AIMING HIGHER

AMES MIDDLE SCHOOL

ISS Chicago Plan for School Transformation

A partnership of Ames Middle School, Logan Square Neighborhood Association, Chicago Public Schools and Local Initiatives Support Corporation/Chicago

With major funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies
and additional support from The Chicago Community Trust, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Polk Bros. Foundation

May 2008
This plan was created under a planning grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies, which seeks to create a robust and replicable model for middle-school improvement. The plan is constructed around four principles, which together comprise the Chicago model of Integrated Services in Schools:

**Principle 1** Learning time in schools must be extended through after-school, Saturday and summer programs; that extended-time content must be integrated with a strong core-school academic program; and out-of-school-time faculty, regular faculty and other staff should have significant shared training and planning opportunities.

**Principle 2** The highest quality of preventive, youth friendly and confidential health care must be provided on-site to middle-school students; and those health services must be embedded in broader programming that covers nutrition, fitness, prevention and reproductive education.

**Principle 3** Improved access to public benefits must be made available to parents of middle-school students; that access must be convenient; and it must be part of an array of social supports that ensure parents are providing the most stable base possible for their children.

**Principle 4** Parents, community members, local organizations, school faculty and students must be an integral part of planning, implementing and monitoring the transformation of the school. Community ownership helps ensure that the plans are realistic and appropriate for that particular school community, and it supports continuity and sustainability of programming beyond any one leader or group of stakeholders.
**The Chicago signature**

The first three principles flow directly from Atlantic’s model, which is already being implemented in the state of New Mexico. The fourth principle—that parent and community involvement are integral elements of school change—is based on LISC/Chicago’s experience supporting comprehensive community development over the past eight years. By engaging a broad spectrum of stakeholders in both planning and implementation, LISC’s New Communities Program has shown strong promise of improving the quality of life for 16 Chicago communities. Embedding this approach into the Atlantic Philanthropies model will help transform schools and ensure that all students can succeed in their transition to high school, college and/or careers.

The ISS-Chicago program builds on 15 years of school-reform progress in the Chicago Public Schools. It is overseen by the Chicago Committee, which includes representatives of the following organizations:

> The Chicago Community Trust
> Chicago Department of Children and Youth
> Chicago Public Schools
> JP Morgan Chase Foundation
> The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
> Michael Reese Health Trust
> Polk Brothers Foundation

The program is coordinated by LISC/Chicago and includes participation of five lead agencies in LISC’s New Communities Program, a 10-year effort to implement comprehensive community development in 16 neighborhoods. Participating schools and neighborhoods are:

> Ames Middle School/Logan Square Neighborhood Association
> Orozco Community Academy/The Resurrection Project (Pilsen)
> Marquette Elementary/Southwest Organizing Project (Chicago Lawn)
> Perspectives-Calumet Middle School/Greater Auburn-Gresham Development Corporation
> Reavis Elementary/Quad Communities Development Corporation

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INTENSIVE PLANNING DRAWS BROAD PARTICIPATION

Ames Middle School and Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) were chosen for participation in ISS-Chicago through a competitive process in early 2007. They represent one of five school-community partnerships seeking to create and demonstrate a new model of Integrated Services in Schools (ISS).

The Ames/LSNA partnership led a comprehensive planning process between February and May 2007. More than 60 people participated in four initial visioning and goal-setting meetings followed by committee work and plan-writing meetings. The summary plan that follows is the result of their work.

Ames and LSNA thank all who contributed. The list below was compiled from sign-in sheets and may not include all participants. Our apologies for any omissions or misspellings.

AMES MIDDLE SCHOOL
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A tough school turns around

The 1990s community campaign to erect a middle school on the site of the old Ames department store was a tough but ultimately successful one. Organized by Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA), community leaders, parents and principals in the Northwest Side neighborhood had battled for years to secure relief for their severely overcrowded elementary schools.

Ames Middle School opened in 1999 as a community-planned and-designed middle school, with 800 students and a principal chosen by the community. Early curricular efforts were innovative and promising. LSNA worked with Ames staff and parents to create a curriculum that drew on community resources, to provide after-school programming and adult education and to design a program that trained parents to assist in classrooms and lead literacy programs for students’ families.

But the community’s hard-won school faltered after the founding principal was promoted at the end of her fourth year to run the district’s new teacher induction program. During the next two years, Ames had two more principals and high teacher turnover. Test scores leveled off and students grew restless. The school landed on the district’s academic probation list, and while parent and community support remained high, there was a clear need for strong, sustained leadership.

That summer, searching once again for a school leader, the district zeroed in on a freshly credentialed administrator who seemed to possess just what Ames needed. A long-time middle school teacher, Lorraine Cruz had worked briefly for the district on improving instruction at probation schools. She had just graduated from New Leaders for New Schools, a principal-training program that district leaders considered top-notch.
Tough but charismatic, Cruz had grown up in the low-income, predominantly Hispanic neighborhood near Ames. She wasn’t intimidated by the parents – in fact, she had known some for decades. Most importantly, she had a reputation for being unafraid to push for change. Her area instructional officer made the call.

