

INVESTING IN INNOVATION FUND



L.A.'s BOLD COMPETITION TURNING AROUND AND OPERATING ITS LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

Submitted By



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Competitive Priority Preference (CPP 5). The Initiative addresses CPP5 by requiring applicants in the competition to develop plans that detail their commitment to early learning and to include specific plans for how early childhood education will be integrated in their overall instructional programs. Schools may collaborate with community early childhood education providers and preschools that feed into their elementary school or offer preschool programs like California State Preschool Program (CSPP), Head Start, Los Angeles Universal Program (LAUP) and other school-readiness programs.

College Access and Success (CPP 6). Through the support of Official Partners, UNITE-LA and UWGLA, as well as the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and other partnering institutions of higher learning in Los Angeles, the Initiative not only requires that applicants provide detailed plans for ensuring college access and career readiness (CPP 6) using a p-20 framework, but also supports these efforts through the work of partnering agencies.

Unique Learning Needs of Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficient

Students (CPP 7). The initiative further requires applicants to address the needs of special populations, including those with learning disabilities and English language learners. Support structures such as the Los Angeles School Development Initiative will further provide experts trained in both developing and implementing plans shown to help raise achievement for students with disabilities and those who are limited English proficient.

A. Project Need and Design

Los Angeles's Bold Competition – Turning Around and Operating Its Low-Performing Schools (hereafter referred to as “the Initiative”) focuses on enhancing the distinctive features of an open competition for operators of turnaround schools. In the competition, applicant teams and selected schools can receive support through the Los Angeles School Development Institute

(LASDI), an initiative specifically designed to provide such services; iDesign, a unique department in Los Angeles Unified School District's Innovation and Charter Schools Division that focuses on empowering and supporting schools to implement innovative and effective practices; and other mechanisms to be created in the Initiative that aim to accelerate student achievement by reforming the way in which school districts serve and support their students. Provided that these models demonstrate the promise of dramatic improvements to the district's lowest performing schools, the process and the associated supports are neutral with respect to the overarching governance system and/or instructional design.

The Initiative's central hypothesis is that, through this bold competition, a diverse portfolio of innovative schools will be created, supported and sustained that can better respond to the needs of the local community and systematically turn around low achieving schools. The Initiative will build on early successes of the first competition – initiated in August of 2009 by LAUSD's Board of Education – by leveraging the civic resources of the L.A. Compact, an unprecedented and diverse collaborative of 18 major Los Angeles institutions. Members of the L.A. Compact, including Official Partners UNITE-LA and the United Way of Greater Los Angeles (UWGLA) and Other Partners, including the City of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce (L.A. Chamber), United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) and the Association of Administrators Los Angeles (AALA), will not only further develop and enhance the process through focused school- and community-based support, but will also help to ensure transparency, accountability and competition by engaging parents, teachers, bargaining units, organized labor, nonprofit organizations, administrators, and private businesses – stakeholders that are demanding better schools – and empowering them to shape the management structures, leadership, instructional models, and school cultures and climates in Los Angeles' lowest

performing schools.¹ The Initiative will be rigorously tested by external evaluators, and, if promising, can be scaled-up and adopted in other large, high-needs school districts. (See Exhibit 1, Appendix H, for L.A. Compact Strategies)

Students Served. In the 2008-2009 academic year, more than 675,000 Angelinos attended one of the 658 public and charter schools within LAUSD. It is the second largest school district in the nation and larger than the public school systems of 26 states. Altogether, nearly three out of every four students at LAUSD qualified for the free or reduced-price lunch program in 2009; over 91 percent identified as nonwhite; nearly a third were English language learners; and 11.2 percent were special needs. (See Exhibit 2, Appendix H, for a demographic profile of LAUSD)

In recent years, LAUSD has made significant strides in raising student achievement (as described in Section C). Despite these gains and the many high-performing schools within LAUSD, too many children remain in schools that are not adequately preparing them for two- and four-year colleges or the requisite careers of the 21st century. District-wide in LAUSD, only 52% of students graduate on time and more than 322,000 students attend one of the more than 260 elementary, middle and high schools in Program Improvement 3+ status. The needs of these students are even greater: 81.8% qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch program; 41.9 are English language learners and over 90% are African American or Latino.

Background. In August of 2009, Los Angeles embarked on a unique district-wide initiative to turn around the 260 lowest performing schools by allowing internal educator-led teams and

¹ The L.A. Compact is represented in this proposal by the Los Angeles Unified School District [the lead applicant] and these Official Partners: UNITE-LA and the United Way of Greater Los Angeles; other signatories of the L.A. Compact who are Other Partners of this proposed Initiative include the Associated Administrators of Los Angeles, the City of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, and 11 institutions of higher learning.

management organizations, as well as external not-for-profit organizations and charter school operators to submit plans to improve the schools. (See Exhibit 3, Appendix H for the PSC Resolution). The LAUSD School Board adopted the Public School Choice Resolution which paved the way for the Initiative's first round which was held from December 2009 to February 2010. Annual rounds are planned until all low-performing public schools are transformed into high-performing public schools.

