



NATIONAL
CHARTER SCHOOL
RESOURCE CENTER

Charter Management Organization Grantee Profiles

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Introduction

The U.S. Department of Education awards grants to Charter Management Organizations for the Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools (CMO Grants) for the replication and expansion of high-quality charter schools. A charter management organization, or CMO, is defined by the U.S. Department of Education Charter School Programs (CSP) as a nonprofit organization that operates or manages a network of charter schools linked by centralized support, operations, and oversight.¹

The following CSP Charter Management Organization (CMO) grantee profiles capture key elements of each grantee's project and disseminate lessons learned and project successes. Each profile includes key elements of the grantee's project, a description of major grant activities with a general timeline, highlights of project successes and lessons learned, and quotes from grantees.

Each profile draws on the respective grantee's CSP application, completed project evaluation where available, public website, and interviews with leaders of the grant-funded project. Grant activities described in these profiles are not exhaustive, but instead reflect the focus of project leaders at the time they were interviewed. Links to grantees' CSP applications and websites are provided throughout the document where applicable. Any data collected from external data sources is additionally cited. All statements of fact or causality are derived from grantee publications or interviews and have not been verified or vetted by NCSRC except where explicitly stated.

Further Reading

National Charter School Resource Center (2020). [Preparation for Replication: Case Study of AECL](#).

National Charter School Resource Center (2020). Expansion and Replication Reflection Tool: Questions to Ask Before You Expand (forthcoming on NCSRC website)

¹ [Federal Register, Vol. 84, No. 228](#)

AppleTree Schools

Grantee Overview

The mission of [AppleTree Institute for Education Innovation, Inc.](#) (AppleTree) is “to close the achievement gap before students get to kindergarten” so they are ready to thrive.² AppleTree has replicated its charter school model to serve 11 campuses in Washington, D.C. As of the 2019–20 school year, AppleTree served approximately 1,200 three- and four-year-olds at nine campuses across the city.³ Of those, 90% are identified as from economically disadvantaged circumstances and 58% are regarded as being “at risk.” In its 2020–21 [school quality reports](#), AppleTree’s authorizer rated five of its schools as Tier 1 (high-performing) and one as Tier 2 (mid-performing).

AppleTree created [Every Child Ready](#), an evidence-based response-to-intervention instructional model, through a U.S. Department of Education Investing in Innovation grant in 2010. *Every Child Ready* integrates what to teach, how to teach, and how to measure progress on a scalable technology platform. *Every Child Ready* is a foundational element of AppleTree’s expansion and replication activities.

The Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools Grant

- AppleTree Schools
- Washington, D.C.
- CMO grant awarded in 2019
- Total expected funding over five years: \$6,514,480
- As of SY 2019–20, CMO served 1,189 pre-K students at nine campuses

Grant Goal⁴

Replicate AppleTree’s success by creating nine new schools located in high-need areas of Washington, D.C. and thereby double its size, providing a high-quality preschool education to nearly 2,600 children annually.

Grant Timeline

Year 1: Opened a new program at a Rocketship Public Charter Schools site.

Next Steps: Planning to open two sites in August 2020. One is at a Rocketship in Fort Totten and a second is new construction expected to be completed in June 2020.

Grant Activities

AppleTree is using the replication grant to expand and deepen their impact within D.C. Over the five years of the CSP grant, AppleTree is opening nine schools to serve disadvantaged children and will support all new schools to implement *Every Child Ready*. AppleTree is replicating by establishing two kinds of charter preschools: standalone charter preschools and preschools centered on co-location and a partnership with a CMO serving subsequent grades. In the

² [AppleTree’s 2019 CSP grant application](#)

³ [U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data](#)

⁴ Adapted from [AppleTree’s 2019 CSP grant application](#)

latter arrangement, AppleTree is the CMO for preschool grades Pre-K3 and Pre-K4 while another third-party CMO manages grades kindergarten and higher.⁵

Project Successes

When reflecting on the successes of replicating its sites across Washington, D.C., AppleTree’s CEO Jack McCarthy points to the relationships with other CMOs that AppleTree has developed. In a city that is rapidly gentrifying, accessing facilities has been an ongoing challenge for charter schools. However, through partnering with existing charter schools that serve higher grade levels, AppleTree has replicated to new sites, offering high-quality early learning programming and providing students a seamless school experience when transitioning from preschool to kindergarten.

