

EXHIBIT A

Dimension 1

How meaningful is the change? Is it substantial rather than superficial?

There has been measurable change in attitudes, beliefs, and values at New York Avenue School. Meaningful school change is determined by the measurable academic and social outcomes of students. Students who attend New York Avenue School were given the opportunity to change their attitudes, beliefs and values in the 2006-2007 academic year when Mr. James Knox became their Vice-Principal. Primarily responsible for discipline, Mr. Knox increased direct pupil contact time, provided mentoring and most importantly, held students accountable for their actions. For these reasons, students' social behavior improved as evidenced by the percentage of students who were suspended from the school during that year. In 2006, New York Avenue School experienced a suspension rate of 24%. In 2007, Mr. Knox was able to lower the suspension rate to 21%. In 2008, the suspension rate decreased from 21% to 19%. Mr. Knox has had a tremendous impact upon changing the attitudes, beliefs and values of students at New York Avenue School.

Built at the epicenter of low-income housing, poverty, crime and drug trafficking, New York Avenue School serves families where mom and dad did not go to college and where few, if any, siblings or other relatives have continued their education beyond high school. Why build a 13 million dollar, state of the art Elementary School for such a marginalized population? The project was illogical to most and a waste of taxpayer's money to many. Then, no one foresaw New York Avenue School as one of the foremost academic institutions in the Atlantic City School District. Then, no one knew from this very neighborhood a leader would emerge, an educational leader who would redefine public education for the disenfranchised and demonstrate the efficacy of a "community school" in an urban setting. Previously known as the Indiana Avenue School for more than 100 years, it became New York Avenue School which has evolved as an exemplary model of effective urban education. Opened in January of 2004, New York Avenue School is a K-8 Elementary School where approximately 95% of the students receive free or reduced lunch. The population of the school is 79.4% Black, 17.50% Hispanic, 2.5% Asian/Pacific Islander and 0.96% Caucasian. The staff is comprised of two administrators, thirty classroom teachers, six basic skills teachers, six special education teachers, one guidance counselor plus one shared guidance counselor, a school nurse, six specialists and several non-certified support personnel. There are also five Early Intervention Reading Specialists and two Teacher Literacy Coordinators. The building is serviced by one Technology Coordinator and one teacher of the Gifted and Talented. Basic Skills services are available to students who need extended assistance in Reading, Math and Language Arts Literacy. The Special Education program provides for those students who have been identified and classified. New York Avenue School currently has two self-contained Special Education classrooms in addition to two Learning Resource Centers.

Since 2007, as the principal of New York Avenue School, Mr. Knox focused on the goal of increasing academic achievement for students and convincing the stakeholders within the neighborhood that New York Avenue School could be a haven of hope, a center of

transformation and an epicenter of change in the community. Mr. Knox began implementing academic and social programs that also challenged the attitudes, beliefs and values of stakeholders within the educational community who were less familiar with the dictates of urban education. He hoped they too would ultimately share his vision.

Pedagogical practices, especially in classroom instruction, dramatically changed once Mr. Knox became the educational leader. Literacy Coaches and Math Coaches were better utilized to work with classroom teachers to use assessment data. Classroom teachers were expected to align assessment data with classroom instruction. Students were given greater opportunities for collaboration, experiential learning, project based learning and theme based learning. Together, the shared focus was helping students arrive at their best learning outcomes. With diligence given to coordinating instruction, and increased staff accountability, improved measurable academic outcomes were expected and indeed came to pass. In the 2008-2009 school year, New York Avenue School reduced its all over failure rate by 10% on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) thereby reaching Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is a mandate of the No Child Left Behind legislation and marks a significant milestone for the school. By improving pedagogical practices in classroom instruction, positive outcomes for students and groups of students were also achieved. Seeing the results of their efforts, teachers are now further engaged and own the vision of change set forth by the school's new leadership. Principal Knox and Vice-Principal, Mr. Atiba Rose are the new leadership. Together, they create an atmosphere in which a first class education can be offered to every student who passes through the doors without regards to any obstacle that may statistically, historically, socially, or economically deter them from attaining their highest potential as productive citizens.

With 95% of the student population receiving free and reduced lunch, New York Avenue School, like many other urban schools, faces a multiplicity of challenges to achieve academic success. With high student mobility, large numbers of English Language Learners (ELL), poverty and homelessness, Mr. Knox understood his students were "at risk" of more than academic failure. With this understanding, Mr. Knox took extreme care in making programming decisions that would impact the academic, as well as the social, challenges students face. As the principal of New York Avenue School, Mr. Knox understands the direct and influential role he plays in the school community and in shaping the lives and personal values of its students.

