

BEACON SCHOOL

Application Packet

NATIONAL EDUCATOR PROGRAM

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APPLICATION PACKET

Congratulations on your decision to apply for the designation of Beacon School from the National Educator Program (NEP). The NEP offers this as a service to the great schools of our nation for two reasons. First, to honor you for your hard work in making the teaching and learning experience more powerful and meaningful to the students. Second, to shine a light on your institution nationally so other educators know your school is both a model and a resource.

A lighthouse is an important part of the NEP logo. Lighthouses serve as navigational beacons so ships can find their way through troubled waters to their destination. The designation of Beacon School shows that your school has arrived at, and mastered, one critical part of your school's evolutionary progress and now serves as a beacon to guide other schools to where you are. It shows that your school has mastered every one of the 5 Keys for Successful Career Academies (If you are not implementing career academies, the 5 Keys are easily adaptable to other forms of small learning communities, or SLCs.), have completed the process of career academy implementation, and have set up a cycle of continuous improvement and innovation. As with every school, there is always room for improvement, but a Beacon School has systems in place to address new concerns, promote growth, and sustain itself.

This designation is the highest honor the NEP bestows on a school and as such is the most difficult to achieve. (New Schools: To be considered, your school must have all grade levels it is designed to have in place with at least one graduating class.) Because the NEP will stake its reputation on you, your school's operation and documentation will be closely scrutinized. A school should not be discouraged if the Beacon School designation is not awarded in the first application cycle. The NEP Application Team will prepare a report at the end of the process that details next steps to be taken and benchmarks to achieve so your school can successfully attain the designation the next time you apply.

Once your school becomes a Beacon School, you know your work is not finished - and neither is ours. We won't "name you and forget about you." The designation of Beacon School must be renewed every two years. The initial application process is demanding, but the renewal is significantly easier.

The Beacon School application process has five parts:

1. School submits application and accompanying documentation to the NEP Denver office.
2. NEP School Designation Team conducts analysis. (Additional documentation may be requested by NEP.)
3. NEP School Designation Team has a series of conference calls with faculty, staff and administration of the applicant school, and district-level administration.
4. The School Designation Team completes analysis and makes recommendation to the NEP Board of Directors.
5. The NEP Board of Directors votes to approve the decision of the Designation Team.
6. NEP issues a report to applicant school on why the Beacon School designation was awarded, or why it was not and offer suggestions for next steps so the applicant school can reapply the next year if they so choose.

Depending upon the outcome of data review by the NEP School Designation Team, other steps (including a site visit to the applicant school by and NEP representative) may or may not be added to the application process.

The NEP School Designation Team

The team that conducts analysis of your schools data will always be comprised of at least five people. These will include:

- ▶ The NEP Director
- ▶ A representative of the NEP Lab School
- ▶ A high school or district-level administrator
- ▶ A high school teacher
- ▶ A representative of the business community

None of these School Designation Team members will be from the district of the applicant school.

A school may only apply once per calendar year. Because the NEP offers this free of charge, only one Beacon School application will be considered per year. (Additional schools may be considered, but at a cost of \$2,500 per school.) **All applications and supporting data must be received in the NEP Denver Office no later than January 15** of each school year (or the first business day following the 15th if it falls on a weekend).

If your school achieves a designation from the NEP, the applicant will be honored at the NEP's annual SLC Success Conference in the spring of each year. Schools will receive an embossed certificate signed by the NEP Application Team, a press release to notify the school's local media of their achievement, and publication of the school's name and contact information on the NEP website and in *Innovation Magazine* as a national model of excellence. (The school may purchase an optional 4' x 10' Beacon School banner for \$500. It will be customized with both the NEP and school logos.)

If you have questions about this packet, please call 888-NEP-1997 x1, or email Mark A. Thompson at mthompson@neponline.org. Whether your school is awarded a designation or not, it is our hope that the application process will be a thought-provoking, productive and rewarding experience for the applicant school. Once again, congratulations on your decision to apply, and best wishes for success.

Beacon School Parameters

To be considered for NEP Beacon School status, your school must meet the following criteria:

- Your school has every grade level in place it is designed to have
- Your school has at least one graduating class
- Your school's overall attendance rate averages at least 85% over the last three years
- Your school's overall graduation rate (or completion rate if school does not offer graduation) averages at least 85% over the last three years for standard or advanced diplomas.

To achieve NEP Beacon School status, your school must score a minimum of 940 out of a possible 1,000 points.

To maintain NEP Beacon School status, your school must renew every two years. The renewal process is significantly easier than the initial application process.

