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# Pennsylvania Department of Education

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Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
**Department of Education**  
333 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

**Charter Annual Report**  
Tuesday, May 07, 2013  
(Last Accepted: Wednesday, July 25, 2012)

**Entity:** Tacony Academy Charter School  
**Address:** 1330 Rhawn Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19111

# CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY DATA

## Summary Data Part I

### Charter School Annual Report Summary Data 2011 - 2012

**Name of School:** Tacony Academy Charter School

**Date of Local Chartering School Board/PDE Approval:** August 8, 2009

**Length of Charter:** 3 years    **Opening Date:** September 9, 2009

**Grade Level:** K-6 and 9-10    **Hours of Operation:** Elementary 08:30- 03:30 High School 07:45 - 03:04

**Percentage of Certified Staff:** 97%    **Total Instructional Staff:** 44

**Student/Teacher Ratio:** 25:1    **Student Waiting List:** Elementary - 657 High School - 30

**Attendance Rate/Percentage:** 93.19%

**Second Site Address, Phone Number and Site Director:**  
n/a

## Summary Data Part II

Enrollment: 729 Per Pupil Subsidy: Reg. Ed. 8,000+ ---- Spec. Ed. 10,000+

### Student Profile

|                                 |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| American Indian/Alaskan Native: | 1   |
| Asian/Pacific Islander:         | 12  |
| Black (Non-Hispanic):           | 242 |
| Hispanic:                       | 159 |
| White (Non-Hispanic):           | 281 |
| Multicultural:                  | 34  |

Percentage of Students from Low Income Families Eligible for a Free or Reduced Lunch:  
72%

Provide the Total Unduplicated Number of Students Receiving Special Services (Excluding Gifted) as of Previous December: 120

### Instructional Days and Hours

| Number of:          | K (AM) | K (PM) | K (F.Time) | Elem. | Middle. | Sec.  | Total |
|---------------------|--------|--------|------------|-------|---------|-------|-------|
| Instructional Days  | 0      | 0      | 180        | 180   | 0       | 180   | 368   |
| Instructional Hours | 0      | 0      | 1,125      | 1,125 | 0       | 1,070 | 3,320 |

## SECTION I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Educational Community

The school proposes to serve the students and families residing in the Tacony neighborhood of Philadelphia. Specifically, the children attending the following severely over enrolled schools, Hamilton Disston, Spruance Elementary, and Ethan Allen will be targeted to attend Tacony Academy Charter School. The children living in Tacony are daily impacted by an unemployment rate of 9.8% which is higher than the current national average. Over 66.5% of these children live a life below the poverty line. As many as 25% of Tacony's children live in homes where English is not the primary language. This neighborhood's children were affected by over 600 hundred violent crimes in 2006. We employ a lottery system in which submitted applications are chosen randomly during a public event and which is publicized. All others are placed on a waiting list.

The Tacony Academy Charter School is designed to attract students whose families desire a heightened attention to smaller class sizes, and a non-traditional calendar that builds in significant opportunities for early identification of at risk students, remediation and enrichment.

This school is pledged to develop every one of its students into inventive thinkers and problem solvers. This mission to serve students in Kindergarten through the twelfth grade is also designed to raise the graduation rate in Tacony. Currently only 47% of Tacony's adults have a high school diploma. Accordingly, the school's mission extends to nurturing a love, respect, and appreciation for life long learning. The school will keep its building open well beyond traditional

school hours to enable neighborhood residents to take advantage of many learning and cultural opportunities that will increase the current educational level in the Tacony community.

## **Mission**

### **Mission Statement:**

The Mission of the Tacony Academy Charter School (TACS) is to enhance, support and promote creative and critical thinking as well as the problem solving skills of school-age learners in the making of original inventions as amazing solutions to puzzling problems while mastering State and national standards.

## **Vision**

### **The Vision**

The aim of the school is to provide each Kindergarten through the twelfth grade student the opportunity to learn about the art of invention and applied science through a curriculum that emphasizes the creative process, critical thinking and inquiry as well as problem solving. Instruction that enhances a young learner's natural inventive thought process will address the many challenges of providing city children with a world class public education. Our students will be encouraged to think through problems, analyze, ask questions, and support their decisions both orally and in written form. The school plans to provide a unique opportunity for all students to apply the inventive thought process or higher order thinking through all of the academic disciplines. Improving higher order thinking abilities will in turn ensure that students in grades K-12 will meet or exceed national standards in language arts (including writing), mathematics, science, and technology. The founders plan to accomplish these goals through research-based practices including an intensive balanced literacy approach to reading and writing, year-round schooling, and involving the community through rich and substantive partnerships. These partnerships will include Neumann College, The Franklin Institute, The Wistar Institute, families, local and national business and industry, community organizations, and other groups and individuals committed to quality education in the Tacony community.

## **Shared Values**

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appreciation for life long learning. The school will keep its building open well beyond traditional school hours to enable neighborhood residents to take advantage of many learning and cultural opportunities that will increase the current educational level in the Tacony community.

## **Academic Standards**

### Academic Standards

#### **Objectives:**

- A. Students select a problem to be solved and create project/invention ideas at school as individuals or in teams of two with classroom instruction and guidance from teachers.
- B. Students receive support from local inventor mentors at school.
- C. Students create their invention or innovation with teacher support.
- D. Students submit entry of invention/innovation to the Invention Convention.

#### **II. To apply critical and creative thinking skills in the form of an invention or innovation.**

Specific higher level thinking skills include comprehension of information, research, analysis, application, synthesis, evaluation and communication.

#### **Objectives:**

- A. Students will **analyze, apply, synthesize and evaluate** their work throughout the invention/innovation process.
- B. Students create and utilize an Inventor's Logbook to **write technically, record** all activities, and **analyze and synthesize** ideas regarding their invention or innovation.
- D. Students must **communicate** their work to their teachers, mentors and The Invention Convention audience.

#### **III. To bring creative ideas to reality through the invention process.**

#### **Objectives:**

- A. Students create their invention or innovation with teacher support.
- B. Students submit entry of invention/innovation to the Invention Convention.
- C. Judges (trained volunteer inventors, educators, artists, engineers, etc) will review and judge student entries.
- D. Students will exhibit inventions in small groups at local educational and business meetings and events.
- E. Selected Students will showcase their invention/innovation during community events and before the board of trustees.

#### **IV. To support the academic content standards set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act.**

#### **Objectives:**

- A. Students will utilize the Young Inventors Program integrate all core curriculum areas of language arts, math, science and social studies.
- B. Students will connect the invention/innovation process to related real-life careers and professionals (mentors).
- C. The high level of instruction and learning will result in student mastery of State and national standards.
- D. A comprehensive program evaluation will be conducted to measure both process and outcome objectives/program components of the Young Inventors Program Curriculum.
- E. A Young Inventors Program Advisory Committee made up of inventors,

educators, and business people will meet three times annually for program guidance.

High School Students will also participate in the Junior Science and Humanities Symposia Program. “ The Junior Science and Humanities Symposia (JSHS) Program promotes original research and experimentation in the sciences, engineering, and mathematics at the high school level and publicly recognizes students for outstanding achievement. By connecting talented students, their teachers, and research professionals at affiliated symposia and by rewarding research excellence, JSHS aims to widen the pool of trained talent prepared to conduct research and development vital to our nation.”

## **Strengths and Challenges**

Tacony Academy’s programming goal includes explicit instruction in reading, math and science. Research based instructional strategies such as, project based learning, cooperative learning, and team teaching will be used to remediate and enhance student learning. Results from frequently administered standardized assessments will monitor student achievement and drive instruction. Daily tutoring, homework help, physical activities, recreational and cultural opportunities support the growth and development of the whole child.

The aim of the Tacony Academy is to provide each student at risk of academic failure an opportunity to continue learning even beyond the school day. The Administrator from each school partner will first use report card grades, the PSSA and other standardized assessments to identify at risk learners to recruit for the after school program. Secondly, reviewing our students’ absentee rates and behavior records will ensure every at risk student is identified. Additionally the school staff will work together to determine our students’ interests, social service needs and family dynamics to support increased student learning and achievement during the after school hours. Meetings will be held with families as needed to explain the academic and social benefits of student participation and family involvement.

