



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN SCHOOL: INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

“Every year is a bit of puzzle to solve.”

- Dr. Roderick Millson principal, Franklin School

On a sunny day in March, Dr. Roderick Millson is sitting in his office at Benjamin Franklin Elementary School in a large mid-western city working over the goals for the school’s current plan. After two months of talking to teachers, taking input from parents and community members, and meeting with the School Council, Millson is set to write the annual plan that will drive Franklin’s program for the coming year. “I take the process very seriously. The goals we set, collaboratively, really drive our educational program.”¹ The goals for the school are based on the collective vision of Franklin as a humanities-based curricular program that offers art, music, and French language over and above the district and state prescribed curriculum. In order for the students at Franklin to have the benefit of this “extra” program, Millson manages a network of independent, non-profit organizations that raise funds for and co-administer (with him) programs in music, art, and French language as well as provide equipment and extra-curricular activities.

Millson’s work, on this spring day, is twofold: first, to develop goals and objectives based on the vision statement of Franklin (Exhibit 1-Vision and Mission Statement), as well as the needs and desires of the Franklin community of parents and teachers, and second, to develop a budget that will fund these goals and objectives. Millson’s task is similar to the other principals in this school district. “What makes my job different is my collaboration with the three independent non-profit groups,” says Millson. “We set the vision for the school collaboratively. The school plan is the written statement of how we will make the vision happen.” As the melting snow drips outside his window, Dr. Millson reflects on the vision of Franklin school and the role of each of the three non-profits and how they will fit into this year’s plan.

History

Founded in 1871, Franklin enrolls 575 students in grades K-8 from a diverse neighborhood in a large Mid-Western city. Over the last 20 years, with the addition of French language instruction and

¹ Interview with Dr. Roderick Millson. Subsequent quotes are from this interview unless otherwise noted.

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the establishment of art and music programs, Franklin has demonstrated that a humanities-based curriculum can be provided even in an environment of diminished resources. Educational research has indicated for many years that students educated in a humanities-based curriculum consistently excel on tests of academic achievement²; though, the “extras” needed to provide a humanities-based curriculum –art, music and foreign language—are frequently excluded from basic school budget allocations. Franklin has provided the necessary curriculum and maintained high academic standards, as measured by standardized tests, through the use of non-profit groups and the pursuit of grants. The role of non-profit groups as a means of supporting Franklin’s programs has developed over time.

In 1978, Dr. Bill Wilson, a professor of music at a local university had a dream that every public elementary school in the city would have a band. Wilson was committed to using music to enrich children’s learning and saw a school band as a way to teach teamwork. Ian McCann, the principal at Franklin School at that time, was willing to listen to Wilson’s idea. Franklin draws from a socially cohesive neighborhood of middle-class families, and McCann believed, “A band program seemed like something Franklin’s constituents would appreciate.” McCann himself was interested in building a broader curriculum at the school that would encompass greater emphasis on the humanities. Creating a band seemed to be a win/win proposition.

Over a period of several months, Wilson and McCann met with other stakeholders at Franklin to establish a band program. They worked out a means of funding the band without having to reapportion current resources or ask the central office for additional funds. They hired a full time band teacher, found space in the building, purchased music and other needed supplies, and established a relationship with a local music store to rent instruments for students. They did this by founding Benjamin Franklin Music Association, an independent, non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization to raise funds for and administer the band program in cooperation with McCann’s administration.

According to McCann, “Benjamin Franklin Music Association is unique because it was established for a specific mission”³—to provide band instruction. Benjamin Franklin Music Association wasn’t to be “just a group of parents who raise money for ‘extras’” for the principal and teachers, it was meant to be an independent non-profit group taking on full responsibility for the funding and administration of a specific program. To that end it accepted a commitment to work collaboratively with the school administration, in effect to become part of the school team.

This idea, of using non-profit corporations to provide specialty programs for Franklin school, was taken to new levels in 1981 when McCann was approached by a group of French parents from the school’s neighborhood who were seeking alternative educational opportunities for their children. These French-speaking parents wanted their children to learn English and participate fully in American society, but did not want them to lose touch with their native culture. They sought a bilingual French-English program whose curriculum met the educational standards set by the French government. Such a program would allow parents to integrate their children into French schools easily if the family decided to return to France. Parents also sought a program that would qualify them for French universities. The parent group approached McCann and he negotiated an arrangement whereby an independent non-profit organization would be formed to operate a fully

² Smith 1993, Weider 1990

³ Interview with Ian McCann.

accredited, independent French scholastic program within Franklin. The new organization, Lycee Americaine-Francaise, would pay the entire cost of the teachers and materials needed for the French program while working in close cooperation with McCann's administration. Franklin would benefit by having a foreign-language program that would, in time, be expanded to include all the students in the school.

These two non-profit organizations, together with the long-standing Friends of Franklin, the fund-raising foundation affiliated with the school, form the backbone of Franklin's ability to raise supplemental funds. Together the groups sought 1) to provide a humanities-based curriculum that contributed to Franklin students achieving high standards with regards to standardized test results and desired learning outcomes, and 2) to allow the school to maintain and expand these programs despite a redistricting that changed the student demographic profile, increased the number of low-income students and diminishing state funding.