The first round (PSC 1.0) sought plans to operate 12 underperforming "focus" and 24 newly-constructed "relief" schools and yielded a total of 85 proposals from internal and external operators.² The composition of the first round of internal applicant teams varied widely: some teams were composed of excited and energetic teachers looking to convert their successful small learning community to a stand-alone school; others were teachers, parents and administrators from the local school community; while still other teams formed innovative partnerships with not-for-profit groups and parent organizations. External applicant teams included non-profit organizations such as the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools (PLAS) and Youth Policy Institute (YPI) looking to assume the daily management functions of schools as well as charter management organizations, such as Aspire Public Schools, Camino Nuevo, Inner City Education Foundation, the Alliance for College-Ready Public Schools, and GreenDot. Whether internal or external, each team offered innovative ideas, management approaches and high quality instructional models that were tailored to the needs of the school community. In all, PSC 1.0

² In the past decade, with the help of the individuals and organizations now forming the L.A. Compact, voters passed a series of bond measures, and upfront investment of \$20 billion to build new schools to relieve overcrowding and end year round schooling in Los Angeles

affected 38,000 students, comparable to the entirety of the New Orleans Public School District. (See Exhibits 4 and 5, Appendix H, for achievement scores of relief and new schools in PSC 1.0)

The office of LAUSD Superintendent Ray Cortines managed the Public School Choice process with great transparency, posting on the District's website weekly updates, proposal submissions and reviewer comments. A series of community stakeholder meetings facilitated by the UWGLA and other community-based organizations engaged parents, caregivers and local community leaders and allowed school teams to gather data and input for their school plans. LASDI – a partnership of UTLA, AALA, the LAUSD School Board and Superintendent Cortines, UNITE-LA and the L.A. Chamber and other organizations – provided internal applicant teams with technical support and expert guidance as they prepared their proposals. Community members affected by the transformation effort were asked to cast an “advisory vote” in favor of the school team or school operator of their choice. In February, the Board received the Superintendent's recommendations, the reviewer recommendations, and the parent and community advisory votes and selected four charters, four not-for-profits, and 29 school-based or local district-based teams. In an effort to build in additional accountability, some school plans were accepted “with reservation”, requiring them to adjust their plans in coordination with the iDesign and the district office.

While whole school reform efforts have long sought to turn around the nation's persistently lowest performing schools through increased choice and competition, more often than not, they precipitate more impassioned pleas than focused efforts to *turn around, support and sustain* student learning and achievement.³ Other cities such as Boston, Chicago, New Orleans, New

³ The Brookings Institution notes that “advocates and opponents of school choice typically lock horns over idealized systems of schooling that do not presently exist in the United States.” Brookings (2010).

York, and Washington, D.C. have opened their schools to similar kinds of reforms, but the Initiative is distinctive and innovative for several reasons. First, parents, the community and the district are not only selecting schools but collaboratively shaping both *who will operate them* and *how they will be operated*. Indeed, the Initiative is not a typical “choice” process in which parents choose which school their child will attend, but rather a process in which the community supports the development of instructional models and school plans for schools in their community. Second, the Initiative is being supported and advocated for by a diverse group of stakeholders encompassed by the L.A. Compact. This broad stakeholder engagement helps to ensure not only a greater balance of participation, but also provides a mechanism for enhanced accountability; it exerts pressure on both internal and external applicants – as well as the officials responsible for implementing the choice process – to compete at the highest level. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the intervention does not arbitrarily transition low-performing public schools to external providers at either new relief schools or focus schools. Instead, it encourages and supports internal operators to take ownership of their schools and empowers local communities before, during and after the selection process to support the implementation of the plans.

“Fit” with Absolute Priority 4. The Initiative is tied directly to the Investing in Innovation Fund’s Absolute Priority of Innovations that Turn Around Persistently Low-Performing Schools (Priority 4). First, it is focused exclusively on schools that have been in Program Improvement for three or more years and is congruent with the ideas present in No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Additional qualifications in Year 1 included that the schools had less than 21% proficiency in either Math or English Language Arts, that they had zero or negative growth in California’s Academic Performance Index (API) for the previous year, and had greater than 10% drop out rates. In PSC 1.0, six of the 12 focus schools were among the lowest 5% performance across

California. In addition to these “focus” schools, the choice process also includes newly-constructed “relief” schools built to ease overcrowding at the district’s most impacted campuses.

Key Objectives and Strategies. The three-year Initiative helps to enhance and embed a transparent, systematic and sustainable turnaround process for chronic academic underperformance. Each year, operational and instructional plans from internal and external entities compete for both the lowest performing schools in the district and new relief schools designed to ease overcrowding in low-performing schools. The primary objective of the Initiative is to create a rich portfolio of high-performing schools that are tailored and supported by the local community.

The three goals for the Initiative are provided below followed by a brief overview of the project design.

- Enhance the Public School Choice Selection Process
- Support the Implementation of the Instructional Plans of the Selected Teams
- Implement Accountability and Continuous Improvement Measures

Goal 1: Enhance the Public School Choice Selection Process

To accomplish the first goal, the Initiative will pursue several measurable objectives and strategies. LA Compact members – led by UNITE-LA, the UWGLA and LAUSD’s Innovation and Charter Schools Division – will increase the supply of internal and external applicants for each focus and relief school identified as low-performing. Project team members will work together to actively seek out and encourage participation from internal educator-led teams, high-quality organizations with relevant experience opening new schools and turning around low-performing schools. Members of the L.A. Compact will leverage their deep community

relationships with a broad cross-section of school operators and collaborators, including organized labor, nonprofit community-based organizations and charter associations.

