



2020 NEW SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION REPORT FOR: IMPACT | TACOMA

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Report Submitted By

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INTRODUCTION

The Washington State Charter School Commission (Commission) was created in 2013, after the approval of Initiative 1240 and subsequent passage of Engrossed Second Substitute Senate Bill 6194, to serve as a statewide charter school authorizer. The eleven-member Commission is tasked with running a process to approve new charter schools, and effectively monitoring the schools it authorizes through ongoing oversight.

Mission

To authorize high quality public charter schools and provide effective oversight and transparent accountability to improve educational outcomes for at-risk students.

Values

Student-Centered
Cultural and Community Responsiveness
Excellence and Continuous Learning
Accountability/Responsibility
Transparency
Innovation

Vision

Foster innovation and ensure excellence so that every student has access to and thrives in a high-quality public school.

The Commission is committed to being culturally responsive. To that end, the Commission has adopted cultural competence definitions to support this commitment.

Cultural Inclusion

Inclusion is widely thought of as a practice of ensuring that people in organizations feel they belong, are engaged and are connected through their work to the goals and objectives of the organization. Miller and Katz (2002) present a common definition: "Inclusion is a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best work." Inclusion is a shift in organization culture. The process of inclusion engages each individual and makes each feel valued and essential to the success of the organization.

Individuals function at full capacity, feel more valued and are included in the organization's mission. This culture shift creates higher-performing organizations where motivation and morale soar.¹

Cultural Responsive Education Systems

Culturally responsive educational systems are grounded in the beliefs that all culturally and linguistically diverse students can excel in academic endeavors when their culture, language, heritage, and experiences are valued and used to facilitate their learning and development, and they are provided access to high quality teachers, programs, and resources.²

Cultural Competency

Cultural competence provides a set of skills that professionals need in order to improve practice to serve all students and communicate effectively with their families. These skills enable the educator to build on the cultural and language qualities that young people bring to the classroom rather than viewing those qualities as deficits.

Cultural competence allows educators to ask questions about their practice in order to successfully teach students who come from different cultural backgrounds. Developing skills in cultural competence is like learning a language, a sport or an instrument.

The learner must learn, relearn, continuously practice, and develop in an environment of constant change. Cultures and individuals are dynamic – they constantly adapt and evolve.

Cultural competence is:

- Knowing the community where the school is located
- Understanding all people have a unique world view
- Using curriculum and implementing an educational program that is respectful of and relevant to the cultures represented in its student body
- Being alert to the ways that culture affects who we are
- Places the focus of responsibility on the professional and the institution

¹ Puget Sound Educational Service District. (2014). Racial Equity Policy. (p. 7) Seattle, WA: Blanford, S.

² Leadscape, National Institute for Urban School Improvement. (2010) Culturally Responsive Coaching for Inclusive Schools. (p. 4) Tempe, AZ: Mulligan, E. M., Kozleski, E. M.

- The examination of systems, structures, policies and practices for their impact on all students and families viewing those systems as deficits.³

Focus on Quality

The New School Application solicitation and the resulting evaluation process are rigorous and demanding. The process is designed to ensure that charter school operators possess the capacity to implement sound strategies, practices, and methodologies. Successful applicants will clearly demonstrate high levels of expertise and capacity in the areas of education, charter school finance, administration, and management, as well as high expectations for excellence in professional standards and student achievement.

Autonomy and Accountability

Charter schools have broad autonomy, but not without strong accountability. Charter schools will be accountable to the Commission for meeting academic, financial, and organizational performance standards. The three areas of performance covered by the evaluation policy correspond directly with the three components of a strong charter school application and the three key areas of responsibility outlined in charter contracts.

Accountability

Evaluation of charter school performance is guided by three fundamental questions:

- Is the educational program a success?
- Is the school financially viable?
- Is the organization effective and well-run?

The answers to each of these three questions are essential to a comprehensive evaluation of charter school performance.

Charter schools are evaluated annually against standards in the following categories:

Academic Performance – Charter schools are required to make demonstrable improvements in student performance over the term of the charter. Schools are required to administer all state standardized tests and to adhere to academic standards.

Financial Performance – Schools must demonstrate the proper use of public funds, as evidenced by annual balanced budgets, sound audit reports, and conforming to generally accepted accounting practices.

Organizational Performance – A nonprofit corporation holds the charter school contract and is responsible for complying with both the terms in the contract and all applicable laws. This charter school board of directors is a public body and is required to adhere to public meeting and public records laws.

Approved charter schools will be granted a five-year charter contract. Schools unable to demonstrate academic progress or unable to comply with legal/ contractual or financial requirements may face sanctions, non-renewal, or charter revocation.

Autonomy

In exchange for rigorous accountability, charter school operators experience substantially greater authority to make decisions related to the following:

- Personnel
- School management and operations
- Finances
- Curriculum
- School day and calendar
- Education Service Provider (ESP) agreements

Evaluation Process

Commission staff manage the application evaluation process and evaluation teams that include national and local experience and expertise on the operation of successful charter schools. The Commission staff leads these teams throughout the evaluation process to produce a merit-based recommendation regarding whether to approve or deny each proposal. This report from the evaluation team is the culmination of three stages of review:

Proposal Evaluation

The evaluation team conducted individual and group assessments of the merits of the proposal based on the complete submission. In the case of experienced operators, the Commission and NACSA supplemented the evaluation team's work with due diligence to verify claims made in the proposals.

Capacity Interview

After reviewing the application and discussing the findings of their individual reviews, the evaluation team conducted an in-person assessment of the applicant team's capacity.

³ Center for Improvement of Student Learning, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.

<http://www.k12.wa.us/CISL/EliminatingtheGaps/CulturalCompetence/default.aspx>

Evaluation Team Ratings

The evaluation team members each produced independent, ratings and comments regarding whether to recommend the proposal for approval or denial.

Commission staff collated the team ratings into an overall recommendation report to approve or deny each application based on its merits as outlined in the rubric. The authority and responsibility to decide whether to approve or deny each application rests with the members of the Commission.

Recommendation Report Contents

This recommendation report includes the following:

Proposal Overview

Basic information about the proposed school as presented in the application.

Recommendation

An overall rating regarding whether the proposal meets the criteria for approval.

Evaluation

Analysis of the proposal based on four primary areas of plan development and the capacity of the applicant team to execute the plan as presented:

Educational Program Plan and Capacity

- School Overview
- Family and Community Engagement
- School Culture and Climate
- Student Recruitment and Enrollment
- Program Overview
- Curriculum and Instructional Design
- Student Performance Standards
- High School Graduation Requirements (if applicable)
- Supplemental Programming
- School Calendar and Schedule
- Special populations and at-risk students
- Student Discipline Policy and Plan
- Educational Program Capacity.

