

Rich Structured Learning Experiences: Developing and Disseminating the Neighborhood

House Charter School Model

Project Narrative

I. Need for Project

Neighborhood House Charter School (NHCS) was founded in 1995 as one of the 14 original Massachusetts charter schools. Located in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston, NHCS is a grade PreK to 8 charter school that seeks to offer a quality education to a diverse community of Boston children through a neighborhood-based school that integrates education with social services and health care programs. Our motto, “Succeed Anywhere,” describes an educational vision where every student in the school will achieve the academic, social, emotional, and physical development to attend and succeed in a high-quality high school (whether public or private) focused on college preparation, technical trades, or the creative arts. NHCS has also emerged as a leader of the charter school movement in Massachusetts and has an institutional commitment to incubating and disseminating innovative practices that have the potential to improve public education for all students.

NHCS is one of the most popular charter schools in Boston. During the 2012-13 school year, it enrolled 400 students – 245 in its lower school (grades PreK to 4) and 155 in its middle school (grades 5 to 8) – with a waiting list of over 3,000 students. Our diverse student body includes 82% children of color with 55% African-American and 14% Hispanic; 69% low income students (eligible for free and reduced price lunches), 12% special education students, and close to 11% whose first language is not English.

Low-income students of color, who comprise the majority of the NHCS student population, often lag behind their more affluent peers in academics and have limited access to

experiential learning opportunities. We believe that integrating the arts into our core curriculum reduces these disparities by providing regular, on-going opportunities for hands-on, inquiry-based learning, boosting students' engagement in school and in turn, boosting their academic achievement. Research tells us that children and teenagers who participate in arts education programs show more positive academic and social outcomes in comparison to students who did not participate in those programs. According to a recent study issued by the National Endowment for the Arts: *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies*, "among low socioeconomic students, eighth graders who had high levels of arts engagement from Kindergarten through elementary school showed higher test scores in science and writing than did students who had lower levels of arts engagement over the same period." [Catterall, James S. (2012). *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: Findings from Four Longitudinal Studies*. National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, DC., p. 12]

Furthermore, the study also tells us that 71% of low-socioeconomic students with arts-rich experiences attended some sort of college after high school, while only 48% of the low-arts, low socioeconomic group attended any sort of college. (Catterall, p. 10.) With 69% of our students from low-income families and the aim for our students to "Succeed Anywhere" -- in academics and life -- we are inspired by this study and convinced that our approach to integrate the arts into our teaching philosophy is meaningful and valuable.

Integrating the arts into our daily curriculum also instills a love of learning, keeping students interested and engaged in school, while at the same time, fostering the development of crucial 21st century skills like collaboration, creativity, communication and critical thinking. In recent years, NHCS has demonstrated considerable academic success in the state's standardized assessment (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, MCAS). Results from the

spring 2012 MCAS show NHCS students substantially outperforming the state in nearly every tested grade level in mathematics and English language arts (ELA). Grade-level highlights include 88% of sixth graders scoring at the Advanced or Proficient levels in mathematics and 87% of 7th graders and 91% of 8th graders scoring at the Advanced or Proficient levels in ELA. Over the past six testing years, NHCS has seen a 31 percentage point gain in students scoring at the Advanced or Proficient levels in mathematics and a 24 percentage point gain in students scoring at the Advanced or Proficient levels in ELA.

Despite these gains, NHCS still has too many students who are failing to demonstrate academic proficiency – 26% in ELA and 38% in Mathematics across grades 3 to 8 during 2012. We have determined that this failure is, in part, due to basic social, emotional, and mental health struggles that undermine our students’ education and development. Our students regularly experience trauma in their lives, which tests their social-emotional health, and in turn, reduces their level of interest in school and their academic success: Trauma, including, community and domestic violence, child abuse, mental illness, homelessness, and hunger. Recent assessments of NHCS students conducted by the Program in Education, Afterschool, and Resiliency (PEAR) from Harvard University and McLean Hospital documented a significant magnitude of need at NHCS. It revealed that a majority of NHCS students were at medium-to-high-risk levels for social-emotional and behavioral concerns – a rate that exceeded expectations based on epidemiological data according to PEAR.

For young people, the ability to effectively develop resiliency and coping skills in the face of serious emotional challenges is frequently related to the levels of support they receive. We know that arts integrated teaching can help us engage even our most at-risk students. By making lessons more arts-centered and hands-on we are able to deepen learning, increase student

ownership and engagement with academic content. At NHCS we are developing a successful way of increasing a student's level of engagement *and* achievement in school through an innovative model, the Rich Structured Learning Experience (RSLE). RSLEs are lessons that offer multiple points of access to the material and enable students at all learning and social-emotional levels to succeed and at the same time, serve as a framework for our approach to integrating the arts.

NHCS believes that quality lessons are both rich and structured; they provide deep, meaningful, multi-modal learning experiences, and are well-organized, focused, and make use of data and assessments. RSLEs are the primary vehicles through which NHCS purposefully and explicitly helps its students to develop the academic and social emotional competencies that will lead to their success in further education and in life. These competencies include mastery of core subjects and fundamental skills, such as critical and creative thinking, collaboration, communication and organization, as well as social emotional skills like, assertiveness, engagement, reflection and belonging. For example, in 3rd and 4th grades students spend many weeks in their social studies classroom learning the history of Massachusetts, with a particular focus on the Wampanoag tribe, a Native American tribe local to Massachusetts; simultaneously, in technology class, the students use their creativity to generate online animated avatars, based on their Wampanoag lessons. Using Voki, a web-based program, students design the characteristics and features of their computer-based Wampanoags and using their technical skills, program them to speak and express themselves.

According to a study conducted by Lesley University (Voices from the Field: Teachers' Views on the Relevance of Arts Integration), when teachers adopt and implement arts integration strategies into their professional practice, they can motivate and engage learners in their

classroom while infusing their own practices with creativity. Our next goal, as we continue to hone and develop our RSLE philosophy of teaching, is to increase the level of arts integration into lessons and units and at the same time, increase the number of teachers using the arts as a part of their RSLE teachings -- not all NHCS teachers are comfortable and confident with using arts in their classrooms. We have a handful of teachers, both arts teachers and general education teachers, who are successful at creating arts-integrated RSLE but many are in need of professional development and guidance from their peers on how to best integrate the arts into their standards-based lessons so students effectively and successfully learn core subjects.

[Bellisario, K. & Donovan, L. (2012). *Voices from the field: Teachers' views on the relevance of arts integration*. Cambridge, MA: Lesley University.]

