

**ORLEANS PARISH SCHOOL BOARD**

# CHARTER SCHOOL APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION REPORT 2017

*National Association of Charter School Authorizers*

**November 10, 2017**

*New Charter School Application for*

**FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS (School Name TBD)**

*Submitted by*

**FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS**

*Evaluation Team*

**TEAM LEAD: HAROLD LEE**

**EVALUATORS: GAIL LAZARD**

**ANTHONY OLIVER**

© 2017 National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA)

This report carries a Creative Commons license, which permits noncommercial reuse of content when proper attribution is provided. This means you are free to copy, display, and distribute this work, or include content from this report in derivative works, under the following conditions:

**Attribution:** You must clearly attribute the work to the National Association of Charter School Authorizers and provide a link back to the publication at <http://qualitycharters.org>.

**Noncommercial:** You may not use this work for commercial purposes, including but not limited to any type of work for hire, without explicit prior permission from NACSA.

**Share Alike:** If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under a license identical to this one.

For the full legal code of this Creative Commons license, please visit [www.creativecommons.org](http://www.creativecommons.org). If you have any questions about citing or reusing NACSA content, please contact us.

## INTRODUCTION

Across New Orleans, more than 90 percent of public school students currently attend charter schools. These schools have led to a dramatic increase in the number of students meeting academic proficiency standards and the performance gap between students in Orleans Parish and Louisiana as a whole has dramatically decreased over the last 12 years.

Despite these gains, additional progress is needed. Every student deserves high quality schools where their interests will come first, where they and their families will have choice, and where educators will have the tools and support they need to be successful.

The Fall 2017 charter school application process seeks proposals from highly qualified applicants to open new Type 1 charter schools and transform existing district-run schools into Type 3 charter schools.

### *Focus on Quality*

The 2017 Request for Proposals and the resulting evaluation process are rigorous and demanding. The process is meant to ensure that approved charter school operators possess the capacity to implement a school model that is likely to dramatically increase student outcomes. Successful applicants will demonstrate high levels of expertise and capacity in the areas of curriculum and instruction, school finance, educational and operational leadership, and non-profit governance, as well as high expectations for excellence in student achievement and professional standards. An application that merits a recommendation for approval will present a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; be detailed in how this school will raise student achievement; and inspire confidence in the applicant's capacity to successfully implement the proposed academic and operational plans.

### *Evaluation Process*

For the 2017 RFP cycle, OPSB partnered with the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) to manage the application process and to provide independent, merit-based recommendations regarding whether to approve or deny each proposal. NACSA assembled an independent evaluation team that included both national and local expertise related to charter school start-up and operation. This report from the evaluation team is a culmination of three stages of review:

#### **PROPOSAL EVALUATION**

The evaluation team conducted individual and group assessment of the merits of the proposal based on the complete written submission.

#### **CAPACITY INTERVIEW**

After reviewing the application and discussing the findings of their individual reviews, the evaluation team conducted an in-person interview to assess the team's overall capacity to implement the proposal as written in the application.

#### **CONSENSUS JUDGMENT**

Following the capacity interview, the evaluation team came to consensus regarding whether to recommend the proposal for approval or denial. The duty of the evaluation team is to recommend approval or denial of each application based on its merits against OPSB-approved evaluation criteria. The authority and responsibility to decide whether to approve or deny each application rests with the members of OPSB.

### *Report Contents*

This evaluation report includes the following:

#### **PROPOSAL OVERVIEW**

Basic information about the proposed school as presented in the application.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

An overall judgment regarding whether the proposal meets the criteria for approval.

#### **EVALUATION**

Analysis of the proposal based on four primary areas of plan development and the capacity of the applicant team to execute the plan as presented:

School: academic model and schedule, LEA status, special student populations, goals and metrics, enrollment plans, school culture, and family and community engagement.

People: founder's submission, governing board, staff, mission critical partners, and education service providers.

Operations: start-up plan, facility, and financial readiness.

