
Case Study: DC Prep-Edgewood Middle Campus

Washington, DC | Grades 4-8 | 95% African-American | 82% Free and reduced lunch | Founded in 2003

Mission and Vision: Can't Do Everything

No is a word that Katie Severn had to get very comfortable with saying when she took over as principal of the DC Prep-Edgewood Middle Campus in Washington DC. *"There are a lot of things in the world of education that come at you, a lot of good ideas,"* she says. *"Everybody's got a good idea and people are well intentioned—they want to help kids—but not all of those good ideas actually are the right levers to push and pull to get kids what they need."*

Leaders must have a clear vision, based on research, and use that vision to guide their decisions. *"To say no when you have to say no is a hard thing for people to do,"* says Severn, former principal of the school who is now chief academic officer of the DC Prep network. There will be enthusiastic parents, donors and board members who come pitching projects; and saying no to school supporters is anything but easy.

While Severn considers herself hopeful about the future of her kids, she finds it funny that she spends her day operating out of a place of *no*. Staff members come to her and say can I try this? And she thinks of all the things that can go wrong before she can say yes. *"Every one thing one person does has an impact on everything else that's going on, and you can't do everything well. You have to have focus in*

order to have quality," she says.

Early on as principal, she realized the problems that come with trying to do too much. Outside organizations operated some of the after school tutoring and other activities. But the adults in those programs were not necessarily schooled in the DC Prep way, which resulted in mixed messages

being sent to kids. Severn cut back on those programs to keep the school focused on culture. *"Most school leaders, especially new ones, especially young ones, have a really hard time saying no. That would be my advice: Learn to say no about the right things and do it with heart and do*

it because it's the right thing to do for kids and not because it might hurt some adult's feelings," she says. *"They'll get over it. They're adults."*

DC Prep founder Emily Lawson agrees. *"It's easy to be responsive to the external world and end up adding a million programs on that have nothing to do with your mission,"* she says. The administration fields many great ideas, but can't pursue everything that seems exciting. The answer sometimes has to be: *"We don't have the bandwidth to do that right now,"*

Lawson says.

"To say no when you have to say no is a hard thing for people to do."

Case Study: DC Prep-Edgewood Middle Campus

Washington, DC | Grades 4-8 | 95% African-American | 82% Free and reduced lunch | Founded in 2003

Hiring: Grow Your Own Leaders

The hardest thing about opening DC Prep was finding the right person to run the school, says founder Emily Lawson. Now, a decade in, her team has found it better to grow leaders from within. Case in point: Cassie Pergament, the current principal of their high-performing Edgewood Middle Campus, who took over when former principal Katie Severn became chief academic officer. Pergament started as a teacher, and continually sought out additional leadership opportunities. When an opening emerged, the administration already knew she was a fit with the culture, she understood the mission, and would carry out both as they wanted.

"We found it hard to find people from outside. Their level of preparedness—some of them haven't seen excellence," Lawson says. But for staff, "we've already seen them perform really well, so it makes more sense for them to grow up to be who we want to lead our schools."

Here is what she looks for in DC Prep school leaders:

- A strong belief that all kids can learn at a high level. *"Obviously everybody says that these days,"* Lawson says. But she's looking for someone who has shown all kids can learn. *"If they haven't been a really successful teacher themselves, they don't have the conviction that it could be done,"* she says.
- Typically, leaders have past experience being part of an excellent organization. *"They've seen the culture, the rigor, the expectations of what can happen. When people haven't been in that kind of environment, it's hard for them to envision and operationalize,"* Lawson says.
- An agreement on the school mission and model.
- An emphasis on teaching and learning as the most important thing. *"We wouldn't want to have a principal who is all about special events. What happens in the classroom is where we want them to be."*
- Ability to push academic rigor. *"Someone who*

knows quality instruction and knows enough about instruction to be a high-quality coach," she says.

- Focus on a strong culture. Someone who can connect with kids and develop good relationships, but is not afraid to hold students accountable.
- Ability to communicate messages and plans in person and in writing to faculty, students and parents.
- Strong organizational skills. *"For them to stay on top of the small things and stay on top of the big things is a Herculean effort,"* Lawson says. *"By being very organized, you can be out in front of the people you're leading and show them where you're going."*
- Self-awareness and a commitment to improvement.