Organizational Plan and Capacity

- Legal Status and Governing Documents
- Board Members and Governance
- Organization Structure
- Advisory bodies
- Grievance/Complaint Process
- District Partnerships
- Education Service Providers (ESP) and Other partnerships

- Staffing plans, Hiring, Management, and Evaluation
- Professional Development
- Performance Framework
- Facilities
- Transportation, Safety, and Food Service
- Operations Plan and Capacity

Financial Plan and Capacity

- Financial Plan
- Financial Management Capacity

Existing Operators (if applicable)

- Track record of academic success
- Organizational soundness
- Plans for network growth

Rating Characteristics

Evaluation teams assess each application against the published evaluation rubric. In general, the following definitions guide evaluator ratings:

Exceeds

Clear and complete responses to all prompts. Consistently detailed, comprehensive explanations provided, including specific evidence that shows robust preparation. Presents a clear, explicit picture of how the school expects to operate. When applicable, responses connect cohesively to other sections of the program. When applicable, the information/evidence demonstrates a high degree of capacity to implement the proposed program.

Meets

Clear and complete responses to all prompts. Sufficient explanations provided, including evidence that shows preparation. Presents a clear picture of how the school expects to operate. When applicable, responses connect to other sections of the program. When applicable, the information/evidence provided demonstrates capacity to implement the proposed program.

Partially Meets

Clear and complete response to some but not all prompts. The response provides partial explanations and lacks meaningful detail or requires additional information in one or more key areas. When applicable, responses provide limited connections to other sections. When applicable, the information/evidence provided demonstrates some/limited capacity to implement the proposed program.

Does Not Meet

Unclear and/or incomplete responses to most prompts. The response provides insufficient details to most prompts. Responses lack connections to related sections. Responses demonstrate lack of preparation and/or raises substantial concerns about the applicant's understanding of, or ability to, implement an effective plan.

A Note about Transitional Kindergarten (TK)

Under the Charter School Act ("CSA"), the Charter School Commission ("CSC") is required to solicit proposals for charter schools. The solicitation must include the criteria that the CSC will use to approve or deny a charter school application, and the required performance framework that the CSC uses for school oversight and evaluation. The current application criteria and performance frameworks do not include TK, which means that there is no established or vetted criteria for assessing an applicant's TK program, and no performance frameworks for overseeing or evaluating a TK program. In addition, the sample contract applicants were referred to does not include TK, and applicants were specifically notified that the CSC has no obligation to contract with an applicant.

While the solicitation did not include TK, some of the current applications indicate the hope to enroll students in TK. For the reasons set forth above, TK was not assessed in the application process. **While the reports will include recommendations regarding whether or not to authorize a school as a whole, any recommendations specifically exclude TK, as TK will not be authorized this application cycle.** The CSC currently intends to develop the legally required criteria and performance frameworks, and processes for authorized applicants and existing school to add TK in the future.

APPLICATION OVERVIEW

Applicant Name

Impact Public Schools (IPS)

Proposed School Name

Impact | Tacoma

Proposed Location

Tacoma, WA

Board Members

Sara Morris – Board Chair

Tatiana Epanchin-Troyan - Secretary

Noah Wepman - Treasurer

Todd Meldahl – Facility Committee Chair

Patrick Methvin – Finance Committee Chair

Michaela Razo

Daniel Zavala

Proposed School Leader

Not identified at the time of submission

Enrollment Projections

Academic Year	Planned Enrollment	Maximum Enrollment	Grades Served
2021/2022	180	180	Grades: K-1
2022/2023	270	270	Grades: K-2
2023/2024	354	354	Grades: K-3
2024/2025	438	438	Grades: K-4
2025/2026	522	522	Grades: K-5

Mission, Vision, Values

Mission:

The mission of Impact | Tacoma is to prepare a diverse student population to succeed in college and impact communities as the next generation of equity-driven, innovative leaders.

Vision:

Impact | Tacoma graduates will be problem-solvers, innovators, and change agents of tomorrow. Students will live full, connected, and purposeful lives. Our diverse group of scholars will solve our future's greatest challenges; together, we will eliminate the opportunity gap in our community. Our school offers a rigorous, personalized curriculum within a vibrant school community that balances high expectations with joy.

Values:

- Bold Ambitions
- Team WA
- Play Big
- Brave Solidarity
- Everyone Grows
- Intention

Long Term Goals

Impact | Tacoma’s primary objective and long-term goal is to prepare all students to meet their individual potential and for success in middle/high school and a four-year college. IPS’ academic, operational and financial functions must work in concert to ensure success.

Additionally, IPS has developed two additional frameworks to provide a full picture of student success.

Deeper Learning Rubric evaluates competencies that extend beyond basic skills, preparing students to apply knowledge in 21st century jobs and civic life. Examples include critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and communication.

- Each year while enrolled at Impact | Tacoma, 80% of students will show at least one year of growth on the Deeper Learning Rubric.

IPS Compass evaluates habits, skills and mindsets that empower students to be the next generation of equity-driven innovative leaders. Examples include growth mindset; social emotional skills, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) competencies; and others.

- Each year enrolled at Impact | Tacoma, at least 80% of students will show growth in the IPS Compass.

Education Program Terms

Impact | Tacoma’s school model has three program terms. They include:

1. School-based mentor groups
2. Personalized learning pathways for every student
3. Project-based learning (PBL)

Each program term is intended to ensure that every student has the opportunity to meet career and college-ready standards and are provided a culturally responsive and inclusive program. Additionally, Impact | Tacoma places a focus on nurturing “21st century” skills and habits while cultivating an educational experience that is “rigorous, engaging and effective.”

Education Model/Instructional Design Elements

Multi-age, small guided reading/math groups based on student level

- Fosters reciprocal peer mentoring and an understanding that everyone has both strengths and opportunities. Research shows that, when paired with intentional groupings and effective instruction,

multi-age, small groups help students develop “more positive attitudes toward school, themselves, and their peers.”

Departmentalized teachers (4th - 5thgrades)

- Increases the quality of focused instruction as teachers become experts in the pedagogy of their subject area. Allows opportunities for specialized professional development and teacher development pathways.

Co-teacher model (TK-3)

- Provides instruction within each student’s zone of proximal development: tasks are feasible without becoming frustrating. As a result, student learning accelerates.

Individualized instruction and practice

- Supports actionable feedback through one-on-one conferences with teachers and peers. Positively impacts the student’s thinking in the moment. Research shows that receiving regular targeted feedback and working at one’s independent level accelerate student learning.

Large-group direct instruction

- Increases schema for students from diverse backgrounds in core content areas, which is critical to developing reading comprehension. Research shows that establishing core knowledge in the early grades is a critical prerequisite to reading comprehension in later grades.

Online learning

- Offers adaptive instructional modules iteratively to address student learning needs and misconceptions in real-time, increasing the scope and moderating the pace of individualization in the classroom.

Project-Based Learning

- Encourages students to build, create, and serve as a change maker in their communities. Increases student executive functioning skills including focus, critical thinking, making connections, taking on challenges, and self-directed learning.

Mentor Groups

- Promotes student feelings of safety and freedom in the school environment, both physically and intellectually. Students develop the ability to establish and maintain positive relationships with diverse individuals and groups, a core SEL competency.

