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OF NEW ORLEANS

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OUR SCHOOL
OUR VISION
OUR CHOICE

STUDENT BLUEPRINT

FOR SARAH T. REED

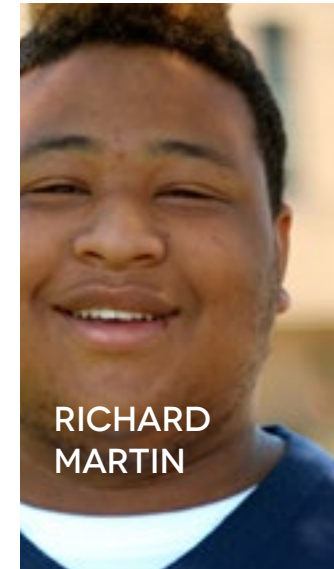
“NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US, IS FOR US.”

– SOUTH AFRICAN PROVERB

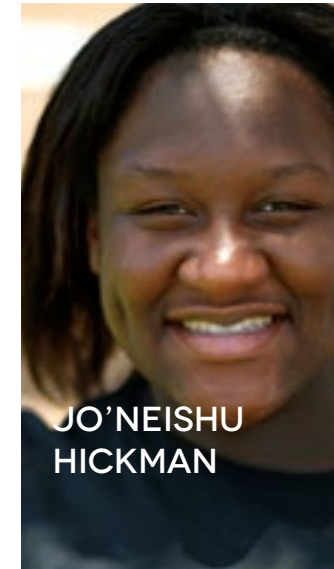
PRODUCED BY THE REED RENAISSANCE INITIATIVE



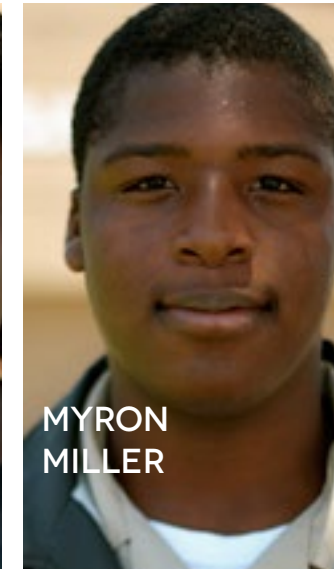
A Community Engagement Project supported by
New Orleans East Charter Academies, Inc. (NOECA)
and the Vietnamese American Young Leaders
Association's Raise Your Hand Campaign.



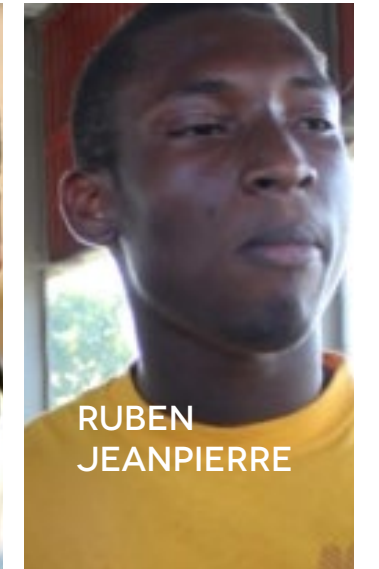
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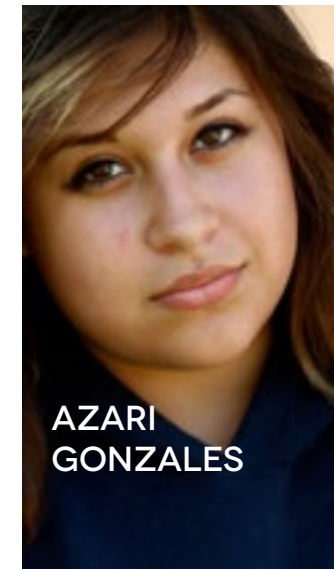
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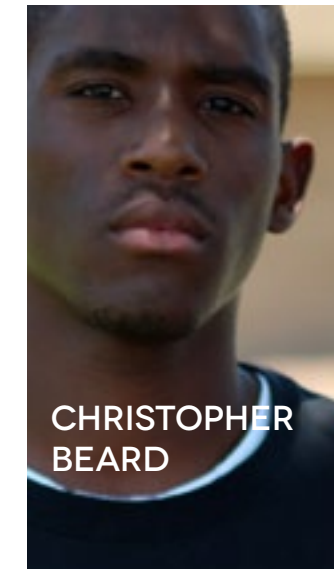
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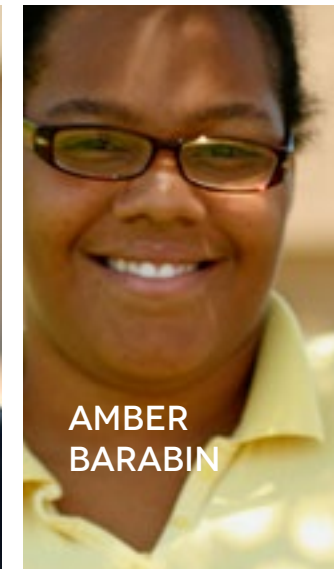
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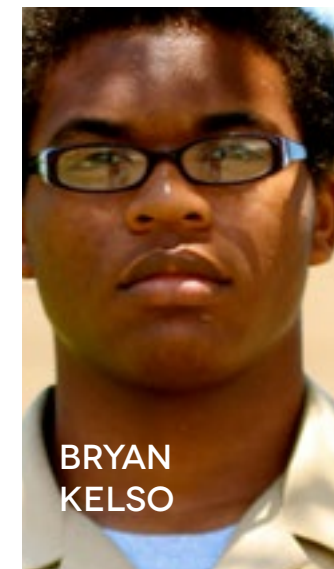
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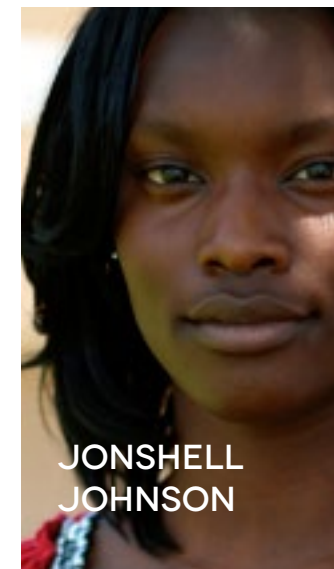
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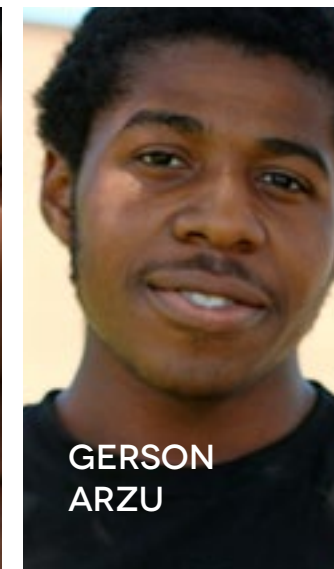
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JONSHELL
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RONALD
JOHNSON

