



Application for a Public Charter School

Prospectus

**Submitted to NYSED Office of Innovative School Models
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August 16th, 2010

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I. Executive Summary

Introduction:

Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School is a newly proposed 6-12 Expeditionary Learning School. The Expeditionary Learning (EL) model balances both academic rigor and character development through experiential, project-based learning. *Launch* has established an institutional partnership with New York City Outward Bound (NYC Outward Bound), providing the school with the following resources:

- 20 years of experience working with students in NYC, and nearly 10 years of experience opening and helping to run small, NYC public schools. There are currently nine schools in the network.
- \$520,000 from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation through NYC Outward Bound

Launch, as the first EL charter school in New York City, will be able to work under the EL system with greater autonomy, to the benefit of all its students.

Mission Statement:

Launch students will develop the academic skills and strength of character necessary to thrive in college, contribute to their communities, and excel in their careers.

Educational Program:

Launch believes that the skillful implementation of the Five Core Practices of Expeditionary Learning will result in clear academic gains as well as personal growth for its students.

- 1) **Learning Expeditions** – In-depth, cross-curricular, standards-based studies that are project-based, incorporate fieldwork and are relevant to students’ lives. Expeditions are the primary way of organizing curriculum, and always address central academic standards.
- 2) **Active Pedagogy** – Engaging, research-based, effective instruction focused on student inquiry and literacy across the curriculum. Teaching and learning are active and engaging in *Launch* classrooms. Literacy skills serve as one of the primary vehicles for learning across the curriculum.
- 3) **Culture and Character** – School culture is developed and supported through a strong character-building program. Teaching practices and school wide structures ensure that all students are well known by adults and peers. Student achievement, culture and character are enhanced at *Launch* through the *crew* system, a unique advisory system that is a powerful tool for learning.
- 4) **Leadership and School Improvement** – Success at *Launch* is supported by strong and collaborative leadership that uses data to drive school improvement and links the EL philosophy to the school as a whole. Leaders create a professional community that focuses on curriculum and instruction as the primary vehicles for improving student achievement and school culture.
- 5) **Structures** – Clear structures are in place that provide time for both student and teacher learning and development. The schedule will integrate blocks of class time, opportunities for integration of the disciplines, and common planning time for teachers.

Data

Through the generous donation of Jonathan Harber, CEO of Schoolnet and *Launch* board member, *Launch* will implement the Schoolnet Instructional Management Suite. This will allow all *Launch* students, teachers, parents and administrators to look at the same information in a transparent and purposeful way.

Special Education

Launch will employ a Special Education Coordinator who will work with the Committee on Special Education (CSE) to ensure that IEP’s provide the least restrictive environment for students to learn. The Special Education Coordinator will work with Special Education and General Education teachers to ensure that students needs are being met in accordance with a student’s IEP and all applicable laws.

English Language Learners

Students who are not proficient in English will be provided with support to not only gain the language skills necessary to succeed in school, but will also be given the support to meet or exceed state learning standards in all subjects. All teachers will be trained in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) in order to meet both the content and language needs.

Extended Learning Time

Launch will work on an extended day and extended year schedule. Students will be in school from 7:45am to 3:30pm each day and the school year will run for 190 school days. More time on task will allow *Launch* students to make even greater academic gains from year to year.

Capacity

Launch has assembled a team of individuals representative of the diverse needs of a charter school planning team. Planning team members have backgrounds ranging from education, finance, law, real estate, business, technology, school start-up, and entertainment. Each member of the planning team has demonstrated a commitment to *Launch* and to educating students in NYC who are most in need. *Launch* will be working with NYC Outward Bound. NYC Outward Bound has worked with over 20,000 students and 250 schools in NYC. The organization has over 20 years of experience working with NYC schools and almost 10 years of experience helping to open and run successful, small schools in all five boroughs. NYC Outward Bound has received over \$8 million dollars from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to open new schools in NYC. *Launch* will directly benefit from this grant by receiving \$520,000 to assist in start-up and operations over five years. Part of this money will finance to unique personnel positions, a School Designer and an Instructional Guide that will help to ensure effective implementation of the Expeditionary Learning model.

Planning Team

Geoffrey Roehm – Mr. Roehm is the Lead Applicant and proposed Executive Director. Mr. Roehm is a graduate of the Summer Principals Academy at Columbia University’s Teachers College where he received his Ed.M. in School Leadership

Evan Kilgore – Mr. Kilgore is the current Director of School Culture at Explore Charter School and the proposed Principal at *Launch*. He also received his Ed.M. from the Summer Principals Academy.

Suzanne Tillman – Regional Director, Expeditionary Learning, NYC Outward Bound. Ms. Tillman has extensive experience in education, having worked for the New York Citywide School to Work Alliance, The Gateway Institute for Pre-College Education and the NYC Partnership and Chamber of Commerce.

Jonathan Harber – Co-Founder and CEO Schoolnet – Mr. Harber has been working in the field of education for over twenty years and is the founder of four award winning education software companies. He has served on the Board of NYC Outward Bound.

Reggie Williams – SVP Strategy and Operations, BET Networks – Mr. Williams has worked in the fields of law and entertainment for many years. Mr. Williams has also served on the Board of NYC Outward Bound.

Mark Abramowitz – Partner, Troutman Sanders LLP (Retired) – Mr. Abramowitz served as an attorney for forty-five years at some of the top law firms in New York. He is a long-standing member of the NYC Outward Bound Board.

David Goldban – Goldban and Goldban PLL – Mr. Goldban has worked as an attorney, specializing in real estate, at some of the top law firms in New York City for the past fifteen years. He previously served as the Associate General Counsel for Edison Schools Inc. and helped to manage and negotiate all facilities related needs.

Grace Lee – Mutual of America Capital Management Corp. – Ms. Lee, a graduate of Stanford and Harvard Business School, has worked in the field of finance for over twelve years.

Jasmine Anderson – American Express – International Consumer and Small Business Services – Ms. Anderson, a graduate of Stanford University and Columbia Business School specializes in marketing for American Express.

II. Student Population

Enrollment Planning

Intensive daily work will be done throughout a student’s time at *Launch* to develop a college-focused culture of personal and academic achievement guided by the design principles of Expeditionary Learning. A key foundation of this work is the shared experience of the five-day backpacking orientation with their crewmates and crew leader at the beginning of sixth grade and a similar acculturation process in ninth grade. Limiting entry points allows *Launch* to develop robust acculturation experiences and provide a vertically aligned character development program that builds on work done day-to-day and year-to-year.

The goal of *Launch*’s enrollment plan is to preserve small class and school size to ensure that all students are well known. This will enable us to best meet their academic and social and emotional needs. With four classes per grade, beginning class sizes of 25 in 6th grade are large enough to allow for natural attrition of up to 10% without the need for new enrollment in order to maintain the academic pace and culture of each cohort¹. We will however enroll new students in 9th grade in order to provide an outstanding education to more students and meet the needs of the community.

