



COMMUNITIES OF EXCELLENCE

IDAHO'S CHARTER SCHOOLS PROGRAM GRANT



APPLICATION DETAILS

School Name: Idaho Arts Charter School	
Contact Person: Jackie Collins	Contact Email: jackie.collins@idahoartscharter.org
Application Type: Expansion	Grant Budget: \$800,000.00
Grades Served: K-12	New Seats Created: 260
Application Status: Funded	

RUBRIC

A. Grant Project Goals

Identify 3-5 grant project goals and **justify** each goal in terms of its value in supporting the planning and implementation of your proposed school. **All grant spending, including future revisions to your budget, must fit clearly within one of your stated project goals.**

Reviewer Comments – Grant Project Goals

Strengths:

- The school recognizes their demographics do not mirror the district within the 5% range but have set a goal to focus on marketing and the application process.
- The identified goals will support the expansion of a successful K-12 arts integration charter school through increased academic outcomes, increased advanced opportunities for students, student satisfaction measures, and representative school demographics.
- All four goals are exceptionally aligned to the vision of the school, as well as being SMART goals. The goals, as a whole, speak to the school's desire to ensure every student's high achievement, enrollment of the school to reflect target demographics, engage in learning that reflects the school's arts and academic focus, and expand the number of advanced opportunities for coursework.

Weaknesses:

- The school has set a goal for math and reading in regard to the percentage of 4th and 8th grade students who will meet proficiency. There is nothing to compare to where these grade levels are at this point. What is the percentage of growth they want to attain?
- Goal 4 and the goal 4 narrative to not appear to match. The goal speaks to a school administered survey yet the narrative speaks to an increase in course offerings, although course offerings will most likely lead to satisfaction.



B. Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices, and Curriculum

Fully *describe and justify* the design of the academic program in terms of the educational philosophy, instructional practices, and curriculum that will be utilized to meet the school's performance objectives. Be sure to include key design elements, references supporting its validity and alignment to state and federal requirements, and rationale for why this education model was chosen and how it will produce strong outcomes for the unique community and student population the school will be located within.

Reviewer Comments - Educational Philosophy, Instructional Practices, and Curriculum**Strengths:**

- Model is backed by research and widely accepted best practices.
- The school uses a comprehensive approach to curriculum as well as innovative approaches from staff as long as these align to the vision and mission of the school.
- The school uses research-based curriculum to deliver project-based learning and inquiry based instruction. There is a strong focus on culture and relationships evidenced by the use of a Middle School "house" system, Restorative Practices, and PBIS.
- The IACS educational model is grounded in the Idaho Core Standards, and is based on four tenets: a culture of innovation; the integration of arts into core content; college and career preparation; and self-empowerment through self-expression. Integrated arts is cited as a fundamental construct for every student's success, particularly low-income populations. This assertion is supported through references from Teaching with Poverty in Mind, an authoritative resource on the subject.
- The school is grounded on a foundation of a highly trusting community where students take risks and learn from their mistakes. Specific structures – Restorative Practices and Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies are described as behavioral models that guide day to day interactions and are fundamental to this community building. The application cites research to substantiate the impact of this investment, especially for underserved students.
- The application justifies core academic curriculum in ELA, humanities, literacy, mathematics, science and social studies – and provides solid descriptions regarding the choice of these materials. A sampling of curricula across the grades includes Wonders strategic phonics, Engage New York literacy curricula, and Developing Mathematical Thinking. Many of the school's standards-based courses are developed through a culture of innovative curriculum development by classroom teachers. Many popular arts electives were created in this way, and supported by strong student interest.
- Lastly, the school is exercising key autonomies in two areas. First, they are providing arts integration opportunities that are currently not found at surrounding district schools. Second, the provision of specialized equipment (such as musical instruments) will allow all students, regardless of income level, to participate in this area of education.

Weaknesses:

- Although the research is cited, this section does not identify correlations between research and school demographic information.
- Although the grant mentions that at this point, low-income students are deterred from participating in band and orchestra programs because of the cost of instruments, it does allow for deeply discounted rentals of instruments, costumes and materials...the concern is there may still be students who may not be able to afford a discount. How will this be addressed in order for all students to have equal access to the entirety of the program?
- The application does not identify a correlation between the research and curriculum and the school's demographics. The application would be strengthened by specifically addressing how the selected educational model and resources meet the needs of the school community.
- Descriptions of the school's technology use does not include references to its use in administering standardized assessments, per the application rubric.



C. Teaching and Learning

Fully *describe and justify* the design of the instructional strategy in terms of the educational philosophy, instructional practices, and curriculum that will be utilized to meet the school's performance objectives. Be sure to include key design elements, references supporting its validity and alignment to state and federal requirements, and rationale for why this strategy was chosen and how it will produce strong outcomes for the unique community and student population the school will serve.