Finance: budget.

## EVALUATION: ADDENDA

For applicants on the existing or experienced operator tracks, applicants that are or will form a corporate partnership, schools whose primary instructional environment is computer-based or virtual, applicants seeking or potentially willing to seek a match to operate an existing Orleans public charter school or school facility, or applicants seeking to start, transform or convert a school serving Grades 9-12, an analysis of:

Experienced Operator Addendum (if applicable): past school performance, growth plan, scale strategy, and risks and associated contingency plans.

Corporate Partnership Addendum (if applicable): corporate partnership formation, corporate partner track record, legal relationships, and organizational structure.

Virtual School Addendum (if applicable): location, educational program, instructional staff, state and federally mandated services, evaluation and assessment, school operations, and parent and community involvement.

Transformation Addendum (if applicable): transformation overview, operator track record, educational program, school operations, metrics and goals, and community engagement.

High School Addendum (if applicable): state and district graduation standards, supporting success for all students – truancy prevention, remediation and intervention, ensuring college and career readiness, and strong start – 9th grade transition plan.

## RATINGS CHARACTERISTICS

Evaluation teams assess each application against the published evaluation criteria. In general, the following definitions guide evaluator ratings:

### Meets the Standard

The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the applicant's capacity to carry out the plan effectively.

### Meets the Standard with Reservations

The response meets the criteria in many respects, but lacks detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas.

### Approaches the Standard

The response meets the criteria in some respects but has substantial gaps in a number of areas.

### Does Not Meet the Standard

The response is wholly undeveloped or significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out.

## PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

*Applicant Name:*

**FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS**

*Proposed School Name:*

**FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS (School Name TBD)**

*Mission:*

The mission of FirstLine Schools is to create and inspire great open admissions public schools in New Orleans. For FirstLine Schools, great schools are those that provide an education for life by nurturing students' development in mind, body, and spirit.

*Proposed Location:*

Orleans Parish

*Enrollment Projections:*

| <i>Academic Year</i> | <i>Planned # Students</i> | <i>Maximum # Students</i> | <i>Grades Served</i> |
|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 2018-19              | 660                       | 810                       | PK-8                 |
| 2019-20              | 710                       | 810                       | PK-8                 |
| 2020-21              | 760                       | 810                       | PK-8                 |
| 2021-22              | 810                       | 810                       | PK-8                 |
| 2022-23              | 810                       | 810                       | PK-8                 |
| At Capacity          | 810                       | 810                       | PK-8                 |

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Recommendation:*

**FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS (School Name TBD)**

**APPROVE**

### *Summary Analysis:*

The evaluation team recommends approval of FirstLine Schools' (FirstLine) application to transform two Type 1 charter schools in Orleans Parish.

FirstLine currently operates five charter schools in New Orleans. FirstLine's academic results have stabilized and are on the trajectory to move schools from "C" to "B" or "A" status in the next few years. In 2016, FirstLine showed improvement and the CMO's "K-8 schools had the second highest combined performance in English and math across all CMOs in New Orleans" (Experienced Operator Addendum, pg. 1-2). In 2017, the positive trajectory continued as four of five schools' School Performance Scores (SPS) grew. FirstLine's four elementary/middle schools had an average of 9.6 progress points in 2017—some of the strongest results in the city and state.

FirstLine's leadership team was able to articulate a thorough understanding of its past challenges and how it implemented systems and strategies to ensure continuous organizational improvement. In the past several years, FirstLine has written and adopted a more robust curriculum and aligned support for teachers. Content directors for English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies have joined the central office. FirstLine has also implemented a weekly Teacher Prep Day to allow teachers to lesson plan and review data more systematically. In order to build the school leader pipeline, FirstLine created a Leadership Fellow program to increase the internal bench of school leaders. There are multiple individuals within the network that are willing and able to lead additional schools.