Explicit DEI and SEL instruction and assessment

- Prepares students to lead well with others, while supporting student learning in the present. Metaanalysis of 213 studies shows an 11-percentile point gain in academic achievement for students who participated in evidence-based SEL programs compared to students who did not participate in SEL programs.

Anticipated Student Population

The applicant anticipates serving a population with diversity in culture, language, prior educational experiences, home circumstances, learning styles, attitudes toward learning, and future ambitions. This includes the following characteristics indicated below:

Free and Reduced Price Lunch Eligible	Students with Disabilities	English Language Learners	Highly Capable	Homeless
60+%	10+%	11+%	5%	5%

RECOMMENDATION

Impact | Tacoma

APPROVE

Application Strengths Summary

- The Impact Public School’s model is well developed, based on evidence-based best practices, and looks to nurture and empower students both academically and social-emotionally.
- The IPS team brings a depth and diversity of experience in both charter and traditional district settings locally and nationally.
- The IPS board and leadership has already successfully launched one K-5 charter public school and is in the process of launching a second school in fall of 2020.
- Preliminary student academic results are promising, and national funders consider Impact | PSE to be one of the top performers in the country.
- IPS | Tacoma plans to locate in a facility that is move-in ready and designed to meet the needs of elementary school-aged children.
- Understanding the challenges of a teacher shortage locally and nationally, IPS has adopted a “grow your own” philosophy and is formally working to develop not only teachers, but school leaders from within.

Application Weaknesses Summary

- There is little evidence of how the feedback from the Tacoma community influenced the IPS model to make it more responsive to specific community-identified needs.
- Though the initial results are promising, IPS’s current school only serves K-2 students and therefore student performance on statewide assessments is not known at this time.
- The board is proposing a very ambitious growth plan. Even though the board and staff may have the relevant skills and experience to grow a charter school network, the current accountability mechanisms by the board may be insufficient to provide oversight to not only IPS as a non-profit entity, but up to four schools by the fall of 2021.
- The proposed special education staffing model and program may be insufficient to meet the needs of all students, particularly once the school is at capacity.

EDUCATIONAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

Impact | Tacoma

MEETS

Summary

Impact | Tacoma is the proposed third school of Washington-based Impact Public Schools (IPS), a Washington-based charter management organization (CMO). The school, at full enrollment will enroll 522 Kindergarten through fifth grade students in the Tacoma area. IPS operates Impact | Puget Sound Elementary (Impact | PSE), a school serving Kindergarten – second grade students in Tukwila, Washington and Impact | Salish Sea (Impact | SSE), an elementary school that will eventually locate in South Seattle, is slated to open in fall of 2020 (co-located with Impact | PSE for the 2020-21 school year).

According to the application, “IPS has conducted a two-phase approach assessing family and community demand in Tacoma...” with the first phase commencing in August of 2019 through “listening tours” and meetings with community leaders (pg. 10 and Attachment 3). The second phase of community outreach, “lead by Impact’s CEO and an experienced Community Outreach Ambassador with deep ties to Tacoma through her previous work with SOAR Academy” began in November 2019 and continues through to the present (pg. 10 and Attachment 3). IPS included artifacts; such as, letters and signatures of support as evidence.

IPS stated that they received 309 applications for 160 seats available for SY2019-2020 at Impact | PSE and that some of the current Impact | PSE families commute from Tacoma, though specific numbers were not provided.

Though IPS provided evidence of community engagement, the type of engagement differed from that of brand new charter school applicants. In this case the questions posed to the community appear to be more general and are not indicative of co-creation with the Tacoma community specifically. While the model attends to many of the concerns presented by the community, the application lacked specificity instead stating that the, “responses to these questions will be used to contextualize the Impact | Tacoma culture, climate, curriculum, and continued outreach efforts” (pg. 11).

Of particular importance and context is the history of charters in Tacoma. Both Green Dot Destiny and SOAR Academy recently closed, leaving many elementary and middle school families without a charter public school option. These closures were traumatic for families, particularly for the founding families at SOAR Academy – a charter school that was developed alongside and deeply responsive to the needs of families in the historic Hilltop neighborhood. The applicant provided information regarding listening tours conducted with families wherein they “heard repeatedly that parents are desperate for an elementary school that is focused on culturally responsive social emotional learning and academic excellence” (pg. 7). Additionally, since Impact | Tacoma plans to locate in the former Green Dot Destiny building, a listening session was held

specially with neighbors in that community who expressed a desire for another school to occupy the building.

The enrollment policy includes a timeline and process that allows the applicant to engage in broad-based recruiting and the applicant has outlined several recruitment strategies including: community events, door to door canvassing, targeted marketing which includes direct mail and door hangers. IPS has and will continue to develop resources in the languages spoken by the target enrollment population; conduct events in locations and languages that allow attendees to feel welcomed and empowered.

While schools may ask a variety of questions for the purposes of enrollment, very few questions should be asked during the “application” stage. The second paragraph of the policy discusses several pieces of information to be collected on students upon enrollment, including a child’s special education status, past disciplinary actions, and health conditions (Attachment 4). For parents who are unfamiliar with charter public schools in Washington or for whom English is a second language, the wording could cause confusion or a “chilling effect” for interested families. This was brought to the attention of the applicant team during the capacity interview and the team said they were willing to review the existing policy.

IPS understands that community engagement works when it is long-term and mutually beneficial. To maximize services, IPS partners with organizations to connect students and families to resources that strengthen and support learning with cultural inclusion to expand their worldview. The following organizations have already committed to solidifying a partnership:

- ECEAP Preschool Eastside has committed to partnering with Impact | Tacoma as an early childhood feeder, with interest in sharing space in the facility.
- Multicultural Child and Family Hope Center provides culturally-relevant support services to children and families with special care for social-emotional and academic development and parent resources.
- Summit Olympus is a high-quality charter high school option with deep knowledge of the Tacoma community and needs of the families Impact | Tacoma may serve (pg. 13).

School-based mentor groups, personalized learning pathways for every student and project-based learning (PBL) will drive instruction at Impact | Tacoma. The Social-Emotional (SEL) Curriculum is also a core component of Impact’s education model. This SEL curriculum has three core components: Compass Habits - rooted in core values and aligned with key 21st century skills; Badge Work – a way to recognize students (scholars) and staff for demonstrating core values and habits; and Circle – the primary way in which students and staff engage in SEL.

IPS will use several baseline, formative, and summative assessments (ex: Fountas & Pinnell, NWEA MAP, Lexia, and Smarter Balanced Assessment (grades 3-5)) to drive instruction and to monitor student progress toward standards mastery of the Learning Standards. Grade promotion and acceleration are based primarily on reading, writing, and math performance. In the case of grade retention, academics will be the primary factor to make the determination, but other indicators such as attendance, social-emotional development, and academic growth over time may be considered as well.