Reviewer Comments – Teaching and Learning**Strengths:**

- Rubric elements for this section were thoroughly addressed. The tiered approach to intervention was well explained.
- The school uses a variety of formative and summative assessments to track student progress and implement a Response to Intervention program.
- The application reiterates the use of a standards-based instructional model centered around integrated arts to engage students and meet rigorous performance objectives. A comprehensive assessment program is described, including benchmark, diagnostic, lesson and unit, formative and performance assessments. A specific example of specialized Tier 3 instruction at the middle and high school level is provided.
- Differentiation and intervention structures, all part of the school's RTI and MTSS systems, are described in detail, including supports for tier 1, 2 and 3 intervention. School schedules include a designated academic advising time and study hall in which students can complete homework or engage in online learning.

Weaknesses:

- The application identifies that differentiation occurs in every classroom, however few details were provided to describe the systems and structures in place to ensure successful implementation.

D. Student Academic Achievement Standards

As an independently governed public school, charter schools need to ensure plans, systems, and tools for strong oversight and monitoring in the areas of academic performance. In this section, persuade the reader that your school will have rigorous goals and adequate oversight to ensure quality implementation, operation, and accountability.

Reviewer Comments – Student Academic Achievement Standards**Strengths:**

- Normed and criterion referenced assessments are addressed. The school has a well rounded and robust approach to student achievement with built-in intervention strategies and responsibilities for whom these will be carried out.
- The school collects student outcome data from a variety of sources to monitor individual student progress as well as assess overall program quality.
- Instructional coaches work closely with teachers to ensure that instruction aligns with school-wide performance goals. PLCs support a culture of data-driven instruction.
- The application includes thorough descriptions of the school's performance management plan for monitoring and reporting progress. Building upon the introduction to assessments in the previous section, the application describes and justifies the use of specific standards-based assessments, including: NWEA MAP (reading, math and language usage), ISAT interim and summative assessments and i-Ready diagnostics.
- The school supports a culture of data-driven instruction as supported by the above portfolio of assessments. IACS employs an assessment coordinator to analyze data and work with the school's leadership team, creating school-wide performance goals. Instructional coaches then work closely with teachers to ensure that instruction is tailored to these goals and the needs of students. The school utilizes Professional Learning Communities, which meet at least twice monthly. This time is focused on data analysis and reflection to adjust and improve instruction.

E. Student Demand and Community/Local Support

Schools funded under the CSP subgrant must ensure they are in tune with their communities' needs and priorities. In this section schools will document their vitality and long-term sustainability through demonstrating their dedication to developing and maintaining community partnerships and connections.

Reviewer Comments – Student Demand and Community/Local Support**Strengths:**

- Demographics compared to the district were clearly available. Students are out in the community showcasing their talents. Visiting artists are part of the school culture. Student ambassadors interact with prospective students and families.
- The school plans to expand marketing to recruit a more representative student population. Available transportation, food service, and financial support for qualifying students will make the school model more accessible to students living in poverty.
- IACS' application indicates that it has maintained a robust waitlist every year that it has been in operation. Indeed, the school has chosen to expand several times in order to meet demand from the community. This expansion will build out the high school grades, and so priority is being given to retaining students who will matriculate from the K-8 program.
- The application describes a thorough approach to meaningful parent and community involvement, including the school's use of a variety of committees to enhance parent and community engagement.
- The school utilizes a robust student recruitment plan to enroll a diverse student population. It uses a variety of print material, public forums, social media, strategic door-to-door campaigns to attract a student population that mirrors the local district's profile and which prioritizes enrollment of low-income students who traditionally have less access to the arts.

Weaknesses:

- The grant clearly states how parents are involved in the school but does not state the percentage of parent participation in these events.

F. Effectively Serving All Students

Charter schools are obligated to take specific actions to ensure an open, fair, non-selective method of attracting and enrolling students, and all charter schools need to be ready to serve the group of students that choose to attend. In this section, describe your plan to offer a continuum of services for all types of students, including those that are educationally disadvantaged (such as low-income, special education, English learners, homeless, migrant and other at-risk students) and gifted and talented.