The Friends of Franklin, a non-profit 501(c)(3) foundation, raises money for components of the humanities programs at Franklin as well as for operational needs such purchasing new computers or underwriting student trips. Benjamin Franklin Music Association provides funding for the band program; Lycee Americaine-Francaise funds the French curriculum program for 60 students along with providing support for French language instruction for all enrolled students. Grants and funds from the principal's discretionary funds (a fund provided by the district to be used at the principal's discretion) make up the additional resources needed to offer a humanities-based curriculum that includes music, art, and French language in grades K-8.

In 1989, when the district implemented a massive decentralization reform, two aspects, in particular, impacted Franklin's program—either of which could have forced a change in the model of using non-profit groups as independent auxiliaries. The first was that school boundaries were redrawn to expand Franklin's catchment area to include a low-income housing project. This change, which brought the number of low income students at Franklin School to 33%, was large enough to impact the classroom environment and instructional methods, but not large enough to bring with it any federal compensatory funds for low income students under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which requires a minimum of 35% of children from families living below the federal poverty line. As the district reform was implemented, Franklin's staff, in consultation with the School Council and Millson, chose to continue to cooperate with these non-profit groups to provide the humanities-based curriculum.

The second reform of the district was the mandatory formation of two new groups. The governing School Council, an elected body of parents, teachers, and community members, was to be responsible for the budget and hiring and firing of the principal. The second group formed was the Personnel Advisory Committee, a group of teachers in the building who would advise the principal on major programmatic issues. The School Council could have disbanded the "extra" programs, Millson noted, but "the Lycee Americaine-Francaise and Benjamin Franklin Music Association really formed the backbone of Franklin's program, and both the School Council and the Personnel Advisory Council recognized that." Mrs. Kraft, a fourth grade teacher said, "The teachers have supported the program from the start. Of course the Personnel Advisory Council would support the existing program."⁴

⁴ Interview with Mary Kraft.

Under pressure from the state legislature, a district reform in 1995 recentralized the district under the control of the mayor and brought schools under closer control by the central district office. Under recentralization, the School Council continued to oversee the school program but with more limited control over the school budget. In 1995, Millson, who had been groomed for the principalship as a teacher and assistant principal under McCann, took over as principal.

The Planning Process

The school plan, mandated by the state in 1989, is a means of holding each school accountable to state and district standards (Exhibit 2 – Excerpts from School Plan). It sets annual goals and objectives for instructional and certain non-instructional issues. The plan provides a means of evaluating program goals at the school through test scores and other factors and also provides the district and state with a way to monitor each school's progress. It includes the goals for the instructional program as well as any minor physical improvements on the building (major improvements are part of the district capital plan) and also contains the budget for the coming year.

The school plan is the end result of a process that includes input from all stakeholders. "It begins with the teachers turning in a list of needs to the Personnel Advisory Committee," says Millson. The Personnel Advisory Committee is a group of nine or ten teachers who are selected by their peers to advise the principal. The committee compiles the needs and gives them to the principal in March. Input from the teachers includes "their evaluation of the previous year's goals as well as what they need for the coming year," Millson notes. Test scores also provide a way of evaluating last year's goals. "Did we meet our goals in Math? Look at the scores and ask the teachers." Once the input from the teachers is in, "I know what the goals are for the next year, and then I can draft the plan and put together the budget with the budget committee," he continues. Before the plan is submitted to the School Council for debate and final approval in April it is presented at two public meetings.

Franklin's three non-profit groups are not formally or officially involved in the development process for the school plan because their participation is not required by the district. However, in practice, members of all three organizations' boards of directors participate. First, Dr. Millson solicits input to the plan from the teachers in the Benjamin Franklin Music Association and the Lycee Americaine-Francaise. Parents and community members involved in Benjamin Franklin Music Association and the Lycee Americaine-Francaise attend the public meetings and have direct and frequent conversations with Dr. Millson. "I work closely with board members from Benjamin Franklin Music Association and Lycee Americaine-Francaise. Everyone's input is considered and goals are developed collaboratively through a series of meetings," says Millson.

Board members from the Friends of Franklin are directly involved in the school plan process both as members of the school community and because several of the goals included in the plan depend on funds raised by the Friends of Franklin. "Friends of Franklin must be involved in the budget process. Members of Friends of Franklin help draft the budget."⁵ explained Mrs. Leslie, a parent and board member.