GREGORY
ESTES

STUDENT LEADERSHIP BOARD

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

NEW ORLEANS EAST
CHARTER ACADEMIES, INC.

The mission of NOECA is to make Sarah T. Reed Senior Charter High School an exemplary high school in the city of New Orleans where students excel in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math.

VAYLA-NO

VAYLA's Raise Your Hand Campaign promotes equal access to quality public education for racially and economically marginalized students through youth participatory research, grassroots leadership development and policy-centered youth organizing.



PROGRAM SUPPORT

JACOB COHEN is a member of the NOECA board and the Assistant Director of the Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association. Jacob coordinated The Reed Renaissance Initiative, helping to leverage resources from both NOECA and VAYLA to carry out the initiative's research activities. Throughout the eight-month project, Jacob facilitated weekly meetings with student and community leaders and spearheaded a collective process for analyzing the data, constructing the report, and the formulating recommendations. Jacob also served as chief editor for the report, piecing together sections that were written by each of the student leaders.

CYNDI NGUYEN is the Vice President of NOECA, and the Executive Director of Vietnamese Initiatives in Economic Training. Cyndi was instrumental in the initiative's founding, and worked tirelessly to ensure that the Reed Renaissance student leaders were supported by NOECA throughout the project's duration.

DR. OIYAN POON is the 2011-12 UCLA Institute for American Cultures Visiting Research Scholar at the Asian American Studies Center. Her research interests include race and public policy, youth and community-based policy research, social demography and GIS spatial analysis. Oiyen worked closely for over a month with the inter-stakeholder committee to design the visioning survey.

CRISTIANE WIJNGAARDE is a parent in the Village de l'Est neighborhood. In addition to her generous contribution of ideas, Cristiane supported the Reed Renaissance Initiative by providing logistical support for student meetings, as well as facilitation assistance.

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I. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Following Hurricane Katrina, the Louisiana Recovery School District (RSD) took Sarah T. Reed Senior High School under its direct management. After several years of unsatisfactory academic results, the RSD stated its intention to charter Reed High and relinquish direct responsibility for the school and its students. Members of the New Orleans East Charter Academies, a grassroots community board dedicated to partnering with students and local residents to shepherd the school's transformation, heeded the District's call and submitted a proposal to charter Reed High. For three consecutive years, the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) rejected NOECA's charter applications, placing Reed and its students in a prolonged state of limbo.

