

Business Plan

A. TransCenter's Mission & History

TransCenter for Youth was incorporated in 1973. Our founding mission was to provide high quality educational programs that would allow “at risk” students to obtain high school diplomas and prepare them to become productive adults and responsible community members. To realize this mission, TransCenter created and continues to operate three small high schools. Over time, we realized that to continue to accomplish our mission we needed to advocate for education policies that would ensure all students, regardless of their economic status, have real opportunities to lead successful lives.

Therefore, TransCenter for Youth, Inc. became committed to a New Vision of Public Education based on a diversity of personalized learning environments, a diversity of school governance structures, and the ability of all families, regardless of their economic status, to choose options they believe will be best for their children. We believe that all children are part of the public and that all children deserve:

- ◆ High quality learning environments of their choice;
- ◆ Adequate and equitable funding for their education; and
- ◆ Learning environments that are accountable for results.

TransCenter for Youth opened its first school for at risk students, Shalom High School, in 1973. For twelve years, Shalom operated as a private, independent, alternative school. In 1984, TransCenter helped organize the Milwaukee community to support the enactment of Wisconsin's Children At Risk statute (WI s. 118.153), which allowed for the creation of “partnership schools,” the first “prototype” charter schools in the nation. In 1985, TransCenter contracted with MPS to convert Shalom High School into a partnership school. By virtue of this contract, Shalom was transformed from a private, independent, alternative school into a new type of “public” school thus beginning the realization of a New Vision of Public Education in Milwaukee.

In the late 1980s, TransCenter began revising Shalom's program by engaging partners in the business community and in post-secondary education. The three-year process resulted in the creation of what an independent evaluation by the Center for Urban Community Development at UWM called “one of the most successful models of its kind in the nation.” Shalom was visited and studied by educators from Russia, Japan, Germany, Great Britain, South Africa, as well as the United States. The school's design was featured in publications by the National Center on Education and the Economy, Jobs for the Future, the Academy for Educational Development, the National Network for Youth, the Wisconsin Association of School Boards, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and Holistic Education Press.

Shalom's success led to a much larger number of students trying to enroll than the school had room to accommodate. Rather than expand Shalom and risk losing its relationship-building environment, TransCenter decided to serve more students by creating new schools. Discussions with the Northwest Side Community Development Corporation and its business council resulted in the creation of TransCenter's second partnership school, the Northwest Opportunities Vocational Academy (NOVA) in 1993. TransCenter subsequently opened two additional high schools: a third partnership school, El Puente High School for Science, Math, and Technology in

collaboration with Esperanza Unida, an economic development agency on Milwaukee's near south side in 1997; and The CITIES Project High School (CPHS), a non-instrumentality charter school in 2004.

CPHS grew out of The CITIES Project, which was a unique mentoring program (university faculty were recruited to give credit to undergraduate students who worked in partnership schools to counsel, mentor, and tutor at risk students) and which organized the community to support the expansion of the New Vision of Public Education in Milwaukee. Eventually, working with the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at the Humphrey Institute for Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, The CITIES Project became the center of the implementation of the Public Achievement program in Milwaukee, which asks students themselves to identify problems in their communities and to become engaged in their resolution.

In addition, TransCenter advocated for high school reform and increased opportunities for at risk students on the national level in forums organized by the Academy for Educational Development, American Youth Policy Forum, Children's Defense Fund, Jobs for the Future, National Council of State Legislatures, National Network for Youth, National Youth Employment Coalition, National Governors Association, and the Buck Institute for Education.

This history – of creating successful small high schools, of engaging the community in education reform, of advocating for a New Vision of Public Education – resulted in TransCenter becoming the intermediary and, through the creation of the Technical Assistance & Leadership Center, TALC New Vision, the technical assistance provider for the \$17.25 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in 2003 to create fifty (50) new, small high schools in Milwaukee.

B. Transition and Long Range Plan

While TransCenter for Youth continues to operate three schools for at risk students under contract with MPS, the agency is in a period of transition.

The grants from the Gates Foundation and other funders to support A New Vision of Secondary Education in Milwaukee extended through June 30, 2010. After a strategic planning retreat, TransCenter's board decided to return to the agency's "core mission" of operating schools for at risk students. The agency has shown a history of being able to operate highly successful programs with its current infrastructure. However, recent studies of nonprofit viability indicate that healthy organizations have a quarter of a year's operating capital in reserve. To reach that goal for TransCenter, the agency will need to add a development director and perhaps a fiscal manager. With the closing of TALC (in 2010) and CPHS (in 2009), it will be difficult for TransCenter's three existing schools to support the existing infrastructure by themselves, let alone cover the costs of adding new positions. Therefore, the board concluded that the agency should consider the possibility of expanding the number of schools it operates in Milwaukee and even to consider running schools in other locations.

TransCenter, as noted above, has a long history of contracting with MPS. However, given the current financial crisis in MPS, the board thought it would be wise to "hedge our bets" by exploring the possibility of chartering with either the City of Milwaukee or UWM. It was suggested that TransCenter propose the idea of an "umbrella charter" where a chartering authority grant the agency a charter that would allow TransCenter to operate up to eight schools under the "umbrella." By expanding the number of schools the agency operates over the next five years,

the infrastructure of the agency could expand as well. And with the addition of a development director, TransCenter would put itself in a position to increase its corporate reserves, possibly creating an endowment for the agency that would allow it to become solidly sustainable in the long run.

