Five Steps to Building Operational Excellence
Session 1 of 2
Introductions

John

Vera

Kim
EdOps Services Overview

- Finance & Accounting
- Facilities Support
- Operations
- Student Data
- Strategic Consulting
- Human Resources
EdOps Clients Overview

~35,000 Students served
~$600MM Operating budget $ under management
$150MM+ Facility financing supported last 3 years
Who’s In the Room Today

Academy of the City Charter School  
Amani Public Charter School  
Amber Charter School East Harlem  
Beginning with Children Schools  
Brilla College Preparatory Elementary  
Brilla Veritas  
Bronx Arts and Science Charter School  
Bronx Charter School for the Arts  
Brooklyn Prospect Charter School  
Brooklyn RISE Charter School  
Broome Street Academy  
Brownsville Ascend Middle School  
Cardinal McCloskey  
Challenge Charter Schools  
Coney Island Prep  
Democracy Prep Public Schools  
DREAM Charter High School  
Emblaze Academy  
Equality Charter School  
Evergreen Charter School  
Excel Charter School  
Family Life Academy Charter School  
Future Leaders Institute Charter School  
Grand Concourse Academy  
Growing Up Green Charter School  
Harlem Hebrew Language Academy  
Harlem Link Charter School  
Harlem Village Academies West Middle  
Harriet Tubman Charter School  
Hebrew Language Academy  
Heketi Community Charter School  
Hyde Leadership  
Ivy Hill Preparatory Charter School  
Launch Expeditionary Learning  
Metropolitan Lighthouse  
Neighborhood Charter Schools  
New Dawn Charter High School  
New Heights Academy Charter School  
New Visions Charter High School  
New Visions for Public Schools  
Public Prep Network  
Rosalyn Yalow Charter School  
South Bronx Community  
Storefront Academy Charter School  
The American Dream School  
NYC HS for Arc Engin & Constr Ind  
The Renaissance Charter School  
The Rochdale Early Advantage  
The Rosalyn Yalow Charter School  
Unity Prep Charter School  
VOICE Charter School
Who’s In the Room Today

Our diverse group!

- **25** multi-campus schools
- **57** single campus schools
- **11** first year in roles
- **40** 5+ years operations experience
- Collectively, we have over **480** years ops experience
Goals for These Sessions

“Operational excellence in support of student achievement”

- Share insights as to what constitutes operational excellence
- Provide best practice tools to build upon ops practices at your schools
- Utilize tools and best practices to create and implement improvements at your schools
- Assess the state of your schools’ current operational strengths and weaknesses
Five Domains of Operational Excellence

There are many factors which encourage well-run school operations. We believe there are five pillars to creating an effective operational environment.

- Increase accountability
- Reduce confusion
- Boost team cohesion and forward planning
- Prevent things “falling through the cracks”

Clear Roles & Responsibilities

- Increase consistency of deliverables
- Create roadmap for operational procedures
- Decrease new staff training burden

Standard Operating Procedures

- Improve team flexibility and overall performance
- Foster internal coverage of vacancies
- Build skills towards promotion

Cross-Training

- Replace “fire fighting” with forward planning
- Raise awareness of ops team contributions
- Develop cadence for updates and streamline information

Proactive Communication

- Promote staff engagement and professionalism
- Improve service level while providing growth opportunities
- Encourage staff ownership over advancement

Staff Development

Session 1

Session 2
What Is Operational Excellence?

Tools to Clarify Roles & Responsibilities

Implications for Organizational Structure

Creating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Next Steps
What Is Operational Excellence?

Commitment to defined key processes and strategic decisions across schools

Routine communication and feedback loops

Maximize instructional time; ops processes run behind the scenes

Proactive and ahead of the game

Operations positions are exciting, competitive and rewarding; Less operations turnover

Shared understanding of expectations and goals, with clear accountability of objectives and appropriate resources, empowerment, training, processes and tools

Giving 100% during the work hours, but leaving work / not being consumed by it

Schools hum; systems run smoothly, avoiding unnecessary hiccups

What Is Operational Excellence?
## What Can Hold Us Back from Achieving Operational Excellence?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clear Roles &amp; Responsibilities</th>
<th>Standard Operating Procedures</th>
<th>Cross-Training</th>
<th>Proactive Communication</th>
<th>Staff Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of time, or a lot of urgent (or seemingly urgent) requests</td>
<td>Operations isn’t a priority for the organization</td>
<td>High turnover in operations staff</td>
<td>Lack of feedback or trust</td>
<td>Underdeveloped career pathways due to lack of clear directives or resources for PD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of joint planning or effective communication between academic and operations teams</td>
<td>We have something “that works,” and a lot of other problems to solve</td>
<td>Many exceptions to policies &amp; procedures</td>
<td>Staff feeling that “it is not their job”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack of all trades, master of none mentality</td>
<td>Desire not to have accountability to a written process</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Our Perspective on Implementation / Building Ops Excellence

There is no silver bullet.
Pursuing incremental improvement across the five core areas is more likely to lead to success.

Do not over-engineer.
A simple, consistently implemented process aligned with the school’s size and needs is always better than a more complex one.

Take ground gradually, and keep it.
It is best to go slow or take a measured approach, especially at first, to avoid re-work and staff frustration.

Explicitly identify dependencies.
The sequence of implementation will depend on when certain steps are taken (e.g. cross-training can only begin once roles are defined).
Agenda

What Is Operational Excellence?

Tools to Clarify Roles & Responsibilities

Implications for Organizational Structure

Creating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Next Steps
The first step to achieving operational excellence is a clear, shared understanding of who is supposed to be doing what, and who is responsible for various decisions.

No amount of process documentation, cross-training, development or communication can make up for lack of clarity when it comes to what staff members’ jobs are (and are not).
Scenario Exercise & Discussion

On a Friday morning in October, the board chair of Apex Charter School receives an email from an irate parent, which she immediately forwards to the school’s principal. The mother writes that her 7th grade daughter skipped school earlier in the week, but no one from the school notified her of the absence. She only found out while overhearing her daughter bragging to friends about cutting classes. She knows that the Student & Parent Handbook states that the front office calls parents anytime there are unexcused absences. She is very upset, threatens to unenroll her daughter, and wants to know why her daughter’s absence was not reported. Fortunately, the principal is able to placate the parent by assuring her that this oversight will never happen again.

Internally, the school team needs to determine what caused this break from protocol, and what steps will be taken to ensure it won’t happen again.
Do Now #1: Roles & Responsibilities Reflection

Workbook, page 3
Tools to Clarify Roles & Responsibilities

**Job Descriptions**
Outlines essential job functions for each position; typically externally facing, setting expectations for new hires.

**Employee Skills Matrix**
Allows for tracking staff skills by helping to determine appropriate responsibilities & individual growth plans.

**RACI Decision Framework**
Clarifies team roles and decision rights within specific tasks allowing for a clear delineation of duties.

**Competency Maps**
Articulates ownership of decision-making by showing how departmental responsibilities are broadly allocated.
The Right Tool Will Improve Team Performance Only If It Is…

Visible across roles within and outside the team, ensuring all parties share expectations

Dynamic so it can be regularly reviewed and adjusted as needed

Balanced between a need for team clarity and a level of excess detail that poses a barrier to regular use
RACI enables teams to clearly define each person’s role within each process or task. For each task, individuals are assigned one of four roles:

**Responsible**

“The Doer.” The individual(s) who completes the task.

**Accountable**

“The Buck Stops Here.” The individual who ensures task/process succeeds. Should only be 1 person; has veto power if a decision is involved; may or may not be the same person as “the doer.”

**Consulted**

“In the Loop.” Consulted prior to the final decision / task completion. Typically a subject-matter expert; input affects process / task.

**Informed**

“Keep in the Picture.” Those who must be informed after task completion. One-way communication – NOT solicitation for feedback or advice.
RACI Application: Mapping Roles in Key Processes

Listed **roles** must include all members of the ops team, even if they are not involved in the specific process, and non-ops staff when relevant. These may not vary much (or at all) between processes.

Tasks / Activities sequentially outline each step within a particular process. These vary based on process selected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarterly Report Cards</th>
<th>ROLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TASKS / ACTIVITIES</strong></td>
<td>Assistant Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Enter grades into SIS</td>
<td><strong>R</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Review grades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Print report cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mail report cards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Responsible**  **Accountable**  **Consulted**  **Informed**
Do Now #2: Example RACI Matrix
Workbook, page 4
RACI Application: Use to Revise Job Descriptions

**Budgeting & Finance**

- **C** • Assists school leadership in understanding and maintaining accurate financial and grant records
- **R** • Generates purchase requisitions and POs, pays all bills within established budgets using correct account codes
- **R** • Processes payroll and hourly timesheets
- **R** • Tracks and reports inventory and capital assets
- **C** • Assesses and monitors data collection processes to assist HOS in creating monthly & annual forecasts
- **C** • Serves on school’s budget team including operational, purchasing, and technology matters

**School Management**

- **A** • Manages all office functions and daily school operations to ensure efficiency and maximum customer service
- **A** • Supervises in-school ops staff while working cooperatively with instructional staff and volunteers
- **C** • Assists in planning and revision of school safety policies, processes, and programs
- **R** • Prepares and distributes all necessary student / family packets to ensure compliance
- **C, R** • Works with Director of Facilities and HOS to coordinate facilities projects and communicates with all staff and administration members the logistics plans
Select an existing job description from your school’s operations team. Review each bullet point of the JD, and determine whether each task corresponds to an R, A, C, or I. Once completed, review the document with an eye toward:

- In practice, does this position still perform these job functions?
- Are there essential job functions (R or A) which should be included but are missing?
- If there are C’s and I’s, are they necessary to include in this position’s JD?

Based on the answers to each question above, develop a revised job description.

* See page 7 of your workbook for homework assignments!
Agenda

What Is Operational Excellence?

Tools to Clarify Roles & Responsibilities

Implications for Organizational Structure

Creating Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Next Steps
Roles & Responsibilities Affect, and Are Affected By, Org Structure

- Actively identifying and naming potential limitations of your org structure
- Proactively addressing breakdowns and misalignments within the larger organization
- Regularly revisiting your organizational structure in light of the school’s maturity and size

- Who is **accountable** for operations processes?
- Who is **responsible** for operations processes?
Pros

• Fosters strong relationships between school ops and their respective principals
• Encourages customization of processes to guarantee right fit for a school’s specific needs
• Promotes nimble decision-making at school level, without need for layers

Cons

• Siloed structure inhibits communication between campuses
• Operational burden falls heavily on principals and ED
• Lack of a centralized supervisory role results in less strategic operations, with focus on day-to-day
• Little opportunity for cross-training and standardization across campuses
Central Office Deployed Operations Organization Structure

**Pros**
- Concentrates accountability for operational success in DOO
- Increases camaraderie and sharing of ideas between ops staff
- Creates buffer for ED and principals from day-to-day operational functions
- Enables consistent performance management of ops team

**Cons**
- Difficult to identify and hire DOO that allows this structure to work well
- DOO may feel tension as time must be split across multiple locations
- Extra layer and dotted line relationships to principals likely to take time to adjust to for staff and principal in a transition
Operations Organization Structure Design Considerations

Campus-Based Ops

- Different operations needs among campuses
- Ongoing challenge to hire Director of Operations
- Fewer campuses
- Lower staff turnover

Central Office Deployed Ops

- Similar operations needs among campuses
- Ability to hire / retain strong Director of Operations
- Many campuses
- Higher staff turnover (redundancies & cross-training needed)
5 minute break!
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Next Steps
SOPs Are the Ops Team’s Key Documents

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) serve to:

- Document and establish consistent expectations for recurring processes
- Provide a basis for measuring operational execution
- Make process improvement easier
- Document procedures for when team members are absent or leave
- Provide clarity to people outside the operations team (instructional staff, families, etc.) about how we do things
What Tends to Happen Without SOPs?

A few purely hypothetical examples that we have never seen in any charter schools:

- A great teammate running payroll (student enrollment/teacher onboarding/ etc.) leaves the organization, and no one else has any idea what to do (or possibly, even how to log into system).

- Four schools run the same process in four very different ways. Some ways are much more efficient than others, but the school staff with the less efficient approach never hears that there’s a better way - and the central office is left trying to piece things together once information comes in.

- Enrollment (staff onboarding, returning offer letters) is so important, that it’s everyone’s job! Roles & responsibilities not clearly defined, though, so multiple people tackle the same subtasks, while other tasks fall through the cracks.

- A new smart, energetic staff member joins the team and is told to “figure it out and get things done.” She is provided with only a brief training, and ends up working really hard to recreate processes and documents that had already existed in the past.

- A new operations manager takes initiative to hire the badly needed additional SpED vendor, but fails to meet the procurement compliance requirements
Scenario Exercise & Discussion

Apex Charter School is preparing to open its third campus next school year. It’s May 1, and they anticipate hiring and onboarding over 20 new teachers in the coming months. The staff onboarding process involves several departments from the central office (Human Resources, Facilities, IT, Compliance (SIRS), Accounting) as well as school-based staff (Director of Ops, Principal). They want to leave no room for error and ensure all new teachers are able to hit the ground running once they start on August 10.

What does each of the positions or departments mentioned above need to do to ensure a successful onboarding for these 20 new hires? On what timeline?
Do Now #3: SOPs Scenario Reflection

Workbook, page 5
Scenario Exercise & Discussion

CENTRAL OFFICE

• **Facilities:** issue key fob

• **IT:** provision laptops, grant copier access, create email and log-ins to SIS

• **Human Resources:** create offer letter, provide access to HRMS, run background checks

• **Compliance:** ensure proper teacher qualifications

• **Accounting:** collect bank account information, tax documentation, other personal information

SCHOOL STAFF

• **Director of Operations:** distribute key fobs, laptops, ensure government paperwork is properly filled out

• **Principal:** make offer, send welcome email, assign classroom, provide training materials & onboard
Tools to Document SOPs - Checklists

**Simple Checklist (Y/N)**

Steps in reviewing the Excel sheet

1. Verify Excel sheet is accurate
   - Were there any new hires/promotions?
   - Was anyone terminated? Will pay be withheld (i.e. the $1500 fee for leaving early)?
   - Is anyone on leave? If so, how are their benefits being collected (note this on payroll sheet)?
   - Do the totals from each section add up correctly?
   - Do all hourly staff hours match what is in payroll provider?
   - Do supplemental pay hours match what is in payroll provider?
   - Remove all colors and shading before you save the excel sheet on the payroll drive. (It does not print legibly with colors).

2. Authorized signer signs Excel Sheet

**Detailed Task List**

Best for error-checking / quick check that all necessary steps have been completed.

Best for documenting more complex processes with sequential or non-sequential steps and multiple staff members responsible.
Tools to Document SOPs – Process Charts

**Swimlane**

Best for showing interdependencies amongst multiple players for relatively simple tasks without too many players.

**Process Flow Chart**

Best for illustrating a complex process and highlighting dependencies between multiple players.
SOPs Will Improve Team Performance Only If They Are…

- **Created on a rolling basis**, allowing the team to get into a rhythm of developing → training → implementing, and then adjusting as needed.

- **Revisited regularly** to confirm accuracy and evaluate opportunities for improvements.

- **Data-driven**, with simple performance metrics that are regularly reviewed for increased accuracy, and cost or time savings.
Do Now #4: SOPs – Your Recurring Tasks

Workbook, page 6
### Sample of Daily Operations Activities for a DOO

**Finance**
- Prepare payroll
- Process accounts payable
- Develop departmental budgets

**Human Resources**
- Conduct ops team check-ins
- Oversee staff attendance
- Conduct candidate interviews

**Food Service**
- Order and serve student meals
- Complete monthly NSLP claim
- Conduct internal audits

**Front Office**
- Ensure attendance is taken properly
- Audit student files
- Assist with generating report cards

**Facilities / Safety**
- Handle HVAC issues
- Perform building cleanliness walkthrough
- Ensure safety protocols are properly executed

**Technology**
- Troubleshoot faulty equipment
- Conduct stress test for state testing
- Inventory equipment

**Student Enrollment**
- Update enrollment applications
- Track student applicants
- Prep for and attend recruitment events

**Purchasing**
- Order classroom supplies
- Implement field trip logistics
- Plan staff events
Prioritizing Which SOPs to Focus On

- **Quick Wins**: Low effort, high impact
- **Major Projects**: High effort, high impact
- **Fill-in Projects**: Low effort, low impact
- **Thankless Initiatives**: Low impact, high effort

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High Effort
Low Effort

Low Impact
High Impact
Do Now #5: SOPs – Time/Effort Matrix
Workbook, page 6
Example Impact-Effort Matrix

- **High Impact**
  - Conduct stress test for state testing
  - Develop departmental budget
  - Update annual enrollment applications
  - Implement field trip logistics
  - Assist with generating report cards

- **High Effort**
  - Process accounts payable
  - Conduct ops team check-ins
  - Prepare payroll

- **Low Effort**
  - Oversee staff attendance
  - Order classroom supplies

- **Low Impact**
  - Plan staff events
  - Inventory equipment
Using SOPs to Evaluate Ops Performance

- Ensure clearly defined ratings
- Completed by self, peer or supervisor
- Performed on a consistent basis (e.g. monthly, quarterly, annually)
- Outlined are highly detailed tasks; the more specificity, the better

- Analyze and compare scores to show changes over time and/or across multiple schools
What Is Operational Excellence?

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Next Steps
Select one or two tasks from your “Quick Wins” quadrant and create an SOP. If an SOP already exists, feel free to review and refine the existing SOP. Or, if you’re feeling ambitious, choose a task from the “Major Projects” quadrant.
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Recap: Five Domains of Operational Excellence & Next Session

There are many factors which encourage well-run school operations. We believe there are five pillars to creating an effective operational environment.

- Increase accountability
- Reduce confusion
- Boost team cohesion and forward planning
- Prevent things “falling through the cracks”

**Session 1**
- Increase consistency of deliverables
- Create roadmap for operational procedures
- Decrease new staff training burden

**Clear Roles & Responsibilities**

**Standard Operating Procedures**

**Cross-Training**

**Session 2**
- Improve team flexibility and overall performance
- Foster internal coverage of vacancies
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**www.ed-ops.com**
Thank You!

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