



“ We expect to be held accountable for results, but we want the freedom to do what we think is best to get those results. With Empowerment, we truly feel as if the possibilities are limited only by our imagination as leaders.
Nick Marinacci, Principal, Bronx Writing Academy”

Empowerment Schools



“ Education is a battle for the future of our city, and a struggle on behalf of the very lives of our children. Empowerment allows leaders who are closest to the battle to set objectives, to identify strengths, to select the tactics and to deploy troops.
Patrick Kelly, Principal, The Urban Science Academy”

empowerment schools

Division of School Support | The power to achieve.



OUR LEARNING HISTORY:

The work of Empowerment schools and the Empowerment Support Organization (ESO) together has increased both student achievement and principal satisfaction. The beliefs and policies embedded in Empowerment have influenced significantly the levers for student achievement and the expectations for principal support across the city. Beginning with one network of 29 schools in 2003, Empowerment grew to 523 schools within 22 networks today. We look forward to continued growth in the coming school year.

Empowerment team members learned to listen deeply to principals and teachers. This has informed our work and led to strategies, policies and innovations that support our principals, teachers and their school communities. **Some of the most successful innovations include:**

Principal Empowerment

Network Team support concept

School-based Inquiry Team pilot that led to CFI

Design Your Own (DYO) periodic assessments

Goldie Anna Excellence in Education Awards

CFN (Children First Network)*

*The CFN pilot network began in 2007-08 with 25 schools and grew to four networks with 90 schools in 2008-09. CFN is an initiative designed to integrate operational and instructional support for schools. Each CFN network employs a 13-person, cross-functional team directly accountable to principals that delivers personalized service to an average of 25 schools.

WHY EMPOWERMENT?

Student Achievement Up!

The Empowerment Support Organization (ESO) has consistently excelled on key achievement metrics when compared to other SSOs in the city. In 2007-2008:

90% of ESO high schools received an A or B on their Progress Reports compared to 83% of high schools citywide.

Citywide, ESO elementary, K-8, and middle schools consistently received a greater share of A's on their Progress Reports.

Citywide, ESO schools consistently received a greater share of Outstanding and Well Developed results on Quality Reviews.

Principal Satisfaction Up!

Principal satisfaction with ESO consistently ranks amongst the highest in the city.

In Fall 2008, 95% of principals were satisfied or very satisfied with the support provided by ESO. Almost half of our Network Leaders received 100% satisfaction. As ESO has grown, Principals have consistently commented on the positive power of the following change levers:

Devolved funding and decision-making

Increased principal autonomy

Developing periodic and formative assessments

Collaborations within networks and between networks

Embedded professional development at the school

Student attendance support

WE SUPPORT:

As part of the Empowerment Support Organization, the support you receive is customized, practical and in alignment with your school's mission. Empowerment teams listen, observe and then work hard to understand what works and does not work for schools in order to develop the right supports, and to advocate for policies that make sense. As part of a network of approximately 25 schools, principals select a network team to help them manage the demands of the system and to provide support, coaching and advocacy related to all issues from instruction to accountability to budgeting.

The job of the Network Team is to support schools with all their instructional and operational needs so they can fulfill their missions and reach their accountability targets. By selecting your network of schools and Network Leader, hiring the Network Team, and providing regular feedback, you are able to ensure that the team has the knowledge and skills to help you reach your goals.

Under the leadership of the Network Leader, the Network Team provides expertise in areas of instruction, achievement, business services and special services. There are two team models within the ESO. One model provides a core group of approximately four professionals who work in support of the network's schools, and in conjunction with the Integrated Service Centers (ISC). The other model, referred to as Children First Network (CFN), provides a group of approximately thirteen professionals that work in support of the network's schools and performs functions previously handled by an ISC.

Under both models, network teams:

Work closely with principals and key faculty leaders to provide intensive coaching and professional development according to the needs of each school. They provide targeted instructional support on a wide range of topics from literacy development to differentiating instruction, from goal setting to developing facilitative leadership skills.

Assist school staff in analyzing student performance data (both quantitative and qualitative), interpreting and designing periodic assessments, and preparing schools for Quality Reviews. 95% of Empowerment School principals believe that being part of this initiative has improved the use of data by teachers to inform instruction.

Provide professional development and guidance on instructional best practices for those who are achieving well and for those with special needs (including special education students, English language learners). In addition, the team provides support navigating special education regulations and advocating in areas such as referral, placement and service delivery, as well as assisting schools in building capacity around compliance.

Ensure resources, support, and guidance are available as related to all youth development issues including crisis intervention, attendance and counseling, in addition to the delivery of professional development.

Work with schools to provide comprehensive, specialized support for business and operations functions such as budgeting, contracts, grants, procurement, human resources, and facility maintenance. Additionally, the team provides schools with guidance, resources, and problem-solving techniques to assist them in increasing their operational and administrative capacity and autonomy.

Under the leadership of the Network Leader, regardless of functional role, each member of the network team acts as a professional developer, problem-solver, thought partner, navigator, advocate and ally.

“ The Empowerment initiative has allowed us to work with other like-minded schools to support our work. One example is the work we have done on authentic assessment, developing our own assessments (DYO) that allow us to know our students well as readers, writers and mathematicians. Another example has been being able to pool our resources to provide quality professional development for our staff.

Naomi Smith, Principal, Central Park East II ”

WE BELIEVE:

- It is important to put the decisions about how to educate students as close as possible to those who work with them – the principals in collaboration with teachers and the rest of the school community.
- Schools should have the autonomy and decision-making authority necessary to have a positive impact on student growth, progress and achievement.
- All members of Empowerment share the responsibility for deepening student understanding and raising their levels of achievement.
- The definition of achievement should push beyond test scores into the realm of developing critical thinking, applying knowledge in different contexts, and engaging as citizens in support of democracy.
- Personalization is essential in creating the context for students and adults to learn well.
- Collaborative learning communities are powerful forums to build shared knowledge in which relationships are built on trust, mutual respect and reflective practices.
- A healthy organization has systems to develop and support its members' leadership capacity.
- Shifting from positional power and authority to entrusted power and responsibility is an effective and healthy means to support school development.
- It is our responsibility to advocate for school communities in support of each school's mission.
- We must work creatively within the system to support the continued devolvement of funds and resources to the classroom.