Knowing children in poverty are more likely to become members of dysfunctional families that experience an unusually high stress level, "Dare to Be Kings" was established under the current administration. A mentoring program for boys in grades 6 through 8, this after school club addresses the "thug" mentality that often lures Middle School students to embrace the street culture. The anti-social culture we desire our students to avoid is that which includes sales, distribution and use of illegal substances and gang involvement. Knowing young girls living in poverty receive less parental supervision and are 5 to 7 times more likely to become pregnant teenagers "Dare to be Queens" was established for girls in grades 6 through 8. This after school club encourages girls to clarify their goals for the future and helps them identify the benefits of avoiding

negative behaviors. Girls learn refusal skills they can use when peers attempt to encourage them to participate in behaviors that threaten their future and the timely attainment of their educational, professional and social goals. "Girls Rule" is also a club for girls in grades 4 through 6. This after school club teaches girls everything from setting academic goals to setting a table for a family meal. Identifying family and community values, along with discussing girls' health issues, are strong components of this mentoring program. "T.R.U.S.T." (Trusting, Respecting, Understanding, Supporting Teens) is actually a pregnancy prevention club that asks girls in grades 5 through 8 to examine what it would be like if they became teen parents, how it would change their life's goals and affect their families? "Wise Guys" is the male version of Girls Rule for boys in grades 4 and 5. In this after school club, boys learn about responsibility, money management and financial literacy. Boys also learn about staying healthy, and male physical and emotional development. For male and female students who suffer from stress, demonstrate low self-esteem and exhibit aggressive behavior, "Don't Blow Your Kool" is another after school club available for students in grades 4 through 8. Here students learn anger management and conflict resolution in a supportive environment. All of these programs are offered through the AtlantiCare Behavioral Health's Atlantic City Family Center, Rosalind Norrell-Nance, Director. The goal of the Family Center is to support families, strengthen the community, and give necessary attention to the social needs of students in order for them to experience successful learning outcomes. New York Avenue School is fortunate to have a Family Center within the school building. Knowing the school cannot address all the challenges faced by urban students before they reach the doors of the school, Mr. Knox and Mrs. Nance seamlessly weave the social benefits of the Family Center into the lives of students here at New York Avenue School.

Knowing children living in poverty spend more time watching television and possess fewer learning resources at home, Mr. Knox extends the school day with meaningful and purposeful before and after school tutoring programs. The normal school day begins at 8:15 a.m. Teachers, however, arrive as early as 7:00 a.m. so students can begin their day with nurtured confidence and a well balanced breakfast. Normally the school day ends at 2:45 p.m. Many students, however, are tutored after school by committed staff members until 4:30 p.m. Thereafter, students have the option of attending "Club Destiny," another school based program that extends the day until 7:00 p.m. Students in the community have a place to feel safe from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., twelve hours of each twenty-four hour day, because Mr. Knox understands that children who live in poverty often find themselves in trouble when there is nothing constructive to do at home. Knowing students who live in poverty also live in shelters for the homeless, or live in crowded, substandard housing in unsafe neighborhoods, Mr. Knox thought of extending the school week to include "Saturday School." Saturday School consists of a half day of learning for students who would otherwise be idle, chasing police cars and ambulances for fun. With the various programs available for the academic and social benefit of its students, 41% of elementary students surveyed said they enjoy coming to school each morning. New York Avenue School has become a place where students in the community come to learn and come to have fun. Mr. Knox strives to ensure that students experience a quality education and enjoy the benefits of a safe and civil, community school.

The “Developing Safe and Civil Schools” (DSACS) project is designed to assist school staff in implementing social-emotional learning and character development (SECD) principles and practices for developing safe and civil schools. A requirement of DSACS is for participating schools to complete climate surveys measuring student, staff and parent perceptions of the school. DSACS evaluates the data collected and provides a detailed report of the findings. In its fourth year of partnering with New York Avenue School, DSACS also links our school with other schools that can assist with addressing specific needs and goals. In a recent DSACS Staff Climate Survey, 55% of the staff strongly agreed that they enjoy coming to work. 28% of Middle School students and 56% of Elementary School students perceived the same; teachers and staff enjoy working at New York Avenue School. Further self-reflection revealed 41% of Elementary School students like coming to school and 60% of them feel that teachers in the school really care about them. Middle School students were generally neutral in their perceptions of student approval, utility of learning, and student pride. Overall, 43% of the staff strongly agree that the morale in this school is high and 67% of the staff would say they are very satisfied with the school. The level of satisfaction and high morale can be attributed to the staff recognizing how caring and supportive teachers are to their students, how comfortable students are to talk to their teachers about problems, how respectfully staff members treat one another, how supported by the school the teachers feel, how respectful parents are to teachers, and how supportive the administration is to all staff.