The Difficult Conversation

The first year in her job as principal at DC Prep-Edgewood Middle Campus, Cassie Pergament had to have the dreaded conversation with a teacher who was not a fit with the rest of the team. But once she confronted the teacher, things went much better than Pergament expected. Relieved, the teacher confessed that she had been crying every night, saying *"I can't do this."* The staff all knew the teacher was overwhelmed, and even daily coaching in her classroom was not leading to progress. They tried a lot of different coaching approaches, including recording her lessons. Once Pergament talked with her about not fitting with the rest of the team, they could focus on improving things in her classroom until she left, agreeing someone else would manage her kids so she could concentrate on her lesson. They worked together to tell the team she was not coming back. *"It was a story of her team really liked her as a person, but knew how much she was struggling, and wanted to make sure it was smooth for kids,"* Pergament says.

Case Study: DC Prep-Edgewood Middle Campus

Washington, DC | Grades 4-8 | 95% African-American | 82% Free and reduced lunch | Founded in 2003

More than Just a Routine

A 5th-grade boy greets visitors at the door of his reading class. He starts talking but then reminds himself to look into a visitor's eyes, as all students are instructed to do when speaking to adults. He explains that the class just had a lesson about the difference between fact and opinion and is now marking up a text about recycling. *"You've heard the expression your heart can change?"* he asks. *"Well, you put your heart into opinion,"* he explains to summarize the class lesson.

He returns to his desk, and teacher Katie Michaels makes her way through the room. *"I notice students like Sasha are making notes,"* she comments. *"You're doing this,"* she says to another, looking out the window in a distracted way. *"Doing this is not going to make you smart. I want you to understand this,"* she says to the student. Her tone blends a no-nonsense approach with warmth. Her classroom procedures and her style set out clear goals for the students through symbols, routines and constant affirmation.

Throughout her class, Michaels uses student examples to show students what excellent work looks like. *"I use a lot of data to show them where they are, making things very transparent, making expectations very clear, and being very consistently accountable,"* she says. But she is careful to also celebrate progress, being thoughtful about exactly what to spotlight.

To start the class discussion, she says *"I need you here in 3,2,1."* And she starts to go over the strategy for their exit ticket. With nine minutes on the timer clock, she directs them to mark up the text by putting a heart around opinions and a cloud around facts. She starts checking their papers with a red sharpie marker, throwing both fists above her head and pulling them down with a silent "Yes!" as she reacts to one student's 100 percent. She directs others to

go back and find how they can prove a sentence is a fact. Michaels says she wants every student to get a 4 or 5 out of 5 on the exit ticket. She starts handing out "Responsible E's" for "voices turned off" as part of a comprehensive behavior system at DC Prep.

Then it is on to reading. The room remains quiet as the students move through different assignments in their journals, with occasional interruptions. Michaels has projected an independent reading rubric on the board that lays out student expectations.

- 1= Oops. You wasted precious reading time.
- 2= So-so.
- 3= Wow.
- 4= Outstanding. You are reading way down deep. You are lost in the book. You talked back to the book in your head.

In the back of the room, boards are dedicated to showing where each student is as a reader, with each group's skills and the skills they need to master detailed. *"I want kids to understand where they are in reading and own it and know what they need to do to improve,"* she says. At the end, the class gets "Responsible I's" marked on their Prep Notes for an "incredibly focused reading period," Michaels says.

The Prep Note is a tool DC Prep uses to set high behavior expectations, while giving kids the vocabulary and understanding of the social and interpersonal skills they need to be successful. Each letter of the alphabet stands for a particular "Prep Skill" that students should exhibit at their grade level to be successful. For example, in 5th grade the letter F stands for Following Directions. Students can earn a "Responsible F" if they followed directions properly, or an "Irresponsible F" if they did not. The Prep Note tallies student's behavior throughout the school day, then is taken home nightly to parents. Teachers enter

the students record into a database, and students receive a “bank statement” every two weeks that shows the dollars they have earned toward field trips, pizza parties, or dress-down days. Students also set their own goals, which are reflected on the Prep Note.

