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Hale Cook Elementary School
School Culture Blueprint: A Framework for Excellence

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Table of Contents

PROPOSED: Joint letter from KCPS and Friends of Hale Cook

Purpose

Mission and Philosophy

Core Values

School-wide Behavior Policies

Core Competencies of Hale Cook Principal

Service Learning

School Calendar

Before and After School

Outcome Goals and Measures

SMART Goal 1: Academic Achievement

SMART Goal 4: Student Attendance & Attrition

SMART Goal 6: Community, Teacher & Parent Engagement

Role of Friends of Hale Cook

Appendix A. Hale Cook Parent/Teacher Partnership Agreement

Appendix B. Hale Cook Behavioral Plan Outline

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**INSERT PROPOSED LETTER
FROM KCPS AND FRIENDS OF HALE COOK**

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Purpose

Schools that do not have a strong start, particularly in the first three years, are very difficult to turnaround later. The purpose of this document is to provide Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS) with a framework to ensure a strong school start at Hale Cook Elementary School. The Hale Cook School Culture Blueprint covers the essential elements of school culture (mission, philosophy, core values, etc.) and outcomes measures that should guide the school as it starts and scales up. It can also be used in the staff hiring process to attract and select candidates aligned with the Hale Cook mission and philosophy. This document is a result of research and collaboration from the Friends of Hale Cook (FOHC) led by its School Culture Committee in conjunction with parents and community members. While the topics covered in this document are considered drafts until formalized by the Hale Cook principal and staff of the school, the intent is for KCPS to use this blueprint to help ensure the best possible outcomes and success of the school.

Mission and Philosophy

Hale Cook Elementary School is a neighborhood public school in the Kansas City, Missouri Public Schools (KCPS) school district. Our mission is to equip students to be resourceful, critical thinkers who are making a positive change in their community.

Hale Cook Elementary School provides a challenging, engaging curriculum in a safe, inclusive and supportive environment. We promote personal accountability and self reflection with the goal of all students achieving academic excellence and high standards of character. The school uses data to inform instruction; we value student growth as much as end results.

Hale Cook encourages healthy lifestyles in its students through physical activity, wholesome nutrition, and environmental stewardship. We provide multiple avenues for students to create, explore and discover their talents and passions.

Parents are our partners. Communication between parents and teachers is open, honest and often.¹ Parents are welcome in the school and are Hale Cook's most valued volunteers.

Hale Cook Elementary School is a school of and for the community. Through Friends of Hale Cook, the school cultivates relationships with local businesses and community organizations that enhance the learning environment.

Hale Cook Elementary School is a revitalization story. It reopened in 2013, a result of a small group of hard working, dedicated neighbors who were committed to bringing back a quality public school to their neighborhood. Building on the energy and activism that brought Hale Cook Elementary back to life, the school connects community service and civic engagement to its learning experiences.



1 See Appendix A for Parent/Teacher Partnership Agreement.

Core Values

Hale Cook’s core values are characteristics that the school will cultivate in each child. They are simple, memorable and actionable. Children at all grade levels will be able to understand the values’ meanings. The values are ones that students and staff can be “caught doing” on a daily basis. Hale Cook will use constant reinforcement, acknowledgement and celebration of values to help internalize them.

FOHC surveyed its newsletter subscribers, asking them to select five values they would want Hale Cook Elementary School to promote. Fifty individuals responded with the five values below receiving the most votes. *Hale Cook students will be...*

Empathetic

“I hear you. I feel you. I understand you.”

Students will be taught by teachers modeling how to listen and respect each others thoughts and feelings. They will practice using kind words and displaying kind actions. Hale Cook values diversity and our students will learn to understand the circumstances and viewpoints of others. Students will develop the capacity to forgive others and themselves and celebrate contributions of others, all with the goal of promoting a peaceful, caring and safe community.

Responsible

“See it. Own it. Fix it.”

Students at Hale Cook will be responsible for their own learning, for their behavior and to their community (school and neighborhood). When they see a problem, they will speak up. When they make a mistake, they will not see it as a bad mark on their identity, but as an opportunity to try again.