Impact | Tacoma’s annual academic schedule provides 183 instructional days and at least 1,151.5 instructional hours for students, which exceed state standards. The learning environment and components of the school design aligns with IPS’s mission, vision, and values. The model is predominantly classroom based, with varying instructional strategies to support all learners. Specific instructional groupings and strategies will include small group instruction, a co-teaching model, online learning, and large group direct instruction. Although IPS describes a “co-teaching” model, it is important to clarify that the staffing table provided by Impact appears to indicate that each classroom has one certificated teacher and one *Teaching Fellow* for K-3rd grade.

Upon opening, IPS anticipates enrolling students with existing IEPs. The Student Success Team will meet weekly “to identify and/or discuss students of concern related to academic and vocational challenges” (pg. 51). IPS will also utilize a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (i.e. MTSS) approach aimed at improving outcomes for all students, which will be used to “identify “at-risk” students, monitor student progress, and/or provide evidence-based interventions to address special factors impacting students’ access to high educational outcomes” (pg. 52).

Using the experience of Impact | PSE, the applicant anticipates the percentage of students receiving special education growing over time, with 1% in year 1 growing to 10+% in years 3 and beyond. The staffing chart indicates that there will be 1 special education teacher in years 1-4, growing to 1.5 FTE in years 5 and beyond. While outside entities (True Measure Collaborative and Seneca Family of Agencies) will be contracted to provide needed services, the internal staffing structure may be insufficient to meet student needs.

In general, the plan for serving special populations lacks details and specificity. The application states, “inclusion is a priority and the preferred method of educating all IPS students” but does not explain how this works in practice (pg. 52).

IPS has outlined a discipline policy that nurtures students’ social-emotional development. The application states that, “Positive incentives are built into the model at the school and classroom level to establish a positive, consistent school culture” (pg. 62). They will use a restorative practice model “to attain outcomes rooted in research, including a drop in overall disciplinary referrals, lower suspension and expulsion rates, peaceful conflict resolution, and an end to bullying” (pg. 64).

While the school leader has not been identified at this time, the applicant provided the hiring timeline and qualifications necessary for that leader (pgs. 68-69, Attachment 11). IPS believes in developing leaders internally through their Leadership Fellows Program and states that the professional development, “prepares IPS teachers to assume school leadership positions” (pg. 67). The year-long fellowship trains potential leaders in “essential skills tied to IPS’s Leadership Rubric, focusing specifically on instructional leadership and implementing positive, culturally responsive school culture systems” (pgs. 67-68). More time will be needed to assess the effect of this program on leaders’ ability to implement a positive school culture and produce strong academic achievement outcomes.

IPS’s board and home office leadership team has deep educational experience and significant educational program capacity. The IPS home office has successfully opened one, fully-enrolled school, and is on track to open their second in fall of 2020. So far, student academic achievement appears to be positive, though IPS recognizes that their data is currently limited to growth in grades K, 1 and 2.

Overall, IPS has demonstrated that there is community and parent interest for the school. The applicant has engaged with the community and based on parent feedback, it appears that the proposed model attends to desires they have for their children’s education. The proposed academic program is rigorous and based in research-based best practices. IPS clearly values growth their students and early results indicate scholars are making gains. The board and the leadership team at the home office possess the necessary credentials and experience that is indicative of a high-quality charter school operator.

Educational Plan and Capacity: Analysis and Evaluator Comments
Strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact Tacoma anticipates serving approximately an equal proportion of special populations than the surrounding districts (except for Students with Disabilities in Tacoma School District). They anticipate that a majority of students will enroll with low levels of literacy or lack a solid foundation in math. Other student enrollment characteristics may include those whose performance is inconsistent; those with difficulty following oral instructions and those that have the tendency to disengage from learning (pg. 47). • IPS included information regarding Impact PSE’s enrollment and waitlist lengths that demonstrate significant demand in the Tukwila community (pg.10). • The applicants submitted a variety of stakeholder support evidence, e.g., letters. The applicants present a petition signed by numerous people, many of whom have children of the age eligible to enroll (Attachment 3). • Every student has a daily check-in with an assigned mentor during mentor time, and an extended coaching session once per week (pg.15). • There are several strategies for developing and reinforcing the school wide culture: Morning Circle, Friday Impact Circle, Badge System, etc. (pg. 17). • The description of a typical school day aligns with Impact’s educational program and mission. Teachers are given adequate planning time throughout the Mon-Th school day: 30 minutes over two recess periods and 50 minutes during enrichment period (pgs. 18-19, Attachment 9). • Student retention at the flagship school has been strong- “Between the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school year, Impact PSE maintained a 93% recurrent enrollment rate” and replication schools will employ similar strategies to retain students/families (pg. 21). • Impact describes how enrollment policies/strategy may shift in order to achieve diversity. “Each year, IPS will review its racial and ethnic balance and its [enrollment] policies to determine which are the most effective in enrolling and retaining a diverse student population” (pg. 22). • Personalized learning (self- and teacher-directed), mostly applicable to grades 3-5, and project-based learning are other key tenants of Impact’s program. Per the criteria, these aspects of the program will promote agency (self-directed) and are evidence-based (pgs. 25-26).

- The applicant has defined key instructional groupings and design elements that will drive student growth including, multi-aged, small group instruction; departmentalized teachers; co-teacher model; small group instruction; individualized instruction, etc. (pgs. 28-29).
- Curriculum choices were selected based on alignment with the school’s mission, best practices across high-performing schools across the country, and research-based evidence demonstrating effectiveness in addressing anticipated needs (pgs. 32-33).
- IPS will utilize various assessments to monitor student progress toward standards mastery of the Learning Standards and to drive instruction. They will use the assessments to inform personalized learning pathways for students. A table provides an overview of the assessments that will be used to evaluate student mastery in all core academic subject areas (pgs. 39-40).
- IPS has developed partnerships with local agencies (True Measure Collaborative & Seneca Family of Agencies) to provide supports to special education students and diverse learners. The partnership will allow support identification of students for services and determining types of services needed (pg. 47).
- According to the calendar and schedule submitted, students will spend approximately 360 minutes per day (on regular dismissal days) immersed in core subjects. Tacoma’s annual academic schedule provides a minimum of 180 instructional days and 1,000 instructional hours for students. Doors open for students at 7:45 am and dismissal begins at 3:30 pm (Monday - Thursday) and 1:00 pm (Friday) (pg. 60).

Weaknesses

- Though the applicants undertook community design sessions and sought community input, it is not clear that this influenced the specific school design. A review of the presentation that was shared with the community was the school describing and explaining its model/design with limited opportunity for families to question and influence the model. This discussion-question-breakout session was not about the school’s design but about what was happening in Tacoma and public education in general (pg. 11 and Attachment 3). While the applicant stated that the feedback would be used to “contextualize” parts of the model, no specific examples were provided.
- The applicant describes how the school culture will be shaped by the community and students, particularly through Circle. The applicant did not provide information on how or if additional supports would be necessary so that all students, including ELLs and students with IEPs, especially those with behavioral issues, have equal input in shaping the culture (pg. 15).
- IPS describes mentor relationships with the mentor engaging in mentor group coaching and supporting students with Circle time. There is a lack of information regarding the training that educators will receive in order to effectively mentor students, outside of their own mentor relationship with school administration (pgs. 15-17, 93).
- IPS describes a co-teaching model that will be used to support student growth. However, the Lead Teacher & Teacher Fellow model is not a best-practice. A best practice “co-teaching” model calls for two certificated teachers supporting student growth. However, having a Teacher Fellow in each classroom may provide some benefit to student learning and teacher professional development (pgs. 28-29).