The RSD's inability and unwillingness to effectively manage the school, coupled with the State's refusal to devolve control to the local community, have left Reed students in an unconscionable situation, forced to endure continuous disinvestment, a dwindling population, and substandard educational and environmental conditions. Throughout this period of dire uncertainty, community voice has been repeatedly undermined. In November 2011, the Recovery School District commenced an inauthentic community engagement process when they hosted a meeting to announce the "phasing out" of Sarah T. Reed, beginning with the 9th grade. The District made this decision unilaterally despite the disapproval expressed by hundreds of students, parents, neighborhood residents

and teachers. Most recently, the community discovered that the RSD had made yet another decision without their consent: to move the KIPP Renaissance program onto Reed's facility alongside the remaining 10th-12th grade Reed students. Despite concerns with student safety and space shortages, and program incompatibilities, the District has yet to engage the community on its plans for program co-location.

The future of Sarah T. Reed hangs in the balance, and the makeshift plan for 2012-2013 does not appear promising. It remains to be seen whether the current political environment will allow students, parents, and local residents to meaningfully participate in determining the school's long-term fate, and whether Reed students will be treated with dignity. Such uncertainty provides both the context and impetus for the formation of the Reed Renaissance Initiative and for the construction of this report. It is our hope that this report will provide a framework for continued community advocacy and action, ushering in a phase of educational change at Sarah T. Reed that reflects our highest democratic principles.

ABOUT THE REED RENAISSANCE INITIATIVE

Community leaders, students, and local community-based organizations launched the Reed Renaissance Initiative to give students and community members a voice in determining Reed's future. In September 2011, New Orleans East Charter Academies, Inc. (NOECA) and the Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans (VAYLA-NO) began working together to launch a school visioning campaign. NOECA's deep commitment to local community ownership and VAYLA's expertise in student civic engagement led to a natural partnership. After a series of inter-stakeholder community task force meetings, the group conducted a student vote to determine the name of the project: The Reed Renaissance Initiative. By January 2012, a group of core student leaders had emerged to take the reigns of the initiative.

The Reed Renaissance Initiative is an intergenerational, inter-stakeholder community group composed of students, alumni, teachers, and neighborhood residents whose mission is to empower the local community to develop and execute a democratic, bottom-up plan for the school's positive transformation. The group has come together to make a positive difference in their school and community, and to transform Sarah T. Reed into a more effective and promising educational environment so that students can access the support that they deserve.

COMMUNITY VISIONING RESEARCH PROCESS

A task force composed of current students, alumni, and community leaders began meeting in early fall, 2011, to determine methods for engaging the opinions and ideas of students and the larger community. The task force kicked off their community visioning campaign on October 28th, 2011, by hosting a rally in the Reed gymnasium to hear from students, teachers and neighborhood residents about their dreams for Reed.

Shortly thereafter, a committee of students, teachers, faculty, and neighborhood residents worked closely with Dr. Oiyen Poon to develop a comprehensive “visioning survey” intended to capture the community’s priorities for Reed’s future. After three weeks of drafting and revising the survey, 500 copies were distributed to Sarah T. Reed students and the surrounding community. Within two weeks, half of the surveys were recovered, and the task force began to enter and analyze the data using a program called Survey Monkey.

Survey Monkey allowed the group to easily translate the data into charts, graphs, and percentages to better understand what students, teachers, staff, alumni, community members, and parents want to see at Sarah T. Reed High. The Reed Renaissance leadership committee, consisting of eight students and two adult supporters, spent over three months analyzing the data, determining actionable recommendations, and constructing this report. The recommendations and data analysis contained herein reflect the perspective of the Reed Renaissance Initiative’s student leadership board, which took significant liberty in translating the research findings into concrete, specific directives.