Creative

“Discover you. Be you.”

Students at Hale Cook will be encouraged to express themselves through various forms that promote their individuality, interests, and passions. Arts are essential for creative expression. Students will have opportunities to explore art, music, physical activity, and the outdoor environment to stimulate their senses and their sense of self. Hale Cook values diversity, specifically diverse ways of thinking and problem solving. Resource: Ken Robinson’s *Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative*

Curious

“Never shy from Why.”

Hale Cook Elementary School will instill a love for learning in its students. They will be encouraged, through teacher prompts and an engaging curriculum, to question, wonder, and explore. They will see their intelligence as not a fixed trait, but something that continually grows through hard work and persistence. Teachers will remind students that their opinions and thoughts have value and to be confident in themselves, so when something doesn’t feel right, they question it. Resource: Carol Dweck’s *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*

Collaborative

“We’re better together.”

Hale Cook is a team, a family. Tasks requiring teamwork and collaboration will be part of daily classroom experience. Students will learn how to hear, respect and discuss diverse viewpoints and how to find common ground. Students will have opportunities to experience a collective sense of accomplishment and ownership in hard work done together.

School-wide Behavior Policies

Hale Cook Elementary School will have a set of school-wide behavior expectations. The expectations should offer positive over punitive interventions. KCPS uses Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in its elementary schools and Conscious Discipline in its Pre-K. These are well researched and well respected behavioral practices. Hale Cook will implement these practices with fidelity, in every classroom.



Students will know how to behave because they have been shown how to behave and are given frequent opportunities to practice what is expected of them. Likewise, teachers will be given extensive and continuous training to implement these practices fully. Just-in-time coaching and role playing are the most effective methods to build-up teachers' toolkits of effective behavioral management strategies.

Hale Cook will also provide classes to parents on the behavior practices for the purpose of creating common understanding about behavior expectations as well as providing parents with some strategies they can use at home.

Hale Cook should create a behavior plan to share with teachers, staff and students. Suggested items to include in the plan can be found in Appendix B.

Core Competencies of Hale Cook Principal

Hale Cook Principal is the instructional leader first and foremost. Through the systems and structures the principal develops, he/she will solidify school culture and ensure the school achieves its outcome goals.

At a minimum, the Hale Cook principal should have the following competencies:

- Believes that all students can learn at high levels and sets high expectations for both students and staff.
- Possesses a knowledge of curriculum scope and sequence with a specific focus on internal alignment (common assessments, common instruction).
- Recognizes and is able to discuss effective instruction and instructional strategies.
- Performs effective instructional evaluations including observation & feedback sessions and Performance-Based Teacher evaluations.
- Analyzes multiple forms of data with a focus on instructional trends.
- Is able to give and receive effective and honest feedback that targets improvement that includes affirmation and direction for positive change.

Service Learning

Hale Cook Elementary School's signature characteristic is its commitment to community service. Teachers connect lessons to real-world issues and needs through case studies, projects, fieldwork, and service opportunities. Students think beyond the four walls of their classroom and contribute to bettering their community.

The Hale Cook community garden and orchard is a key asset for service learning. Students, parents, and community members work together to cultivate the garden. Teachers use the garden to teach lessons on science, health, data analysis, technical writing, marketing, and research. With Hale Cook's partnership with KC Healthy Kids, students also will learn proper handling of fruits and vegetables to harvest and prepare them for school lunches and for families in need.

School Calendar



Hale Cook will adhere to KCPS school calendar. However, understanding the high expectations we have for academic outcomes and behavior practices and the changes to instructional methods and curriculum to meet the new Common Core State Standards, FOHC strongly suggests KCPS provide teachers with more time for planning and development. We recommend an early release day once a week in addition to the teacher professional development days and daily planning time in the school calendar. The time will allow for teachers and staff to analyze data, collaborate with peers on instructional practices and lesson planning, receive weekly coaching and feedback from instructional leaders, and conduct school-wide professional development. FOHC suggests extending the school day to make up time for the early release days.²

Without great teachers, nothing else matters. Teachers should be treated like professionals and given the time, tools, and resources to hone their craft.