Grade	Ages	First Chartering Period					Full Enrollment	
		11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18
6	11-12	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
7	12-13		90	90	90	90	90	90
8	13-14			81	81	81	81	81
9	14-15				100	100	100	100
10	15-16					90	90	90
11	16-17						81	81
12	17-18							73
Total		100	190	271	371	461	542	615

Target Population:

The goal of Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School is to serve a student population that has a high need for the rigorous and supportive learning environment we will offer. This need clearly exists in CSD 16²

Key demographic information about the student population of Launch expects to serve in CSD 16 includes:

- 84% of students are Black or African American and 13% are Latino
- 80% of students qualify for free or reduced lunch
- 12% of students have individualized education plans (IEPs)³
- 3% of students have limited English proficiency (Spanish is the language spoken at home for 77% of non-English proficient speakers in Community District 3, which comprises the majority of CSD 16, according to the most recent census data available)

¹ Annual attrition has been estimated at 10% based on attrition at schools within CSD 16 serving similar grade levels and populations. We have chosen a higher than average estimate to promote conservative budget projections, but our programs and staffing will allow us to support and strive for less than 10% attrition. With 0% attrition we still remain within 15% of our projected enrollment. *Launch* reserves the right to enroll students at any grade level if enrollment drops below projected levels.

² Academic data in this section taken from 2008-2009 NYS Accountability and Overview Reports and Comprehensive Information Reports

³ Calculated using Department of Education S-Form report found here:
<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/data/stats/Register/SFormbyDistricts/default.htm>

Notable information about academic performance in CSD 16 according to the most recent available data:

- 19% of 6th grade students in scored at or above a level 3 on the state English Language Arts (ELA) exam and 31% did so on the state mathematics exam in 2010
- 19% of 8th grade students scored at or above a level 3 on the state ELA exam and 27% did so on the state mathematics exam in 2010
- 61% of students testing scored above a 65% on the Comprehensive English Regents Exam
- 27% of students tested scored above a 65% on the Integrated Algebra Regents Exam
- The district graduation rate is 42%: 44% for Black or African American students, 26% for Hispanic or Latino students, and 6% for students with disabilities
- Boys and Girls High School served 2832 students in 2008-209, approximately 80% of CSD 16's high school students.
- Boys and Girls High has a graduation rate of just 43%, failed to make adequate yearly progress in all areas of their 2008-2009 Accountability and Overview Report, and was added to the list of Schools Under Registration Review in February 2010
- 2214 middle school students in CSD 16 were in schools with fewer than 80% of students performing on grade level in 2008-2009
- Only four schools in CSD 16 averaged greater than 80% student proficiency in math and ELA in 2009: Bedford Stuyvesant Collegiate Charter School, Brooklyn Excelsior Charter School, Excellence Boys Charter School, and Frederick Douglass Academy IV High School (These schools will have space for roughly 1150 students in grades 6-12 at full capacity. There were approximately 5675 6-12th grade students in CSD 16 district and charter schools in 2008-2009).

A wealth of data also points to the strong need for character education and social and emotional learning and support for the students of CSD 16. A recent study by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene examined health behaviors of teens in public high schools throughout New York City⁴. The study reported the following information about students in Bedford-Stuyvesant and Bushwick:

- 17% had used marijuana in the past 30 days and 9% had done so before the age of 13, the highest rates in the city
- 34% reported symptoms of depression and 12% reported attempting suicide, the highest rates in the city
- 17% were obese, tied for the South Bronx for the highest rate in the city
- 45% have been sexually active, 16% had sexual intercourse before the age of 13, and 11% had been or gotten someone pregnant, all the highest rates in the city
- The teen pregnancy rate is 133 per 1,000, while the national average is 75 per 1,000 and the New York City average is 94 per 1,000
- 24% carried a weapon in the last 30 days, 7% carried a gun, and 9% carried a weapon on school property, all the highest rates in the city
- 47% had been in a fight in the last 12 months, the highest rate in the city

Additional relevant information about the students and families of Bedford-Stuyvesant includes:

- At 40 per 1000, Community District 3, which comprises the majority of CSD 16, has the highest rate of adult incarceration in Brooklyn
- At 1:11, CD 3 has the highest incarceration ratio of males age 16-24 in Brooklyn
- CD 3 has the highest ratio of children in foster care and families on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

By complementing a rigorous, college focused academic program with a comprehensive, meaningful character development program, *Launch* will enable students to overcome the obstacles highlighted above and equip them for a life of success.

⁴ Noyes P, Alberti P, Ghai N. Health Behaviors among Youth in East and Central Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant and Bushwick, and the South Bronx. New York, NY: New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2008

Outreach

It is *Launch's* goal to recruit a student body that is representative of our community school district, and one that has equal to or greater than the district average of students with disabilities and ELL students. *Launch* will undertake the measures below, among others, to recruit student applicants. For any parent that requests assistance in completing the application, the Director of Operations will provide help. If translation services are required and bi-lingual staff are unavailable, we will hire translators during the admission period. *Launch* will:

- Develop marketing materials that contain a description of the special education, ELL, and related services that the charter school will provide directly
- Highlight in marketing materials Expeditionary Learning's capacity for engaging and meeting the needs of English Language Learners students and students with disabilities.
- Provide all marketing and application material in both English and Spanish based on the demographics of Community Board 3 (CB 3) and CSD 16
- Meet with CB 3 and Community Educational Council 16 (CEC 16) to discuss the needs of the community and identify locations in the community to target recruitment
- Meet with the Committee on Special Education (CSE) for CSD 16 to inform them about the school, learn about community needs, and leave promotional and recruitment material at the office to be provided to families of students with disabilities
- Leverage partnerships with CBOs such as Groundwork, Inc. to facilitate outreach and recruitment and identify locations and organizations in the community to target
- Provide a Spanish translator at recruitment events and information sessions
- Provide assurance in marketing materials that all communication to parents will be available in Spanish and translation will be available at school functions
- Provide assurance in marketing materials and at informational sessions that English Language Learners and students with disabilities will have access to all programs offered by the school and available to general education students

Recruitment

In addition to the strategies described above to recruit a student body composed of equal to or greater than percentages of students with disabilities and English Language Learners, *Launch* will do the following to secure enough applicants to fill the school:

- Attend and participate in community events organized by local elected officials, community based organizations, and other cultural institutions to inform families about Launch and garner parent and student interest and excitement through presentations and marketing material.
- Foster relationships with school leaders, counselors, and PTAs of district and charter elementary schools within CSD 16 to promote Launch as school of choice for students leaving 5th grade
- Present at meetings of CB 3, CEC 16, and New York City Housing Authority Tenant Associations to inform the community at large about the opening of the school and the Expeditionary Learning model
- Work with NYC Outward Bound to coordinate positive press coverage on radio, television, and in local neighborhood newspapers including the placement of advertisements
- Create an internet presence through the creation of a school website and Facebook group as well as engaging with neighborhood blogs such as bedstuyblog.com and community forums such as brooklynian.com
- Organize informational and social events at libraries, CBOs, churches and businesses
- Mail flyers to a wide variety of organizations and businesses within CSD 16 and CB asking them to display them within their establishment. Flyers will be mailed and dropped off to churches, schools, libraries, aftercare centers, food programs and drop-in centers

- Regularly publish a print and email newsletter to share our progress and updates with people who have signed up for our mailing list or have signed a petition of community support. We will seek permission to leave a supply of newsletters at a variety of establishments in the community. We have already done so at Bread-Stuy, Brownstone Books, the Von King Cultural Center, Little Sun People, Too Child Care, and the House of Art Gallery among others.

