

Mark Gleason, Executive Director, Philadelphia School Partnership, was drawn to PSP by its willingness to define its vision in terms of a bold and specific goal—25% more high-quality schools available for the children of Philadelphia by 2015—and by its emphasis on supporting all kinds of great schools, regardless of their ideology, platform or political alliances. Mark is an entrepreneurial leader with a record of launching and growing new ventures. He has significant experience in fund-raising, partnership development, strategic planning, general management and communications. Having worked primarily in media and marketing over the past 20 years, his commitment to improving American schools was ignited when he joined the board of education for a racially diverse school district bordering Newark, N.J., in 2006. Quickly he learned there is no shortage of good intentions in American education—but that too often political disagreements and bureaucratic torpor block those intentions from leading to better outcomes for students.

Mark served as president of the South Orange-Maplewood, N.J., Board of Education from 2007-2011. During that time the board focused its energies on developing an organizational culture that revolves around rewarding outcomes rather than intentions. The district has developed a strategic plan rooted in measurable outcomes (student test data as well as others), recruited a new superintendent, overhauled the English curriculum in grades K-12, instituted a new, robust system for evaluating teachers, and aligned principals' and supervisors' pay with student performance—all while reducing the rate of tax increase five years in a row. The fruits of these efforts began to show last year, when the district narrowed achievement gaps between blacks and whites in nearly every grade while also improving its performance relative to statewide benchmarks.

Prior to joining PSP, Mark led partnership development at Christ the King Prep School, a Cristo Rey Network high school in Newark, N.J. Earlier in his career, Mark co-founded a web venture called What's Next Media, founded and built a national magazine about books and culture called Book, led the brand launch of telecommunications firm Qwest Communications, served as editor in chief of the leading business newspaper in Cincinnati, Ohio, and helped launch a Hispanic marketing group at Procter & Gamble Co. He has a bachelor's degree in American Studies from Georgetown University and a master's degree from Northwestern University's journalism and communications school.