

Critical Assessment #7: School Description

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School Management Functions: Finance, Resources, Structures

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Our school has a current enrollment of 730 pre-k – 8 elementary school students. There are 100 more students in the school this year than last year. It is a brand new two-year old school in a neighborhood where the parents come out and are involved. Three administrators oversee the daily functioning of the school.

This neighborhood school has a lot of amenities that the parents, staff and students all enjoy, e.g., a clean brand new facility with regulated temperature control, two separate playgrounds, and average to small class sizes, to name a few. Many of the staff members are new teachers.

Since the school is so new, we are fortunate to be receiving support in areas that other schools in the district are lacking. We are a one-to-one technology school where each student receives his or her own laptop computer for the year. Students use the computers throughout the day and return them before leaving. This is convenient because it enables students to save their passwords on frequently used programs. The computer lending process also projects a serious level of responsibility onto the third through eighth grade students – a responsibility most of them take very seriously.

Last year, each teacher had the good fortune to receive a \$100 stipend to purchase the supplies we needed from the principal. I purchased Post-It note Chart paper because that was an expense that I was not going to incur myself. As we prepare for next year's budget, I remarked to our principal how helpful it was to receive.

The culture and climate of our school is mostly good, primarily because many of the students, as well as the veteran staff come from less than stellar academic district accommodations elsewhere and people are appreciative. The few challenges we face are unrelated to any budget issue.

Consequently, as a one-to-one tech school in our second year, the administration is finding that money must be budgeted for repairs to the computers. Just today in our second budget prep meeting (a schoolwide group of teacher leader volunteers) to help produce a functional budget for next year, we learned that due to some computer damage, we will have to budget for repairs. Additionally, some of the middle school-aged students are misusing their computers. As a solution, the administration is moving to the idea giving students access only to the computers in each of their classes. With this scenario, students will be released from the responsibility of carrying their computers all day.

We have plenty of copy paper, thankfully, because since there are no textbooks for ELA, I have a great deal of copying to do; I am on my third carton of paper and it is only December. Although each classroom has a brand new copier/scanner hybrid machine, we do not have a replenishing supply of the toner that goes into those machines. Teachers were forced to purchase their own copier toner, if they wanted to use their copiers.

Our art teacher among others, uses Donor's Choose on a regular basis and receives a number of necessities for her classroom. In fact, the whole school has a page on Donor's Choose.

We have an extensive Morning and Afterschool program funded by our schoolwide budget. Over this past Summer, I was instrumental in writing the curriculum for the morning program which is based on character development. The Vice Principal and I worked together to produce the Mindful Assessment curriculum. The afterschool program is based on primarily on homework help. The cost of the afterschool program exceeds that of the morning program because there are so many more teachers involved. One of the teachers on our budget committee questioned the excessive cost of the afterschool program in the large

scheme of things and as it relates to the total budget (it cost close to 1/3 of our total supplies/programs budget).

The music department needs instruments. The building was built to house an extensive music program with an assortment of instruments. There is even a room where equipment would be sheltered, if we had any.

We lost half of a gym teacher last year, but gained two bilingual teachers. The two new bilingual teachers have been very instrumental since our population increase is primarily due to an influx of bilingual students who are new arrivals to this country.

Overall, our class sizes increased dramatically from last year and we lost a 1st and 2nd grade teacher. The shortage of salaried workers can be felt as much as the lack of supplies. We are making do with what we have because we realize the blessings of a new school do not come without challenges.