Recruitment – Special Education

The board and staff of *Launch* are committed to making good faith efforts to attract and retain a comparable or greater percentage of students with disabilities when compared to the average for Community School District 16 of 12%⁵. Any child eligible for admission to a traditional public school is eligible for admission to a public charter school, including students with IEPs. The planning team, board, and staff of *Launch* will actively recruit students with special needs using the following strategies:

- Design marketing materials highlighting the number of special education teachers on staff and the special education teacher to student ratio
- Design materials describing the inclusive special ed program and related services, inclusion model, and services provided by the district of residence or other providers
- Designate one individual to oversee the provision of special education programs and services
- Target locations in the community for recruitment that serve students with special needs, such as the CSE offices and community based service providers
- Developing relationships with special education coordinators and feeder elementary schools in the community and provide them with marketing materials to give to the families of their students

In conversations with parents and through marketing materials we will highlight the ability of the Expeditionary Learning model to meet the diverse needs of our student body through active pedagogy, engaging content, and our small group advisory that ensures all students are well known and supported by adults in the building

III. School Design

(Note: The Introduction and Model is followed by a separate and specific response to each of the lettered subsections (a-i) in this section)

Introduction and Model

Launch believes that the Five Core Practices of Expeditionary Learning will lead our students to success. The Five Core Practices work as a comprehensive system to provide students with a learning environment where they can succeed, regardless of what skills they possess when they enter. A model of the Five Core Practices is represented below:

Launch Expeditionary Learning Core Practice Benchmarks

I. Learning Expeditions	II. Active Pedagogy	III. Culture and Character
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing learning expeditions across the school • Designing compelling topics and guiding questions • Designing products and linked projects • Incorporating fieldwork, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using effective instructional practices schoolwide • Teaching reading 6-12 across the curriculum • Teaching writing 6-12 across the curriculum • Teaching inquiry-based math 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building school culture and fostering character • Ensuring equity and high expectations • Fostering a safe, respectful and orderly community • Promoting adventure and fitness

⁵ Calculated using Department of Education S-Form report found here: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/data/stats/Register/SFormbyDistricts/default.htm>

local expertise, and service learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producing and presenting high quality student work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching inquiry-based science and social studies Learning in and through the arts Using effective assessment practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a professional community Engaging families in the life of the school
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IV. Leadership and School Improvement	V. Structures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing leadership in curriculum, instruction and school culture Sharing leadership and building partnerships Using multiple sources of data to improve student achievement Linking Expeditionary Learning and school improvement plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designing time for student and adult learning Creating structures for knowing students well

The Core Practice Benchmarks at *Launch* serve several purposes. They provide a comprehensive overview of the Expeditionary Learning model, a planning guide for school leaders and teachers, a framework for designing professional development, and a tool for evaluating implementation.

Each of the five core practices is comprised of a series of benchmarks. Each benchmark describes a particular area of the core practice. Benchmarks that are addressed in other sections are not addressed below, but the corresponding section where the information is referenced is provided.

Core Practice I: Learning Expeditions

Benchmark 1: Implementing Learning Expeditions across the School:

At *Launch* learning expeditions are the primary way of organizing curriculum. The subject matter of a learning expedition is a compelling topic derived from content standards. Learning expeditions feature linked projects that require students to construct deep understandings and skills and to create products for real audiences. Learning expeditions support critical literacy, promote character development, create a sense of adventure, spark curiosity, and foster an ethic of service. They address central academic standards of content, skills, and presentation, and include goals related to character and community. They allow for and encourage the authentic integration of disciplines.

Teachers work together to ensure that learning expeditions align with state standards. A coherent sequence of learning expeditions is mapped vertically through the grade levels to ensure that expedition topics are not repeated and that students learn essential skills and knowledge.

While learning expeditions are the primary curricular structure at *Launch*, other curricular structures, programs, materials, projects and lessons will be used if appropriate or required. For example, in crafting a particular Response to Intervention plan for a student, a commercial math program may be appropriate. As much as possible, however, these other curricular structures incorporate essential elements of learning expeditions such as products, literacy and service.

Benchmark 2: Designing Compelling Topics and Guiding Questions:

The compelling topic articulates the content of the learning expedition, links the content to big ideas, and specifies the context in which that content will be studied. Developing compelling topic is the first step in planning learning expeditions. The compelling topic is a cohesive package that includes in-depth investigations and one or more guiding questions that connect those investigations. In-depth investigations engage students in long-term study of one aspect of the compelling topic. Compelling expedition topics take content standards and shape and organize them to make them engaging and accessible to students. They motivate students to become experts, to generalize to big ideas, and to experience how depth leads to breadth.

Benchmark 3: Designing Products and Linked Projects:

Products, the tangible results of in-depth investigations, are critical components of learning expeditions. Products are motivational, drive a need to know, and propel students to apply skills and understand learning expedition content and key concepts. They require students to develop craftsmanship and afford the opportunity for creativity in a particular medium or format. Teachers determine what students need to know and be able to do to create a specific product. Then they plan backward to develop a sequence of lessons leading to the product. In-depth investigations may include one or more linked projects; each project may result in a product. The linked projects and resulting products often culminate in an exhibition or performance.

Benchmark 4: Incorporating Fieldwork, Local Expertise, and Service Learning:

Students at *Launch* learn from fieldwork, experts, and service in addition to learning from texts. They use the natural and social environments of their communities as sites for purposeful fieldwork and service connected to academic work. Students working in the field are active investigators using the research tools, techniques of inquiry, and standards of presentation used by professionals in the field. Schools develop procedures and protocols to ensure that fieldwork is safe and productive. In addition to having students conduct research outside the school, teachers bring experts from the community into the classroom. As *Launch* grows, older students will participate in internships and apprenticeships that engage them in the real world and service learning. These experiences maximize students' motivation to learn.

Core Practice 2: Active Pedagogy

Benchmark 1: Using Effective Instructional Practices Schoolwide:

Teaching and learning are active and engaging in Launch classrooms. Effective instructional practices promote equity and high expectations: they make the content of expeditions come alive, ensure that all students think and participate, and allow the teacher to know all students and their thinking well. Good practices foster character by inspiring each student to develop craftsmanship, perseverance, collaborative skills, and responsibility for learning. They promote critical thinking by asking that students make connections, perceive patterns and relationships, understand diverse perspectives, supply evidence for inferences and conclusions, and generalize to the big ideas of the discipline studied. Effective planning for instruction entails choosing from a repertoire of practices and protocols and sequencing them into a coherent lesson. Thoughtful lesson design guarantees that lessons are paced well, all students engage in productive work throughout the class period, teachers have time to confer with students, classroom management is smooth, and teachers are aware of each student's level of understanding and participation. Knowledge of each student's level of understanding and participation leads teachers to differentiate instruction by teaching for multiple intelligences, varying organizers, texts, supplemental materials, questioning strategies, and other methods.

