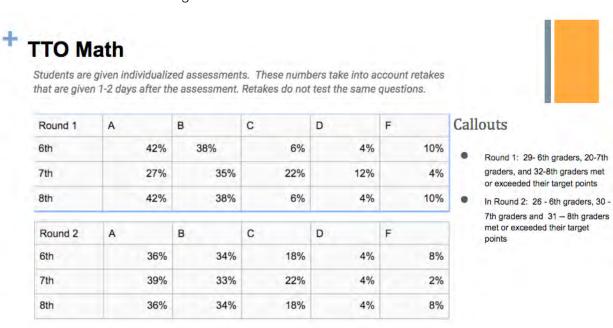
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#### Appendix E: Teach To One (TTO)

This graphic shows the middle school schedule and the layout of the TTO Lab at ASCEND.



These tables show that students are meeting their personalized academic goals in TTO with 90% of middle school students scoring a C or better on their individualized assessments.



#### **Appendix F: Current Year O Pilot Strand Schedules**

### 1st grader's morning

Community Time	Guided Reading	ELD	Recess	ELA
8:30-	8:50-	10:00-	10:20-	10:35
8:50	10:00	10:20	10:35	11:35

### 1st grader's afternoon

11:35-	12:15-	1:30-	2:00-	2:15-
12:15	1:30	2:00	2:15	3:15
Lunch	Math	Math Intervention	Recess	Creation Time Social Studies/Science

### 4th grader's morning

8:30-8:50	8:50-	9:50-	10:20-	10:35-
	9:50	10:20	10:35	11:35
Commun ity Time	Guided Reading ELA	ELA	Recess	Math

### 4th grader's afternoon

11:35- 12:15	12:15-12:45	12:45-1:45	1:45- 1:55	2:00-2:50	2:50-3:30
Lunch	ELD	Writing	Outdoor	Social Studies/ Science	Creation Time

#### LEGEND

Multi-age instructional grouping
Grade-level instructional grouping
Non-instructional time

#### Appendix G: Middle School Discipline Data

This SWIS data shows that daily office referrals among middle school students has drastically dropped.