- Impact will primarily differentiate instruction through small group instruction: “Students receive small group instruction daily in both reading and math, and in other subjects, according to student needs. Every student receives small group instruction every day; specific intervention group occur in parallel as needed, while other small group instruction is also taking place” (pg.35). For 80% of the students that are “at or above standard,” classroom differentiation will be the primary driver of personalized instruction. Yet in the table on page 36, it states that the classroom teacher alone is responsible for providing this instruction. No explanation is given for how differentiation will (physically) take place in the classroom.
- “GLAD interest strategies” are referenced for the baseline assessments for social studies though it was unclear why they were being used for that purpose (pg. 38).

ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

Impact | Tacoma

MEETS

Summary

Impact | Tacoma will be governed by the IPS Board of Directors. Board members possess a range of knowledge and skills in finance, operations, administration, nonprofit management, and leadership. The board's bylaws state that there is a minimum of three members and a maximum of thirteen members each serving a three-year term. Impact states that they intend to operate with at least ten board members at this time. At the time of application submission, there were seven members and the board has grown by two members during the application period.

Currently the board meets monthly in accordance with state laws. The application indicates that much of the work of the board happens at the committee level. There is currently a finance committee, a facility committee, and a board recruitment and selection committee. As a result, the board meets quarterly with a more robust agenda (2-3.5 hours), with the intervening months primarily dedicated to voting on a consent agenda that includes monthly accounts payable, policies, and any time-sensitive items (30 minutes). Notably absent in the committee structure is an education or academic performance committee. While the board has experience managing IPS's two current schools, the organization's growth plan is ambitious and may pose challenges for the board as the plan comes to fruition, particularly with the current meeting cadence. The board is responsible for the annual evaluation of the CEO using the "High Bar Evaluation Tool" which includes five external reviewers (360 degree feedback), and self-assessment, and student outcome and school climate data. Additionally, the application describes a comprehensive board self-evaluation process.

IPS has provided organizational charts for Year 1, Year 5 and full IPS operational capacity. The charts delineate roles and lines of authority for the governing board, organizational leadership, school leadership and faculty (Attachment 17). The organizational chart indicates that nearly all staff will report directly to the school's principal and no one reporting to the assistant principal. This staffing structure may pose capacity challenges for the principal, particularly when the school is at capacity.

Three advisory bodies will serve as central partners in Impact | Tacoma's success with a focus on achieving a two-part mission: The School Advisory Council (SAC), the Village Action Committee (VAC) and the IPS Families for Equitable Schools Team. Each advisory body will meet the following criteria to ensure a diverse makeup that is representative of the student body

- At least 50% families of color
- At least one male member
- At least one member from each grade level

Members of the IPS leadership team met with the both the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent of Tacoma Public Schools. According to the application, “the meeting was positive, and norms were created for how each organization (Tacoma Public Schools and Impact Public Schools) will talk about one another in the community given there was agreement that both organizations have the same mission for kids and families” (pg. 84).

IPS has established partnerships for contracted services, specifically System Six and Paylocity, which will provide back office services including accounting, payroll, strategic financial guidance, audit preparation and reporting. The applicant has signaled a desire to grow their contractual relationships with current transportation, food service, and janitorial providers, but also acknowledges the need to put these contracts up for public bid due to state procurement law.

According to the application, “new teachers will be compensated according to the IPS teacher compensation scale, which is based on years of experience and masters or national board certification” (pg. 88). The compensation structure includes performance raises, cost of living adjustments, and “spot bonuses.” While the principal will have the ultimate responsibility to hire teachers, the CEO and the Regional Director of Schools will support the recruitment and interview process. IPS has developed its own internal “Everyone Grows” rubric that is used to assess teacher and school leader performance.

IPS views professional development (PD) as one of its core strategies to, “recruit, retain, and develop a high-quality teaching force” at Impact | Tacoma (pg. 93). There is a robust professional development plan, with a description and timeline for staff development, which includes individual learning plans, data days and Faculty Fridays, among others.

IPS has developed a “robust evaluation system, [with] a combination of metrics and a data dashboard that are used to track student achievement and ensure that IPS students meet/exceed proficiency, growth, and achievement goals” (pg. 97). This data drives decision making and is used to improve instruction and student outcomes. The school-specific academic goal is in-line with the Commission’s desire to see student achievement measured in ways that aren’t captured in other accountability systems. The organizational goal, faculty satisfaction, is based from an internally designed survey though the application provides reasonable explanations for data collection and verification.

IPS is partnering with Washington Charter School Development (WCSD), a nonprofit real estate development organization that has extensive experience in facilities acquisition and management, having built over 45 charter school campuses. At the time of application, IPS has identified the former Green Dot Destiny Middle School facility that is already up to code and suitable for elementary aged students. The building has enough classrooms and administrative space to support Impact | Tacoma at capacity. IPS “is currently working to finalize the lease agreement documents” (pg. 101).

IPS has a high level of operational capacity and experience, as evidenced by their board and leadership team’s qualifications and the current portfolio of schools. However, there are concerns about the board ability to manage the organization’s ambitious growth plans. Changes to the board’s meeting schedule or committee structure may help to alleviate some of the concerns identified in this recommendation report.

Overall, IPS has provided a strong organizational plan. The organizational structure is logical, though the responsibilities of the principal are significant. The recruitment and hiring plans appear reasonable and achievable. The compensation package is competitive for a charter public school and includes incentives, including a robust professional development plan, to increase staff retention. The organization has already identified a facility that will meet its needs. Support from and experienced home office will likely benefit Impact | Tacoma's ability to launch successfully from an operational standpoint.

Organizational Plan and Capacity: Analysis and Evaluator Comments

Strengths

- Board members possess a range of relevant expertise, including education, real estate, finance, management, contract negotiation, nonprofit management, among others. The range of skills will be imperative to the growth and development of Impact | Tacoma (pgs. 75-76).
- Parental involvement is expressed through the school's parent organizations (School Advisory Council and Village Action Committee) and other advisory bodies. The Advisory Bodies will be made up of diverse represent parent and community perspectives and interests (pg. 81).
- IPS provides a reasonable grievance/complaint process. There is an informal framework for handling minor complaints. There is a more formal process for more serious complaints which involve escalation of an issue from the Principal, to the CEO, to the Board Chair (pgs. 82-83).
- IPS has established contractual relationships with key vendors—back office support, food services. They are leveraging the knowledge and experience of the previous school to facilitate the operational support Impact Tacoma will need (pg. 85).
- The school has a comprehensive PD plan, including summer and in-service formal training goal setting and planning, observation and coaching, data days and team meeting. (pg. 94) There is a coherent framework for delivering PD to the staff—Individual Learning Plan, Class Observations, Faculty Friday PD, etc. There is also a detailed agenda for professional development especially for the summer institute (pgs. 93-95).
- The Principal will create a professional environment in which all faculty can drive their own development aligned with their professional goals. The team has provided a protocol for how faculty will drive their own professional growth, including Reflect, Set goals, Make and Execute the plan, Demonstrate learned knowledge and skills (pg. 95).