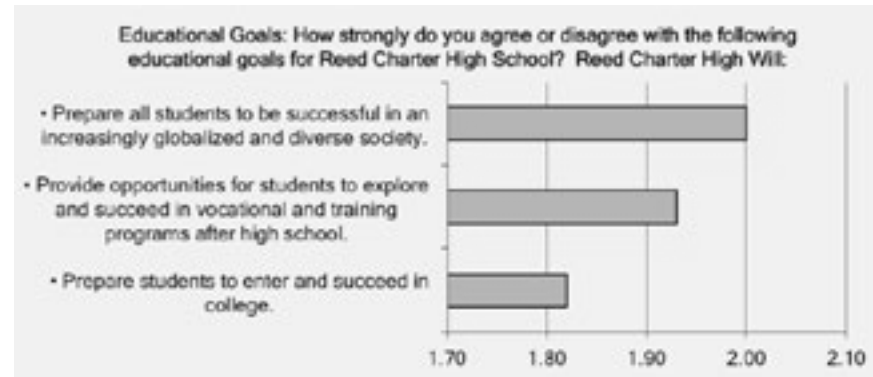
SURVEY SAMPLE

		RESPONSE PERCENT	RESPONSE COUNT	
RELATIONSHIP TO REED	Current student	83.1%	172	
	Parent of school-aged children	6.3%	13	
	Student at another school	7.7%	16	
	Parent of a current Reed student	3.4%	7	
	Graduate/alumni/former student	5.3%	11	
	Local New Orleans East Resident	15.0%	31	
	Teacher/Staff/Administration	9.2%	19	
	Local New Orleans East Business Owner	1.4%	3	
	Local Community Leader	2.4%	5	
	Other	2.4%	5	
		answered question		207
	skipped question		40	
GENDER	Female	50.3%	91	
	Male	49.7%	90	
		answered question		181
		skipped question		66
RACE OR ETHNICITY	African American/Black	83.0%	161	
	American Indian	1.5%	3	
	Asian American	7.2%	14	
	Latino/Hispanic	2.1%	4	
	White/Caucasian	5.7%	11	
	Other	3.6%	7	
		Answered Question		194
		Skipped Question		53

II. RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

EDUCATION GOALS

*NOTE: The graph represents mean response rating on a 1-4 scale, with lower mean ratings corresponding to greater agreement or support for each statement.



1= STRONGLY AGREE
 2 = AGREE
 3 = DISAGREE
 4 = STRONGLY DISAGREE.

SUMMARY OF DATA

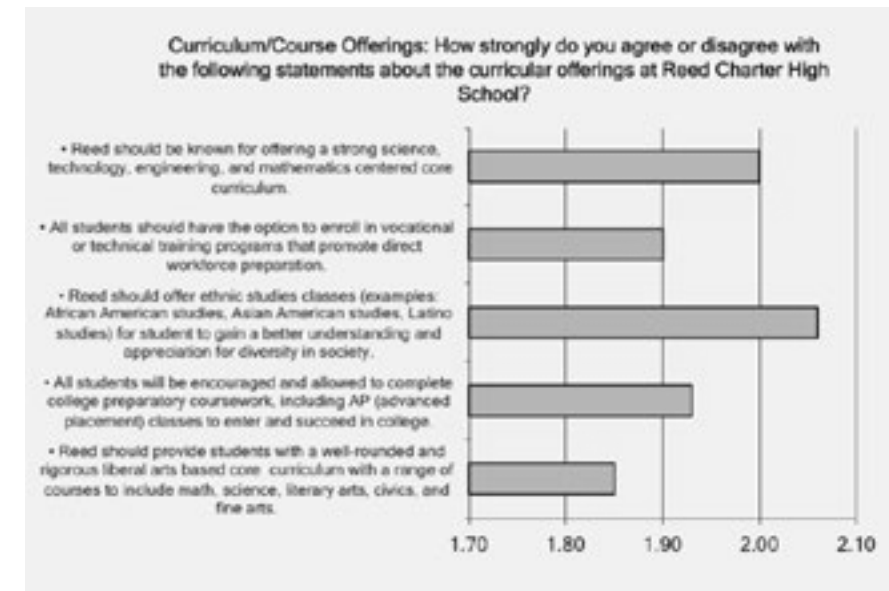
It is clear from the survey responses that the community desires a school with a strong college preparatory focus. 44.2% of respondents “strongly agree” that Reed should prepare all students to enter and succeed in college, and 35.6% of respondents “agree” with this statement. A smaller, but significant percentage of respondents “strongly agree” that Reed should provide students with opportunities to explore and succeed in vocational and training programs after high school. 34.6% “strongly agree” and 43.7% “agree” that Reed should have a “vocational preparatory” focus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that Reed provides all students ample opportunities to take college preparatory coursework, yet also creates opportunities for students to explore vocational paths and prepare for postsecondary training programs. Given the diverse aspirations of Reed students, Reed should not “track” students in one particular direction.
- Convene alumni focus groups every two years to assess whether Reed’s academic programs are providing students with a solid foundation for postsecondary college and career opportunities.