Additionally, as a school that thrives on data, we need a way to measure the impact of our arts-based RSLE teachings. We feel confident that the work we are doing with RSLE is meaningful and worthwhile but at the same, we are eager to have a means of collecting data to support this work. There has always been a strong strain of hands-on, inquiry-based and collaborative learning at Neighborhood House and at the same time, we believe in the “standards movement” that gave us MCAS and the new Common Core. We have wrestled with the seeming tension between these two approaches – one more progressive and the other standards-based – and came to realize that, at our best, we balance and unite the two approaches into the RSLE teaching philosophy. With the proposed project, we will develop a tool that can measure the effects of this balanced approach.

II. Significance

One of the stated goals of the charter school movement is that charter schools serve as “innovation laboratories” to develop and test effective school-based strategies that have the

potential to create positive change on a district- or system-wide basis. In Massachusetts, the charter legislation specifically requires that charter schools disseminate effective programs and practices to the broader public education community. At Neighborhood House, “dissemination” is not only a state mandate but a core element of the school’s mission; the proposed project is designed to create products (information, materials, processes and techniques) that can be used effectively at NHCS, in the Boston Public Schools – and replicated in schools across the country.

While many charter schools and chartering organizations are working hard to replicate and scale their models, charter schools still reach only 3% of K-12 students in Massachusetts. The vast majority of children are served by their local public schools, and sadly for far too many of these children, particularly those living in urban centers, these local schools are failing. Real improvement in terms of outcomes for students will require change at the district level and Neighborhood House believes that we can and should be a key partner in helping to bring about that kind of change.

In the spring of 2010, after Boston Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Carol Johnson visited NHCS and was impressed by the school’s leadership, culture, and results, she asked Neighborhood House to be the first Boston charter school to help turn around a low-performing Boston district school. Headmaster Andrews and others at the school immediately recognized that this was an opportunity to do what many charter schools had aspired to do, but few had actually done: apply successful strategies and practices developed at NHCS within a traditional district school context and work in collaborative partnership with school and district personnel.

Despite significant upheaval at the district school’s leadership level (the school has recently hired its third principal in three years), NHCS’s three year partnership with the Harbor

Pilot Middle School (HPMS) has been a success in terms of improving student performance as measured by MCAS. For example:

- HPMS outperformed the Boston school district on the 2012 English MCAS.
- Depending on grade level, students with disabilities at HPMS either equaled or outperformed their peers in Boston and across the state on both the English and Math MCAS in 2012.
- HPMS substantially outperformed the district and the state on the 2012 Progress & Performance Index (PPI) (a measure of improvement that a group of students makes toward their individual targets) for all students and for two of its major subgroups (high needs students and students with disabilities).

The proposed Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination (AEMDD) project – Rich Structured Learning Experiences: Developing and Disseminating the NHCS Model - will build on the model of NHCS’s work with HPMS by partnering with two of Boston Public School’s lowest achieving schools to boost their student achievement through arts integration.

At the same time, NHCS will develop products, including information, materials, processes and techniques, which can be disseminated even more widely with schools across Boston, the state of Massachusetts and nationwide.

Many schools recognize the value of integrating the arts into core curriculum areas. NHCS’s proposed project is unique – and uniquely replicable – in the way that our Rich Structured Learning Experiences (RSLE) framework integrates the richness of the arts with the structure of standards-based curriculums. At the conclusion of the pilot year, NHCS will have developed a series of professional development and training presentation materials, overview materials, rubrics and sharing protocols that will be effectively used in a variety of other settings, along

with practical curriculum ideas and tools that teachers can put to their use in their classroom to begin integrating arts immediately. These will be first tested with a larger group of staff members at NHCS and then with two Boston Public Elementary schools. At the conclusion of the project, NHCS will publish materials to make these processes and practices widely available, including through a Weebly website that will share arts integration ideas and ideas.

III. Quality of the Project Design

a. Project Outcomes

This project seeks to strengthen and expand the integration of standards-based arts education into the core curriculum in the lower and middle school of Neighborhood House, thereby addressing the **Absolute Priority** of this grant competition. By accomplishing this, the project will achieve the following outcomes at the end of three years:

Outcome #1: Above an already high score, the percentage of students participating in the proposed project who demonstrate proficiency level on the Massachusetts standardized academic assessment for both ELA and math will increase by 2% as compared to those in a comparison group.

Outcome #2: The number of students demonstrating proficiency on the arts standards using a measure to be developed by NHCS as part of this project will improve over baseline by a statistically significant measure.

Outcome #3: The proportion of students demonstrating increased school and learning engagement on a standard measure will increase by 5% each year.

A Massachusetts Commission to Develop an Index of Creative and Innovative Education in Public Schools is currently engaged in the work of developing a set of school-level indicators

of creative and innovative opportunities. If the Commission succeeds in creating this Index, NHCS will likely use its index rating to assess the success of its arts engagement work.

Priority 1 – Building Evidence of Effectiveness: The proposed project includes a comprehensive evaluation plan, described in *Section VI: Evaluation* beginning on page 29 below, which is likely to produce valid and reliable evidence regarding (a) improving project design and implementation and (b) identifying and improving practices, strategies, and policies that may contribute to improving outcomes. Under the evaluation plan, the outcome of interest will be measured multiple times before and after the treatment for project participants and a comparison group of non-participants.

Priority 2 – Supporting Programs, Practices, or Strategies for Which There is Strong or Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness: The proposed project is based on the Understanding by Design framework, which is supported by moderate evidence of effectiveness, described in described in the current section *Quality of the Program Design* in the section *Research-Based Practices* on page 17 below.

Priority 3 – Turning Around Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools: Under the proposed project, NHCS will provide services to students enrolled in persistently lowest achieving schools through a partnership with two low-achieving Boston Public Schools, as described in the current section *Quality of the Program Design*, in the section *Staff Training* on page 18 below.

Priority 4 – Technology: NHCS is committed to improving student achievement and student effectiveness through the use of high-quality digital tools and materials. Our Tech Specialist/Trainer is a key member of the Creative Arts Department and will be a member of the Pilot Team described in this proposal working to develop best practices and professional

development around arts integration. An example of how technology is integrated into the RSLE framework is included in *Section I: Need for Project* on page 4 above. The proposed project also includes using technology tools such as video to aid in dissemination of the RSLE framework and model, as described in *Section II: Significance* on page 8 above.

b. Project Goals & Objectives

Goal #1 – NHCS will increase teacher use of the arts within the core curriculum using research-based techniques to improve students’ creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills.

Goal #2 – NHCS will improve the integration of Common Core within the arts education curriculum.

Goal #3 – NHCS will develop tools for measuring arts proficiency and for determining the impact of our Rich Structured Learning Experience (RSLE) framework.

