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Relevance Strategic Designs
Perspectives Charter School



Case Studies of Leading Edge
Small Urban High Schools

Education Resource Strategies

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Case Studies of Leading Edge Small Urban High Schools

This report is one of nine detailed case studies of small urban high schools. Each case study can be accessed individually or in one complete document at www.educationresourcestrategies.org.

Core Academic Strategic Designs

1. Academy of the Pacific Rim
2. Noble Street Charter High School
3. University Park Campus School

Relevance Strategic Designs

4. Boston Arts Academy
5. Life Academy of Health and Bioscience
6. Perspectives Charter School
7. TechBoston Academy
8. High Tech High School

Personalization Strategic Designs

9. MetWest High School

Also available on our Web site, www.educationresourcestrategies.org:

- Executive summary and full report: "Strategic Designs: Lessons from Leading Edge Small Urban High Schools"
- Detailed methodology
- Data request and interview protocol
- Introduction to the "Big 3" framework
- Comparative Leading Edge School data on diagnostic resource indicators (by school)

Thirty years ago, urban high school organization looked similar from one school to the next. Today, rising dropout rates and persistent achievement gaps have generated an urgency around redesigning the urban high school. Creating small high schools has become a central element of this redesign movement, with reformers envisioning improving instruction and, through the schools' "smallness," creating a supportive community of adult and student learners.

At Education Resource Strategies (ERS), in our work with school and district leaders, we have found that many school districts begin creating small high schools without a clear sense of how much they will spend or how to ensure that small schools organize in ways that will promote high performance. In response, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation supported ERS in a three-year effort aimed at building understanding and tools to support districts in creating cost-effective systems of high-performing urban high schools.

This report is one of nine detailed case studies of small urban high schools that served as the foundation for our report "Strategic Designs: Lessons from Leading Edge Small Urban High Schools" (available at www.educationresourcestrategies.org). We dubbed these nine schools "Leading Edge Schools" because they stand apart from other high schools across the country in designing new ways to "do school" while outperforming most high schools in their local districts.

We found that Leading Edge Schools deliberately create high-performing organizational structures, or Strategic Designs, that deliberately organize people, time, and money to advance their specific instructional models — the set of decisions the schools make about how they organize and deliver instruction. They create these Strategic Designs through four interconnected practices:

1. Clearly defining an instructional model that reflects the schools' vision, learning goals, and student population.
2. Organizing people, time, and money to support this instructional model by (a) investing in teaching quality, (b) using student time strategically, and (c) creating individual attention for students.
3. Making trade-offs to invest in the most important priorities when faced with limits on the amount, type, and use of people, time, and money.
4. Adapting their strategies in response to lessons learned and changing student needs and conditions.

Reviewing the case studies, readers will find that teacher characteristics, staffing patterns, schedules, and budgets look very different across the nine schools. Their instructional models reflect three broad approaches to teaching and learning:

1. **Core academics:** a rigorous core academic college-preparatory program for all students;
2. **Relevance:** a curriculum that is relevant to student interests and/or the world in which they live; and
3. **Personalization:** personal relationships between adults and students are fostered to ensure all students are known well by at least one adult.

All Leading Edge Schools incorporate some aspects of each approach, while tending to emphasize one over the others.

We also found that although no school organizes resources exactly the same, high-performing schools organize people, time, and money to implement three high-performance resources strategies. They:

1. Invest to continuously improve **teaching quality** through hiring, professional development, job structure, and collaborative planning time.
2. Use **student time** strategically, linking it to student learning needs.
3. Create **individual attention** and personal learning environments.

Using these strategies as our framework, we assessed case study school practices and quantified their resource use. We did this by creating a set of *diagnostic indicators* that describe how schools best use their resources for improving student performance. They are used throughout the case studies to illustrate resource use.

A detailed methodology, an in-depth introduction to the “Big 3” framework, and a full list of the diagnostic indicators can be found at www.educationresourcestrategies.org.

Education Resource Strategies hopes that these case studies will serve multiple purposes: to generate ideas about implementing strategies in schools; to help develop new small schools and reform existing schools; and to engage colleagues, principals, and teachers in conversations about what is possible in their districts. By detailing how these nine Leading Edge Schools organize their resources — people, time, and money — to improve student achievement, it is our hope that readers will be able to apply the findings to their own context and contribute to changing the national conversation around resource use from “how much” to “how well.”

Relevance Strategic Designs

6. Perspectives Charter School

1930 South Archer Avenue
Chicago, IL 60616

www.perspectivescs.org

Perspectives Charter School is one of Chicago's first charter schools, founded in 1997 by two Chicago Public Schools teachers. The founders wanted to create a small school with high expectations, where personal attention for students was a priority and where students were engaged in their learning and connected to the outside world.

Perspectives' mission

Perspectives Charter School's mission is to provide students with a rigorous and relevant education — based on A Disciplined Life® — that prepares them for life in a changing and competitive world and helps them further become intellectually reflective, caring, and ethical people engaged in a meaningful life. The following five principles guide the work of teachers and leaders:

- *We teach ethics.* (A Disciplined Life)
- *We are intellectuals.* (Academic Rigor)
- *We connect students to the community.* (Community Engagement)
- *We partner with parents.* (Family Involvement)
- *We grow educators.* (Professional Development)

Summarized from
www.perspectivescs.org

In SY2005–06, Perspectives served 322 students in grades six through 12, 186 of whom were high school students. The school's founders designed Perspectives to include middle and high school grades because they believed students would be more successful academically and socially if they had a rigorous academic curriculum with a strong school culture beginning in the sixth grade.

Students must apply to attend Perspectives, but as a public school, admission is based on a lottery rather than test scores or student transcripts. Perspectives prefers to admit students in the sixth grade to have the greatest amount of time to work with them. The school will occasionally accept students up through ninth grade to even out fluctuations in enrollment.

Preparing students for success in college and beyond

Perspectives follows a character-based curriculum called “A Disciplined Life” (ADL) to build a culture of success among students, both personally and academically. The school describes ADL as giving its students “the tools to foster a genuine community of young adults who understand, appreciate, and respect the differences of their peers.” There are 26 codes of character that make up the ADL standard, covering issues of self-perception, communication, and productivity.¹

Perspectives believes that school will be relevant to students when it is connected to their interests, the world outside the school walls, and what students need to know and be able to do to be successful in life. Perspectives' leaders purposefully align the student schedule to ensure students have the opportunity to pursue their interests and actively engage in the community. Two days a month, teachers plan a field study excursion to Chicago that is

related to the curriculum, rotating the content focus on each outing. Ninth and 11th graders also participate in internships in chosen fields of interest, and they are paired with a mentor to learn critical work skills, such as collaboration, negotiation, and problem solving.

Perspectives created a College for Certain program to prepare students for four-year universities as early as 10th grade. Sophomores take a weeklong trip to visit regional colleges and universities. Juniors travel across the country for one week to visit colleges. Every senior must apply to at least five colleges and for 10 scholarships, and they must be accepted to college before graduating. Perspectives ranks second among nonselective Chicago Public Schools in retaining freshmen through their senior years. The school has had an 89 percent graduation rate since 2001, and 100 percent of its graduates have been accepted to at least one two- or four-year college or university.²

A school that emphasizes relevance needs a staff that believes in the necessity of engaging students with relevant and authentic connections between the real world and the classroom. Through its hiring process, Perspectives identifies teachers who are willing to think about teaching and learning as extending beyond the textbook and classroom.

