

ORLEANS PARISH SCHOOL BOARD

Summary Template



Executive Summary

The Querencia School

What is your plan?

- (1) Why do you want to start a school? Identify and describe in detail the problem that you are starting a school to address.
- (2) Provide the mission of your school.
- (3) Provide a vision for your school that clearly illustrates how your school will put students on a trajectory for lifelong success.
- (4) Outline the key components of your scale strategy
- (5) Detail your approach to mitigating the threats most likely to hinder your success.

Mission: The Querencia School cultivates empathy and agency in an academically rich, therapeutically informed, culturally sustaining school “home” for kids of diverse backgrounds.

Querencia is a Spanish language metaphysical concept. It describes a place from which one's strength of character is drawn and a place where one feels at safe and at home. We envision a school where every child is deeply known, well-educated, and warmly welcomed every day. Instruction is both tailored to individual children and designed to provide collaborative, authentic experiences. A strengths-based, trauma-informed approach recognizes and nurtures each child's unique skills and character, developing their agency, empathy, and self-awareness.

The Problem: Over 40% of children in the United States demonstrate mild mental health, social/interpersonal, or behavioral support need. Moreover, national estimates indicate nearly 20% of children demonstrate mental health or behavioral needs requiring clinical intervention. However, per research conducted by the Recovery School District a much larger group of approximately 60% of school-aged children in New Orleans exhibit signs of post-traumatic stress or similar mild to moderate mental health need. In addition the number of students who require clinical intervention is estimated to be nearly twice the national norm. In many ways, the need for therapeutically informed educational practice is the norm in New Orleans rather than the exception.

In addition to students with mild to moderate behavior and social emotional challenges, our city has a large population of children with more significant needs who are being underserved.

Nationally 10.07% of students with diagnosed behavioral disabilities attend separate schools for a portion of their academic careers, while in Louisiana only .41% do. Disproportionately high numbers of children are therefore being served in settings that were not designed with a therapeutically informed pedagogy in mind. These sites are ill-prepared to support the most vulnerable among them, and the absence of “step down” sites exacerbates this problem. When students participate in stabilizing environments (such as partial hospital, eating disorder residential treatment, or rehabilitation settings) and are prepared to return to their home-schools there are few “right fit” options.

In addition to more traditionally understood trauma and mental-illness, the on-going segregation of schools in New Orleans is typical of a racially traumatizing environment. The psychological toll of institutional racism on children from minority populations is well documented, and there is evidence that there are negative effects on children who are part of the racial majority. Increasingly parents are seeking schooling environments that provide not only an excellent education but that also work toward equity and anti-racism.

Each year the number of families participating in the New Orleans’ “OneApp” process, and seeking a racially and economically diverse school experience, increases. Last year there were 19%, or roughly 2000, more OneApp participants than the previous year. In addition, 461 students requested transfers because they were dissatisfied with their current placement. The majority of these new and transfer applicants listed the most in-demand schools as their top choices. While the majority of schools in New Orleans struggle to achieve student pass rates exceeding 50% basic or above, these schools tend to handily exceed that rate while serving a racially and/or economically diverse population. Unfortunately, they accept less than 70% of their applicants.

These schools to which we compare our educationally holistic program – including Morris Jeff Community School, Bricolage Academy, Lycee Francais de la Nouvelle Orleans, and the International School of Louisiana – cannot meet current levels of demand. There is evidence that families who list these schools as their first choice do not enroll in public school if they are placed elsewhere. For example, a family that lists Morris Jeff and Bricolage as their first and second choice will not enroll in their third choice school but will instead choose a private option despite preferring a public one. A similar problem exists for schools that are not currently part of the OneApp, such as Lusher.

We believe that the Querencia School is well suited to a portfolio district where many charters struggle to support kids “on the margins.” This includes the children with mental health needs whom we have discussed, but as a school designed for the margins Querencia will be a school that works for everyone. Querencia is intended to serve those students whose parents are seeking a progressive education model, middle class students of color and children from the majority population whose parents often reject high-control charter environments, LGBT students who sometimes find schools challenging especially around issues of gender expression, and children who are “quirky” to the point of non-conformity making them poor fits for some of our most successful charter models.

Growth and Scale Strategy: Starting in the fall of 2018, we plan to open a single site charter

school, capitalizing on what we have learned running our programs serving children “on the margins.” We anticipate opening with grades K-2. We would grow one grade a year until we are a K-8. At scale, the K-8 school would serve 640-700 children.

In 2020 we believe we will be ready to use our Querencia model and our previous experience in school turnaround to take over a fully built out K-8 school if such an opportunity is available. We anticipate the need for two K-8 schools and one small high school in Orleans Parish. We believe we will need with an additional two K-8 schools in Jefferson Parish and perhaps one in an adjacent parish such as St. John.