Dimension 2

How deep and broad is the change? Is it systemic rather than isolated?

The change in school culture is both deep and broad, affecting academic achievement in more than one classroom and at more than one grade level. The change has also been systemic. Stemming from the change in students' attitudes, beliefs and values, and seeing the effects thereof, teachers also began to accept greater accountability which represented a change from past practices. For example, Mr. Knox refined procedures for lesson plan review to ensure that all feedback guided teachers toward increased student-centered instruction and differentiated instruction for all students. By closely tracking lesson plans, classroom practices began to change. Classroom instruction was enhanced. Additional programming was implemented based on formative benchmark data. The data allowed for strategic interventions targeted to meet the specific needs of students rather than random enrichment and after school programming. Moreover, having addressed the social needs that often impede academic success, because he understands the dictates of urban education, Mr. Knox placed New York Avenue School on an academic achievement track never experienced before. Data from the "New York Avenue State Test Achievement Results By Grade- Language Arts/Literacy- All Students" shows academic achievement at multiple grade levels from 2006 to 2009. Achievement data will be further discussed within Dimension 4, however, it should be noted there has been consistent Language Arts/Literacy growth in two cohorts of students, those currently in grades 3 and 8, since Mr. Knox became the educational leader in 2006. Thus, the changes in the school culture have been deep, broad and consistent over time.

The changes in the school are evident in decisions about instruction, organization, governance and accountability. Mr. Knox's vision is to build a school culture where academic rigor is the cornerstone. Teachers are encouraged to use their time wisely and gently. With strategic rigor, however, teachers are to approach instruction and learning to increase student performance. In addition to quality instruction, increased student performance can also be attributed to the extension of the school day and the school week. Changing the organization of the typical school day and, moreover, the typical school week, with the addition of Saturday School, has affected the organization of the school week for the entire Atlantic City School District. Having studied the data from students at New York Avenue School who attended Saturday School from 2007 to 2008, it was concluded that additional instruction under the extended day organizational structure produced an increase in overall student achievement. Mr. Knox's vision of encouraging, nurturing and empowering students to achieve success through offering an additional half day of school on Saturdays was viewed by district level administrators as an initiative worthy of implementing district-wide. With such focus upon the great changes that are taking place at New York Avenue School, governance is closely monitored at the state and district levels. Recently the school underwent a CAPA Review conducted by the New Jersey Department of Education and received high ratings. At times it seems as though the school is being observed under a Gesell dome. The vast majority of staff, however, welcomes the positive attention and the heightened accountability change has brought to New York Avenue School.

There is a distinct perception among stakeholders in the immediate community that positive change has come to New York Avenue School. Once known for the infamous bullet holes that greeted you at the entrance doors, a second set was located in windows enclosing a glass stairwell, New York Avenue School was initially identified as an unsafe environment for children soon after the school opened. How ironic, a school constructed to be a haven of hope, and a center of transformation had become a pariah among those it was built to serve. The lores associated with the two separate incidents would haunt the multi-million dollar school for the next 3 years. Then change forced a different story to be told. The positive story of a successful urban school changing the lives of children replaced negative stories of shattered glass that had threatened the future of these same lives. The many ways positive change has come to New York Avenue School is often highlighted in the local newspaper, the Atlantic City Press. Stories ranging from Stockton College partnering with the school to paint murals and build a community garden to "University Hall," located in the Middle School, a school within a school. Envisioned by the vice-principal to inspire youth to aspire for a college education, Mr. Knox brought the vision to pass. Such positive news articles depicting what the school is like today overshadow those written of the school in the past. Administrators at the district and school levels are elated at the social and academic achievement students are experiencing. The positive attention attracts potential teachers who are passionate about education and sincerely want to teach in an urban school. Students are proud of their many accomplishments for which they are often celebrated.