The unique design allows the school to achieve economy of scale by jointly contracting services from Philadelphia’s largest culture and science institutions; This is crucial since both schools serve large concentrations of low income students.

Our strengths include:

- Quality second language teaching for (Chinese) for all 9 - 10 students and K - 6. Students in grades 9 - 10 have daily sessions for 45 minutes, K - 6 students have weekly sessions.
- Success in providing supports for the whole child in academics as well as social skills.
- Solid teaching using best practices that include manipulatives, experiential learning, flex grouping, and differentiation.
- Strong teacher support in the areas of professional development, collaboration, teacher involvement in planning, support in substantial access to materials and resources.
- Highly qualified staff that is engaged and reflective.

Our challenges that we are working to develop plans for include:

- flexible grouping for math and reading
- technology to support learning
- field trips to content learning
- authentic assessments

## SECTION II. STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

### Strategic Planning Process

The administration, special education coordinator, and Director of Curriculum meet monthly at Tacony Academy ( and more often if needed). The entire team is responsible. The CEO is the leader. The administration communicates with the Leadership Team and the entire staff. There is an ongoing reflective review of our academic year with the fidelity to our Mission and Vision. This information is then used to identify problem areas and set goals for the coming year.

### Strategic Planning Committee

| <b>Name</b>             | <b>Affiliation</b>                                     | <b>Membership Category</b>          | <b>Appointed By</b>                                 |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| Ashcroft, Heather       | Tacony Academy Charter                                 | Elementary School Teacher           | Sterling Garris / Principal (Leadership Team)       |
| Bombas, Carol           | Beneficial Bank  | Business Representative             | Board   |
| Bynum, Regina           | Tacony Academy Charter                                 | Elementary School Teacher           | Sterling Garris / Principal                         |
| Chavis, Jenna           | Tacony Academy Charter                                 | Administrator                       | Stacey Cruise                                       |
| Cruis, Stacey           | First Philadelphia Paradigm-<br>Tacony Academy Charter | Administrator                       | Stacey Cruise Executive Director                    |
| Darby, Patricia         | Special Education Teacher                              | Elementary School Teacher           | Sterling Garris / CEO - Principal (Leadership Team) |
| Garris, Sterling        | Tacony Academy Charter                                 | Administrator                       | Stacey Cruise - Executive Director                  |
| Gasperi, Andrew         | Al's Corner Deli and Catering Services                 | Community Representative            | Sterling Garris / Principal                         |
| Jankusa, Joe            | J2A Architects   | Business Representative             | Sterling Garris / Principal                         |
| Johnson, Cheryl         | Tacony Academy Charter                                 | Ed Specialist - School Counselor    | Sterling Garris / Principal (Leadership Team)       |
| Johnson, Lisa           | Tacony Academy   | Parent                              | Sterling Garris / Principal                         |
| Kunwar, Teena           | Bayada Nurses  | Ed Specialist - School Nurse        | Sterling Garris / Principal                         |
| Litzinenko, Yelena      | School Psychologist                                    | Ed Specialist - School Psychologist | Sterling Garris / Principal                         |
| Magargee, Kristine      | Paradigm Curriculum Director                           | Other                               | Stacy Cruise (Executive Director)                   |
| Palumbo, Jeanin         | Tacony Academy Charter                                 | Middle School Teacher               | Sterling Garris / Principal (Leadership Team)       |
| Refearn Neswick, Ashley | Ashley   | Administrator                       | Stacey Cruise                                       |
| Rodriguez,              | Tacony Academy   | Parent                              | Sterling Garris / Principal                         |

|                     |  |                          |   |
|---------------------|--|--------------------------|---|
| Christopher         |  |                          |   |
| Schwendiman, Thomas | Meadowbrook Estates Committee Representative | Community Representative | Sterling Garris / Principal                   |
| Smith, Todd         | Tacony Academy Charter                       | Middle School Teacher    | Sterling Garris / Principal (Leadership Team) |
| Spera, Joseph       | Tacony Academy Charter                       | Secondary School Teacher | Sterling Garris / Principal (Leadership Team) |

## Goals, Strategies and Activities

### **Goal: EFFICIENCY OF OPERATIONS THROUGH SOFTWARE**

**Description:** Provide student records software to improve efficiency of operations

#### **Strategy: APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONAL APPLICATIONS**

**Description:** PROVIDE STAFF AND STUDENTS WITH APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONAL APPLICATIONS

#### **Activity: STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** Each teacher will select one teaching unit appropriate to his or her class and create new lessons and objectives that incorporate the use of technology to add value to the instructional experience

Each teacher will prepare copies of new lessons to share with colleagues (ongoing)

Provide training for staff to use student records software (ongoing)

Train all staff in use of effective e-mail communications to support instruction and to promote family involvement (Achieved/ongoing)

Provide training for staff to use student records software (Achieve/Ongoing)

Train staff in use of financial software for school records (Achieved/Expanding)

Provide staff development sessions to support integration of technology into the curriculum specifically the development of staff use of electronic boards (Achieved; Ongoing)

Continue to provide staff development sessions to support integration of technology into the curriculum ie. Smart boards

\*Continue to draw upon expertise of IT consultant ('11-'12)

#### Staff Development to Implement

1. Small Group Instruction staff development will be provided for all new staff and review for returning staff

Description

1. Small-group reading is an assisted-literacy experience in which the teacher supports and guides the students with text on their instructional level. The teacher helps students develop an understanding of the text while prompting them to apply strategies they will need to become independent readers. Each small-group reading group consists of approximately two to six members. This small-group setting allows the teacher to introduce a new text each day and to ensure that the challenges are manageable. It also allows the teacher to assist and support the students as they respond to the text in varying ways.

Small-group reading is important because it enables teachers to observe students' reading behavior and provide support while they practice reading strategies. During small-group reading, students' reading abilities are matched to appropriate reading materials. This allows teachers to demonstrate specific reading behaviors and strategies within context.

It also provides opportunities for students to apply these strategies in order to develop competence through practice.

#### Staff Development to Implement

1. Small Group Instruction staff development will be provided for all new staff and review for returning staff

Knowledge / Skills to Gain: As these strategies are implemented, teachers are making daily assessments and are able to adjust and prepare appropriate lessons to address students' areas of weaknesses in order to increase student achievement.

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7. Modifications and Accommodations for Special Education Students, understanding the autism spectrum, testing process, and parent communication will be provided for all new and returning staff.

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8. Problem-solving, hands-on instruction, and technology staff development will be provided for all new and returning staff members.

Knowledge / Skills to Gain: Strategies to motivate students — by an inspired and effective teacher; adopt a problem-solving approach to personal education by imagining the benefits of improved personal knowledge-and-skill in the future.

9. Caring School Community staff development will be provided for all new and returning staff members.

Knowledge / Skills to Gain: School wide program whose central aim is to help the school become a "caring community of learners" that effectively promotes students' intellectual, social, and ethical development and teachers' continuous improvement of practice.

9. Adolescent Training will be provided for all new and returning staff members.

Knowledge / Skills to Gain:

Program addresses the problem of expressive violence, which involves loss of control among family, friends, and acquaintances and represents the greatest threat to adolescents.

- learn more appropriate and socially effective ways of interacting- with others:
- recognize and control angry emotions that can interfere with verbal resolutions to conflict: and
- understand and avoid violence risk.

Follow-up activities will include monitoring lesson plans and evaluations will consist of administration doing informal and formal walk-thrus and observations for evaluations.

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**Person Responsible      Timeline for Implementation Resources**

Refearn Neswick, Ashley Start: 8/1/2010  
Finish: Ongoing

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**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

## **Strategy: MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT**

**Description:** PROVIDE MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE, WORK-STATIONS AND INSTRUCTIONAL SOFTWARE

## **Activity: STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** Each teacher will select one teaching unit appropriate to his or her class and create new lessons and objectives that incorporate the use of technology to add value to the instructional experience

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Follow-up activities will include monitoring lesson plans and evaluations will consist of administration doing informal and formal walk-thrus and observations for evaluations.

| <u>Person Responsible</u> | <u>Timeline for Implementation</u> | <u>Resources</u> |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|

|                         |                                    |   |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Refearn Neswick, Ashley | Start: 8/1/2010<br>Finish: Ongoing | - |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

## **Goal: IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS**

**Description:** School leaders will strive to improve our communications systems to encourage more frequent contacts between staff and parents or families

## **Strategy: IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS**

**Description:** SCHOOL LEADERS WILL STRIVE TO IMPROVE OUR COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM TO ENCOURAGE MORE FREQUENT CONTACTS BETWEEN STAFF AND PARENTS OR FAMILIES

### **Activity: STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** Each teacher will select one teaching unit appropriate to his or her class and create new lessons and objectives that incorporate the use of technology to add value to the instructional experience

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|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|

|                         |                                    |   |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Refearn Neswick, Ashley | Start: 8/1/2010<br>Finish: Ongoing | - |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

## **Goal: INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT**

**Description:** Maintain an adequate infrastructure and sufficient equipment to support student achievement in all areas. Our school technology infrastructure will enable improved communications among all instructional, support and administrative staff. Provide maintenance and support of the infrastructure, work stations and infrastructure software.

**Strategy:** FINANCIAL RECORD KEEPING SOFTWARE

**Description:** PROVIDE FINANCIAL RECORD KEEPING SOFTWARE TO MEET STATE AND FEDERAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

### **Activity: STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

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\*Continue to draw upon expertise of IT consultant ('11-'12)

#### Staff Development to Implement

1. Small Group Instruction staff development will be provided for all new staff and review for returning staff

#### Description

1. Small-group reading is an assisted-literacy experience in which the teacher supports and guides the students with text on their instructional level. The teacher helps students develop an understanding of the text while prompting them to apply strategies they will need to become independent readers. Each small-group reading group consists of approximately two to six members. This small-group setting allows the teacher to introduce a new text each day and to ensure that the challenges are manageable. It also allows the teacher to assist and support the students as they respond to the text in varying ways.

Small-group reading is important because it enables teachers to observe students' reading behavior and provide support while they practice reading strategies. During small-group reading, students' reading abilities are matched to appropriate reading materials. This allows teachers to demonstrate specific reading behaviors and strategies within context.

It also provides opportunities for students to apply these strategies in order to develop competence through practice.

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1. Small Group Instruction staff development will be provided for all new staff and review for returning staff

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assessments and are able to adjust and prepare appropriate lessons to address students' areas of weaknesses in order to increase student achievement.

2. Balanced Literacy staff development will be provided for all new staff and review for returning staff

Knowledge / Skills to Gain: As these strategies are implemented, teachers are making daily assessments and are able to adjust and prepare appropriate lessons to address students' areas of weaknesses in order to increase student achievement.

3. Making Meaning staff development will be provided for all new staff and review for returning staff

Knowledge / Skills to Gain: Teachers gain expertise in instructing students in comprehension strategies and cooperative structures.

4. Being a Writer staff development will be provided for all new staff and review for returning staff

Knowledge / Skills to Gain: Teachers will learn to help develop students to be successful writers and set a climate of writing in the classroom.

5. Guided Reading staff development will be provided for all new staff and review for returning staff

Knowledge / Skills to Gain: As these strategies are implemented, teachers are making daily assessments and are able to adjust and prepare appropriate lessons to address students' areas of weaknesses in order to increase student achievement.

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Knowledge / Skills to Gain: As these strategies are implemented, teachers are making daily assessments and are able to adjust and prepare appropriate lessons to address students' areas of weaknesses in order to increase student achievement.

7. Modifications and Accommodations for Special Education Students, understanding the autism spectrum, testing process, and parent communication will be provided for all new and returning staff.

Knowledge / Skills to Gain: Strategies for Accommodations for actual teaching supports and services that the student may require to successfully demonstrate learning. Strategies for Modifications and changes made to curriculum expectations in order to meet the needs of the student. Modifications are made when the expectations are beyond the students' level of ability. Modifications may be minimal or very complex depending on the student performance. Modifications must be clearly acknowledged in the IEP.

8. Problem-solving, hands-on instruction, and technology staff development will be provided for all new and returning staff members.

Knowledge / Skills to Gain: Strategies to motivate students — by an inspired and effective teacher; adopt a problem-solving approach to personal education by imagining the benefits of improved personal knowledge-and-skill in the future.

9. Caring School Community staff development will be provided for all new and returning staff members.

Knowledge / Skills to Gain: School wide program whose central aim is to help the school become a “caring community of learners” that effectively promotes students’ intellectual, social, and ethical development and teachers’ continuous improvement of practice.

9. Adolescent Training will be provided for all new and returning staff members.

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Follow-up activities will include monitoring lesson plans and evaluations will consist of administration doing informal and formal walk-thrus and observations for evaluations.

| <u>Person Responsible</u> | <u>Timeline for Implementation</u> | <u>Resources</u> |
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| Refearn Neswick, Ashley | Start: 8/1/2010<br>Finish: Ongoing | - |
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**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

## ***Goal:* INSTRUCTIONAL APPLICATIONS**

**Description:** Provide staff and students with appropriate instructional applications and maintain a cadre of teaching staff skilled in using technology within the curriculum.

### ***Strategy:* SKILLED TEACHING STAFF**

**Description:** CREATE A CADRE OF TEACHING STAFF SKILLED IN USING TECHNOLOGY WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

## **Activity: STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** Each teacher will select one teaching unit appropriate to his or her class and create new lessons and objectives that incorporate the use of technology to add value to the instructional experience

Each teacher will prepare copies of new lessons to share with colleagues (ongoing)

Provide training for staff to use student records software (ongoing)

Train all staff in use of effective e-mail communications to support instruction and to promote family involvement (Achieved/ongoing)

Provide training for staff to use student records software (Achieve/Ongoing)

Train staff in use of financial software for school records (Achieved/Expanding)

Provide staff development sessions to support integration of technology into the curriculum specifically the development of staff use of electronic boards (Achieved; Ongoing)

Continue to provide staff development sessions to support integration of technology into the curriculum ie. Smart boards

\*Continue to draw upon expertise of IT consultant ('11-'12)

### Staff Development to Implement

1. Small Group Instruction staff development will be provided for all new staff and review for returning staff

#### Description

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Small-group reading is important because it enables teachers to observe students' reading behavior and provide support while they practice reading strategies. During small-group reading, students' reading abilities are matched to appropriate reading materials. This allows teachers to demonstrate specific reading behaviors and strategies within context.

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| <b>Person Responsible</b> | <b>Timeline for Implementation</b> | <b>Resources</b> |
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| Refearn Neswick, Ashley | Start: 8/1/2010<br>Finish: Ongoing | - |
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**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

## **Goal: MATHEMATICS**

**Description:** At least 67% of all students will be proficient in Mathematics, as measured by the annual state-wide PSSA assessments.

### **Strategy: APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONAL APPLICATIONS**

**Description:** PROVIDE STAFF AND STUDENTS WITH APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONAL APPLICATIONS

### **Activity: ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT**

**Description:** Create a library of age-appropriate instructional software for use by all staff and students (Achieved; Ongoing)



## Description

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**Person Responsible      Timeline for Implementation Resources**

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Refearn Neswick, Ashley Start: 8/1/2010      -  
Finish: Ongoing

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

**Strategy: SKILLED TEACHING STAFF**

**Description:** CREATE A CADRE OF TEACHING STAFF SKILLED IN USING TECHNOLOGY WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

**Activity: ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT**

**Description:** Create a library of age-appropriate instructional software for use by all staff and students (Achieved; Ongoing)

Provide web publishing publication for sharing student successes with family and community (Partially Achieved; Currently seeking to employ Student Information System)

MMS has been employed as a student information system to track academics behavior and attendance.

Utilize web based progress monitoring system to track student achievement.

Utilize student laptops in upper grades to differentiate instruction.

Utilize software to meet the individualized education plan needs of special education students.

All instructional, support and administrative staff will use our e-mail system to communicate with each other (Achieved)

Announcements, and other regular communications from school office staff will be sent to teachers and staff via e-mail (Achieved)

Continue to maintain a library of age-appropriate instructional software for use by all staff and students

Continue to develop support systems of teachers-assisting-teachers in use of technology

All of these are designed to accomplish increased student achievement. Follow-up activities include teacher observations (formal and informal) as well as teacher meetings (individual and whole staff). The evaluation method will be teacher observation reports, parent feedback, and teacher survey feedback about instructional software and use of technology during instruction.

**Person Responsible      Timeline for Implementation Resources**

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Refearn Neswick, Ashley Start: 8/1/2010      -  
Finish: Ongoing

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

**Activity: STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** Each teacher will select one teaching unit appropriate to his or her class and create new lessons and objectives that incorporate the use of technology to add value to the

instructional experience

Each teacher will prepare copies of new lessons to share with colleagues (ongoing)

Provide training for staff to use student records software (ongoing)

Train all staff in use of effective e-mail communications to support instruction and to promote family involvement (Achieved/ongoing)

Provide training for staff to use student records software (Achieve/Ongoing)

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Provide staff development sessions to support integration of technology into the curriculum specifically the development of staff use of electronic boards (Achieved; Ongoing)

Continue to provide staff development sessions to support integration of technology into the curriculum ie. Smart boards

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#### Staff Development to Implement

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| <u>Person Responsible</u> | <u>Timeline for Implementation</u> | <u>Resources</u> |
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| Refearn Neswick, Ashley | Start: 8/1/2010<br>Finish: Ongoing | - |
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**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

## ***Goal: READING***

**Description:** At least 72% of all students will be proficient in Reading, as measured by the annual state-wide PSSA assessments

### ***Strategy: APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONAL APPLICATIONS***

**Description:** PROVIDE STAFF AND STUDENTS WITH APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONAL APPLICATIONS

### ***Activity: ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT***

**Description:** Create a library of age-appropriate instructional software for use by all staff and students (Achieved; Ongoing)

Provide web publishing publication for sharing student successes with family and community (Partially Achieved; Currently seeking to employ Student Information System)

MMS has been employed as a student information system to track academics behavior and attendance.

Utilize web based progress monitoring system to track student achievement.

Utilize student laptops in upper grades to differentiate instruction.

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Announcements, and other regular communications from school office staff will be sent to teachers and staff via e-mail (Achieved)

Continue to maintain a library of age-appropriate instructional software for use by all staff and students

Continue to develop support systems of teachers-assisting-teachers in use of technology All of these are designed to accomplish increased student achievement. Follow-up activities include teacher observations (formal and informal) as well as teacher meetings (individual and whole staff). The evaluation method will be teacher observation reports, parent feedback, and teacher survey feedback about instructional software and use of technology during instruction.

| <b>Person Responsible</b> | <b>Timeline for Implementation</b> | <b>Resources</b> |
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| Refearn Neswick, Ashley | Start: 8/1/2010<br>Finish: Ongoing | - |
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**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

### **Activity: STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** Each teacher will select one teaching unit appropriate to his or her class and create new lessons and objectives that incorporate the use of technology to add value to the instructional experience

Each teacher will prepare copies of new lessons to share with colleagues (ongoing)

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**Person Responsible      Timeline for Implementation Resources**

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Refearn Neswick, Ashley      Start: 8/1/2010      -  
Finish: Ongoing

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

## **Strategy: SKILLED TEACHING STAFF**

**Description:** CREATE A CADRE OF TEACHING STAFF SKILLED IN USING TECHNOLOGY WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

### **Activity: ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT**

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| Refearn Neswick, Ashley | Start: 8/1/2010<br>Finish: Ongoing | - |
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It also provides opportunities for students to apply these strategies in order to develop competence through practice.

#### Staff Development to Implement

1. Small Group Instruction staff development will be provided for all new staff and review for returning staff

Knowledge / Skills to Gain: As these strategies are implemented, teachers are making daily assessments and are able to adjust and prepare appropriate lessons to address students' areas of weaknesses in order to increase student achievement.

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7. Modifications and Accommodations for Special Education Students, understanding the autism spectrum, testing process, and parent communication will be provided for all new and returning staff.

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9. Caring School Community staff development will be provided for all new and returning staff members.

Knowledge / Skills to Gain: School wide program whose central aim is to help the school become a "caring community of learners" that effectively promotes students' intellectual, social, and ethical development and teachers' continuous improvement of practice.

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Knowledge / Skills to Gain:

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- understand and avoid violence risk.

Follow-up activities will include monitoring lesson plans and evaluations will consist of

administration doing informal and formal walk-thrus and observations for evaluations.

| <b>Person Responsible</b> | <b>Timeline for Implementation</b> | <b>Resources</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|

|                         |                                    |   |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Refearn Neswick, Ashley | Start: 8/1/2010<br>Finish: Ongoing | - |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

## **Goal: STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN STATE ASSESSMENTS**

**Description:** At least 95% of eligible students will participate in required state-wide assessments.

### **Strategy: SKILLED TEACHING STAFF**

**Description:** CREATE A CADRE OF TEACHING STAFF SKILLED IN USING TECHNOLOGY WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

### **Activity: STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** Each teacher will select one teaching unit appropriate to his or her class and create new lessons and objectives that incorporate the use of technology to add value to the instructional experience

Each teacher will prepare copies of new lessons to share with colleagues (ongoing)

Provide training for staff to use student records software (ongoing)

Train all staff in use of effective e-mail communications to support instruction and to promote family involvement (Achieved/ongoing)

Provide training for staff to use student records software (Achieve/Ongoing)

Train staff in use of financial software for school records (Achieved/Expanding)

Provide staff development sessions to support integration of technology into the curriculum specifically the development of staff use of electronic boards (Achieved; Ongoing)

Continue to provide staff development sessions to support integration of technology into the

curriculum ie. Smart boards

\*Continue to draw upon expertise of IT consultant ('11-'12)

#### Staff Development to Implement

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Small-group reading is important because it enables teachers to observe students' reading behavior and provide support while they practice reading strategies. During small-group reading, students' reading abilities are matched to appropriate reading materials. This allows teachers to demonstrate specific reading behaviors and strategies within context.

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- understand and avoid violence risk.

Follow-up activities will include monitoring lesson plans and evaluations will consist of administration doing informal and formal walk-thrus and observations for evaluations.



# **Goal: TECHNOLOGY IN LESSON PLANNING**

**Description:** All teachers will intergrate technology into their lessons.

## **Strategy: SKILLED TEACHING STAFF**

**Description:** CREATE A CADRE OF TEACHING STAFF SKILLED IN USING TECHNOLOGY WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

## **Activity: STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

**Description:** Each teacher will select one teaching unit appropriate to his or her class and create new lessons and objectives that incorporate the use of technology to add value to the instructional experience

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|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|

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| Refearn Neswick, Ashley | Start: 8/1/2010<br>Finish: Ongoing | - |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

## **Goal: TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM**

**Description:** The use of technology in the classroom to provide instructional support

## **Strategy: SKILLED TEACHING STAFF**

**Description:** CREATE A CADRE OF TEACHING STAFF SKILLED IN USING TECHNOLOGY WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

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|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
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| Refearn Neswick, Ashley | Start: 8/1/2010<br>Finish: Ongoing | - |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---|

**Status:** In Progress — Upcoming

## **Statement of Quality Assurance**

Charter school has not met AYP.

Charter school has created a School Improvement Plan.

Charter school has submitted and reviewed its School Improvement Plan with the Intermediate Unit designee.

**Intermediate Unit designee met with and when meeting occurred:**

The School Improvement Plan was submitted to the SDP and electronically submitted.

## **Statement of Quality Assurance - Attachments**

- AYP Data
- AYP 2011
- Assurance of Quality & Accountability
- AYP Data 2011-2012

## **SECTION III. QUALITY OF SCHOOL DESIGN**

### **Rigorous Instructional Program**

The administration and staff of Tacony Academy Charter School are aware of the diverse socio-economic backgrounds of the children in the community of Tacony. Additionally the founders have considered the various levels of academic achievement these children will have. Most importantly, since these children attend critically over crowded low performing schools with limited resources a specific educational program is needed.

The founders are committed to providing:

- Flexible class sizes to create the best instructional setting
- Technology in order to support learning
- An expressive arts program-including music, art, dance, physical education, world language and ....
- Field trips and assemblies
- Remediation to support low achieving students
- Enrichment for high achieving and gifted students

At Tacony Academy Charter (TACS) inventive thinking/problem solving activities will infuse all aspects of the school day. The instructional program will reflect the most effective research-based strategies. In addition, TACS longer school year will reduce the loss of skills students typically experience during the summer and will allow for additional enrichment and remediation activities.

The founders recognize that this ambitious program will require highly qualified and dedicated teachers. The school has recruited a cadre of teachers who bring substantial expertise and experience in teaching. The school will then provide all teachers with training in a variety of innovative and proven variety of ways to identify those at risk so that early intervention can reduce future remediation needs.

A longer school year and other activities are among the critical factors that will allow this school to serve its students in a superior way. Extra time in school provide opportunities for students to address areas needing improvement and will allow students to participate in enrichment activities that are not always available during a traditional school year. Instead of being limited to after school or summer programs, TACS students will participate in special seminars at school, work in smaller groups on specific, concentrated projects, and participate in competitions, visit museums and other cultural centers in the neighborhood and around the city.

Another critical factor is the involvement of the community. The founders propose that the school be located in Tacony a diverse community where many families are searching for viable educational options for their children. By involving individuals and groups in the neighborhood in activities and programs, the students will be reinforced in their love of reading and learning. Better academic performance will lead to enhanced life chances and better economic and career opportunities for students and their families, thus improving conditions in the community. Part of the school's vision is to partner with other organizations and agencies to provide additional educational and cultural opportunities for families and community members to develop or enhance skills that improve their employability, thus contributing to the economic viability of the neighborhood, community, and the city as a whole.

Tacony Academy Charter School's Professional Development and Induction is under the First Philadelphia Plan. Tacony Academy Charter School is one of the American Paradigm Schools.

## **Rigorous Instructional Program - Attachments**

- Young Inventors Program
- Induction Plan
- Tacony Professional Education Plan
- Tacony Teacher Induction Program
- ACT 48 Professional Education Approval Letter

## **English Language Learners**

Tacony Academy does not have any ELL students at this time. We will use the standards mandated by PDE and the research included in the support document.

Policy is attached.

## **English Language Learners - Attachments**

- English Language Learners at Tacony Academy Charter School
- ELL Policy

## **Graduation Requirements**

Tacony Academy students will meet the requirements for graduation as mandated by the state of Pennsylvania and in addition our:

High School Students will also participate in the Junior Science and Humanities Symposia Program. "The Junior Science and Humanities Symposia (JSHS) Program promotes original research and experimentation in the sciences, engineering, and mathematics at the high school level and publicly recognizes students for outstanding achievement. By connecting talented students, their teachers, and research professionals at affiliated symposia and by rewarding research excellence, JSHS aims to widen the pool of trained talent prepared to conduct research and development vital to our nation."

1330 Rhawn Street

Philadelphia, PA 19111  
215-742-5100  
Fax: 215-742-5200

## **Tacony Academy Preparatory Charter School (9-12)** **Graduation Requirements**

Each student of Tacony Academy is required to fulfill the following for graduation:

### **Credit Hours:**

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| English   | 4.00  |
| Mathematics   | 4.00  |
| Science   | 3.00  |
| Social Studies  | 4.00  |
| Health  | 0.50  |
| Physical Education  | 1.00  |
| Arts/Humanities   | 2.00  |
| World Languages   | 3.00  |
| Electives<br>(one of the electives must be math or science) | 4.00  |
| Total Hours Required  | 25.50 |

### **Credits Required for Promotion:**

**Grades 9 to 10            5 credits**

**Grades 10 to 11        11 credits**

**Grades 11 to 12        17.5 credits**

\*In addition to the credit hours each student must complete a total of 40 hours of community service per school year. Each student will graduate having completed at least 160 hours of work in the community.

### **Subject Rating Scale**

|   |        |             |
|---|--------|-------------|
| A | 90-100 | Advanced    |
| B | 80-89  | Proficient  |
| C | 70-79  | Basic       |
| D | 60-69  | Below Basic |

|   |      |         |
|---|------|---------|
| F | 0-59 | Failing |
| P |      | Passing |

## Special Education

Both during the academic sessions and inter-sessions, TACS will utilize an inclusion model for identified special needs students as appropriate and to the degree possible. The charter school has a CSP Team (Child Study Team) whose primary responsibility is the design and implementation of individual learning plans that will support all students in their progress towards their academic goals and objectives. In the case of students with special needs, the CSP Team, as directed by the special education teacher, will identify strategies to address special learning needs on an individual basis. Speech therapy and occupational therapy will be provided on a contract basis to students with needs in those areas. The school will engage the services of a psychologist to provide appropriate and effective diagnosis and interventions for students with emotional, behavioral, or other special learning needs.

TACS year-round schedule represents a key asset in delivering services to students with special needs. The small breaks between academic sessions mean that skill erosion will be drastically reduced, a tremendous benefit to students at the developing level. More significant for students with special academic needs are remediation, enrichment and additional time that can be focused on students' Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. ESY will be offered to students. In addition to providing services for English as a Second Language (ESL), TACS will recruit community volunteers with expertise in the various languages spoken in this richly diverse community. These volunteers will assist in acclimating the students whose first language is not English.

Special Education Teachers provide special support to teachers in the form of advice regarding testing, grading, and accommodations. Instructional strategies employed to ensure student success include the following:

- instruction in flex grouping with attention to time spent in large vs. small groups
- accommodations for testing time, place, and tested goals
- provision for behavioral shaping and feedback system if necessary
- utilization of best practices including addressing Bloom's Taxonomy

Special Education Teachers work with parents to write IEPs.

When TACS secures a location for the school, it will ensure that the design easily accommodates students with special physical and environmental needs. Adaptive physical education programs will be designed for students with such needs. Similar adaptations and accommodations will be made to the charter school's technological resources, thereby accommodating visually and hearing impaired students as well as those with challenges.

## Special Education - Attachment

- Special Education Policy from the Faculty Handbook

## Special Education Program Profile - Chart I

| Teacher    | FTE  | Type of class or support | Location | # of Students | Other Information               |
|------------|------|--------------------------|----------|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Anne Young | 1.00 | Learning                 | Tacony   | 0             | Ms. Young served as the Special |

|                   | Support               | Academy        |    | Education Coordinator   |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------|----|---|
| Patricia Darby    | 1.00 Learning Support | Tacony Academy | 35 | Mrs. Darby provides reading and math support to groups of children during the day.  |
| Theresa Linder    | 1.00 Learning Support | Tacony Academy | 24 | Ms. Linder provides reading and math support to groups of children during the day.  |
| Stephanie Gasperi | 1.00 Learning Support | Tacony Academy | 30 | Ms. Gasperi co-teaches and provides learning support.                               |
| Mary Kate McDade  | 1.00 Learning Support | Tacony Academy | 20 | Mrs. McDade provides reading and math support to groups of children during the day. |

