

SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

SFF DETROIT

REACHING DISCONNECTED YOUTH THROUGH A RIGOROUS, RECUPERATIVE COLLEGE PREP MODEL

“*Schools for the Future is designed specifically for students who are off-track academically, where frustrating school experiences could easily make them walk away. SFF can counter this by addressing learning gaps—but in a way that is recuperative, confidence-building, and blends remediation with challenging, higher-order academic work and extended learning opportunities that help students accelerate their learning and leave SFF college- and career-ready.*”

EPHRAIM WEISSTEIN, SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE

KEY FEATURES:

- ✓ New School
- ✓ Individual Rotation and À La Carte Blended Models
- ✓ Competency-Based Learning
- ✓ Social-Emotional Development
- ✓ Experiential-Based Learning

AT A GLANCE:

Start Date: Fall 2012

Grades Served: 8–12

Location: Detroit, MI

Operator: Schools for the Future Development

Operator Type: Nonprofit

School Type: Charter

Setting: Urban

Students at Start: 120

Students at Capacity: 480

MODEL TOOLBOX:

Learning Management System & Gradebook: MiStar

Student Information System & Behavior Management: MiStar

Assessment Tools and Approaches: ACT Plan and Explore (Pre, Mid, Post), Academic Approach - 3 Interim Assessment targeting college readiness standards, Performance-based projects

Digital Content Provider: Edgenuity

Student Hardware: Chromebooks, HP desktops (Windows 8.1)

Picture a 15-year-old student. Now imagine her in a middle school classroom, struggling with basic skills and a life outside school, managing part-time work and the increasing demands from friends and family. Although she reads at a third-grade level, the term “grade level” just doesn’t apply to her—she’s a high schooler in every other way—and she’s strong at basic math, having helped out in the family business. Promote her socially to high school and statistically she’ll drop out by grade 10. Put her in a traditional alternative school or online recovery program and she might graduate, but with marginal skills. But if you keep her in middle school, what will happen to her?

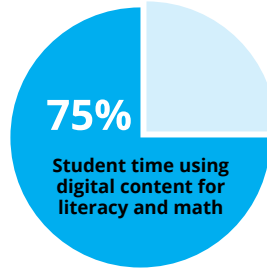
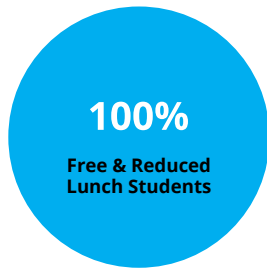
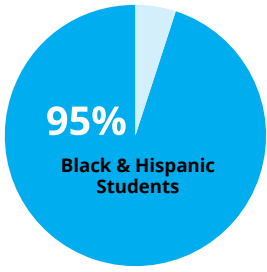
Schools for the Future (SFF) offers an alternative to help her succeed. SFF is a new model for overage and undercredited students that uses a mastery approach to help them recuperate lost credits while accelerating their path toward college-ready standards and high school graduation. In its Detroit-based school, SFF combines intensive staffing with strategies to address social-emotional development with “wraparound” services like tutors and various technologies to support the diverse learning needs of students who are two or more years behind academically when they enter high school.

The heart of a student’s SFF experience is the “PACT Team,” a group of 12–14 students that meets weekly and is facilitated by a certified school social worker. Along with daily ad-

visory that helps students monitor their academic progress, the PACT provides a “home base” facilitating a personalized program. It anchors every student’s SFF experience and provides a regular format for students to develop the necessary habits and skills to graduate college and career ready. For 60 minutes each week, students meet with their PACT team to work on their social-emotional literacy, self-efficacy, group and individual problem-solving skills, and to explore their college and career options and map their pathway.

Students and teachers receive real-time data on performance, and parents can view their children’s progress anytime and immediately communicate with SFF advisors. Student-led conferences occur quarterly for a comprehensive review of student progress and support. As a result of these conferences, a student might schedule extra “flex time” practice on a particular skill, or he might work with his advisors to connect with a tutor. “Catch up” days, or even weeks, are available for students who need them.

