



# **Executive Summary**

**Mater Academy, Inc.**

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### Introduction

Every corporation has its own story to tell. The context in which teaching and learning takes place influences the processes and procedures by which the corporation makes decisions around curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The context also impacts the way a corporation stays faithful to its vision. Many factors contribute to the overall narrative such as an identification of stakeholders, a description of stakeholder engagement, the trends and issues affecting the corporation, and the kinds of programs and services that a corporation implements to support student learning. <br><br> The purpose of the Executive Summary (ES) is to provide a corporation with an opportunity to describe in narrative form the strengths and challenges it encounters. By doing so, the public and members of the community will have a more complete picture of how the corporation perceives itself and the process of self-reflection for continuous improvement. This summary is structured for the corporation to reflect on how it provides teaching and learning on a day to day basis.

## **Description of the Corporation**

**Describe the corporation's size, community/communities, location, and changes it has experienced in the last three years. Include demographic information about the students, staff, and community at large. What unique features and challenges are associated with the community/communities the corporation serves?**

Mater Academy, Inc. currently has public charter schools in Miami-Dade and Osceola Counties in the State of Florida as well as one privately-operated virtual school. The School Board of Miami Dade County (M-DCPS) serves as the Sponsor of 25 Mater Academy Schools while The School Board of Osceola County Sponsors one K-8 Mater School. Miami-Dade County Public Schools is the fourth largest school district in the United States, comprised of 464 schools, serving 356,043 students, 75% of which are economically disadvantaged. M-DCPS serves as the Sponsor to approximately 125 charter schools. Mater has built on their academic success and fiscal efficacy, having operated schools in the Miami-Dade school district for over 17 years, and plans to continue to grow within Miami-Dade County by replicating and expanding schools based on need and demand.

The Osceola County School district is located in the Orlando-Kissimmee metropolitan area, and currently serves 62,430 students, of which 73.6% are minorities with Hispanics making up 47% of the student population. Seventy-two percent (72%) of students in the district are economically disadvantaged. Osceola County Public Sponsors 17 charter schools. Faced with a growing population and overcrowded schools, the Osceola school district partnered with Mater Academy this year (2015-2016 school year), chartering a Mater School in an area of need to serve the growing community of minority and economically disadvantaged families. Mater plans to grow their current school as well as they are in discussion with their Osceola Charter School Sponsor to open additional schools in high needs areas of Osceola County.

In 1998, Mater Academy, Inc. established its first charter school, Mater Academy Elementary in Hialeah Gardens, Florida. Mater Academy was the first Mater school to open, just one year after adoption of charter school legislation in Florida. In 2003, Mater replicated the elementary program to add an additional K-5 campus and expanded to a middle school and high school. By 2009, the network had 14 replicated schools throughout Miami-Dade County. Since 2010, Mater nearly doubled the number of schools (from 14 to 27) in the span of 5 years, and more than doubled the number of students, from 6,340 students to 14,065 in 2015.

A key component of Mater's successful growth over the years has been its commitment to quality assurance, as a means to ensure success for all students, and as confirmed by a continuous internal review process and further verified through the External Review processes embedded in AdvancED Corporate accreditation for Mater Academy, Inc. Accordingly, future and/or replicated schools will be evaluated under the same quality and accountability standards as the existing Mater school programs and will concomitantly receive the same level of support, guidance and oversight to ensure their success.

Over the years, Mater Academy opened schools in underserved communities, such as Hialeah, Hialeah Gardens, Allapattah and Little Havana. Today, in the 2015-16 school year, Mater Academy, Inc. is a high performing educational network, that operates 7 high schools, 7 middle schools, 3 K-8 schools, 7 elementary schools, 2 virtual schools (one public charter and one private) and one school that recently consolidated as a K-9 school, for a total of 27 schools across 16 campuses serving 14,065 students. The Mater system currently employs 1,171 employees, of which 815 dedicate themselves to the network on a full-time basis. Mater schools have been extremely successful, both financially and academically, especially when considering that the majority of Mater schools are located throughout some of Miami-Dade County's most impoverished urban neighborhoods.