⁵ Interview with Zoe Leslie

The budget for the school plans includes only the funds over which the principal has direct discretion. These include the funds allocated to him from Friends of Franklin, grant money, and the district's "principal's discretionary fund." (Exhibit 3 – Budget). The budget committee works with Millson to create realistic budget projections based on previous year fund-raising efforts and guaranteed grant allocations. Lycee Americaine-Francaise and Benjamin Franklin Music Association maintain their own budgets separately from the school plan; however, Millson is aware of these budgets. The success of these non-profit groups (and the programs that they provide) is, in part, a result of each organization's close working relationship with the school administration—the principal, the staff, and the School Council. Millson says, "Everyone knows where we're going and how we're going to get there. By having clearly articulated goals we increase our chances of making progress." Franklin's goals are to set high academic standards for all students and provide the instruction and curriculum that supports these goals. Test results show most students scoring at 80% or better above the district average. (Exhibit 4 – Test Scores)

Organizational Structure

Franklin's organizational structure can be analogized as several balls being held up or juggled by the central figure of the principal. But, in fact, those 'balls'—the three independent, non-profit groups, Friends of Franklin, Benjamin Franklin Music Association and Lycee Americaine-Francaise have their own momentum. The principal acts as coordinator among the groups, and also oversees the implementation of the school plan. (See Exhibit 5 – Organizational Chart)

Management tasks of the principal include both non-instructional and instructional responsibilities. Non-instructional tasks include the day-to-day operation of the building, grounds, and cafeteria as well as recruiting and processing paperwork for staff, maintaining accounting records for the general budget allocations made for each school, and tracking district, state, and federal regulations. Instructional tasks include working with teachers to select curriculum, monitoring instruction, hiring and supervising teachers, adjusting the daily schedule as needed, developing and monitoring academic program, administering testing, as well as maintaining a positive school environment and enforcing student discipline standards, and providing support for teachers. Coordinating with the three non-profits is part of Millson's instructional tasks.

All students at Franklin receive the basic courses required by the State of Illinois (which has no specific requirements for specialized arts or foreign language) as well as a fully integrated schedule of music, art, drama and French instruction. While elementary school teachers normally are expected to provide art, music, drama and physical education instruction themselves, Franklin provides specialists in these areas plus foreign language. Each day, students participate in music, art or physical education (which integrates music and dance into the instruction). Drama is integrated into the regular classroom instruction along with additional arts emphasis. The three non-profit groups act primarily to raise funds for the "extra" art, music and language programs. Additionally, Lycee Americaine-Francaise and the Benjamin Franklin Music Association cooperate with Millson to administer their unique programs.

All of the non-profit groups follow the organizational structure required by the Internal Revenue Service (www.irs.gov) to operate as a 501(c)(3) entity. The groups must be incorporated with an Articles of Incorporation and a set of by-laws, which delineate in detail how the group will be

organized. They have elected boards of directors, drawn from their constituency and from the Franklin community in general, that meet monthly or more often as needed. The IRS requires annual reports from these groups, and Franklin requires their close cooperation in all relevant school decisions.

Benjamin Franklin Music Association

Benjamin Franklin Music Association's band program provides both learning and performance opportunity for students in grades five through eight, while also supporting the K-8 music program for all students. The band program operates as an extra-curricular activity with an estimated annual budget of \$54,000 provided entirely through the fund-raising efforts of the association. Benjamin Franklin Music Association provides the school with a full-time band instructor who also works with the school-supported music teacher and classroom teachers to integrate music into the entire curriculum. Every child at Franklin studies music in their classroom, and all fourth graders learn the recorder (a simple, flute-like instrument usually made of plastic or wood used for basic music instruction). From fifth grade on, students can elect to participate in band in addition to the regular classroom music program.

The Benjamin Franklin Music Association board of directors raises the money used to pay the full time band teacher (approximately \$50,000/year) and to purchase supplies (up to \$4,000 per year). The band teacher technically works for Benjamin Franklin Music Association, but is supervised by the school principal through an agreement between Benjamin Franklin Music Association and Franklin. "All the teachers in this building are under my supervision as required by the state and the district" says Millson. Hiring is done in collaboration between the principal and Benjamin Franklin Music Association. "I don't hire the music teacher alone," remarks Millson. Last year, when the band teacher retired, Millson worked with a university consultant and under advisement from Benjamin Franklin Music Association to make the final decision on the new band teacher. Benjamin Franklin Music Association does not employ an administrator. The board of directors works closely with the principal to assure the program runs smoothly.

Lycee Americaine-Francaise

French instruction is provided to all Franklin students, as part of the World Language Program, three times a week for kindergarten through third grade, and four times a week for students in fourth through seventh grade. Eighth graders are offered French instruction as an elective. Lycee Americaine-Francaise students and Franklin fifth graders participate in a five-day annual spring "French camp" immersion program, and all students have an opportunity to participate in an annual exchange program with students from Morocco.

Lycee Americaine-Francaise operates a larger program than Benjamin Franklin Music Association. Three full-time teachers, accredited by the French government, teach French language and the specialized French curriculum program (described in detail below) for 60 French-speaking students, in addition to supporting the Lycee Americaine-Francaise's involvement with the French language program for all Franklin students. One of the teachers also acts as director of the Lycee Americaine-Francaise program. As a teacher, she is supervised by the principal, while as the head of the Lycee Americaine-Francaise she reports to its board of directors. An estimated cost of the staff for Lycee Americaine-Francaise is \$150,000/year. Supplies for the program amount to about \$7,000/year.

Lycee Americaine-Francaise teachers are hired by the Lycee Americaine-Francaise director and the board of directors. The principal collaborates with Lycee Americaine-Francaise to recruit teachers, but maintains sole supervisory responsibility. Principals in Illinois, by law, are responsible for the teachers in their building. This law makes it imperative that the principal participate in the hiring and supervision of the French teachers.

