



# SCHOOL FOR SUPERHEROES DESIGN PHASE

1. School Mission & Culture
2. Teaching & Learning
3. Student Agency & Engagement
4. Networks & Partnerships

## 1. SCHOOL MISSION & CULTURE

What mission, purpose, and core values will animate and unify your school? Consider how these might build the engagement of students and adults, rally the support of your community, and drive the development of your school.

Provide up to 300 words and/or describe and upload 1-3 videos, images, or other materials that illustrate how you

might communicate your mission to others, including prospective students, teachers, and parents.

### **SUBMITTED 2/11/16:**

*The mission of School for Superheroes is to support students to combine their superpowers (character strengths), passions, and interests to create a learning experience of their own making. In order to support, and not obstruct, where a student needs to go, we exert our energy to create a culture and organizational structure that can respond favorably to change. We must be able to pivot to follow a student in a new direction and celebrate that change, not resist it.*

*Rather than teachers assigned by content subject area, School for Superheroes will invite advisors from the community as well school personnel, parents, and fellow students to participate on an individual student's project advising team. This team will guide and facilitating projects through classroom time, exploration outside of the school, and participation in the Conference. Because we recognize that everyone has unique superpowers and knowledge to share, learning can come from every quarter. In addition, the community may identify a need in a Roundtable discussion that would create an opportunity to develop team projects coordinated by the whole school (e.g., cleaning up local wetlands, planting a*

*community garden, etc.).*

*The culture of School for Superheroes will be found both inside and outside of the school building. Many school experiences will carry the students outside of the school, either for externships, volunteer activities, or fieldwork for research projects. In addition, the community will be invited inside the school to participate in learning projects and Roundtable discussions. These inflows and outflows will create a more permeable boundary that will invite members of the community to contribute to the school's culture and, with the use of the structured circles, give Roundtable participants a model for communicating that takes into account the health and welfare of everyone in the community.*

## **2. TEACHING & LEARNING**

How will you enable and demonstrate student-centered, standards-based learning at your school? Illustrate your vision by describing two learning experiences that show how students will learn deeply and build toward mastery.

For each learning experience, consider the following:

- Specific learning activities students will engage in
- Knowledge and skills students will develop, and how their learning will be assessed and shared
- Role(s) teachers or other adults will play
- When and where learning will take place
- Facilities, technology, or other resources that will be needed

Provide up to 150 words per learning experience, and/or describe and upload 1-3 videos, images, or other materials that illustrate to prospective students, teachers, and parents how learning will be different and exciting at your school.

### **SUBMITTED 2/11/16:**

*Today I got to sit in on the Roundtable with the owner of the paint store, a college professor, the director of a food pantry, a park ranger, and some parents and advisors from this school. We followed a format where everyone got a chance to talk about the school and what we think the businesses and people in the community need. We also talked about Randall's recycling project (using his superpower of judgment/critical thinking). The park ranger was new to the*

*Roundtable, so they also explained how the Airlock works, which is a circle that she has to be a part of before she can sit in on a Conference. I was included in the group decisions about who to ask from the community to be a part of Randall's advising team, to sit in on his Conference. These business people and professors were really curious about my point-of-view!*

*First day in a new school. I've done this before. My big question is, am I going to fit in? But this school is different. My advising team wants to know all about me and asked me to create something including 24 superpowers, this list of character strengths. I'm going to make a Superpower board game. When I figure out which superpower(s) I want to work on, they'll help me find a way to use them to ask a question, make something, or start a project. It's kind of disorienting. It's like, here, the sky's the limit. I've always wanted to know how people in power handle all that responsibility and I like to use humor. They say we'll find most of our answers out in the world. I'm thinking about visiting the State Capitol to figure out ways to get politicians to laugh more and shout less.*

### **3. STUDENT AGENCY & ENGAGEMENT**

How will your school support and enable students to form positive identities as continuous learners, build complex skills, and contribute as members of their communities? Develop profiles of 2-3 representative students and describe their growth and development through high school.

Provide up to 300 words and/or describe and upload 1-3 videos, images, or other materials that illustrate to prospective students, teachers, and parents how your school will cultivate student agency and engagement.

#### **SUBMITTED 2/11/16:**

*I love this school, but I often feel like an astronaut, looking at my own planet from space, and think about what my friends are doing at my old school today. I used to worry, "what will happen after we leave here? Will we be prepared to take the SAT or get into college?" But every time I completed an externship, volunteer project, or presentation on my research, I realized that I am going to be a different kind of college applicant than my friends. Each time my Conference team reconvened and I did the self-assessment about where I had been and where I wanted to go next, my story grew more complex and interesting. I am going to have something to say and it won't come from a transcript or test scores. It will come from me!*

*My old school was obsessed with testing. This school is all about tests again, but totally different. Every self-assessment I do starts with my superpowers and how I want to use them. But now that I'm about to graduate, I can tell the whole story from where I started, what superpowers I wanted to use, and what I've learned here, which is a lot. I started with a question about who gets to travel to other planets (superpower of fairness), got to interview an astronaut, visit where they made the Space Shuttle, and then my "mission" took a right turn into learning about jet fuel and suborbital flight (superpowers of critical thinking and love of learning). I don't want to be an astronaut anymore but I love physics and want to study aerospace engineering. My Conference team didn't give me any resistance when I changed course. In fact, they kind of celebrated. It convinced me that they were really there for me.*

#### **4. NETWORKS & PARTNERSHIPS**

What partners will be part of the ongoing work of the school? Explain how partners will work together to design and plan the school, and how your partnership will support student learning, engagement, development, and connection to post-secondary success.

Provide up to 300 words and/or describe and upload 1-3 videos, images, or other materials that illustrate to prospective students, teachers, and parents how your school will draw upon deep partnerships to expand and enhance student experiences.

#### **SUBMITTED 2/11/16:**

*The Roundtable is the cornerstone of three regular, structured dialogues that form the core of School for Superheroes, necessary to adapt and respond to the future and because relevant learning occurs in the world outside the school walls, engaged with the community, to address shared problems or contribute to a shared goal with the community.*

*Schools are located in, but isolated from, communities. Teachers and school leaders use one-way announcements and reports to inform parents about school activities or their child's behavior and achievement. Parents may play large and small roles within the community, but their communication with the people that make up the school is usually limited to their child's performance (and usually problems, rather than on positive news). Unless we face an educational crisis*

*(school closures, a spike in violent incidents, etc.) there is rarely an honest, sustained dialogue between school leaders, parents, and students and the people that make up and lead the community.*

*Students and parents at the Schools for Superheroes will engage in a completely different kind of communication with the community. At the Roundtable, community members (parents or not) are invited to participate in regularly-scheduled discussions about potential areas of collaboration, shared concerns, collective solutions and supports that would serve to provide mutually beneficial experiences and outcomes for all community and school members. Whenever appropriate, dialogue facilitators would guide the participants through an appreciative inquiry process, so that action could focus on leveraging strengths and building on small successes. The Roundtable would be an essential way to build relationships, share skills, solve problems, support students, help students support the community, and ensure collective action toward the common good.*

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