The Prep Skills and Prep Note were created to keep the focus on DC Prep’s dual mission of character and academics. Beforehand, the school had no real systematic way for teaching social skills. *“We got clear about what social skills we want to teach and why. We aligned certain social skills to our motto of Do the RIGHT Thing,”* says Chief Academic Officer Katie Severn. It boils down to a basic merit/demerit system. If you don’t follow instructions, you lose a dollar; if you follow directions, you gain a dollar, with which you can earn rewards. But the Prep Skills have a dual purpose of teaching kids what each value means. Like academics, *“you can’t just expect kids to master these things if we’re never purposefully teaching them,”* she says. Teachers focus on teaching skills in homeroom. As the system became more cemented, the staff ended up building the Prep Skills into their curriculum maps and individual lesson plans. For example, a 7th grade lesson on dissecting frogs requires students to learn about anatomy, but also to learn to work appropriately with peers while sitting at lab tables with sharp instruments. *“We’ve gotten much clearer that the purpose for having a social skill program or character system is to help kids be better students. It’s not just to do character ed, and I think sometimes when you’re not clear about how it supports the other, it can seem like they’re competing forces rather than a supplementing or supporting system,”* Severn says.

Put It in Writing

Putting everything in writing also helped to focus DC Prep’s systems and avoid individuals interpreting situations on their own, which breeds inconsistency. *“I know it sounds silly, but the simplicity of something being in writing is actually not that common,”* says Deborah Hanmer, Director of Student Support Services. *“If three people have mentioned it to*

me, we’re going to put it in writing so we don’t make it up every time when we tell somebody.”

The written policies show students and parents that the administration has thought out the reason why students need their shirts tucked in. For one policy, the school may develop three kinds of talking points to help different stakeholders understand the expectation. *“This is how you motivate a 1st-grader to care about their shirt being tucked in. We might talk to them about looking good, feeling good. ‘See in the mirror!’ When you talk to a teacher about it, you talk about how a kid changes their mindset for the learning environment when they’re neat and presentable, that is something that’s going to help their class run more smoothly,”* she says. *“When talking to a parent, you might make the connection about there are so many spaces in the city where children are judged by the way they look, and we want our students to look like young professionals, and that’s the way they’re treated.”*

Narrate your Lesson

The staff also spends time shaping the environment for students so they are set up for success. *“We don’t typically—it’s not perfect here—have fights because we’re so intense about the way a transition looks,”* Hanmer says, as those are times when fights usually break out because kids are moving. The teachers describe each action for students: *“Everyone is going to stand up, your mouths are going to be off, you’re going to stand behind the chair, are we there? Great. Position 2. We’re going to step out the right side of our chair,”* Hanmer says. *“It takes a few more seconds to do it, but we saved so much instructional time because there’s no chaos to it.”*

Teacher Julia King credits this skill with transforming her teaching. *“At DC Prep, I learned very quickly from watching other teachers how to weave in behavior narration into every single lesson,”* she says. That means telling the story about what students are doing throughout the lesson. If a teacher directs students to silently turn to page 2 and write their name, *“as soon as you’ve given that direction, you tell a story of what you see—I see that Crystal’s turned to page 2, Jamie’s*

already done writing his name, Joseph you are not doing the right thing, mark down an irresponsible dollar."

Instead of just narrating the literal behaviors that the teacher sees, he or she narrates the habits children need. *"Instead of saying Crystal is on page 2, we say 'Crystal is following directions,' or 'Deanna is on task'" she says. "Being on page 2 is not the behavior you want to repeat, following directions is the behavior," she says.*

King's lessons are structured as such that there is little down time for distractions. One recent morning, she switches on some music that's slightly bossa nova in style for students to listen to while they complete their "Do Now" on identifying simple interest. Her eyes scan the room and she tells everyone to straighten up in their desks. As students finish, they pull out a book and start reading while they wait for others to catch up. Part of the uniform is to always have a reading book with you, she says.

King switches off the music and starts to go over the problem that gave the kids the most trouble. To quiet them down she chants "Shh. Shh. Shh." and the students parrot it back to her. They move on to a problem on the test that almost every person got wrong, as she walks through the steps she throws out a couple "Responsible L's" for students who are doing "good quality work." They work on their own for a while, and she brings them back again with the "Shh. Shh. Shh." chant. The rest of the class moves along, the pieces strung together so students aren't looking around because they don't know what to do with themselves. This is purposeful. *"It goes back to always having very explicit expectations. Kids should know at every minute of every lesson what should they be doing, where should they be looking," King says. "It creates this illusion that things are moving quickly, it maximizes learning time, builds culture, builds consistency."*