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart II

| Organization      | FTE | Type of class or support | Location       | # of Students | Other Information                                   |
|-------------------|-----|--------------------------|----------------|---------------|---|
| Therapy Solutions | .20 | Physical Therapy         | Tacony Academy | 1             | Offered in pull-out sessions.                       |
| Therapy Source    | .25 | Occupational Therapy     | Tacony Academy | 15            | Offered in pull-ou sessions.                        |
| Therapy Source    | .40 | Speech                   | Tacony Academy | 26            | Speech is offered in small group pull-out sessions. |

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart III

| Title               | Location       | FTE |
|---------------------|----------------|-----|
| School Psychologist | Tacony Academy | .25 |
| Speech Therapist    | Tacony Academy | .25 |

### Special Education Program Profile - Chart IV

| IU, Public Agency, Organization, or Individual | Title/Service        | Amount of Time Per Week |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Therapy Solutions                              | Physical Therapy     | 3 hours                 |
| Therapy Source                                 | Occupational Therapy | 22.5 hours              |

## SECTION IV. ACCOUNTABILITY

### Student Assessment - Primary

| Test/Classification | K  | 1  | 2  | 3   | 4   | 5   |
|---------------------|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| PSSA                | No | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Terra Nova          | No | No | No | No  | No  | No  |

PASA No No No No No Yes

## Student Assessment - Secondary

| Test/Classification | 6   | 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---------------------|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| PSSA                | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| PASA                | No  | No | No | No | No | No | No |

## Student Assessment

In order to measure student achievement and progress, a formal, comprehensive monitoring plan of pre, post, and periodic interim program testing, coupled with annual standardized testing, will track student performance using an array of test measures appropriate to subject and grade. A Student Achievement Committee will be established at TACS. This committee will be comprised of the Director of Curriculum, a counselor, a special education teacher, two veteran teachers and other staff as needed. Although its chief purpose is to design and implement individual learning plans for TACS's students, it will also assume the responsibility of analyzing and interpreting performance data. Lodging these functions with the Student Achievement Committee will facilitate the development or modification of programs to ensure that the mission and goals are met through the educational program. Test results will be recorded and submitted monthly to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for review and analysis in consultation with classroom teachers and subject matter specialists. Academic assessment will encompass specific knowledge and application in reading and the related language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and fine arts. Assessment data will be used for program planning, instructional decision-making, and the identification of individual student needs.

TACS will use School District of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Department of Education benchmarks and standards at each grade level and in each discipline, as well as national benchmarks in specific content areas, as guides for measuring the success of the educational program. Additionally, the school will use portfolios, teacher assessments, and input from professional advisors, community liaisons, and families to determine the level of performance in academic, social and cultural areas. The school will develop rubrics based on its stated mission, vision, goals and objectives and will evaluate its performance using these rubrics. The evaluation will be conducted by a team of administrators, teachers, and members of the Board of Trustees.

The analysis of our 2011-2012 data shows that we have made a rebound in reading and continue to grow in mathematics.

Reading 2011-2012 Proficient Students 54.7% compared to 2010-2011 Proficient Students 45.2%

Math 2011-2012 Proficient Students 64.0% compared to 2010-2011 Proficient Students 54.8%

## Student Assessment - Attachments

- AYP Data for 2011
- AYP 2011
- Grade 3 and 4 - 2010 and 2011 Data
- AYP Data 2011-2012

## **Teacher Evaluation**

Teacher Evaluations are completed by the CEO/Principal and Director of Curriculum and Instruction (both hold a current principal certification). Both the CEO/Principal and Director of Curriculum & Instruction attend special education professional developments so they know what is necessary in a special education setting and can properly evaluate and support special education teachers. Continuous informal and formal observations are conducted which focus on specific domains. Meaningful supervision and evaluation are integral in assuring quality learning experiences for Tacony students, for Tacony families, and for assuring meaningful professional growth for Tacony Teachers.

Staff development is regarded as an important investment at TACS. As noted above, the school will work hard to draw its faculty from a pool of applicants with dual certification in reading or with additional credits in reading instruction. Moreover, the school will encourage teachers to obtain such certification and/or attain certification in a specialized key reading program such as the Wilson Method, the Orton-Gillingham Method, or Reading Recovery. Staff Development is scheduled through-out the school year and is used in different ways, depending on the needs of the teachers and of the school. Part of the training for teachers is to observe public and private school teachers in the Greater Philadelphia area who are already utilizing the specialized reading methods. An ongoing goal will be for more and more staff to earn a certificate in one of these specialties.

TACS will construct a staff development and teacher induction plan that complies with Commonwealth requirements. The plan will include ample opportunities for approved Act 48 professional development activities that will enhance the learning environment for both students and teachers. The staff development plan will be designed to support teachers by supplementing and improving their skills in ways that are consistent with the goals and mission of the school. Time for professional development is also built into inter-sessions. Teachers will be encouraged and supported to attend workshops and other continuing education programs, particularly those addressing reading and literacy skills.

Each teacher will develop an individual professional plan that outlines goals, objectives, activities, and assessment. Resources for addressing weaknesses in individual performance include peer mentoring, team teaching, providing teachers with strategies for classroom management, evaluation, and effective communication. Teachers' individual professional plans will highlight the information and skills necessary to fulfill their respective roles in realizing the mission, vision and program of the school.

## **Teacher Evaluation - Attachments**

- Teacher Observation Form
- Tacony Teacher Observation Criteria

## **SECTION V. GOVERNANCE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Leadership Changes**

During the 2010-2011 school year there was an administrative change made in the school leadership. A new CEO / Principal was hired.

In 2010 - 2011 the following changes were made to the Board of Trustees -

A new Board member was added: Ms. Sandra Farmer

2011 - 2012 the following change was made to the Board of Trustees -

A new Board Member was added: Ms. Lisa Johnson (Parent Representative)

## **Board of Trustees**

| <u>Name of Trustee</u> | <u>Office (if any)</u> |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Dr. Rebecca Mitchell   | President              |
| John MacDonald         | Vice President         |
| Barbara Saunders       | Secretary              |
| Anita Kaiser           | Treasurer              |
| Sharon Dennison        | member                 |
| Charkes Tarlaski       | member                 |
| Joseph Bauer           | member                 |
| Sandra Farmer          | member                 |
| Lisa Johnson           | member                 |

## **Professional Development (Governance)**

The TACS will meet all requirements of the School District of Philadelphia. A Board of Trustees will establish and govern all operations of the school, overseeing the administration, which handles the day-to-day operations and acts as facilitator among students, parents, staff, the community, and the Board.

The Board will consist of seven to nine voting members, including representation from the founding group, parents of currently-enrolled students, and community and business leaders. One TACS teacher and one TACS student will be non-voting members. An affirmative vote of a majority of the members of the trustees of the charter school, duly recorded, showing how each member voted, shall be used in order to take action on the following subjects: Budgeting, adopting curriculum and policies, hiring and firing school staff and administration, contract delevopment and partnerships.

The Board of Trustees has received and receives PD training from Ernest E. Brattstrom (Learning Tree Educational Consultants, L.L.C.) and the Attorneys from Sand & Saidel, P.C.

Information shared also included this year:

- Rules and regulations regarding suspensions, expulsions, and special education law implications
- Right-to-know impact

The Board of Trustees operates faithfully following the Sunshine Law and the Public Officials Act. Board Meetings are open to the public and posted in advance. Board Meetings include a time on the agenda for public comment.

## **Coordination of the Governance and Management of the School**

The Charter Board posts and maintains in a public area the list of the names of individual members of the board and revises the list to reflect any change in the membership of the board. The Board publishes scheduled meetings prior to the commencement of the academic year as well as posts notices for any special or emergency meeting.

The Charter Board is always available to the CEO should there be any questions or concerns pertaining to governance and direction of the school. In addition, each Board Meeting is preceded by a conference call and written CEO report that details current areas of interest to the Board. Minutes and reports are also written prior to the monthly Board Meetings so that the members may read up on current information, hence they are informed and involved in all aspects and areas.

The Board of Trustees has received and receives PD training from Ernest E. Brattstrom (Learning Tree Educational Consultants, L.L.C.) and the Attorneys from Sand & Saidel, P.C.

## **Coordination of the Governance and Management of the School - Attachments**

- Tacony Academy Board Meeting Schedule for 2010-2011
- Tacony Academy Board of Trustees Board Meeting Schedule 2011 - 2012

## **Community and Parent Engagement**

Parents, students and teachers will have multiple opportunities for involvement in decision-making. For example, parents will have input into Tacony Academy Charter activities through the Parent Advisory Council. The by-laws also provide for parent membership on the Board of Trustees. The by-laws further provide for one teacher and one fifth-grade student to be non-voting members of the Board.

The Parent Advisory Council will meet once a month with the CEO. The CEO will update the Council on school operation and governance. Through the Council and other means, parents will be invited and encouraged to participate in established activities as well as to propose activities that are consistent with the school's mission and goals. A process for such proposals will be developed by the Board of Trustees and included in the Parent Advisory Council's structure.

A parent now serves as a Board Member and as a representative of Tacony parents for the monthly Board of Trustees Meetings and there is a healthy relationship that is productive between these two groups.

Committees are also established for parental involvement: Title I / Student Achievement; Fund Raising / Special Events; and Safety Committee.

## **SECTION VI. FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

## **Major fund-raising activities**

Tacony Academy Charter School is part of the American Paradigm Schools. The American Paradigm held a Fund Raiser for a school play ground. This will continue until the amount needed is reached.

## **Fiscal Solvency Policies**

The Charter School maintains fiscal solvency in many ways. The first is by use of SAGE MIP for the accounting software (July 1, 2011 through June 30th, 2012) which is loaded with the State Chart of Accounts and allows the Business Manager to generate Profit & Loss statements, Balance Sheets and Check Disbursement runs. The system also allows for Grant Tracking through the use of fund codes so Profit & Loss statements by Grant can be produced at any time. All accounting transactions are driven by paper form initially and converted to electronic format, forms are in place for all transactions including but not limited to purchase orders, check requests, payroll processing, new employee paperwork etc. All forms are signed by the CEO and the Controller. The CEO and Controller maintain routine conversation regarding possible changes to the budget. Financials are presented to the CEO and Board President in advance of the Board Meeting after review in the Business Office. Once reviewed and agreed upon they are disbursed to the full Board and presented at the Board meetings.

Effective March 1<sup>st</sup> 2011, Tacony Academy put a new accounting system into place, SAGE MIP. Sage is a sophisticated accounting system which converts the internal controls to electronic format, moves the majority of processes to electronic format from paper format, allows detailed by fund budgets to be loaded into the system and a larger array of custom reports to be generated in the system as well as CEO's real time access to run reports. Previously the school used QuickBooks.

## **Accounting System**

The Charter School used SAGE MIP (July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011 through June 30th, 2012) for the accounting software which is loaded with the State Chart of Accounts and allows the Business Manager to generate Profit & Loss statements, Balance Sheets and Check Disbursement runs. The system also allows for Grant Tracking through the use of fund codes so Profit & Loss statements by Grant can be produced at any time. GAAP reporting is used as is required by the Independent Audit.

Effective March 1<sup>st</sup> 2011, Tacony Academy put a new accounting system into place, SAGE MIP. Sage is a sophisticated accounting system which converts the internal controls to electronic format, moves the majority of processes to electronic format from paper format, allows detailed by fund budgets to be loaded into the system and a larger array of custom reports to be generated in the system as well as CEO's real time access to run reports. Again, this new system complies with GAAP reporting. Previously the school used QuickBooks.

## **Preliminary Statements of Revenues, Expenditures & Fund Balances**

## **Preliminary Statements of Revenues, Expenditures & Fund Balances - Attachments**

- Revenues for Tacony Academy
- Expenditures for Tacony Academy
- Preliminary Statement of Revenues, Expenditures & Fund Balances as of June 30, 2011
- Tacony Preliminary Revenues 06/30/12

## **Audit Firm, Date of Last Audit, Auditor's Opinion, and Any Findings Resulting From the Audit**

Attached is the 2010-11 audit in which the school received an unqualified opinion. The school has engaged the firm, Zelenkofske Axelrod for the 2011-12 audit. The firm is located in Jamison PA, with offices in Harrisburg and has extensive knowledge of government and charter schools. The audit will be completed in the Fall of 2012 and submitted to the authorizer at that time.

## **Audit Firm, Date of Last Audit, Auditor's Opinion, and Any Findings Resulting From the Audit - Attachments**

- Support Documentation for financial section
- TACS Final Audit

## **Citations and follow-up actions for any State Audit Report**

The Charter School has engaged the firm, Zelenkofske Axelrod for the 2009-10 audit. The firm is located in Jamison PA, with offices in Harrisburg and has extensive knowledge of government and charter schools. The members of the Board received a letter from Zelenkofske Axelrod LLC on February 10, 2011 noting that they had audited the financial statements of the Tacony Academy Charter School for the year ended June 30, 2010. The results of their tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under Government Auditing Standards.

## **SECTION VII. FACILITY RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Acquisition of Facilities, Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment During the Last Fiscal Year**

The Charter School leases the building it resides in from Jewish Employment and Vocational Services and is leasing a Catholic School building for its High School in 2012-13. The school does not have any additional capital leases added to the leases initiated in 2009-10 that are coming to an end, as it purchases all capital items outright and this is the intention going forward as additional capital furniture and equipment is required.

### **Future Facility Plans and Other Capital Needs**

The charter school will continue to lease the building it resides in from Jewish Employment and Vocational Services. It will also lease a second site from a local catholic school for grades 9-11. Eventually the school would like to purchase a building for renovations.

## **SECTION VIII. HEALTH AND SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Compliance With Health and Safety Requirements and Maintenance of Health and Immunizations Records for Students**

Tacony Academy has contracted with Bayada Nurses a school nurse. She works with the school nurse at First Philadelphia Charter School. The school nurse monitors compliance in regards of the following requirements: immunizations, physicals, medications, hearing, obesity check, scoliosis, eye and dental screening. To meet the needs of students a partnership for services was developed with the Ronald McDonald Dental Van and Eye Logic.

Fire drills are held on a regular basis. Our students have participated in a fire safety and prevention assemblies, bike safety workshops and swimming and water safety classes.

### **Compliance With Health and Safety Requirements and Maintenance of Health and Immunizations Records for Students - Attachments**

- Wellness Policy
- SHARRS Report
- SHARRS Report 2011-2012

### **Current School Insurance Coverage Policies and Programs**

The Charter School maintains coverage limits as requested by the local district, School District of Philadelphia, including but not limited to, umbrella, educator's legal liability, worker's compensation, treasurer's bond, board of directors insurance etc. The school's broker is Boardman-Hamilton located in Philadelphia PA with The Hartford providing the insurance.

The medical and dental standards are set by the local district, School District of Philadelphia, which the school matches. The broker for these is EBA Consults located in Merchantville NJ. Medical is provided by Keystone Health Plan East for 2011-2012 and 2012-13, dental is provided by United Concordia, and life/short term disability is provided by The Prudential.

### **Current School Insurance Coverage Policies and Programs - Attachments**

- Acorn Certificate
- ACORD Certificate
- Tacony Academy Property (Insurance Cert)

## **SECTION IX. ADMINISTRATIVE NEEDS**

## **Quality of Teaching and Other Staff**

Tacony will recruit teachers with a strong commitment and/or background in literacy and reading education. All prospective teachers who are considered for employment will be fully aware of the school's mission and goals and be able to articulate them to students, parents, and others in the community. A mix of experienced and new teachers will allow for a staff that is well versed both in traditional and innovative methods for achieving literacy goals. Staff will be chosen for their skills in working cooperatively with other staff, parents, students, and community members; utilizing non-traditional methods of achieving goals, understanding the unique needs of the community, and assuming full responsibility for classroom management.

This school year there was a 1:25 teacher/student ratio in the classroom. Tacony had three classroom teachers per grade level in grades K - 6, and 9th and 10th grades. We also had five special education teachers, specialty teachers (art, music, library, physical education), two full-time guidance counselors and seventeen paraprofessional staff (eight classroom aides and a site assistant). As grade levels are added, the number of teachers will be adjusted accordingly. Additionally, the school will employ a full-time nurse.