SFF students progress through four performance levels to graduation. Courses at the first two levels support acceleration and focus heavily on literacy and math as the “languages of learning.” Students spend the bulk of their day working on core subjects. In a prototypical class, five groups of three students work on five different activities within a module, two groups work on a different



BY THE NUMBERS:
 Public revenue per pupil: \$8,000
 Expenses per pupil: \$8,000
 Years to sustainability: 3

BLENDED SUBJECTS: Math, Literacy, Science, Social Studies, PACT (youth dev. class)

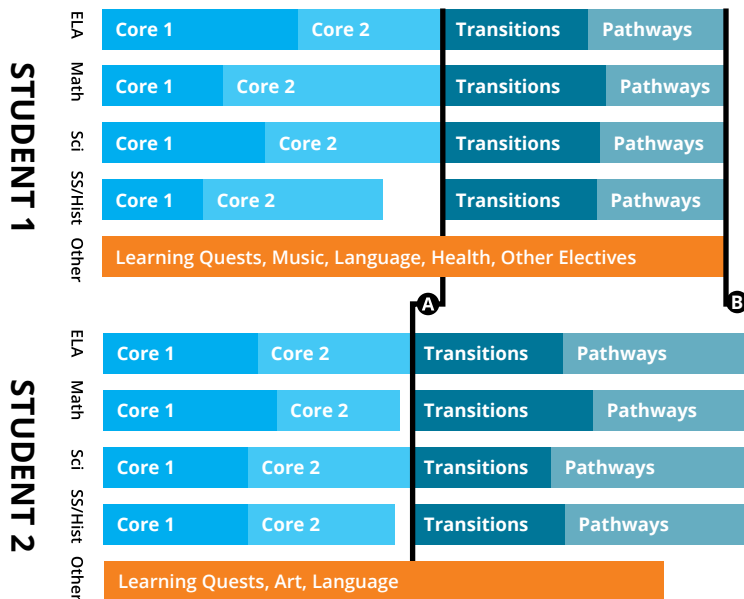
module, and three students work individually on their Chromebooks. Students attend SFF from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. participating in a variety of classes and activities that includes Learning Quests in which students work on self-identified projects of interest and recreation & wellness. Learning takes place in different venues—classes, individual work stations, internships, college campuses, and in the community. Through SFF’s learning management system, students can stay after regular school hours to plug into their personalized learning “playlist” or do the same at home through their mobile device.

As students advance to SFF’s upper levels, Transitions and Pathways, they gain greater independence and broader options about how, where,

and when they learn. Their “limitless campus” of school, web, and community-based learning opportunities includes blended courses at the school, online courses, Saturday academies or workshops, tutorials, internships, Summer of Work and Learning activities, community-based projects, and required dual enrollment courses. By the final level, students are off-site as much as 60–70 percent of the day, accessing a range of high-quality learning opportunities such as college courses or internships that a single school could never provide alone. This approach also allows SFF to use an innovative and cost-effective staffing plan, with higher student-staff ratios at lower SFF levels (when students need more intensive support) and fewer staff at higher levels (when

students are more independent). The SFF team integrates wrap-around services and a high-tech, high-touch approach into the high school experience. A valuable opportunity exists to apply the new SFF model beyond Detroit to help address the growing nation-wide issue of overage and undercredited high school students. The school, which originally opened in Fall 2012, closed after the first year due to administrative challenges. The founders reopened the school in Fall 2014.

RECUPERATIVE COLLEGE PREP FOUR LEVEL PERFORMANCE SYSTEM



CORE 1: Grade 6 or below proficiency

CORE 2: Grade 8 proficiency

TRANSITIONS: Grade 10 proficiency

PATHWAYS: Grade 12 proficiency

CORE 1 & 2 EXPERIENCE

Recuperative college prep curriculum: basic and higher order skills concurrently.

30-day curriculum modules to increase motivation and more effectively track learner progress and needs

Intensive literacy and numeracy development (115+ mins. day)

Built-in opportunities to accelerate through carefully selected acceleration programs

Formal 30-day performance reviews

1:1 technology environment and “high touch/high support” blended online curriculum

PACT Team: Hub of the SFF student experience and daily support system. Facilitated by school psychologist. Affective development curriculum.

Gateway to SFF Upper Levels ^A

Successful presentation of performance portfolio, required reading and math proficiency, and demonstration of gateway and ACT assessment benchmarks.

Transitions & Pathways Experience

Increasing independence and diversity in path to graduation using “limitless campus” of web-based and community learning opportunities

2 required internships

2 required dual enrollment courses

PACT Team continues to provide “home base” for student support and graduation pathway planning

Graduation & Post Secondary Transition ^B

Passed state graduation exam, received ACT score of 21 or better, and met other SFF graduation requirements.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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