Norming out Response

Through dress rehearsals, DC Prep sets the stage for the culture to take root. Teachers are presented

with various scenarios. Say you give a direction to a student and he makes a face at you? How will you respond? Will you send him out of class because it is gross disrespect to a teacher? Are you giving him a detention because it is a disrespect to a teacher? Are you giving him an "Irresponsible K" according to the school's behavioral code, meaning he did something inappropriately? *"It's a very fine line, that's people's perceptions," says principal Cassie Pergament. "We practice it, we role play it, we talk about it, not only do we do it in August, but we have to do it throughout the year...We are constantly norming on what could potentially be a gray area."*

Part of the two-and-a-half week summer orientation is spent on scenarios like this, so the staff can implement the model with fidelity. *"A lot of it is just really holding people to that consistency, and getting our staff comfortable with calling each other out on it," she says. That means if a teacher notices another in the hallway who allows kids to walk by talking, it's up to that teacher to call the other staff member on it. "We all agreed to silent hallways so we all have to uphold them. It's hard but it's important that I help the staff get to a place where they can have those conversations with each other," she says.*

Teacher Katie Michaels says the level of specificity the leadership offers to teachers helps. *"We identify before the school year starts all of the areas where every single adult should be present—hallways, the cafeteria, exiting the building. The leadership team has done a really great job of explaining it, modeling it themselves," she says. Because the leadership is out enforcing the rules, "the staff feels supported, and they also know we're all working together on these issues," Michaels says.*

The Walk Through

At DC Prep, principals do a morning walk through and once again after lunch. The idea is to reset expectations. *"It's the job of school leaders to take their leadership teams out in force and be available to the staff—which kids are in class on time? Which aren't? Who's in uniform? Who's not? Who's got their materials ready for the day? Who doesn't and how do*

we support and get everything set for the day?" says Chief Academic Officer Katie Severn. The informal "check" keeps the staff focused on the mission. More formally, instructional and cultural rubrics clearly spell out where everyone should be.

Leaders also do culture walkthroughs at each campus once a month. The idea is to see if the campus is living by the principles of the school's motto of "Do the RIGHT thing" and keeping with the school's shared values, Severn says. *"We have a really long intense rubric that talks about whether there is*

trash on the floor," she says. *"It's very nit-picky." Instructional rounds led by the director of curriculum and instruction take place almost every week. "We go together into classrooms, it's less about the physical environment and structure...and gets more into how is the DC Prep way being taught, lived, met, assessed in terms of what's happening in each individual classroom,"* Severn says. *"So we're constantly talking about our shared values and norms and giving people feedback on it in the moment."*

Speak in numbers

DC Prep leaders seek specifics, numbers and evidence when talking about student performance. *"We push our whole organization to talk about things in terms of data. Do you have any evidence for what you're saying?"* says Deb Hanmer, director of student support services. *"Because if you don't have evidence, that means either we need to go back and do some observation, or figure out maybe we aren't capturing something we need to know about our students."*

Case Study: DC Prep-Edgewood Middle Campus

Washington, DC | Grades 4-8 | 95% African-American | 82% Free and reduced lunch | Founded in 2003

Common Core Comrades

With the coming of Common Core, Chief Academic Officer Katie Severn last year pulled together a team of people who were interested in learning more about the national state standards, and they titled themselves the “Common Core Comrades.” The group dove into researching what the standards would mean and what would have to change structurally to be able to give teachers what they need to teach it. From that work, the team decided to departmentalize 1st through 3rd grade in the elementary school as well—a huge change, but one that enabled the staff to develop more content area expertise so they could teach the more challenging standards, Severn says. It required adding more teachers to the elementary school. Reading and writing were integrated, instead of being taught separately. *“We did a lot of collaborative curriculum work in the spring and the summer, sharing the same curriculum mapping templates; the same non-negotiables of unit planning,”* she says.

The Common Core Comrades evolved into the “Assessment Warriors” to focus teachers who like writing tests on the task of preparing for the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers’ (PARCC) new tests. *“We can’t push*

our curriculum work forward and understand the instructional implications for what the standards are going to demand, which would then influence our PD calendar and our leadership needs—we can’t do any of that until we get much clearer on what our assessments needs to look like, because they are how we start our curriculum development process,” Severn says. *“We backward plan from them,*

so we decided to make that more of a home office function. We were going to write those assessments and set the bar.” Assessment Warriors is a bit of a shift for the team, says teacher Rachel McClam. In the past, teachers have written their own assessments. *“Now, we’re coming together as a group to provide assessments for teachers, which I think is going to be really helpful and powerful, because it gives us an opportunity to benchmark where do we want our students to go,”* she says. Teachers determine what objectives students need to master to get to the assessment, then decide what to teach in the time frame, developing lesson

plans and materials from there, McClam says. *“It’s challenging, but it’s interesting, because it allows for a lot of flexibility as opposed to just following a textbook,”* she says.