Before and After School

Current Hale Cook parents have raved about their experience with LINC at Hartman Elementary School. The students love LINC's after school activities. We request that the LINC program continue when families move to the Hale Cook building.

Moreover, FOHC sees after school as a wonderful opportunity to add enriching extracurricular activities and service-based opportunities to students through partnerships with community-based organizations. We already have reached out to KC Healthy Kids, BikeWalkKC, and KC Community Gardens to offer programs.

² FOHC understands KCPS has a teacher union contract that stipulates working hours and professional development time, and changes to the school calendar would mean changes to the contract.

Outcome Goals and Measures

To make real the mission and values of Hale Cook Elementary School and in following with KCPS current practice, Hale Cook will have the following SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound) goals. The school principal and staff will be responsible for achieving these goals.

The SMART Goals are organized in categories defined by KCPS, but FOHC has added some additional SMART goals that will help shape and solidify school culture. Background research used to inform the development of these SMART goals can be found in Table 1.

SMART Goal 1: Academic Achievement

Hale Cook Elementary School, through rigorous and engaging instruction, will have students achieving at high levels. The school recognizes the importance of standardized tests, but acknowledges that they reveal only part of a student's learning journey. For that reason, Hale Cook measures academic achievement using both growth and status measures.

Growth Goals:

Growth measures, specifically those used as pre/post in a school year, are not publicly available or consistently used by schools in Kansas City. Background data to derive Hale Cook's growth goal came from talking to school leaders and education experts who use nationally normed growth measures.

1.1) Average student growth in each content area is 1.2 years.

Hale Cook should choose a nationally normed referenced instrument to measure growth like NWEA. High-performing schools tend to have an average student growth exceeding 1.2 years.

1.2) Achieve the "Exceeding" level on MSIP 5 growth measure in Math and ELA.

Exceeding means students are scoring better on the MAP than what they were predicted to score based on their previous year's MAP. In other words, students at schools with "exceeding" scores are growing more than expected. Hale Cook should strive to exceed expectations for student learning.

Status Goals:

We looked at elementary schools in Kansas City with Free or Reduced Lunch percentages ranging from 25-45 percent. TABLE 1 lists the comparative schools. The average percent of students from these schools who meet or exceed proficiency on 2013 MAP assessment was 62 percent in ELA, 60 percent in math, 64 percent in science, and 56 percent in third grade reading.

1.3) Be above DESE's annual proficiency target.

With DESE's Top 10 by 2020 goal, the state's proficiency target increases each year. Hale Cook will be committed to exceeding the state's proficiency target every year. In SY 2013, the ELA proficiency target was 55.6 percent. For reference, the only school in KCPS that exceeded the state's proficiency targets in SY 2013 was Lincoln College Prep.

1.4) 60% of students meet or exceed proficiency on state test in each content area.

The average student proficiency for some of the highest performing elementary schools in Kansas City was 60 percent. Hale Cook should have at least 60 percent of its students proficient on the MAP.

1.5) 75% of students who've attended Hale Cook for three consecutive years meet or exceed proficiency on state test.

Research suggests that students who are below grade level can be caught up if they have

a stellar teacher for three consecutive years. Hale Cook should make such a promise to its students and families. No matter what grade level you are at when you come to the school, Hale Cook will get you where you need to be in three years.

Third Grade Reading Goals:

Third grade is a critical juncture in a students life: when students transition from learning to read to reading to learn. Students who are not reading at grade level by the end of third grade are much more likely to drop out of high school. And remediating a poor reader is increasingly more difficult in the upper grades. For this reason, Hale Cook Elementary will have a particular focus on ensuring its students are reading on grade level by the end of third grade.

1.6) 56% of third graders reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade.

The average third-grade reading proficiency for some of the highest performing elementary schools in Kansas City was 56 percent. Hale Cook should have at least 56 percent of its students proficient on the MAP in ELA.

