



A New Health & Science Campus as part of an Arts Integrated High School.

Michael Fisher



Introduction

Expanding on a good idea.

In 2006/07 school year we opened a new school with an arts and academics - integrated focus. In short, the belief was that if you could think like an artists you could act like an academic. In the succeeding five years that the school has been open, we're closing in on our goal of 220 students (currently, 205) and we've achieved some remarkable success:

- Achieved AYP in 2009/10
- Solid performance on state assessment tests with meets & exceeds percentages consistently above district and state averages.
- 98% Graduation Rate
- 60% of the 2010 graduates enrolled in four year universities

In 2008, we received the Charter School grant and with those resources, we are choosing to expand the school and open an additional campus, focused on Health and Science. In a time where schools are typically "hunkering down," we believe the opportunity is ripe to expand and take in more students in a new campus experience, yet still maintain our learning-focused, small school environment.

An Intriguing Idea

Where's this coming from?

Initial anecdotal research with partner arts-based schools who have expanded to offer other areas of focus - specifically the Tacoma School of the Arts (SOTA) and the myriad of theme-based charter schools in the Portland area - have suggested that a science/math or science-based academy is a popular draw. A look at graduation data in Springfield - though inconclusive, but at least informative - would suggest that few of the large high school graduates move on to high-end careers in the medical or science field, like M.D. or PhD, but many do enroll in health field programs at two year institutions, such as LCC, to prepare for careers in health support occupations like nursing and medical technicians.

Further incidental information from math and science teachers throughout the school district would allow us to conclude that there is support for a focused science-integrated curriculum at the high school level. As well, health occupations curriculums, at one time flourishing at both large high schools, have since disappeared with the staff who originally inspired them but have since moved on.

Finally, when we first started our small school, the data supported that maximum efficiency in small school design is around 350 - 400 students. Based on our community, an arts-focused school would only realistically draw 220 to 240 and in those halcyon days of school design before implementation, that seemed like a reasonable, even ideal number. However, we're beginning to accept that the initial conclusions around size are, indeed, accurate. Our current size has made our program susceptible to threats from diminished resources and from the whims of recruitment. Thus, keeping every kid who enrolls is a priority and staffing for a projected 200 can leave us open to a significant short fall if 10 of them leave, yet we've already spent the money based on 200.

The "Buckets of Concern": A Timeline for Implimentation and Options



Year 1: 2010/11.

Bucket 1: WHY a Health & Sciences Campus as part of the existing Arts-integrated school?

Though we have anecdotal data to support that a health and science focused school has appeal and there is an assumed match of community values, we don't actually have any hard data that shows that parents or students would actually choose this option were it available. Greater analysis of actual data is called for through surveys of actual district students and parents as well as offering opportunities for students to engage in a science/health mini-institute or summer workshop to see how many would actually actively choose that sort of work. Possible activities to explore:

- A web-based survey announced to 4th - 7th grade parents (ones mostly likely to sign up in the next three to five years) that would collect responses around what interest there is in a health & sciences focused academy as part of the existing campus. Such a survey would also invite respondent text input for ideas and questions.
- Information meetings and workshops for district science, math, and health teachers and district administrators. The meetings would be organized to gather staff input, as well as to calm fears that the program would not draw students away from exemplary science and health programs at the large comprehensive schools. The goal would be to offer something deeper and different, rather than to replicate what's already being offered.



Bucket 2: WHERE would we locate a science and health academy? How many students do we actively plan for?

Size matters. Or at least that's what we're hearing from other Health/ Science Academies from across the nation. We attended a conference in Texas and, after a brief outline of what we were thinking about, there was a universal response that we may want to consider that we'll outgrow our original projection of 100 health & science students. We believe that the new campus needs to integrate with our existing school, utilizing our current capacities for foreign language instruction, fine arts-integration, and an all-school daily writing group. Thus, the new campus will need to be located close by our existing structure. Our options:

- Option 1 (our favorite one at this point): Purchase adjoining property & buildings right next to the current school. We have a donor who is willing to purchase the two 1940s era buildings next to us. The trick is getting the current owners to sell for what they're worth, not what they want. We could retro-fit one of the existing buildings to accommodate the program for the first couple of years.
- Option 2: rent space in any of the other close by store fronts. There are a lot of options in downtown Springfield.