INSTRUCTIONS: Read each of the 5 Keys listed on the following pages. After each Key is a checklist of data that must be included to demonstrate mastery. It is necessary to include every item listed **OR** suitable substitute data that would demonstrate your school's mastery of the 5 Keys. At the end of each list is the option of "Other Examples." Additional data you believe is credible and aligned with one of the 5 Keys can be just as valid as the items suggested. This application must be completed with members of your school teams and community. All evidence submitted needs to be included with your application form below and emailed to mthompson@neponline.org no later than January 15, 2009, or mailed to:

NEP School Designation Team
3700 Quebec Street
Bldg 100, Suite 286
Denver, CO 80207

Be mindful that it is postmarked by the deadline.

SCHOOL PROFILE

SCHOOL NAME _____

PRINCIPAL _____

ACADEMY COORDINATOR(S) _____
Use additional sheet if necessary

SCHOOL ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ST _____ ZIP _____

NAME OF CONTACT PERSON FOR THIS APPLICATION _____

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THIS PERSON _____

PEOPLE WHO HELPED PREPARE THIS APPLICATION:

NAME

SIGNATURE

5 Keys for Successful Career Academies

A career academy's success comes by design. Academies and SLCs are not likely to succeed if they are yet another "program" to be implemented. Where academies thrive is in schools where they are part of a whole-school, systemic improvement initiative.

Successful career academies have five characteristics in common. This gave birth to the 5 Keys for Successful Career Academies created in 1998. They are the basis for the NEP's TINA (The Initial Needs Assessment) and TONYA (The Ongoing Yearly Assessment), and are the unifying element of multi-year professional development plans at NEP schools.



Key #1 - Faculty Ownership

Faculty and administration at the school share a common vision of what the school is supposed to become, agree on the value of what career academies will bring to the school, and work cooperatively to create and continuously improve their school environment.

- ✦ The faculty members and school leaders feel compelled to implement academies to accomplish specific outcomes.
- ✦ The administration helps create faculty "ownership" of the process because the professionals in the classrooms will be the ones who primarily determine the success of the academies.
- ✦ A plan is developed under expert guidance on outcomes, implementation and evaluation.
- ✦ Outside funding is accepted only after Key #1 is established at the school site, or in the district. Outside funding helps to facilitate a vision that already exists.

The following types of documentation can demonstrate mastery with this Key:

Leadership Team roster

This is the group of educators that takes the lead in ongoing, whole-school growth. It is your core team and will show a mix of academic and career teachers, administrators and guidance counselors and other members of your school community who have taken ownership in building your school culture.

Minutes of Leadership Team meetings

Examples of minutes prepared upon completion of Leadership Team meetings will show to what extent the team members listed on the roster are actively involved and what they are typically doing.

Faculty Meeting Presentations

Examples of multi-media slides and/or handouts of presentations to the whole faculty made by faculty leaders are an example of what the NEP calls "coalition building." Coalition building articulates the vision so other faculty members can see the value in it, adopt it and further develop the vision as their own.

Email and Blog Entries

Emails or blog entries that show faculty members offering suggestions on changes in design, or adaptations to implementation show that faculty members have input and are accepting ownership of the process.

Outside Resources

List resources outside of your school that were consulted to assist in the development of your design and implementation plan. (This may include websites, other schools, national experts or consultants, etc.)

Built Capacity

Examples of distributive leadership, delegated responsibility and sustainability.

Teacher Survey

At least 75% of instructional faculty complete a survey on the extent to which they share the vision of the school, to what extent they have been enfranchised in the decision-making process, and to what extent their instructional creativity is encouraged. Teacher surveys may be anonymous, and may be written or used as a Likert Scale. (An example of a teacher survey may be provided to the applicant school upon request.)

Other Examples

If you have other examples of data and documentation you believe demonstrates a common vision shared among a cross-section of the school faculty, and faculty ownership of the process, please furnish it along with a brief explanation of why it was included and what it is intended to show.



Key #2 - Preparation & Design

Prior to attempting implementation, the site-based educators work to articulate the vision and have it shared by faculty, district and appropriate feeder schools. The design is clear for implementation and allows for continuous innovation.

- ◆ A thorough needs assessment (such as TINA) is conducted that identifies desired outcomes, a school's strengths and assets, areas of change, benchmarks, a timeline, a long-term professional development plan, and involvement in a network of schools for data sharing (such as the NEPwork).
- ◆ Research is done into the various forms of implementation career academies can take. The long-term plan has ongoing improvement and innovation built into the initiative's life cycle.
- ◆ The school determines how many academies they will implement before the implementation process is completed. The school decides on the correct number of academies based on their enrollment.

The following types of documentation can demonstrate proficiency with this Key:

A Needs Assessment

A copy of your school's needs assessment as it relates to academy implementation.

Your School's Long Term Plan

You may call it an Action Plan, or School Improvement Plan, etc. It shows your school's long range goals and strategies for getting there, as well as where the academies fit into that vision and how they will be implemented over time. It will also demonstrate if you plan on having single academies, and/or if your school plans to implement an all-academy model.