Lycee Americaine-Francaise raises the funds for the program by charging tuition to the parents of the French-speaking students. Activities such as field trips, an exchange program, and a French camp are open to all Franklin students and paid for by the students who participate. Annual fundraising efforts by Lycee Americaine-Francaise and the Friends of Franklin offset the cost of activities for the 33% of the students who are low-income.

Formally, Lycee Americaine-Francaise is an extracurricular activity. The program has maintained an enrollment of 60 French-speaking students since its inception. Recruitment is by word of mouth among the French-speaking community. No additional recruiting methods are used. French-speaking students receive 13 hours a week of French instruction before and after the regular school day. The rest of the school day the Lycee Americaine-Francaise students attend classes at Franklin with their English-speaking peers and meet all the academic requirements mandated by the city and the state. In seventh and eighth grade, students submit to rigorous testing by the French Ministry for National Education, an agency that oversees and accredits the program for compliance with French national standards under contract with the Agency for the Teaching of French Abroad. Lycee Americaine-Francaise is also a member of the Association of French Schools of North America and the National Association of French Schools from Abroad.

The Lycee Americaine-Francaise program's goal is to provide a bilingual program that is accredited by the French government (which is the accrediting agency for all French schools). This allows for students to enter the French school system at grade level should they return to the France and prepares them to pass the exams that are required for admission to French universities. A fully accredited French program is available at the Ecole Francaise de la Cite; however, that program is not bilingual, nor does it allow the students to complete an accredited state education program. Lycee Americaine-Francaise was founded, according to Mrs. LaFonte, a parent, "so that our children could have both a French and an American education. It's important to us that our children experience being American, but we also want them to have a French education."⁶

The Lycee Americaine-Francaise program at Franklin has established an international atmosphere and helped provide the resources for the French language program offered to all of the students. As a result of the Lycee Americaine-Francaise program, Franklin participates in an annual exchange program with a school in Casablanca, Morocco, and offers a Spring French camp in addition to French language and cultural activities for all students. Lycee Americaine-Francaise serves a diverse French community with a range of professional and income levels. "The French program includes children from Haiti and parts of Africa, some are on free and reduced lunch," says Millson.

Friends of Franklin

⁶ From interview with Katrina LaFonte, parent of Lycee Americaine Francaise student, Dec. 2002

Friends of Franklin, as an independent non-profit, raises money for programs at the school, but this group, like many public school foundations, does not administer a particular program. The funds it raises are part of the annual school plan budget and are under the discretion of the principal and the school council.

Financial Structure

Franklin's budget process begins with the school plan that projects goals and objectives consistent with the mission of the school. The school plan sets and accounts for a budget that includes only the funds over which the school council and the principal have control for spending---the principal's discretionary fund from the central district, funds raised by the Friends of Franklin, and grant money. (Exhibit 3 – Budget)

The bulk of the educational programs at Franklin are provided through a basic state funding formula that allocates resources in the form of teachers, supplies, equipment, and services to the school. Resources are allocated in unit such as staff, supplies, and equipment based on the number of students in the school. Principals in the district have no discretion over their building's base budget. The base budget for Franklin amounts to approximately \$2.7 million per year, but “the basic funding isn't something I really consider, since I have no authority over it,” says Millson.

Benjamin Franklin Music Association and Lycee Americaine-Francaise operate as independent organizations with their own boards of directors and, in the case of Lycee Americaine-Francaise, its own program administrator. Their budgets are not under the discretion of either the principal or the School Council, and their programs, technically, operate independently of the Franklin School administration—with the one exception being the requirement that the principal supervise the teachers. However, in practice, Lycee Americaine-Francaise and Benjamin Franklin Music Association work in close cooperation with the principal. Close coordination of programs provides for a cohesive instructional experience and collegial atmosphere. The independence of Lycee Americaine-Francaise and Benjamin Franklin Music Association allow for the ongoing generation of funds to provide the humanities-based program, which is over and above what the basic budget would provide.

Schools in middle and mixed income areas, such as Franklin, frequently have fewer discretionary dollars than schools in low-income areas because of the lack of federal Title I funds. While the average per student allocation for the district, based on data reported by the district office, is approximately \$5,500 per student, the average per student allocation for Franklin is \$4,200. Costs for basic services for all schools are set by the district. Basic services include a minimum number of teachers based on one teacher for every 27 children, a principal, an assistant principal (who also teaches part of the time), office staff, and other support staff as calculated by district formulas according to the needs of the school. Basic services also include a supply budget. The district provides one half-time position to be used for either a music or art teacher. All programs beyond the basic services require additional funding. While Title I schools receive some of this funding from the federal government, non-Title I schools must find ways to raise these funds if they are to meet the needs of the community. Franklin's choice to provide an integrated humanities curriculum requires that it supplement its program. The base budget provides for 1.5 language teachers through

the bilingual funds and a .5 teacher for the arts only. Funds for a music teacher, full time art, or adequate language instruction for all students are extra (See Exhibit 3 – Budget).

