

ENVISION SCHOOLS

Rigor + Relationships + Relevance = Results



“These schools are posting significant gains and preparing all its students to succeed in college and career, regardless of income, ethnicity and background.” — Steve Seleznow, Program Director for Education, Gates Foundation

“Envision Schools is a model for our country.” — Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey

Our Purpose

Justice, prosperity, and democracy require that all students, and especially socio-economically disadvantaged students, succeed in high school and college. Only 12% of California’s First Generation College Bound (FGCB) urban high school students receive a four-year college degree. Envision Schools aims to quadruple the college graduation rate for our FGCB students in comparison to peer students in their surrounding school districts. Within three years Envision Schools has demonstrated excellent academic results, detailed below.

We achieve great results by:

- Transforming the high school experience so that all our students graduate with the knowledge, habits of mind, and confidence to graduate from a four-year college;
- Bringing to scale a sustainable model for building clusters of small, high-achieving, college prep urban high schools;
- Sharing best practices to ensure more students outside the Envision network graduate ready to succeed in college.

The Problem

- Only 70% of entering ninth graders in California graduate from high school.
- Hispanics, African-Americans, and economically disadvantaged students **fall as much as four years behind** their white and non-disadvantaged peers.
- Only 1 in 4 California high school **graduates** is even **eligible** to attend the University of California/California State University (UC/CSU) system;
- Nationally, an average of 7,000 students drop out of school **every school day**. The average annual income for a high school dropout is less than \$16,500.

Our Method: The Envision Schools Educational Model

Four specific principles—**Rigor, Relationships, Relevance, and Results**—ground the innovative Envision model.

1. **Rigor:** Every Envision student engages in a rigorous, standards-based college-prep curriculum that meets or exceeds the course requirements for the UC/CSU systems—there is no second track.
2. **Relationships:** Class size is no more than 27 students, and teams of teachers work with the same students for two consecutive years. Teachers and leaders guide students academically and socially in small advisory groups of 15 to 20 throughout a student’s high school career.
3. **Relevance:** Interdisciplinary, project-based work and field studies are at the heart of the Envision learning experience. Students exhibit their projects to the entire school community, and art and technology is integrated into the curriculum.
4. **Results:** Envision holds its students accountable to rigorous outcomes. Envision graduates must pass all mandated state tests, meet UC/CSU entrance requirements, and earn an acceptance letter from at least one four-year college or university.

Our Schools’ Results

MARIN SCHOOL OF ARTS & TECHNOLOGY (MSAT) – Novato, CA Opened in 2003, grades 9-12

- 68% of MSAT’s first senior class was accepted to a 4-year college. The average MSAT senior garnered over **\$12,000 in financial aid**. 55% of our graduates *who will be the first in their family to graduate from a 4-year college* were accepted to a 4-year college.
- 100% of MSAT graduates met the course requirements for entrance into the University of California system. Statewide, 25% of graduates meet those requirements.
- MSAT’s senior class boasts a National Merit Scholar.
- MSAT students were accepted to Stanford, UCLA, UC Davis, University of Michigan, Wake Forest, Northeastern, and other prestigious colleges.
- The California Department of Education awarded MSAT \$250,000 to disseminate MSAT’s award winning project-based curriculum as an exemplary best practice for all California high schools; MSAT is only one of two California high schools to receive this award in 2006.

- The Western Association of Schools and Colleges, California’s school accreditation agency, awarded MSAT its highest accreditation status, an extraordinary achievement for a school less than four years old.
- The George Lucas Educational Foundation selected MSAT’s Watershed Project as a national example of a “best practice.”

CITY ARTS & TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL (CAT) – San Francisco, CA Opened in 2004, grades 9-11

- Student demographics: 77% students of color, 45% FGCB, and 40% eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch.
- CAT earned **the highest API gain of any high school in San Francisco** Unified School District in 2006 and is now the third-highest scoring non-magnet high school in San Francisco.
- CAT’s Academic Performance Index ranking places it in **the top 10%** of all public schools with similar demographics in California.
- Honored by the US Department of Education as one of 12 exemplary charter schools in California.
- CAT students **averaged impressive pass rates** on the California High School Exit Exam that far outpace the state and local averages: **90% for English/Language Arts (ELA) and 83% for Math.**

METROPOLITAN ARTS & TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL (METRO) – San Francisco, CA Opened in 2005, grades 9-10

- Student demographics: 90% students of color, 74% FGCB, and 66% eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch. Metro enjoys a 93% attendance rate.
- Metro sophomores **also averaged impressive pass rates** on the California High School Exit Exam: **86% for ELA and 83% for Math.** In comparison, San Francisco Unified School District sophomores, significantly more socio-economically advantaged than Metro sophomores, averaged 74% for ELA and 76% for Math.

ENVISION ACADEMY OF ARTS & TECHNOLOGY (EA) – Oakland, CA Opened in 2006, grade 9

- Student demographics: 97% students of color, 65% FGCB, and 90% eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch. EA enjoys a 93% attendance rate.

Our Impact

Envision is achieving outstanding results with a student body that is 53% African-American or Hispanic/Latino, 52% eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch, and 50% FGCB. Envision recruits aggressively in socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and enrolls students through a random lottery; 35% of total admissions are reserved for FGCB students.

By 2009, Envision Schools will produce:

- Graduates who outperform their peers in other public schools, and who are well prepared for college and life.
- Students who are engaged in learning, now and for the rest of their lives.
- A Bay Area cluster of high-performing college-prep high schools serving 4,000 students annually.
- The opening of our second cluster in Fresno, CA.
- Proof that Envision’s instructional and business models are replicable and sustainable.

Envision Supporters

Envision is one of two charter school management organizations funded directly by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). BMGF awarded Envision \$10.8 million to start two clusters of eight high schools each.

Other generous supporters include:

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| California Charter School Grant Program | Oracle Education Foundation |
| Donner Foundation | Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund |
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| James Irvine Foundation | San Francisco Foundation |
| Koret Foundation | Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation |
| Low Income Investment Foundation | State of California |
| Napa New Technology Foundation | Stuart Foundation |

Key Advisors

Envision’s Advisory Board contains a group of nationally renowned leaders in education reform, including:

- Ray Cortines—former superintendent of NYC, LA, and San Francisco public school systems
- Erin Gore—Public Finance Senior Investment Banker for the Banc of America
- Linda Darling Hammond—Professor of Teacher Education at Stanford University
- Rick Lear—Executive Director of the Small Schools Project
- Stanley Rabinowitz—Director of WestEd’s Assessments and Standards Division
- Don Shalvey—CEO of Aspire, California’s largest charter school management organization