Weaknesses

- While the founding team has some connections to the community through its outreach efforts, it is not clear how deeply embedded they are in this particular community (pg. 68).
- There is still limited information about how the IPS board will hold the CMO accountable for providing appropriate services to the specific school. Given that the CMO board is also the charter contract holder for Impact | Tacoma, care and planning will need to take place to ensure that each entity is managed fairly, particularly in instances where one school's priorities may be at odds with another or with the CMO itself (pgs. 72-73).
- Per IPS' bylaws, the board could have as few as three members (pg. 72).
- Although IPS has made the case that the CMO has the capacity to start the school and have developed a well-developed action plan, it will be necessary to reflect in the application how time will be allocated between starting Impact | Tacoma and operating existing schools? (pgs. 79-80)

- Impact plans to have three board committees: Finance, Facility Committee, and Recruitment and Selection Committee. The full Board is responsible for reviewing “outcomes and metrics to provide active oversight of the school through annual performance goals for academic success [and] student engagement” (pg. 73). Committees meet “between regularly-scheduled Board meetings” (pg. 76). It appears that IPS can only dedicate time at full-board meetings towards academic oversight, which may not be adequate as the network grows.
- The SAC Committee “will meet monthly and its concerns will be raised to the Impact CEO and Board as necessary, through the Principal.” It is unclear exactly how, formally or informally, feedback from the SAC will be conveyed to the IPS Board (pg. 81).
- Section 18 states that “the Commission shall not intervene in any such internal disputes without the consent of the IPS’s Board and shall refer any complaints or reports regarding such disputes to the Board or CEO for resolution pursuant to the school's policies” (pg. 83). Depending on the nature of the dispute, the Commission is allowed to intervene at its own discretion per the terms of the charter contract.
- It is not clear how the principal will be able to effectively manage all of the duties assigned including, “collecting, disaggregating, and analyzing the data with and for classroom teachers, leading PD and facilitating weekly coaching sessions” when the school grows to full capacity (pg. 99).

FINANCIAL PLAN AND CAPACITY

Impact | Tacoma

MEETS

Summary

IPS has provided a financial plan that outlines appropriate fiscal oversight roles for the CMO, principal, school staff, board and contracted providers. The established policies and procedures, in conjunction with oversight from the CEO and the CFO/COO, ensure that Impact follows all applicable local, state, and federal regulations regarding the use of public funds. They have included board-adopted financial policies and procedures within their application and “will follow all accounting procedures mandated by GAAP, FASB and the State of Washington Accrual-based accounting will be used with appropriate ledgers codes, along with account segments capable of reporting on sub-categories such as revenue source, department and other areas as required” (pg. 109).

According to the policies and procedures, the CEO and CFO/COO “prepare the annual budget and five-year forecasts” (Attachment 30). The policy does not explicitly outline how the Principal of each school site is included in the *development* of the budget, however, in the narrative it states that:

In monthly meetings, the CFO/COO will train the Principal on financial management, analysis of the budget versus actuals, variances, monitoring cash, and providing real-time access to all financial data. This is a tight collaborative relationship between in which the Principal has significant ownership over the school-site budget and also has an expert partner to ensure success (pg. 109).

The CFO/COO submits the budget and forecasts to the board’s Finance Committee, which meets quarterly in an open public meeting, for review and an approval recommendation to the board. The board approves this budget in accordance with state law and revises the budget every fall, which is a strength. Given the growth of the organization, from two schools to four, quarterly meetings of the committee may be insufficient to ensure proper oversight of the organization.

The application successfully addressed other items including procurement and purchasing, maintaining strong internal controls, and selection of a firm for the required annual financial audit. The CMO fee is 10%, which is reasonable and consistent with other charter school operators, but it will be important to make sure each individual school site is receiving ample supports from the home office to warrant the cost, particularly once the school is at full capacity.

IPS’s “Home Office Team will manage all of Impact | Tacoma’s finances, internally” with various support (accounting, payroll, audit preparation, etc.) from two outside vendors, System Six and Paylocity (pg. 111-112). Members of the team have previously managed the finances at other charter schools locally and nationally. In addition to the CEO and CFO/COO, the application also states that members of the team include the “Director of Finance”; however, “Director of Finance” is not a position listed on either the staffing table or the organizational charts. Rather, there is a Director of School Operations position listed. IPS

may want to review their financial policies and procedures and update accordingly based on the current staffing structure.

In the budget narrative, it states that, “The functions of the SPED Teacher [1.0 FTE], the Mental Health Therapist [0.20 FTE], and one of the Behavior Intervention Specialists [1.0 FTE] are assumed to be provided with the staff in-house” (Attachment 28). However, aside from the special education teacher, those positions are not listed in the Financial Workbook or the Staffing Chart submitted with the application.

Additionally, the narrative states that Seneca Family of Agencies will provide Impact with staff that includes a 0.20 FTE school psychologist, a 0.10 FTE occupational therapist, a 0.25 FTE speech and language pathologist, and two full-time behavioral intervention specialists [2.0 FTE] for a school the size of IPS. However, it is unclear if that model is for the school in Year 1 or when it is at capacity. If those services are to be provided by Seneca Family of Agencies, the budgeted amount of \$79,591 may be insufficient in Year 1.

Another inconsistency between the budget narrative and the financial workbook is the cost of office expenses once in operation. The narrative states that, \$14,000-15,000 is budgeted annual for office supplies including the copier lease and supplies. However, the workbook only shows a little over \$2,000 in the “Office Expense” line in Year 1. While the narrative does address a \$2,000 start-up expense for office supplies, the ongoing costs do not appear to be reflected once in operation. The relatively low dollar amount for this expense does not have a substantial negative impact on the overall health of the budget.

Fundraising will be led by the CEO and CFO/COO with support from the Board. The CEO does have significant fundraising experience, including the launch of one operational charter school and a second school that is currently in its planning year. The fundraising plan identifies “local foundations” as a source of possible philanthropic support, but omits the significant funding that is expected from other funders including WA Charters, the Charter School Program Grant, and the Charter School Growth Fund, though it is discussed in budget narrative. Both WA Charters and the Charter School Growth Fund have submitted letters of support for Impact | Tacoma, and are current funders of IPS’s other schools, though neither specifies and official funding commitment at the time of application submission.

Based on the budget narrative and the financial workbook:

Impact | Tacoma has included rent amounts comparable to observed actuals at Impact | PSE when the school is approaching full enrollment (\$664,006 in Year 4). Impact Public Schools will engage its strategic partners in order to raise philanthropic funds and subsidized debt in order to achieve sublessee’s affordability targets in years 1 through 3 of the sublease (Attachment 29).