Second, the success of the process hinges on its transparency and the extent to which the local community is engaged and involved in the planning and selection process. L.A. Compact members – led by the UWGLA and UNITE-LA – will enhance community participation through community outreach and education efforts that target parents, caregivers and community leaders in the affected communities. Project team members will engage parents and other vested stakeholders at every step of the process to help ensure that local communities are aware of the choices available to them and have clear and accurate information regarding the competition and how they are empowered to shape the outcomes.

Third, the quality of applications – which require detailed, well-developed and aligned instructional and operational plans – is a critical aspect of turning around failed schools. Each plan creates a blueprint for reaching the goals and is matched to the individual needs of the school community. L.A. Compact members – led by LAUSD's Innovation and Charter Schools Division, UNITE-LA and the associated work of LASDI – will increase pre-application support to internal and external applicants. Project team members will provide expert guidance and support to applicant teams during the proposal development phase of the process, including workshops that expose teams to the latest innovations and best practices in turning around low-performing school. The workshops will cover a wide range of school development topics such as: School Culture, Assessment and Data-Driven Instruction, and Supporting the Needs of All Students, among others. Additionally, on an as needed basis, project team members will match school teams with consultants and coaches who will work closely with them during the proposal development phase of the process.

Finally, and perhaps most critical to the overall sustainability of the reform effort, is the enhancement of the supporting infrastructure at LAUSD. The internal staff members responsible for the day-to-day operations of the competition will be divided into two teams, one focused on managing all aspects of the RFP process from development through applicant approval and one focused on school incubation and plan implementation post-approval.

Goal 2: Support the Implementation of Instructional Plans of Selected Teams

The Initiative recognizes that enhancing the Public School Choice process alone will not create better schools in Los Angeles: it also requires intentional support mechanisms to help selected teams effectively implement their plans at both newly-constructed “relief” schools and low-performing “focus” schools. One such support mechanism will be provided through LASDI and coordinated by UNITE-LA. LASDI was created by the L.A. Compact not only to provide expert guidance as applicant teams developed their plans and the associated applications, but also to help teams revise and implement their instructional plans, start or restart their schools and link selected applicants with resources to turn their plans into reality. To do this, LASDI will provide workshops, seminars and expert consultants to teams as they implement their curricula and instructional strategies and operational plans. LASDI will further develop their skills in creating systems of assessments, analyzing school data, engaging communities, developing school leadership teams, and building financial resources to sustain improvements. (For a full list of LASDI activities, see Exhibit 6, Appendix H) In addition to the supports provided to teams through LASDI, LAUSD’s Innovations and Charters Division, along with UWGLA and UNITE-LA work with external organizations, such as the California Charter School Association and others, to assure that charter schools and other external providers receive the supports they need as plans are implemented.

Goal 3: Implement Accountability and Continuous Improvement Measures

In order to continuously enhance the public school choice process and ensure that school plans are effectively implemented and that school operators are accountable for their performance, the Initiative will create two parallel oversight systems: one will review the school choice process as a whole while the other will create and implement a new performance management framework applied to all LAUSD schools.

The first system will be led by the Superintendent in partnership with members of the L.A. Compact. This advisory body will meet annually to review and enhance the competition, resolve challenges to implementation, ensure transparency and accountability and galvanize additional resources to address a wide range of issues.

The second system – to be developed, implemented and refined by LAUSD with support from other members of the L.A. Compact – will enhance the way in which LAUSD manages and supports schools, and may include the development of a tiered accountability and support system to help differentiate the supports offered to schools along a continuum of those needing maximum support to those having demonstrated the capacity to accelerate student achievement. Implementation of selected plans and assessment of the results will be reviewed regularly by the Office of the Superintendent. Lack of success will trigger further actions, to be determined by the Superintendent, such as placing the schools back into the public school choice competition. The system may also include the adoption of a coordinated school quality review process and accountability walk-throughs as well as utilization of the School Report Card system, a new accountability system in LAUSD modeled after those in New York and other cities.

B. Strength of Research, Significance of Effect, and Magnitude of Effect

The Initiative is built on strategies and research that demonstrate the effectiveness of developing a wide “portfolio” of schools, in which school leaders, regardless of the governance model, have varying degrees of autonomy over budgeting, curriculum, staffing, and instructional programming. (See Exhibit 7, for the portfolio of schools chosen in PSC 1.0) Such autonomy builds on findings from decades of school reform efforts that range from the site-based management and comprehensive school reform efforts to individual choice models such as charter schools and vouchers (See Exhibit 8, Appendix H, for the LAUSD Portfolio of Schools Reform Model) The Initiative builds from these models and adapts them to LAUSD's unique and diverse context. The intended result is lasting school reform and systemic change.