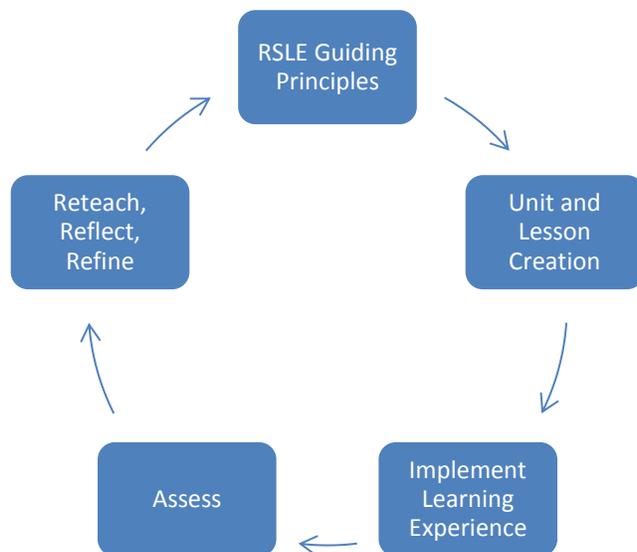
Goal #4 – NHCS will improve the quality of school day and after-school arts education within NHCS.

c. Rich, Structured Learning Experiences

There has always been a strong emphasis on hands-on, inquiry-based and collaborative learning at Neighborhood House. At the same time, we believe in the “standards movement” that gave us MCAS and the new Common Core. We balance and unite the two approaches into a teaching philosophy grounded Rich, Structured Learning Experiences (RSLEs): lessons that are engaging, deep, meaningful, and multi-modal (this is the “richness”); and that are well-organized, focused, standards-driven, and informed by data and assessments (this is the “structure”).

NHCS is dedicated to a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students. In the 2012-13, NHCS professional

development has focused on the effective use of the Common Core/Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in lesson planning. RSLE lessons are based in the school’s educational philosophy – that children learn best, that they are most effectively prepared to achieve proficiency in rigorous academic standards, when they are experiencing, creating, enjoying and thinking in an environment that is carefully structured to achieve goals of the unit or lesson effectively. Where many teachers include art projects within their classroom, NHCS’s RSLE are unique – and uniquely replicable – in that they provide a framework for adding structure to lessons so that the



inclusion of art really does increase knowledge and understanding.

Cycle of Successful RSLE Implementation
Under the NHCS RSLE rubric, “rich”

learning experiences are defined as: (1) allowing entry through personal/emotional connections; (2) are engaging and may be interdisciplinary, relevant and applicable; (3) differentiate for interests and learning style;

(4) promote student choice and voice; (5) create opportunities for communication and collaboration; (6) demand critical thinking; and (7) allow for creativity.

“Structured” learning experiences: (1) are well-planned and thoughtful about timing and pacing; (2) differentiate for ability levels; (3) contain clear and explicit expectations; (4) provide exemplars and rubrics; (5) teach and incorporate routines; (6) explicitly teach content and process skills; and (7) assess student understanding.

While arts are currently an important component of many RSLE units, providing the “rich” to the academic “structure”, during the proposed project teachers will take arts integration to the next level by increasing the number of teachers who are effectively integrating the arts, deliberately using methods of doing and looking at the arts to boost student engagement, academic achievement, and building 21st century skills.

During Year 1 of the proposed project, the NHCS pilot team will work with external evaluator Noe Medina of Education Policy Research to develop tools for measuring arts proficiency and for determining the impact of our Rich Structured Learning Experience framework.

d. **Long-Term Commitment to Arts Integration**

NHCS teachers have an additional resource in designing their science-based RSLE lessons and units: the NHCS KidLab, a unique hands-on classroom that integrates science and arts that has been a part of the NHCS’ curriculum for seventeen years. The KidLab teacher encourages students to think and problem-solve creatively during class. The interdisciplinary curriculum uses art and experimentation as tools to facilitate scientific learning. Lou Casagrande, former Executive Director of the Boston Children’s Museum, has described KidLab as Neighborhood House’s “own little children’s science museum.”

Six elements are essential to the KidLab model:

- Mix of imagination and facts – Through KidLab projects, students test not only the factual properties of science, but also the bounds of artistic imagination and expression.
- Modeling inquisitive behavior – The KidLab teacher models an inquisitive attitude that pushes students to think through what they are doing and encourages them to “wonder why.”

- Uncertainty about answers, certainty about support – Through the trial-and-error process, KidLab exposes students to situations in which the right answer may not be immediately apparent, but where they are always encouraged and supported to explore possible solutions.
- Experiential learning – Students have the opportunity to learn by doing, gaining an understanding of theoretical concepts through KidLab projects that they can see and touch.
- Experimentation and problem-solving – A series of lessons and activities examine dimensions of a single question. Students learn to derive hypotheses through experiments and creative projects and use results to respond to guiding questions.
- Demonstration of learning – KidLab holds both students and teachers responsible for explaining what they have learned through physical demonstrations, models, posters, drawing and discussions.

The KidLab teach facilitates student learning through probing questions, modeling the scientific method and explaining and connecting scientific principles that ground students' observations and experiences. KidLab's curriculum is aligned with the both Massachusetts State Frameworks for science, technology, engineering, and the arts.

Each week students in grades K2 through Four spend an hour and a half in KidLab for either one semester or the entire year, depending on their grade level. Our 5th and 6th graders spend 50 minutes, four times a week during their nine-week arts rotation cycles in KidLab; and our 7th and 8th graders participate in KidLab during month-long, three-day-a-week elective enrichment courses.

The KidLab curriculum is closely integrated with the core classroom curriculum: concepts learned in classrooms are expanded and experienced in KidLab. For example, when third grade classroom teachers are leading a unit on electricity, students build electromagnets, make radios and robots, and wire model houses in KidLab. In second grade, students learn about living things and the environment and simultaneously, in KidLab, they create their own terrarium using organisms found around our schoolyard. In addition, through experimentation and observation, students study rocks and form hypotheses about when, where and how each one formed. Students learn about physics, simple machines and how things move by building their own pinball machines.

KidLab, in and of itself, is both rich and structured – rich because students work creatively and collaboratively on hands-on projects; structured because the lessons follow all Massachusetts standards. We believe that this inquiry-oriented approach not only prepares our students to approach the high school subjects of biology, chemistry and physics with confidence and a solid foundation; it also instills a love of learning and fosters the development of crucial 21st century skills like logical reasoning, critical analysis, innovation and creative problem solving.

e. Standards-Based Arts Instruction

In designing their curriculum, NHCS arts teachers adhere closely to the Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework developed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education.