Staff will commit to continuous professional development and will demonstrate their professionalism in their behavior, conduct, dress, and demeanor. Every teacher will have a personal development plan whose goals are aligned with the school's goals and which will be reviewed by administrators.

Staff evaluation will consist of formal and informal observations, consideration of student performance as measured by standardized and other test scores, and review of their progress towards achievement of personal and school-wide goals. This evaluation will be one component in determining yearly salary increases, as well as performance-based bonuses.

Every teacher will be employed on a one-year contract. Contracts may not be renewed in cases of unsatisfactory performance.

## **Quality of Teaching and Other Staff - Attachments**

- PDE 414
- PDE - 414
- Staff Certification Snapshot
- ACS
- Hqt1
- HQT2
- HQT3

## **Student Enrollment**

Widespread, city-wide publicity and recruitment for the school, plus an open lottery for randomly selecting students in the event of over-subscription, ensure that students will be admitted without regard for sex, race, ethnicity, religion, income, or disability. Any student meeting the admission criteria as listed above will be considered without prejudice. Preference will be given to siblings of currently-enrolled students.

## **Student Enrollment - Attachment**

- Admission Policy

## **Transportation**

All students in grades 1 - 6 are eligible for yellow school bus transportation if they live 1.5 or more miles from the school. There are eight school buses which transport students to Tacony each day. Our special education students ride these buses if parents choose to do so. Because we do not directly select the bus company that provides our service, and because they are granted a lengthy contract, sometimes there are problems with the quality of drivers, and the response of the company. We work closely as possible with those individuals and with the School District of Philadelphia which has granted contracts. One of our secretaries has been assigned to work with the school district and the bus company management to assist with complaints and requests from parents. The vice principal provides training for students about bus safety and appropriate behaviors. We have a strict bus behavior code of conduct as designated in our student handbook.

## **Food Service Program**

The School contracts with a Food Service Management Company that is on the approved State vendor list. Breakfast, lunch and afterschool snack are offered to all students wishing to participate. These meals are offered at the free, full and reduced prices based on the student completed free and reduced meal application. The school goes out to bid in accordance with the State regulations.

## **Student Conduct**

Even at the kindergarten level, students know that their behavior has an impact on the overall classroom environment. All students at Tacony Academy Charter School will understand what is expected of them, and they and their parents will be asked to sign a COMPACT that outlines specific behavior guidelines and procedures. This COMPACT will be developed by a committee of the Board of Trustees and representatives of the school's staff. Covered by this COMPACT are issues involving conflict resolution between students, teachers, and other members of the community, as well as guidelines for good school citizenship. Punctuality and regular attendance are keys to school success and will be included in the code of conduct compact. Chronic unexcused tardiness and absences will be reviewed, and appropriate interventions will be implemented. Students will be required to wear the school uniform.

Obviously, the classroom teacher is the primary manager of his or her own classroom. Teachers will develop rules and expectations for their respective rooms that are in concert with the overall school code. Depending on grade level, students may participate in creating those rules. If a student's behavior violates the code of conduct and is negatively affecting the educational environment, the classroom teacher has the initial responsibility for modifying that behavior, with minimum disruption to the rest of the class. If this strategy is unsuccessful, the student will be referred to school administrators for further intervention. In most cases, parents will be contacted and involved in working with the student and the school to improve the situation.

For the most severe violations, suspension and/or expulsion may be necessary after exhausting all other reasonable and appropriate remediation. Tacony will adopt policies and procedures regarding suspensions and will expel students consistent with the provisions of Act 26. All due process requirements will be followed, as appropriate, for all regular and special education students. The Board of Trustees will review all expulsions and requests for reinstatement and will base their decision on the severity of the offense, the potential for continued hazard to members of the school community, and other factors.

## **Student Conduct - Attachment**

- Student Code of Conduct for Tacony Academy

## **Signature Page**

## Assurance for the Operation of Charter School Services and Programs

School Year: 2012

The Tacony Academy Charter School within Philadelphia IU 26 assures that the charter school will comply with the requirements of 22 Pa. Code Chapter 711 and with the policies and procedures of Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). PDE will specify, in writing, policies and procedures to be followed. Requests for any deviations from these regulations, policies, and procedures must be made in writing to PDE. The charter school assures:

1. There are a full range of services, programs and alternative placements available for placement and implementation of the special education programs in the charter school.
2. The charter school has adopted a "child find" system to locate, identify and evaluate children who are thought to be a child with a disability eligible for special education residing within the charter school's jurisdiction. "Child find" data is collected, maintained, and used in decision-making. Child find process and procedures are evaluated for effectiveness. The charter school implements mechanisms to disseminate child find information to the public, organizations, agencies, and individuals on at least an annual basis.
3. The charter school has adopted policies and procedures that assure that students with disabilities are included in general education programs and extracurricular and non-academic programs and activities to the maximum extent appropriate in accordance with an Individualized Education Program.
4. The charter school will comply with the PA Department of Education annual report requirements including special education information.
5. The charter school follows the state and federal guidelines for participation of students with disabilities in state and charter school-wide assessments including the determination of participation, the need for accommodations, and the methods of assessing students for whom regular assessment is not appropriate.
6. The charter school assures the Pennsylvania Department of Education that funds received through participation in the medical assistance reimbursement program, ACCESS, will be used to enhance or expand the current level of services and programs provided to students with disabilities in this local education agency.

**This assurance must be signed by the Board President and the Chief Executive Officer for the charter school to operate services and programs.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Board President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Executive Officer  
2011 - 2012 Annual Report for Pennsylvania Charter Schools

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Verify that all DATA reports to PDE are complete

YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

## **Assurance for Compliance with the Public Official & Employee Ethics Act**

The original Public Official and Employee Ethics Act (the "Ethics Act") was amended and reenacted in 1989 by Act 9 of 1989 and in 1998 by Act 93 of 1998. (See Act 9 of 1989, 65 P.S. §401, *et seq.* and Act 93 of 1998, Chapter 11, 65 Pa.c.s. §1101 *et seq.*) The Act provides that public office is a public trust and that any effort to realize personal financial gain through public office is a violation of that trust. The Act was passed to strengthen the faith and confidence of the people of the Commonwealth in their government. The Act established the State Ethics Commission to administer and enforce the provisions of the Act and to provide guidance regarding the standards established by the Act.

The Tacony Academy Charter School assures that it will comply with the requirements of the Public Official and Employee Ethics Act (the "Ethics Act") and with the policies, regulations and procedures of the Pennsylvania State Ethics Commission. Additional information about the "Ethics Act" is available on the Ethics Commission's website at:  
<http://www.ethics.state.pa.us/ethics/site/>

**The assurance must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer and Board of Trustees President of the charter school.**

*Identify the charter school's Chief Executive Officer.*

**Name:** Sterling R. Garris   **Title:** CEO  
**Phone:** 215-742-5100   **Fax:** 215-743-9187  
**E-mail:** [scruise@firstphiladelphiacharter.org.com](mailto:scruise@firstphiladelphiacharter.org.com)

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*Signature of the Chief Executive Officer and Date*

*Identify the charter school's President of the Board of Trustees.*

**Name:** Dr. Rebecca Mitchell   **Title:** Board President  
**Phone:** 215-742-5100   **Fax:** xxxx  
**E-mail:** xxxxx

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*Signature of the President of the Board of Trustees and Date*

*Identify the charter school's Special Education Contact Person.*

**Name:** Patricia Darby   **Title:** Acting Special Education Coordinator  
**Phone:** 215-742-5100   **Fax:** 215-743-9187  
**E-mail:** [ayoung@taconyacademy.org](mailto:ayoung@taconyacademy.org)

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*Signature of the Special Education Contact Person and Date*

### **Signature Page - Attachment**

- Assurance for Compliance 2011 - 2012