

## **Be the Change Charter School - CSP Grants - Narrative**

Be the Change Charter School (BCCS) is applying for the Charter Schools Program Grants to Non-State Educational Agencies for Planning, Program Design, and Initial Implementation and for Dissemination. We have applied for charter approval from Chicago Public Schools' Office of New Schools. The State Educational Agency that serves Be the Change Charter School is the Illinois State Board of Education, located at 100 W Randolph, Suite 14-300, Chicago, IL 60601. The Project Directors for this project include Eliza Bryant (914.282.9943, eliza.bryant@gmail.com), Sonia Wang (630.965.6378, wangmisun@gmail.com), Jeannie Kim (773.573.4248, jeanster9@gmail.com), Esther Angulo, and Amy Millikan.

The Design Team of BCCS consists of a small group of teachers with a combined experience of over 20 years in the classroom and a variety of educational leadership roles who seek to create change by opening a charter school in the south side of Chicago. For over three years, we have refined our mission and vision for a charter school; a charter would allow more flexibility for innovative practices and methods to fulfill our goals as well as tailor its programs to meet the strengths and needs of the community in which we will serve.

**Be the Change Charter School (BCCS)** will be a public and non-selective school that provides another neighborhood schooling option for families in the Bridgeport community of Chicago, IL. The need for BCCS is based on data gathered from a Needs Assessment of Bridgeport community members in addition to conversations with many community leaders. We have found that there are many strengths of the community including its recent business developments, diversity, parks, and family atmosphere. However, several areas of improvement in Bridgeport include the academic rigor and preparation for college, number of schooling options in the community, quality of after-school programming, communication between school and home, opportunities for engagement in decision-making, availability of bilingual/ESL services, and addressing issues of racism and discrimination.

The mission and vision of BCCS reflect the Design Team's dedication to effective teaching, understanding of how students learn best, and the needs of the Bridgeport community. Thus, **BCCS's mission** is to cultivate in its students and teachers the qualities of curiosity, resilience, advocacy, and empathy, empowering them to be active participants in the community and in the larger democracy. We believe that "being the change" at its core is about changing the way schools have traditionally defined success. We believe that our students will be successful not only if they achieve according to traditional measures, like test scores, but also if students are able to speak up for themselves and others, work together as part of a team, and become active participants in their learning and their community.

**Our vision** is to create a safe and trusting environment where students, teachers, and community members work together and take on the role of active learners and citizens. As a purposefully diverse school, we will respect and honor people from different backgrounds, with different abilities, interests and ideas, and acknowledge that these differences make learning dynamic and nurture the classroom and community.

In order to fulfill our mission and vision, BCCS is committed to bringing back the whole curriculum and providing real experiences for learning everyday. We will engage students in authentic reading and writing, mathematics exploration, scientific and historical studies, fine arts, life skills application, and socio-emotional development in our curriculum, which will prepare students to connect and apply what they learn in school to beyond its walls. BCCS will also develop a close and symbiotic partnership with the Bridgeport community by maintaining essential partnerships with organizations, inviting families into the educational process, and allowing all stakeholders to have a voice in decision-making at the school. Lastly, BCCS will have a unique partnership with the Chicago Urban Teacher Education Program (Chicago UTEP), helping to professionalize the field of education and work towards our mission of cultivating well-rounded, deep thinkers in both our staff and students.