In visual arts and in music, K1 students (age 4) spend the year in exploration. Beginning in K1 and continuing through 8th grade, arts classes focus on a different medium every six weeks throughout the year, returning to the same mediums and learning new skills in each subsequent year. Skills learned in the painting unit in Kindergarten, for example, are refined and enhanced in

first grade and subsequently, in each following grade. In the middle school grades, the individual arts skills are integrated as students work on multimedia projects and use their critical thinking skills to critique and respond to leading artists - in writing, in class discussions, and through arts projects of their own. For example, in conjunction with 6th grade social studies curriculum on world civilizations, the arts specialists taught a curriculum on world cultures. In their arts enrichment class, which met three times a week, students watched videos on the Japanese cherry blossom festival, created inspiring cherry blossom art using pastels and tempura paint. They also studied and wrote haikus and read articles on Japan's gift of the cherry trees to the US. This RSLE unit enhanced students' 21st century skills by allowing them to practice their communications and critical thinking through self-assessments of their artwork and critiques of their class

NHCS has received recognition for the quality of its arts education: In March 2011, NHCS was named a School of Distinction in Arts Education by the Champions of Arts Education Awards, one of only two schools in Massachusetts to earn this designation. The Champions of Arts Education Awards honors individuals and organizations that have made exceptional contributions to arts education advocacy and continue to make strides toward the goal of high quality arts education for every student in Massachusetts.

As a leader in the national standards movement, Massachusetts' academic standards have generally been accepted as among the most rigorous in the country. NHCS has achieved significant success in helping its students meet those standards, as demonstrated by our students demonstrated proficiency on the MCAS. This success has been excellent preparation for the adoption of the newly mandated Common Core academic standards throughout the school, including the arts program. While the adoption has inspired increasing levels of challenge and

rigor throughout all classes and subjects, the pace we have needed to set is has been appropriate and the school has repeatedly met benchmarks indicating successful implementation.

A particular focus of the Common Core is for schools to increase the amount of informational texts students read. At NHCS, we use this emphasis to thoughtfully and deliberately build schema around issues of culture that our low SES students may not have seen in their early lives. Informational texts around the arts are incorporated in a variety of different ways. In arts classes, arts specialists might introduce an artist, medium, or technique through an informational article before or after demonstrating it. Arts teachers also use the middle school's weekly guided reading time as an opportunity to expand exposure to arts topics. In this middle school-wide program, teachers select engaging and informative articles on a variety of topics which are then read by all students in the middle school. Some arts related topics students have read this year: the design of the 9/11 memorial, the impact of the acoustic music ensemble Sauti Sol on the young people of Kenya, the history and role of political cartoons, the debate over whether Hip-Hop is a legitimate and respectable form of music, the Isabella Stewart Gardner museum heist, Shepard Fairey's art and its use to voice political positions, and how Os Gemeos transforms public spaces with their urban art. Under the proposed project, arts specialists would receive additional targeted professional development around incorporating elements of the Common Core within their classroom.

During the proposed project, NHCS's rich visual and musical arts integration will be expanded to include more opportunities for dance and theater. Dance will be integrated into the Physical Education program, while theater will become a greater part of work in the regular classrooms. Teachers in the lower school currently use theater as a teaching tool, working with their students on writing and performing scripts. For example, during Black History month, third

graders read books on Harriet Tubman and Martin Luther King, and then, in small groups, wrote and acted out scripts to teach their classmates about these American icons. During the proposed project, NHCS would bring in experts from Wheelock Family Theatre to do a consultancy around using theater in the classroom.

f. Research-Based Practices

The proposed project is based on up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practices. NHCS instruction in general, and RSLEs in particular, are informed by principles of *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), a standards-driven framework for improving student achievement through curriculum development, instructional design, assessment, and professional development. Among the key tenets particularly embraced by NHCS are (1) Our lessons, units, and courses should be logically inferred from the results sought, not derived from the methods, books and activities with which we are most comfortable (backwards design), (2) Evidence of student understanding is revealed when students apply knowledge and skills through authentic contexts, and (3) Teachers provide opportunities for students to explain, interpret, apply, shift perspective, empathize, and self-assess. [Wiggins, G., McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by Design*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2nd ed, Alexandria, VA.]

The Understanding by Design (UbD) framework is supported by numerous research studies, including a 2003 Consortium on Chicago School Research study that provided strong empirical support that the interactive teaching methods advocated by UbD and used at NHCS are associated by more learning in mathematics and in reading. [McTighe, J., Seif, L. (2003). *Teaching for Meaning and Understanding: A Summary of Underlying Theory and Research*, *Pennsylvania Educational Leadership*, 24 (1), 6-13.] Research by Marzano, Pickering and

Pollock (2001) analyzed multiple studies to show that certain instructional strategies positively affect student achievement, strategies such as asking students to explain their thinking or “using nonlinguistic representations,” such as artistic expressions or kinesthetic activities like acting.

[Marzano, R., Pickering, D., and Pollock, J. (2001) *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, VA.]

In the context of the RSLE framework, and throughout their coursework, NHCS teachers are grounded in the belief that responding to and engaging in the arts stimulates critical thinking. NHCS teachers are guided in our efforts by earlier training in VTS (Visual Thinking Strategies). This research-based technique uses open-ended yet highly-structured discussions of visual art as a means of increasing students' critical thinking, language and literacy skills. In NHCS art classes, students are asked to think critically about the works of major artists, and also about their own and their classmates' work. During the proposed project, teachers will receive training from their peers in techniques for using arts to process information, explore meaning, gather evidence, and think critically. Under the proposed project, NHCS students will have increased opportunity to engage with theater and dance, and critical thinking strategies will be adapted for use with these variable genres.

g. **Staff Training Program**

In order to build capacity and yield results that will extend beyond the four walls of Neighborhood House Charter School and beyond the period of Federal financial assistance, the proposed project includes capacity building and intensive training, encompassing three components to take place consecutively during the three project years.

In the first project year, the first component will target NHCS arts teachers and a pilot group of four general education teachers (the “pilot team”). For the pilot team, the Project Director will recruit NHCS staff members who are most enthusiastic about our RSLE philosophy, express interest in improving teaching and learning for students, and support rigorous academic standards for students. Led by the Project Director, the pilot team will 1) receive specialized training in arts integration from local arts partners, potentially including Troubadors, VTS, Wheelock Family Theatre, Classroom Cantata, and more; 2) work collaboratively to document and refine the integration of visual and dramatic arts into their classrooms through RSLE units; and 3) design a training program that will create impact through targeted professional development introduces the RSLE arts integration model; offers opportunity for curriculum development, feedback and reflection; and provides practical tools and ideas that are immediately applicable in the classroom.

The first project year will also see the development and refinement of metrics and tools to evaluate the success of the project, including proficiency on the Massachusetts Arts Curriculum Framework, the effects of the arts and 21st century skills (collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, communication) on academic performance.

In the second project year, the second component will target a larger group of NHCS teachers. Through professional development designed and led by the Project Director and the Pilot Team, elementary and middle school teachers will receive specialized training in 1) the importance of creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills and the role of the arts in teaching those skills, 2) research-based arts integration techniques that hone these skills. A larger group of teachers will implement integration techniques and practices in their classrooms, and will model the value of integration.