Cruz was shocked. “I [had been] an assistant principal for maybe a week,” she says.

District officials were frank about the challenge, Cruz recalls. They said, “I’m not going to lie to you. This school is tough.”

She wasn’t deterred. Three years later, the school’s progress is remarkable. Order reigns; suspensions dropped 50 percent in the first year alone. Standardized test scores leapt, with gains outpacing state and district averages. Cruz was selected by the district as one of four “turnaround principals” to attend a prestigious training program at the University of Virginia. In fact, the program is using her work at Ames as a case study.

Cruz insists that teamwork—with teachers, community leaders, even the lunchroom staff—was the key to her success.

Safety was an early priority. At her request, the high school sent its security guards to retrieve loitering teens. LSNA helped her recruit parents for their “walking school bus” to ensure kids a safe passage to and from school.

When gang harassment continued, Cruz again worked with her allies at LSNA to challenge the local alderman, who brought three aldermen from adjacent wards to the next meeting. This was just the reaction she was hoping for. The aldermen agreed to help sponsor an annual “Safety Summit” at Ames where parents and staff from neighborhood schools meet with politicians and the police to identify issues and come up with solutions.

Next, Cruz tackled the curriculum. At her urging, Ames adopted AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) to teach students the study and organization skills they need to succeed in high school and to strengthen the middle-school course content. As part of that effort, Ames teachers from every department began to meet with their counterparts at Kelvyn Park to align curriculum and expectations. Cruz also brought in a new social studies program, Facing History and Ourselves, that builds rich content knowledge, writing skills and reading comprehension. A new math program teaches math concepts in greater depth.

To draw on the strengths of her entire staff, even janitors and cafeteria workers are included in training and school decision-making.

Despite the progress, challenges remain. Health and social issues take a toll on student achievement, which

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PROFILE:
LOGAN SQUARE COMMUNITY AREA, CHICAGO, IL

DEMOGRAPHICS (2005 estimates)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>84,466</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of households</td>
<td>29,946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population change 1960-2005</td>
<td>down 10,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Latino</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent white</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent African-American</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS (2005 estimates)

| Households with income below $15,000 | 5,819 |
| Households with income from $15,000 to $74,999 | 18,691 |
| Households with income above $75,000 | 5,436 |
| Public and private school enrollment (K-12) | 18,029 |

hovers just below the district average. Students come from four different primary schools, and since Ames enrolls only two grade levels – 7th and 8th – that leaves the school a mere two years to close academic gaps. But with the right leadership, new resources and creative teamwork, the Ames community now believes that every one of those obstacles can be overcome.

**Fast-changing Logan Square**

Chicago’s Logan Square community is four miles northwest of downtown and changing fast. Known for its leafy boulevards and historic mansions, it has been a working-class community since the late 1800s. Today the majority are first- and second-generation Latino immigrants, with a mix of residents from Puerto Rico, Mexico, Cuba and Central America. But the neighborhood is undergoing another demographic shift as gentrification rolls westward.

As of 2000, Logan Square was about two-thirds Hispanic, one quarter non-Hispanic white and about five percent African-American. Many immigrant families have been forced to move out or double-up with relatives as rents and home prices have skyrocketed. Still, the public school population remains low-income. More than 90 percent of students enrolled in neighborhood schools qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.

Safety remains an issue, especially for residents in the poorer western end of Logan Square. Some 30 gangs reside within the attendance boundaries of Ames Middle and its four feeder elementary schools, the highest gang concentration anywhere in the city.

Nearly two-thirds of Logan Square residents speak a language other than English at home. A third of students in neighborhood schools are English-language learners. Over 40 percent of adults aged 25 and older do not have a high school diploma.

But the neighborhood has strengths, as well. Chief among them is a committed network of social service organizations, churches, school leaders and block groups, well-organized under the umbrella of the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA), a 45-year old community organization with 10 schools as members. In 2002, LSNA and its partners created a comprehensive plan for quality-of-life improvements under the New Communities Program. Among the plan’s top priorities are creation of affordable housing, health care expansion and education reforms.

LSNA is the lead agency for the ISS project at Ames and is itself a leader on health, education and housing issues. In 2005, LSNA won a national award from the Ford Foundation for its education work and received the Chicago Community Organizing Award from local funders.

Among other accomplishments, LSNA has a Parent Mentor Program that has hired and trained more than 1,200 parents since 1995 to work with teachers and students in eight public schools. These same parents, mostly immigrant Latina mothers, are encouraged to set education goals for themselves and are eligible to work towards certification to become bilingual teachers through a program LSNA arranged with a local university. The program has become a model for a statewide initiative.