Lycee Americaine-Francaise and Benjamin Franklin Music Association operate their programs through the independent structure of the non-profit status. While the funds they generate and administer are not technically under the auspices of Millson or the Franklin School Council, their primary purpose is to support Franklin’s programs. Benjamin Franklin Music Association’s music teacher works collaboratively with the full-time music teacher hired with principal discretionary funds, the after-school choir teacher who is funded with a federal and district grant for after-school programming, and with the classroom teachers who integrate music as part of their curriculum. While no Benjamin Franklin Music Association funds are used directly outside of the band program, the presence of the program provides an emphasis on music that enriches the curriculum not only through support and training for the regular teaching staff, but with individual instrument instruction for band members. “The music teacher helps us integrate music into our other classroom activities,”⁷ notes Mrs. Roberts, a 3rd grade teacher.

Lycee Americaine-Francaise’s three full-time French teachers provide resources in the form of materials and a professional cohort to the three French teachers who teach the “regular” Franklin students who are not enrolled in the Lycee Americaine-Francaise. These teachers are paid with a combination of funds from a district grant, federal Title VII (Bilingual) funds, and funds raised by the Friends of Franklin. Franklin collects Title VII funds because of the number of non-English speaking students enrolled in the school. Bilingual funds are used to support one full-time French teacher and a half-time teacher who also teaches French to non-French speaking students. The presence of the non-English speaking French students results from the existence of the Lycee Americaine-Francaise program, which attracts these additional federal funds. Without Lycee Americaine-Francaise, the federal Title VII funds would not be available to Franklin. The French students and the support by Lycee Americaine-Francaise allow for all enrolled students to have French language and enhance the school culture with an international element.

Teachers in the Benjamin Franklin Music Association and the Lycee Americaine-Francaise are employed by their respective non-profit organizations rather than contracted by the school district. In practice this means that they are under the supervision of the school principal as building employees, but are not under the district salary schedule or benefits package. “I insist that the teachers in the non-profits be paid commensurate with the district salary scale, however,” says Millson. “Benefits are not the same for the non-profit association teachers as for the school district employees, and, especially in terms of the pension, this can be a problem.”

The principal’s discretionary fund comes from a move in the mid-1990s when the regional office suggested to Millson that he encourage the principals’ association to lobby for funds to help offset the lack of federal Title I money in mixed income schools. “A group of us met with the current superintendent and a regional administrator. They approved ‘Minimum Funding,’” a grant of discretionary funding based on school size,” Millson notes. Franklin receives \$105,000 per year in “minimum funding” which is over and above the base budget. This discretionary money is included as part of the school plan budget.

⁷ Interview with Leanne Roberts.

Millson encourages the creative solicitation of grants. For example, the district provides Franklin with a half-time art teacher. Instead of settling for a small, under funded and incidental art program, Millson hired an art teacher who agreed to pursue a grant to cover the rest of her salary and some of her materials. The art teacher, Ms. Lott, was able to acquire a grant for the other half time position within her first year. Millson and Franklin's volunteer grant writer helped Lott locate grant funds that would be applicable to the Franklin program. The grantwriter assisted with a presentation, and Lott's art program was funded for three years. Lott's students study art history, learn to draw and paint, and explore their own creativity. "We can really do a lot of creative activities here because of the support from the grant," notes Lott.⁸ The need for funds to support the second art teacher continues. Therefore, Lott and the grant writer keep their eyes open for funding sources, the Friends of Franklin continue to consider possible additional funding sources, and Millson keeps the art program in mind as he assesses each year's budget.

"A full time art teacher really fleshes out the program here. Kids get three hours of art every week which isn't true in most of the city's schools," says Millson. "Many schools are content to offer instructional programs within what they can afford with their general budget allocation from the district office. Our non-profit groups are committed," says Millson. "They must vie for dollars with countless other organizations such as schools, neighborhood associations, museums, and political parties," he continues.

Fundraising is focused on supporting the goals as set out in the school plan. Franklin non-profits have, over the years, developed effective means to achieve their fund-raising ambitions. Students at Franklin are not asked to be fund-raisers in their off hours and no time is taken away from the instructional program to raise money. "School activities are for learning," Millson insists. All fundraising is undertaken by the non-profit groups. The annual Phonathon is the primary fundraiser for Franklin School. The school's commitment to not spending student time or energy raising funds has "eliminated candy sales and magazine drives from fund raising," says Millson. The support of local businesses and long-term donors allows for the annual Phonathon to raise the resources needed each year. Members from all the non-profit groups participate in the Phonathon as a collaborative effort.

Millson keeps his fund-raising programs focused on the needs of his school as articulated in the school plan. "There is no tweaking of programs to make them fit funding guidelines. We don't chase money just to chase money," Millson point out. The principal has enlisted the help of a parent volunteer to write grants. With her previous grant-writing experience and a background as an accountant, she is able to research and apply for grants that specifically address Franklin's goals.

"We know exactly how close we came to fulfilling last year's goals," Millson says. "And we know exactly where we want to go this year." The money raised in last year's Phonathon, for example, helped pay for much-needed new computers for the mobile lab in addition to providing ongoing help for the science, music, art, drama and French activities. This year, the Phonathon aims to bring new air conditioners to the classrooms.