Many reform models focus explicitly on variety and choice; however, increasingly policymakers and administrators are realizing the importance of context and environment in school reform thereby structuring their district turnaround strategies around the idea of "portfolios" of schools. Chicago, New Orleans, Washington DC, New York City, and Los Angeles have greatly expanded their options for school choice. These portfolio-based systems “allow school boards to customize schools to their students’ diverse needs within the framework of public education” (Hill, 2006, p. 2). The key features of a portfolio system include: public oversight and funding; the concentration of resources near the student; the strategic use of community resources; rewards for high performance; openness to promising ideas, people, and organizations; free movement of capital, students, and educators; and an environment of support for both new and existing schools. (Hill, 2006; Lake & Hill, 2009).

These portfolio options can be categorized by the amount of authority decentralized to a school site, the limitations on budgets and staffing imposed by district regulations, and the

degree to which the reform strategy leader is internal or external to the district. Internal approaches are situated within existing school district structures. The district operates the school, staff members are district employees, and collective bargaining agreements remain intact. In contrast, external partners gain authority over resources through a charter or contract with the district (Calkins, Guenther, Belfiore, & Lash, 2007).

LAUSD has already embraced a portfolio system of reform. Currently the district has 161 charter schools (150 independent and 11 affiliated) operating in the district, as well as 79 magnet schools, 18 partnership (iDesign) schools, and nine pilot schools. The Initiative makes this portfolio model more expansive by allowing applicants for both new campuses and traditional schools in Program Improvement to select the model from the portfolio that best meets the needs of their students, and to apply for the authority to administer that model. The process is structured to ensure that the lowest-performing schools and the most traditionally disadvantaged students benefit from increased autonomy and locally-situated innovations.

The Initiative is especially innovative because it allows both non-traditional and traditional operators to compete for control of schools, a practice rooted in research that demonstrates that change is most likely to result when a diverse set of organizations competes for school management contracts. Specifically, “a fundamental premise in public and private portfolio management is that optimal performance is unlikely to come from the same service providers that have been producing inadequate results” (Lake & Hill, 2009). By opening campuses to district employees, labor groups, charter organizations and non-profit groups, LAUSD is prioritizing student performance.

Over the past three decades, districts and states have used a variety of methods to turn around low-performing schools. Site-based management, based on the decentralization of authority, is

one of the earliest approaches to school reform. The model is centered on the principle that locally-determined student needs, rather than centrally-mandated rules, should dictate how schools operate. Some districts turned to a comprehensive school reform (CSR) strategy. The premise of CSR is that a school's structure, organization, curricula, and delivery of instruction need to be fundamentally altered and redefined by a detailed plan for school improvement. Another model is the pilot school. Pilot schools are grounded in the ideas of local autonomy, high levels of accountability, and small size. Schools are given autonomy over staffing, budget, curriculum, assessment, professional development, governance, and schedule. Teachers in pilot schools negotiate a "thin contract" and have the authority to hire and evaluate the principal (Center for Collaborative Education, 2006; UTLA, 2010). There are also two models that rely on external rather than internal lead reformers. The first of these is charter schools which rely on public money but are freed from some of the rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools in exchange for some type of accountability for producing certain results, set forth in each school's charter. The second is partnership schools which use intermediaries to develop diverse, and specific, programming options. Intermediaries help schools leverage external partners, internal networks, and promising practices determined by research in order to build school capacity (Foley et al., 2010). This portfolio of schools – site-based management, CSR, pilot schools, partnerships and charters, as well as small schools and career academies – will all be expanded through the Initiative.

Strategies that have failed to turn around underperforming schools have several elements in common. The design may be insufficient, lacking in comprehensiveness, integration with the existing context, or networking support. School capacity may be limited, with fragmented leadership training not specifically targeted to the successful development and implementation of

a plan for reform. Incentives to change may be inadequate; mandated compliance is not as strong as buy-in. Finally, the policy design may be confusing, underfunded, or lacking in political support (Calkins et al., 2007). The activities proposed by members of the L.A. Compact, through LAUSD's Innovations and Charters Division, LASDI and other support mechanisms address many of these elements by (1) providing support to internal and external applicants as they create their plans to ensure sufficient integration within the school system; (2) developing the leadership capacity of schools and supporting implementation; and (3) facilitating collaborative networks and empowering stakeholders to create, enhance and take ownership of their plans and their execution. The activities go beyond superficial or incremental efforts at school improvement and instead leverage both research and resources in order to create fundamental and lasting reform. More than simply providing cursory training to develop internal partners, these targeted actions are specifically designed to increase the capacity of local leaders in the development and implementation of the best models for school turnaround.

Preliminary Data.

While growth in school performance in PSC 1.0 cannot yet be measured, positive student growth indicators from reform efforts that Public School Choice has mimicked and expanded upon can be briefly examined. One example is Hollywood High School. The school was on a multi-track schedule, but after completion of a new neighborhood high school, it went to a traditional calendar with a clear instructional plan and grew its API score by 89 point in a single year. Another example is the Belmont Zone of Choice. Over the past 5 years new buildings and small school conversions have led to significant student gains for students, including a 78 point jump in API score in Belmont High School last year.

C. Experience of the Eligible Applicant

The L.A. Compact document – a summary of which is included in Exhibit A, Appendix H – consists of goals, strategies and specific measurements that allow the community at large to track progress and success and carve out specific commitments of the partnering organizations involved. The L.A. Compact Signatories and Partners are a coalition of diverse civic, business, labor and education leaders committed to using their resources to systematically reform Los Angeles' public schools and collectively lead and support the work of LAUSD [the Lead Applicant].