FirstLine's mission to create and inspire great open admissions public schools in New Orleans is clear and compelling. FirstLine seeks to develop the whole child through a rigorous yet nurturing environment. Key components of the educational program—rigorous instruction, personalized learning, extensive learning supports, and parents as partners—are coherent and well-planned.

FirstLine's governing board and network level leaders have the educational, financial, legal, and operational capacity to effectively govern and run successful charter schools. As an experienced operator, FirstLine has developed key tenets of the transformation model that support achievement for all students. Governing board and CMO leaders were able to clearly articulate the indicators they looked at to determine if FirstLine is ready to grow. Over the last three years, FirstLine has developed a strong bench of school leaders, raised significant financial support, and increased network-level talent. Due to these factors, the evaluation team is confident that FirstLine is poised to take on an additional two transformation schools.

### *Summary of Section Ratings:*

Opening and maintaining a successful, high-performing charter school depends on having a complete, coherent plan and identifying highly capable individuals to execute that plan. It is not an endeavor for which strengths in some areas can compensate for material weaknesses in others. *Therefore, in order to receive a recommendation for approval, the application must Meet the Standard in all areas.*

#### **SCHOOL**

Meets the Standard

#### **PEOPLE**

Meets the Standard

#### **OPERATIONS**

Meets the Standard

#### **FINANCE**

Meets the Standard

#### **EXPERIENCED OPERATOR ADDENDUM**

Meets the Standard

#### **TRANSFORMATION ADDENDUM**

Meets the Standard

## SCHOOL

## RATING:

**FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS (School Name TBD)**

**Meets the Standard**

### *Plan Summary:*

FirstLine Schools is a non-profit charter management organization (CMO) that currently operates five charter schools in New Orleans. The school model's three core areas—rigorous and engaging academics (mind), physical activity/healthy habits (body), and developing character/community building (spirit)—are incorporated throughout the school day. Key components of the academic program include rigorous instruction, personalized learning, extensive learning supports, and parents as partners.

The applicant will utilize Achievement Network and LEAP 360 interim assessments three times per year to determine how successfully curricula is being implemented and to inform classroom instruction.

The professional development plan for teachers includes five weeks of summer planning prior to the school year. FirstLine has developed a "Vision for Excellent Teaching" handbook to align expectations for high-quality instruction.

FirstLine seeks to transform up to two existing district-run schools over the next two years. Each school will open as a Grades PreK-8 open enrollment charter school with enrollment between 660 and 810 students.

### *Analysis:*

The School section meets the standard. FirstLine's mission to create and inspire great open admissions public schools in New Orleans is clear and compelling. FirstLine seeks to develop the whole child through a rigorous yet nurturing environment. The applicant's three core areas—mind, body, and spirit—are clearly integrated throughout the school day as evidenced by the "day in the life" student narrative. For example, to promote healthy lifestyles (body), FirstLine utilizes a curriculum for gardening and cooking called Edible School Yard New Orleans, for all Grades K-4 students.

The application clearly outlines the essential elements of FirstLine's curricula by grade and subject, the rationale for curricula selection, and evidence that curricula are aligned to Louisiana state standards. Many components of the chosen curricula are either highly ranked (Tier I or Tier II) by the Louisiana Department of Education. FirstLine cited the adoption of best practices from Success Academies in New York (Proposal Narrative, pg. 12), one of the highest performing charter networks in the country.

FirstLine will implement a robust, five-week professional development plan prior to the school year to ensure that staff are prepared for the challenging work of school transformation. There appears to be adequate training and support for teachers. During the school year, teachers go to weekly department meetings and network-wide trainings.

FirstLine's Response to Intervention (RtI) framework is multi-tiered and includes blended learning approaches, small group instruction, research-based curriculum, and intervention strategies. For students with disabilities, the applicant will implement an integrated co-teaching model which will provide a more inclusive setting for all students. The application also provides a detailed process for the identification of gifted and talented students.