A School Self-Evaluation

If you complete a self-evaluation as a separate instrument from your school's long term plan, that may be included to show process and progress with Key #2. If you don't have one already, but would like to complete one, you may use the NEP's Self-Assessment Instrument. (It is free and available upon request.)

Conferences and Site Visits

A listing of recent conferences and school site visits related to your academy initiative. Include who attended and briefly describe how each event contributed to your staff's knowledge base.

Master Schedule

A copy of your school's master schedule will show how your academy (or academies) are structured with a teacher team and cohort scheduling (with the same group of students circulating among the same set of teachers).

Academy Rosters

A listing of which students and teachers are assigned to which academy.

Other Examples

If you have other examples of data and documentation you believe demonstrates a common vision shared among a cross-section of the school faculty, and faculty ownership of the process, please furnish it along with a brief explanation of why it was included and what it is intended to show.



Key #3 - Career Areas

Career themes are chosen early in the process based on what resources the local community has to support instructional experiences inside and outside of the classroom, and which of those are most expedient for promoting student mastery of state-mandated content standards.

- ◆ Community experts are utilized as adjunct faculty, guest speakers, and assist with real-world learning experiences created for the classroom.
- ◆ These partners also host job shadowing and formal internship programs.
- ◆ Career areas are broad enough to allow teachers flexibility in creating learning experiences for students that are clearly understood and useful to students.
- ◆ Career partners are actively involved in planning instructional experiences.
- ◆ Career partners represent both local business interests and post-secondary institutions of all kinds (technical schools, community colleges, four year universities, etc).
- ◆ Post-secondary institutions work with high school educators to create smooth transitions for students from high school to post-secondary education.

The following types of documentation can demonstrate proficiency with this Key:

Roster of Leadership Team or Academy Advisory Councils

These rosters will show who is involved in your school's evolutionary process.

School Internship Program Documentation

If your school has a structured internship program in place, submit documentation of how it works: student requirements, business partners who host interns, how credit or pay is awarded, etc.

Curriculum and Instructional Participation

Show any documentation available of business and post-secondary involvement in curriculum development and/or delivery of instruction.

Dual Enrollment

Provide a listing of any dual enrollment courses offered within each academy, along with the name of the credit-granting institution.

Integration and Content Standards

Provide evidence of academic integration with career and technical education, or being taught in the context of a career theme. Demonstrate how this instruction provides students the relevance of a real-world career context while promoting mastery of state-mandated content standards.

Other Examples

If you have other examples of data and documentation you believe demonstrates a common vision shared among a cross-section of the school faculty, and faculty ownership of the process, please furnish it along with a brief explanation of why it was included and what it is intended to show.



Key #4 - Specific and Well-Planned Professional Development

The professional development plan targets areas of specific need for academy teams and provides a mechanism to build capacity for future professional development that does not rely on an outside provider.

- ◆ Successful academies outline a course of professional development based on their initial needs assessment (such as TINA).
- ◆ Professional development includes training, consultation with an outside expert, staff-directed follow-up via professional learning communities and/or peer coaching, conferences, site visits and more.
- ◆ Faculty teams and administrators agree on one or two areas per year to focus on for professional growth. All professional development training, follow-up, coaching, etc., is then focused on those specific areas to promote mastery by the staff.
- ◆ Training is provided by staff with expertise or outside trainers who have proven expertise.
- ◆ Outside providers are vetted for qualifications and experience.

The following types of documentation can demonstrate proficiency with this Key:

Professional Development Plan

If you have completed a professional development plan separate from your school's long term plan, that may be included to show how your school's focus and plan will equip your staff with the processes and skills necessary to realize your school vision.

Agendas, Slides and Handouts

Submit content of any site-based trainings related to your instructional and systemic focus.

Conferences and Site Visits

A listing of recent conferences and school site visits related to your academy initiative. Include who attended and briefly describe how each event contributed to your staff's knowledge base.

Peer-to-Peer Follow-up

Show evidence of teachers working together as peer coaches to implement new skills, instructional strategies or procedures to solidify your academies and promote student achievement. Demonstrate how ongoing collaboration between educators (within your school, and/or with another school, and/or within your feeder system) help develop the school instructional staff's professional skill base or improve the student learning experience.

Other Examples

If you have other examples of data and documentation you believe are evidence of your school's focus with respect to vision and staff development goals, please furnish it along with a brief explanation of why it was included and what it is intended to show.

Formative Assessment of Professional Development

Provide documentation of how your school assessed the effectiveness and efficacy of professional development. Show what changes to, or reinforcement of, your long term professional development plan as a result of data you collected.

Continued Innovation

Identify and document mechanisms that are in place for your school to continue its evolution, innovation and learning from other institutions.