Sustainability

⁸ Interview with Jennifer Lott

The sustainability of Franklin’s system is substantiated by the fact that it has successfully raised funds to cover operations over a 25-year period. Those 25 years, however, have spanned the administration of only two principals, the second one having been handpicked and trained by his predecessor. Further sustainability must be addressed in terms of how the network of non-profit organizations can function under a different leadership. As Millson looks toward his retirement, he is planning to groom a successor—much like his predecessor did with him. “I’m not ready to retire yet, but there are several good candidates here in the building that the School Council might consider.”

Because the system has been in place for 25 years, all the stakeholders—parents, teachers, community members—are accustomed to working with the structure. The three non-profit groups function independently of the school administration, but rely on coordination with the school for their success. Parents in Lycee Americaine-Francaise and Benjamin Franklin Music Association are involved with the entire school program.

Board members and active participants in these groups are constantly recruited and acculturated into the organizations. For the French-speaking parents to continue to have access to the Lycee Americaine-Francaise program they must maintain a positive working relationship with the school administration, the teachers, and the school council regardless of the particular individuals who hold the positions. The same is true for parents on the board of the Benjamin Franklin Music Association.

Teachers work together and with the administration through the Personnel Advisory Committee, a group of five teachers elected annually by the faculty. “There is very little union activity in our building. It just never comes up. It’s a very effective system for input to the principal,” commented Mrs. Boyle, a teacher and member of the committee.⁹ “The Personnel Advisory Committee requested a few years ago that they provide input directly to me—and I take it to the School Council,” says Millson. “This works well.”

New School Council members are elected every year, but they are drawn from the pool of active participants in the school program. One School Council member, Mr. Rennie, commented, “It’s the high level of parent participation that really makes this program work. Everyone is supportive of the program, of the school, and of Dr. Millson; it would be hard to find any conflict.”¹⁰ Another member added, “We work very closely with the principal.”

Millson feels that “the groups really manage themselves. I’m really just the cheerleader.” Indeed, during an observation in a faculty/parent meeting for the exchange program to Casablanca, Millson introduced the topic and then facilitated a discussion. When conflict arose over an unrelated issue—a schedule change in the music program for the next day — Millson let the three people involved work out the conflict without his input. Two primary teachers, who had been at Franklin for many years, objected to the new music teacher changing a daily schedule on short notice. The teachers made it clear to him why the schedule change caused a problem, and the music teacher offered a compromise that was accepted.

⁹ Interview with Nancy Boyle.

¹⁰ Interview with Richard Rennie.

Principal's Biography

Recruited by McCann and groomed as his successor, Millson had spent a dozen years in the school as a teacher, the last several of them mentoring other members of the staff as head. As head teacher at Franklin, Millson was a school district mentor teacher, and he continues as a mentor to new principals in the district.

The observations of Millson's day-to-day interactions in his building are illustrative of his management style. He moves in and out of classrooms with virtually no disruption. Teachers and students are used to his presence. He praises teachers, staff and parents liberally. "These teachers are working so hard to articulate their curriculum—which is one of the "best practices" we are working on. Everybody ought to feel important about what they're doing and that what they're doing is important."

The hallmark of the Franklin program is that each of the three non-profit groups, Lycee Americaine-Francaise, Benjamin Franklin Music Association, and Friends of Franklin operated semi-autonomously. Millson doesn't "manage" these groups by telling them what they have to do, he "coordinates" them by acting as a communication conduit between groups, and as a beacon of the vision in the school plan. Each group has specific program responsibilities and is free to manage them as long as they are consistent with the vision. "People need to be allowed to do their work, to make their contribution," he asserts. "I don't worry too much about (staff) mistakes," he says. "Everybody's human. We all make mistakes. But I do ask that if a problem does exist with a classroom or a program, it not happen twice." Millson avoids second mistakes by being "in every classroom at least twice a day" and "attending every board and committee meeting."

Millson suggests that all successful principals must empower the members of the community, and work to keep them invested in the school. Two years ago, Mrs. Smith, a mother of a pre-school aged child moved into a house across the street from Franklin. She complained to Millson, the School Council, and other members of the school community that she felt the school playground was an eyesore (a square block of concrete and play equipment). She suggested that the school plant trees along the periphery of the schoolyard. Millson presented the idea to the parent groups and the school council with his suggestion that they plant only a few trees, rather than the number that Mrs. Smith requested. He was concerned that the trees encroach on the small playground space, and potentially posed a hazard to the children while they were playing.

