EDUCATION FOR CHANGE
EPIC CHARTER SCHOOL

A NEXT GENERATION SCHOOL MODEL SYNERGIZED WITH NARRATIVE

> *At Epic, students will learn to see themselves as heroes in their own Epic journey.*
> **MICHAEL HATCHER, PRINCIPAL, EPIC CHARTER SCHOOL**

KEY FEATURES:

- ☑ **New School**
- ☑ **Station Rotation, Individual Rotation, Flex Blended Models**
- ☑ **Competency-Based Learning**
- ☑ **Project-Based and Experiential Learing**
- ☑ **Flexible Learning Spaces**
- ☑ **Social-Emotional Development**

AT A GLANCE:

Start Date: Fall 2014

Grades Served: 6-8

Location: Oakland, CA

Operator: Education for Change

Operator Type: Charter

Setting: Urban

Students at Start: 168

Students at Capacity: 504

MODEL TOOLBOX:

Learning Management System: Google Classroom

Student Information System & Gradebook: Illuminate

Assessment Tools and Approaches: Amplify benchmarks, NWEA MAP, ExitTicket

Digital Content Providers: ST Math, Reading Plus, History Alive, Gooru, Khan Academy, Summit playlists on Activate, Imagine Learning, Duolingo, PLTW LMS

Hardware: Acer 720 Chromebooks, Lenovo Ideapads Y510 for Engineering lab, laser cutter, vinyl cutter, 3D printer

The Vision: Adolescents claim their identities and sense of self-worth through narrative. Everyday, students in the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland, California, are confronted by two disempowering narratives: the 'street narrative' that invokes a culture of punishment and violence and the 'macro narrative' of culture deficit for urban communities. The charter management organization Education for Change intends to change students' interpretation of these narratives through a student-centered school model with a narrative of its own: **a hero's journey**.

This narrative structure for Epic Charter School empowers middle school students with sense of unity and purpose in life, where they can feel part of a culture with a shared experience and with more opportunities to experience growth and accomplishment. It structures the middle school experience as a single, ongoing, coherent journey, giving students much more control over the pace of their own journey.

The school's social system is designed intentionally to build character, community, and confidence. The academic program is designed intentionally to develop innovators and engineers who have the skills and confidence to independently design and implement creative solutions to real world challenges.

The Academic Model: The hero's journey is a personalized and immersive educational experience. Design and engineering is front and center so students have authentic opportunities to design solutions to real world problems, prototype those solutions, and test and iterate on those prototypes using the same technology, programs, and tools used by engineers at Lockheed Martin.

The school culture is embodied in the narrative of the Epic Chronicles: within small learning communities—Houses—students engage in cycles of 6-12 week units that culminate in Quests—live action role plays where students apply their learning to solve real-world problems. Students are given an open-ended problem to solve however they choose, demonstrating their growth and capacity.

Game mechanics drive the school model: students' advance by leveling up through progress paths. They receive daily feedback and rewards, earning points and badges for themselves and their House through academic achievement, social-emotional development, and completing Quests. They engage in multi-player-like social connection through their Houses and with badges for pro-social behaviors.

Students make progress through 12 distinct levels of mastery, not grade levels—a second-year student could be at copper level in math, platinum level in ELA, and silver in science and history. A data dashboard provides students and adults the ability to daily monitor points, badges, and levels for individual students and Houses using data from mastery-based assessments, social-emotional development, and Quests.

Through blended learning and mastery-based education, students become critical independent thinkers with the capacity to self-direct their learning. First-year students
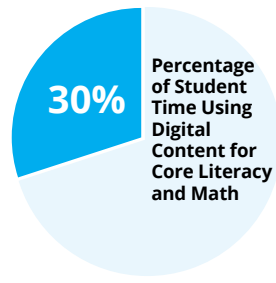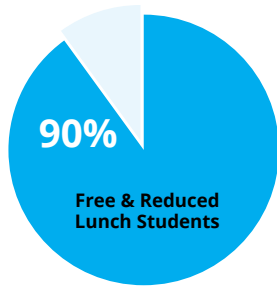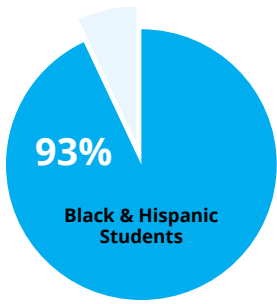
BY THE NUMBERS:

Year 1 public revenue per pupil: $10,952

Year 1 expenses per pupil: $16,778

Year 4 revenue per pupil: $11,275

Year 4 expenses per pupil: $11,260

Years to sustainability: 3

BLENDED SUBJECTS:
English Language Arts/History, Math/Science, Engineering, PE, Design

have a regular daily schedule with in-class station rotations; through gradual release, third-year students develop their own weekly plans and have greater ownership over scheduling their work and managing longer-term projects.

Students spend more time in their House's Sandbox as they demonstrate increased capacity to self-direct learning. A large room with moveable furniture and smaller adjoining rooms, the Sandbox is a space for collaborative learning, small group discussions, large project work, inde-

pendent work, and small group instruction.

Student choice in what is learned, when it is learned, and where it is learned is combined with strong relationships, relevance, and engagement. This gives students the safety and security to persevere as it taps into their individual interests, and brings joy to learning.

The Organizational Model: Fully-credentialed, experienced teachers are supported by uncredentialed Guides, maintaining an affordable low student-to-adult ratio. Guides

monitor and support students in their digital learning by leveraging analytics data; they mentor students, attend to social-emotional development, and help students with goal-setting. Teachers focus on targeted direct instruction and facilitating rigorous performance tasks and higher-order thinking activities.

The Operator: Education for Change believes it is the right for every child to have access to a high-quality, 21st century education. EFC operates three elementary and two K-8 charter schools within the Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland, California, with a focus on turning around failing district public schools and dramatically improving outcomes for the students it serves. The charter organization started to employ blended learning in its existing elementary schools. As part of its strategic plan, EFC created Epic to provide students in its elementary schools with a quality middle school option in their neighborhood as well as test and extend the elementary blended learning model.

The charter's leaders are looking to test different elements of Epic's model for scaling within EFC and throughout Oakland: Guides, gradual release blended learning, engineering and design curricula, increased access to feedback and data, the Sandbox, Quests, gamification of school culture, and competency-based progression.

HERO'S JOURNEY

A graphic depiction of the Hero's Journey which aligns to the levels students must progress through to graduate from Epic.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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NEXT GENERATION LEARNING CHALLENGES
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