In the second and third project years, a third component of the project will expand the reach of NHCS's RSLE model beyond its four walls by providing professional development and coaching to teachers from two low-achieving partner schools within the Boston Public Schools (BPS) system.

Beginning in January of Year 2 of the proposed project, NHCS will partner with one low-performing BPS elementary school to provide professional development and coaching around implementing arts-rich RSLEs in their school. A partnership with a second BPS school will begin in September of Year 3. Through a series of hands-on working sessions, the NHCS Project Director and teacher-leaders will provide a framework and language for teachers to effectively integrate rich arts elements with structured, standards-based learning. Quarterly working sessions will pair partner-school teachers with NHCS teacher-leaders to design RSLE lessons or units based on their curriculum plans. Each meeting will include a "RSLE share" in which teachers share their lesson or unit plans to provide inspiration to their fellow teachers. In the first meeting or meetings, NHCS teachers will provide the share; partner-school teachers will be coached through sharing in subsequent meetings.

During the length of the partnership, the Project Director will also work with both partner schools to help them create a network of external partners to provide richness to their arts program, including but not limited to, creating relationships with the ICA, Dot Art, Boston City Singers, Troubadours, and more.

Throughout the partnerships with BPS schools, NHCS will train their partners in the use of the evaluation tools developed in Year 1 of the project. The specific performance measures required by the grant include the percentage of students involved in grant-funded projects who demonstrate proficiency on mathematics and English Language Arts compared to those in

comparison groups. The performance of students at BPS partner schools will be included in the evaluation, and in the project's final report, which will be disseminated widely.

NHCS has successfully implemented a similar partnership with BPS. In 2010, NHCS was asked by Superintendent of Boston Public Schools to partner with the Harbor Pilot Middle School (HPMS), a designated "Turnaround" school located near NHCS in Dorchester. NHCS works with HPMS to improve its academic results by sharing and adapting practices, systems and structures that have proven successful at NHCS.

This partnership between a district school and a charter school, the first in Boston, yielded positive results; despite having three principals during the three year partnership, with our help, HPMS has met or exceeded the benchmarks set by the Boston Public School System. For example, HPMS outperformed the Boston school district on the 2012 English MCAS – with a higher proportion of advanced/proficient students (46% vs. 42%) and a lower proportion of warning/failing students (15% vs. 22%). HPMS also substantially outperformed the other Level 4 elementary and middle schools in Boston. The proportion of advanced/proficient students was 17% higher than the average for all Level 4 schools in Boston and the proportion of warning/failing students was 15% lower. Just as importantly, surveys of HPMS staff rate the departmental professional development sessions provided by NHCS as High to Very High in quality and as Better to Much Better than other professional development offered at the school.

In the proposed Arts Demonstration project, NHCS will implement key learnings from our experience with HPMS regarding forming and implementing successful charter-district partnerships:

- the school needs to identify an area of concern to be addressed by the new practice (preferably this concern would be supported by data)

- the new practice to be implemented needs to be clearly defined and begin with a specific and manageable focus
- school leadership must be invested in and supportive of the new practice
- teachers need professional development time as a group to learn about the practice
- there need to be follow up accountability and feedback sessions to support teachers in implementation
- the impact of the new practice should be measured or observed

Boston Public Schools fully supports the proposed project and, if NHCS receives the Arts in Education Model Development and Dissemination Program funding, has committed to identifying two Level III or IV (lowest-achieving) schools for participation and partnership.

IV. Quality of Project Personnel

Neighborhood House Charter School is led by Headmaster Kevin Andrews. An African-American, Mr. Andrews has been a school administrator for over thirty years and has led NHCS since its founding in 1995. Active in the charter school and educational reform movements, Mr. Andrews has served as the Chair of the Boston Charter School Alliance and the First Vice President of the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association. Mr. Andrews serves on the Board of Trustees of the Bridgewater State University Foundation. Mr. Andrews received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Massachusetts and a Master of Education and Administration from Antioch University.

Maura Jereb, Creative Art Department Head, will serve as Project Director for the proposed project. Ms. Jereb holds a Bachelors in Fine Arts from University of Massachusetts and a Masters in School Administration from the American International College of Springfield, MA. Under Maura's leadership, NHCS received the 2011 Massachusetts

Champions of Arts Education Award– School of Distinction in Arts Education. Ms. Jereb will be assisted in directing the project by two NHCS school leaders, Kate Scott and Emily Pratt Davidson, who were instrumental in NHCS’s successful partnership with Boston Public Schools’ Harbor Pilot Middle School, which resulted in that school successfully meeting its turnaround goals. Ms. Scott, NHCS’s Assistant Headmaster, holds a BA from Wellesley College and an Ed.M, from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. Ms. Pratt Davidson, NHCS’s Director of ELA and Social Studies/Special Projects, holds a BA from Brown University and an Ed.M, from the Harvard University Graduate School of Education

NHCS is committed to hiring the highest quality personnel, as well as members of groups that have been traditionally underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, age, or disability. All of our job postings are listed on NEMNET National Employment Minority Network, is a national resource organization committed to assisting schools and organizations in the identification and recruitment of minority teachers, administrators and coaches. Our recruitment efforts have achieved success: twenty-three percent of our school staff is Asian, African-American, or Latino.

| Qualifications of Proposed Pilot Team | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Name | Position | Qualifications |
| Pascale Asfour | 6 th Grade Social Studies Teacher | University of Massachusetts, Amherst/ B.A. Art History |
| Karen Baken | Music Specialist/Trainer | University of Massachusetts, Amherst B.A. in Music Education |
| Brandi Hood | Visual Arts Specialist/Trainer | Massachusetts College of Art with dual major: B.F.A. in Painting and |

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|--|--|
| | | B.F.A. in Community Art Education/early childhood development | |
| David Hughes | 8 th Grade Social Studies Teacher | Morehouse College, B.A; University of St. Thomas (Houston, TX), Masters of Arts in Education | |
| Nick Lind | Kindergarten Teacher | Wheelock College, B.A; Simmons College, M.S.Ed | |
| Cara McCarthy | 4 th Grade Teacher | Massachusetts College of Art, B.F.A., Painting; B.A., French Language and Literature; Pace University, M.S.T., Elementary Education | |
| Larissa Perkins | Technology Specialist/Trainer | West Virginia Wesleyan College, B.A; Lesley University, M.Ed., Technology in Education | |

Neighborhood House Charter School (NHCS) asserts that none of the six specific characteristics cited (gender, race, national origin, color, disability or age) are barriers to prevent any member of our School Community from accessing or participating in the program for which we have applied for funding.