FirstLine clearly highlights the baseline (i.e., MAP and STAR), formative, unit, and interim (i.e. ANET, LEAP) assessments that it will utilize to inform curriculum and instruction on a daily, weekly, monthly, and annual basis. The application describes a thoughtful approach to performance goals. FirstLine provides reasonable absolute performance goals of four percent annual increases in students achieving basic, mastery, or above on the LEAP assessments. The applicant also set goals for attendance, re-enrollment, and suspension rates based on historical data and future baseline data.

The applicant outlined a clear recruitment strategy and plan for students at the two proposed transformation schools including partnering with parent associations, PreK programs, Head Start programs, and community organizations.

Firstline's transformation school leaders will develop a cultural blueprint, which is a set of policies and procedures for culture building. By utilizing monthly culture dashboards and conducting whole school reviews two to three times per year, FirstLine will ensure a strong and healthy school environment.

FirstLine presents a plan that will engage parents from the time the charter is approved until their students graduate. The parent communication plan clearly lays out how and when the school and parents will communicate with each other.

## PEOPLE

## RATING:

**FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS (School Name TBD)**

**Meets the Standard**

### *Plan Summary:*

FirstLine Schools is led by CEO Jay Altman. FirstLine has identified multiple internal candidates for administrative positions at the new school. A director, primary school principal, and middle school principal will be selected by December 1, 2017.

A single governing board at FirstLine oversees all schools within the network and will oversee the transformation schools, if approved. The governing board includes 13 individuals with professional experience in education, finance, human resources, law, facilities, community relations, technology, fundraising, and politics. The governing board meets six times per year and includes six committees: development, advocacy, facilities, finance, audit, and governance.

Teachers at FirstLine attend weekly staff meetings, weekly teacher prep days, network professional development days and weekly or bi-weekly coaching sessions. The applicant will monitor and track coaching, goals, and observations through its performance management system, Whetstone Education. FirstLine recruits staff locally and nationally and has developed partnerships with a variety of talent providers including City Year, teachNOLA, Teach for America, Relay Graduate School of Education, and traditional teacher preparation programs.

### *Analysis:*

The People section meets the standard. FirstLine's governing board has the educational, financial, legal, and operational capacity to effectively govern its schools. The governing board outlined the process and measures (quantitative and qualitative) that it uses to set goals and to evaluate the CEO. The governing board utilizes a three-year cycle for goal setting. The three domains that the CEO is held accountable for are student achievement, financial health, and student enrollment. The CEO evaluation also includes a 360 assessment to collect qualitative data from staff members. While the whole governing board only meets six times per year, committees meet eight to 12 times per year to ensure that the governing board is able to conduct business and meet its obligations.

The application's organizational and staffing charts align to FirstLine's proposed school model. Job descriptions were complete and described the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities FirstLine is seeking in its leadership team. Several internal school leader applicants have been identified for the new schools. However, depending on the schools selected for transformation, school leaders in the former school sites may also have the opportunity to apply.

The application outlines a rigorous process for the selection of qualified leaders, including observation of performance tasks to demonstrate knowledge and half-day interviews that include classroom observations. FirstLine typically grows leaders internally, but hires one or more School Leadership Fellows (a one-year apprenticeship) from outside the CMO. The network recruits nationally and locally and has partnerships with City Year, teachNOLA, Teach for America, Relay Graduate School of Education, and traditional teacher preparation programs. FirstLine has recently partnered with Xavier University as a founding school for their teacher residency program.

The application provides a teacher recruitment and hiring timeline that clearly articulates the timeframes and responsible parties to ensure a strong pipeline of quality teachers. The presented plan is based on the assumption that schools will be matched in February and will be adjusted accordingly if a charter is granted. FirstLine describes a thoughtful strategy for retaining teachers through its Teacher Career Pathway, which outlines opportunities for growth and compensation by performance.

FirstLine outlined 23 established partnerships with talent providers, social services organizations, enrichment programs, sports programs, and other supports to assist in the operation of a new transformation school.