AppleTree is also supporting schools piloting *Every Child Ready* in New York City, Austin, and Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas. “All education is local,” notes McCarthy. “The conditions for early childhood education in D.C. are different from other cities. Having a program that is scalable and buildable is key to creating effective early learning programs in every new place.” He adds that AppleTree seeks to implement *Every Child Ready* in other cities by identifying willing operators with the right conditions to move forward.

“*Our mission is very closely focused on supporting three- and four-year-olds and ensuring that they enter school ready to thrive. We want to expand the number of schools we are operating ourselves, but we are also helping other schools operate to implement our programming. We always point back to our mission to raise outcomes for vulnerable three- and four-year-olds.*

— Jack McCarthy, CEO of AppleTree

⁵ [AppleTree’s 2019 CSP grant application](#)

Grantee's Lessons Learned

Evidence-based investments in early learning implemented by quality charter operators create an opportunity to scale effective programs. AppleTree prioritizes evidence-based practices in its *Every Child Ready* model. AppleTree believes that charter schools concentrating on evidence-based early learning approaches like *Every Child Ready* provide an effective and scalable way to reach greater percentages of children. “If we continue to scale the program, it will be an important lesson for the country to learn how we can serve our most vulnerable kids – those who would benefit the most from early learning programs,” McCarthy notes.

Be flexible with a focus on the end goal. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, AppleTree shifted to distance early learning supports for families and teachers. McCarthy emphasized flexibility and adaptability when facing challenges. “We are involved in distance learning without being face to face. We’re adapting and trying to figure out what is effective.”

Brooke Charter Schools

Grantee Overview

[Brooke Charter Schools'](#) (Brooke's) mission is "to provide an academically rigorous public education to students from the city of Boston that will ensure they are prepared to attend and succeed in college."⁶ Since Brooke opened its first middle school in 2002, it has grown to a network of four public charter schools serving nearly 2,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade. As of 2019–20, Brooke served a population that was nearly 47% economically disadvantaged.⁷ In 2019, Brooke students across all four schools outperformed the Boston Public Schools and the state average for all students on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS).⁸

The Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools Grant

- Brooke Charter Schools
- Boston, Massachusetts
- CMO grant awarded in 2017
- Total expected funding over five years: \$836,136
- As of SY 2019–20, CMO served 1,969 K–12 students at four campuses

Brooke credits their success to a focus on supporting excellent teaching: "We revere teaching as an intellectual profession. We believe great teachers are made, not born."⁹ Providing teachers with comprehensive supports, including coaching from administrators and peers, is foundational to Brooke's approach to developing great teachers capable of rigorous instruction. Brooke shares its [learning standards](#), teacher-developed curricula, and professional development resources through its [website](#). Additionally, [Brooke compensates its teachers](#) with annual raises based on tenure alongside the demonstration of excellent teaching, allowing teachers to earn more than teachers in neighboring districts over time.

Grant Timeline

Year 1: Expanded Brooke High School enrollment to 9th and 10th graders.

Year 2: Expanded enrollment to 11th graders.

Year 3: Expanded enrollment to 12th graders. Brooke High founding class graduated in 2020.

Next Steps: Brooke High School graduates enroll in and attend college.

Grant Goals¹⁰

1. Ensure students "have the preparation necessary to gain admission to and succeed in college."
2. Expand enrollment in Brooke's first high school, founded in 2016, by 600 students over several years.

⁶ [Brooke Charter Schools' 2017 CSP grant application](#)

⁷ [Massachusetts Department of Education, School and District Profiles, Brooke Charter School \(District\)](#)

⁸ [Massachusetts Department of Education, School and District Profiles, Brooke Charter School \(District\)](#) and [Massachusetts Department of Education, School and District Profiles, Boston Public Schools](#)

⁹ [Brooke website](#)

¹⁰ [Brooke Charter Schools' 2017 CSP grant application](#)

Grant Activities

Through a 2017 CSP expansion grant, Brooke is expanding enrollment at Brooke High School. Beginning in August of 2017, Brooke expanded enrollment to 9th and 10th graders in a temporary building. In August of 2018, Brooke additionally expanded to include 11th graders and moved Brooke High School to a newly built permanent campus. In August of 2019, Brooke expanded to include 12th graders, who graduated in Spring 2020.