Our admission and hiring practices are grounded in a framework of fairness and inclusion. Any child who fits geographic and age criteria and who is offered a spot in our school after winning a spot in the lottery designed for this purpose is admitted to our school. There are

no criteria designed to “counsel out” or otherwise screen potential students. NHCS provides a full spectrum of support through our special education teachers, school psychologist and school social worker so that our children and families can access assistance in a variety of ways. Further, we provide a rich, structured learning environment designed to accommodate a variety of learning styles, recognizing that we must meet our children’s learning challenges with a variety of approaches to keep them engaged and thriving.

When NHCS took up residence at our current building at 21 Queen Street in Dorchester in 2005 we made sure our space was ADA compliant. Specifically, we installed an outside handicapped-accessible ramp, ensured that all school bathrooms were handicapped accessible, and that all doors were installed with handicapped-accessible hardware. We installed an elevator in our building to assure ease of mobility for anyone with physical limitations, whether permanent or temporary, so that each member of our School community has access to every floor in our school.

Our hiring practices are transparent, thorough and fair. We are EEOC compliant and seek to provide a faculty, administrative and volunteer staff that reflects the richness and diversity of our student body. This is an ongoing challenge of the utmost priority.

V. Quality of Management Plan

a. NHCS Management Structure for the Project

NHCS is governed by a 19 member Board of Trustees. The Board meets 5 times a year, and the Board’s Executive Committee meets an additional 4 times per year. The Board maintains a robust structure of Committees which are responsible for financial and management oversight. The Committees report to the full Board at each Board meeting. Key strategic, organizational, and financial decisions are made at the Board level and voted on by the full Board.

At the school level, Headmaster Kevin Andrews is the chief executive officer. Reporting to him are the Assistant Headmaster for Academic Affairs; the Chief Financial Officer; the Director of Development; the Director of Literacy, Social Studies & Special Projects; the Head of the Middle School; the Head of the Lower School; and the Dean of Special Education & Student Support. The Headmaster and his direct reports form the Management Team, which meets weekly and is responsible for day-to-day operational management of the school.

The NHCS Leadership Team, along with the below mentioned personnel, are highly qualified to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and on budget. The NHCS' Creative Arts Department Head, Maura Jereb, will serve as the Director of this project. In that role, she will oversee the planning and implementation of all project activities and will monitor project achievement of identified benchmarks, objectives, and goals. She will recruit and manage all outside contractors involved with this project, including Troubadours, Visual Thinking Strategies, Wheelock Family Theatre, Classroom Cantatas, and Noe Medina, the external evaluator. She will work with the NHCS Chief Financial Officer on the financial management of the project. The position of Creative Arts Department Head is a full-time position and Ms. Jereb will devote 60% of her time each year. Ms. Jereb's staff of Arts Specialist/Trainers will devote 25% of their time to the project; and two NHCS leadership staff members experienced in successful district-charter partnerships will devote 10% of their time to the project. In all, the staffing is adequate and appropriate to achieve the objectives of the proposed project.

NHCS has experience administering Federal grants, achieving the objectives of the project on time and within budget. The school was the recipient of the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling grant from 2009-2011. During the course of that project, for which NHCS received more than \$850,000 over three years, we met all programmatic and

financial milestones and benchmarks. In addition, NHCS was awarded, and successfully administers, more than \$325,00 in Race to the Top funding starting in fiscal year 2011.

b. Project Timeline

Sept. to Dec. 2013: (1) Project Director decide on pilot group of four general education teachers (the “pilot team”). (2) Project Director will decide which outside organizations to hire to conduct specialized training for pilot team (i.e., Troubadours, VTS, etc.). (3) Pilot team, led by Project Director, will begin to receive specialized training in arts integration. (4) BPS partner schools identified and NHCS to hold a kick-off meeting with the BPS district representative, BPS partnering schools’ Principals and key personnel.

Jan. to May 2014: (1) Specialized training for pilot team will continue, concluding before February school break. (2) Led by Project Director, the pilot team will work collaboratively to integrate visual and dramatic arts into their classrooms through RSLE units.

June to Aug. 2014: (1) Project Director and pilot team will work together to design a professional development program to train the rest of the NHCS staff and others on best to integrate the arts into RSLE units. (2) Pilot team, Project Director and evaluation consultant will work on design and refine the metrics and tools used to evaluate the success of the project. (3) Project Director will define the larger group of NHCS teachers to receive year-long professional development sessions.

Sept. to Dec. 2014: (1) Project Director and pilot team to lead bi-monthly professional development sessions for larger group of NHCS teachers on RSLE and arts integration. (2) BPS Partnering School 1 choose a pilot team (3) Larger group of NHCS teachers design an arts-integrated RSLE and implement by the end of the semester. (4) Late in the semester, Project Director and Head of Middle School lead kick-off meeting with first, of two, BPS partnering

school on RSLEs and the integration of the arts. (5) Larger group of NHCS teachers learn the new metrics tool and begin to implement

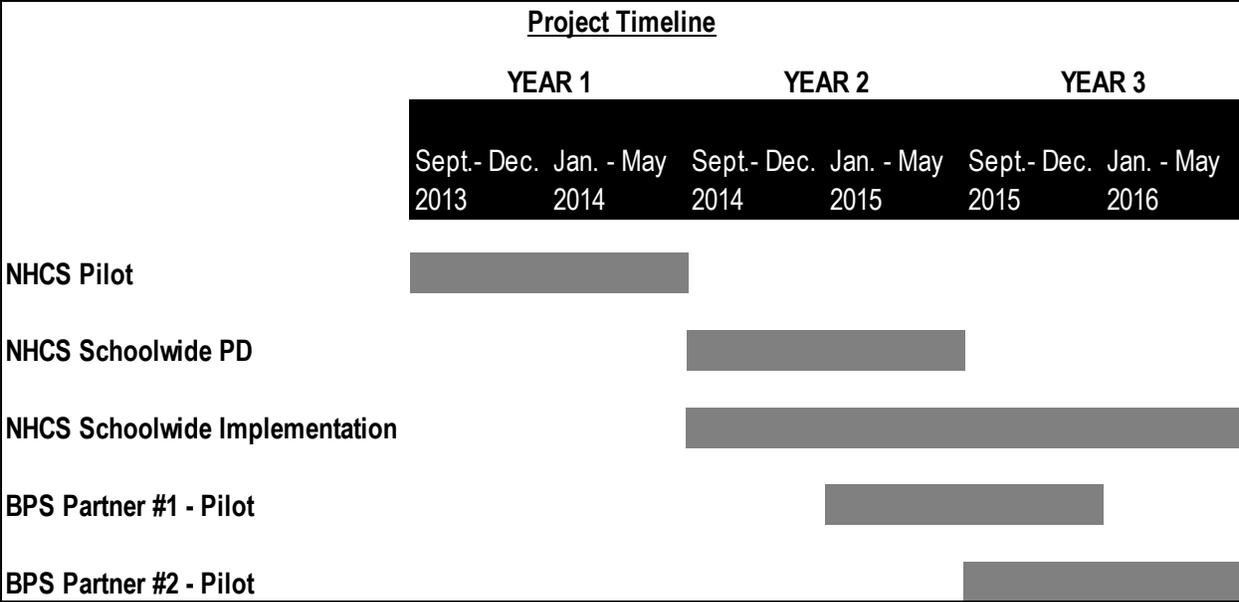
Jan. to May 2015: (1) NHCS officially begins partnership with first BPS partner school by holding working sessions with group of trained NHCS teachers and group of BPS group of teachers on how to integrate RSLE into their curriculum. (2) Two other working sessions with partnering school will take place that include “RSLE share” in which teachers share their lessons or unit plans to provide inspiration to their fellow teachers. (3) Larger group of NHCS teachers being trained implement two more RSLE units by the conclusion of the school year.

