

Abstract for Horizon Science Academy—Southwest

Concept Schools is a charter management company that oversees 31 schools in seven different Midwestern states: Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan. In 1999, a small group of educators, engineers and academics founded Horizon Science Academy Cleveland and Horizon Science Academy Columbus in Ohio—the first two schools in our charter management. To ensure the development of a rigorous, research-based curriculum aligned to state standards, a number of local scientists were invited to become part of the Concept Schools’ project planning phase. Involvement of these scientific practitioners made a significant contribution to the Concept Schools learning environment. The project team's charter school proposal was lauded by the State of Ohio Board of Education and was immediately approved. Even though the Concept Schools’ team had originally submitted only one proposal for a high school in Cleveland, state education officials urged and approved the submission of a second proposal for a high school in Columbus. Thus, in 1999, expansion of the Concept Schools’ model began. The dynamic group went on to develop what has evolved into a proven successful school design in all the Concept Schools today—a college preparatory STEM curriculum focusing on math, science, technology, and engineering, where expectations and standards are high regardless of the students’ backgrounds, and where relationships between all members of the school communities are highly valued.

In Illinois, Concept Schools has two well-established charter schools: Chicago Math and Science Academy (CMSA) and Quest Charter School in Peoria. CMSA has been ranked as a Level 1 “Excellent” rating school from the Chicago Public Schools. CMSA ranks among the top 10 non-selective high schools in Chicago with a 90% college acceptance rate and a 94% poverty rate. From 2011 to 2013, close to 80% of students at Quest Charter School met and exceeded standards on the ISAT standardized test, slightly above the state average of 77 percent. In 2013, Concept Schools opened two new charter schools in Chicago communities with above 92% poverty levels: HSA-Belmont and HSA-McKinley. Both schools have made tremendous academic strides within a year’s time on the NWEA-MAP data by moving from the 20th percentile to the 66th percentile at the Belmont site and from the 40th percentile to the 80th percentile at McKinley. Our new Southwest charter school in the Gage Park-West Englewood neighborhood with a 93% poverty rate will also make great academic strides in its first year.