Since inception, the Mater organization made their vision a reality by continuously raising student achievement while decreasing the

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achievement gap for disadvantaged student populations. As of October 2015 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Counts, Mater's student population maintains a ninety-seven percent minority rate (97%) distributed as follows: 92% Hispanic, 4% Black, and 1% Other. Moreover, a great majority of the student population is economically disadvantaged, as evidenced by 82% of students across the Mater network qualifying for free and/or reduced lunch (and 20 out of 27 schools being classified Title I schools). Also ten percent (10%) of Mater students participate in exceptional student education programming, including gifted (7%) and students with disabilities (3%). Additionally, 17% of Mater students are English Language Learners, and many Mater students revealed they come from families with limited educational backgrounds and/or little to no English proficiency. Prior to the Mater experience, a vast majority of Mater students lacked access, exposure, or opportunity to high-quality academic programs, and few would have access to seamless preparation for college.

Despite the fact this population cohort is typically expected to underperform, Mater students continue to excel. Mater is fully committed, as central to its mission and vision, to delivering college bound curriculum and ensuring our students and families realize that a post-secondary education is attainable notwithstanding socio-economic limitations. Furthermore, we also attribute Mater's success to our "Mater Family Culture." Akin to "It takes a Village to Raise a Child", Mater is family. Family means something different to each stakeholder. For example, some parents seek motherly advice from their child's CAP Advisor. For others, family means that a teacher offers additional tutoring, on their own time, and at no-cost simply because they see their student is struggling with a new topic. For others, it is just the variety of "think outside the box" afterschool programs that are offered to students who need to stay engaged and at school for as long as possible, since their parents maybe working late into the evening. Being a part of the Mater Family means a lot of different things to many people, but there is no doubt that when you speak the varied Mater stakeholders, they will speak to a sense of belonging to the "Mater Family". Whether it be a Mater student, parent, community member, "Mater Family" is an attribute of the Mater network and it is systemwide.

## **Corporation's Purpose**

**Provide the corporation's purpose statement and ancillary content such as mission, vision, values, and/or beliefs. Describe how the corporation embodies its purpose through its program offerings and expectations for students.**

The Mission of the Mater Academy, Inc. Charter School Organization is:

Meaningful achievement of  
Academics facilitated by  
Teachers, administrators, parents and the community  
Enabling students to become confident, self-directed and  
Responsible lifelong learners.

The Vision of Mater Academy, Inc. is:

To provide a viable educational choice by offering an innovative, rigorous and seamless college preparatory curriculum that gives Mater students a competitive advantage, while creating confident, self-directed and responsible life-long learners.

To that end, Mater Schools strive to:

- o create a thirst for knowledge in all disciplines;
- o kindle the art of thinking and serve as a springboard for lifelong learning; and
- o deliver and enrich every student with a sense of purpose, a belief in their own efficacy and a commitment to the common good.

Our Operational Beliefs include:

1. All children have the inherent right to learn, grow and maximize their full potential without limitations.
2. The foundation of all students' knowledge stems from effective communication developed through literacy.
3. Pluralistic students are better equipped to face the challenges and opportunities of 21st century globalization.
4. Students must be exposed to a rigorous and relevant curriculum that is built on conceptual relationships to improve student achievement.
5. Schools must demonstrate a passionate commitment to high standards and student success.
6. Schools must create a professional teaching culture marked by shared purpose, collaboration, innovative spirit, and continual learning.
7. Schools must analyze and utilize data in order to provide feedback to students, inform programmatic and instructional decisions, and support focused intervention efforts.
8. Mater stakeholders will commit to the pursuit of teaching methodologies that foster student engagement, critical thinking, self-efficacy, and content mastery.
9. Mater Stakeholders will let compassion, conviction and intense dedication to the mission of teaching and learning stand as the trademark of our work.
10. All Mater Schools will be communities of learners, inclusive of students, teachers, parents, and other community stakeholders, engaged in meaningful activities to contribute and enhance their school culture.

Mater's Educational Program - Mater schools expose students to a program that addresses Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships in learning in a college preparatory environment. Mater schools meet high standards of student achievement through the delivery of a rigorous and relevant advanced curriculum, with an emphasis on mastery of the content of core academic areas (language arts, math, science, history, and the arts) within a framework of communication (reading, writing, speaking and analyzing), and holistic learning. Teachers and other

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support staff use data from all available assessments to develop and target instruction in order to meet the needs of all students so that each child can realize his or her highest potential. Units of instruction within and across all grade levels will provide a vertically articulated curriculum framework that scaffolds the skills and knowledge required for success and concomitantly provides teachers with continuous feedback on student progress. By design, Mater's program is aligned to the Florida Standards and college preparatory curriculum.