## OPERATIONS

## RATING:

**FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS (School Name TBD)**

**Meets the Standard**

### *Plan Summary:*

Joseph Neary is FirstLine's COO. He has 30 years of professional experience in finance and school operations, including 14 years of experience in the charter sector. FirstLine's start-up plan identifies over 20 individuals that are responsible for specific tasks. The staff recruiting process begins in December 2017. FirstLine plans to hire a majority of staff between February and May 2018. Student recruitment activities begin in December 2017 and include developing marketing materials, parent focus groups, training office staff, and conducting community presentations. By February 2018, decisions on general operations such as facility maintenance, building security, and food service vendors will be completed. The start-up plan also includes action steps related to technology readiness and professional development for staff.

If approved for one or more Type 1 transformation charter schools, FirstLine will be sited in a facility by OPSB. FirstLine seeks to be sited in a facility that is large enough to accommodate a school with two sections of PreK students and three sections of Grades K-8 students. FirstLine is also seeking small group rooms for interventions and additional rooms to serve students with disabilities. An outdoor space would also be ideal to implement its Edible Schoolyard garden program.

FirstLine's recently hired CFO, Gizelle Banks, reports to both the CEO and treasurer of the governing board. The governing board will provide oversight through the finance and audit committees. FirstLine's financial policies and procedures manual outlines a system of controls and roles and responsibilities to ensure financial oversight.

### *Analysis:*

The Operations section meets the standard. The application outlines a detailed start-up plan to ensure that a transformation charter school will be ready to open next year. Key responsibilities are divided between central office and school-based staff. As an existing operator with experience in school transformation, it is clear that FirstLine has the expertise to implement all aspects of the plan. For example, in order to meet legal obligations relative to student transportation, FirstLine contracts with external providers Apple Bus and NOLA Transportation to provide transportation to both general and special education students each day. In order to minimize the time students spend on a bus on a daily basis, FirstLine works with its transportation providers to tier bus routes to benefit FirstLine students.

FirstLine has extensive experience managing school facilities and employs an in-house maintenance team with two full-time staff. Currently, these staff members rotate through all five FirstLine schools each week. These staff members address any facility issues and provide preventative maintenance on a regular basis. FirstLine also conducts Facility Topical Reviews two times per year. The comprehensive rubric has over 300 items to assess the facility. These reviews are tracked over time to ensure that immediate and longer-term issues are addressed in all of FirstLine's buildings.

There are clear structures in place for the governing board to execute its fiduciary responsibilities, where FirstLine's CFO reports to the CEO and the treasurer of the governing board. FirstLine's finance team also includes a controller, director of grants management, staff accountant, and payroll manager to ensure proper financial accounting and payroll functions at any new FirstLine school. The chosen financial accounting system, Financial Edge, will be used to provide the appropriate reports. This comprehensive approach has led to unqualified audit opinions for all FirstLine managed schools.

FirstLine outlined a clear and comprehensive budgeting process that it has utilized over the past 11 years. If a FirstLine school experiences significant variances between revenue and expenses, the CMO's budget and staffing models are scalable to allow for the school to make changes to balance the budget.

## FINANCE

## RATING:

**Meets the Standard**

**FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS (School Name TBD)**

### *Plan Summary:*

The application details the five year financial projections as follows:

Year 1: \$8,301,280 in revenues and \$ 8,113,982 in expenses, with an ending fund balance of \$187,298.

Year 5: \$9,979,906 in revenues and \$ 9,819,697 in expenses, with an ending fund balance of \$1,188,967.

The applicant expects to serve 700 students in Grades PreK-8 in its first year of operation. The application assumes \$11,858.97 in per pupil revenue based on all funding sources. Twelve percent of students are expected to receive special education services with one percent of students assumed to be English language learners. The budget assumes approximately \$700K from the Charter School Growth Fund over the first three years of operation. FirstLine's CMO fee is nine percent of total revenue.

### *Analysis:*

The Finance section meets the standard. The applicant's budget is built on FirstLine's past experience operating charter schools in Orleans Parish. The applicant presents a budget that is conservative and includes a contingency of two to three percent of revenue to mitigate any expense overruns. The presented budget is based on a model where all required expenses are paid from recurring public revenues (i.e., local, state, and federal). The revenue assumptions and accompanying enrollment projections are realistic, and the expense assumptions are based on actual expenses from FirstLine's current middle and elementary schools.

FirstLine has a demonstrated track record of fundraising. In its history, the CMO has raised \$2.7M to build network capacity, support its leadership pipeline, and provide support to transformation schools. For this particular transformation school application, FirstLine has secured \$700K in funding from the Charter School Growth Fund to support the first three years of operation.

## EXPERIENCED OPERATOR ADDENDUM

### RATING:

**FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS (School Name TBD)**

**Meets the Standard**

#### *Plan Summary:*

FirstLine currently operates five charter schools in New Orleans. According to Louisiana's latest state report card data, Arthur Ashe, Samuel J. Green, Phillis Wheatley, and Langston Hughes are rated as "C" schools. Joseph S. Clark, the high school that is currently being phased out, is rated as a "D" school. FirstLine demonstrated SPS growth for four of the schools in its network, with one school, Samuel J. Green, staying flat while most schools in New Orleans declined due to the inclusion of social studies scores. The network's student retention rate is between 82 and 86 percent with attendance rates between 94 and 96 percent.

FirstLine seeks to open two PreK-8 transformation schools in the next two years, but is flexible on when those schools open. FirstLine identified academic achievement, meeting the needs of at-risk learners, teacher attrition, leadership pipeline, and financial health as its major challenges.

FirstLine had one compliance violation in May 2014. A safety transfer for a student was submitted by the school director at Langston Hughes without parental consent. The violation was rectified and the school was returned to 'Good Standing' in June 2014. FirstLine has not had any other compliance violations and is not involved in any active litigation.

#### *Analysis:*

The Experienced Operator Addendum meets the standard. FirstLine's academic results have stabilized and are on the trajectory to move schools from "C" to "B" or "A" status in the next few years. Starting in 2006, FirstLine demonstrated eight consecutive years of SPS growth before a taking a dip during the transition to Common Core. In 2016, FirstLine showed improvement and the network's "K-8 schools had the second highest combined performance in English and math across all CMOs in New Orleans" (Experienced Operator Addendum, pg. 1-2). In 2017, the positive trajectory continued as the SPS of four of five schools grew. FirstLine's four elementary/middle schools had an average of 9.6 progress points in 2017—some of the strongest results in the city and state.

Recognizing the need to allocate more time and resources to opening a transformation school, FirstLine's scale strategy includes providing three senior leaders per school transformation, five weeks of professional development prior to the start of the school year, and additional central office resource allocation in the first two to three years of operation. FirstLine's central office has increased its capacity over the last three years to boost its support for schools. For example, the the CMO's academic team increased from three team members in 2014 to 14 team members in 2017.

FirstLine's leadership team was able to articulate a thorough understanding of its past challenges and how it implemented systems and strategies to ensure continuous organizational improvement. Based on the challenges of Common Core implementation, FirstLine identified a less intensive focus on data cycles and weak curriculum as root causes. In order to systematically address these challenges, FirstLine wrote and adopted a more robust curriculum and aligned support for teachers. FirstLine currently utilizes a shared curriculum across all of its K-8 schools. Content directors for ELA, mathematics, science, and social studies have joined the central office over the past three years. FirstLine also implemented a process for the feedback and revision of curriculum units. Additionally, the network implemented a weekly teacher prep day to allow teachers to lesson plan and review data more systematically.

In order to build a stable school leader pipeline, FirstLine created a Leadership Fellow program to increase the internal bench of school leaders. Mr. Altman, FirstLine's CEO, stated that there are multiple individuals within the network that are willing and able to lead a new school. FirstLine also hired a director of information systems and developed a common data system with easy-to-use tools and dashboards for data analysis.

## TRANSFORMATION ADDENDUM

### RATING:

**FIRSTLINE SCHOOLS (School Name TBD)**

**Meets the Standard**

#### *Plan Summary:*

FirstLine is applying for two transformation charters and will seek to serve all students if approved for a transformation school. All schools within the FirstLine network were transformation schools except for Arthur Ashe. The CMO's transformation strategies include "implementation of a values-based culture; social emotional supports; additional learning supports; rigorous instruction; retention of great teachers; and increasing leadership capacity."

FirstLine will collect formative data on culture, personnel, and academics throughout the school year to inform educational and operational support for the transformation effort. This will include the use of school culture reviews, feedback from staff, and daily walk throughs by the CAO and director of culture and wellness during the first three weeks of school.

#### *Analysis:*

The Transformation Addendum meets the standard. As an experienced operator, FirstLine has developed key tenets of the transformation model that support achievement for all students. Governing board and CMO leaders were able to articulate the indicators they looked at to determine if FirstLine is ready to grow. Over the last three years, FirstLine has developed a strong bench of school leaders, raised significant financial support, and increased network-level talent. Due to these factors, FirstLine is poised to take on two additional transformation schools.

FirstLine has developed internal school leader candidates while recruiting teachers from various local and national partners. One major component of the teacher retention plan is the Teacher Career Pathway program which creates a much more articulated career ladder. Teachers have the opportunity to gain mid-level leadership roles, such as becoming a dean or assistant principal. Also, through the performance pay program, teachers are compensated for being highly effective. FirstLine also discusses the plan to create incentives for teachers to remain career teachers rather than seeking leadership roles.

FirstLine has a clear plan to connect and engage parents during the matching process and work with them continuously throughout the year. There will be a parent advisory board at both schools, and each school will also develop a parent communication plan that outlines how parents can work with their students and establish regular communication practices with their child's teacher. The increased opportunities for parents to engage with the school will create more opportunities for parent feedback.

## EVALUATOR BIOGRAPHIES

### *Evaluator's Name*

#### **HAROLD LEE**

Harold (Harry) Lee is an independent education consultant specializing in charter school authorization, new school development, school oversight/evaluation, renewal services, and board training/capacity building. Most recently, Harry worked as the Chief Strategy Officer at iLearn Schools, a non-profit charter management organization based in New Jersey. From 2011-16, he worked at the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Charter Schools serving as the School Performance and Accountability Manager for 3 years and the Director for 2 years. In 2014, Harry completed the NACSA Leaders Program, the nation's only professional development opportunity for current and upcoming leaders in charter school authorizing offices. He holds a B.A. from Yale University and an M.P.A. from Rutgers University-Newark.

### *Evaluator's Name*

#### **GAIL LAZARD**

Gail Lazard is a retired educator with over 30 years of experience in the education of public school students in the state of Louisiana. Gail has worked as a teacher, principal, and central office administrator in New Orleans and at the Louisiana Department of Education. She has also worked as a consultant for the Louisiana Department of Education - Charter School Office and the National Association of Charter School Authorizers. In addition, Gail holds a B.A. and a M.Ed. +30 from the University of New Orleans. Gail is certified by the state of Louisiana as a teacher, principal, supervisor of student teaching, parish/city school supervisor of instruction, and superintendent of schools.

### *Evaluator's Name*

#### **ANTHONY OLIVER**

Anthony Oliver is currently an assistant principal in the Jefferson County School System in Birmingham, Alabama. Most recently, Anthony served as Executive Director at Breakthrough Birmingham, an education non-profit dedicated to providing high-quality academic programming to underserved students and preparing the next generation of teachers. Anthony has also served as a high-school mathematics teacher and coach, and has worked as a principal intern at Newton North High School where he worked to create access to challenging academic curriculum for African American students and students from low socioeconomic classes. Anthony holds a B.A. in mathematics from the Virginia Military Institute, an M.A.E. in secondary education - mathematics curriculum and instruction from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and an Ed.M in school leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.