1.7) 75% of third graders who've attended Hale Cook for three consecutive years reading at or above grade level.

Research suggests that students who are below grade level can be caught up if they have a stellar teacher for three consecutive years. Hale Cook should make such a promise to its students and families. No matter what grade level you are at when you come to the school, Hale Cook will get you where you need to be in three years.

SMART Goal 4: Student Attendance & Attrition

Students need to be in school to learn. Mobility and persistent absenteeism adversely and significantly affect student achievement overtime. Hale Cook will provide a challenging and joyful environment so students want to come to school. It will also make every effort to keep its students year over year, helping them to overcome challenges at home that often keep them on the move.

4.1) 90% of students attend school 90% or more of the time.

This is the DESE Top 10 by 2020 goal.

4.2) Average student attendance is 95%.

The average student attendance for some of the highest performing elementary schools in Kansas City is 96 percent. Hale Cook should have at least 95 percent of its students attending on a daily basis. Current average attendance for KCPS is 75 percent.

4.3) 85% student retention.

Hale Cook should meet the needs of students and families in its neighborhoods, so they will want to stay. Knowing there are circumstances that force families to move often³, Hale Cook will try to connect these families to community supports as well.

4.4) 90% retention of great teachers.

Hale Cook wants the very best teachers in its classrooms. It will support and develop its teachers in order for them to feel valued and want to stay. No more than 10 percent of teachers will choose to leave Hale Cook each year.

3 For students that move outside Hale Cook boundaries, but stay within KCPS boundaries, FOHC requests that KCPS continue to offer bus service for these students to Hale Cook for the remainder of the school year. North Kansas City School district is instituting such a policy for its students next school year.

TABLE 1. The Percent of Students Proficient or Advanced on 2013 MAP in ELA, Math, Science, and 3rd Grade ELA and the Average Student Attendance Percentage for Kansas City Schools with Free and Reduced Lunch percentages between 25 and 45 percent.

DISTRICT	SCHOOL NAME	FRL (%)	Enrollment	Attendance (%)	ELA (%)	Math (%)	Science (%)	3rd Grade Reading (%)
NKC	Cardy Elem.	42.2	444		55.6	60	45.6	68.3
Park Hill	Alfred L. Renner Elem.	39.3	362	96	59.7	59.1	74.2	52.5
Park Hill	Line Creek Elem.	38.9	456	95	62.3	59.7	76	51.5
Park Hill	Thomas B. Chinn Elem,	37.5	476	96	59.8	57.1	57.6	54.2
Platte County	Barry School	37.5	582		59.2	56.2	61.1	52.2
Park Hill	English Landing Elem.	35.7	531	95	71.3	69.6	75.3	65.9
Park Hill	Tiffany Ridge Elem.	34.5	516		64.1	62.1	54.3	45.9
Park Hill	Prairie Point Elem.	27.9	479	96	67.4	63.2	73.4	61.5
NKC	Fox Hill Elem.	25.5	534	96	58.3	52	60.5	55.2
AVERAGE				96	62	60	64	56

SMART Goal 6: Community, Teacher & Parent Engagement

Engagement is best measured by the responses of those you wish to engage. Hale Cook is committed to including community, parent, student and teacher input in the shaping of the school. It should frequently survey these groups to ascertain their satisfaction and identify areas where Hale Cook should improve. The content of these surveys should evaluate how well these groups perceive Hale Cook is achieving its mission and core values as well as their satisfaction with the school. FOHC suggests biannual surveys, but, at the least, annual surveys.

- 6.1) 90% student satisfaction
- 6.2) 85% parent satisfaction.
- 6.3) 85% teacher satisfaction.
- 6.4) 85% volunteer/community partner satisfaction.



Role of Friends of Hale Cook

Friends of Hale Cook (FOHC) is a 501c3 organization aimed at supporting the startup and operations of the Hale Cook Elementary School. FOHC wants Hale Cook to be a high quality school to attract and to keep more families in the neighborhood. The community plays an integral part in making a school great. As representatives of the community, FOHC will use its resources and volunteer base to help Hale Cook Elementary School meet its outcome goals.