The following categories of instructional practice may be used in all subject areas; more discipline-specific instructional practices are described in other benchmarks: Protocols; Workshops; Mini-Lessons; Modeling; Representing Thinking; Questioning and Following Student Thinking; Using Exemplars and Models; Multiple Drafts, Revision and Critique; Reflecting and Debriefing

Benchmark 2: Teaching Reading 6-12 Across the Disciplines:

See below in section a. for more on this essential practice

Benchmark 3: Teaching Writing 6-12 Across the Disciplines:

See below in section a. for more on this essential practice

Benchmark 4: Teaching Inquiry-Based Math:

See below in section a. for more on this essential practice

Benchmark 5: Teaching Inquiry-Based Science and Social Studies:

At *Launch*, teacher use expeditions and projects, problem-based content, and interactive instructional practices to foster inquiry in science and social studies. As much as possible, these disciplines are taught through learning expeditions that focus on big ideas. Science and social studies expeditions require students to think, write, and research like social scientists or scientists and to use the tools of inquiry specific to the disciplines studies. The in-depth investigations of science and social studies expeditions focus on issues and problems that promote inquiry. Compelling topics often focus on engaging current issues, controversies, social justice and cultural diversity and may highlight an event, a place, a person or living history.

Benchmark 6: Learning In and Through the Arts:

At *Launch*, art is an important vehicle for learning and representing learning through products. In learning expeditions students have the ability to create, perform, and respond to a variety of art forms, and to connect the art to content. The visual and performing arts are taught using the same effective instructional practices that are used in other disciplines and every effort is made to give all students access to exhibitions and performances. The arts build school culture and student character by emphasizing authentic performance, craftsmanship and risk-taking. Art enlivens the school building through the aesthetic exhibition of student work and student thinking.

Benchmark 7: Using Effective Assessment Practices:

Assessment practices at *Launch* drive instructional decisions and invite students into the assessment process. Teachers analyze student work and evidence of student thinking to understand learning and shape instruction. Assessment practices help students understand, reflect on, and take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers and students collaborate to develop standards-based criteria for good work, and students learn to use explicit criteria to assess their progress and improve.

Core Practice III: Culture and Character

Benchmark 1: Building School Culture and Fostering Character

At *Launch*, school culture is developed and sustained through practices that bring the community together, promote shared understandings, and encourage all community members to become “crew, not passengers.” Teaching practices and schoolwide structures ensure that all students are well known by adults and peers. The faculty articulates and promotes a set of character traits that are emphasized throughout the school. Teachers foster student character through challenging academic work, service, and the expectations that students are courteous, respectful and compassionate. Public and classroom spaces reflect the values of *Launch* and the Expeditionary Learning Design Principles, showcase the work of students and facilitate collaboration.

Benchmark 2: Ensuring Equity and High Expectations

Launch teachers and school leaders hold high expectations for all students. Teachers work to understand the home cultures of their students. School leaders create and adapt structures to ensure that all students have access to a comprehensive and challenging curriculum. Teachers differentiate instruction so that all students produce high quality work and meet standards.

Benchmark 3: Fostering a Safe, Respectful and Orderly Community

Physical and emotional safety, respect and courtesy, and a disciplined environment characterize the climate at *Launch*. Teachers and school leaders communicate clear expectations for students’ conduct. Policies and practices encourage students to take responsibility for their actions, their learning, and their shared space.

Benchmark 4: Promoting Adventure and Fitness

Launch promotes a spirit of adventure. Academic and physical challenges push students to pursue excellence and assume responsibility for their own learning. The physical education program puts a strong emphasis on personal fitness and nutrition, enhances the culture at *Launch*, and promotes character development.

Benchmark 5: Developing a Professional Community

School leaders, teachers and staff at *Launch* are members of a community of learners. Professionals work together to share expertise, improve *Launch's* programs, build background knowledge in their disciplines and model collaborative learning for students. Professional development for individual teachers and for the staff as a whole is at the heart of the school.

Benchmark 6: Engaging Families in the Life of the School

Families are partners in the education of their children. Students and staff at *Launch* make families feel welcome, know them well, and engage them actively in the life of the school. Regular communication and multiple opportunities for participation encourage families to be strong partners in their children's learning.

Core Practice IV: Leadership and School Improvement

Benchmark 1: Providing Leadership in Curriculum, Instruction and School Culture

Leaders at *Launch* create a professional community that focuses on curriculum and instruction as the primary vehicles for improving student achievement and school culture. Leaders assume responsibility for implementing Expeditionary Learning, allocate resources for professional development, and partner with NYC Outward Bound staff.

Benchmark 2: Sharing Leadership and Building Partnerships

The Executive Director and the Principal at *Launch* encourage teachers, school staff and families to assume leadership roles. *Launch* has a clearly articulated governance and organizational structure that is driven at every level by the mission. This produces a clear process for making, communicating and implementing decisions. School leaders will build and sustain partnerships with community organizations and cultural institutions.

Benchmark 3: Using Multiple Sources of Data to Improve Student Achievement

Teachers and school leaders at *Launch* will collect data to understand student achievement, assess teaching practices, and make informed decisions about instruction. Data collection and analyses will be a central daily task for both teachers and administrators, creating a data culture at *Launch*. We will not just pay lip service to this oft used phrase. Through a generous donation from *Launch* board member and CEO of Schoolnet, Jonathan Harber, *Launch* will implement the full Schoolnet suite of education software. The Instructional Management Suite (IMS) allows administrators and teachers to integrate reporting and analysis, curriculum management, formative assessments, report cards, attendance, discipline and teacher grade books. The IMS further integrates Parent Portals, Professional Development Management and powerful Response to Intervention tools. Teachers and administrators will be trained in using Schoolnet beginning as early as the recruitment stage, and they will receive continuing professional development during summer PD and throughout the year. Schoolnet will be one of the central tools, used at every level of *Launch*, to build, implement, analyze and modify the Expeditionary Learning model. Some key features of the Schoolnet IMS:

- *Account*, the reporting and analysis component of Schoolnet's IMS, provides *Launch* administrators interactive Key Performance Indicator (KPI) dashboards that give an at-a-glance view of current performance.
- *Align*, the curriculum management component of Schoolnet's IMS, offers teachers a quick, easy-to-use instructional tool that conveniently delivers informative views of student assessment data, class rosters, standards-aligned curriculum, and comprehensive student profiles to the teacher's desktop. Teachers use *Align* to track class and student instructional progress with formative and summative

assessment data, and to create learning plans for individuals and groups of students to support differentiated instruction based on particular areas of need.

- *Assess*, the comprehensive benchmarking and formative assessment solution within Schoolnet's IMS, provides *Launch* with all of the tools required to implement assessment programs. Using *Assess*, the school is able to create, manage and deploy a variety of classroom and school-wide assessments. The powerful reporting and analysis capabilities available within the Schoolnet Suite allow teachers, the Principal and the IG to immediately access student assessment results and make real-time adjustments in instruction, professional development and supplemental services.