At the elementary level, Mater's curriculum provides a solid academic foundation for students to have success at subsequent levels. Cognitive science research in mathematics and reading underscores the emphasis on meaning and understanding, beginning in the early elementary grades. Thus, much of the curriculum is centered on this approach as well as remediation when necessary. Instruction emphasizes developmental learning while providing differentiated strategies (supports and interventions for struggling students and students with special needs as well as enrichment for advanced learners). The curriculum for struggling students at Mater Elementary schools is not limited to pullout instruction in reading and math, but is as rich and balanced as the instruction provided to the highest achieving students. While student success at grade level for reading and mathematics is important, such minimal competencies are only a part of the total educational goals and objectives for all Mater students.

Secondary school programs bridge middle to high school and high school to college gaps through a vertically aligned educational program designed by educators working in Professional Learning Communities (PLC) in reading, math, and science while simultaneously integrating college coursework into high school programs. Program elements at the secondary level include SpringBoard, a CollegeBoard curriculum, which provides an instructional loop that begins the CollegeBoard Standards for college success to ensure all students are prepared for AP high school and college level courses - without remediation (and which are aligned to the Florida Standards). This curriculum includes formative assessments and a continual professional development program for teachers. Rigor, Relevance and Relationships, will serve as the fundamental core of pedagogy, and drive teaching and learning within Mater Schools, preparing students for success in meeting the demands of the 21st century.

The following research-based strategies, implemented at Mater schools are sustained by educational research and contribute to maintaining Mater's culture, academic success, and human capital:

**Early Interventions** - Early intervention initiatives have been proven to narrow achievement gaps between the participation of educationally disadvantaged student populations in college attendance and readiness. Incoming students are assessed using district and state baseline data and provided targeted interventions including on site-tutoring, counseling, enrichment, and transition course-work for middle to high school. As part of the early intervention strategies, incoming students in grade six at Mater schools, regardless of reading ability are required to take a mandatory reading course focusing on language development, vocabulary, and thinking skills. The reading course is not only designed to remediate, but to prepare students for the rigor that will be expected during their time as middle school students and beyond.

**Data-Driven Individualized Support for all Students:** Mater schools implement strategies designed to address students' individualized learning needs, including educationally disadvantaged students who may be at-risk for falling behind. For example, teachers at each school are trained to continuously monitor student progress and make data-driven decisions for effective delivery of instruction. Each school creates a Response to Intervention (RtI) Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) leadership team composed of administrators, teachers, and specialists at the school. This team uses a Problem-Solving RtI/MTSS Framework to meet the academic and behavioral needs of all students. The team provides high quality instruction and intervention matched to student needs using learning rate over time and level of performance. Through this process the schools plan, evaluate, and revise all tiers of instruction.

**Supporting Students with Disabilities** - The Mater model allows educationally disadvantaged students, including those in special education and those students entering below grade level, to benefit highly from the core curriculum. Students with Disabilities are supported and challenged to excel within the general curriculum and will be prepared for success in their post school lives, including college and/or careers.

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In order to accomplish this, schools will commit to instruction that incorporates supports and accommodates, including: 1) An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for Special Education and a plan to progress monitor students below grade level proficiency, which includes annual goals aligned with and chosen to facilitate student's attainment of grade-level academic standards; 2) Teachers and specialized instructional support personnel who are prepared and qualified to deliver high quality, evidence-based, individualized instruction, support services and Florida Standards expectations; 3) Instructional accommodations in materials or procedures - which do not change the standards but allow students to learn within the framework of the Florida Standards; 4) Assistive technology devices and services to ensure that students with special needs have equal learning and developmental opportunities; 5) Instructional supports for learning based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which foster student engagement by presenting information in multiple ways and allowing for diverse avenues of action and expression. In addition to providing the specific services listed in a student's IEP, EP, and/or ELL plan, schools offer tutoring services or other such assistance to ensure students remain successful. Morning, Saturday and daily pullout tutoring is available for those students consistently demonstrating non-mastery of the standards.

