

“To ensure that all students master the skills required to earn a high school diploma and that they acquire the tools necessary for future success.”



VISTA CHARTER SCHOOL

BEST APPLICATION CASE STUDY

PRESENTED BY:

CONI WILSON — ADMINISTRATOR — VISTA CS

TED HUGHES — DIRECTOR — BEST PROGRAM

BUILDING EXCELLENT SCHOOLS TODAY

BEST

*Building Safe,
Healthy, Secure,
1st Class, High
Performing, 21st
Century Schools.*



cde Improving
Academic
Achievement

- ◎ The BEST Program increases the level of financial assistance provided to school districts, charter schools, institute charter schools, BOCES, and the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind, for capital construction projects.
- ◎ The BEST Program is a needs based grant which focuses on health and safety issues by providing funds to rebuild, repair, or replace Colorado's most dangerous and needy K-12 facilities.
- ◎ There are two types of BEST grants:
 - ◎ BEST Cash Grants which are typically used to fund smaller projects like roofs, boiler replacements, fire alarms, etc;
 - ◎ BEST Lease-Purchase Grants which are typically used to fund larger projects like new schools, major renovations, and additions.
- ◎ This presentation will be focused on BEST Lease-Purchase Grants.

BEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS

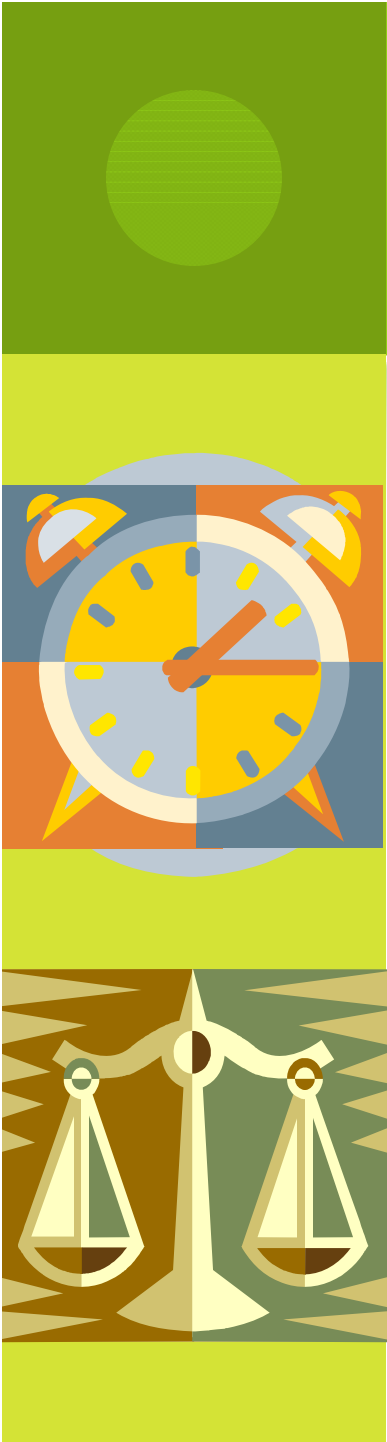


ALTA VISTA CS

- ◎ To date almost \$1.2 Billion in grants have been requested;
- ◎ All Schools - 118 projects (44%) awarded for a total of \$591,440,023 in project costs;
- ◎ Over 84,000 students have been impacted through BEST;
- ◎ Charter Schools – 12 of 31 (39%) applications have been awarded, for a total of \$51,102,148 in project costs;
- ◎ Over 3,800 Charter School Students have been impacted through BEST.