These, along with many other features, will allow the entire *Launch* community to use data to effectively drive our mission.

Benchmark 4: Linking Expeditionary Learning and School Improvement

School leaders at *Launch* apply Expeditionary Learning's core practices as the central means for improving instruction, student achievement and school culture. During the annual improvement planning process, the staff examines achievement data, student work and teaching practices to reflect on and analyze progress. The process of reflection and analysis leads to a focused and manageable set of school improvement goals and action steps. Expeditionary Learning professional development is the primary means of realizing these goals.

Core Practice V: Structures

Benchmark 1: Designing Time for Student and Adult Learning

At *Launch*, the schedule serves instructional and curricular priorities. There is time built into the schedule for extended learning in English and Math, opportunities for integration of the disciplines, and common planning time and professional development for the staff. The schedule accommodates project work, fieldwork, service learning and flexible groupings of students. Time is scheduled during the school year and summer for whole school professional development and collaboration across grade levels and subject areas.

Benchmark 2: Creating Structures for Knowing Students Well

Students at *Launch* are known well and supported by adults. Each student's academic progress and character development are followed closely over time by at least one caring adult. Crew serves as a powerful tool to ensure that student's needs are met and strengths are discovered. Mentoring, internships and apprenticeships foster relationships with students and community members. Flexible, heterogeneous groupings replace tracking.

Benchmark 3: Classroom Design Principles

Launch designs and uses classroom and school space to intentionally support and build upon the instructional principles of Expeditionary Learning. Classrooms adhere to four basic design principles: **1) Flexibility**-movable classroom, flexible to the needs of the students, all parts of the classroom are usable space for learning (multi-functionally) **2) Ownership**-facility reflects who the students are (student work), teacher and students collaborate to manage the space, spaces are used by the larger school community, shared ownership **3) Transparency**-classrooms are open learning communities, school community members are welcome as visitors, openness promote a sense of transparency and coherence **4) Originality**-unique and creative use of instructional space

III.a. – Increase student achievement and decrease student achievement gaps in reading/language arts and mathematics

Note: In addition to these practices in Reading/Language Arts and Math please see section III.b. for additional information about working with at-risk students, which will also work toward closing the achievement gap.

Teaching Reading 6-12 Across the Disciplines:

Reading is a complex process that includes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary development and an array of comprehension strategies. At *Launch*, comprehension strategies are taught in sixth through

twelfth grade to convey the idea that reading is all about making meaning. The excitement of learning expeditions motivates students to read; in turn, the explicit teaching of reading comprehension deepens students' understanding of content. Reading is taught across all the content areas because each subject area requires students to learn from written materials and requires different kinds of text (e.g. science articles, primary sources in history, word problems in math). Trade books, primary sources, and discipline-related articles are used along with or instead of textbooks.

The following reading comprehension strategies may be used in all subject areas and grades:

- Locating main ideas and supporting details
- Making inferences
- Recognizing patterns
- Using context clues
- Asking questions
- Summarizing or outlining
- Re-reading
- "Think-aloud" with a partner

Teaching Writing 6-12 Across the Disciplines:

Students at *Launch* write for various purposes and audiences and across all areas of the curriculum. Students do their best writing when they care about the topic, purpose and audience. Compelling topics, in-depth investigations, and written projects and products motivate students and require them to represent their understanding of learning expedition content and issues. Teachers develop and teach a common language for the writing process and the components of writing and use consistent practices for teaching and assessing writing. While the nature and amount of writing vary by discipline and grade level, writing is a major tool in all content areas.

The following steps of the writing process may be used in all subject areas and grades:

- Pre-writing
- Drafting
- Revising (for ideas, organization and style)
- Editing (for conventions)
- Making the Work Public

Teaching Inquiry-Based Math:

Learning math involves understanding concepts, grasping procedures, and applying them to real-life contexts. At *Launch*, mathematics is taught in an inquiry-based manner as emphasized by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards. The *Launch* approach focuses on big mathematical ideas, high quality student work, and structures for teaching math within and outside of learning expeditions. *Launch* math teachers invite students to find patterns and relationships, to become flexible problem solvers, to articulate their reasoning, and to become metacognitive about their strategies.

Teachers cultivate mathematical habits of mind: curiosity, risk-taking, perseverance, craftsmanship, and tolerance for ambiguity. At *Launch*, Math class is often conducted as a workshop. It begins with a complex problem, and continues with independent or group work, a mini-lesson based on what students are struggling with or have discovered, sharing/comparing problem solving strategies, and a synthesis of the day's learning. This sequence ensures that the students are doing the thinking.

III.b. – Increase high school graduation rates and focus on serving at-risk high school student populations

Launch is deeply dedicated to supporting the academic achievement of students-at-risk of academic failure. This is a significant reason why we have selected Expeditionary Learning as our instructional model and partnered with NYCOB to effectively implement this model.

A report published by the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR), identifies Expeditionary Learning as having highly promising evidence of effectiveness as a comprehensive

school reform model based on a meta-analysis of four experimental-control evaluations⁶. CRESPAR identifies students as being placed at-risk by poverty, ethnic minority status, and non-English-speaking home background. Launch includes special education students in our focus of students in need of additional support. Data collected by Expeditionary Learning Schools (ELS), New York City Outward Bound's national partner, shows that Black, Latino, Special Education, and students receiving free and reduced lunch enrolled in schools implementing ELS outperform their district peers by 15.1, 13.8, 11.2, and 10.3 percentage points respectively on average across all grade levels in the 2007-2008 school year⁷.

In addition to implementing the Expeditionary Learning Model to boost the achievement levels of these traditionally underperforming populations, Launch's approach to supporting academic achievement for all students will include: Greater time on task through an extended instructional day and year; Engaging standards-based instruction through the implementation of Expeditionary Learning; High expectations for academic achievement for all students; Strong academic support for struggling students through flexible professional periods for staff and additional tutoring; Ongoing assessment and data driven instruction using Schoolnet's student information system to identify weaknesses and trends in relation to standards mastery; A strong character education component that addresses the social and emotional needs of students and creates a community of support and respect for a diverse body of students; A crew program that ensures that every student is well known by at least one adult and his or her academic progress and character development are followed closely over time by

To identify students who are at additional risk of academic failure due to performing below grade level upon entering the school, *Launch* will use a school-wide screening system. This screening will begin with the administration of the **TerraNova 3** and a diagnostic reading assessment such as the **Fontas and Pinell Benchmark Assessment (F and P)** or the **Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2)** to all students upon enrollment. These nationally normed, scientifically researched assessments will provide a valid baseline to assess growth as students progress through the school year.