Reviewer Comments – Effectively Serving All Students**Strengths:**

- A well-rounded system of support was identified. Three full time counselors identify families in need who require support as well as provide support to students in multiple ways. Students are also supported by The Mentoring Network and the use of Restorative Practices. There is a Culture Committee and student ambassadors that are responsible for reinforcing a positive school culture. Student support for the education program beyond the classroom is provided by instructional aids, instructional coaches and special education teachers and contracted SLP, OT and school psychologist.
- A tiered approach to teaching and learning entails training, support and a structure that meets students' needs through a data-driven culture.
- The school was pro-active in regard to Covid-19 in providing students online educational opportunities and devices as well as providing food to their most vulnerable students.
- The school has a strong focus on culture and community and utilizes counselors to support students through advisory, social groups, and personalized support.
- The school implements an inclusive model for students with disabilities and students receiving language development support.
- The applicant includes a thoughtful description of programs and interventions to support educationally disadvantaged students. Students receive support from the mentoring network, the schools advisory program. Restorative practices are incorporated schoolwide. The school employs three full-time counselors who provide support for all students, and facilitate social groups. Schoolwide title I funds support 10 full-time instructional aides in push in and pull out interactions throughout the day. The school employs four full-time special education teachers, and contracts with outside professionals including a speech language pathologist, and occupational therapist, and school psychologist.
- The application describes the socioeconomic profile of the student body. The school trains all teachers on the RTI process. This process, including various tiers of intervention, is described. Additionally, classroom teachers participate in content level professional learning communities, during which they utilize data to target and adjust instruction to individual student needs. An ELL coordinator oversees the identification and support of English language learners. This process and supports are described adequately.
- Descriptions of how the school meets the needs of all students, in terms of nutritional lunches and free transportation, are provided.

Weaknesses:

- While the school has a robust RTI process in place to provide academic interventions, few details were provided about behavioral interventions that may be implemented for students.



G. Staffing and Professional Development Plan

Describe the approach to staffing, inclusive of ratios, positions, etc. required for effective implementation of the chosen education model. Further, describe the process in which all staff will be supported in their ongoing professional development.

Reviewer Comments – Staffing and Professional Development Plan**Strengths:**

- The school advertises for opening both locally and nationally as well as through job fairs. An 83% retention rate of teachers is to be commended.
- A three-tiered approach to professional development activities as well as an Individual Learning Plan allow each teacher to grow professionally in areas of needed growth. Teachers work hand-in-hand with both the Instructional Coaches and the administration in order to determine goals and growth as individuals and school-wide improvement.
- The school has a high teacher retention rate and offers competitive salaries, new teacher mentoring, and a three-tiered professional development structure to be responsive to the needs of teachers and the school.
- The application outlines a summary of the school's approach to staffing, and their desire to attract and retain talented educators who believe in academic excellence through the arts. Staff retention over the past three years is 83%, significantly above both state averages and comparable charter schools in the state.
- The school describes robust strategies for retaining and supporting individual teacher growth. New teachers are mentored by instructional coaches. A three tiered coaching program exists and is rooted in a research based approach. Tiers include ongoing professional development sessions designed by the school's instructional coaches, and take part in specialized training in arts integration. Second tier professional development includes Professional Learning Communities, focused on data-informed discussions regarding student learning and well-being. Third tier coaching involves one-on-one coaching between teachers and instructional coaches.
- The school uses Charlotte Danielson's Frontline platform to continually assess teacher performance through both formal and walkthrough observations. This data informs individual teacher goals, which are codified in Individualized Professional Learning Plans.

Weaknesses:

- The recruiting plan does not mention who is involved in the interviewing process as well as the selection of teaching candidates.
- Although continuous improvement was detailed in this section, teacher innovation was not. I did not mark this down, because the school as a whole is innovative in its educational program and this was mentioned in a previous section.
- No staffing structure was provided to be able to evaluate the feasibility of implementing the expansion of the specific educational model.

H. Financial Management and Monitoring Plan

As independently governed public schools, charters are fully responsible for ensuring quality financial management practices and ongoing financial stability. In this section, explain your school's plan to be compliant, strategic, and responsible with finances and business services.

Reviewer Comments – Financial Management and Monitoring Plan**Strengths:**

- Cash on hand is almost double what is required. Facility costs are 12% of the school's annual budget.
- The Budget Narrative and budget corresponded well with the goals. The Budget Narrative was very well written and easy to follow.
- The school's budget utilizes best practices by ensuring that facility costs represent only 12% of the overall budget.
- The school's operating budget and reserves demonstrate a long history of strong financial management. Previous expansions have proved successful, and continuing demand for IACS integrated arts program – in a large charter school – produces economies of scale that are laudable.
- The CSP budget template provides an incredibly detailed picture of planned expenditures utilizing CSP funds. All are aligned with the school's mission and vision. CSP funds are targeted toward a smart combination of updated curriculum (particularly for high school students, where most of the school's expansion will occur), staffing investments, professional development, furnishings and fixtures, and technology.