Teachers determine what objectives students need to master...then decide what to teach in the time frame, developing lesson plans and materials from there



Case Study: DC Prep-Edgewood Middle Campus

Washington, DC | Grades 4-8 | 95% African-American | 82% Free and reduced lunch | Founded in 2003

Leveraging Data to Improve Grade-Level, Teacher, and Individual Student Performance

DC Prep's beloved hub of data is known as LUMOS, which pulls together discipline and attendance information from PowerSchool and combines that with spreadsheets on interim assessments. Staff can access data on character education, punctuality, homework, uniform compliance, how many dollars students have earned, and more. Principal Cassie Pergament can look up all of the detentions in the 4th grade between certain dates, knowing that the 4th-grade team started an initiative during that time frame to decrease detentions. The system prints individual data sheets for each student, which are updated twice a day. This information goes home in what they term a "bank statement" to be signed by parents.

Grade-level team leaders meet weekly with the assistant principal and principal to discuss new initiatives that might be needed, based on the data. "We spend our leader meeting looking at data to decide 'Wow, 8th-grade homework has really dropped—what do we need to do?' Eighth grade team leaders can say 'this is what we see. Let's do a homework push. Let's do a donut challenge to see who can pull their homework up the highest, then we can see it in

the data and celebrate it." Pergament says.

As an administrative team, Pergament says they are looking at data to see "how is this one teacher, what is her punctuality rate, why is her homeroom not doing as well, is it parent communication?" Chief Academic Officer Katie Severn does a quarterly step back with every leadership team to review the

school wide results, while each school staff comes together for quarterly data days to look at student and departmental data. Teachers create their own spreadsheets to gauge student performance. Teacher Rachel McClam tracks all of her unit assessments in an Excel spreadsheet that enables her to see where students are strong and where students are struggling.

"I use that in my classroom to decide what needs to happen in Prep Session (intervention

blocks)," she says. "If there's something that needs to be retaught as a whole group, I can use that to make that decision as well." Daily, she has the exit tickets that will tell her which students might need extra help on a concept.

Staff can access data on character education, punctuality, homework... how many dollars students have earned, and more.

Case Study: DC Prep-Edgewood Middle Campus

Washington, DC | Grades 4-8 | 95% African-American | 82% Free and reduced lunch | Founded in 2003

Prep Sessions

At DC Prep-Edgewood Middle Campus, if a group of 5th-graders does not grasp the idea of ordering fractions in math class, teachers there have an extra 45-minute math session to work with small groups of students intensively targeting each student's weakness.

These "Prep Sessions" provide teachers the opportunity to reteach or dig in deep with each student, without pulling away from the pacing of the whole class. Students who need help get it, but do not fall behind the rest of the class because they're being pulled out for extra help during the regular class hour.

"You have to have intentional ways where you give kids exposure to grade-level learning and grade-level critical thinking and all the things they need to be doing. You have a moral obligation to do that," says Katie Severn, former principal of the middle school who is now chief academic officer of the DC Prep network. *"But if they are reading and doing math at a 2nd-grade level, you also have a moral obligation to address that, and you need to be able to do both. Oftentimes, schools are pulling kids out of the grade-level components to try to remediate, but it just keeps those kids in the basement, because they never ever get exposure to what they're supposed to be doing."*

Students in grades 4-6 have two prep sessions a day—a 45-minute session dedicated to math and a 45-minute period dedicated to reading. Data on individual student performance is used to group students. Teachers reassess the groupings once

each quarter using the results of quarterly interim assessments as well as information from their own classrooms—exit tickets, unit assessments and observations.

"Prep Session is much more our way of saying we have to teach everything throughout the year, but we also don't want kids to fall behind," says teacher Rachel McClam, who teaches 5th grade and leads the math department. *"Some Prep Sessions will spend*

"You have to have intentional ways [to] give kids exposure to grade-level learning and grade-level critical thinking... You have a moral obligation to do that."

an entire week on comparing and ordering fractions because that's really what those students need and it's an important standard. Whereas the kids in my group, we got it in class, we don't need to focus on it anymore." McClam says each grade has prep sessions for students on grade level, for those who need a little support and for those who are really struggling. She has nine students in her Prep Session, which is geared toward the highest-performing students. *"I use a variety of different data points to determine what I want to do with them,"* she says. "A

lot of what I do is take what we're learning in class and push it to the next level for them, so that's a lot of time where they get to have enrichment as well."