Launch will utilize **Response to Intervention (RTI)** to provide assistance to students who are identified as being at-risk of academic failure based on below grade-level performance on the above assessments. The results of the baseline assessments will be entered into Launch's **Schoolnet** student data system to begin the process of identifying areas of weakness and monitoring growth. Schoolnet facilitates the RTI process by allowing staff to generate standards-aligned assessments, enter results into the database, and disaggregate data at the subject, standard, and item level. The RTI module of Schoolnet allows for the centralized creation and management of instructional and behavioral plans, and provides easy access to these plans to all involved parties to promote consistency in implementation. The Schoolnet Teacher Intervention Dashboard easily allows staff to track the progress of students receiving interventions by compiling results from teacher and state created assessments, curriculum based measurements, and a variety of other third party assessments.

Based on RTI's tiered system of intervention, the initial monitoring of growth for students who performed below grade level on the baseline assessments begins Tier 1 interventions. At Tier 1, measurable goals will be established and growth will be monitored using standards based assessments created by the teacher and entered into Schoolnet. Time will be dedicated during collaborative planning with the instructional guide (IG) and special education teacher to identify research based interventions for the at-risk students that the teacher implements in the whole-class setting. Differentiated instruction is central to the Expeditionary Learning model and will comprise the bulk of our Tier I interventions to meet the needs of students with a variety of learning styles within heterogeneous classes. Visual and audio resources, in addition to physical responses to the content, will be used across content areas.

⁶ Borman, G.D., Hewes, G.M., Overman, L.T., & Brown, S. (2003) Comprehensive school reform and achievement: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 73 (2), 125-230.

⁷ Expeditionary Learning School Performance Report. (2010). Expeditionary Learning Schools. Retrieved from http://www.elschools.org/results/School_Performance_Report_EL_031110.pdf

After nine weeks of Tier 1 interventions students who were placed on the watch list will be reassessed using the diagnostic reading assessment and components from TerraNova. Students who have not met growth goals will advance to Tier 2 interventions. Students who demonstrate a need for Tier 2 interventions will receive additional support similar to that of Tier 1, except that it may occur within or outside of the regular classroom setting and may involve additional staff. When a student begins receiving Tier 2 interventions, the school will notify the student's family, giving them the ability monitor the student's RTI process online through Schoolnet as well as via phone. All guardians will be given a secure login to access their child's performance data, attendance, and homework, and teacher comments when students are enrolled.

In addition to the classroom teacher working in small groups or individually with students at Tier 2, flexible professional periods built into teacher schedules will allow teachers to provide push-in support to small groups of students or individuals. These Tier 2 interventions will take place for at least 30 minutes two to three times a week. In addition, staff may spend one afternoon a week from 3:40-4:30 providing additional instruction to students at Tier 2 or greater.

Tier 2 interventions will take place for at least nine weeks and progress will be measured during this time through curriculum based measurement probes administered regularly to measure growth in reading fluency, spelling accuracy, writing skills, and math fact fluency. Standards-based, teacher created summative assessments will also be administered during this time, and results from all of these assessments will be entered into Schoolnet to facilitate data analysis and progress monitoring.

Students who continue to struggle after the implementation of Tier 2 interventions will be referred to the Child Study Team (CST), composed of the student's teachers, the special education coordinator, the school counselor, and the IG. The student's guardians will be invited and encouraged to attend the CST, and the referred student's crew advisor will be required to participate as well. The CST will analyze the data compiled on Schoolnet, including behavioral referrals, and identify data needed from other sources such as structured student observations and or medical evaluations. Within 10 working days, based on the data collected, the CST will make recommendations for more intensive Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. These may be similar to Tier 2 interventions but will increase the time dedicated to support to between 150 and 300 minutes a week.

These interventions will be monitored by the CST, and a referral to the Committee on Special Education (CSE) will be made when it has been clearly documented that the interventions, accommodations, and remedial services provided have not proved sufficient to meet the student's needs.

In addition to the process described above, *Launch* will use several other structures of assure that students of all levels are provided with support to avoid academic failure.

Counseling Supports

The school will employ licensed school counselors, psychologists, or social workers to provide mental health services to students through one-on-one and group support.

Social Supports

Launch's crew program ensures that all students are well known by adults in the building and have significant time dedicated to their social and character development. Crew leaders will work with students, their parents, special education staff, the school counselor, and the leadership team to establish behavior plans and goals to promote appropriate social development and interactions.

Launch will develop relationships with CBOs such as CAMBA and Groundwork, Inc. Groundwork provides youth and family support programs. We have begun discussing a potential partnership with Tracy Caldron, Managing Director of Programs, and Mary Belay, Family Resource Center Coordinator for Groundwork Inc.

in Bed-Stuy. Groundwork provides academic and enrichment support services to students as well as family counseling, crisis intervention, legal assistance, and other family supports.

Academic Supports

Grade level teams, each including a special education teacher, will meet daily for fifty minutes of collaborative planning time. The inclusion of a special education teacher on each team ensures that the needs of students with IEPs, which we believe will comprise roughly 12% of our population based on the district average⁸, will be taken into account during planning and met during general instruction and push-in support. It will also provide general education teachers with an additional resource for differentiation strategies to meet the needs of all students.

Students who are not meeting promotional criteria will be required to participate in a weekly staff lead tutoring period that will take place between the end of the regular instructional day and staff dismissal. All instructional staff will work with small, homogenous student groups to provide remediation during this time.

Intensives are differentiated courses lasting 5 to 8 days during which students are involved in an in-depth study of a topic or receiving targeted academic support. Students in need of remediation will take part in academic interventions targeted towards their individual needs based on data collected and analyzed by instructional staff. Intensives will be offered two to three times a year to provide additional support to struggling students in order to help them meet promotional criteria.

III.c. – Focus on academic achievement of middle school student populations and preparation for transition to high school

Launch is dedicated to meeting the academic and social needs of middle school students to prepare them for success in high school and well beyond. Both Mr. Roehm and Mr. Kilgore have worked extensively with middle school students. *Launch's* rigorous academic program and comprehensive system of support are designed to address areas of need made clear through their own professional experiences and local data. Ways *Launch* will ensure our students are ready for success in high school and college include:

Curriculum – Our rich, interdisciplinary curriculum promotes high levels of engagement and critical thinking through project-based, standards-driven assessment rooted in the real world. This meaningful, relevance rich approach to learning addresses the developmental needs of middle school students as they move through pre-adolescence and adolescence. As students move through middle school, they begin to seek greater autonomy as they develop their sense of self and an understanding of how they relate to the world around them. Our project-based curriculum provides the ideal space to meet these needs in a structured and highly supportive environment.

Crew – All students begin their experience at Launch in 6th grade with a 5-day Crew orientation adventure trip. This trip introduces students to their Crew, a small advisory group of 12-15 students and one staff advisor that meets daily from 6th through 8th grade. Crew allows the needs of each student to be well known, and for a consistent staff member to serve as point person in coordinating support for his or her Crew members throughout their middle school years. Crew activities build on the orientation experience and develop a strong network of peer support to help students navigate the complex issues of character and identity that arise in the middle school years. Through ongoing goal setting, character development, and self-reflection, Crew promotes high levels of academic and social competency in years where these typically decrease for students.