Ames is one of six schools to house an LSNA Community Learning Center, and offers adult education classes, educational activities for families and after-school tutoring and recreation for students. Since Ames opened, LSNA has run a parent mentor program there along with a literacy home-visit program called Literacy Ambassadors.

Logan Square’s quality-of-life plan aims to expand these community learning centers as well as to increase the number of parents trained as mentors and bilingual teachers. It also intends to strengthen college preparation and counseling in the high school. As the neighborhood’s only middle school, Ames is the linchpin for education reforms at the elementary and high school level. The faculty and leadership team at Ames, along with their parent and community partners, are poised to take the school to unprecedented heights.
Our Vision: Healthy and capable graduates with a thirst for knowledge

Graduates of Ames Middle School will be prepared mentally, physically and emotionally for high school and college. They will know how to set clear goals and make good choices, have a healthy cultural identity, and have the social skills necessary to interact with adults and mentor younger children. They will feel safe and secure as they move outward from elementary school and their neighborhood into the larger world. They will be curious, passionate and ready to learn more about life.

Academics
> All Ames students should be academically, socially, mentally and emotionally prepared for high school, and will be eligible to select the high school of their choice.
> Students and their parents will have high expectations and access to lifelong learning.
> School stakeholders will be aware of each student’s learning style.
> Ames Middle School will be a safe space for students and parents to come to school and say whatever they need to say and feel secure.

Health
> Ames will provide a supportive environment that takes a holistic approach to supporting children, youth and their families.
> Educational programs and on-site services will span all aspects of physical health, from hygiene and dental care to exercise and nutrition, with an emphasis on prevention.
> Health programming will address mental and emotional health and psycho-social development.

Social supports
> Ames will foster a respectful culture among students, parents and teachers.
> All students will have access to educational, emotional and spiritual support from parents, teachers, their peers and the community.
> All students will have access to services like mentoring and mental health counseling.
> Ames will help create healthier families through collaborative efforts that envelop youth and their families with educational, social and economic supports.
Ames is in the midst of a nationally-recognized turnaround, with a reinvigorated curriculum and rising achievement. We intend this plan to support our upward trajectory with new academic supports and enrichment, health services, social supports and parental and community involvement.

Our regular and extended-day programs will be carefully integrated to provide a seamless experience for students. Academic enrichment clubs follow themes and reinforce skills taught in our popular new social studies curriculum. Extended-day staff that provides homework help and tutoring will be trained in our approach to teaching mathematics. In addition, all extended-day staff and parent volunteers will learn our new discipline strategies which teach students self-control and conflict resolution. A health center will provide comprehensive services to students and eventually to parents and community residents. Healthy eating programs will encourage better nutrition for families, while fitness programs will improve concentration and curb obesity. An intensive outreach program will increase the number of children who are medically insured.

To help our children reach their potential, we will surround them with social supports, including mentors from Big Brothers, Big Sisters, additional parent mentors and literacy home visit teams, peer mediation and counseling, and more guidance counselors to help our kids set career goals and choose the best high school options. Parents will receive supports, too, from GED and English as a Second Language classes to financial literacy workshops and assistance in securing government benefits. At the same time, we will draw on our parents as a vital resource for our school, training them to tutor in classrooms, lead family book groups, maintain order and safety on school grounds and visit homes to encourage still more families to participate in our expanding programs.
Our extended day program will accomplish a number of goals. It will boost academic achievement with enrichment activities and tutoring. It will provide time for social supports, such as peer counseling. Perhaps most importantly, it will add the fitness, art and music instruction that our kids desperately need to develop into healthy, motivated and well-rounded adults.

Our extended day program will supplement our current after-school offerings to include a wider range of fitness activities, sports teams, art workshops, as well as high-interest academic clubs and opportunities for tutoring, mentoring and leadership development. Academic programs will be carefully aligned with our core curriculum to reinforce skills and concepts.

During our regular school day, we will continue to build the rigor of our curriculum with collaborative planning and professional development.

Extended school day

Currently, about 200 students participate in after school programs at Ames. We intend to expand by that number each year with the intention of reaching 100 percent participation. To guarantee full participation, we will negotiate with the district and our own staff to lengthen the school day by an hour.

To oversee the after school program, we will need to hire an additional assistant principal. (District policy requires that an administrator remain on-site while the school building is open.) This individual will consult with classroom teachers and after school service providers to ensure that the academic needs of individual students are met. The administrator will also monitor and coach after school staff as they attempt new strategies introduced in professional development.
Saturday Adventure Club

Our monthly Saturday program will expose students and their parents to the world beyond Logan Square. Too little experience beyond their own neighborhood limits children’s store of background knowledge and impedes reading comprehension. It also inhibits their appreciation of diversity and their willingness to venture into other communities to enroll in selective high schools. We will visit museums, ethnic festivals and cultural events. We will sample cuisine from the city’s varied ethnic communities, embark on historic and architectural tours and even explore the city on bike.