In the end, only a few trees were planted, but Millson worked to cultivate a relationship with Mrs. Smith. "I wanted her to feel like part of our school community," he said. Today, Mrs. Smith is the parent of a Franklin school first grader and just completed a project planting hundreds of bulbs around the front of the school building. In a meeting with Mrs. Smith, Millson remarked, "I wish now that we had planted all the trees she asked for. The kids don't have any problem playing around the trees, and they look great!" Mrs. Smith smiled at Millson's comment said, "It's a wonderful school, and Millson is great to work with. I have an investment in beautifying the school."¹¹

In addition to the high student test scores, less measurable but no less tangible impacts are to be seen in the positive attitudes, demonstrable creativity and social grace of the students encountered

¹¹ Interview with Clair Smith.

during visits to the school and in the unanimous expressions of satisfaction with Franklin's programs on the part of parents and staff. "It's just a great school!" exclaims one parent, nearly in tears. Another parent, Mrs. Lind, said, "We're from the Southside. I don't know where my son would be without the Franklin school program. He is very bright but at his old school just didn't get enough stimulation. Franklin is hard, but he loves it."¹²

Conclusion

In evaluating the goals and objective for the coming year, Millson is comfortable with the long-standing success of his program, but he is also aware of the constant pressures exerted on the school. This year, Millson, is particularly mindful of the state budget crunch and the possibility of reduced basic funding. He looks closely at how a reduced basic budget and the slowing private economy might impact the programs at Franklin.

Understanding that reading is the backbone of any elementary school program, Millson shares his vision for Franklin's programs, "We need to make our program so valuable that the community would almost give up reading instruction before they would give up the humanities-based program." This kind of importance attached to the program is what gives Millson confidence that the three non-profits will be able to continue their twenty plus years of success at providing Franklin's exemplary program.

¹² Interview with Isolde Lind.

Discussion Questions

- 1 How has the use of non-profit organizations at Franklin enhanced its overall academic program?
- 2 What makes the program at Franklin entrepreneurial?

Questions 3-5 are intended to stimulate discussion about the pros and cons of using the non-profit 501(c)(3) model in other educational organization.

- 3 Considering the possibilities for using the non-profit (501 (c)(3) model within the context of a public school, what challenges might a school administrator have to deal with---at the district office level, at the community level, and at the school level?
- 4 Could the use of non-profit groups to provide specialized foreign language program be applied to areas with large numbers of Latino students such that the language program added a bilingual component for all students? How might this work?
- 5 How might you use one or more non-profit corporations to augment or enhance your school or organization's program?

EXHIBIT 1 – BENJAMIN FRANKLIN VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

VISION:

The vision of the Benjamin Franklin Elementary School is to provide the highest quality of education for children so that they are successful, independent, and responsible. Benjamin Franklin Elementary School is notable because of its diverse and creative student body, supportive and active parents, and involved community, led by a strong administration, and served by a dedicated staff, within a safe environment. We see ourselves realizing our vision as we:

1. Build a coordinated and interrelated humanities-based curriculum responsive to the individual needs of children;
2. Create a learning environment which addresses the needs of the whole child;
3. Encourage and support staff development;
4. Communicate meaningfully between home and school;
5. Join the community in education and public service;
6. Organize all resources to improve the learning environment;
7. Upgrade the school facilities for the well-being and safety of the school community;
8. Acquire technology for every classroom so that children are educated for modern life;
9. Open school after hours for educational and community activities;
10. Foster mutual respect and esteem among the children, parents, and staff of Franklin School.

MISSION:

Benjamin Franklin Elementary School will prepare children for the challenges of the present and the future, and promote and develop self-respect and respect for others and the world around them. All children will be taught in an environment that respects their needs and differences. To this end, the school will:

1. Promote a high level of security and self-confidence in each child in an atmosphere of care and concern;
2. Actively involve the students in their own education, promoting a sense of personal responsibility, love of learning, and the realization that education is a life-long process;
3. Assure that students, to the maximum extent possible, are provided with a common learning experience of high academic quality and that they are prepared to live in a technological society;
4. Create an academic environment that reflects high expectations in which all students can achieve according to their abilities;
5. Provide an environment to promote school pride and an esprit de corps among all members of the school community;
6. Prepare all children for the freedom and responsibility of a democracy;
7. Expose children to the diversity of the community and develop respect for the heritage of others;
8. Encourage open and honest communication among school personnel, parents, and students;
9. Encourage all parents to participate in the educational process.

Exhibit 2 - School Plan Goals1. To ensure that all students achieve reading skills at or above the national average

- A. A greater articulation of writing excellence will be integrated to support reading development;
- B. Additional academic support programs will be available for students at risk including: Reduced class size, Before & After-School programs;
- C. Enhance the reading experience through a humanities-based integrated curriculum, which includes Foreign language-French, Dance, Drama, Music, and Visual & Technical Arts;
- D. Continue development of the automated and networked system open library program to support integrated curricular activities;
- E. Focus on developmental readiness within the primary grades to support each child's success in reading (Bookbag Program, ESL, lighthouse/Academic Center Program);
- F. Utilize parent involvement/support in appropriate areas of the Chicago Reading Initiative.