Some days it's structured as a class, some days it is more of a problem-solving session, some days they will break into smaller groups. For the second Prep Session period, McClam pushes into other teachers' sessions as needed to work with small groups.

"It happens a lot in 5th grade where a student will have a light bulb go off and all of a sudden, things make sense to them, and there are connections

that they just didn't get before," McClam says. At that point, students would move ahead to a different Prep Session.

Teachers spend part of their professional development time planning Prep Sessions, coordinating with content teachers to make sure lesson plans are appropriate. Everyone in the building teaches Prep Sessions, so there are a number of teachers from other content areas teaching math and reading.

In 7th and 8th grade, students only attend Prep Session if they are falling behind grade level. If they are on target, they take SSAT classes or an elective like Spanish. In a 7th grade classroom, teacher Julia King leads students through the steps to finding interest. The lesson focuses on a 7th grade standard that all students should master by the end of the year. *"There are all kinds of skills necessary to be able to access that standard," King says. "No matter how good a job you do of teaching in that 7th grade classroom, there are certain kids who—because they don't know how to do certain things—aren't going to get it. Prep Session is the time when we can address those skills."* King leads a Prep Session with the lowest performing students, where students are working on adding and subtracting integers, skills not connected to the main probability lessons they're learning in class. *"But if my kids don't understand how to add and subtract negative numbers, they're not going to understand how to solve multi-step word problems," King says. "Prep Session is our time to really meet kids where they are."*

As Severn sees it: *"Without (Prep Sessions), we wouldn't have as high achievement as we do, because you can't do everything we're doing in the limited amount of time we have. If you want to keep kids heterogeneously grouped in class, and they have a range of needs, and you have one teacher and they have to teach grade-level standards, then there's only so much you can do and accomplish in that setting."* With Prep Sessions, students bound ahead. *"We can get kids one-and-a-half to two years growing versus*

if we only tried to address it in a pull-out session. They might grow half a year or one year, and we just know that for a fact, because that's how we're getting the results we're getting," she says. Creating the time and space for Prep Sessions in the schedule wasn't entirely easy, even with an 8 to 9-hour day. "I was a little unpopular," Severn admits about the changes she had to make to create space in the schedule for Prep Sessions. DC Prep used to have outside organizations and universities running tutoring sessions and other programs. But that brought other adults into the culture, who were not trained in the DC Prep way. Having adults in the building who were not on the same page compromised the consistency of the expectations for students. "We got rid of some of those programs and we got really clear that the best intervention and support comes from the teachers who typically work with the children," Severn says.

The leadership first tried the intervention blocks as an addition to the reading class. Students would have their 90-minute reading class, then at the end, two other teachers would come in to assist the teacher with small groups. The teacher of record would plan all three groups. *"The other teachers came in—and it may be the PE teacher and the art teacher—they'd come in and take the lesson plan and try to implement it. There was not a lot of ownership. It was 'show up and try to teach,'" Severn said.*

The following year, Severn says the leadership focused on making sure the teachers were more connected to the students and their individual data. *"We made them all distinct small groups," she says. "Teachers had to get to know those kids and their data."* The shift worked, and the school's results were such that the administration decided to make more time in the schedule to accommodate a math prep session. *"The trade offs have always been there and will continue to be hard because you can't do everything well, but we do reading and math really well now," Severn says. "That was definitely a big push in terms of the trajectory of the improvement of the school."*

Case Study: DC Prep-Edgewood Middle Campus

Washington, DC | Grades 4-8 | 95% African-American | 82% Free and reduced lunch | Founded in 2003

The Edgewood Middle Campus was the first school for DC Prep, which has since added two elementary schools and a middle school, with continued plans for expansion. According to DC test results, the Edgewood Middle Campus is the highest-performing charter school in DC, with 72% of students proficient in reading and 89% proficient in math. In the graduating class of 2012, 18 students had attended DC Prep-Edgewood Middle since the 4th grade. As 4th-graders, 61% of these students were proficient/advanced on the ELA portion of the DC-CAS test. When they graduated, 89% scored proficient/advanced. In math, 67% of these same students were proficient/advanced as 4th graders, but by the time they graduated, 100% had reached that level.

The school is located in a retrofitted warehouse in DC's Ward 5, tucked in an area where you would not expect to find a school. Brightly painted walls aim to disguise the building's original industrial use. The school motto is "Do the RIGHT thing" with RIGHT standing for Respectful, Intelligent, Genuine, Hard-Working and Team-Oriented. An operations manager

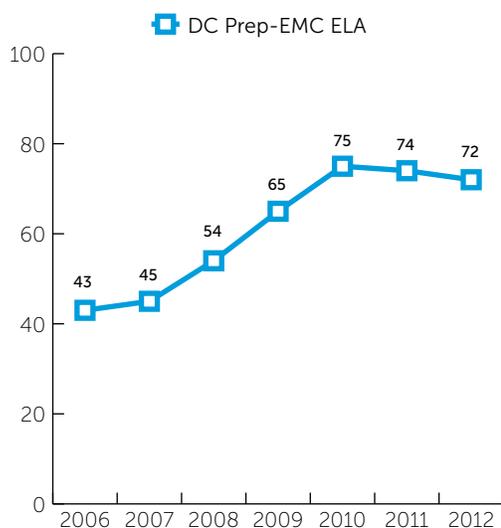
at each campus frees up the principal to focus on teachers instead of things like a broken air conditioner.

Some key elements of the DC Prep program:

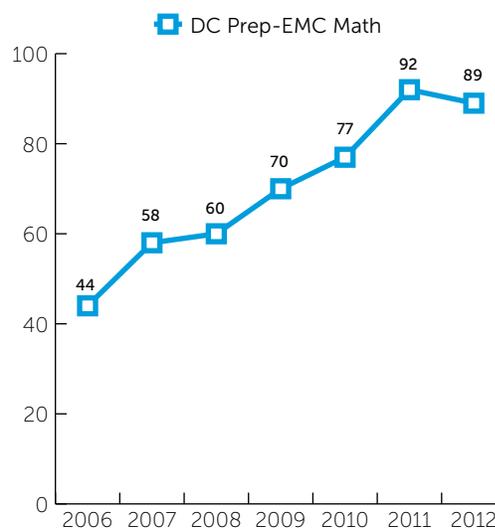
- **The Prep Note**—A daily tracking sheet that every student carries detailing their goals and their responsible and irresponsible behaviors from the day. Each grade level has its own 'alphabet' of behaviors, meaning each letter of the alphabet stands for a behavior or a value. That language is constantly reinforced throughout the day. For example, a responsible 'I' may mean the student is staying on task, while an irresponsible 'I' points out how the student is not.
- **Prep Session**—Two daily 45-minute intervention blocks in reading and math where teachers work with small groups to re-teach what students have not mastered or to challenge those who have mastered the material.
- **LUMOS**—Data is constantly monitored and reviewed through this system.

In terms of student growth, students at the DC Prep-Edgewood Middle Campus saw the highest growth in math in the whole city of DC in 2011, with a median growth percentile of 85, meaning students showed more growth than 85 percent of the students with similar prior test scores. For reading, the school was in the top 15 schools citywide for growth.

Student Proficiency Rates on the DC-CAS-English/Language Arts



Student Proficiency Rates on the DC-CAS-Math



Case Study: DC Prep-Edgewood Middle Campus

Washington, DC | Grades 4-8 | 95% African-American | 82% Free and reduced lunch | Founded in 2003

Meet the School Leaders:



Katie Severn

*Chief Academic Officer,
DC Prep network, and
former principal, DC Prep-
Edgewood Middle Campus*

Severn, who serves as chief academic officer for the DC Prep network, started with DC Prep in 2007, serving as principal of the Edgewood Middle Campus from 2008-2011. She has a bachelor's degree from Grinnell College and master's degrees in special education and educational administration.



Cassie Pergament

*Chief Academic Officer,
DC Prep network, and
former principal, DC Prep-
Edgewood Middle Campus*

Pergament joined DC Prep in 2006 and has been a teacher, instructional coach, department chair and member of the school leadership team. She started her career in education with Teach for America and taught at a KIPP school in Oakland, Calif. She has a bachelor's degree from the University of Rochester, a master's degree from Loyola Marymount University and a master's in school leadership.