Summer camp

An expanded summer camp would be a huge advantage for the safety and academic progress of our students. Without a structured program, low-income students tend to lose ground academically during the summer months. Furthermore, few families have the time and money to take advantage of our city’s educational and cultural offerings. Outdoor play is also restricted. Our neighborhood has the highest concentration of street gangs anywhere in the city.

We already offer several summer programs at no cost to families. GEAR-UP provides academic programs for participating students. The school board funds a remedial math and reading program for 8th graders who fail to meet promotion requirements and a support class for bilingual students that focuses on reading. LSNA runs a day camp for 50 students at Ames.

Next summer, LSNA will double the enrollment of the Ames day camp to enroll 100 students. Activities will include art workshops, African and Latin dance, bike repair, sports and planting a vegetable garden in the courtyard. Students will also travel to the Brookfield Zoo, The Art Institute and other cultural institutions.

Professional development

In the last several years, Ames has developed a comprehensive set of strategies for developing teachers’ skills in priority areas: literacy, math, social and emotional learning, and two recently adopted programs, Facing History and Ourselves and AVID, a program that prepares middle school students for high school with improved curriculum and the teaching of study skills.

Professional development is directed at identified needs. To gage the progress of instruction, teachers and school leaders conduct regular classroom observations known as “walk-throughs.”

Teachers also meet in small groups to analyze student work and assessment data. School-wide trainings occur 14 times a year. Two literacy specialists and one math/science specialists provide small-group and individual coaching.

As we increase rigor, we must simultaneously provide more targeted support to help all students keep pace with the curriculum. A new, on-going testing program in Chicago, called Learning First provides data on student progress throughout the year. However, teachers need time and support to analyze the data and plan interventions for individual students. We will hire substitutes to free each team of teachers four times a year to examine the academic, emotional and health needs of struggling students and to plan interventions that may take place during the school day or in the extended-day program.

We want to take a similarly focused approach to our extended day program. To ensure continuity between classroom and after-school learning, we will train after school service providers and parent volunteers in strategies from our core programs: social and emotional learning, Facing History and Ourselves, AVID and Connected Math. In addition, parent volunteers will receive training in supporting bilingual and special education students.

Other priorities for teacher professional development in the coming year include:

- Tailoring math and reading instruction to a variety of learning levels. In reading, teaching a wider range of genres.
- Additional training on AVID
- Expanding the Facing History program by creating cross-curricular thematic units that address Latino culture.
- Training school staff on how to identify students who should be referred to school social workers and counselors.
Leadership training

Ames’ principal, Lorraine Cruz, was recently selected by the district as one of four Chicago principals to enroll in the University of Virginia’s School Turnaround Specialists’ Program. During the year-long program, principals join with colleagues across the country to learn proven strategies for leading dramatic change in previously under-performing schools. The rest of our leadership team—the bilingual coordinator, a lead literacy teacher, a math/technology specialist and the dean of students—will participate in several training sessions.

New Leaders for New Schools, a national principal preparation program, has also trained our leadership team on classroom observation and data analysis. In addition, the team has received training on how to support teachers in implementing Facing History and Ourselves, a school-wide social studies and literacy program.

New hiring process

Our school’s reputation is on the rise. Once a place that teachers fled from, Ames is now inundated with resumes. To select the best from our growing applicant pool, we have revamped our hiring process. All candidates will submit a portfolio in advance to demonstrate their skills. A panel of five administrators and teachers will review portfolios and conduct interviews. Candidates will also teach a sample lesson for the panel.

High-quality teacher induction

Once hired, teachers are mentored by a teacher in their subject area and beginning next year, a member of the school’s leadership team. New hires still in their first four years of teaching will continue to enroll in the New Teachers Network, a highly-regarded, two-year induction program locally based at the University of Chicago.

New strategies for reading

Last year, Ames made substantial reading test score gains, outpacing average gains for both the city and state. New teaching strategies and expanded classroom libraries account for much of the increase. For example, teachers learned to model strategies that good readers use, such as pausing to make a prediction, clarify an unfamiliar word or visualize a scene. We also invested discretionary funds and foundation grants in expanding classroom libraries to promote independent reading. Two full-time literacy coordinators, funded in part by the Chicago Community Trust, lead professional development, coach teachers in the classroom, and help the staff analyze their progress and set priorities for improvement. Next year, we will add the following programs:

> **Study group.** With a grant from the Rochelle Lee Foundation, teachers will also form a study group to discuss research on how to further motivate students to pursue independent reading. They will also conduct research on their own teaching methods in order to improve them.

> **Literacy Ambassadors.** Parents are the strongest influence on their children’s reading habits. Yet many homes in our low-income community lack the reading material taken for granted in middle class neighborhoods. For five years, the Logan Square Neighborhood Association has run a program to build a family culture of reading. Through its literacy ambassador program, parents and teachers are trained to lead book groups for other parents and students in the homes of Ames students. This program will reach 60 Ames families each year.