Querencia schools would replicate in other metro areas states where there is a demand for a progressive, holistic, diverse charter option. These schools would capitalize on clinical and therapeutic expertise at the founding New Orleans site to support those learners for whom a traditional school or a high-control charter are poor options.

Mitigating Threats:Dr. Marcell has identified potential political impediments to our founding and growth. Cultivating relationships has been essential to my role at NOTDP and began before the program launched, when sheI convened a monthly working group to help with the design and launch of the program. Working group members consisted of special education coordinators, school leaders, social workers, counselors, and non-profit directors. Also during our planning year, Dr. Marcell met with over 20 stakeholders from the medical, mental health, philanthropic, insurance, and educational communities - everyone from hospital executives to leaders of Federally Qualified Health Centers, from city officials to local judges, to inform them about our program and invest them in its mission. She has specifically sought out relationships with potential detractors, all of whom have become supporters. Since our program launch, she met one-on-one with our partner school point people to get feedback and share expansion plans for their advice, and have used our current funders to connect me to community members who support our work and other potential funders. Our relationships have been helpful in a variety of ways, including but not limited to: leading to increased referrals from year one to year two of the program; new, in-kind space for the treatment program side of our program for the 2017-18 school year; requests for site visits from as far away as Australia; requests for us to replicate the program elsewhere in Louisiana and in other states, as far away as Indiana; connections to other funders; connections to contractual service providers for services such as art and music therapy; free press, such as being featured in the Baptist Community Ministries annual report and a story on WWNO; and invitations to participate in leadership development opportunities through community partners such as the Greater New Orleans Foundation.

The other significant threat to our success is ensuring financial and operational stability. We have addressed this by partnering with FirstLine schools to provide all our “back office” support during our founding years.

How will you measure your plan’s success?

(1) Describe the performance goals that you will achieve to put students on the path towards achieving your vision. Provide the baseline data used in establishing all performance goals. Include the goals that you will reach in years one through five, the length of your first charter contract.

**Orleans
Parish
Specific**

1. How will you evaluate school performance?
2. What are performance goals for year 1 through 5? How did you get to these goals?

Questions	<p>3. What is your capacity to effectively measure success?</p> <p>4. What will you do to address performance if you fall below these targets?</p>
------------------	--

School performance will be evaluated using the Orleans Parish School Board’s Charter School Performance Framework. We have set goals for both academic and non-academic outcomes that we are confident will ensure we meet or exceed standards set forth by OPSB for state letter grade performance, Math and ELA outcomes, subgroup performance and compliance, school environment and operations, and financial obligations and management.

Given our school leadership experience and experience running the New Orleans Therapeutic Day Program, we are confident in our ability to execute these measures for a population of up to 700 children. Because we propose to launch a slow growth charter school beginning with graders K-2, the goals for our second year of operation remain our goals moving forward. That is, for example, we have set a goal that 100% of students who have been with us for two or more years will be reading on grade level by the end of third grade.

Academic Outcomes:

State Assessments - We will measure our success on an absolute scale by our performance on state Louisiana assessments (starting in third grade). Currently Louisiana uses an assessment that reflects the rigor and structure of the PARCC and is aligned to the Louisiana State Standards. We are targeting a 90% rate of proficiency and 50% rate of mastery as measured by state assessments for our first class of third graders (in our second year of operation). In year five we anticipate a comparable 90% rate of proficiency for grades 3-6.

Standards Mastery – Our grading and report card structure share data from teacher made tests on which students are graded using a four point rubric. Such assessments are created using an Understanding by Design planning process informed by curricular material for each subject area. We are targeting 80% standards mastery, and 100% mastery of the “major work of the grade” standards.

Progress Monitoring and Benchmark Assessments - We contract with the Achievement Network in order to use benchmark assessments to inform teacher practice. We use STEP (grades pK - 3) and Fountas and Pinnell (grades 3 - 8, and students reading significantly below level) to track and measure student progress in Reading, and iReady to track and measure student progress in Math.

Non-Academic Outcomes:

Attendance: We monitor daily student attendance as an overall measure of the school’s health with a goal of 95% average daily attendance.

Mental Health: We use the BASC-2 BESS (Behavioral and Emotional Screening System) to track and measure student social-emotional well-being.

Daily Behavior: We track four indicators of habits likely to promote success (kind language, task attention, work completion, and peaceful conflict resolution). These indicators then inform the identification of lagging skills and the completion of Collaborative and Proactive

Solutions conversations.

