



## **JOB DESCRIPTION**

ORGANIZATION: EXCEL ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOLS  
POSITION: FOUNDING PRINCIPAL  
LOCATION: BOSTON, MA  
REPORTS TO: CEO

### **About the Organization**

Excel Academy Charter Schools is an emerging network of charter schools in Boston based on the highly successful model of Excel's first middle school in East Boston.

Excel Academy was founded in 2003 to address very low high school and college graduation rates among minority students from low-income families in East Boston and Chelsea. Excel's flagship school serves more than 200 students in grades 5-8, over 70% of whom are low-income and Latino students. This school is the highest-performing public middle school in Massachusetts and sends more than 90% of its alumni on to college-preparatory high schools. More than 50% of Excel's students do not speak English at home.

Excel's success is built on a culture of rigor and excellence with the following elements:

- Uniformly high expectations—starting with the ultimate goal of college graduation—to which parents, students and teachers alike are held;
- Optimized use of every minute of the school day together with a longer school day and year;
- Individualized support for students with special needs; and
- Highly developed operational systems that enable teachers to focus on instruction.

Excel is developing ambitious growth plans and recently opened its second school in Chelsea. Excel will open its third middle school in fall 2012, followed by its first high school in 2015. Excel is actively considering its growth plans beyond this initial wave of expansion.

### **About the Position**

Excel is seeking strong Founding Principals to build new Excel schools as the network grows. The first such opportunity will be to open the third school in the Excel network, a middle school serving grades 5-8 that is slated to open in fall 2012. The Founding Principal will have overall accountability for the success of the school and will serve as its instructional leader. He or she will work closely with a Dean of Operations who will manage the operational aspects of the school program. Though the Founding Principal will build a school that adheres to the core Excel systems, culture and philosophy, he or she will be empowered to innovate and adapt the model as needed. Excel believes that its distinctive performance is rooted in the quality of its school leaders, and Excel's organizational philosophy centers on investing in people—starting with and flowing from Excel school leaders.

#### *Training and preparation*

Excel is working to develop an outstanding leadership development pathway for future Principals. Founding Principals will go through an extensive training process at Excel before opening a new Excel school. During this time, the Founding Principal will be known as a Principal Resident and will gain a deep understanding of the Excel model and culture through hands-on experience. The training and preparation will focus chiefly on getting the Principal Resident ready to: re-create the unique Excel culture—both student culture and the culture of relentless adult learning—that has driven Excel's success to date; develop and manage instructional staff effectively; add his or her personal vision and imprint to the existing Excel model to help push our program to the next level.

The Principal Resident will be mentored by the Principal at the residency site, benefitting from exposure to his or her leadership and co-reflection on key school challenges. The residency would include a targeted set of functional rotations (e.g., operations, culture/behavior, etc.) at the residency site, as well as a series of school visits to other excellent schools around the country led by Building Excellent Schools. The Principal Resident will also receive coaching from a highly experienced executive leadership coach, and planning support and coaching from senior staff at Building Excellent Schools. In addition, the Principal Resident will have the opportunity to attend the KIPP School Leadership Program, an intensive five-week program for developing school leaders. During the final few months before school launch, the Principal Resident would prepare full-time to open his or her Excel school.

#### *Founding Principal Competencies*

Excel seeks candidates with the qualities and skills to become outstanding Founding Principals, recognizing that a candidate's incoming skills will be further developed through the leadership development pathway outlined above. These competencies distinguish Excel Principals:

- Providing intellectual leadership to develop a big-picture programmatic vision and translating it into measurable goalposts and day-to-day implementation
- Creating the culture and conditions for relentless *adult* learning
- Modeling Excel norms, culture and behavior through his/her own actions
- Coaching, developing and retaining high-performing instructional staff
- Acting as an effective leader and ambassador for the organization beyond the school's walls

The full Excel Founding Principal competency framework is included as an appendix to this document.

#### *Qualities Sought*

We are looking for someone **sharp, driven, reflective and kind**. The following qualities are also prerequisites to developing the full set of competencies outlined above:

- **Contagious passion:** Unyielding commitment to closing the achievement gap in public education and an infectious desire to constantly improve him/herself and the program.
- **Entrepreneurial spirit:** A track record of being a resourceful and creative self-starter in tackling challenges, and of questioning conventional wisdom.
- **Integrity:** Embodying the honesty and trustworthiness that Excel expects of all its community members and particularly those serving as visible role models for others.

#### *Qualifications*

The ideal candidate will also possess the following qualifications:

- At least 5 years of work experience including substantial experience as a high-performing classroom teacher;
- Prior experience as a school leader—or in other instructional leadership roles—preferred but not required;
- Bachelor's degree.

#### Contact Information

Email a resume to [jobs@excelacademy.org](mailto:jobs@excelacademy.org), addressed to Dai Ellis, CEO.

***Excel Academy Charter School is an equal opportunity employer and therefore does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or disability.***

## Appendix: Excel Founding Principal Competency Framework

1. Provide intellectual leadership translating big-picture vision into action
  - a. Develop big-picture vision to take school/program to the next level
  - b. Translate big-picture vision into day-to-day implementation needs
  - c. Understand all aspects of Excel model in depth
  - d. Lead team reflection in structured and insightful manner
2. Create the culture and conditions for relentless adult learning
  - a. Set ambitious, measurable goalposts for team based on big-picture vision
  - b. Secure high level of buy-in among staff to vision and goalposts
  - c. Promote key learning habits:
    - i. Anticipate challenges and plan in advance
    - ii. Use data-based adaptive learning cycle (assess-reflect-act)
    - iii. Translate learning into systems that get uniformly applied
  - d. Act as communication hub to ensure that staff always have information they need
  - e. Celebrate staff members' success frequently and visibly
  - f. Promote unyielding adherence to a high bar for performance
3. Model Excel norms, culture and behavior
  - a. Embody all school norms
  - b. Display above-and-beyond work ethic
  - c. Model exceptional teaching, classroom management and use of school systems
  - d. Manage own/others' time and complex plate of projects efficiently
  - e. Exude contagious passion for own professional development
4. Coach, develop and retain high-performing instructional staff
  - a. Help others learn and "self-discover" opportunities for improvement through a balance of keen observation, inquiry and advocacy
  - b. Be accessible and highly visible to staff
  - c. Connect with others both professionally and personally
  - d. Empower others and trust them to do their job
  - e. Give and receive constructive feedback
  - f. Put staff in situations to take risks & grow professionally
  - g. Handle difficult conversations/situations promptly & frankly
5. Act as an effective leader and ambassador for the organization
  - a. Build strong trust-based relationships with all school stakeholders
  - b. Communicate effectively as school ambassador, tailoring message as needed
  - c. Mentor, support, and engage other Excel school leaders
  - d. Serve as an active contributor on Excel network leadership team