> **Literacy nights.** Ames families will be invited to the school in the evening four times a year to participate in a variety of activities intended to build interest in reading. Activities will likely include workshops for parents on supporting their children’s reading growth, book groups, related art activities and a presentation by a young adult author.

Higher-level mathematics

Ames recently replaced its traditional drill-and-memorization approach to mathematics with a program that focuses on math concepts and problem solving. Connected Math is a research-based program developed with support from the National Science Foundation and recommended by Chicago Public Schools. Teachers receive training from the district and follow-up support from our math/technology specialist. The program went school-wide this year, and we expect to see significant improvements in math achievement in the coming years. Next year,
professional development will include strategies for tailoring math instruction to a range of learning levels.

Many of our lowest-performing students will still need additional support to keep up with the challenging new program. Our math/technology specialist will train after-school service providers and parent volunteers in the new approach so that they may better reinforce skills and concepts.

Revamped science curriculum

We are revamping our science curriculum to add more science labs and to insure greater continuity between grade levels. Teachers are mapping out a schedule for teaching skills and content based on state standards. We are also meeting regularly with our neighborhood high school science department and now our feeder elementary schools to strengthen the curriculum across all grade levels. Once our plan is complete, we will purchase new science materials including equipment for hands-on science labs.

Academic enrichment and support

Skills and concepts taught in our core curriculum will be incorporated in all of our extended-day enrichment and support programs.

> **Facing History and Ourselves Clubs.** Ames recently adopted a social studies curriculum that focuses on social justice topics such as the Civil Rights Movement and the Holocaust. Our students have developed a real interest in its social justice themes. We believe that offering clubs based on this popular program will draw many students and provide yet another opportunity to strengthen their academic skills.

> **Creative Writing Club.** Students will write on topics of social justice with a focus on their own communities. This club will reinforce our school-wide approach to writing instruction, in which students are taught to plan, draft, share feedback and revise.

> **Girls Book Club and Boys Book Club.** Students will discuss books on social justice themes and also social and emotional issues relevant to teens. Separating students by gender will increase their comfort in discussing sensitive topics.

> **Math support.** Those who need extra help to master our challenging new Connected Math program can attend this support class.

> **NCLB tutoring (SES).** Federally-funded tutoring programs offer remedial help in math and reading for students who scored below standards on state exams. Outside agencies provide services for 60 students on-site at Ames. We will train these providers in our math, reading and social and emotional learning strategies.

> **College prep.** GEAR-UP, a national initiative aimed at preparing low-income students for college, enrolls 60 kids in after-school programs at Ames. Those programs include homework help, math and environmental science clubs, a cooking class, a book club and keyboarding. The grant-funded program will follow students through their high school years.

> **ESL class.** We will offer an English as a Second Language class for students who are recent immigrants.

> **On-line test prep.** Ames recently began a pilot to offer on-line test preparation and homework help to students through Study Island. Students log into their home computers to practice lessons and assessments.
based on the Illinois state standards. They can also communicate with their classroom teachers for homework help. To expand this service to all students, we must acquire refurbished computer equipment to lend to interested families.

Art, music and fitness

Ames students lack the opportunities for physical education and artistic expression that are taken for granted in middle class schools. For its 800 students, Ames receives a single art teacher and no music teacher. Inadequate art and music education also robs students of a chance to develop talents that, for some, could be the motivation to persevere in school. Children’s inactivity undermines their health, contributes to absenteeism and interferes with their ability to focus on schoolwork.

Below are our new and existing extended-day programs that will provide the children with the art, music and fitness activities they deserve:

> **Art and music workshops.** We will hire artists to lead workshops in painting, drawing, drama and dance from diverse cultures. The goal is for students to learn not only artistic skills but respect for a variety of cultures, including their own. We have already established relationships with Puerto Rican Arts Alliance and ART (Art Resources in Teaching). We will also draw on the National Museum of Mexican Art and other cultural institutions.

> **Fitness.** Students reported that they would be more likely to participate in fitness activities if a wider range were available. To our existing offerings, we will add organized sports teams, dance classes, a yoga class, weight lifting, health-club style fitness training and bicycle repair workshops. Classes will be offered before and after-school to accommodate the largest number of students.

> **LSNA clubs.** Logan Square Neighborhood Association offers a variety of after-school programs on-site at Ames that enroll about 100 students. Programs include a martial arts class, a dance class, a yearbook club, arts and crafts, service projects, homework help and Go Girl Go!, a running program for girls. A student-lead advisory board selects the activities and helps monitor student behavior.

> **Intermural sports.** We will continue to offer basketball, golf, cross-country, girls soccer and boys softball.

> **Student council.** A student council that meets briefly during the school week will have time after school to develop their leadership skills by planning school-wide activities, particularly those that emphasize fitness or the arts, such as a talent show.