Based on this statement, IPS will rely heavily on WSCD for all facilities related activities. WSCD has worked with many of WA’s charter public schools and has a strong track record of providing financial support and facilities assistance to those organizations.

The applicants provide strong evidence of financial management capacity based on current and previous experience. The board and leadership at Impact have demonstrated, to this point, that they understand

what is needed to develop and manage a budget that would meet the needs of students & staff at Impact | Renton. However, as the organization grows, it is unclear if the current financial oversight from the board will be sufficient. The internal controls coupled with the clean audit demonstrate that they have a process in place that minimizes opportunities for financial malfeasance and for resources to be aligned to identified needs at the school. The financial workbook and budget narrative are generally consistent, aside from the concerns outlined above.

Financial Plan and Capacity: Analysis and Evaluator Comments

Strengths

- Impact | Tacoma has provided detailed and sound assumptions for staff and operating expenses, which are “based on review of benchmarking data from other charter schools, and actuals for Impact | PSE” (Attachment 29).
- Teacher salaries appear competitive. Impact assumes an average teacher salary of \$72,926 (Attachment 28).
- The financial policies and procedures in are sound and comprehensive. They have a sound plan for segregation of duties and general procurement processes (Attachment 30). IPS has a sound plan for signing checks, audit, and overall internal controls (pg. 110).
- IPS provides clear description for the individuals (principal & CFO) who will be responsible for developing and managing the school’s budget. They also provided information about general oversight from the board and the CEO (pg. 109).
- Impact’s projections show strong operating margins in the first four years of operation --- cumulative net income margin of 12% (Attachment 28). Note that during these four years, Impact plans to receive \$700,000 in donations and \$1.3 million of CSP funding. In year 5, when both donations and CSP funding are zero, Impact projects a healthy 5% net income margin
- While cash balance is not directly computed in the budget template, it is implied that at the end of year 5 Impact | Tacoma will have \$3.1 million of cash (cumulative Net Income, note that they assume no non-cash expenses like depreciation). This represents a healthy ~130 days’ worth of expenses (Attachment 28).
- Attachment 34 shows healthy financial statements at the network and Impact | PSE. Both have cash balances that represent over 180 days’ worth of expenses, and both have positive operating incomes.

Weaknesses

- Per the Budget Narrative Impact plans to raise “\$700,000 from Charter School Growth Fund (Attachment 29). It is important to note that the letter of support does not commit funds, but states “Since 2017, Charter School Growth Fund has committed almost three million dollars to Impact Public Schools to launch and grow their first two schools” (Attachment 3).
- Fundraising: Impact plans to receive \$565,000 in funding from WA Charters, but it is unclear if IPS is eligible for more than \$400,000 in funding as an “expansion” school (Attachment 29).
- The sample CMO agreement between IPS CMO and Impact | PSE shows a CMO fee of 10% of revenues. In year 5, this translates to \$920,000 of expense for Impact | Tacoma (Attachment 20). The board will need to assess if the school is receiving adequate services from the CMO to justify this expense.
- Per the Application, System Six and Paylocity will be paid at the CMO level, not the school-level. Presumably this accounts for some of the CMO fee that is paid, but it is unclear.
- In order to lower rent expenses in years 1 to 3, Impact is relying on partnering with WCSD to fundraise (or subsidize debt) the following amounts: \$550,000, ~\$450,000, ~\$275,000. Impact does not provide a plan for how Impact/WCSD will be able to raise these funds.

EXISTING OPERATORS

Impact | Renton

MEETS

Summary

According to the application, Impact intends to open and operate six schools by the 2022-23 school year and eight in total in both Western and Eastern Washington. While the team, both staff and board, have considerable experience launching schools, this is an ambitious growth plan, particularly since the first Impact school, Impact | PSE, will not have graduated their first 5th grade class until 2024-25.

The applicant states that, “one of the key metrics in the growth plan for IPS is whether the model is generating the desired results for students” and provides the following academic data as evidence of that achievement.

- On average, Impact scholars entered the 2018-2019 school year 1 point below the national average in reading. At the end of the year, Impact scholars outperformed the national reading average by 7.8 points.
- On average, Impact scholars entered the 2018-2019 school year 1.2 points below the national average in math. At the end of the year, Impact scholars outperformed the national math average by 10.6 points.
- 77% of scholars met their NWEA MAP reading growth targets and 87% of scholars met their NWEA MAP math growth targets.
- 81% of English Learners met their growth targets in reading and 91% of English Learners met their growth targets in math.
- 79% of students receiving free or reduced lunch met both their reading and math NWEA goals, compared to 73% of students who did not qualify for free or reduced lunch.
- 76% of students of color met both their reading and math NWEA goals, a rate comparable with 81% of White students who met their NWEA goals.

Due to the grades served, IPS will not have Smarter Balanced Assessment (SBA) data for students until fall of 2021 (assuming the SBA is administered in the 2020-21 school year due to the COVID-19 situation). However, the NWEA MAP data is promising and compelling.

The applicant also submitted selected results from their family and faculty satisfaction surveys. While the data presented was positive, it is difficult to evaluate without a more complete data set for context and comparison. Of note, Impact | PSE reported a 50% teacher retention rate in their first year of operation, though the organization has set an 80% retention rate going forward.

Prior to conducting network growth, IPS will use “the following criteria to determine viability of replication.

- **Need:** academic performance of surrounding schools, student demographics, size of student population

- **Community Support:** community and family support for school model, family interest in school choice
- **Location:** availability of potential facilities, proximity to home and/or future regional office support, viability of a quality talent pool
- **Finances:** cost of operation and regional funding factors
- **Political Viability:** local leadership support, historical charter relationships and political landscape
- **Results:** performance of IPS schools already in operation” (pg. 116).

In order to support IPS network growth, “the four schools in the Puget Sound will be supported by a Regional Office led by a Director of Schools (Puget Sound) and a Home Office that will provide operational and educational services (pg. 117). As stated earlier in this report, the staff of IPS’ home office bring significant capacity and experience, including having helped other charter networks grow and expand. What is noticeably absent in this section is any mention of the board or its ability to manage or provide effective oversight for the multitude of complexities that will result in the exponential growth of the network.

In the Capacity Interview and within the application, the applicant team discussed the success at Impact | PSE. Although there has been growth, the applicant team, during the Capacity Interview, struggled to articulate lessons learned and challenges experienced during the planning and operation of Impact | PSE, Impact’s first charter public school. Again, given Impact’s growth plan, the inability of Impact’s board and leadership team to articulate how they are applying their learning to the new schools they are seeking to operate is concerning.