In both cases, we will need to make a decision about how many students. At this point our research would indicate 100 is a sustainable number, but we're still open to modifying that number and will, of course, plan space accordingly. Ultimately, our goal is to work with the school district to go out for a bond measure in three to five years to construct a new building that will serve not only the needs of the new campus, but the rest of the district's downtown student programing.



Year 2: 2011/12.

Bucket 3: WHAT are we REALLY offering and how is it sustainably and significantly different than what is available at the other large high schools?

By year two of our development, we need to get specific about exactly what the curriculum for the school is and what is the scaffolded experience that we're offering. Some key components that must be considered:

- Rigor. Science, math, and health content is typically rote learned and requires a level of mastery different than just the typical integrated thinking that has characterized our math and science curriculum up to this point. We must look to offering a rigorous experiential pathway to content attainment that does not rely on simple content memorization, but does honor it's importance as well. In order for science, math, and health students to be successful beyond high school, they must develop values and practices around memorization of key content and how to actively and creatively apply it in a variety of problem-solving circumstances.
- Relevance. It will be important to develop a partnership with Sacred Heart hospital and the science programs at UO. Our 3rd and 4th year students will need to have a scaffolded program that puts them in direct instructional and mentoring contact with trained professionals. As well, they will need to be able to conduct themselves professionally and accurately in these environments.



Bucket 4: HOW do we get kids to sign up? How do we market the new campus?

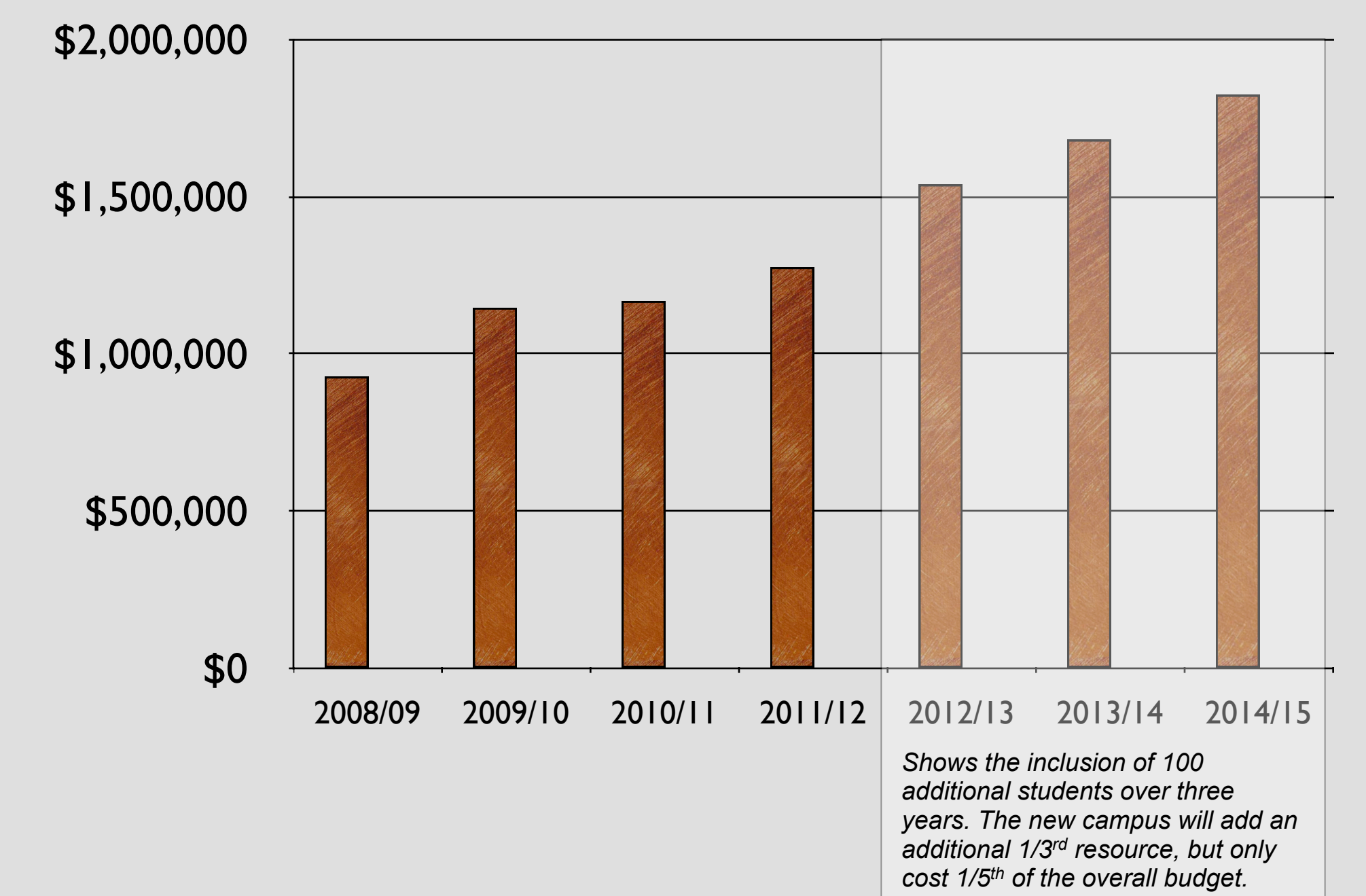
In year two of the campus development, we're going to have to do a good deal of marketing and out reach to get our start-up student body of 50 sophomores and freshmen. Possible activities to explore:

- Hold a week-long science and health based "day camp" during the summer. The program would be low cost or free for participants and would feature multiple hands-on learning opportunities for middle school students. The camp would mimic the existing arts school structure, but with a more academic, science/health, focus. At the end, each student would be responsible for publicly presenting either as part of a group or individually something that demonstrates their learning. Finally, the students would respond to survey data about their engagement in the work and if they would be interested in continuing this style of learning in high school. The camp could serve as an initial recruitment for the first group of students.
- New marketing blitz. We are currently working with a marketing agency to help us narrow our message and do a better job of branding our school. The five year marketing plan will include the school expansion.
- Visits to feeder middle schools. We already do this as part of our regular recruiting, but for the new campus we would need to focus the visits more specifically to students who would already self-select to be in this type of program.

Above all, it's important to develop a clear message. The public must see that the health and science campus is not some sort of elitist program for smart kids only, but is part of the general school philosophy that ANYONE can attend, irregardless of prior academic success or talent.

Some Results and Conclusions

The chart below plots the growth of the school since 2008/09 through a projected full enrollment of 320 students in 2014/15. The projection includes the additional 100 health and science students beyond our current capacity of 220, projected for 2011/12.



Some important notes:

- The school was funded at 115% of ADM in 2008/09, 105% in 09/10 and, currently, at 100% in 2010/11.
- Note that the first four bars denote only a modest increase in resource as the school reaches anticipated capacity in 2011/12, even with additional district support figured in the first two years.
- There is a more steady climb though as we add more students once the new campus is added.
- We anticipate having to only add 2.0 fte to staff the additional 100 students if we fully utilize the current capacity of the school staff and fill in with adjunct professional part-time faculty.
- Start up costs for the new school will be off set through charter grant funds and an anticipated bond measure to build a new building through the school district that will include FF&E.

Conclusions: Though it's always a risk to initiate a new program, we believe that our research indicates that expanding our school to include a health and science campus that would add up to 1/3rd additional resource, but only cost 1/5th of our actual budget is a good move. As well, the program would fill a void in the district where there is no focused health and science job/college preparation program.

Further, we believe, though this is a time of diminishing resources in Oregon, this is the time to expand. We have Charter Grant resources to support the research and implementation of the new campus and our programatic ideas have both the historical and community support to be successful.

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