CURRICULUM AND COURSE OFFERINGS

1 = STRONGLY AGREE
 2 = AGREE
 3 = DISAGREE
 4 = STRONGLY DISAGREE



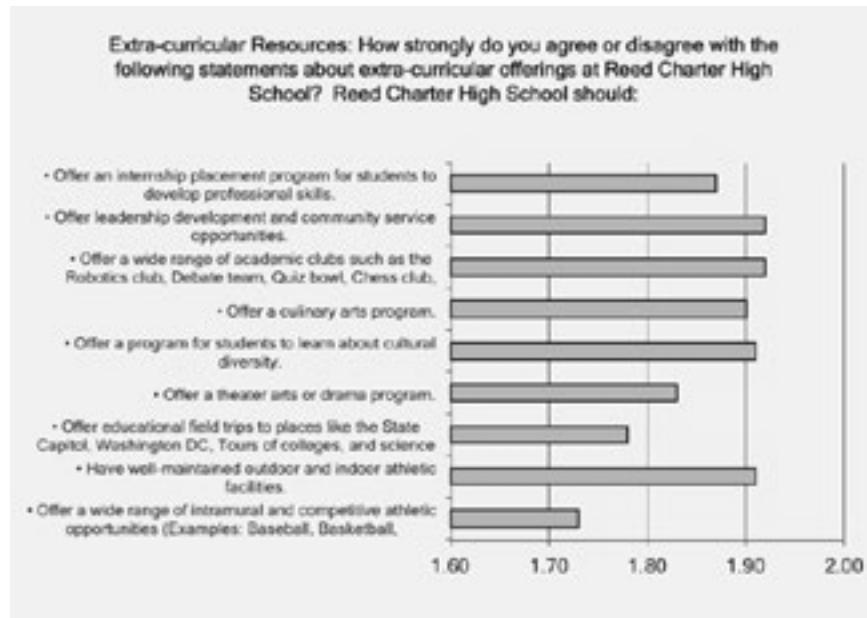
SUMMARY OF DATA

Respondents express support for many different types of courses and academic programs at Reed. There is broad agreement that Reed should provide students with opportunities to enroll in vocational and technical training programs (1.90 mean rating), and nearly equal support for Reed to provide students with opportunities take college preparatory and Advanced Placement classes (1.93 mean rating). There is also broad support for Reed to provide students with a well-rounded liberal arts curriculum that includes civics and fine arts courses (1.85 mean rating). There is slightly less support for a strong STEM emphasis (2.00 mean rating) or ethnic studies course offerings (2.06 mean rating). In summary, respondents do not want Reed to push students into one specific educational track, or to specialize in a particular academic area, but seem to favor a wide array of options.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that Reed offers students a diverse array of academic and elective course offerings, spanning the gamut from technical training classes to advanced placement and college preparatory courses.
- Create a student commission at Reed to review course offerings each year and advise the principal on changes or additions to the academic program.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR RESOURCES



- 1 = STRONGLY AGREE
- 2 = AGREE
- 3 = DISAGREE
- 4 = STRONGLY DISAGREE

SUMMARY OF DATA

Students overwhelmingly value extracurricular and enrichment programs, and believe these programs are necessary to retain students and build a brighter future for Reed.

Mean ratings for each extracurricular

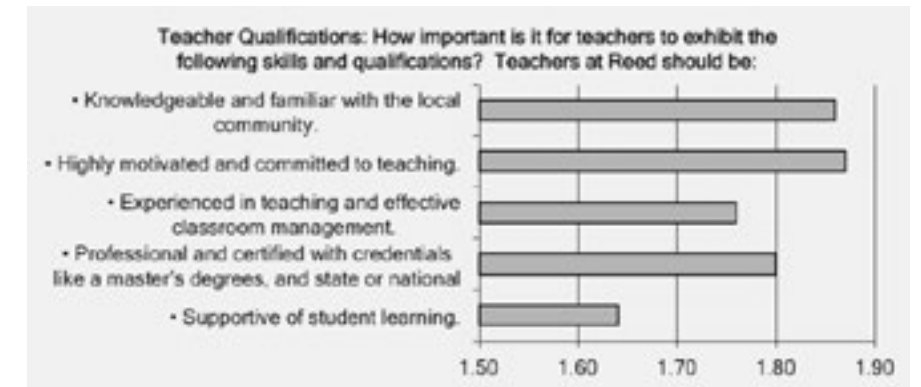
program fall between 1.73 (intramural and competitive athletic opportunities) and 1.92 (academic clubs and community service opportunities), indicating strong support for extra-curricular resources generally. Respondents most strongly agree that there is a need for intramural and competitive athletic opportunities, educational field trips, a theater arts or drama program, and an internship program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create intramural sports leagues for varsity and non-varsity students to improve their health and develop stronger social bonds.
- Provide introductory and intermediate studio arts classes, open to all students, that focus on training and developing students' skills. There should be multiple fine arts classes leading up to the gifted and talented arts class. Note on Present Reality: Currently, Reed only offers a "fine arts survey course," which is primarily textbook-based; students do not have the opportunity to learn art techniques from a trained professional or artist. Reed also offers a gifted/ talented arts class, but only a handful of selected students are chosen for this class.
- Provide introductory, intermediate and advanced music classes, in addition to maintaining a school band program. Note on Present Reality: Reed currently has a band, though students are not offered music classes.
- Offer a theater/drama program led by a trained theater director. The theater program should produce holiday performances that are open to the community, and also offer classes in poetry and creative writing.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

- 1 = VERY IMPORTANT
- 2 = SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
- 3 = SOMEWHAT UNIMPORTANT
- 4 = NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL



SUMMARY OF DATA

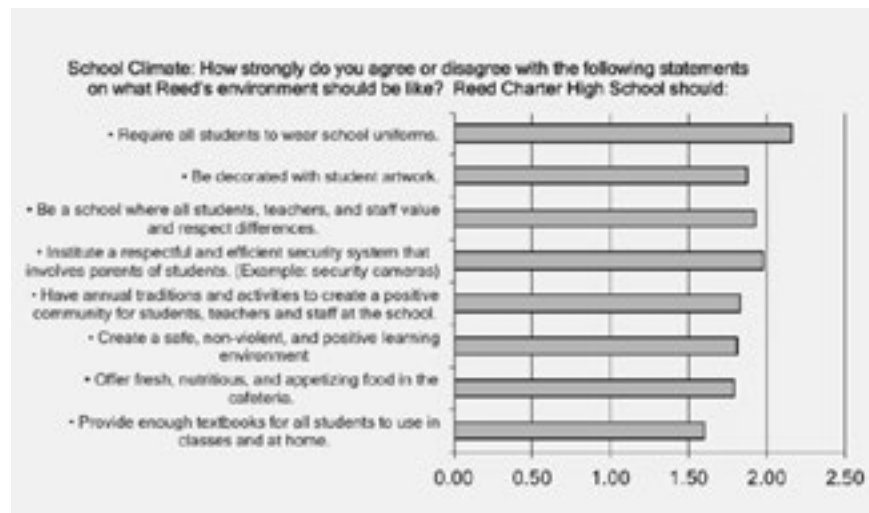
The data reveals that respondents believe there is a tremendous need

for student support services. Mean response ratings for the various services range from 1.60 (Tutoring and Credit Recovery) to 1.93 (Drug and Alcohol Abuse Counseling). 57.8% of students say that tutoring and credit recovery programs are "very important" to them. 44.1% to 51.3% of respondents express that health services such as Drug and Alcohol Abuse Counseling, Medical Counseling and Health Services, Mental Health Counseling and Emotional Support, and Family Planning or Teen Pregnancy Support are "very important" to them. 50.4% of respondents believe that community skills programs for students with severe disabilities are very important.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create an expansive tutoring and credit recovery program, and ensure that all students can have access to afterschool tutors for academic support.
- Create an easily accessible, well-resourced health clinic staffed with medical professionals. At a minimum, health staff and services should include: a fulltime nurse who is accessible to all students throughout the day and after school; a fulltime health counselor who can educate students on health issues, provide health counseling, and make direct referrals to public health agencies; and two fulltime social workers. Ensure that at least one social worker has advanced training in drug and alcohol counseling, and identify one social worker to create a peer counseling/ mentoring program at the school.
- Increase college and career counseling staff so that all students can have individualized support with their college and career planning from 9th grade onward. Aim for a counselor to student ratio of 1:75, and provide opportunities for students to work 1-1 with counselors during lunch and after school.
- Ensure that Reed remains a school that truly accommodates the needs of all disabled students.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT



1= STRONGLY AGREE
 2 = AGREE
 3 = DISAGREE
 4 = STRONGLY DISAGREE

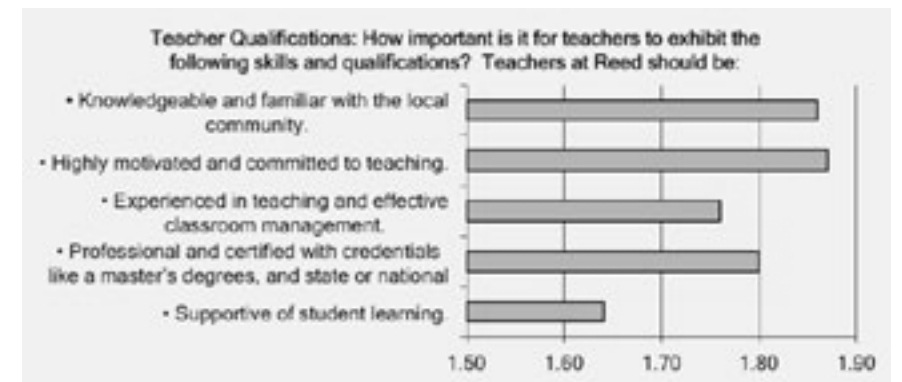
SUMMARY OF DATA

The data reveals consensus amongst respondents concerning different aspects of Reed’s physical environment and school climate. Respondents agreed most strongly with the need for student access to textbooks both inside of class and at home (mean rating of 1.62), as well as the need for fresh, nutritious food (mean rating of 1.80). Respondents also highly value a safe, non-violent learning environment (mean rating of 1.81), vibrant annual traditions and school-wide activities (mean rating of 1.84), and a school that is decorated with student artwork (mean rating of 1.89).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide sufficient textbooks and learning resources for all students to use inside of the classroom and at home.
- Improve school food and promote student health by: 1) providing fresh, healthy meals, with multiple menu options, and; 2) making contract renewals with food providers contingent on high student satisfaction ratings.
- Increase the student government’s operating budget and staff support so that they can host community events and reinvigorate Reed’s annual school traditions.
- Create a student-faculty-parent commission on school safety to help come up with non-punitive solutions that address the root causes of Reed’s social and behavioral problems.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS



1= VERY IMPORTANT
 2 = SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
 3 = SOMEWHAT UNIMPORTANT
 4 = NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL

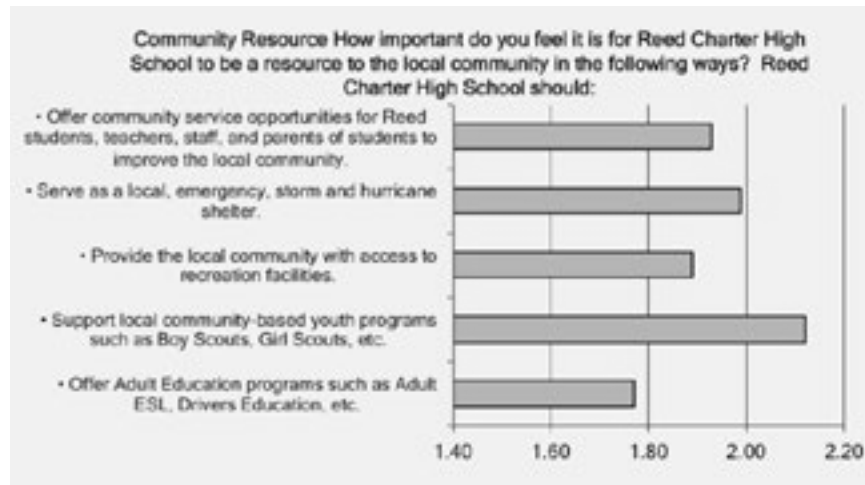
SUMMARY OF DATA

Respondents believe that a diverse array of teacher skills and qualifications are important. Of the qualifications and criteria included in our survey, respondents believe it is most critical that teachers are “supportive of student learning” (mean rating of 1.63), and that they have significant teaching experience (mean rating of 1.75). Respondents, to a slightly lesser degree, value certification, motivation/commitment to teaching, and knowledge of the local community, as additional criteria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that Reed has a significant share of experienced, veteran teachers with mastery in classroom management techniques. These teachers should mentor and support newer teachers.
- Invite students to be a part of teacher interviewing committees and require teaching candidates to conduct mock lessons for a student evaluating committee.
- Convene a diverse inter-stakeholder task force to help define criteria for hiring and evaluating teachers.
- Include students in the teacher evaluation process by distributing confidential student-teacher evaluation surveys each semester.
- Ensure that Reed’s effective, dedicated teachers are retained and empowered as leaders during the school’s transformation process.

COMMUNITY RESOURCE



- 1 = VERY IMPORTANT
- 2 = SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT
- 3 = SOMEWHAT UNIMPORTANT
- 4 = NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL

SUMMARY OF DATA

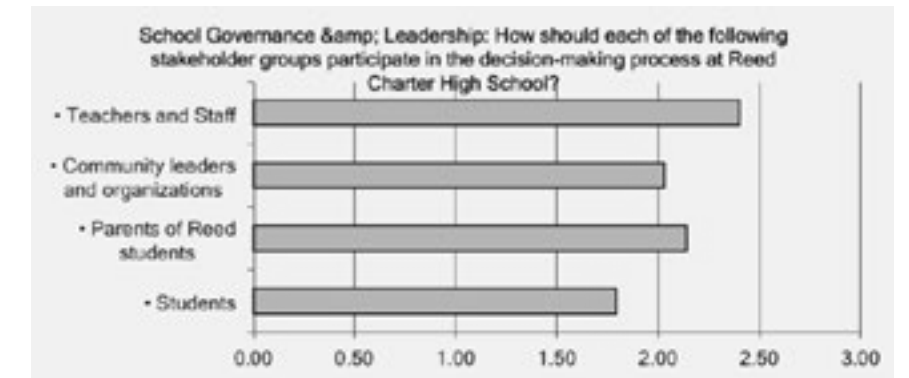
Respondents believe that Reed must be an integral part of the New Orleans East community, responsible for promoting student participation in neighborhood projects, and the community’s participation in Reed programs and events. There is strong support for Reed to become a hub for services and programs that serve the broader community: 51.8% of respondents believe it is very important for Reed to offer Adult Education programs; 43.8% of respondents believe it is very important for Reed to provide the local community access to its recreational facilities; and 38.8% believe Reed should serve as a local, emergency storm shelter. Respondents would also like to see Reed students, teachers, staff, and parents involved in community service projects (mean rating of 1.94). In short, there is broad support for Reed to become a vibrant community school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Offer adult education programs to serve Reed parents and others in the community.
- Create opportunities for the local community to use Reed’s athletic facilities, and create recreational programs that serve the entire community.
- Create durable partnerships between Reed and other local agencies so that Reed students can participate in neighborhood improvement projects, community service opportunities, and internships.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