The plan for operating MNSS includes utilizing the same management structure TransCenter uses for its existing schools. Financial management and human resources administration will be provided to MNSS by TransCenter's Executive Director's office.

As a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization, TransCenter receives contributions from foundations, corporations, and individual donors every year. However, we do not think it is wise to create budgets for our schools that *depend* on charitable donations. We also realize that eligible students at MNSS will receive support from federal Title programs. These additional funds will be welcome and will be used for allowable expenses to enhance our program. However, until we know how many students will qualify for federal support, we thought it best not to include federal funds in our budgets. Therefore, as we develop our budget, it will be based only on per pupil revenue from the state for charter schools. Since the City of Milwaukee and UWM charter schools are funded on a reimbursement basis, TransCenter has obtained a line of credit from First Bank Financial Centre to cover cash flow.

We have identified two key partners to work with us during the 2011-2012 planning year to help launch MNSS. Heather Heaviland of IFF has agreed to act as a consultant on facilities issues. In the summer and early fall of 2011, she will work with TransCenter's Executive Director and board on initial strategy for deciding on the location for MNSS. After reviewing IFF's mapping of the neighborhoods in Milwaukee in greatest need of quality schools, TransCenter's board will choose the area of the city within which to locate MNSS. Then, IFF will complete a site search and due diligence to identify potential facilities for the school. Once agreement has been reached on a building, IFF will be our representative in obtaining any zoning variances or permits necessary for MNSS to occupy the facility and will manage any renovations that may be required to bring the site up to code.

EdVisions has agreed to act as a consultant for the marketing of the school within the City of Milwaukee, for recruiting the school's staff, and for providing the necessary staff development for the school to open in the fall of 2012. EdVisions has outlined for us the following planning and development activities:

Planning Steps/Development: prior to opening

- EdVisions will monitor TransCenter's planning process and progress to ensure that throughout the planning process the planning group is equipped with the resources to successfully implement the model
- 2 immersion visits to EdVisions Network Schools/sites
- Purchase of the following EdVisions recommended readings
 - *Passion for Learning* "How a Project Based-System Meets the Needs of High School Students in the 21st Century"
 - *The Coolest School in America: How Small Learning Communities are Changing Everything*
 - *Teachers as Owners: A key to Revitalizing Public Education*
 - *Democratic Learning and Leading: Creating Collaborative School Governance*
 - *Assessing What Really Matters in School: Creating Hope for the Future*

Development Steps: Typically, for 3 months prior to opening

- 17.5 days of coaching and technical assistance (10 days on-site & 7.5 off-site) with the following objectives:
 - Understanding of overall implementation of the EdVisions Design Essentials and related learning program materials, resources and training.
 - Small Learning Community
 - Student centered
 - Multi-age Advisory format
 - Personalized climate including flexibility of schedule
 - Community connections
 - Citizenship (student voice)
 - Project Based Learning
 - PBL on the continuum
 - Personalized workspace
 - Full integration of technology
 - Personal learning plans
 - Authentic Assessment
 - Diagnostic assessments such as NWEA
 - Standardized tests per state regulation
 - Value added
 - School climate/learning environment survey such as Hope Survey
 - 21st century skills/life skills
 - Teacher Professional Practice
 - Autonomy/ Site based management
 - Teachers/staff full partners in school vision and implementation
 - Democratic governance including staff evaluation and professional development
 - Development of personalized project-based learning community where students and teachers engage in personalized, academically, productive learning program.
 - Project process
 - Authentic assessment
 - Orientation to project process for both students and parents
 - Advisory development as the basis of an organization and relationships for a project-based learning environment
 - Developing a teacher professional practice for shared leadership and collaborative practice consistent with the EdVisions Design Essentials/EdVisions Model.
 - Understanding the research and theoretical base of the Hope Survey/Hope Logic Model as it pertains to the EdVisions Design Essentials and school improvement planning.
 - EdVisions will monitor and review the start-up process, progress towards & realization of the EdVisions Design Essentials as stated in the above planning steps.

- Developing MNSS leadership capacity to sustain the implementation of the EdVisions model of education within Milwaukee. To include:
 - on-site coaching and technical assistance
 - immersion visits to EdVisions Sites
 - off site webinars
 - site conference calls
 - off site development

- Planning group develops their School Action Plan for pre-opening staff development and other related pre-opening tasks. To include:
 - on-site coaching and technical assistance
 - immersion visits to EdVisions Sites
 - off site webinars
 - site conference calls
 - off site development
 - on site summer trainings
 - on site Hope Study Coaching
 - off site Hope Survey webinars
 - Off site prep time

TransCenter will apply to the Department of Public Instruction for a charter school planning grant to cover the costs associated with the work of IFF and EdVisions during the 2011-2012 school year leading up to the opening of MNSS in 2012.