New approach to discipline

Out-of-school suspensions have dropped dramatically in the last several years. Gang intimidation in and around the school has virtually ceased thanks to a crackdown lead by Ames in cooperation with the neighborhood high school and Ward offices. Our next goal is to further reduce discipline referrals by teaching students self-control and interpersonal skills. Punitive discipline is often ineffective when students lack alternative strategies for managing their emotions. We have already trained the entire staff on methods for teaching the state’s new social and emotional learning goals. Teachers are incorporating character development themes during literature discussions. We also discuss conflict resolution and self-control as issues arise with the class or individual students. In addition, we have discussed as a staff how our own behavior can model appropriate or inappropriate reactions to conflict.

Efforts to change student behavior are most effective when adults agree on expectations and follow similar strategies. As a next step, we will to train our after-school service providers and parent volunteers on our approach to teaching social and emotional skills. Administrators will also monitor classrooms before and after school to ensure that those skills are being taught.
Children who are ill, physically unfit or poorly nourished are less likely to perform well in school. At Ames, many of our students suffer from unaddressed health needs. Few receive regular preventative care as many families lack health insurance. Even when ill, some of our students do not even receive medical attention when they are ill. Untreated depression and obesity are also serious issues. In fact, a local university found that nearly half of students at one of our feeder elementary schools were already obese or at-risk for obesity by 6th grade.

An on-site health center, expanded health education and new fitness activities could significantly improve the health of our students and their school attendance. Our health partner, PrimeCare Community Health, Inc., will run a school based-health center with comprehensive services for students, families and community residents in our medically-underserved neighborhood. Additional partners will provide nutrition education, comprehensive sex education and activities to promote physical fitness.

The health center will initially serve Ames students only. In subsequent years, we will extend services to families and community members. To insure confidentiality, some hours will be reserved exclusively for students.

PrimeCare and Illinois Masonic, our mental health partner, are established medical providers with experience opening and operating medical health centers throughout Chicago. PrimeCare is also a Federally Qualified Health Center System.

**Health center buildout**

Representatives from Ames, Chicago Public Schools, PrimeCare, Logan Square Neighborhood Association, Bauer Latoza Studio, Millennia Consulting and the Illinois Facility Fund agree that the Ames health facility should include the following elements:

- Waiting areas
- Reception area/desk
- 3 exam rooms
- Nurses’ station/secure medical record storage
- Locked cabinet with medications
- Office space for providers and counseling staff
- Laboratory space (workroom) with pass-through connection to washroom
- Washroom
- Accessory storage spaces
Ames has identified a staff lounge and accessory program space on the first floor as the location of the health center. These are adjacent rooms that share an internal wall and front the eastern exterior wall of the building. In the interest of security, a separate entrance will be built for the health center and a separate security system will be installed. However, students would be able to access the health center from a secured entrance in the school corridor.

In order to accommodate the program, Ames will need to relocate the teacher’s lounge to room #305 and relocate Logan Square Neighborhood Associations’ program space to another location on the first floor. Minor modifications would be made to another classroom to accommodate the Logan Square Neighborhood Association activities. The development budget provides funds for the relocation of these rooms and associated physical improvements. These items include landscaping, exterior signage, and an awning at the new entrance, a T-1 line to connect the Health Center to Prime Health Care/Illinois Masonic’s mainframe, and separate telephone lines.

Comprehensive health care

The following services will be provided on-site at our health center:

> Annual health screenings and immunizations.
> Diagnosis and treatment of minor illnesses and injuries.
> Basic laboratory services, prescriptions and referrals to specialty care and low-cost dental services.
> Age-appropriate reproductive health services.
> Health education and case management for overweight clients and for those with chronic conditions such as asthma and diabetes.
> Nutrition counseling for students and adults. A dietician from the University of Illinois at Chicago Partnership for Health Promotion will provide this service in groups or one-on-one.
> Mental health counseling, family counseling and art therapy from the Illinois Masonic Behavior Health Services.

Outreach for health and income support

Beginning in Spring 2007, the Health Outreach Team of the Logan Square Neighborhood Association will set up information tables at school events to promote the new Ames health center. Families will be encouraged to select PrimeCare/Ames the as their children’s primary provider. Since the health center will not immediately be open to adults, parents will be directed to other low-cost health care options for themselves. The team will also assist families in applying for all public benefits to which they are entitled such as state medical insurance, Food Stamps and cash assistance.
Annual “Health Day”

Each year, we will organize a school health day with activities and speakers to educate our students about healthy habits, chronic health issues in the community and health careers.

Comprehensive sex education

The Chicago Women’s Health Center will provide eight sessions of comprehensive sex education each year for all students. The curriculum will cover abstinence, birth control and preventing sexually transmitted diseases.