The L.A. Compact addresses a number of high-profile issues, including further decentralization and more local school site control, increased accountability, leadership development at all levels, and revamping the evaluation process for district, administrators and teachers, among many others.

Modeled after the Boston Compact signed nearly 30 years ago, the agreement describes the pooling of the resources of signatories and partners with a focus on helping to fund programs at schools, like enrichment courses and internship opportunities, and meaningful research on education reform. The Boston Compact has produced notable academic gains, including increasing the college attendance rate from 50 percent in 1985 to 78 percent in 2007.

LAUSD (Lead Applicant). Through the hard work of students, teachers, administrators and district partners, LAUSD has made significant strides in raising student achievement in recent years. In 2009, LAUSD raised its API scores by double digits (11 percent). In addition, six Title 1 schools exited Program Improvement status, and another 48 who made AYP in 2009 will be eligible to exit Program Improvement if targets are met again in 2010. LAUSD has also met the AYP graduation rate criterion with an increase of 5.1%. The AYP graduation criterion requires an 83.1% graduation rate, or +0.1% one-year change, or +0.2% two-year average. (See Exhibit 9,

Appendix H for achievement gains in LAUSD) Twenty-seven elementary schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) have been honored as 2010 California Distinguished Schools by the California Department of Education. This award recognizes exemplary instructional programs and academic excellence.

In addition to the success of launching, managing and implementing the first public school choice initiative last year, as Superintendent of Los Angeles Public Schools, Ramon Cortines has led a number of key initiatives that demonstrate the district's capacity to implement critical reforms and programs. For instance, the Belmont Zone of Choice (BZC), a network of pilot schools patterned after the Boston Pilot Schools, has been a local, state and national success. It has helped to demonstrate how the district could collaborate with the community and open new schools, and turn around failing schools. LAUSD is now in the process of replicating pilot schools across the district as a result of the success in Belmont. LAUSD has further raised the bar by: (1) adopting rigorous course requirements (A-G) and aligning its assessments to ensure that all students have access to college and careers; (2) building and using a data system to improve student achievement and establishing an accountability system for schools; (3) utilizing multiple data measures to provide targeted professional development to teachers; (4) working with UTLA to develop alternative compensation systems that help it retain teachers; (5) taking aggressive steps to address the needs of the lowest performing schools by establishing a Charter and Innovation Division; and (6) planning the creation of an Educational Excellence cluster that would have the lowest performing schools report directly to the Office of the Superintendent.

LAUSD will leverage the organizational strengths of two official partners – and signatories of the L.A. Compact – to implement and support the Initiative: UNITE-LA and the United Way of Greater Los Angeles. In addition, an external evaluation of the project by the University of

Southern California's Rossier School of Education, in consultation with RAND, will ensure an independent and practice-oriented evaluation to inform a further scale up phase. Each organization's qualifications as an official nonprofit partner are described below.

UNITE-LA (Official Partner). Since 1998, UNITE-LA, the School-to-Career Collaborative for Los Angeles, and an affiliate of the L.A. Chamber, has led education reform and workforce development initiatives designed to benefit the Los Angeles Unified School District. UNITE-LA played a critical role in the formation of the L.A. Compact, building consensus between diverse stakeholders and anchoring the strategies and goals in the agreement in clear, realistic benchmarks and annual progress indicators. UNITE-LA is committed to achieving a high-quality public education system in Los Angeles that raises student achievement, improves education attainment, and ensures that students have access to education and training opportunities that prepare them for high-skill, high-wage employment in a fulfilling career of choice.

Working with its extensive network of collaborators and partners, UNITE-LA provides direct services to more than 30,000 students, teachers, administrators and parents; advocates for an effective and aligned education and workforce delivery system from pre-school through college; and cultivates businesses and corporate leaders as education advocates and connects them to schools through formal partnerships.

United Way of Greater Los Angeles (Official Partner). In its strategic goal to increase the high school graduation rate in Los Angeles to 75%, United Way of Greater Los Angeles – one of the oldest and largest charities in L.A. – has made improving educational achievement one of its highest priorities. With its deep community roots in Los Angeles, United Way has brought about changes in education in ways that build trust and establish ties between community leaders, businesses, organizations, and individuals, including its leadership role in the L.A. Compact.

The agency has conducted extensive research on educational achievement in Los Angeles, including an influential report on middle schools published in 2008, called “Seizing the Middle Ground.” UWGLA has invested heavily in data-driven direct service programs that have helped to raise student achievement. For example, it has partnered with the California League of Middle Schools on a principal leadership program that sets the standard for teachers, engages parents and impacts student performance. To date, 15 principals have graduated-ed from the program, directly impacting almost 900 teachers and 16,400 students. United Way of Greater Los Angeles has also reached more than 3,000 parents in school leadership programs designed to enhance the capacity of principals in high-needs L.A. schools. As another example, with its after-school partner, United Way has helped almost 35,000 students and their parents integrate college and career planning and connect them to programs to raise academic achievement.