Weaknesses:

- The application would be strengthened by including a grant implementation plan identifying key personnel and target dates for completion of activities. In addition, the facility plan included in the application does not address how the school will meet the needs of students receiving special services.

I. Board Capacity and Governance Structure

A competent, trained governing board is essential to the success of a public charter school. In this section the school will demonstrate how it has developed a strong governing board with a diverse set of skills. Board members should understand their roles and responsibilities and have in place a transition plan and ongoing professional development to maintain board strength going forward.

Reviewer Comments – Board Capacity and Governance Structure**Strengths:**

- The grant explained responsibilities of the board and the division between governance and daily operations of the school.
- The board engages in regular self-evaluations and training twice a year, demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Board composition and selection is clearly articulated, and individuals represent a breadth of critical expertise, including finance, legal, construction, management and charter governance. The board's experience with the school varies, with some members being school founders and others quite newer.
- The application summarizes an exhaustive set of policies, which allow it to operate efficiently and remain a governance body. The board reviews standardized testing scores several times each year, reviews monthly financials, and reviews operations and policy matters as needed. The board has utilized sample policies from the Idaho School Board Association as foundational material for its own policy development.
- The application prioritizes initial and ongoing professional development for all board members. Specific resources are identified, and an annual self-evaluation is utilized to identify specific areas of continuous improvement and ongoing training.

Weaknesses:

- All board members are parents at the school rather than any participants from outside the school. The board does represent law, although it was mentioned when necessary the board retain an attorney.
- The current board composition has a gap in legal experience and there was no plan to address this skill gap provided.
- This is not necessarily a weakness, but care should be taken regarding the length of tenure that board members serve in their roles. The application indicates that at some board members were school founders, implying that their tenure may have been almost 15 years (since the school's founding). Term limits and rotating terms are probably important features of most school governance systems.

J. School Leadership and Management

This section should describe the intended leadership structure of your school and demonstrate a strong leadership and staffing plan that ensures high-quality implementation and sustainability of the school.

Reviewer Comments – School Leadership and Management**Strengths:**

- The table of Leadership Roles clearly identified leadership responsibilities.
- School leadership has thought through some of the risks of growth and has actually lived it in the past on a much larger scale. Because of this, they are very aware of their needs and have put into place a Culture Committee and student ambassadors to help mitigate the risk of losing their cultural identity.
- The school has consistent, long-time staff in leadership roles. There is a clear division of roles and responsibilities for leaders in the school as well as plans to evaluate the performance of staff on a consistent basis.
- The school will be expanding at a gradual pace of 60 students a year based on past expansion experience and the priority of maintaining school culture.
- The school employs a team of veteran leaders. The school's executive director, who oversees the school budget, all hiring, benefits, marketing and development, maintenance, professional development and elevated discipline, has been with the school for its entire 15 year history. Each of the two campuses is run by a single principal. These individuals oversee academic programs, major discipline, supervision and evaluation of all staff, and a variety of school-specific operational roles. The school's framework of leadership roles are explained effectively using a matrix within the application.
- The school's executive director is evaluated annually by the board of directors. Evaluation of principals, counselors, instructional coaches, and classified staff is summarized.
- No operational challenges are identified, but the application does identify the need to maintain its student-centered culture as a growth-oriented risk. In 2016, the school expanded quickly, and experienced the challenge of integrating new students into the school's rigor and customs. This expansion effort uses a much more gradual approach, and strategies are in place to connect new students to the school's culture - including a culture committee and student ambassadors.
- The school benefits from lessons learned during previous expansions, with the added benefit of continuity of leadership during its lifespan as an organization.



Overall comments

Reviewer Comments

- The grant was very well written and followed the outline of the rubric. The arts integrated model appears to be a great success as evidenced by previous growth. There is strong leadership and the school has shown there is a desire to attend a school such as IACS.
- Behavioral supports were not as detailed as academic supports.
- The application clearly communicates a research-supported academic program, data-driven instructional focus, strong leadership, and a compelling educational opportunity for the community. The planned gradual expansion will allow the school to increase high quality seats while still maintaining a focus on school culture.
- Several sections of the application contained vague references to plans and structures and the application would have been strengthened by additional detail, particularly in the area of staffing, finances, and facilities.
- IACS is an example of a charter school that has obviously created many successes during its 15 years of operation. The school is no stranger to growth, as it has expanded several times since its founding student population of 450 students. This grant-supported expansion will allow it to more than triple that original number of students.
- This application reveals a picture of a strong group of educators, a proven school and educational model, and a plan for ongoing, thoughtful expansion. It is obvious that school leaders and teachers are important contributors to the Idaho charter school movement, as well as an example of integrated arts education nationally.