Healthy eating

Poor eating habits are seriously undermining our children’s health. Despite the availability of fresh produce in our neighborhood, fresh fruits and vegetables are consumed less often than chips and soda. Parents often fail to model or reinforce healthy eating at home. Changing these entrenched habits will require an all-out effort at our school. Below are the programs and activities aimed to education both students and families with engaging activities and curriculum.

> Nutrition education. The University of Illinois at Chicago’s Partnership for Health Promotion will lead one session a month for each class, and teachers will receive professional development to teach additional lessons. UIC will also train lunchroom staff in how to improve the quality and appearance of cafeteria food.

> Healthy cooking classes. UIC will also offer after-school cooking and nutrition classes for students and their families.

> Healthy eating and the environment. Seven Generations Ahead, a local non-profit, will lead their eight-week “Fresh from the Farm” curriculum to teach 7th-graders about the economics and environmental impact of different types of farming as well as the nutritional value of food. The program includes field trips to farms in the Chicago area.

> Organic vegetable garden. Openlands Project, another local non-profit, will teach families and students how to build raised herb and vegetable beds at home.

We will also build them in the school courtyard as a resource for health and science education during the regular day and also for use in after-school summer and garden clubs. We believe that students are more likely to eat vegetables that they helped to grow. Produce will be served in the school cafeteria and used for cooking classes.

> Harvest Festival. An annual harvest festival in the school courtyard will celebrate the accomplishments of students and families and outside partners who participated in the organic garden. Parents will be invited to display produce grown at home. The event will encourage further interest in vegetable gardening and in healthy eating.

Expanded fitness

To improve physical fitness at our school, we will add the following routines, programs and facilities:

> Fitness break. Using the intercom, we will lead the whole school in ten minutes of physical activity in the classroom at a regular time each day. The exercise will help students relieve tension and refocus and also serve as a daily reminder of the importance of exercise.

> Dance studio. Ames will transform its multi-purpose room into a dance studio with new flooring, mirrors and bars. The studio will serve as a space for dance and yoga classes during the extended-day program.

> Bicycle programs. Chicago Bicycle Federation will hire a part-time instructor to lead eight-week bicycle repair and safety classes for students as an alternative to a regular gym class. Students will learn the value of bicycling as a form of recreation, exercise and alternative transportation. The instructor will also lead an after school bicycle club, repair workshops and summer bike tours. An Americorps volunteer will assist with the program.
Children’s social and emotional issues are of enormous concern to our school community. We recently completed an extensive survey of Ames teachers and parents from our feeder schools. Three-quarters of our teachers strongly agreed with the statement, “Social and emotional issues are a barrier to student learning at Ames.” Over half strongly agreed that physical and mental health issues at Ames are barriers to learning. Top student problems cited were anger management, family issues and low self-confidence.

A 1999 study by the Consortium on Chicago School Research found that students were most successful academically “when they experience strong academic press in their schools and strong social support from people in and out of their schools.” Our own findings reinforce this research, and we aim to create a safe, caring culture of high expectations and rigor. While a school culture cannot be “programmed,” there are programs and activities that will contribute to this culture.

Students that participated in this planning process indicated the desire for more adult guidance. They insisted that they wanted many opportunities for mentoring—from community members, from parents and from peers.

In the coming years, we will expand our mentoring programs with the goal of providing mentors to a third of our students. We will also train students as peer counselors and peer mediators. An additional guidance counselor will provide more support in high school and career planning and also train peer mediators. Our health center will offer mental health counseling for students and family counseling for adults.

Finally, new supports for parents will reduce financial instability that can place undue stress on kids. An outreach team will increase parent contact with the school to ensure that students receive needed services.

Needs assessments

Ames School, the Logan Square Neighborhood Association and our partners to regularly evaluate and revise our programs. We will continue to refine our needs assessments in the following ways:

> We will use the “40 Developmental Assets” student survey, designed by the Minneapolis-based Search Institute, to gather data on kids’ risk-taking behaviors and their “assets,” which are external supports, such as good communication at home, and personal traits, such as an ability to peacefully resolve conflicts. Research has shown that the 40 “assets” on this survey are strongly correlated with the students’ avoidance of risky behavior. The survey will help us identify patterns by grade and gender, plan interventions and prioritize programs.

> We will also survey our families to ensure that they are aware of community resources and whether there are unmet needs. We will follow a model that LSNA has employed successfully for more than twelve years. Teams of parents will survey families at report card pick-up days and go door-to-door in the attendance area. We will use the results to design support programs at Ames. The survey will be conducted biannually.

Mentoring and peer support

Research has shown that high-quality mentoring programs can improve students confidence and ability to make good decisions. We would like at least 35% of Ames
students to participate in a mentor program and will track their personal growth with a pre and post-test about their beliefs and attitudes. We will also add or expand the following programs:

> **Big Brothers, Big Sisters.** Ames will partner with Big Brothers, Big Sisters to provide year-round, one-on-one mentoring for kids. Fifteen students will participate in the pilot year. We intend to pair 75 students with mentors by year four.

