

University of Pennsylvania STI Application Essays

“...These new standards [being proposed and enacted by states and national associations] will require students to be able to engage in independent analysis and problem solving, extensive research and writing, use of new technologies, and various strategies for accessing and using resources in new situations...” (Darling-Hammond, Journal of Negro Education, vol. 69 No 4 (Fall 2000), Pg. 280.)

- 1) To what extent and in what ways does the culture of your school (which includes all school personnel, students, parents of students, and your school/district’s expectations) support or place constraints on your efforts to implement the ideas of teaching and learning described above?

Culture plays a crucial role in the success of a school due to its influence on a student’s desire for learning, attitude with academic work, and willingness to work hard for the greater goal of the school. The culture of Mastery Charter High School, which is only 5 years old, is based on community and the mission statement: students attend Mastery “...to learn the academic and personal skills they need to succeed in higher education, compete in the global economy, and pursue their dreams.” Without this focus, students would come to school without a purpose, a plan, or posture to live up to the stated mission. Mastery’s structured, safe, and disciplined environment supports Darling-Hammond’s description of teaching and learning and my efforts as well. Students engage the material through hands on activities, and parents actively participate through close teacher/parent interaction. Teachers enjoy working in a positive, **constructive culture that emphasizes, “Excellence, no excuses.”**