Parents are equally proud to enroll their children at New York Avenue School because they know the education their children receive will give them a bright future. They are also glad to be able to receive support in accessing social services available to them through the Family Center located within the school. Rosalind Norrell-Nance, Director of the Family Centers believes social service issues must be addressed in the educational setting. According to Mrs. Nance:

If a teacher sees a child coming to school bundled up in sweaters or "hoody" jackets, they let the family center know and a winter coat is purchased. Likewise if a family needs help purchasing school uniforms, paying for prescriptions, keeping their electric or gas on, the Family Center, through grants, assists them. Transportation to doctor's appointments, social security or other social service agencies is provided. Children who need to see medical specialists are assisted in getting appointments, transported to the appointment and if necessary helped in finding ways to pay for the medical services needed. A family case manager will help advocate for the family who may not feel they have the ability to express their needs and concerns. This has made parents feel that our school is some place to go for support and they play an important part in the education and success of their children.

Parents know they are valued and respected At New York Avenue School. The level of parent involvement in the academic lives of their children is also improving. Clearly there is a perception in the immediate community that positive change has taken place at New York Avenue School.

There is also a perception in the larger community that positive change has taken place. Recently, New York Avenue School was selected to partner with “The Stockton Center for Community Schools.” To date, students from the local college have worked in after-school programs, in-school teacher assistance, and nursing outreach. Additionally, Stockton students have developed projects in such diverse areas as school gardens, murals, and yoga for at-risk youth. Most recently the Stockton Center for Community Schools received a grant from the United States Tennis Association to develop a junior tennis program in Atlantic City. It is hoped that New York Avenue School students will have an opportunity to develop tennis skills on courts located directly across the street from the school.

Dimension 3

How is the change focused? Is it student centered looking at teaching and learning?

The change in school culture is student centered, however, it is not solely relegated to student change. The overall quality of teaching has improved as measured by observations and student feedback. Throughout the hallways of New York Avenue School on any day, at any time of the day, you will observe the instructional staff actively, joyfully and vigorously engaged in the art of teaching. Such passion for education is contagiously inspired by the educational leader.

In keeping with the mission of the school, teachers are proud to provide a first class education to every student that passes through the school doors. The educational services provided to students are done without regard to any obstacle that may statistically, historically, socially, or economically deter them from attaining their highest potential as students and productive citizens. Recent surveys reflect Elementary and Middle School students are cognizant of the sincere support and caring that is found in their learning environment. Each day, students enter a nurturing community of learners, educators and support staff.

New York Avenue School has not attempted to recreate the wheel of instruction with new teaching practices for the purpose of affecting "change." Rather, the change in student achievement is directly attributable to consistency with familiar teaching practices. The element of consistency is what causes the practice to be innovative and effective. Too often in education, we are apt to try the newest instructional trend being offered and we lose the continuity of sustained consistency and, therefore, student focus. New York Avenue School has consistently applied educational practices that have survived the test of time. The instructional model simply includes teaching the skill, testing the skill, assessing the level of mastery and using the data to inform small group instruction if re-teaching the skill is indicated. Additionally, offering the necessary social and academic support programs enable students to give their best efforts to the learning process. In addition, focus has been given to align curriculum, instruction and assessment. Teachers recognize students' strengths, needs and experiences. Teachers have been trained to attend to different intelligences that account for a broader range of individualized achievement (Gardner.) Teachable moments are found in all student experiences (Dewey). Teachers understand that students are unable to attend at higher levels unless their basic needs have been met first (Maslow). Instruction is offered in Basic Skills, English as a Second Language, and Gifted and Talented. Literacy programs include Read 180, Accelerated Reader, Plato Focus, Reading Recovery and Leveled Literacy Intervention. Lessons are taught in state-of-the-art- computer labs, art and music rooms, on the athletic field, on the stage, and at in-school science and art fairs. All inspire confidence in students to continue striving to reach their goals.

Mr. Knox has significantly changed the culture of New York Avenue School in so many ways. The effects are many. To name a few:

- The changed school culture promotes the use of research. All educational strategies are grounded in scientifically based research that will strengthen instruction in core academic subject. The school uses curriculum and instructional materials that are supported by scientifically based research and are aligned to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS).
- The changed school culture promotes the use of professional development. Professional development is ongoing at New York Avenue School. Literacy Coaches and Math Coaches conduct professional development during school, for example grade level meetings and after school in principal literacy meetings. The Literacy Initiative is also supported by after school professional development throughout the school year. This ongoing training is necessary as teachers are expected to uniformly implement literacy instruction across the district in grades K-6. Grades 7 and 8 follow a different literacy model. Partnerships with Lesley University for literacy and Stockton College for math provide ongoing and sustained training and professional development for teachers and administrators to improve instructional practices. The data suggests that by providing ongoing professional development that primarily focuses on improving instruction and using data to inform instruction has benefited teachers and has equipped them for targeted instruction.
- The changed school culture promotes school growth. Each year the New York Avenue School develops a school improvement plan in accordance with recommendations from the State of New Jersey Department of Education. The school improvement plan provides a framework for analyzing problems, identifying causes and creating a map for reaching the root causes of existing instructional challenges. The committee that collectively works to gather information for this document includes dedicated members of the teaching staff, administrative staff, guidance staff, parents, community and paraprofessional staff members.
- The changed school culture promotes the idea of New York Avenue School being a "learning organization." New York Avenue School learns from the internal school community and the external school community. The internal school community includes students, parents and teachers and staff. School climate surveys and focus groups are consistently used to assess the perceptions of community stakeholders. The information learned from these queries is then recycled and used to drive programming and overall school improvement when the annual needs assessment is conducted. New York Avenue School also learns from the external learning community. Having established partnerships with Lesley University and Richard Stockton College to improve language arts literacy