Perspectives also provides teachers with ample time to collaborate with their grade-level and content-based colleagues. This collaboration time allows teachers to share information about the same students they are teaching and discuss strategies for connecting the curriculum to other content areas and the outside world. In its efforts to grow educators, Perspectives leverages the expertise of its master teachers through a unique coaching model in which four experienced teachers serve as part-time instructional leaders to observe, coach, and evaluate four to eight teachers in their content areas.

Replicating a successful model

Perspectives' success over the years, coupled with the city's Renaissance 2010 program to open 100 new small schools in Chicago, prompted Perspectives' leaders to replicate the school model. It opened three new schools — one middle school and two high schools — between 2006 and 2008, and it will continue to explore opportunities for further expansion in future years. Perspectives created a charter management office (CMO) — which it calls a “home office” — to support the development and work of the original and newly formed schools.

Student demographics

As shown in Figure 6.1, Perspectives has similar student demographics as the average Chicago Public Schools students, with the exception of not having any special education self-contained students or English language learners.

FIGURE 6.1

Student demographics: Perspectives and Chicago Public Schools district average, SY2005–06

	Perspectives	Chicago Public Schools district average ⁱ
Race/ethnicity		
African American	61%	49%
Hispanic	35%	38%
Caucasian	3%	9%
Asian	0% ⁱⁱ	3%
Socioeconomic status		
Free and reduced-price lunch	86%	85%
Program		
Special education		
Resource	16%	9%
Self-contained	0%	4%
English language learners	0%	14%

Source: www.perspectives.org/page_id=24; percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

^{i.} <http://iirc.niu.edu/District.aspx?source=cat2&source2=subCat1&districtID=150162990&year=2006&level=D>.

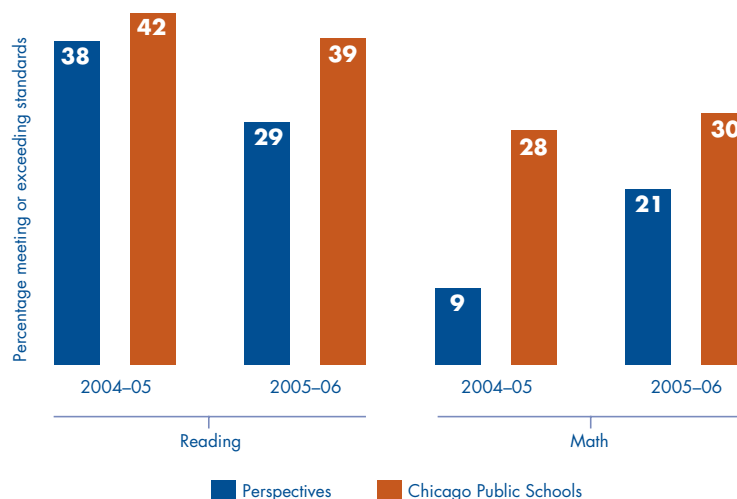
^{ii.} <http://iirc.niu.edu/scripts/school.asp?schoolID=150162990003C&colName=SCHLNAME&searchStr=perspectives%20charter&test=all>.

Student performance

Figure 6.2 compares the performance of Perspectives students and the Chicago Public Schools district average on the reading and math portions of the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE). The PSAE is a state assessment given to 11th graders to determine whether schools are making adequate yearly progress as defined by No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Perspectives had comparable scores to the district average on the SY2004–05 reading portion of the PSAE. However, Perspectives' scores in SY2005–06 were lower than that of the Chicago Public Schools district average in both reading and math.

FIGURE 6.2

Percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards on PSAE: Perspectives and Chicago Public Schools, 2004–05 and 2005–06



Source: <http://iirc.niu.edu/school.aspx?schoolID=15016299025003C&source=school%20profile>.

Perspectives exceeds Chicago public schools on other dimensions of performance, such as attendance and graduation rate (see Figure 6.3). It also has lower mobility and dropout rates than the district.

FIGURE 6.3

Other indicators of student performance, SY2005–06

	Perspectives	Chicago Public Schools district average ⁱ
Attendance	93%	86% ⁱⁱ
Dropout rate	5%	8%
Graduation rate	91%	73%
Mobility rate	12%	24%

Source: <http://research.cps.k12.il.us/resweb/schoolqry>; percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

ⁱ. <http://iirc.niu.edu/District.aspx?source=cat2&source2=subCat2&districtID=150162990&year=2006&level=D>.

ⁱⁱ. SY2005–06 attendance rate for Chicago Public Schools high school students only: www.cps.k12.il.us/AtAGlance.html.

Per-pupil spending

In SY2005–06, Perspectives received \$7,017 per high school pupil from Chicago Public Schools, which includes the following per-pupil allocations:

- \$6,075 direct allocation;
- \$217 for being a community school;
- \$300 for being a small school; and
- \$425 for facilities.

It is important to note that although Perspectives receives the \$425 per-pupil facilities allocation to find and fund its own facilities, that funding does not represent the full cost of the facilities. This differential makes it necessary for Perspectives to rely on private revenues to subsidize the cost of facilities. Additionally, the school's chief operating officer (COO) noted that the school needed additional funds to get over the hump of starting a school — when there was a low student head count (and related Chicago Public Schools funding) and high fixed capital expenditures to prepare the building and equip classrooms with furniture, textbooks, and computers.

Perspectives created the home office to support the development and work of Perspectives and future schools. It is run by the school's founders and employs nine staff members, including a COO, a director of finance, a director of external affairs, a community connector, two external affairs associates, a director of human resources, an accountant, and a business development assistant. The home office staff is responsible for driving the replication process while serving the needs of the original Perspectives school.

The portion of the home office's expenses that serve the original Perspectives campus is calculated by taking a ratio of student enrollment to the full projected enrollment of all four schools. It is important to note that as Perspectives replicates beyond four schools, each school will pay a smaller percentage of its budget to the home office because the office will allocate its services over a larger number of schools.

The per-pupil expenditures shown in Figure 6.4 reflect the high school portion of Perspectives for SY2005–06, including a portion of the home office costs as detailed above.

FIGURE 6.4*Per-pupil operating expenditures, SY2005–06*

	Perspectives	Chicago Public Schools comparison schoolsⁱ
Total fully allocated operating budget ⁱⁱ	\$2,126,446	\$13,890,372
General education per pupil (unweighted, fully allocated, including private, no geographic adjuster)	\$10,846	\$7,527
Percentage above that is privately funded	16%	N/A ⁱⁱⁱ
Percentage spent on instruction Student-Teacher ratio	45% 13:1	63% 16:1
Percentage spent on leadership ^{iv}	10%	4%
Percentage spent on pupil services ^v	11%	5%

i. Comparison schools are the highest-performing, nonexam schools in the district that were selected to provide a comparison to the Leading Edge Schools' per-pupil cost.³

ii. Fully allocated operating budget includes the costs of running a school on a daily basis.⁴

iii. Data on private funding were not collected for the comparison schools.

iv. Leadership coding includes all functions associated with governance, school administration, secretaries and clerks supporting school leaders, and accountability (research, evaluation and assessment, community relations, attendance tracking, student assignment, etc.).

v. Pupil services coding includes all functions associated with noninstructional programs.⁵

With private funds, Perspectives spends more than \$3,000 more per pupil than the average of the two highest-performing nonexam comprehensive high schools in Chicago Public Schools. This difference may be slightly inflated, as data on private funding were not collected for the comparison schools. Much of the difference is due to higher per-pupil leadership and pupil services costs.