CHARTER SCHOOL INFORMATION



⦿ Charter School Applicant's Responsibilities:

- ⦿ Chartered for at least 5 years on the date authorizer submits application;
- ⦿ Charter School to notify authorizer at least 3 months in advance of submitting application & needs to forward its application for financial assistance to its authorizer, which shall forward the application to the Assistance Board together with a letter indicating the authorizer's position on the application.
- ⦿ Charter School must have complied with all public school facilities construction guidelines addressing health and safety issues established by the Assistance Board, at the time the charter school first occupied the facility;

⦿ Charter School Authorizer's Responsibilities:

- ⦿ Authorizer to submit application and administer funding;

CHARTER SCHOOL AWARDED PROJECTS



NORTH ROUTT CS



MARBLE CS



VISTA CS



CRESTONE CS



LAKE GEORGE CS



GUFFEY COMMUNITY CS



THE CLASSICAL ACADEMY



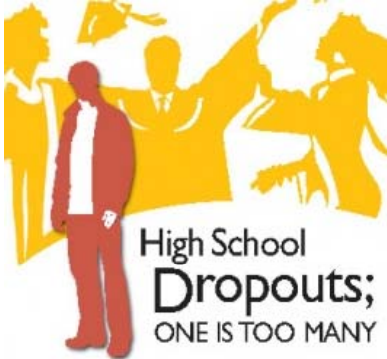
**CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN
CHARTER ACADEMY**

JAMES IRWIN MS (2)



ALTA VISTA CS

HISTORY OF VISTA CHARTER SCHOOL



*A SECOND
CHANCE, AT A
NEW BEGINNING*



- ◎ **Vista Charter School represents a population of students that would not seek a diploma without the option of the alternative approach.**
- ◎ Founded in 1987 as a Second Chance Program for Montrose School District RE-1J, functioning as a district drop out retrieval program;
- ◎ In 2003, Montrose School District acknowledged the success of program and determined they needed to increase student enrollment in order to secure the resources and capital to move into a more permanent facility;
- ◎ As of 2006, Charter School became a Designated Alternative High School and was affirmed by CDE in recognition that 95% of the student population had at least one at-risk factor;
- ◎ During a board and staff workshop in the fall of 2007, the Colorado League of Charter Schools lead the membership of the staff and board through a workshop of goals and growth for the school;

HISTORY OF VISTA CHARTER SCHOOL



- ◎ From 2005-2010, VCS has had consistent growth. Each year, VCS has a waiting list from 40-60 students “waiting” for spots to become available in the school.
- ◎ The programs at VCS provide an educational opportunity for students who would simply drop out of school. Currently VCS has had over 500 students graduate from the program.



VISTA CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Square Feet Per Year:

FY04-05 – 1,068

FY05-06 – 6,000

FY06-07 – 6,800

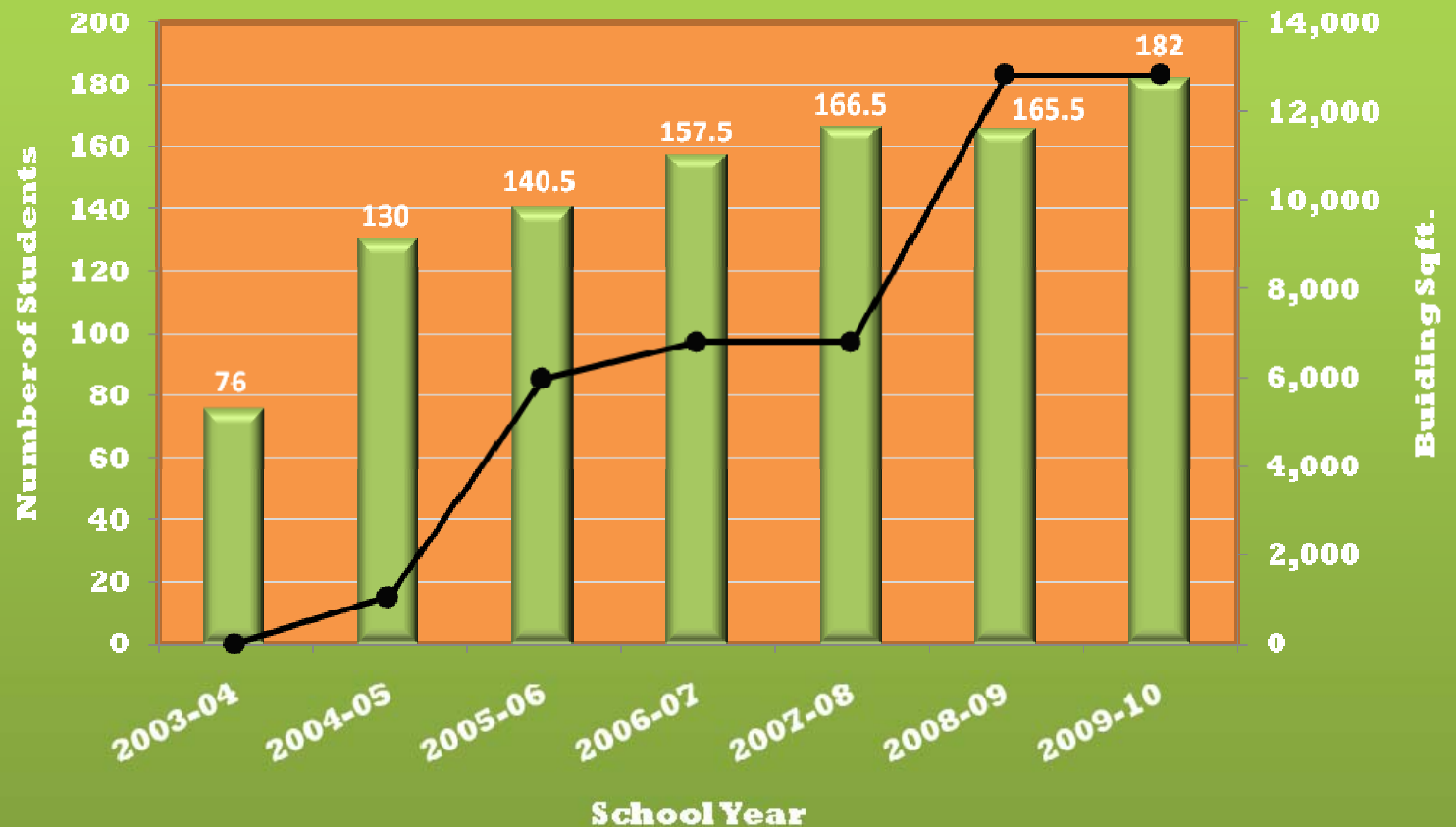
FY07-08 – 6,800

FY08-09 – 12,800

FY09-10 – 12,800



FTE Enrollment & Building Sqft.



HISTORY OF VISTA CHARTER SCHOOL FACILITIES

- ◎ In 2004, Vista Charter School opened in the district trailers as a conversion charter school;
- ◎ By 2005, the school moved to a 6,000 sq. ft. building that houses the school today;
- ◎ In 2006-07, VCS expanded more and added 800 sqft for the EIP program;
- ◎ By 2008, the school acquired an additional 6,000 sqft building to keep up with student demand;
- ◎ VCS has done a good job of utilizing their space and expanding once they were filled past capacity.;
- ◎ Since VCS serves more of the non-traditional students, they are constantly evaluating their programs and students to determine what is best for the students. VCS has learned that if you serve your students, the funding will come.



WHAT OUR FACILITY OPTIONS WERE

- ◎ VCS started out in the districts trailers. The district offered another set of trailers at a different location for VCS to use;
- ◎ VCS considered the move, but there were multiple delays in the process. During this time, VCS Board Members were constantly looking for other buildings to use;
- ◎ During their searches, one of the Board Members found the buildings they are in today and VCS has been expanding ever since then.