"Push and Pull" Method - Through Mater's "push and pull" method, all students are encouraged to maximize their academic potential by enrolling in the most rigorous program in which they can excel. Students are pushed to pursue the most rigorous and challenging academic program they can handle, and those students who may be underachieving are pulled out from the need for remediation through an intensive tutoring program and a multi-tiered system of intervention and supportive learning strategies. The level of difficulty is designed to tap student potential and accelerate them to a level where they can attain the greatest educational success. For example, in grades 7 and 8, students are encouraged to take a minimum of (1) high school credit course in mathematics, science, or a foreign language. This strategy affords students dual enrollment opportunities as early as their 10th grade year of school.

Seamless Articulation for middle/high schools - Middle school students receive on-site tutoring, participate in a transition course to high school, are mentored by high school students and participate in pre-advanced CollegeBoard curriculum. High school students will have AP and dual enrollment college courses available on campus during the school day. This process of acceleration will reduce and/or eliminate cost and transportation barriers for economically disadvantaged students while giving all students equitable access to advanced and college-level programs.

High-quality Assessments - Mater addresses all high-quality state standards and national standards and assessments that measure student progress toward college and career readiness. Students at Mater schools take the PSAT assessment as early as 8th grade. This test, developed by the CollegeBoard, prepares students for the SAT, which they will take subsequently in grades 11 and 12. In 11th grade, students are required to take a test prep course in preparation for the SAT and ACT.

High School Integrated College Experience (ICE) Program - National research indicates that partnerships with colleges provide significant opportunities for disadvantaged students to have the available resources, funding, curriculum, and guidance to enter postsecondary education. Mater Academy has taken its partnerships with local colleges to a higher level by providing an Integrated College Experience (ICE) program at each middle/high school campus. Mater schools provide students with access to higher education by bringing the college to the high school campus and allowing students to enroll in tuition-free dual-enrollment courses as early as 10th grade. Mater has taken the initiative to provide opportunities for its faculty to attain certification as college professors in order to 1) support the development and capacity of staff to teach at more rigorous levels and 2) afford economically disadvantaged students the access to dual-enrollment programs.

Highly Quality Instructors - College professors and accredited faculty instruct both the secondary and post-secondary courses, whenever possible. Through established college partnerships, qualified instructors teach both dual-enrollment and high school level courses on campus. By enhancing teacher preparedness and providing tuition reimbursement for teachers to pursue master's degrees or higher in their fields, Mater provides more rigorous and highly effective instruction for all students. As a result, to date Mater Academy schools have graduated over 300 high school seniors with Associate's in Arts Degree. In 2014, more than 30% percent of 10th, 11th, and 12th graders at

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Mater schools participated in dual enrollment courses.

Horizontally and Vertically Aligned Instructional Teams: Mater schools participate in Professional Learning Communities (e.g. Mater Math & Science PLC and Mater Principal's Coalition, etc.) tailoring professional development opportunities to share and reflect on best practices, discuss new research findings, review educational journals, implement technology, and examine student work. Master schedules are designed to accommodate common planning, both within grade levels and across subject areas.

Professional Development and Mentoring - To provide a seamless transition from one educational level to the next, Mater conducts the following professional activities annually: a) Best Practices workshops for lead administrators during Year 1 of Mater planning phase; (b) Annual professional development training sessions delivered by the CollegeBoard and other college partners; (c) Professional Development sessions for vertical alignment of SpringBoard curriculum; (d) Elementary/Middle and Middle/High school faculty meetings on-site quarterly; and (6) peer teacher observation for elementary to middle to high school to college. Mater supports new principals via mentorship and training during initial planning, and implementation. The mentors will ensure the Mater K-12 model is implemented with fidelity, and support the principals in all aspects of operation/administration.

Parental Collaboration - Parental and community involvement in school matters is a fundamental and required part of the philosophy and operation of every Mater school. Parent and community representation in the decision-making of the educational processes of each school is made possible through the Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSA), School Advisory Councils (SAC) and other such committees. Through open lines of communications, faculty and staff will encourage parental involvement through such endeavors as: Parental Service Contracts; serving on EESAC committee; Quarterly Parent/Teacher Conferences; Open houses, Career Fairs, Family Day events; School Websites, Monthly Newsletters, and Event Calendars. Volunteer opportunities to complete parent participation activities are available on an ongoing basis.