Perspectives invests 10 percent and 11 percent of its operating budget on leadership and pupil services, respectively — more than twice the amount of the average comparison schools. These leadership and pupil services positions include a dean of academic affairs, a college counselor, and a community coordinator, among others. They are all related to the school's goals of making learning relevant to students by connecting them to their community, growing their own educators, and teaching students to be healthy and successful, both personally and academically. These goals extend beyond those of a typical urban high school.

Flexibility dimensions⁶

As a charter school, Perspectives can determine staff salary, class size, and the length of the student and teacher day and year (see Figure 6.5). School leaders also can hire and fire staff. However, Perspectives must comply with special education staffing requirements and NCLB’s requirements for highly qualified teachers. Despite its autonomy over compensation, Perspectives salaries closely resemble those of Chicago Public Schools. However, raises are tied to teachers’ evaluations, and Perspectives provides bonuses to teachers who assume additional responsibilities.

FIGURE 6.5

Flexibility dimensions

Flexibility dimension	Perspectives
Hiring and firing	Yes
Teacher time	Yes
Class size	Yes
Student time	Yes
Staffing composition	Yes (within special education requirements)
Salary	Yes
Option to opt out of district services	N/A
Discretion over nonsalary budget	Yes

Resource strategies

The following sections highlight Perspectives' practices around three resource strategies of high-performing high schools: the school's investment in teaching quality, its strategic use of student time, and the provision of individual attention to students. For comparability to the other Leading Edge Schools, this case study examines only the high school level of Perspectives.⁷

Perspectives resource strategy highlights

1. *Invest to continuously improve teaching quality through hiring, professional development, job structure, and collaborative planning time*
 - Multistep hiring process, focusing on teachers who are intellectuals and believe in providing students a rigorous and relevant education
 - Significant investment in professional development and collaborative planning time for teachers, totaling 276 hours each year
 - Internal coaching model that leverages internal expertise of master teachers to provide targeted and job-embedded support to teachers
2. *Use student time strategically, linking it to student learning needs*
 - Student schedule varies the length and frequency of core academic courses to match each course's structure and learning goals
 - Student schedule is organized to ensure that learning is relevant for students, connecting the curriculum to the community and preparing students for college and careers
3. *Create individual attention and personal learning environments*
 - Strong school culture fostered through ADL curriculum
 - Personal relationships with students and small-school atmosphere created through school model, looping, and family contact
 - Full-inclusion model in which special education and content teachers co-teach classes

■ Resource strategy 1

Invest to continuously improve teaching quality through hiring, professional development, job structure, and collaborative planning time

- *Multistep hiring process, focusing on teachers who are intellectuals and believe in providing students a rigorous and relevant education*
- *Significant investment in professional development and collaborative planning time for teachers, totaling 276 hours each year*
- *Internal coaching model that leverages internal expertise of master teachers to provide targeted and job-embedded support to teachers*

Multistep hiring process, focusing on teachers who are intellectuals and believe in providing students a rigorous and relevant education

Perspectives uses a thorough hiring process that includes a writing sample, multiple in-person interviews, and a demonstration lesson with students. The purpose of the demonstration lesson is to evaluate the candidate's ability to set clear objectives and high standards for students, engage and manage the students, and communicate the content clearly while assessing students' understanding. Throughout the interview process, the school makes an effort to determine the intellect of the candidates because school leaders want teachers who can inspire students to be intellectual thinkers. The school also looks for teachers who espouse the principles of ADL and believe in the importance of providing students a rigorous and relevant education.

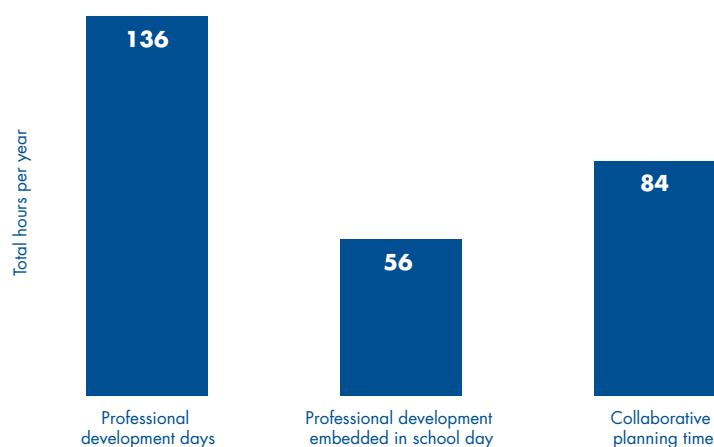
As a charter school, Perspectives is not required to hire certified teachers. However, the principal notes that “certified teachers are the better teacher to hire because they have already invested in the teaching profession. Noncertified teachers might leave in one or two years after we have invested a ton of professional development in them.” Thus, Perspectives hires teachers who have already invested in their own education or content area — 82 percent of Perspectives' core academic teachers have master's degrees, and 100 percent of Perspectives core academic teachers have certification credentials.

Significant investment in professional development and collaborative planning time for teachers, totaling 276 hours each year

Perspectives teachers engage in professional development and collaborative planning time 276 hours a year, which equals 41 Chicago Public Schools days.⁸ This is 152 hours more than the average teacher in Chicago Public Schools receives.⁹ As shown in Figure 6.6, this time is made up of full professional development days outside of the students' school year, professional development time embedded into teachers' weekly schedules, and collaborative planning time in grade-level and content-based teams throughout the year.

FIGURE 6.6

Allocation of teacher hours in professional development and collaborative planning time at Perspectives



Professional development days outside student school year

Teachers at Perspectives devote 17 full days, or 136 hours, each year to whole-faculty professional development outside the student year. They begin their school year almost three weeks in advance of the students. Eleven of these days are devoted to professional development — three of which are spent at an off-site, overnight camp where staff members can focus on professional development without the distraction of preparing their classrooms.

Professional development activities include discussion on aligning the curriculum from sixth through 12th grade, strategic planning for the year, training in the application of Perspectives' guiding principles, and strategies for managing student behavior. In addition, teachers meet to examine the results of student assessments from the prior year, including Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT), the PSAE, Stanford 9 pre- and post-tests, and internal protocols of student learning. They use the student data from the assessments to create teaching and learning goals for the coming year and determine how best to tailor instruction to meet students' needs.

The school uses both external consultants and internal master teachers who serve as part-time instructional leaders to organize and provide the professional development training. Working with the dean of academic affairs, the instructional leaders also plan professional development tailored to the teachers' goals and practice that take place for three days during the school year and three days at the end of the year.