The evidence provided by the applicant indicates that there is clearly a demand for Impact | PSE, which suggest that IPS’ strategies for community engagement and recruitment are effective for full-enrollment of a school. While the Commission would anticipate these strategies would be effective in other communities as well, it will be critical to build strong support and trust with members of Impact | Tacoma’s immediate community in order to garner the same results. Given the history of charter public schools in the City of Tacoma, this may prove difficult and the Commission must consider this risk when making its final decision to approve or deny this application. This is particularly important as Impact | Tacoma plans to locate in a building that was home to both Green Dot Destiny Middle School and later SOAR Academy.

The IPS board and the leaders at the home office bring a significant experience in school start-up and operations. However, approving a third (and fourth) elementary school, particularly given that the current elementary school has only been open for two years and only serves grades K-2, does carry risk and is not considered a best practice in the charter sector. In spite of this risk, the applicant has submitted a strong proposal, and preliminary academic results appear promising which leads to the ultimate recommendation is to approve the charter school application submitted by IPS.

Existing Operators: Analysis and Evaluator Comments

Strengths

- Impact | PSE has positive test scores in their first year of operation. 80th students in math and reading rank at proficiency or above as indicated on NWEA and STEP assessment (pg. 115).
- Fall 2019 SEL Web data shows that 88% of 1st grade students and 83% of 2nd grade students performed at or above average for their overall SEL skills, including emotion recognition, social perspective-taking, social problem-solving and self-control. This is compared to 64% of entering Kindergartners” (pg. 115).
- Impact | Puget has received positive feedback from families: “96% of families would recommend IPS to another family” (pg.116).
- Impact | PSE is in compliance with operational and financial indicators (pg. 117).

Weaknesses

- Rapid growth has proven challenging among other emerging charter school networks nationally and there is little evidence to suggest, particularly in WA’s charter climate, that IPS won’t face similar challenges.
- IPS’ team possesses a skill set that is promising in terms of network growth, but there is a lack of student performance data on state assessments to prove the efficacy of the model. (pg. 115).
- The description of faculty satisfaction at Impact | Puget is vague: “Impact faculty reported a 16.5% higher rating when responding to “How positive is the working environment at your school” in comparison to other New Schools Venture Fund portfolio schools” (pg. 116).

EVALUATION TEAM BIOGRAPHIES

Crystal Wash, Team Lead

Crystal Wash, a former school administrator, has served in various leadership roles including, Senior Literacy Trainer and Project Consultant where she provided expertise to IL School Districts in Teacher Evaluation. She began her career as an elementary classroom teacher, which led to becoming a demonstration classroom teacher. Crystal opened her classroom for teachers to observe and develop their expertise using the Balanced Literacy Approach. Following her teaching, Crystal was promoted to Literacy Project Consultant in which she led literacy Collaborative Inquiry Groups for K-2 teachers.

Crystal was accepted into New Leaders for New Schools, as a resident principal program and later became an Assistant Principal. Within her administrator roles, Crystal remained committed to developing teachers' expertise in instruction. In 2012, Crystal engaged in groundbreaking work as a Principal Calibrator. Her role focused on providing training and support on Danielson-based teacher evaluation to administrators. Over her career, Crystal has conducted a variety of education workshops that focused on teacher evaluation and content instructional strategies to support the Framework for Teaching.

Crystal received an MBA from Northwestern University, a Masters in Educational Leadership from National Louis, MED in teaching and learning from DePaul University, Reading Endorsement from Chicago State and a BA in Philosophy and English from Indiana University.

Aretha Miller, Evaluator

Aretha Miller is a veteran public school educator with 25+ years' experience working in both charter and traditional district public schools. Aretha has expertise in school inspection and accountability, school improvement planning, leadership coaching and mentoring, and workshop design and facilitation. She has worked collaboratively with school and district leaders, and state education department administrators across the United States to improve student achievement.

Steve Robbins, Evaluator

Steve Robbins is the founder of Grand Street Consulting, LLC, which specializes in providing school finance expertise and charter school evaluation services. He has acted as an independent evaluator of charter school applications related to new school proposals, renewal and appeal processes, and CSP grant allocations on behalf of charter school authorizers. He has worked with several charter school authorizers throughout the US, including New York, Mississippi, Florida, New Orleans, Spokane (WA), Illinois, Tennessee, New Mexico, and Washington.

In 2017 Steve received his Master's of Education from Harvard University with a focus on education policy and data science. Prior to earning his Master's degree, he was a founding member of Wolcott School, a high school in Chicago for students with learning differences, as their first ever Director of Finance and Operations. Previously he worked in New York City as both a corporate finance advisor and a hedge fund analyst for eight years. He lives in Chicago with his wife and two sons.

Heather Wendling, Evaluator

Heather Wendling is the Director of Learning at the National Association for Charter School Authorizers (NACSA). This position allows her to leverage her perspectives as an educator, attorney, parent, and advocate for quality schools for all kids. Heather previously served as a Senior School Evaluator and the Director for New Charters at the SUNY Charter Schools Institute. At SUNY, Heather contributed to the oversight of all 147 SUNY authorized charter schools, evaluated their qualitative and quantitative data, and ultimately made determinations about the strength of their academic programs to inform their respective renewal recommendations. She also produced the annual request for proposals, provided guidance and technical support for potential applicants, served as the lead academic reviewer for all new charter proposals through multiple levels of evaluative analysis, and ultimately produced comprehensive summaries of findings to support recommendations for charter approval to the SUNY Charter School Committee trustees. After charter approval, Heather also designed systems and strategies to support the 32 schools approved during her tenure through planning, launch, and their first year of operation to facilitate the strongest possible start and the most optimal outcomes for students.

Outside of her full-time position, Heather provides a variety of consulting services for select clients. Recently, Heather helped establish the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge's initiative to authorize the first charter schools in the Middle East by designing a comprehensive performance framework to infuse clarity and accountability in an emerging sector.

Heather earned her BA in Political Science from SUNY Stony Brook, her MST degree from Pace University Graduate School of Education, and her JD from the University of Connecticut School of Law.

Simeon Stolzberg, Evaluator

Simeon Stolzberg is an education consultant who specializes in new school development, school evaluation, and technical assistance for operating schools. He supports school founding groups, school leaders and their boards, district and state education departments, and charter school authorizers. He has expertise in school design and operations, governance, start-up and leadership development as well as school and authorizer evaluation, oversight and accountability. He has written and supported numerous successful charter school applications and evaluated proposals for authorizers across the country, including New York, New Jersey, New Orleans, South Carolina, Indiana, Georgia, Tennessee, Arizona, and Hawaii. He began his education career at the U.S. Department of Education and has conducted research and evaluation of federal education programs, including Title I and Migrant Education. Mr. Stolzberg subsequently taught high school history in urban district and charter schools in Washington, D.C. and then went on to found the Berkshire Arts and Technology Charter School in Massachusetts. He also served as a middle school principal at a charter school in Brooklyn, NY. Prior to becoming a full-time consultant, he was the Director of School Evaluation at the SUNY Charter Schools Institute, a highly respected charter school authorizer for New York State, and an adjunct professor teaching graduate education courses. Mr. Stolzberg has a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy from Williams College and a Master's degree in Public Policy from Georgetown University.