June to Aug. 2015: (1) Project Director to refine measurements metrics and tools based on feedback and evaluation. (2) BPS Partnering School 2 choose a pilot team

Sept. to Dec. 2016: (1) Early in the semester, Project Director and Head of Middle School lead kick-off meeting with second BPS partnering school on RSLEs and the integration of the arts. (2) NHCS officially begins partnership with second BPS partner school by holding working sessions with group of trained NHCS teachers and group of BPS group of teachers on how to integrate RSLE into their curriculum. (2) Two other working sessions with second partnering school will take place that include “RSLE share” in which teachers share their lessons or unit plans to provide inspiration to their fellow teachers.

Jan. to May 2016: (1) NHCS to work with partnering schools to develop external partners to provide richness to their arts programs.

June to Aug. 2016: (1) Refinement of integration within NHCS with targeted trainings as needed (2) additional NHCS teachers added to integration team.



c. **Procedures for Ensuring Feedback and Continuous Improvement**

The Project Director will work with NHCS leadership and an external evaluator, Noe Medina, to ensure regular and timely collection of high-quality information to provide feedback and opportunities for continuous improvement on all key elements of the project’s operation. This will include the administration of the MCAS as well as the measure for student engagement, the operation and processes of the NHCS Pilot Team (Year 1) and larger Project Team (Year 2) and the BPS-partner school Pilot Teams; and year-end analysis of student achievement.

By directly participating in many of the project elements, the Project Director will be in a position to assess their quality and effectiveness, to respond to problems as they occur, and to adjust plans if they appear to be inadequate. However, the project will also ensure that the perspective of other project stakeholders (including NHCS administrators and faculty along with students and parents) are incorporated into the feedback process using a combination of feedback forms, surveys, interviews, and reflective meetings.

The Project Director will work with the external evaluator to develop feedback forms for all training programs. These forms will be completed by training participants in both the NHCS

and BPS-partner-school trainings. The forms will assess the quality, value, and effectiveness of training content, trainers, materials, and logistics. Results will be compiled in a timely manner. Concerns will be shared with the trainers and plans developed to address any problems.

The Project Director will work with the external evaluator to develop questions related to key project elements for inclusion in the annual surveys administered by NHCS to its staff, students, and parents. The external evaluator will compile the results of the relevant questions on the annual surveys – highlighting any issues related to project operation. The Project Director will work with appropriate staff, or other external contractors to develop plans for addressing any issues identified through the surveys.

Finally, the Project Director will conduct mid-year and year-end reflective meetings involving all the members of the pilot team in Year 1, the larger NHCS staff in Year 2, and the partner-school administration and staff in Years 2 and 3. These meetings will be used to assess the effectiveness of the team and the effectiveness of all key elements of the project's operation. These meetings will also be used to integrate the results from other feedback sources (including the feedback forms and surveys) with the observations of the involved staff to identify areas requiring changes in the implementation plan or adjustments in the project's operation to ensure effective project implementation.

VI. Quality of the Project Evaluation

This project will incorporate a comprehensive evaluation plan that provides timely and valuable information on project implementation, operation, and impact. The overarching goals of the evaluation will be to (1) document the design of the project and the structures and processes used for its implementation, (2) monitor progress in achieving its operational benchmarks, and

(3) measure project outcomes for participating faculty, students, and schools. The evaluation will employ a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve these goals.

In **assessing intended project outcomes**, the evaluation will use a treatment/comparison group design. Randomized student assignment to treatment/control groups is not feasible because each school uses a number of factors to assign students to specific teachers. Randomized selection of schools or classrooms into treatment control groups is also not feasible because NHCS has identified specific conditions for schools and teachers that are required for its work with a district school to be successful.

The comparison group will be made up of teachers and their students in NHCS and the two BPS schools prior to their participation in the project. Once they begin project participation, they will be considered part of the treatment group. The following table lists the status of each group during each year of the project.

| Group | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| NHCS Pilot Teachers | Treatment | Treatment | Treatment |
| NHCS Other Teachers | Comparison | Treatment | Treatment |
| BPS #1 Pilot Teachers | Comparison | Treatment | Treatment |
| BPS #2 Pilot Teachers | Comparison | Comparison | Treatment |
| BPS #1 Other Teachers | Comparison | Comparison | Excluded |
| BPS #2 Other Teachers | Comparison | Comparison | Comparison |

Other (non-pilot) teachers in BPS school #1 will be excluded entirely from data collection in year 3 because it is expected that pilot teachers in that school will begin to share the model with their colleagues that year. However, this will occur outside the scope of this project – so data from this group will not be included in the project evaluation.

Student achievement in ELA and Math (associated with outcome #1) will be measured using student results from the annual state assessment in those subjects (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, MCAS). This is consistent with the performance measures established for this grant program by the U.S. Department of Education.

Student achievement of state arts education standards (associated with outcome #2) will be measured using the NHCS Arts Education Assessment. This will be a new assessment jointly developed by NHCS and the project evaluator. It will be based on existing arts education assessment but will be adapted to align with Massachusetts state standards. The assessment instrument will be developed and pilot tested for reliability and validity with a sample of classrooms from NHCS and the two participating BPS schools during the first half of the first project year. It will be administered on a pre/post basis with students in treatment and comparison groups beginning in year 2.

Student engagement with schooling (associated with outcome #3) will be measured using the School Engagement Measure – MacArthur Network (SEM). This instrument was originally developed by Dr. Phyllis Blumenfeld and Dr. Jennifer Fredericks of Connecticut College for a study conducted by the MacArthur Network for Successful Pathways through Middle Childhood. It was developed and tested with urban, low-income, primarily Black and Latino students in upper elementary, middle, and high schools. The instrument incorporates three subscales (behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, and emotional engagement). Analysis by the

developers has demonstrated reliability and validity of the subscales and the entire instrument.