Professional development embedded in school day

In addition to the 17 full professional development days, Perspectives offers weekly professional development that is embedded in the school day. Students are released at 11:30 a.m. every other Wednesday, giving teachers time for professional development from 1 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. Additionally, teachers meet with their instructional leader for 40 minutes each week to receive targeted support.

Collaborative planning time

Recognizing the benefit of teacher collaboration, Perspectives invests significantly in grade-based and content-based collaborative planning time for teachers during the school day. First, teachers alternate Wednesday afternoons to meet with their grade-level or content-based teams for 75 minutes from 3:15 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. The teachers' schedules also are organized so that grade-level or content-based teams can meet for up to an additional 100 minutes each day. Teachers are not required to meet together for the full time; they are trusted to use the time as they feel it is needed.

It is estimated that teachers use 30 minutes each week to meet with their department teams and 40 minutes each week to meet with their grade-level teams, leaving approximately 300 minutes each week for individual planning time. In all, teachers at Perspectives spend 84 hours each year in collaborative planning time. In budget terms, Perspectives spends 13 percent of its operating budget on professional development and collaborative planning time, equaling approximately \$18,845 per teacher. This cost includes teachers' time in the professional development and collaborative planning time listed above in addition to the salaries of internal staff that provides professional development.

Internal coaching model that leverages internal expertise of master teachers to provide targeted and job-embedded support to teachers

Perspectives provides leadership opportunities for its master teachers through the position of instructional leader. The role of instructional leaders is to serve as the content coaches for the school, support individual teacher growth, and conduct formative evaluations of teachers twice each year. Instructional leaders are chosen by the principal based on their ability to improve student achievement and motivate students, adhere to the Perspectives way, contribute to parent satisfaction, and assign engaging student work.

There are four part-time instructional leaders, three of whom work directly with the high school teachers and focus primarily on one subject area. Although the instructional leaders do not receive an additional stipend to play this role, they have part-time release from teaching. Two of the instructional leaders also are part-time high school teachers, maintaining their connection to the students and curriculum.

Each instructional leader supports the work of four to eight teachers. The instructional leaders observe teachers once a week and conduct pre- and post-conferences with them to plan and debrief the lesson being taught. They also facilitate the grade-level and content-based collaborative planning time meetings among teachers.

At the beginning of this program, the instructional leaders were not responsible for teacher evaluation. School leaders found that this structure did not always encourage teachers to make the adjustments that the instructional leaders suggested, as the instructional leaders did not hold any authority. In SY2005–06, Perspectives refined the coaching structure by giving the instructional leaders the authority to evaluate the teachers they coach. This structure has the benefit of being more organic than a one-time formal evaluation. Through the new structure, instructional leaders work with teachers individually to develop their 60-day goals, support them in improving their practice in the chosen areas, and evaluate them on whether they have made the desired progress. The principal noted that a downside of having instructional leaders evaluate teachers is now teachers do not feel as free to be vulnerable with the instructional leader as they did before.

Because they each observe four to eight teachers, instructional leaders also are able to extract common themes to use for professional development topics. They meet with the dean of academic affairs twice a month to ensure the professional development plan for the year is meeting the teacher needs they observe in the classroom. The instructional leaders also receive professional development themselves so that they can be effective in their school-based coaching roles. For example, instructional leaders participated in training on how to conduct three- to five-minute observations focused on curriculum, instruction, and classroom environment.

The school would like to build on the success of teacher leadership positions by creating a formal career ladder within the school that includes roles for both instructional leadership and new teacher mentors.

■ Resource strategy 2

Use student time strategically, linking it to student learning needs

- *Student schedule varies the length and frequency of core academic courses to match each course's structure and learning goals*
- *Student schedule is organized to ensure that learning is relevant for students, connecting the curriculum to the community and preparing students for college and careers*

Student schedule varies by length and frequency of core academic courses to match each course's structure and learning goals

High school students at Perspectives attend school from 8:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, every other Wednesday, Thursdays, and Fridays (see Appendix 6.2). On the alternate Wednesdays, students are dismissed at 11:30 a.m., making the average length of the school day six hours and 35 minutes. In contrast, a Chicago Public Schools students' day lasts five hours and 15 minutes, giving Perspectives students an additional 202 hours a year in school compared to their Chicago Public Schools peers. Perspectives uses much of this additional time to increase core academic graduation requirements (see Figure 6.7). Perspectives students spend on average 65 percent of their year in core academic classes, the second highest of the Leading Edge Schools.

FIGURE 6.7

Perspectives graduation requirements

Subject	Years/semesters/classes	Subject	Years/semesters/classes
English language arts	4 years	College preparatory	2 classes
Math	4 years	Drop Everything and Read	4 years
Science	4 years	A Disciplined Life	4 years
Social studies	4 years	Art	2 semesters
Spanish	2 years	Drama	1 semester
Internships	2 semesters	Health	2 semesters
Social justice	1 class		

As can be seen in the sample student schedule in Appendix 6.2, Perspectives created a unique student schedule to allow for longer blocks of time in core classes, as well as structures that honor the commitment to experiential learning. The student schedule is organized so that every week students have the equivalent of four 50-minute periods. In classes such as English, history, science, and art, students have a 50-minute period two days a week and a double block of 102 minutes once a week to allow for longer blocks of uninterrupted learning time and project-based learning. In contrast, classes such as math and Spanish meet every day (with the exception of Wednesday), as the daily repetition of this material is viewed as more important than fewer periods of longer blocks of time.

Student schedule is organized to ensure that learning is relevant for students, connecting the curriculum to the community and preparing students for college and careers

Perspectives uses internships, field studies, and College for Certain expectations to connect student learning to the outside world and to make students' time in school relevant to their lives after school.

Internships

Ninth and 11th grade students participate in an internship program every other Wednesday from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. from January through May. The goal is for students "to perceive themselves in professional positions of power and leadership and develop important life skills such as collaboration, negotiation, and problem solving."¹⁰ Four teachers and a community coordinator help students select a field of interest. Students are then paired with mentors from various institutions in Chicago, including companies, law firms, hospitals, nonprofit organizations, and so on. Teachers note that the match between the student and mentor is critical, and they spend a great deal of time ensuring students and mentors are appropriately paired.

These internships benefit students both academically and emotionally. Students gain practical skills on the work sites and, more important, learn what happens behind the scenes, such as the academic knowledge and skills required to be a lawyer. In addition, students create networks and draw on the relationship with their mentor well past their school years. This external expertise comes at no cost to the school, beyond the salary of the community coordinator, who establishes and manages the external relationships with institutions.

Field studies

Perspectives also offers field studies to connect students' classroom learning to the community. Leveraging the school's location in downtown Chicago, time is devoted every other Wednesday for ninth through 12th graders to take advantage of the surrounding cultural, commercial, political, and educational institutions and to use Chicago as their classroom. Both core and noncore teachers plan experiential trips outside the classroom that relate to the curriculum of their classes. Each teacher is responsible for planning a field study approximately once a month, rotating the content and learning for the day with other teachers. Students complete related pre- and post-field study assignments and write in reflection journals about their experiences.