> **Parent mentoring.** LSNA’s Parent Mentor program is nationally recognized for its impact on students, parents and school culture. Ames currently funds 10 parent mentors to assist in classrooms. We will double the size to 20.

> **Peer counseling.** Our social worker will train student council members to provide peer counseling during the extended-day program.

> **Peer mediation.** Our new guidance counselor will implement a peer mediation program. We are deciding between the BoysTown Model of peer mediation or the Peaceable Schools model created at Boston’s Lesley University.

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**Supports for parents**

Improving the education and financial stability of parents can only help their children. Students are also more likely to succeed when parents take an interest in their learning. We will support the academic progress of our students by offering the following services to their families:

> **Income supports and financial coaching.** The Logan Square Center for Working Families will provide financial coaching, tax preparation and referrals to specialized job training for parents on-site at Ames. It will also work with families to secure all the government benefits that they are entitled to.

> **Adult education.** Depending on interest, we will organize ESL, GED and parent classes through the City Colleges of Chicago either on-site at Ames or invite parents to join existing programs at nearby elementary schools.

> **LSNA family advocates** will visit the homes of families who have had no contact with the school. We will ensure that they are up-to-date on school events (middle schoolers sometimes neglect to share fliers) and
on available programs such as the Health Center, extended-day, parent services, social services, family activities and high school placement assistance. If eligible, we will also encourage them to sign their children up for state health insurance. A similar program at Kelvyn Park helped the high school dramatically improve its student attendance rates.

Meal supports

Nearly all of our students qualify for free or reduced price breakfast and lunch. Those who enroll in after-school programs are also provided with a nutritious snack. Students who attend our extended-day program into the evening hours will also receive a hot dinner through the Greater Chicago Food Depository’s “Kids Café.” The program also includes nutrition education. Our meals will be supplemented with herbs and produce from our new organic garden.

High school placements

Most of our students and parents are simply unaware of the vast array of high school options available in Chicago, including magnet schools, small schools, education-to-career programs and charter schools. Instead, most enroll by default in the overcrowded neighborhood high school where students must attend in three shifts. Kelvyn Park is an improving school with many high-quality programs, however, it’s not the best choice for everyone. Only 15 percent of our students apply to selective high schools each year. We intend to double that number. To help students select schools that best match their needs and interests, we will do the following:

> **Guidance counseling.** We will hire an additional certified counselor to assist students in selecting high schools and setting career goals. DePaul University has also agreed to send two student guidance counselors each fall to complete a one-year internship at Ames. Currently, Ames has one guidance counselor for 800 students, making individual attention unlikely, if not impossible. These steps will reduce that ratio to one counselor for every 200 students.

> **Assessment data.** Our 8th-graders will take the ACT’s Explore test which surveys their education and career goals in addition to measuring their academic skills. Our counselors will use the data to assist students and parents in selecting high schools and high school courses.

> **High school fair.** We will host a high school fair each fall for students and parents to learn about programs available at the city’s public, charter and private schools.
Cultural and language barriers often prevent our parents from participating fully in their children’s education. Parents with limited education may also feel intimidated communicating with school staff; 43 percent of Logan Square residents do not have a high school diploma. Parents are sometimes isolated from each other as well, particularly women with small children and no work history. We find that mothers of public school children in our neighborhood typically have not participated in the larger community.

Yet parents and other community residents can be a tremendous resource for schools. For 12 years, LSNA has been a local and national leader in developing parents as school volunteers and community leaders. Our award-winning programs have won a national award and recognition from the state of Illinois as best practice for immigrant families.

We have also built an extensive network of community groups and non-profits to support education in Logan Square. Here are the programs that we will continue, expand or create to support Ames:

- **Safety committee.** We will continue collaborating with the 14th and 25th Police Districts, our local alderman, our feeder schools, social service agencies, the park district and local businesses to ensure that the attendance area of Ames/feeder schools is safe for students walking to and from school.
- **Walking school bus.** We will double the number of parent volunteers who walk students to and from school on a daily basis.
- **Parent Safety Patrol.** To maintain order and safety as students enter and leave the building, we will expand our parent safety patrol. Seven parents currently participate. We will expand to 15 members to allow for rotation and extra assistance at high-traffic school events.
- **Literacy Ambassadors.** Parents and teachers will lead book clubs for Ames families in the homes of community residents.
- **Parent Mentors.** We will double the number of trained parent classroom tutors from 10 to 20.
- **Wellness Council.** Ames and LSNA will partner with Healthy Schools Campaign, a national non-profit based in the Chicago area, and Seven Generations Ahead, a local non-profit that promotes healthy eating, to create a wellness council. The council will make long-term plans to create and improve the quality of programs that promote fitness and healthy eating in our school and neighborhood. We will train a diverse group of community members to serve with us on the council. AmeriCorps volunteers engaged in gardening and bicycle education will work with us on projects.
For more information, contact:

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