2. To ensure opportunities for all students to attain academic excellence

A. Strong Program

- i. Continue to provide a common learning experience of high academic quality in harmony with State Goals & Chicago Academic Standards that reflects the expectation for all students to learn at the upper limits of their ability. (foreign language/World language K- 8; heterogeneous academic groupings);
- ii. Additional academic support programs will be available for students to improve achievement (Reduced class size, Before & After-School programs, Parent Tutors)
- iii. Technology and computer access will be integrated into academic activities to support academic excellence, to enable students to interface in cyber world where appropriate, and to expand resource opportunities for learning

B. Strong Staff

- i. Provide opportunities for staff to plan integrated curricular learning activities together
- ii. Continue to provide staff opportunities for development through in-house activities and off- site conferences/workshops in harmony with this plan

C. Strong Support/Environment

- i. Develop technological support, which is easy to access and ready to use for learning (This includes hardware & software needs, as well as on-going support and maintenance);
- ii. Ensure availability of textual materials required to support learning, including consumables across the curriculum;
- iii. Continue to support mentoring of newer staff through Chicago Public School and locally developed programs.

3. To maintain an environment that models qualities of character and citizenship that empowers students to be responsible, contributing members of the community.

- A. Continue to recognize professional expertise regarding instructional decision-making coordinated within the schools within a School and through the leadership of the Professional Personnel Advisory Committee {PPAC};
- B. Parents and staff and community will continue to model partnership in communication and education on "Best Practice" in supporting the successful development of students & ensuring a positive, safe, interactive environment that demonstrates respect for oneself and each other {counselor aide, Safe & Drug Free Schools Committee activities, Room Parent support and newsletter, monthly Flash newspaper, Children's Memorial Project/partnership; Special event days & Volunteer activities};
- C. Athletic programs will be integrated into the school curriculum and coordinated with volunteer initiatives to foster teamwork, pride and positive identification with the school; Physical education will be combined with World language French, where feasible, to enhance instruction through Total Physical Response strategies;
- D. Continue to expose students to future academic and career opportunities available to them (PTA Career Day. Health & Guidance. Field Trips, High School fair and Science Fair, History Fair, Young Authors Contest and Spelling Bee, Sister City Exchanges).

4. To not only maintain the building and grounds in a state of progressive repair, maintenance and cleanliness, but also expand functional capabilities within the auditorium, science lab, resource labs (library & Computer lab) and telecommunications to support academic excellence and curriculum requirements

- A. Continue upgrade of telecommunications system to support technological needs;
- B. Repair and upgrade bathrooms to 21st century standards;
- C. Continue evaluation and upgrade. of the playground & school grounds in harmony with community needs & expectations;
- D. Modernize science lab in harmony with state safety requirements and in conjunction with technological advancements;
- E. Enhance technological capabilities within the auditorium to support/enhance drama, dance and assembly events, as well as community forums and presentations;
- F. Paint classrooms & closets, stairs & lockers where paint is peeling;
- G. Ensure continued diligence to ongoing maintenance and cleaning schedules.

EXHIBIT 3 – BENJAMIN FRANKLIN SCHOOL BUDGET

School base revenue* \$2,622,400 575 students

FUND	ANNUAL REVENUE
Principal's discretion	\$105,000
Friends of Franklin	\$100,000
District language support	\$75,000
Federal Title VII (Bilingual)	\$25,000
Art Grant	\$25,000
Lycee Americaine-Francaise	\$160,000
Benjamin Franklin Music Association	\$54,000

PROVIDES FOR	AT A COST OF
1.0 Music teacher	\$50,000
1.0 French teacher	\$50,000
1.5 French teachers	\$75,000
.5 French teacher	\$25,000
.5 Art teacher	\$25,000
3 French teachers	\$150,000
Supplies	7,000
Scholarship \$	3,000
1.0 Music teacher	\$50,000
Supplies	4,000

*The base revenue figure is based on a \$4560/student/year that is what any other school in the system would receive as a base budget.

Salary figures includes benefits

(source: author's estimate)

EXHIBIT 4 – Test Score Data on the Iowa Test of Basic

The number represents the percentage of students “Meeting or Exceeding” the standard set by the state. Reese Elementary data is included for the purpose of comparison. Reese Elementary is similar in size and percentage of students living in poverty to Franklin School. The racial demographic is slightly different.

Franklin

2002	Reading		Math		Writing	
	3 rd grade	8 th grade	3 rd grade	8 th grade	3 rd grade	8 th grade
Overall	71.4	88.8	89.8	75.0	67.4	76.3
White (62.8)	83	98	100	85.5	74	77.1
African-American (24.1)	30	58	69	41	38	73.7
Hispanic (7.5)	100	100	100	87.5	100	87.5

Reese

2002	Reading		Math		Writing	
	3 rd grade	8 th grade	3 rd grade	8 th grade	3 rd grade	8 th grade
Overall	70.3	75.6	85.1	63.4	62.3	46.3
White (19.4)	73.1	94.1	84.6	93.8	69.2	56.3
African-American (58.3)	59.2	75.0	79.6	56.7	50.0	41.7
Hispanic (22.1)	100.0	59.1	100.0	35.5	83.3	52.8

Franklin

2001	Reading		Math		Writing	
	3 rd grade	8 th grade	3 rd grade	8 th grade	3 rd grade	8 th grade
Overall	71	90	90	81	45	79
White (59.5)	83	100	94	97	43	98
African-American (24.8)	36	77	84	50	29	50
Hispanic (8.9)	N/R	78	N/R	78	N/R	78

2001 data not available for Reese