College for Certain

Perspectives uses a number of programs and support systems to help prepare its students for college. In addition to the high core academic expectations, students take college-preparatory courses in their junior and senior years and participate in weeklong college visits in 10th and 11th grades. Further, the student curriculum changes during senior year to resemble the type of learning environment they will experience in college.

For example, during the second semester, seniors take two interdisciplinary seminars focusing on humanities and science and technology. From these courses, students identify a particular area of interest on which they would like to structure their independent study. The independent study emulates the type of experience and rigor a student will experience in college, including reading, research, writing, and field experience around a chosen topic. As students progress through the school, the ratio of student-driven relevance activities to teacher-directed relevance activities increases. Twelfth graders are given more choices over their coursework and activities, preparing them for the choices they will have in college and life.

■ Resource strategy 3

Create individual attention and personal learning environments

- *Strong school culture fostered through ADL curriculum*
- *Personal relationships with students and small-school atmosphere created through school model, looping, and family contact*
- *Full-inclusion model in which special education and content teachers co-teach classes*

Strong school culture fostered through ADL curriculum

ADL is a philosophy developed by Perspectives' founders that outlines their beliefs for principles of student success. ADL focuses on self-perception, communication, and productivity — all principles believed to help students succeed and develop into caring and ethical individuals while learning how to think critically, be responsible, and work hard. ADL permeates throughout the school both informally in the interactions between staff and students and more formally through a curriculum that specifically teaches and reinforces the philosophy's principles. Students take one ADL class four times a week, giving each student an average of 84 hours a year in ADL classes.

ADL also enhances the connection between personal and academic growth for students. For example, 12th grade students complete an independent study called Passages. This final project explores life after high school using ADL's principles to respond to writing prompts and create videos and timelines. The principal notes, "Passages is a part of accountability in our agreement with Chicago Public Schools. It is a standardized way of showing what we think is important. A Disciplined Life goes above and beyond standardized testing." ADL fosters being part of a community while providing students the personal skills to be successful in college and beyond.

Personal relationships with students and small-school atmosphere created through school model, looping, and family contact

The average annual teacher load for a core academic teacher at Perspectives is 124 students, one of the highest for the Leading Edge Schools. This means that teachers are responsible for teaching to the learning styles and grading the work of 124 students each year. This is comparable to a typical teacher load at an urban comprehensive high school, where teachers are responsible for approximately 125 students at a time.¹¹ As this structure does not inherently foster individualized attention for students, Perspectives uses different strategies to create a personalized learning environment, such as using a sixth through 12th grade model, looping core academic teachers with students for two years, and devoting significant time to partnering with parents.

Perspectives was intentionally developed as a sixth through 12th grade model to provide teachers with the opportunity to develop long-term relationships with students and have adequate time to prepare them for college. Seven years in the same school building with only 322 students fosters a sense of smallness and personalization that is difficult to create in a large comprehensive high school. Perspectives creates this setting deliberately so that students get the support they need and feel that they are known well.

Perspectives also creates individual attention for students through looping, a structure in which a group of students stays with the same core academic teachers for two years. For example, ninth graders will have the same core academic teachers again in 10th grade, and 11th graders will have the same core academic teachers again in 12th grade. The looping strategy enables teachers to build relationships with their students and to get to know each student's learning style and needs. Teachers are then able to take this understanding and meet in grade-level teams to discuss student progress. The looping structure also allows students to move in a cohort of classmates for two consecutive years, fostering the feeling of smallness within the school.

Partnering with parents is one of Perspectives' five guiding principles. The school actively seeks to build a strong relationship with each student's family through conferences and parent programs. The assistant principal manages the parent program that organizes parent volunteers and develops three-way contracts that identify the responsibilities of teachers, students, and parents.

Teachers begin the year by dividing the students they share and hosting pre-year conferences with their students and the students' parents to examine last year's performance, discuss adjustments that need to be made for progress, and set goals before the year starts. Not only does this give each student a teacher with whom he or she can connect, but it also gives parents a teacher to whom they can go with questions or concerns.

Teachers follow these pre-year conferences with 25-minute conferences on four report card days at the end of each quarter. Teachers stay late to accommodate varying parent schedules, meeting with parents anywhere between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. In past years, 85 percent of Perspectives parents attended these meetings.

Finally, Perspectives welcomes new students and families to the school by hosting a one-day orientation at the beginning of each school year.

Full-inclusion model in which special education and content teachers co-teach classes

Perspectives implements a full-inclusion special education model in which the special education teachers co-teach classes with the regular education teachers. They try to make their support grade-based when possible, that is grouping grades six through eight, nine and 10, and 11 and 12, so they can develop relationships with the same group of students and loop over two years, similar to the core academic teachers.

One special education teacher notes that the team teaching looks different in each classroom, based on the dynamics between the teachers. For example, one co-teaching model may have the special education teacher and the content teacher alternate who teaches the lesson and who acts as support in the classroom. Another variation may use the content teacher as the primary teacher and the special education teacher to support any students who may be struggling with the material.

A noted benefit of the inclusion model is that the special education teachers work with all the students in the class, thereby lowering the student-teacher ratio of the classes they co-teach. As a result of the co-teaching inclusion model, Perspectives' English language arts and math classes have an average class size of 15, and the ninth grade English language arts and math classes have an average class size of 13. This is less than half the average class size students experience in Chicago Public Schools. The full-inclusion model creates an opportunity for individualized attention for all students in the high-need subject areas as well as the high-need grades. Students in classes that do not have special education students do not benefit from a second teacher in the classroom and experience a typical class size of 27.

NOTES

- ¹ See www.perspectivescs.org/?page_id=25 for the list of the 26 codes of character.
- ² www.perspectivescs.org/?page_id=24
- ³ In Chicago, our partnership with the district allowed joint identification of two comparison schools and access to the detailed coded budgets. Chicago Public Schools comparison schools demographics: 1,556 students; 65 percent African American; 15 percent Asian; 8 percent Caucasian; 14 percent Hispanic; 87 percent free or reduced-price lunch; 13 percent students with disabilities; 9 percent English language learners.
- ⁴ These costs include provision and support of the academic program; administration and support services; provision and maintenance of the physical plant; and auxiliary services such as food, transportation, and security. For district schools, some of these costs are administered at the district central office level. If a charter school has a CMO, some of these costs are administered at the CMO level.
- ⁵ These include social and emotional needs (social workers, character education, mentoring, parent programs, etc.), physical health (itinerant therapists, nurses, etc.), students with disabilities and English language learner evaluation/diagnostics, career/academic counseling, and other noninstructional programs (athletics, truancy, etc.).
- ⁶ Flexibility dimensions are a school's ability to use its resources — people, time, and money — as it chooses. Schools can be limited by legal or administrative constraints, such as federal or state laws, union contracts, or district policies. The degree of school flexibility depends on both how much it has and whether the school can use the resource as it chooses.
- ⁷ This framework for analysis, the “Big 3” resource strategies of high-performing schools, is more fully described in Appendix 6.1.
- ⁸ Based on Chicago Public Schools district average length of teacher day is 6.75 hours, as noted in the Chicago Teachers Union contract.
- ⁹ As required by the Chicago Teachers Union contract SY2005–06, each teacher participates in 10 professional development days each year and two 45-minute periods each week for staff development and collaboration.
- ¹⁰ www.perspectivescs.org
- ¹¹ A teacher load of 125 assumes teachers teach five of seven periods with class sizes of 25, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06_064.asp.

APPENDIX 6.1

Resource strategies

Resource principles	What we see in the school	Diagnostic indicators
Invest in teaching quality		
Hire and organize staff to fit school needs in terms of expertise, philosophy, and schedule	• Writing sample • Multiple in-person interviews • Teaching lesson to students with associated rubric	• Use of a rigorous, strategic hiring process • 30% of core academic teachers with three or fewer years' experience • 67% of core teachers teaching more than one subject • Leverage outside experts for student internships
Integrate significant resources for well-designed professional development that provides expert support to implement the schools' instructional models	• 17 full days devoted to professional development spread before, during, and after school year • Weekly professional development time: dismiss students early one day every other week • Focus of professional development: looking at student work, aligning curriculum across grades	• \$12,818 per teacher on professional development (not including teacher time) • 13% staff with instructional leadership roles
Design teacher teams and schedules to include blocks of collaborative planning time effectively used to improve classroom practice	• Teachers alternate grade-level and content-based team meetings each week • Schedule allows for up to 100 minutes per day of collaborative planning time for teachers to use as needed	• 16% of teacher year in professional development (with collaborative planning time) • 276 total yearly teacher professional development hours (with collaborative planning time) • 145 minutes collaborative planning time per week • 15% professional development in content-based teams
Enact systems that promote individual teacher growth through induction, leadership opportunities, professional development planning, evaluation, and compensation	• Master teachers serve in role of instructional leader to provide support to colleagues	• Ratio of teachers to school-based evaluators is 4:1 • Regular review of teacher performance and growth • 12% of teacher compensation for leadership roles

(continued)

(continued)

Resource principles	What we see in the school	Diagnostic indicators
Use student time strategically		
Purposefully align the schools' schedules with their instructional models and student needs	- School matches length and frequency of core classes to learning goals of courses - Schedule provides significant time for relevant learning	- School schedules reflect instructional model and academic needs of students 152 total yearly hours in noncore academics 14% of student year in noncore academics 24% in theme-based courses (relevance)
Maximize time on academic subjects, including longer blocks of uninterrupted time	- Longer blocks of English language arts and history - Organizes field study excursions to connect outside world with core academic curriculum - Use of block schedules	1,115 yearly student hours 726 average yearly hours in core academics 789 yearly hours in ninth grade core academics 536 yearly hours in 12th grade core academics 65% of student year in core academics 2,904 total core academic hours over four years
Vary individual student time when necessary to ensure all students meet rigorous standards	Extra academic support is voluntary and provided after school through tutoring	- No required student time in academic support during school day - Ratio of time in ninth grade math to average time in math: 1.1 - Ratio of time in ninth grade English language arts to average time in English language arts: 1.1
Create individual attention		
Assess student learning on an ongoing basis and adjust instruction and support accordingly	Regular review of student progress	Use formative assessments systematically to guide instruction throughout the year
Create smaller group sizes and reduced teacher loads for targeted purposes	Full-inclusion model in which special education teacher co-teaches some core classes and provides all students increased individual attention	- Average class size overall: 22 - Average class size core: 21 - Average class size English language arts: 15 - Average class size math: 15 - Average teacher load overall: 113 - Average teacher load core: 124 - Average teacher load English language arts: 140 - Average teacher load math: 115
Organize structures that foster personal relationships between students and teachers	- Grades 6–12 school model - ADL advisory for ninth through 12th grades - Partner with families	27 students assigned to an adult advocate providing academic or personal support - Student to core academic teacher ratio is 16:1 63 total yearly teacher hours spent in social and emotional support 186 students in grades 9–12 - Looping practices around strategically grouped students through core academics

APPENDIX 6.2

Perspectives sample student schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday (A week)	Wednesday (B week)	Thursday	Friday
8:30–9:00	DEAR	DEAR	DEAR	DEAR	DEAR	DEAR
9:00–9:50	Spanish	Elective	Field studies	Social Justice/ Internship/ College Prep	Math	Spanish
9:52–10:42	Science	Elective			Spanish	Science
10:44–11:34	Math	Math			English	Math
11:36–12:26	History	Spanish			English	History
12:28–1:06	Lunch	Lunch		Early dismissal for students (Professional development for teachers)	Lunch	Lunch
1:08–1:48	ADL	ADL			ADL	ADL
1:50–2:40	Elective	History			Science	Elective
2:42–3:32	English	History			Science	English

DEAR = Drop Everything and Read, ADL = A Disciplined Life

APPENDIX 6.3

Perspectives graduation requirements

Subject	Years/semesters/classes
English language arts	4 years
Math	4 years
Science	4 years
Social studies	4 years
Spanish	2 years
Internships	2 semesters
Social justice	1 class

Subject	Years/semesters/classes
College preparatory	2 classes
Drop Everything and Read	4 years
A Disciplined Life	4 years
Art	2 semesters
Drama	1 semester
Health	2 semesters

APPENDIX 6.4

Perspectives staff list

Position	Full-time equivalent	ERS coding categories	Other
CEO/principal	0.12	Leadership	CMO; shared with middle school ⁱ
President	0.58	Leadership	CMO; shared with middle school
Business development associate	0.12	Leadership	CMO; shared with middle school
Chief operating officer	0.12	Business services	CMO; shared with middle school
Director of human resources	0.12	Business services	CMO; shared with middle school
Director of finance	0.12	Business services	CMO; shared with middle school
Director of external affairs	0.12	Business services	CMO; shared with middle school
Community connector	0.12	Leadership	CMO; shared with middle school
Associate	0.12	Business services	CMO; shared with middle school
Associate	0.12	Business services	CMO; shared with middle school
Compliance manager	0.12	Business services	CMO; shared with middle school
Accountant	0.12	Business services	CMO; shared with middle school
Dean of academic affairs	0.58	Leadership	Shared with middle school
Assistant principal	0.66	Leadership	Shared with middle school
Receptionist	0.58	Leadership	Shared with middle school
Administrative assistant	0.58	Leadership	Shared with middle school
Chef	0.14	Instruction	Shared with middle school
Chef	0.43	Operations and maintenance	Shared with middle school
Sous chef	0.58	Operations and maintenance	Shared with middle school
Sous chef	0.58	Operations and maintenance	Shared with middle school
Dishwasher	0.58	Operations and maintenance	Shared with middle school
Custodian	0.58	Operations and maintenance	Shared with middle school
Custodian	0.58	Operations and maintenance	Shared with middle school
Buffet aide	0.58	Operations and maintenance	Shared with middle school