Project Successes

Brooke leaders are learning to adapt their model for developing and retaining excellent teachers to a high school setting. Brooke has developed a slightly different approach to coaching high school teachers, as opposed to its elementary and middle grade teachers. This includes developing new positions for content experts, who will serve as chairs of various subjects to guide the teacher curriculum development teams and to lead observation and coaching of teachers alongside the principal and assistant principal. “We structure everything around teachers. We want to do everything we can to keep teachers in the classroom,” said Hagar Berlin, Chief Development Officer for Brooke. Brooke’s yearly survey of teachers, Berlin adds, consistently shows that teachers most highly value working with a team and opportunities to learn from and plan with their peers.



Elevating the teaching profession is an enormous national challenge... We believe that it is at the school level where the most necessary and powerful contributions to this effort must be made. To prove that great teaching can close the achievement gap, we need to show that our model can succeed at scale and can succeed in serving students across the K-12 spectrum.

— Brooke Charter Schools’ 2017 CSP grant application

Grantee's Lessons Learned

Remain focused on creating and sustaining a culture of achievement. Brooke remains focused on high achievement of their students. Formerly, when the school's K–8 assessment results were lower than the state level (although still higher than Boston Public Schools), Brooke leaders worked with their teachers to build consensus around the belief that every student is capable of achieving at a high level. This standard is reinforced regularly to Brooke staff and students at all schools.

Family Life Academy Charter Schools Inc.

Grantee Overview

[Family Life Academy Charter Schools](#) (FLACS) supports high-needs students in the Bronx through individualized programming support, a holistic curriculum, wellness and support resources, and a culture of accountability to help every child achieve high standards. FLACS opened its first campus to 100 kindergarten and first-grade students in the fall of 2001 and, as of the 2019–20 school year, grew to more than 1,000 students in kindergarten through eighth grade serving students at four campuses: one middle and three elementary schools.¹¹ As of the 2018–19 school year, 93% of FLACS students qualified for free- and reduced-price lunch¹² and their student population was 73% Hispanic and 13% English learners (ELs).¹³

The Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools Grant

- Family Life Academy Charter Schools
- Bronx, New York
- CMO grant awarded in 2017
- Total expected funding over five years: \$900,000
- As of SY 2019–20, CMO served 1,099 K–8 students at four campuses

Grant Goals¹⁴

1. Create access to high-quality educational programs for middle school students in the South Bronx so students in this underserved community make progress and achieve high standards, thereby closing persistent achievement gaps within these communities.
2. Expand enrollment by 600 students by opening FLACS Middle School serving grades 6–8.

Grant Activities

FLACS is using its 2017 CSP grant funds to support its strategic growth plan to build a middle school campus and expand its current middle school enrollment. Ongoing grant activities include building capacity within its management to support FLACS' growing network of schools.

Grant Timeline

Year 1: Planned for the middle school campus and sought additional funding sources to support middle school initiatives. Served middle school students at the existing FLACS II campus.

Year 2: Hired staff for the middle school. Expanded middle school enrollment at the FLACS II campus.

Year 3: Opened the middle school building (delayed a year for building issues that included the weather) for the 2019–2020 school year.

Next Steps: Expand enrollment by grade Disseminate middle

¹¹ [U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data](#)

¹² [U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data](#)

¹³ [New York State Education Department, School Report Cards](#)

¹⁴ [Family Life Academy Charter Schools' 2017 CSP grant application](#)

Project Successes

FLACS attributes successful project implementation to early planning and project management, teacher supports, and a whole-child focus. Opening the new school building required strategic business operations with intensive project management and planning, which required a trusting team culture. The CEO and COO built a cohesive team focused on the end goals and developed project management processes to keep the team aware of everyone's progress.

FLACS is committed to building a cohesive education experience for all students through its CSP-funded expansion and replication work. FLACS has implemented a cohesive K–8 curriculum embedded with EL programming that includes curriculum maps and structured pacing guides for teachers. One school leader, when speaking about the importance of having individualized, structured student supports built into the curriculum, noted, “We spent a couple years putting together teams across campuses to consider how to create vertical alignment in the curriculum to support our students entering high school. We want to provide seamless transitions as well as consistent expectations for students coming from FLACS elementary schools.”



Essential to our charter is that students take responsibility for their learning and affirm human values. We not only want our students to be lifelong learners, but also thoughtful citizens of our global society, who will make choices to make this world a better place.