Responsibility to the Profession

Identify ways in which your school has allowed other educators to learn from you. This may include hosted site-visits, conference presentations, video-conferences, etc. Include names of school personnel, dates and locations.

Other Examples

If you have other examples of data and documentation you believe are evidence of your school's focus with respect to vision and staff development goals, please furnish it along with a brief explanation of why it was included and what it is intended to show.



Key #5 - Academic Vigor

Academic vigor is in place when a school combines the three elements of 1) high expectations (rigor and standards), 2) support structures to help students meet those expectations and 3) students are working hard because they want to meet the expectations.

- ✦ Vigor is found in both academic and CTE classes.
- ✦ Successful curriculum integration is found at all levels: Classroom Level, Partner Level and Team Level®.
- ✦ The learning experiences relate to the student's life outside of the classroom and includes all of the components of Meaningful Instruction®.
- ✦ The curriculum is flexible to allow teachers leeway in creating and planning instruction, as well as giving teachers the opportunity to capitalize on learning opportunities arising during instruction that were not foreseen.
- ✦ Teachers are given adequate planning time to create powerful learning experiences for students.

The following types of documentation can demonstrate proficiency with this Key:

Roster of School Teams that contribute to the development, systems and support structures of academic vigor.

These rosters will show who is involved in your school's evolutionary process and how each team contributes to the school's academic vigor and overall learning environment.

Master Schedule or Team Schedule

This schedule will show teachers have been allowed team planning time either during the school day (common planning period), or during the contractual day (after students have left but before teachers are scheduled to leave), or outside of the contractual day with stipends.

Lesson Plans

Lesson and project plans can show how one course is integrating with another, or with several others on the academy team. In addition to exciting learning experiences, identification of state content standards need to be included. (These standards should be included either as code, or as the whole standard written out - *whichever way the teacher normally documents standards.*)

Student Survey

At least 50% of students enrolled write a one to three paragraph response to the question: "What was your favorite school learning experience so far this year and why?" Additional alternatives include a student survey designed by the school that asks students questions related to their learning experiences or learning logs that students write for individual classes. (An example of a student survey may be provided to the applicant school upon request.)

Heterogenous Ability Grouping

Furnish evidence of students of divergent ability groups being mixed and learning together. Show mechanisms in place to promote differentiation in instruction and students learning from other students.

Graduation Rate

Provide data on your school's graduation rate each year for the last three years. (If your school has less than three graduating classes, provide data for the graduating classes you have.) Include only information on students who have received standard or advanced high school diplomas.

Attendance Rate

Provide data on your school's attendance rate for every grade level over the last three years.

Progress Data

Anecdotal evidence and artifacts of student work demonstrating both academic and social/emotional progress. These may include portfolios, letters from students to staff members, drop in dangerous activity on campus, dropout data, graduation rates, etc. (This data needs to be above and beyond the data provided above under "Student Survey.")

Other Examples

If you have other data or documentation you believe demonstrates academic vigor, teacher planning or student achievement, please furnish it along with a brief explanation of why it was included and what it is intended to show.

Renewal

If your school is awarded NEP Beacon School status, what data might be seen two years from now that would indicate you have maintained mastery of the 5 Keys for Successful Career Academies, and that you have innovated and had growth beyond them? (No data or artifacts are necessary to complete this question.)

Schools of Promise

&

BEACON SCHOOLS

What are they?

Schools of Promise have established proficiency with at least two of the 5 Keys for Successful Career Academies and have established a firm foundation for a successful and sustainable future. It is a temporary designation good for three years and may be renewed annually for two additional years beyond that. By that time, a successful School of Promise should have completed its evolution into a Beacon School.

BEACON SCHOOLS have mastered all of the 5 Keys for Successful Career Academies. They are in a mode of continual improvement, have built capacity and sustainability, and are deemed by the National Educator Program as worthy of emulation. This is the highest honor the NEP can give a school.

How do we become one?

If you are working with the National Educator Program for technical assistance in high school transformation to academies, or if you are a NEPwork school, you are already on track to become one.

Do we have to work with the NEP to receive designation?

No. Just go online to www.neponline.org for information, or call 888-NEP-1997 and ask for an information packet and application.

Do we have to have career academies?

No. The 5 Keys for Successful Career Academies are adaptable to all forms of SLCs, career clusters, freshmen academies, and magnet schools.

How much does it cost?

There is no cost. You have already paid the price in your efforts to build a great school and student achievement. We recognize success and want to identify you to other schools nationally as a model and resource for success.

How many schools have been honored?

There are only eight NEP Schools of Promise nationally. As of yet, there are no NEP Beacon Schools. We have very strict and demanding criteria to earn this designation. Will your school be the first?



Let Your Light Shine!

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