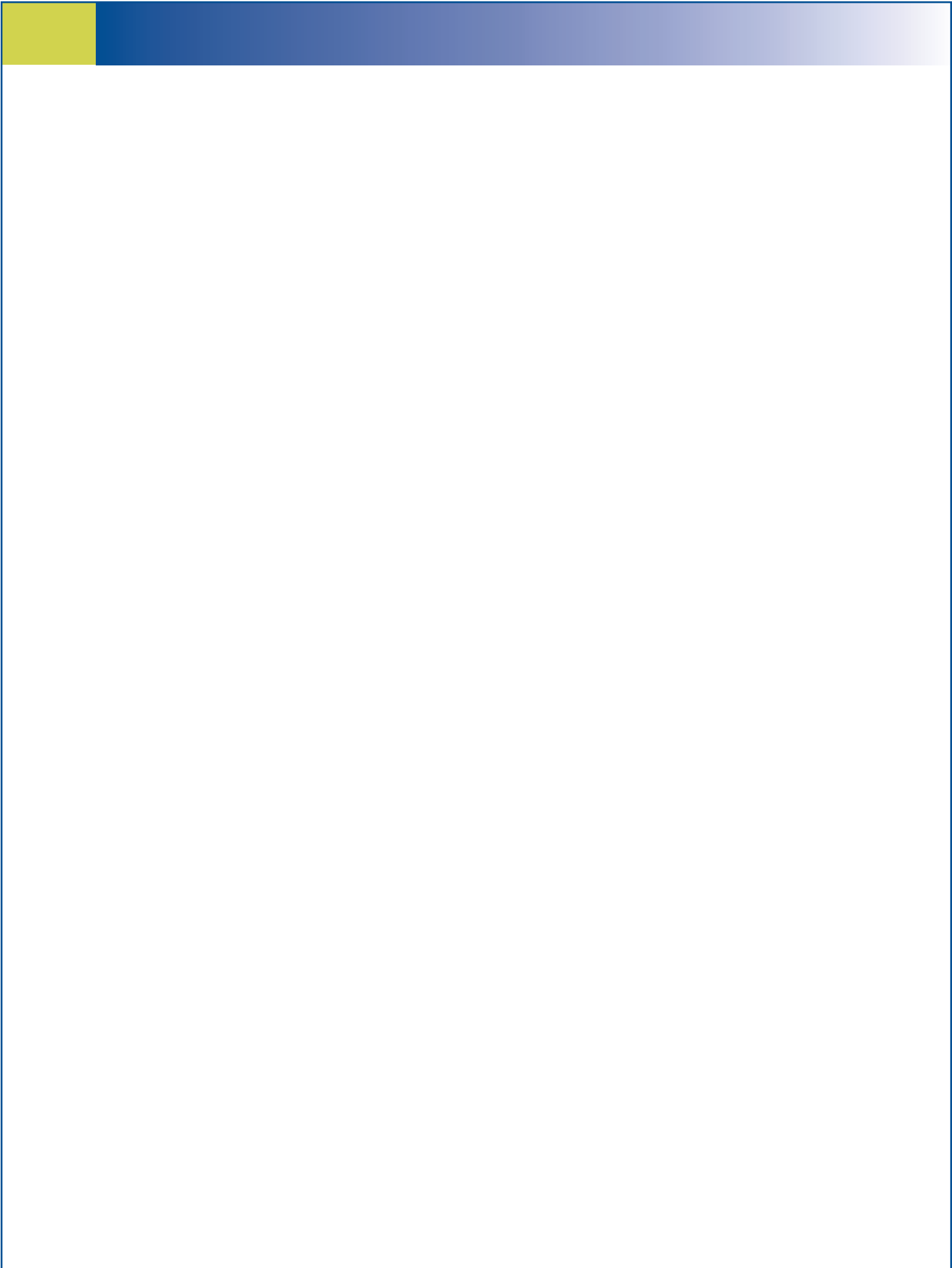
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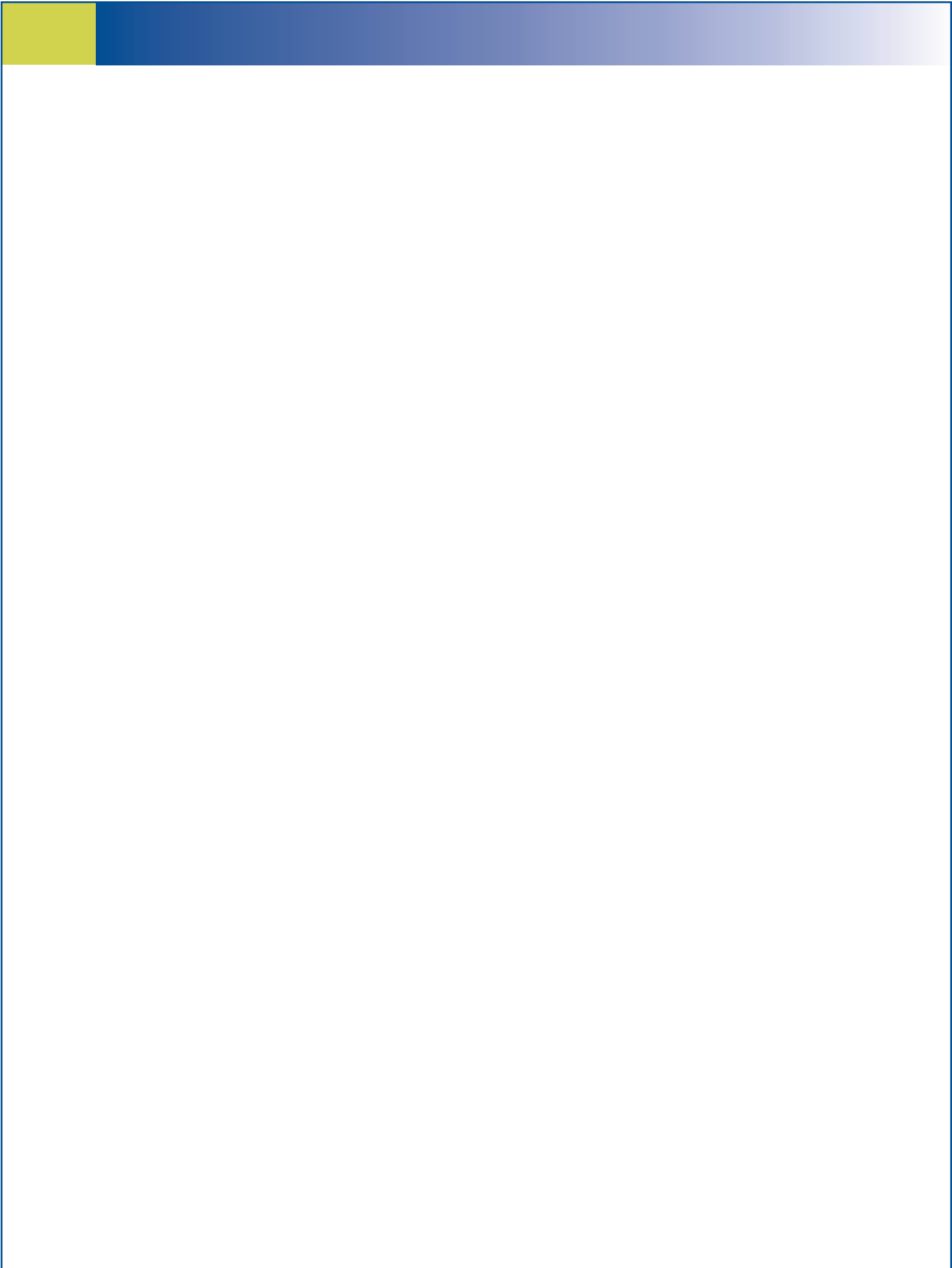
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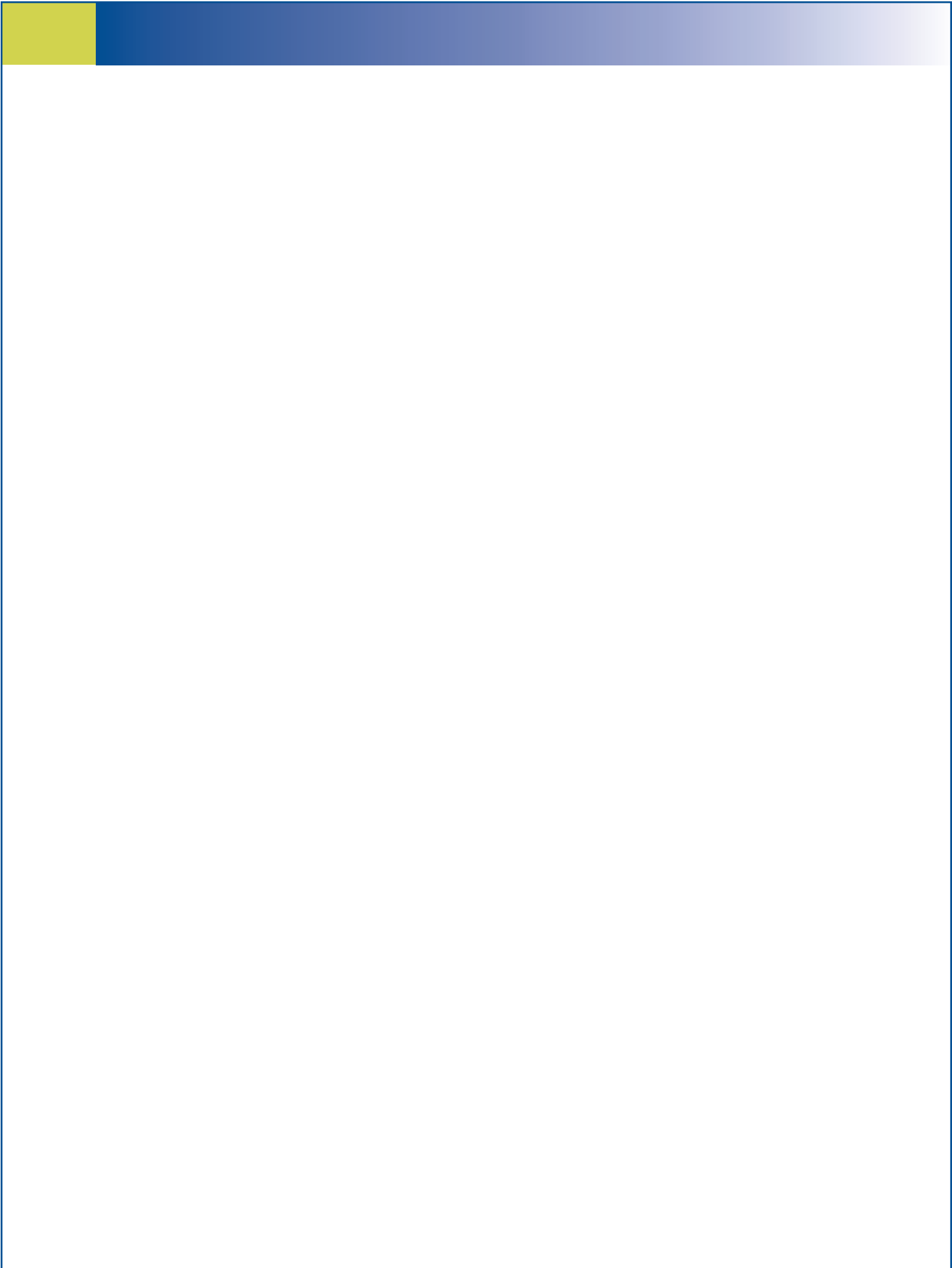
Position	Full-time equivalent	ERS coding categories	Other
Senior disciplinarian/high school	1	Pupil services	
Librarian	1	Instructional support	
Instructional leader	0.75	Instruction	
Science teacher	0.25	Instruction	
Instructional leader	0.25	Instruction	
History teacher	0.75	Instruction	
Instructional leader	0.4	Instruction	
College counselor	1	Pupil services	
Special education	1	Instruction	
Special education	1	Instruction	
High school English	1	Instruction	
High school English	1	Instruction	
High school science	1	Instruction	
High school science	1	Instruction	
High school math	1	Instruction	
High school math	1	Instruction	
High school history	1	Instruction	
High school Spanish	1	Instruction	
High school Spanish	1	Instruction	
Drama	0.58	Instruction	Shared with middle school
Art	0.58	Instruction	Shared with middle school
Fitness	0.58	Instruction	Shared with middle school
Computer	0.58	Instruction	Shared with middle school

CMO = Charter management organization

i. Of the positions that are shared with the middle school, only the high school portion of the full-time equivalent is included in the table.







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Education Resource Strategies, Inc., is a nonprofit organization that has worked extensively with urban public school systems to rethink the use of district- and school-level resources and build strategies for improved instruction and performance.

Our mission is to be a catalyst for the creation of high-performing urban school systems by promoting and supporting the strategic management of education resources. Our unique strength is in our action research where our partnerships with school systems bridge research and practice. We support our clients with Web-based tools, research and training, and diagnostic analyses tailored to their districts. Together, we outline strategies that are actionable and transformational both within and beyond the districts in which we work.

ERS's work and research have identified several areas in which school systems effectively leverage their resources to improve instruction, forming the basis for our five practice areas: Strategic School System Design; School Funding and Staffing Systems; Strategic School Design; School Support, Planning, and Supervision; and Human Capital.

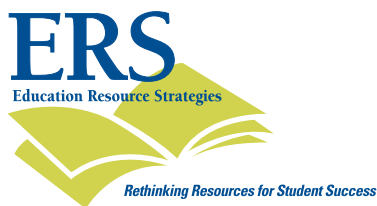
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Rethinking the Cost of Small High Schools Project

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation supported Education Resource Strategies in a three-year effort aimed at building understanding and tools that would support districts in creating cost-effective systems of high-performing urban high schools.

Out of our extensive research, we created the following reports and tools to support leaders as they consider and design small high schools in their districts. All materials are available at www.educationresourcestrategies.org.

- “The Cost of Small High Schools: A Literature Review”
- “Strategic Designs: Lessons from Leading Edge Small Urban High Schools”
- “Case Studies of Leading Edge Small Urban High Schools”
- “District Spending in Small and Large High Schools: Lessons from Boston, Baltimore, and Chicago”
- Going to Scale Tool
- Small Secondary School Design Tool
- District Assessment Tool



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