Supporting Educationally Disadvantaged Families - In order to engage parents in Mater's mission: to prepare all students to attend and graduate from college, parents of students in grades 6-12 are invited to attend informational college sessions (in multiple languages) a minimum of three times per year. School staff assists parents through these seminars to address college affordability concerns and the college application process. Parental support services such as dual language parent workshops are offered on Saturdays or in the evening(s). In conjunction with college partners, workshops address SAT/ACT preparation, financial aid, and applying for dual enrollment courses. Eighth grade students and parents participate in local college tours that include seminars on college costs, financial aid, entrance requirements, and the college application process.

Serving Educationally Disadvantaged Students in Target Locations - Mater Academy expects to continue to provide high-quality services to predominantly minority and economically disadvantaged students and is committed to expanding and replicating its programs in areas where there is a need for charter schools in order to better serve these student populations. The communities to be served warrant highly motivating, academically rigorous and community engaging educational programs that will better prepare minority and economically disadvantaged student populations for workplace demands. The inception of new Mater programs will also expand the capacity of the public school system by providing parents seeking a rigorous, individualized educational experience for their children with an additional high quality option.

## **Notable Achievements and Areas of Improvement**

**Describe the corporation's notable achievements and areas of improvement in the last three years. Additionally, describe areas for improvement that the corporation is striving to achieve in the next three years.**

With twenty out of twenty-seven Mater schools qualifying under Title I, Mater will continue to make significant strides towards closing the achievement gap and increasing the level of education, especially for minority and economically disadvantaged students. Our continuous compliance with legal, organizational, and financial requirements coupled with increasing academic expectations and annual performance, has yielded approved and/or renewed charter school contracts over the past eighteen years. Mater programs are based on a model that has a proven track record of student academic success. The model also demonstrates Mater's organizational viability, compliance with legal requirements, and the direct relationship between program elements and student achievement. The evidence indicates that by adopting Mater's successful educational design, with a full-range of services targeted to students of all performance levels, Mater schools will be highly effective in raising student achievement with emphasis on low-performing and minority populations.

Mater Academy prepares students for advanced academic coursework through a strong foundation in the primary grades and via rigorous coursework as early as Sixth Grade. The emphasis of the framework is a "push and pull" method of preparing students, wherein students are pushed to pursue the most rigorous and challenging academic program they can handle and those students who may be underachieving, are pulled out of remediation through an intensive tutoring program and supportive learning strategies. As a result, by the time students reach high school, they are often better prepared than their peers in traditional public schools.

Schools and Districts in Florida are graded under "Florida's A+ Accountability Plan". Schools receive a grade (A-F) based on the results of statewide assessments that measure proficiency in reading, mathematics, science and writing. In addition, high schools in the Florida system are measured by passing and participation rates on AP, IB, Cambridge and or Dual Enrollment. High Schools, in addition to standardized test scores, include in their grade calculation their respective graduation rates and postsecondary readiness scores derived from the ACT/SAT. All of these additional factors are calculated using the State's grading criteria and subsequently a grade for each school is issued.

Mater has established programs that afford all students opportunities to take more rigorous courses, thus increasing student achievement from year to year. In turn, Mater has raised the graduation rate and expanded opportunities for students to graduate with college credits. This success can be directly attributed to the premium that Mater places on college preparation. Additionally, Mater Academy's successful operation with consistent positive results in student achievement is validated by its academic track record, evidenced by the State of Florida Accountability Reports since inception. Furthermore, the State of Florida has specifically designated eleven (11) Mater schools as "High Performing" (HP) under the state's statutory criteria, s. 1002.331, F.S., which states "a high-performing charter school is a school that has met each of the following criteria: Received at least two school grades of "A" and no school grade below "B" for the last three years; and Received an unqualified opinion on each annual audit in the most recent three years for which such audits are available; and Did not receive a financial audit that revealed one or more of the financial emergency conditions set forth in s. 218.503, F.S., in the most three recent fiscal years for which audits are available." In addition to the prestige of being designated an HP school, the designation also entitles the schools certain privileges under the law, such as paying lower administrative fees to school districts (sponsors), having the option for a 15-year charter contract, and being afforded the right to expand or replicate more easily. The Mater schools which maintain their HP designation, include the following:

Designated 2009-2010 school year:

Mater Academy Charter Middle School

MaterAcademy Charter High School

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Designated 2010-2011 school year:

Mater Academy

Mater Academy East Charter School

Mater Academy Lakes Middle School

Mater Gardens Academy

Mater Gardens Academy Middle School

Mater Performing Arts and Entertainment Academy

Designated 2011-2012 school year:

Mater Academy Middle School of International Studies

Designated 2014-2015 school year:

Mater Academy High School of International Studies

Mater Academy Lakes High School

In addition, many of the Mater schools have also been recognized at local, state, and national levels for their performance in serving elementary, middle, and high school students. Some of the meritorious accolades earned by Mater schools include:

- Mater Academy Elementary (#0100): Proclamation Gold Award for Superior School Performance 2001-2009; Platinum Award for Superior School Performance 2001-2007; Florida School Recognition Award for Achieving Higher Academic Performance for All Students 2002-2010; Florida Title I Distinguished School 2009-2010; Ranked 4th highest performing school in Miami- Dade County based on FCAT 2011-12; Superintendent's Platinum Award 2011-2012;
- Mater Academy East Elementary (#3100): National Blue Ribbon School Award (2010); Received Title I Distinguished School Award (2007 and 2010);
- Mater Gardens Academy (#0312): National Blue Ribbon School Award (2014);
- Mater Academy East Middle School (#6009): Featured as one of the top 10 charter schools at state Charter School Conference (2012);
- Mater Academy Charter High School (#7160): Ranked in U.S. News & World Report as one of "America's Best High Schools" - Gold level standing (2010-2014); Ranked in Daily Beast's Top 25 List for Schools "Doing the Most with the Least"; Received Breaking Ranks Award by NASSP (2012-2013); Ranked in Newsweek's List of America's Best High Schools (2009-2013); Featured in The Washington Post as a Top High School (2011-2013); Recognized as a CollegeBoard Springboard National Demonstration School (2012); Inspiration Award from the CollegeBoard, one of only 3 schools in the entire nation (2011);
- Mater Performing Arts and Entertainment Academy (#7014) National Blue Ribbon School Award (2014);
- Mater Academy Charter Middle School (#6012): Recognized as a CollegeBoard Springboard National Demonstration School (2012); MetLife Foundation/NASSP Breakthrough School Award (2010);
- Mater Academy East Charter High School (#7037): Ranked in U.S. News & World Report as one of "America's Best High Schools" - Silver level (2011- 2012); and
- Mater Lakes Academy High School (#7018): Ranked in Newsweek's List of America's Best High Schools (2012-2013); Featured in The Washington Post as a Top High School (2012-2013); Featured in U.S. News & World Report as one of "America's Best High Schools" - Silver Level (2013) Gold level (2012) Ranked 25 in of Florida.

In continuing to seek to offer the most competitive education for disadvantaged students in the regions we serve, Mater Academy plans to replicate and grow its programs in a responsible manner to continue to "level the playing field" for even more parents and families.

Opportunities for Improvement:

Student Performance and Achievement

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As we look into the future over the next three years, Mater Academy, Inc. wants to maintain a path of continued academic growth, improved services and programming and financial efficacy, all in support of the Mater Vision and Mission. The Mater School System faces a myriad of challenges as we enter 2016, and beyond, including continuous anticipated budget shortfalls to the educational system in general, and acting and reacting to an ever-changing educational landscape that makes it increasingly difficult to continue to focus on learning and college readiness when, for example, the current state-wide assessments constantly and consistently shift the focus to results on tests rather than pedagogical efforts which ensure results for students. The Challenge here is to maintain focused on the students, and not allow instruction to become the single factor/recipe for educating.

### Growth

Another challenge for Mater Academy, Inc. is to respond to the demand and interest of potential students as a result of our success. The acquisition of appropriate facilities is always a challenge. Financial constraints and capital outlay requirements along with the need to change the mindset of municipalities and their zoning requirements often makes it quite difficult to secure property, despite a continually growing waiting list of applicants and families. One aspect of this challenge is the fact that unlike traditional public school systems we do not have the power of eminent domain. As a result, we are often subject to local political opinion which tends to limit school choice. Responsible growth of current and/or existing schools is also important, so we balance the desire to maintain a small school feel while also offering the quality programming only scale can provide.