Significant Discipline: We track significant student disciplinary infractions as an overall measure of the school's health targeting a less than 7% rate of suspension and the assurance that children with disabilities' rights are upheld.

School Culture Survey: Students, faculty, and families complete a twice-yearly school climate survey using the School Climate Assessment Inventory (SCAI) or similar tool.

Financial Outcomes:

Audit: We plan to receive an unqualified audit opinion every year devoid of significant findings, conditions, or material weaknesses.

Report Submission: We anticipate submitting complete and on-time financial reports, including budgets and revision; we will comply with all reporting requirements for the use of public funds and provide the results of an annual independent audit and any related corrective plans.

Orleans Parish Specific Questions

1. What about your school positions it to uniquely address the needs you have identified?
2. What do you know about the families you will serve? What do you know about other schools you may compete with? How will your school be competitive in New Orleans and attract families?
3. Who will your school collaborate with? What community support has the school generated? Who will your school work with to be well positioned within the city and community?
4. What external factors does the school expect to face in opening in Fall 2018 in New Orleans? How does the school expect to address these external factors?

Positioned for Success: The founding leadership team of The Querencia School are veteran educators with a history of achieving dramatic gains in student achievement. Not only do the leaders bring their individual experience to bear, but they have also worked together for almost two years running the New Orleans Therapeutic Day Program. Rarely does the founding team for a charter school have over two years iterating on their model and assumptions with real children and families.

Target Population:

Querencia will participate in New Orleans's citywide enrollment system, OneApp. Therefore, when we think about "community demographics" we think both about the community of New Orleans, of which 73% of youth are African-American and 17.4% of youth are White* - and the community of public school students in New Orleans, of which 85% are African-American and 7% are White (and 4.8% and 4% Hispanic and 2.5% and 2% Asian, respectively). We aim to reflect the city's youth population, but also know that charter schools authorized by the Orleans Parish School Board have a higher percentage of White students, which is why our enrollment projections anticipate a population that is 58% African-American and 35% White. That said, we hope that our location in a neighborhood that reflects the youth population and our intent to attend a diversity of recruiting and enrollment events can contribute to a school

population that reflects community demographics.

We anticipate being located in the Gentilly Terrace neighborhood of New Orleans. Gentilly Terrace was developed in the early 1900s and displays a unique mix of architectural styles. Gentilly Terrace is a subdivision of Gentilly, a historically middle-class/economically diverse African American and Caucasian community with a small Latinx and Asian population in adjoining neighborhoods. 2010 data shows the population of Gentilly Terrace is 77.8% Black or African American, 15.5% White, and 3.8% Hispanic. The average household income from 2011-15 is \$50,822, down from \$58,251 in 2010, with approximately 22.1% of residents living in poverty. Only 1.1% of residents speak a language other than English at home.

As previously noted, These schools to which we compare our educationally holistic program – including Morris Jeff Community School, Bricolage Academy, Lycee Francais de la Nouvelle Orleans, and the International School of Louisiana – cannot meet current levels of demand.

Partnerships and Collaboration: Partnerships with community agencies that provide experiential learning opportunities will be essential in the early stages of The Querencia School before we are able to bring on full-time experiential educators. Currently, the New Orleans Therapeutic Day Program partners with LOOP NOLA, which provides outdoor education experiences in City Park as well as school-site hands-on activities, and Community Works, which provides culturally sustaining enrichment activities such as African Drumming and African Dance. We anticipate expanding these partnerships to The Querencia School. We also anticipate working closely with New Schools for New Orleans in order to participate in their School Review Process. We will work with the Achievement Network to secure benchmark assessments.

An ongoing partnership with faculty and residents and fellows of the Tulane University Medical School Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry will be essential to the success of The Querencia School. This partnership will be an extension of the existing partnership and contract between Tulane University and the New Orleans Therapeutic Day Program (transitioning to the nonprofit Center for Resilience) for clinical psychology faculty and postdoctoral fellows. Tulane is deeply invested in the work of the Center for Resilience and has demonstrated this investment by providing funds to support the contract and increasing the amount of faculty of postdoctoral fellows dedicated to the work. This contract will support The Querencia School's trauma-informed approach and ensure adequate therapeutic and counseling staff on site.

In addition, The Querencia School anticipates a contractual relationship with The Children's Bureau for any additional therapeutic services required. Paulette Carter, CEO and President of The Children's Bureau, is a founding board member. We are also pursuing a relationship with Xavier University to support our staffing efforts.

Querencia's leadership team is well regarded in the educational, clinical, and medical communities. We have received overwhelming support from these sectors and are responding to the urgency that has been expressed to us for the expansion of our current program. For example, we enjoy the full support of FirstLine Schools and have partnered with them to provide back office support.