USC Rossier School of Education (Official Partner). The University of Southern California (USC) is one of the premier research institutions in the United States. USC has garnered international prestige and respect for its academic programming, research, community engagement, and the high caliber of its faculty and students. The university has raised over \$508 million annually for research and is rapidly expanding its research through a strategy that emphasizes collaboration across multiple disciplines.

For the past century, USC’s Rossier School of Education has developed and prepared professional leaders in the field of education and research, including teachers and superintendents, administrative professionals, policy leaders, and scholars. The four thriving research centers at Rossier are the epitome of the synergy between academic research theory and praxis. The Center on Educational Governance (CEG), the Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis (CHEPA), the Center for Cognitive Technology (CCT), and the Center for Urban

Education (CUE) are leading the field in studying effective and non-effective strategies for high-need student populations with special focus on urban low-income students of color. Through direct community engagement, the research that Rossier has produced continues to impact and improve school conditions for urban populations both locally and more broadly. The work of the centers looks to directly improve outcomes for learners. In addition, the School's Center for Outcomes Research and Evaluation (CORE), often with collaborative partners, engages in outcomes-based academic and evaluative studies for government and other clients.

D. Quality of the Project Evaluation

The evaluation, lead by USC researchers, Katharine Strunk, Julie Marsh, and Dominic Brewer (See Resumes in Appendix C), in consultation with RAND, will provide ongoing formative feedback and systematic evidence about the implementation and its effects over time. Researchers will use quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the following research questions: (1) How are the activities being implemented over time?; (2) What are intermediate outcomes of these activities?; and (3) What are the longer-term outcomes of the Initiative?

For the first question, researchers will use a combination of methods illustrated in Exhibit 10, Appendix H. These methods will collect data on the nature, quality, and perceived usefulness of the activities implemented over the three phases annually. In analyzing the data, researchers will examine the extent of the fidelity of implementation of initial plans developed by L.A. Compact and the extent these activities meet the needs of teams during project phases.

To gain a more holistic understanding of the application, selection, and support processes, the team will conduct case studies of 5 schools targeted for PSC 2.0 (Year 1, 2, and 3) and 5 schools targeted for PSC 3.0 (Year 2 and 3). Each sample of five schools will include two elementary, two middle, and one high school, and schools for which internal and external teams are

submitting plans. Researchers will interview a range of stakeholders and observe meetings to understand the school context, goals, and turnaround plans; their participation in support activities; and extent to which these activities meet their needs, and contribute to the development and implementation of quality plans over time.

To answer the second research question, the team will utilize qualitative and quantitative methods to track key indicators of intermediate outcomes over time. These include:

- Number and types of teams applying to compete for schools (analysis of records)
- Level of parent/guardian awareness of choices (focus groups, LAUSD surveys)
- New LAUSD policies supporting the Initiative (analysis of documents, interviews)
- Quality of plans submitted (document analysis tied to rubrics, comparisons of cohorts)
- Quality of school programs and implementation of plans (school surveys Years 2 and 3)
- Quality of accountability and monitoring structures (document analysis, school surveys, interviews)

To assess the extent of improved quality of plans and implementation over time, the research team will develop rubrics to specify indicators of quality, based in part on the Initiative's established rubrics and research on best practices in key domains. These rubrics will guide both the analyses of plans submitted and implementation in the early years. Implementation will be measured by surveys administered to leaders in PSC 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0 schools and compared to other low-performing schools with supporting qualitative data from the case studies.

Based on this design, the evaluation team will track and evaluate the process and implementation of the specific activities funded by the i3 Fund and matching grants. A second set of broader research activities will seek to understand the success of the broader Initiative in improving longer-term outcomes, including achievement and school climate indicators.

The implementation of the Initiative provides the research team with the ability to engage in four separate quasi-experiments to answer the third research question. The team will compare "treatment" schools (those schools that were part of the Initiative's-turnaround reform) to five different control groups based on onset of treatment, treatment status (treated vs. non-treated), year of treatment (PSC 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0), intensity of treatment (high, medium and low), and provider type (external vs. internal). The evaluation will focus on the following outcomes, intended to capture student success and important school-level factors: (1) individual student achievement (CST scores, year-by-year growth in CST scores); (2) the distribution of student achievement within schools (range of CST scores, subgroup scores); (3) school achievement scores (aggregate CST level, growth scores and API scores); (4) high school graduation rates; (5) college matriculation rates (two- and four-year California colleges and universities); (6) student attendance; (7) student retention rates; (8) measures of student discipline and behavior; (9) measures of the school environment; (10) teacher retention/mobility rates; (11) parent engagement; and (12) teacher absences.

Onset of Treatment. To answer the question of whether or not involvement in the Initiative impacted student, parent and teacher outcomes, the evaluation will use an interrupted time series design to study the impacts of school turnaround under the Initiative on student achievement, teacher retention and other key indicators of performance. Specifically, the evaluation will examine the various outcomes pre- and post-treatment, exploiting the policy shift in each school.

Treatment Status. The Initiative targets schools in Program Improvement year three or higher. Specific schools are selected to participate in each cohort based on a specific algorithm to be determined by LAUSD prior to the project start date. Schools that fall above an imposed cutpoint are selected for inclusion in the turnaround initiative, while schools that fall below the

cutpoint are not included in a given cohort. The evaluation team will exploit this exogenous cutpoint and compare the schools that received the "treatment" to those that almost qualified for treatment but fell just below the cutpoint. For each cohort, the evaluation team will compare progress of the treated schools to the non-treated schools along the multiple outcomes outlined above, and, if feasible, will use a regression discontinuity design estimating that impact of treatment on student outcomes in schools just above and below the cutpoint.