HOW WE GOT A GRANT FOR A NEW BUILDING

⊙ Research & Tasks Completed:

- ⊙ Search for new, permanent property – 2008;
- ⊙ First visit from BEST – Spring 2009;
- ⊙ VCS became eligible for BEST Grant in Fall 2009;
- ⊙ Worked & Communication often with BEST Staff;
- ⊙ Came to BEST workshops, asked lots of questions;
- ⊙ Attended other school meetings who had already received BEST Grants;
 - ⦿ Spoke with their grant writers to learn the in and outs of the process;
- ⊙ Attended the League of Charter Schools presentation Spring 2010;
- ⊙ Competitively selected an owners representative to help with process Spring 2010;
- ⊙ Worked on finalizing the process: Financial, Legal, and Real Estate Paperwork with Lawyer's, CDE, State, District, Title Company – Fall 2010.



⊙ A side note from Coni:

- ⊙ The grant writing process for a BEST Grant is extremely time consuming; it is best to let your staff and school board know the amount of time needed and to prepare staff to take on some additional responsibilities during this time.

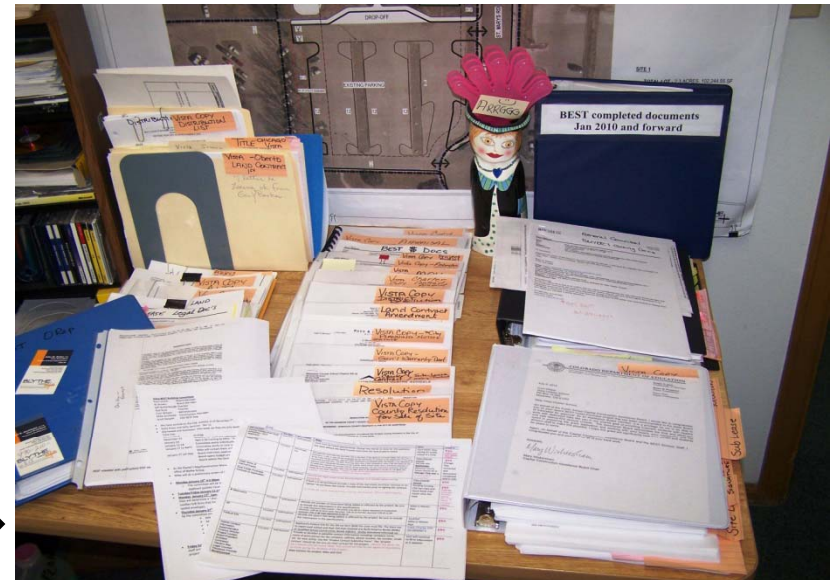


HOW WE GOT A GRANT FOR A NEW BUILDING

- ◎ Vista Charter School has done an exceptional job of saving for a new building. Since the program was started, Coni knew they would need to save every penny to achieve their goals.
- ◎ By securing CDE Set-Up grants, Sam Walton Grants, CDE Capital Construction Grants, EARSS Grants, E-rate grants, and support from the League of Charter Schools, VCS set themselves up to save more.
- ◎ VCS required minimum match for FY2010-11 was 15%. VCS went above and beyond that and was able to provide 25% match for the project. The total project cost is \$6,264,901.



Coni's "BEST Desk of Duty"



VISTA CHARTER SCHOOL

REVENUES, EXPENSES & BALANCE

Fund Balances:

FY04-05 \$341,318

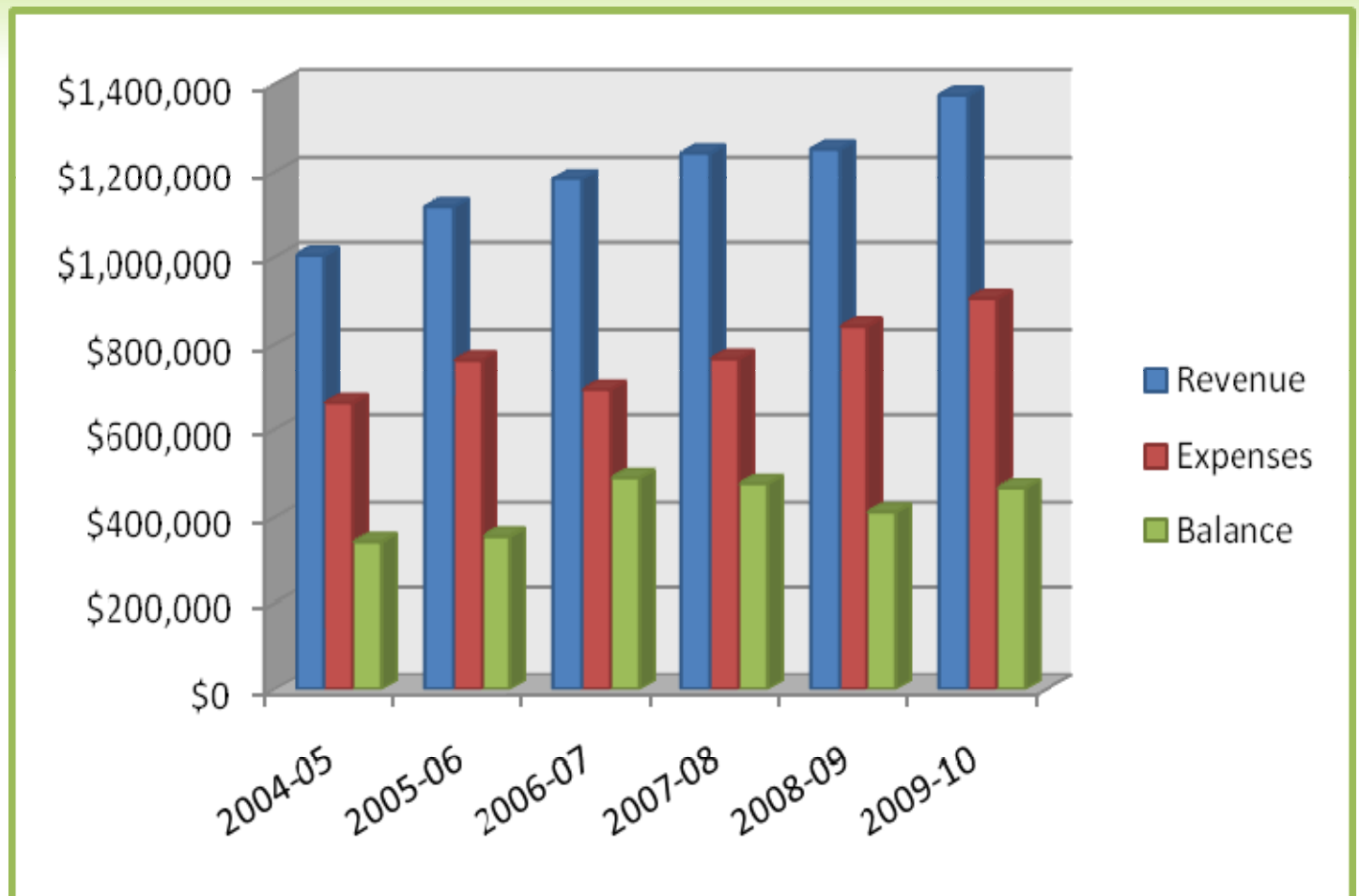
FY05-06 \$353,786

FY06-07 \$490,623

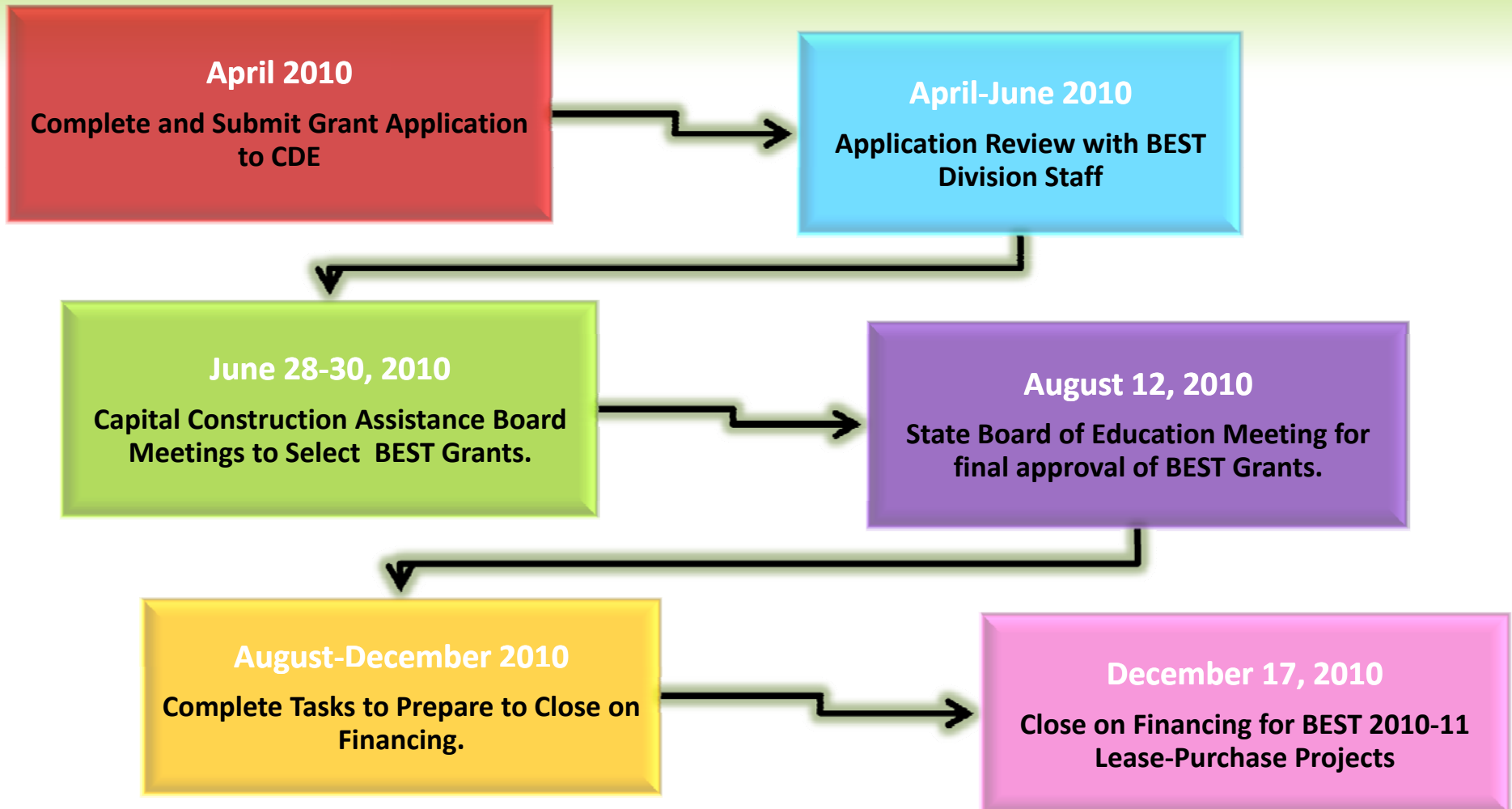
FY07-08 \$476,880

FY08-09 \$410,600

FY09-10 \$467,087



PROCESS AFTER GRANT WAS SUBMITTED



THE FINANCING PROCESS

- ◎ Once a project is approved, there is still a lot of work that needs to be completed to secure financing. Here is a list of needs VCS deemed necessary to complete the financing for their BEST Grant:

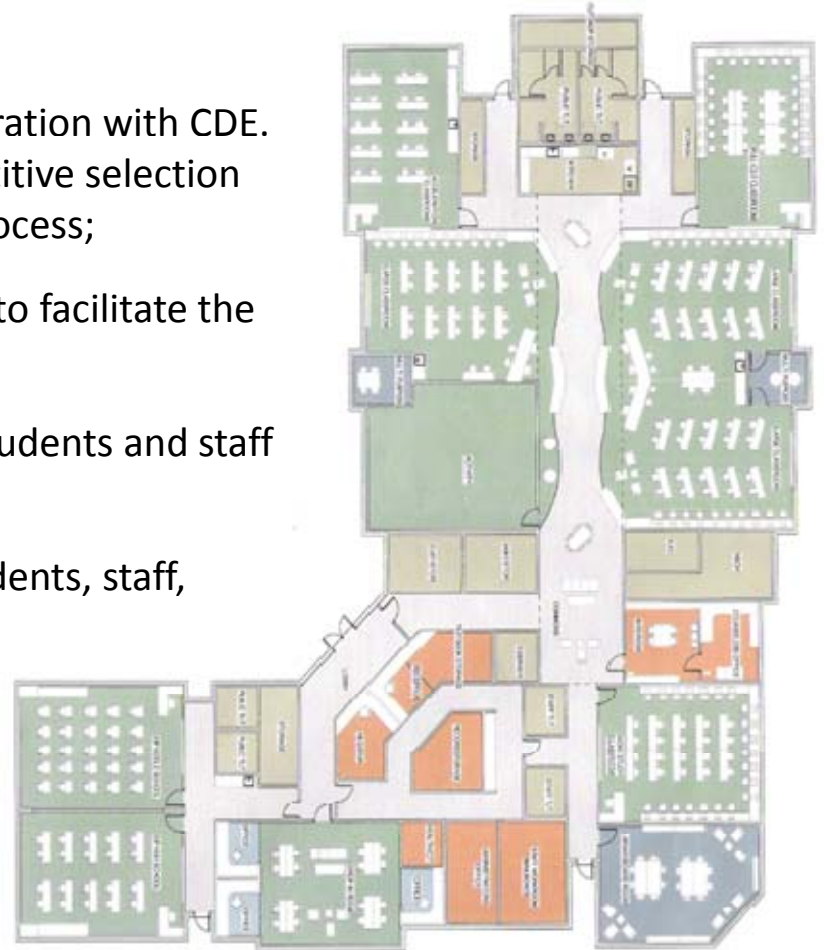


- ◎ Lawyers – a real estate lawyer if you plan to buy land & another who is familiar with school district and charter school law;
- ◎ A person familiar with real estate and or construction who can help walk you through the process (owners rep);
- ◎ City & County contacts, if purchasing land from city or county;
- ◎ A district finance contact who is involved in and understands how the financing works.



NOW WE HAVE A GRANT, WHAT'S NEXT?

- ⦿ Post financing accomplishments/tasks:
 - ⦿ Still working with owners rep;
 - ⦿ Hired a Design/Builder in cooperation with CDE. Posted an RFQ and used competitive selection process. Very happy with the process;
 - ⦿ Used the help of BEST staff to facilitate the process;
- ⦿ Designing a new facility to meet students and staff needs
 - ⦿ Received a lot of input from students, staff, community and district;
 - ⦿ Kick-off meeting with Building Selection Committee & Design Team to review timelines.



YOU CAN DO THIS!



- ⊙ IT IS POSSIBLE! Charter School Administrators/Principles wear many different hats and required to do a lot for their schools;
- ⊙ You must be willing to devote the time and resources necessary to achieve your goals and needs;
- ⊙ Do not be afraid to ask questions, the only dumb question is the one that was not asked;
- ⊙ There is a lot of support and guidance available from CDE and other resources, use them;
- ⊙ VCS is a small school, with even a smaller staff. By investing a portion of our time and stringent saving, we were able to meet our goal of getting a new facility to meet our students' and staffs' needs.
- ⊙ **If I can do it, you can do it! – Coni Wilson**



VISTA CHARTER SCHOOL

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