— FLACS' 2017 CSP grant application

Grantee's Lessons Learned

Caregivers require supports when students transition schools. FLACS leaders recognize that both students and their caregivers transitioning from elementary to middle school experience a culture change. When opening the middle school, the FLACS principal provided workshops for caregivers on child and adolescent brain development to support caregivers in understanding the changes their children experienced. FLACS is considering ways to offer additional transitional supports for caregivers of middle school students.

Think ahead in the grant cycle. FLACS encourages prospective grantees to review and think through their grant evaluation criteria at the start of the grant cycle. This aids with gathering the materials and evidence a school will need when grant monitoring occurs.

Hiawatha Academies

Grantee Overview

[Hiawatha Academies](#) is a network of high-performing college preparatory schools focused on closing the opportunity gap by providing educational equity for students in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Originally opened in 2007, Hiawatha now serves 1,532 students in K-12 at five campuses: two elementary, two middle, and one high school. Eighty-three percent of the student body is eligible for free- and reduced-price lunch and 57% are English learners.¹⁵

Hiawatha’s college preparatory educational program is based on rigor, intellect, and character, with the goal that students will achieve academically and contribute to the social good. Hiawatha purposefully fosters a culture of diversity and inclusion. All Hiawatha Academies employees participate in professional development training in diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural competence. “As much as we want our teachers to be competent in instruction, we also want them to be culturally competent,” emphasizes Christine Reed, Program Manager at Hiawatha. “That requires staff to reflect on themselves as individuals and their expectations for students and communities. A lot of work is done around building relationships with families across differences, including different languages.” Hiawatha also states that it intentionally hires staff to reflect the diversity of its student body.¹⁶

The Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools Grant

- Hiawatha Academies
- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- CMO grant awarded in 2017
- Total expected funding over five years: \$1,875,000
- As of SY 2019–20, CMO served nearly 1,532 K–12 students at five campuses

Grant Goal¹⁷

“Scale the Hiawatha network of schools so that educationally disadvantaged students in Minneapolis have a seamless K-12 educational experience in schools that close historic achievement gaps.”

Grant Activities

With a 2017 CSP grant, Hiawatha is both replicating and expanding its programming, thereby doubling its enrollment. During the five years of the grant, Hiawatha will create 850 seats for

¹⁵ Author calculations of NCES SY 2018–19 data: [Hiawatha Academies \(District\)](#); [Hiawatha Leadership Academy – Morris Park](#); [Hiawatha Leadership Academy – Northrop](#); [Hiawatha College Prep – Kingfield](#); [Hiawatha College Prep – Northrop](#); [Hiawatha Collegiate High School](#)

¹⁶ [Hiawatha Academies’ 2017 CSP grant application](#)

¹⁷ As stated in [Hiawatha Academies’ 2017 CSP grant application](#)

underserved students in Minneapolis. As part of achieving this goal, Hiawatha opened a second middle school campus and expanded two existing campuses to include additional grades.

Grant Timeline

Year 1: Recruited and hired school staff. Expanded an elementary school campus to include grade 4.

Year 2: Opened middle school with grade 5. Expanded high school with the addition of grade 12.

Year 3: Expanded middle school enrollment to grade 6. Two expansion schools are complete. Replication schools are ongoing.

Next Steps: Continue to expand by adding grade 7 in Year 4, then adding grade 8 in Year 5.

Project Successes

Hiawatha determined this expansion was critical to the mission of preparing students for college. In expanding student enrollment across the elementary, middle, and high schools, Hiawatha seeks to provide a continuous K–12 educational experience to students and their families. Hiawatha reports that 100% of students in its first two graduating classes were accepted to college.



In the quest to expand, care needs to be taken to ensure the quality of your core mission is maintained. That's hard to do in any industry. As we replicated, we saw a shift away from the quality of our core mission. We had to adjust our focus on realigning back to our mission and equity vision. We can easily grow and open more seats, but if we're not providing excellent education and equity, then it's not worth opening seats.

— Christine Reed, Program Manager at Hiawatha

Grantee's Lessons Learned

Creating an excellent program requires the right systems to support staff and sustain growth. The leadership at Hiawatha determined that as they grew, creating scalable systems and processes – as opposed to maintaining work in a siloed system of individual roles – was critical to creating a shared understanding and equitable distribution of the work. Reed described the need to establish scalable systems and refocus on their core mission of equity as the network expanded. “The success of our program is both intimately people-dependent and systems-dependent, so that the staff aren't

stretched thin.” With continued scale, a school must determine how to intentionally grow those systems to support the educational work and the administrative management of the grant.