Year of Treatment. As is shown in Figure 1, below, LAUSD has strategically implemented the PSCI in phases across multiple years. This enables researchers to utilize the time variation in implementation to compare cohorts of schools subject to the reform to each other and to track how the reform itself evolves over time. The PSC 1.0 schools, which were not given full access to the support activities outlined in the proposal, will serve as a control group. Schools in PSC 2.0 and 3.0, which will have access to enhanced supports, will be compared against each other and the PSC1.0 schools.

Figure 1.

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Cohort 1.0	Selected	Year 1 Turnaround	Year 2 Turnaround	Year 3 Turnaround
Cohort 2.0		Selected	Year 1 Turnaround	Year 2 Turnaround
Cohort 3.0			Selected	Year 1 Turnaround
Cohort 4.0				Selected

In addition, this design allows the evaluators to examine the uptake-speed of the reform, providing information about how quickly achievement and other outcomes follow the implementation.

Intensity of Treatment. This analysis will answer the question: "Do school teams that take greater advantage of available services have better student- and school-level outcomes once

selected?" The evaluation team will exploit the different degrees to which applicant teams take advantage of the services made available through the i3 and matching funds. The evaluation will group schools from PSC 2.0 and 3.0 into "high," "medium" and "low" intensity groups dependent on the extent of services provided to them, and will then compare the outcomes of students and schools in each group.

Provider Type. A key element to the Initiative is the ability for both internal and external providers to apply to turnaround low-performing schools. Because of the different levels of autonomy granted to external versus internal providers, it will be important to answer the question. The research team will compare focus schools operated by external and internal providers. These analyses will include measures of differential supports given to the two types of teams in the application and implementation phases.

Reporting. All findings from the evaluation will be disseminated through reports to stakeholders and in participating treatment and control schools, as well as, through subsequent peer-reviewed journal articles based on subsequent findings. In addition, at the end of each year, the evaluation team will provide any external assessment data to the project implementation team as required by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. This data will include data that indicates the Initiative's progress in reducing inequities in the distribution of highly qualified teachers, implementing a longitudinal data system, and developing and implementing valid and reliable assessments for English language learners and students with disabilities.

E. Strategy and Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale

Member organizations of the L.A. Compact are fully committed to further developing and scaling the effort in LAUSD across the district and to provide prevention-oriented strategies before schools reach Program Improvement year 3 status. As detailed further in Section G,

LAUSD Superintendent Ramon Cortines has brought in a team of experts – many of them with experience in other school transformation efforts – to manage the project and further develop, enhance and scale up the Initiative. In addition, UTLA and AALA – the largest education-related labor organizations in the County each of whom have been vital partners in providing support and success to internal applicant teams – have reached agreement with LAUSD on the process (See Letter of Support in Appendix D). Other partners, including the California Charter School Association, will encourage and bring resources to applicant charter organizations (See Letter of Support in Appendix D).

Along with LAUSD, the United Way of Greater Los Angeles, UNITE-LA and Other Partners – including the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, UTLA, AALA and the City of Los Angeles – have begun a concerted campaign to secure private funding and additional commitments. Among them are financial commitments from the Walton Foundation, the Wasserman Foundation and tentative support from the American Federation of Teachers, and the Ford Foundation to support LASDI. (Previous financial support for the efforts has been generously provided by the Ford Foundation and the California Community Foundation.)

By the end of the three-year grant period, following the in-depth assessment by external evaluator USC and simultaneous improvement processes conducted by the district in partnership with the L.A. Compact, the project will have produced a detailed roadmap for other school districts in their school transformation efforts. Over the grant period, it is estimated that as many as 36 low-performing focus school (8-12 schools per year) and 30 new relief schools will go through the public school choice process impacting over 60,000 students. In the longer term, over 260 persistently low-performing schools or 300,000 students will be affected.

Cost Estimates. The Initiative is a \$6 million, 3-year effort. On a per student basis, this will cost approximately \$100 per child impacted. Because the effort was created to make longer-term, sustainable changes for the entire district, this per unit cost will diminish over time. Start-up costs are estimated to be approximately 6% of the total budget, with the remaining operating costs of 94%. Therefore, once developed, it is estimated that the cost to reach 100,000 is \$9,400,000; the cost to reach 250,000 is \$23,500,000 and the cost to reach 500,000 students is \$47,000,000.

Dissemination Strategy. The Los Angeles Educational Research Consortium, supported by the L.A. Compact and its convener, UNITE-LA/Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, will leverage the expertise of higher education researchers in the community to provide systematic evidence that will inform district decision making and teachers' and administrators' work through a collaborative community of practice. The work (modeled after similar consortia in Chicago and New York) of the Consortium, will enhance the coherence and rigor of educational research being conducted in LAUSD, translate results into usable knowledge, and in collaboration with external researchers of the Initiative, provide the public with independent and digestible information on the public school choice process.

F. Sustainability

The L.A. Compact was designed specifically to create *sustainable* improvements and systematic reforms to Los Angeles' most pressing educational challenges. The L.A. Compact comprehensively examines 21st century educational problems – from micro-level processes in the classroom to macro-level policy levers at the federal, state and county levels – and builds support and collaborative agreements around bold initiatives that will improve transparency, accountability, school performance and student learning.

In the proposed transformation project, each partner (both official and other) will have a role to ensure sustainability. Unions and collective bargaining units – including AALA, UTLA, and the AFL-CIO – will provide guidance and support to ensure high-quality and competitive proposals are offered from internal applicant teams, mobilize membership to fully engage in the choice process and seek private funding to support internal applicants beyond the grant period.

Both the United Way of Greater Los Angeles and UNITE-LA will lead the way in organizing support from both private business and charities and provide LAUSD and its new relief schools and low-performing schools with valuable insight into the political, practical, and procedural realities needed to succeed. The City of Los Angeles is also a critical partner in the project, helping to align the city's concerted efforts to raise education and achievement, including the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools (the mayor's schools). Institutions of higher learning will help to support applicants through LASDI and serve as important members of the Superintendent's review panel to provide recommendations regarding school operations.

As part of our sustainability efforts, key representatives from UNITE-LA, UWGLA, LAUSD, and the Office of Mayor Villaraigosa, will further continue to meet as the L.A. Compact Development Strategy Work Team, responsible for coordinating individual organization fundraising plans, developing and implementing collaborative grantseeking efforts, and leveraging opportunities (e.g., grantmaker conferences, etc.) to organize local and national philanthropy around L.A. education reform initiatives.

G. Management Plan and Personnel

To accomplish the three primary components of the project – enhancement of the public school choice process, implementation support of instructional plans of selected teams, and

implementation of accountability and continuous improvement practices – the management plan will consist of building internal infrastructure and oversight capacity of LAUSD, gathering external support and engaging community members through outreach and education, developing support mechanisms for applicants and selected operators, and convening a review panel of L.A. Compact members to ensure continuous improvement and sustained activities. A timeline of key activities and associated roles for each organization is detailed in Exhibit 11, Appendix H. (Also See Resumes of the Initiative's leaders in Appendix C).

The Initiative will build the internal infrastructure and oversight capacity needed at LAUSD to promote and manage the process. This will include shifting control for Public School Choice from the Office of the Superintendent to the Innovation and Charter Schools Division and augmenting program and administrative staff in LAUSD to better manage, implement and oversee the process. In coordination with the staff of the Superintendent's office, the Innovation and Charter Schools Division will be responsible for: (1) identifying focus schools; (2) developing and disseminating information related to the choice process; and (3) analyzing data and helping to coordinate district support and school-level implementation. The effort will be led by Ramon Cortines, Superintendent of Schools at LAUSD, an experienced leader and practitioner with the assistance of Matt Hill, who manages strategic initiatives for Mr. Cortines. Mr. Hill will serve as an advisor to Mr. Cortines on the process, liaise with L.A. Compact partners, align district resources around the Initiative and support fundraising efforts. In addition, key personnel from the Innovation and Charter Schools Division, led by Parker Hudnut, and iDesign, led by Monique Epps will oversee and manage the effort. Mr. Hudnut will be responsible for supporting and holding accountable the portfolio of schools within LAUSD, while Ms. will lead a team of professionals in the day-to-day management of competition and

process, including disseminating information to school teams, reviewing plans, coordinating outreach and voting ensuring effective implementation. In addition, Rachel Bonkovosky, Program and Policy Development Advisor, will look for ways to leverage school improvement and best practices from the Initiative to the district-wide and bring such improvements and practices into the Initiative.

The Initiative will further develop and add resources and supports for eligible applicants as well as selected schools through the Los Angeles School Development Institute (LASDI), managed by UNITE-LA, and led by representatives of UTLA, AALA, and LAUSD. LASDI will provide training workshops, and webinars around: new instructional models and pedagogical practices; strategies for raising new sources of revenue; approaches for developing strategic, operational and school-based plans; and practice-oriented tactics for effectively implementing those plans if they are approved. In addition, LASDI will connect applicants and schools with consultants who can fulfill a variety of individualized and school-based needs.

Because the Initiative recognizes the importance of family and community involvement in student achievement, it seeks to develop new strategies to engage parents and the community in developing proposals that can turn around low-performing schools and educate parents and community members about the process to get them involved before they are designated for they are placed in the public school choice process. Alicia Lara, Vice President of Community Investment at UWGLA, will be responsible for overseeing all of the efforts of United Way of Greater Los Angeles in its outreach and community organizing efforts, including supporting LAUSD in the voting process, and will seek to raise additional capital for the transformation effort through a variety of businesses and private foundations.

A number of targeted strategies will also be pursued through the L.A. Compact to ensure the robust engagement of civic and community leaders and businesses and to encourage a broad selection of applications from both internal and external providers. David Rattray, President of UNITE-LA, the convener of the L.A. Compact, will lead this aspect of the Initiative, leverage the organizational strengths of the L.A. Chamber of Commerce and help to ensure that all parties, including organized labor, charter schools and other possible providers are active and committed to participate in the Initiative.