Portfolios – The portfolio system is a fundamental assessment tool at Launch. Throughout the year students will collect work in their courses to add to their portfolios in order to demonstrate that they are making progress toward meeting learning targets. Students will select the highest quality work from subject area

⁸ Calculated using Department of Education S-Form report found here:
<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/data/stats/Register/SFormbyDistricts/default.htm>

portfolios and crew portfolios from the two previous years for their Passage Portfolios, which will be presented to an audience of community members at the end of 8th grade to demonstrate readiness for high school. General content requirements for the Passage Portfolios will include: Author Introduction (personal statement & resume); Science and Technology; Historical Understanding; Literature and Writing; Mathematical Thinking; Artistic Creation; Personal Choice from Crew Portfolio; Supporting reflections

Alignment – The frequent collaborative planning and professional development built into *Launch*'s schedules allows the school to ensure that instructional practices and our curriculum are horizontally and vertically aligned. Grade level and content area collaborative planning periods are built into teacher schedules several times a week, addressing the isolated and fractured instruction that often results in middle school as students transition from teacher to teacher. Collaborative planning ensures that instruction at Launch builds on past learning in a cohesive and intentional manner, ensuring that students develop proficiency in middle school – a strong predictor of graduation with a Regents diploma and college readiness.

School Structure – As a 6th through 12th grade school Launch will be in a strong position to support middle school achievement with a deep understanding of what students need to succeed in high school and be prepared for college, and an ability to align our curriculum to meet these needs. Our middle school students will have outstanding mentors and tutors in our high school students who have been in their position and understand what is required for success. When our students arrive in high school we will already have a deep understanding of their strengths and needs from years of close work, and we will be well prepared to continue this work.

III.d. – Use a variety of high quality assessments to measure understanding and critical applications of concepts

Assessment Overview

Launch believes that the purpose of assessment is to engage, support and hold students accountable for rigorous learning. Assessment at *Launch* can be broken down into two categories, **summative** and **formative**. These two types of assessments are supported by **learning targets**. These three terms, and their relationship to one another, are defined below.

Formative Assessment: Formative assessment is defined as assessment actions that help students at the outset of learning and during the process of learning.

Summative Assessment: Summative assessment is defined as assessment actions given after learning has occurred.

Learning Targets: Both formative and summative assessments are linked at *Launch* through the thoughtful and intentional crafting of learning targets. Learning targets are goal statements that are first and foremost directly linked to specific state standards. Learning targets help to clarify state standards. Learning targets have the following characteristics:

- Written in student-friendly language
- Specific, often referring to the particular context of a lesson, project or investigation
- Clear about the intended *learning* (not doing) that will be assessed

A carefully crafted learning target is an anchor that will vertically align everyday learning and minor classroom assessments with high stakes state assessments. Learning targets do this by supporting both formative and summative assessments.

Learning Targets Support Formative Assessments: Learning targets support formative assessments by clearly framing curricular goals, guiding instructional choices and focusing critique and revision. The intentional use of formative assessment strategies involves students in the assessment process and therefore increases student ownership.

Learning Targets Support Summative Assessments: Learning targets support summative assessments by helping teachers choose appropriate assessment methods based on target type and ensuring that each portion of an assessment is linked to a learning target to help students understand precisely what is being assessed.

The sum of the learning targets during a particular course will cover the required standards for that course, supporting students and holding them accountable not only for the high stakes, summative state assessments that they will be required to take, but ensuring that they are truly engaged and supported in the process of rigorous learning.

Table of Assessments

Month	6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th
Enrollment	DRA	DRA	DRA	DRA	
Aug.	LAB-R	LAB-R	LAB-R	LAB-R	LAB-R
Sept.	TerraNova	TerraNova	TerraNova	TerraNova	TerraNova
Oct.	Interim 1	Interim 1	Interim 1	Interim 1	Interim 1
Nov.					
Dec.					
Jan.	Interim 2	Interim 2	Interim 2	Interim 2	Interim 2
Feb.	DRA	DRA	DRA	DRA	
March					
April	Interim 3	Interim 3	Interim 3	Interim 3	Interim 3
May	NYSESLAT, NYS, ELA/Math	NYSESLAT, NYS ELA/Math	NYSESLAT, NYS ELA/Math	NYSESLAT	NYSESLAT
June	Portfolios	Portfolios	NYS Science and SS, Passage Portfolios	Regents Exams, Portfolios	Regents Exams, Passage Portfolios
July					

III.e. – Increase implementation of local instructional improvement systems to assess and inform instructional practice, decision-making and effectiveness

Launch holds as a core belief the responsibility of those in education to share best practices and do what is necessary to help all students achieve. As such, *Launch* will not only be open to sharing its own successes, but will work to improve systems for all schools. *Launch's* partnership with NYC Outward Bound and Expeditionary Learning Schools will bring with it opportunities for local educators to participate in professional development workshops about which they may not have previously been aware. Expeditionary Learning Schools offers professional development on a local, regional and national level. These opportunities are open to all educators and are briefly outlined below:

Expeditionary Learning Schools Professional Development Overview

Expeditionary Learning's professional development enables teachers and principals to produce quality work. Direct professional development is complemented with regional and national institutes, conferences, school-site seminars and Learning Expedition for Educators' courses where teachers and administrators from different schools across the country learn together. Each network school has multiple slots for these extraordinary opportunities as part of their contract with NYC Outward Bound – Expeditionary Learning, but all schools can participate. The number will depend upon the size of the school and the contract (See attached Professional Development Catalog / Calendar for additional information).

New York City Outward Bound – Expeditionary Learning Schools will provide *Launch* with an integrated set of on-site, regional and national professional development and technical assistance services that will be part

of on-going staff development beginning in the spring and continuing throughout the course of the school year. The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) rated Expeditionary Learning's staff development as exemplary. In three separate studies at the elementary, middle, and high school levels in 1999 and 2002, NSDC found that Expeditionary Learning Schools' professional development was of the highest quality and had significant impact on student achievement at all three levels.

National Professional Development

Teachers, leaders, and school staff from across the national EL network join together for national professional development. Each network school has multiple slots for these extraordinary opportunities as part of their contract with EL. The number will depend upon the size of the school and the contract. Offerings include:

Institutes, three-day intensive seminars in particular practices or content areas. In 2009-2010, these included Assessment, Differentiation, Reading & Writing, Leadership, Using Data to Inform Teaching & Learning, Math, Science, and others.

Learning Expeditions for Educators, five-to-seven days, for EL teachers and administrators. In 2009-2010, these included the Wildlife Learning Expedition for Educators, Civil Rights Learning Expedition for Educators, and Physiology and Fitness Learning Expedition for Educators. Each involves in-depth investigations of content, hands-on fieldwork, discussions with experts, and creation of a product.

The EL National Conference, a three-day conference focused on a particular theme. In 2010, the National Conference focused on the theme of "Good Work." EL teachers and EL staff offered master classes highlighting particular practices and provided participants with the opportunity to practice what they learned. The Conference was preceded by a day during which participants attended a variety of pre-conference activities including Differentiation, a visit to a local EL School, a Science immersion 'slice' of a Learning Expedition, and a Humanities immersion 'slice' of a Learning Expedition.