As we attempt to respond to increased demand to bring and grow the Mater program into new areas/markets, we are working to implement plans responsible growth. Identifying the factors that have made it possible for us to be successful in Osceola County, as well as considering all the past experiences and opportunities in Miami-Dade County, will help us define our plan to grow outside of our current markets. The South Florida area and specifically Miami-Dade County has been a footprint of success for the past seventeen years. This evolution begins with identifying a plan for responsible and successful growth that will ensure the necessary support to deliver the Mater brand with integrity, while affording the needed autonomy to address a varied audience while still yielding success in a varied market. In these next steps for Mater Academy we have a purposeful plan and are confidently optimistic we will provide environments for success for all students in new and exciting markets for growth.

### Maintaining Satisfaction Levels of Various Stakeholder Groups

As a charter school system we are held to a very high standard, but yet none higher than our own. We are responsible to maintain the satisfaction level of our customers e.g. our students, their parents, and the people of the community where our schools are located. We must balance the varied needs and interests while always challenging our students to achieve at the highest levels. The challenge of serving our customers informs every decision.

Also, we must maintain the satisfaction level of our Sponsor, as they hold the key to future operations, approving enrollment increases, and even charter contract renewals. Seemingly at odds, our Sponsors are the same entities with whom we are in direct competition for students. Additionally, they maintain the right to approve or deny the aforementioned ability to expand and replicate. Notwithstanding, our Sponsor holds us accountable for academic results, evidenced by student performance and achievement records as well as financial performance of our schools, evidenced by quarterly financials and annual auditing of all our financial records, among the many day-to-day school operations, governance, and a myriad of compliance factors from State legislation to District-imposed rules and those terms agreed to in our charter contract. To that end, we must perform well (if not outperform) in order to consistently prove that we are increasing student performance and achievement record of the children we serve. This ongoing scrutiny by our Sponsor, serves as a significant quality assurance factor to which Mater schools are very responsive. We address all compliance issues, without creating excessive bureaucracy. We maintain our focus of providing the highest results while being responsive to our stakeholders.

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### Continuing to close the Achievement Gap

One of Mater's core strengths is producing learning gains with our students. This year, with changes in statewide testing, resulting in implementation of a new statewide test (Florida Standards Assessment) there is no means for calculating learning gains, which has traditionally been where Mater schools demonstrate their greatest value. School grades, based upon the results of the statewide assessments, will therefore not factor in learning gains (in the 2014-15 school year) and therefore, although we continue to utilize our own metrics for gauging learner success, the school grades will not reflect all that our students have accomplished nor how much they have grown academically in a year's time.

Mater must impress with our academic and financial results. Coupled with our success is an implied responsibility to be a model for our surrounding area and all charter schools. It isn't enough to equal or even to exceed the achievement rate of neighboring schools by several percentage points, but Mater students must instead demonstrate significant learning gains, and in the 2015-16 school year we will again be able to do so.

The Mater Academy School System, offers a college preparatory curriculum program of rigor to all students. But we are especially proud of our students, which are historically underrepresented in college. Becoming a first generation college student remains a challenge for some students because they lack the "know how" of how to be "on track" for college admission due to cultural influences. Most students come from families where college was not an option because the need to work and support the household far outweighed the benefit and delayed "satisfaction" of a college education and pursuit of a career-oriented job. Thus, some parents have great difficulty encouraging their children to pursue postsecondary education, because they often lack the skills to guide their children; lack the financial resources to support this endeavor; and fear the strain of the lost income could provide had their child continued working immediately after high school. For us, the challenge is to work with both students and their families, to shift that paradigm and "raise the bar". Through our parent academies and CAP advisors, we emphasize that at Mater it's not about if a student is going to college but where a student is going to college.

## **Additional Information**

**Provide any additional information you would like to share with the public and community that were not prompted in the previous sections.**

In the 2014-15 school year, Mater Academy High Schools collectively have an average graduation rate of 95 percent and a college acceptance rate of 96 percent. These far exceed the state and national averages for minority students. Additionally, since 2007, these high schools have graduated about 239 seniors with both a High School Diploma and an Associates of Arts Degree, simultaneously.

Mater has established programs that afford all students opportunities to take more rigorous courses, thus increasing student achievement from year to year. In turn, Mater has raised the graduation rate and expanded opportunities for students to graduate with college credits. This success can be directly attributed to the premium that Mater places on college preparation.

Although originally founded to support immigrant families, Mater Academy's doors are open to students of every nationality, religion, ethnic background and race.