- 1 = BE MEMBERS OF GOVERNING BOARD
- 2 = VOTE ON DECISIONS
- 3 = PROVIDE GOVERNING BOARD WITH RECOMMENDATIONS
- 4 = NO ROLE



SUMMARY OF DATA

Respondents, the majority of whom are students, believe that students should have significant influence over school governance, and that students should be members of the governing board. 52.0% of respondents believe that students should be members of the governing board at Reed High, and 40.9% of respondents believe that community leaders should be members of the governing board. There is not less consensus amongst respondents about the role that Reed faculty and parents should play in school governance, though respondents clearly think they should be included in decision-making processes. Overall, it is clear that respondents believe the school should be locally controlled, and that decisions affecting the school should be made by the local stakeholders most impacted, including students, community leaders, parents and school staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Place a moratorium on the “school phase out” and “KIPP co-location” decisions until the community has vetted these decisions through an authentic community engagement process.
- Create a Student Advisory Committee (SAC).
- Empower the Student Advisory Committee (SAC) to meet monthly with the school principal to advise on school policies, report on student issues and experiences, and assess the resource needs of students.
- Empower the SAC to meet quarterly with RSD leadership to report on Reed’s transition and progress under the school’s new leadership.
- Empower the SAC to interview all charter operators vying to takeover the school, and produce written feedback and recommendations to the RSD and BESE regarding the desirability of these operators.
- Hold public events for community members to examine and deliver feedback on potential charter operators and their school plans. Empower community members to submit feedback on plans, and publish this feedback online for public viewing.
- Lastly, empower students and parents to approve or veto any potential charter takeover through a democratic process.

III. CONCLUSION

The Reed community has articulated a set of broad priorities, as well as concrete recommendations, for shaping Reed's future. Students, in particular, share a vision for what Reed can become, and wish to be part of making this vision a reality. While school closures and restructuring are part and parcel of New Orleans's education reform experiment, it is critical that change happens at Reed with the community, rather than being imposed on the community.

New Orleans' educational transformation will only become democratic, and arguably sustainable, when students and local community members are given meaningful opportunities to participate in, influence, and own the institutional changes that impact their lives. We remain committed to Reed's future, and are determined to be a vital part of creating this future.

NEXT STEPS

Over the summer, the Reed Renaissance Initiative and the Villages of the East Coalition will be working on projects related to improving Sarah T. Reed. Please consider joining one of our various committees so that you can help us bring about the changes we want to see at Reed, and so that we continue to demand student and community voice.

STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

This group will be involved with school governance, policy advocacy, and community engagement related to major decisions concerning the school's future.

SCHOOL SAFETY COMMITTEE

This group will work with the principal, security personnel, students, and teachers on designing preventative and/or restorative measures that will make the school safe for students.

STUDENT MEDIA AND JOURNALISM COMMITTEE

This group will work on plans to revitalize a student journalism and media program at Reed for 2012-2013.

COLLEGE AND CAREER FAIR COMMITTEE

This group will host a large college and career fair in Fall 2012.

STATEMENT ON KIPP

The Reed Renaissance Initiative does not approve of KIPP Renaissance or any other program collocated at our school for the 2012-2013 school year. Reed already has enough of its own challenges academically and socially, with students struggling to get the support and resources they need. We believe this decision will jeopardize the safety and wellbeing of Reed students, and potentially KIPP students. We will continue to publicly speak out against this decision, and we will raise our voices in the year ahead if this decision results in any outcomes that are detrimental to the emotional, physical or academic wellbeing of Reed students.

CONDITIONS REGARDING KIPP CO-LOCATION:

If the RSD moves forward to place KIPP Renaissance at Reed against the will of students and the community, we are requesting the following minimum conditions be respected in order to ensure equity and safety for Reed students:

- A join-student safety commission shall be formed and staffed by the RSD to design preventive measures aimed at reducing conflicts between student populations.
- The Reed Student Advisory Committee, NOECA, and RSD representatives shall meet monthly with the KIPP Renaissance school leader and RSD leadership to voice any concerns regarding the KIPP program's effect on Reed students.
- KIPP shall be required to leave the Reed site after two years, regardless of whether their permanent site is ready for occupancy.
- Reed students shall be guaranteed that there will be no reduction in their access to the library, athletic facilities, science classes or laboratories, auditorium, or the cafeteria.
- There shall be resource parity between the two programs. The RSD must guarantee that the per-pupil budget for Reed students matches or surpasses the per-pupil budget for KIPP students.
- A social worker to student ratio of 1:75 shall be maintained at Reed in order to address the increased emotional, social and behavioral needs of students caused by a combustible social environment and rival student populations.