Secondary Institutes, five-day institutes focusing on learning the EL model. These take place in the summer before schools open, and are attended generally by all teachers new to an EL school. Secondary Institute Week 1 focuses on learning expeditions and embedded literacy practices, specifically reader and writer's workshop models. Participants experience and debrief a "slice" of a science or humanities learning expedition; the crew structure, and other key instructional practices related to the teaching of learning expeditions. Secondary Institute Week 2 is strategically designed to focus more deeply on other important characteristics and structures of ELS secondary schools related to assessment, grading and reporting, curriculum, and other pragmatic structures unique to our model.

Regional and Network Professional Development

Expeditionary Learning is organized into eight regions: the Northeast, New York City, the Mid-Atlantic, the Southeast, the Midwest, Mountain, the Northwest, and the Southwest. Regional staff development is designed to strengthen local networks of EL schools and to provide an opportunity to build ongoing relationships with colleagues from other schools also engaged in using the design.

In NYC, the partnership with NYC Outward Bound – Expeditionary Learning includes:

Site seminars, structured one-day visits to exemplary EL schools that showcase the implementation of the design.

Leadership Cohort, in which leaders from the NYC regional network of EL schools come together to engage in activities including the following: sharing best practices, class-room walk through / instructional rounds, discussion of Work Plans, looking at school and student data, and informal networking.

Teacher Networking, a structured one-day or half-day visit to a school to engage in classroom visits, discussion of practices, sharing of expeditions / planning, and opportunities to engage in consultancies.

These generally center on a particular content area, as illustrated by the “Math Forum” that occurred at Validus Preparatory in 2010.

Slice, a structured one-day “compressed” experience of a Learning Expedition. These include components from a Learning Expedition, including compelling topics, a building background knowledge workshop to increase knowledge / build literacy, fieldwork and discussions with experts, and creation of a product.

NYC Outward Bound Climbing Sessions are regularly scheduled (Spring and Fall) opportunities for teachers and students to climb at the five-story wall located in Long Island City, Queens.

Expedition Planning, a three-day summer planning session that follows the national Secondary Schools Institutes. This provides a regional opportunity for school teams and teachers to engage in supported planning. School Designers offer sessions for the NYC network to target particular NYS standards and support expedition planning.

Crew Advisor Training, a two-day / one-night experience for all new Crew Advisors to the Sharpe Reservation in Fishkill, NY; this experience provides an opportunity for advisors to engage in activities to prepare for the Crew Orientation with students. Crew Advisors participate in high and low-ropes course activities, learn to set-up cooking tools and navigate using a map and compass. This preparation serves to provide a level of comfort and knowledge when teachers return to support students during the Orientation.

III.f. – Partner with low-performing, local public school to share instructional practices

Launch leadership has already reached out to every district elementary school in CSD 16 through email and phone calls. The leadership team will take similar steps with middle schools and high schools in the district. Building off the open source philosophy discussed above, we wish to establish partnerships so that teachers can communicate and visit one another to share what works best for students in our district. We will attempt to formalize processes for teacher to interact through: Regular site visits; Video-conferencing; Uploading videos and documentation of best practices; Consistent communication between leadership teams at different schools; Invitations to other schools to assist and help assess Presentations of Learning (POL’s) delivered by *Launch* students.

The *Launch* team is open to suggestions from all schools in the district about how to best facilitate a relationship that fosters growth and accountability for all schools in the district.

III.g. – Demonstrate the ability to overcome start-up challenges to open a successful school through management and leadership techniques

Launch has attracted personnel, established partnerships and built structures to overcome start-up challenges and ensure a successful opening.

- Partnerships – NYC Outward Bound has almost ten years of experience opening small public schools in NYC. NYC Outward Bound supplies experienced personnel to work with school leaders from the application phase through start up and operation. NYC Outward Bound also provides financial support through a grant received from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. *Launch* will receive \$520,000 to support start-up and operational costs, including teacher recruitment and training, marketing and other costs.
- Structures – *Launch* has built a core Board of Trustees with the diverse skills necessary to ensure successful start-up and operation. Board members come from fields as varied as education, finance, law, real estate, technology, school start-up and operations. The majority of Board members have prior board experience. The *Launch* Board of Trustees will ensure compliance with applicable laws and our charter and is well-suited to provide the skills necessary to overcome challenges that may arise during start-up.
- Personnel – The school leaders at *Launch*, including the Executive Director and the Principal, are deeply invested in the success of the school. Both leaders have worked together to establish the

school, create a partnership with NYC Outward Bound, recruiting the Board and writing the application. Both the Executive Director and the Principal completed an Ed.M. from Columbia and are working closely with school leaders that have founded other charter schools, including Explore Charter School in Brooklyn and High Tech High in San Diego, one of the premier project-based learning schools in the country.

These partnerships, structures and personnel will allow *Launch* to overcome start-up challenges in strategic and effective ways.

III.h. – Demonstrate the support of the school district and the intent to establish an ongoing relationship with such district

Launch is committed to partnering with the school district and residents and organizations in CSD 16. *Launch* leaders presented the school to Community Board 3, in which Community School District 16 resides (CEC 16 was defunct at the time, but we are in the process of establishing contacts with possible members of the CEC). The Community Board voices support for the school and *Launch* has invited members of the community board to participate in events held at some of our network schools in order to continue to make clear what we would like to accomplish and how it will be accomplished. We will continue to reach out to the community board and the CEC for support and guidance throughout the application, start-up phases and into operation.

Launch has begun to establish partnerships with community-based organizations (CBO's). We have had initial discussions with Groundwork Inc., who are excited about the possibility of a partnership with *Launch*. Groundwork not only provides after-school academic supports and enrichment activities, but also provides social services for families, including legal and health services. These services help to meet the needs of families that we will serve and establish the school as a center for the community. We have also had initial discussions with CAMBA about providing further enrichment opportunities for students and families.

Launch has collected signatures from over one hundred families of students who will be eligible to enter sixth grade when we open. Support from families for our school and model was clear during the months we spent collecting signatures and talking with residents in CSD 16.

III.i. – Provide access to viable education alternatives to students in regions where there are a lack of alternatives

As noted in Section II., students in CSD 16 are not receiving the education services to which they are entitled:

- Boys and Girls High School served 2832 students in 2008-2009, approximately 80% of CSD 16's high school students.
- Boys and Girls High has a graduation rate of just 43%, failed to make adequate yearly progress in all areas of their 2008-2009 Accountability and Overview Report, and was added to the list of Schools Under Registration Review in February 2010
- 2214 middle school students in CSD 16 were in schools with fewer than 80% of students performing on grade level in 2008-2009
- Only four schools in CSD 16 average greater than 80% student proficiency in math and ELA: Bedford Stuyvesant Collegiate Charter School, Brooklyn Excelsior Charter School, Excellence Boys Charter School, and Frederick Douglass Academy IV High School (These schools will have space for roughly 1150 students in grades 6-12 at full capacity. There were approximately 5675 6-12th grade students in CSD 16 district and charter schools in 2008-2009).

Launch will provide an alternative for these students to be able to achieve success beyond what is currently being offered, and will strive to work with other schools in the district to increase efficacy for all students.