

BUILDING HOPE

# IMPACT

SUMMIT & AWARDS

## STUDENT EMPOWERMENT

Student Empowerment looks like a charter school that always puts the students. Students at this school take an active role in their education, in the school, and ideally in the community. Their voices are not only heard, but also acted upon. Students leading the way is a hallmark of a model Student Empowerment school.

A charter school that fosters student empowerment operates with a focus on the individual student and honors his or her diverse gifts. The school identifies and nurtures the student's uniqueness while providing them with the tools for future success. These tools are not only academic; they are also 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of critical thinking and adaptiveness, and "soft skills" of communication, social adeptness, and self-regulation.

The IMPACT this makes is that students from these schools will create their own future and are uniquely positioned to be the leaders of the future. Are there opportunities for the students to test-and-adjust their theories, explore their interests, and engage in meaningful inquiry? Does the school actively encourage students to use their voices? Does the school proactively explore its own connections for the benefit of students? Is there a pathway for continued success?

### **IMPACT**

Students are self-motivated, engaged, and respect one another's differences. They support fellow students and are involved in their own education. They are comfortable communicating with each other, faculty, and staff.

Graduates of these programs cite this school model/program as an integral part of their success, and current students report a high level satisfaction and happiness.

A high-level of academic success is present, and a clear pattern of student academic growth is evident. Students at every level of ability are provided with opportunities catered to their skill levels, and students' individual cultural, personal, and societal uniqueness is celebrated.

Direct testimonials from students, statistical metrics of achievement, and detailed examples of individual student empowerment are important to support the IMPACT of the Student Empowerment Grant applicant

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## **PROGRAM**

The charter school curriculum is designed around student empowerment. There are specific, identifiable, elements of the program to support each student's success, and to allow them a voice in their own education and future.

Student Empowerment must provide avenues for students to lead and impact change over their own lives and education. The tools to effectively engage and communicate, as well as the tools to critically assess problems are key to an empowered student. Being supported to safely express themselves and their ideas is the foundation for success.

Support for how diverse individual students have benefitted directly from the program, along with a plan on how to increase the impact constitute the highest level of success for the IMPACT criteria in Student Empowerment.

## **LEADERSHIP**

The leader proactively encourages meaningful and robust student engagement in their education and in the school community. Regular and deep engagement between the leader, faculty and students must be present, along with active promotion of students to grow and learn in and out of the classroom.

Commitment to student empowerment means creating opportunities for students to lead and engage with each other and the community of adults. Ideal leaders encourage all students to shine and seek out avenues to support students of diverse backgrounds, intelligences, cultural, personal and societal groups.

"Walking the walk" is a critical piece of being a leader with integrity. Putting the student needs first, operating one's school with impeccable financial responsibility, and always striving for improvement are qualities of a leader with integrity. Modeling the behavior a leader most wants to see in the students and pushing forward on one's goals with the golden rule at heart are qualities of a leader with integrity.

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## **GROWTH**

A clear plan for how a school plans to increase their student empowerment efforts in depth and breadth should be either in place or about to launch. A critical look at efforts that were not as effective, an expressed understanding of what was learned, and how a program was refined also demonstrates growth.

How future initiatives will be funded, staffed, and executed needs to be clearly delineated and supported by research, data, and/or other outside support to ensure best practices and the highest potential for success.

The future plans should not only be practical, but also inspirational. Long-term visioning provides a guiding star for a school to look to when making decisions about the future. The ideal should be a known quantity, and a path to get there needs to be developed, with the understanding that testing-and-adjusting is an integral part of true growth.

## **SUPPORT**

For Student Empowerment, direct support from the students is critical. Testimonials and verifiable quotes from diverse sources are important to prove the Student Empowerment efforts are currently effective.

Academic research, comparative studies, photos, videos and anecdotal evidence all serve to support the validity of the school's community engagement program and are welcome to demonstrate the program is, and will continue to be, effective.