[Fredericks, J., McColskey, W., Meli, J., Montrosse, B., Mordica, J. & Mooney, K. (2011).

Measuring Student Engagement in Upper Elementary Through High School. Regional Educational Laboratory at SERVE Center, Greensboro, NC.] It will be administered on a pre/post basis with treatment and comparison students beginning in year 1.

Measures for Outcome #1 (academic achievement in ELA and Math)

- Change in the Composite Performance Index (CPI) for the MCAS ELA and Math tests – The CPI is an index developed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) to measure student progress toward achieving proficiency on each MCAS test. It can be calculated for any group of students based on their MCAS results. It credits students with progress toward achieving proficiency even if it has not yet been achieved. In that regard, it is a superior measure to the use of total percentage of students demonstrating proficiency on each test.
- Change in the mean student scale score for the MCAS ELA and Math tests – This measure will allow the evaluation to monitor changes among students who have already achieved proficiency. These changes are not measured by the CPI.

Measures for Outcome #2 (achievement of state arts education standards)

- Change in the percentage of students demonstrating proficiency on the NHCS Arts Education Assessment
- Change in mean student score on the NHCS Arts Education Assessment

Measures for Outcome #3 (engagement with learning and school)

- Change in percentage of students demonstrating a meaningful improvement on the SEM
- Change in mean student score on the SEM

The evaluation will compare annual changes between treatment and comparison groups for each of these measures. In order to increase the statistical power of the analysis, the evaluation will combine results from all treatment and all comparison groups across all years in making its comparisons. At the same time, there are a number of factors which could influence the impact of the project including teaching experience of the teacher, being trained in the pilot group or with the larger group of teachers at NHCS, and having previous experience with use of the RSLE concept (NHCS teachers) vs. being introduced to the concept for the first time in this project (BPS teachers). The evaluation will also disaggregate results based on these factors. Disaggregating between NHCS and BPS teachers could also help explain the relative importance of the RSLE concept (being introduced only to BPS teachers) and the arts integration with RSLE (being introduced to NHCS and BPS teachers).

In assessing project implementation and operations to provide performance feedback, the evaluation plan will follow the model created by Thomas Guskey for evaluating professional development programs. [Guskey, T.R. (2002). Does it make a difference? Evaluating professional development, *Educational Leadership*, 59 (6), 45-51.] It will specifically encompass the first 4 levels of the Guskey model. The fifth level of the Guskey model (addressing student learning outcomes) will be addressed in the outcome evaluation elements of the evaluation plan (described above).

Level 1: Participants' Reactions (measuring satisfaction with program)

Key Questions: Were the goals of the sessions clear and appropriate? Were the presenters, materials, designs, and settings effective? Were participants engaged? Did participants consider it time well-spent? Was overall participant assessment positive?

Data Collection Methods: Participant feedback form completed after each session; Annual structured interviews with selected participants; Annual program survey of all participants

Application of Evaluation Results: Improve program design and delivery

Level 2: Participants' Learning (measuring knowledge or skills gained through program)

Key Questions: Do participants understand the RSLE design principles? Do participants understand how RSLE design principles can be used to integrate common core standards and arts education into lessons? Do participants understand how to use strategies that use arts to process information, explore meaning, gather evidence, and think critically?

Data Collection Methods: Pre/post knowledge assessments of participants; Written summaries of pilot teacher/peer observations

Application of Evaluation Results: To improve program content, format, and organization; To assess immediate impact of program on participating teachers

Level 3: Organizational Support & Change (measuring response of school and impact on policies, practices & operations)

Key Questions: Was adequate time and resources made available for NHCS pilot teachers, other NHCS teachers, and BPS pilot teachers to effectively participate following the project design? Was appropriate advocacy, facilitating, and support provided by NHCS and BPS school leaders? Did program result in changes in school policies, practices, and operations? Did program result in changes in school climate? Were implementation problems related to school identified and address quickly and efficiently?

Data Collection Methods: Periodic interviews of Project Director, NHCS pilot teachers, and school leaders; Observation of program sessions; Annual program survey of all participants

Application of Evaluation Results: To identify nature of school support associated with effective program implementation and operation; To assess impact of program on school

Level 4: Participants' Use of New Knowledge/Skills (measuring changes in teacher practices and learning experiences for students)

Key Questions: Were teachers able to use RSLE principles to create engaging lessons? Did teachers increase arts integration into their lessons while maintaining an emphasis on common core standards? Were teachers able to develop lessons that incorporated practices designed to improve students' creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration skills?

Data Collection Methods: Written summaries of school leader and peer observations; Annual structured interviews with sample of teachers and school leaders; Annual survey of participants; Annual survey of sample of upper elementary and middle school students

Application of Evaluation Results: To improve program content; To assess program impact on teacher practices

In addition to using the Guskey model to assess the professional development program developed under this project, the evaluation will also monitor the project's fidelity to its operational plan and ensure that any changes in that plan are fully considered, carefully reviewed, and appropriate. It will also ensure that accepted standards of project management are maintained throughout its period of operation. This will be accomplished by observing project meetings, reviewing minutes of project meetings, and conduct periodic interviews with the project director, pilot teachers, and school leaders.

Evaluation results will be communicated regularly to the Project Director and other appropriate project decision-makers and stakeholders. The evaluator will provide regular oral reports during the course of the project with evaluation findings and recommendations related to

project implementation and operations. These reports will provide project leaders the opportunity to make adjustments in project design, implementation, and operation in a timely manner to ensure short-term and long-term success. The evaluator will also provide annual, comprehensive, written evaluation reports summarizing evaluation data, findings, and recommendations related to project design, implementation, and outcomes. These documents will be used to inform annual reports to the U.S. Department of Education, long-term project planning efforts, and development of project dissemination documents.

The **project will contract with an independent evaluation consultant**, Noe J. Medina of Education Policy Research, to design, organize, and conduct the evaluation. Medina possesses almost 30 years of experience in the planning and implementation of comprehensive evaluations on wide range of education projects involving everything from a single school to multiple school districts nationwide. He has experience in evaluating implementation of professional development programs with teachers to measure changes in practices and student outcomes. He has previously evaluated the NHCS partnership with a BPS district school as well as another effort by a charter school to disseminate practices with district schools. He has conducted several evaluations of innovative education projects funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

In addition to his consulting work, Medina also served as the Director of Field Services for the Education Alliance at Brown University and as the Director of Program Development and Assessment for the Cambridge (MA) Public Schools. In both positions, Medina was responsible for the development and evaluation of innovative education projects. While in Washington, DC, Medina served as the Director of the Education Division for the Children's Defense Fund and as a Legislative Aide to the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources.