

## **HOW BUSINESS AND OPERATIONS INCREASES SCHOLAR ACHIEVEMENT**

The objective of any school's operations team is to support instructional staff, and thus by extension its scholars. By being on the front line and fielding all of the many issues that arise during the day, the Ops Team makes it possible for teachers to be 100% present in the classroom, engaging scholars in learning. In addition to being reactive (troubleshooting technological problems, fixing facility issues, and much else), and maintaining the school (grading tests, photocopying, providing supplies), it is just as necessary that the operations team be forward-looking and strategic in order to continually improve the systems in place that move the school forward and create further efficiencies.

At South Bronx Classical, we take teacher-scholar time seriously. The best way to help scholars is to extract non-pedagogical tasks from our teachers so that they can stay in front of scholars. Each of these tasks takes time away from scholars, so the operations team reaches as far as it can into Facilities, Classroom Setup, Copying, Grading, Procurement and Technology so that teachers can spend more time teaching. We also prioritize the school's financial side just as much as the instructional and operational pieces. Overwhelmingly, when charter schools fail, it is neither because of disregard for any of the aforementioned tasks nor from scholar performance. It is usually the result of financial mismanagement. While not operations per se, in a single-school environment, finance and operations become necessarily intertwined with operations, due to overlapping tasks and responsibilities, as well as staffing constraints.

### Facilities

The culture of a school is positively or negatively affected by its physical environment, and that is often the first impression made on potential scholars, families, and staff. The Ops Team maintains a clean and safe space for our scholars as the number one priority. By frequent sweeps of the building and encouraging teachers and staff to swiftly communicate issues to the appropriate personnel, we are able to quickly identify potential issues and work to resolve them before they become a larger problem. We also maintain good relationships with the school's security and maintenance staff to ensure that our building is well maintained and permits are current, so as to not experience any disruption to the extended school day.

### Classroom Setup

During the first two weeks of August, SBCCS schedules professional development for all teachers. During those two weeks, teachers spend about two days preparing their classrooms for the year. This past summer, the Ops Team helped teachers set up their classrooms by laminating, hanging bulletin boards, and otherwise creating a welcoming space for scholars to begin their year. This gave teachers more time to receive professional development and gain the knowledge and experience necessary to better help their scholars.

### Copying

Part of operations is continually thinking ahead to create more efficiency. Efficiency ultimately leads to savings, either in time or money. Our Ops Team runs copiers 10 hours a day just to meet the schools' coping demands. SBCCS has a higher demand for this than other schools because we have created our own curriculum. Thus, traditional textbooks and workbooks cannot be used because our educational program is customized for our scholars and for our school. All paper materials are created and copied in the school. In many schools teachers spent most of their preps making copies for the day - everyday. The Operations Team has created a system that allows grade team leaders to submit copies for their grade for the full week ahead. Copies are then made and distributed to grade teams well before they are distributed to scholars. By

having a streamlined copying procedure, and a repeated process, we are able to make the school's copies in cumulatively less time than the sum of the time it takes for teachers to make their own copies. This leads to more time for teachers in front of scholars, or in planning for the next day's lesson.

### Grading

Grading tests can take hours away from a teacher's prep. The Ops Team has taken over grading for all school-wide tests. In addition to that, we provide test trackers (also created by us) with assessment data which allows teachers to analyze test results and facilitates grade team meetings where teachers come together and share a common starting point from which to discuss scholar progress. This allows teachers to efficiently and quickly identify grade-wide trends in scholar performance, and also the strengths and struggles of individual scholars.

### Procurement and Technology

Nothing wastes the time of a teacher more than not having the materials or technology they need to teach a lesson. The Ops Team keeps a large supply of materials that are available to teachers at all times of the day. Instead of making multiple small orders during the year, we place a few large orders of commonly-used materials and equipment to ensure that we always have critical supplies on hand, while streamlining the ordering, receiving, payment and stocking of supplies once rather than four times annually. In addition, every teacher has working technology in their classroom, including computers and projectors. When technology fails, we troubleshoot the issue within minutes of being notified of the problem. If it can't be fixed in-house, temporary technology is readily available until our technicians can make the necessary correction.

### Finance

It is of the utmost importance to remain diligent on financial management, the silent partner to the hectic and urgent distractions of day-to-day operations. Each year, charter schools undergo an independent financial audit which tests the integrity of its financial policies and procedures. SBCCS has a detailed policy with regard to financial management, which is both followed meticulously and always subjected to continuous scrutiny. The ultimate prize at the completion of the audit is to have neither 'findings' nor 'management points'. For the past two years, SBCCS has achieved this goal, and we are looking ahead to many more years of sound financial practices.

SBCCS enjoys a very strong financial position, with little attendant fundraising. We provide a top-notch education to our scholars with, for the most part, public monies. Through New York State per pupil funding and federal entitlement grants, we have managed to elevate scholar achievement to a level that rivals affluent suburban schools', while simultaneously creating financial stability to protect us from potential funding cuts in the future.

Throughout the entire organization, SBCCS maintains, and enjoys, a culture of continuous reflection. Although we are performing very well in all areas (instruction, operations, and finance), we continually strive for self-improvement by seeking best practices from other high performing charter schools and even other industries. We are never content with the status quo, and we know that by keeping the school open, relying on sound financial practices, we can increase the precious amount of instructional time by becoming more efficient in our daily operational tasks.