and math instruction, respectively, it is recognized that the school can become even stronger by forming alliances with institutions of higher learning.

- The changed school culture includes appreciating teacher initiatives which has led to a Veteran's Day Program, beloved by students and Veterans alike; an Anti-Drug Program which brought the realities of the drug culture to the forefront; Peer Mediation instituted at the Middle School level, allowing students to solve differences amongst themselves.

Dimension 4

How is it measured?

Is it solution or outcome oriented?

Mr. Knox placed New York Avenue School on an academic achievement track when he became the educational leader in 2006. Over the past four years, there has been a sharp increase in student achievement in both Language Arts/Literacy and Math. Student achievement is measured by the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) assessment results. This assessment is administered each year to students in grades 3 through 8.

If one looks at any particular grade level over the last four years, in either Language Arts Literacy or Mathematics, there are numerous examples of student achievement. Consider the following data:

Language Arts/Literacy

From 2006 to 2007 – Proficiency increased by 21.8 percentage points in grade 3.

From 2007 to 2008 – Proficiency increased by 27.4 percentage points in grade 4.

From 2008 to 2009 – Proficiency increased by 20 percentage points in grade 7

Math

From 2006 to 2007 – Proficiency increased by 16.7 percentage points in grade 5.

From 2007 to 2008 – Proficiency increased by 12.3 percentage points in grade 5

From 2008 to 2009 – Proficiency increased by 16.1 percentage points in grade 8.

Science (Only administered in grades 4 and 8)

From 2006 to 2009 – Proficiency increased by 38.8 percentage points in grade 4

From 2006 to 2009 – Proficiency increased by 4.2 percentage points in grade 8.

Many conclusions can be drawn from this data. For example, Grade 5 is performing better in Math than in Language Arts/Literacy. The Language Arts/Literacy program is preparing students well at the Elementary School level for Middle School. Science is fun and engaging for 4th grade students. Data can tell many stories. Clearly you can see New York Avenue School is achieving academic success. This desire for achievement began when Mr. Knox became the educational leader.

If one studies the data further, the grade that is consistently achieving and has made major strides over the last four years is grade 3. It is no coincidence that this cohort of students came to New York Avenue School as Kindergarten students at the same time Mr., Knox became the principal of the school. Grade 3 has performed well on the assessment every year since 2006. Could it be because Mr. Knox often finds himself in the Kindergarten classrooms at the height of a hectic day and probably did the same with the current third grade class? Consistency is the key. Or could it be that Mr. Knox, being an educator, kept his foot in the classroom and gave those Kindergarten students a great beginning by instilling in them a sense of purpose and a desire for excellence? There is indeed a direct correlation between the success of the current third grade class and the presence of Mr. James Knox in their lives at such an impressionable and malleable stage of development. There is yet another story that can be told about the data and this 3rd grade class.

According to www.schooldigger.com, in 2008-2009, New York Avenue School ranked 3rd in the state for most improved in Third Grade test scores. This is a great improvement because in 2004-2005, New York Avenue School ranked in the state as being one of the bottom ten schools for the same grade level.

When Mr. Knox became the educational leader in 2006, he began the task of closing the achievement gap. With much work still ahead, we move forward. Words cannot express how much it would mean to our students to be recognized for the Panasonic National School Change Award. They have worked very hard as have the teachers. The school has been recognized for its many accomplishments at the district level for improved student performance, but never beyond its immediate four walls. Achieving the Panasonic National School change Award would prove to the students that their diligent efforts have not been in vane. **Children are and will always be the focus of the New York Avenue School.**

Thank you for your consideration of New York Avenue School to receive the Panasonic National School Change Award.