Some of the activities FOHC will do to support Hale Cook includes the following:

Student Recruitment.

Hale Cook is a new school and word still needs to spread that Hale Cook is a viable public option for families. FOHC volunteers can support information sessions and produce materials to help with student recruitment and to build the reputation of the school. For example, FOHC produced bookmarks (handed out at Brookside St. Patricks parade), yard signs, and mailers. Its electronic weekly newsletter has over 700 subscribers



Parent Engagement.

Parent involvement and support of Hale Cook is crucial for the success of the school and the students. Communication is key and often occurs best in informal situation. FOHC could help coordinate monthly family nights that bring families to the school (feed them) and connect them with each other, teachers, and what's happening at the school.

Fundraising.

FOHC fundraising committee will help raise funds for supplemental items or programs to enhance the learning environment. Improvements to or expansion of a playground is an example.

Community Partnerships.

FOHC is well positioned to build community partnerships for Hale Cook. We already have reached out to KC Healthy Kids, BikeWalkKC, and KC Community Gardens to offer programs.

Outcome Accountability.

Hale Cook has fourteen SMART goals to help it achieve high academic outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction. FOHC suggests its board meet with the Hale Cook Elementary leadership team monthly to review progress toward achieving these goals. The board can work with leadership to identify course corrections that need to be taken to get back on track and what FOHC can do to support.

Appendix A.

Hale Cook Parent/Teacher Partnership Agreement

As a supportive parent, I will:

- Help my child prepare for each day and arrive to class on-time.
- Know, understand and model Hale Cook’s mission and core values at home.
- Create open and consistent paths of communication with teachers.
- Collaborate and plan with my child’s teacher to set goals, monitor academic and social progress and outline support that I can provide for my child.
- Provide a quiet, well-lit space for my child to study or complete homework.
- Engage my child in discussions about each day to encourage a positive attitude toward school.
- Attend, assist or participate in classroom and/or school activities when possible.
- Demonstrate a positive and enthusiastic attitude toward my child’s teachers, administrators and other families of Hale Cook.

As an effective teacher, I will:

- Believe each student can learn and set high expectations for his/her learning.
- Strive daily to create a safe and joyful classroom environment where each student feels valued, successful and open to taking risks.
- Know, understand and model Hale Cook’s mission and core values.
- Create open and consistent paths of communication with parents through conferences, emails and weekly newsletters.
- Collaborate with parents, administrators, faculty and the community as I commit to growing professionally.
- Plan for and provide engaging learning opportunities, monitor student progress, and evaluate learning using a variety of resources.
- Demonstrate a positive and enthusiastic attitude toward my students, colleagues, administrators and parent partners.

We will work together to grow _____ (STUDENT NAME) to his or her fullest potential.

Parent signature/date

Teacher signature/date

Appendix B.

Hale Cook Behavioral Plan Outline

Items to cover in the Hale Cook Behavior Plan include the following:

- General philosophy of PBIS and Conscious Discipline
- School-day structure
- Hallway behavior [level 1 voice; walk on right side]
- Classroom behavior [teachers greet at doorway; unpack/pack-up; expectations clearly written; democratic class rules]
- School-wide staff expectations (training and ongoing support)
- In-classroom observation/feedback and guided practice
- Proactive administration expectations
- Collaborative troubleshooting
- Response to Intervention (RTI)
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Positive behavioral intervention
- Minimization of reactive and punitive tactics
- General behavior plan
- Consistent teacher responses
- Clear student expectations for accountability (group/individual)
- Level of parental involvement
- Supporting parents at home
- Parents supporting teachers
- Targeted behavior responses
- Check-in/check-out system
- Reinforcement strategies
- Student self-monitoring
- Student expectations
- Respect facilities
- Hale Cook Core Values
- Consistent behavior expectations
- Parent expectations
- Parent notification of progress
- Team meetings participation
- Parent training on behavior practices
- Parent involvement in the classroom

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