



DEMOCRACY PREP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*APPLICATION FOR GRANT UNDER THE 2016 CSP
REPLICATION AND EXPANSION OF HIGH-QUALITY
CHARTER SCHOOLS COMPETITION (CMO)*

PROJECT NARRATIVE

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I. APPLICATION PRIORITIES

A. ABSOLUTE PRIORITIES

1. ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 1 – EXPERIENCE OPERATING HIGH QUALITY CHARTER SCHOOLS

Democracy Prep Charter School (“DPCS”), the flagship school in the Democracy Prep Public Schools (“DPPS” or “Democracy Prep”) network, opened in Harlem in 2006. Within three years, DPCS had become the top middle school and the top charter school in New York City on the Department of Education’s Progress Report. Based largely on the success of the DPCS model, which was subjected to rigorous empirical scrutiny by economists at Harvard EdLabs, DPPS received a CSP Grant in 2012. That award catalyzed the growth of our network, allowing us to open thousands of seats in additional high-need communities across the country.

In 2015-16, DPPS operated 17 high-performing schools under eight charters across a network that encompasses Harlem and the Bronx in New York; Camden, NJ; Washington, DC; and Baton Rouge, LA. DPPS continues to prove that all students, regardless of their zip code, can perform at high academic levels and can become active and informed citizens in their communities. A second experimental evaluation, conducted after our enrollment had multiplied “by a factor of 20,” found the impact of attending a DPPS school on ELA achievement to be six times larger than the impact of attending a comparable New York City charter school. *See Appendix E for a list of DPPS schools, Section II.A.5 and Appendix F for further data on student achievement, and Appendix H for the independent experimental evaluations of the DPPS model.*

2. ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 2 – LOW-INCOME DEMOGRAPHIC

DPPS seeks to provide an excellent education to all students, particularly those from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. Our schools are exclusively located in low-income neighborhoods. Network-wide, 85.4% of students qualify for Free or Reduced Price Lunch.

B. COMPETITIVE PRIORITIES

1. COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 1(B) – SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

School turnarounds continue to play an increasingly prominent role in Democracy Prep’s efforts to intensify our impact. Although strict accountability measures for public schools that consistently fail to provide excellent educational opportunities for children are often warranted, consigning entire schools’ worth of children to the surrounding neighborhood schools they had previously elected not to attend remains an unattractive alternative. Since spearheading New York’s first charter-to-charter turnaround effort in 2011, successfully transforming Harlem Day into Harlem Prep, DPPS has continued to undertake turnaround projects other charter operators avoid. DPPS has since been selected by a succession of charter school authorizers and boards of trustees to manage turnarounds in the South Bronx, Camden, and Anacostia. Most recently, Democracy Prep was approved to use School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding to restart Prescott Middle School as Democracy Prep Baton Rouge. The project plan included in this grant application contemplates potential turnaround options in an array of high-need communities, and we are seeking to work with schools that are SIG eligible whenever possible.

2. COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 2 – PROMOTING DIVERSITY

DPPS actively recruits students from diverse backgrounds to attend our schools. In particular, we enroll a large number of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and students with learning disabilities. As a result, 81% of our current students in New York qualify for FRPL compared to 54% across New York State.¹ With the 2015 launch of Democracy Prep Pathways, an intensive transitional sixth-grade program for students with severe learning disabilities, DPPS continues to demonstrate our commitment to *all* students.

¹ data.NYSED.gov

To successfully enroll an increasingly diverse student population, DPPS has begun conducting more targeted outreach to non-native English speakers. Such efforts include offering applications, informational materials, and Student and Family Handbooks in multiple languages; providing assistance with applications; and employing parent canvassers who are bi- or tri-lingual to ensure all children are actively encouraged to apply to our randomized entry lotteries.

Nevertheless, while we recruit students from all backgrounds, DPPS schools draw from applicant pools that are primarily Black and Latino. Accordingly, we offer a range of extracurricular activities and have developed a curriculum that embraces diversity and cultural exploration. Notably, our schools are infused with Korean values and cultural activities, featuring a strong Korean language program at the high school level and showcasing dance, Tae Kwon Do, poetry, and instrumentation in lower grades. Additionally, students have annual opportunities to travel internationally, starting with Canada in eighth grade and progressing through trips to Rome, Ecuador, South Korea, and South Africa. DPPS students have the opportunity to travel on five continents, providing them ample opportunities to experience global diversity and to live the network’s motto: “Work Hard. Go to College. Change the World!”

C. INVITATIONAL PRIORITY — RIGOROUS EVALUATION

DPPS is committed to working with leading experts in educational evaluation to quantify our impact, rigorously evaluate our practices, and identify opportunities for improvement. DPPS recently contracted with an external evaluator to conduct an independent, lottery-based evaluation of our impact on student achievement and other student outcomes. The study was led by Dr. Sean P. Corcoran and Dr. Sarah Cordes, and built upon an earlier 2012 analysis by Dr. Will Dobbie (then at the Harvard EdLabs, now Assistant Professor of Economics and Public Affairs at Princeton University). DPPS has included in this application letters of support from

Mathematica Policy Research, an organization with deep expertise in conducting experimental impact analyses in education, and from Dr. Corcoran at the Institute for Education and Social Policy at New York University, indicating their willingness to work with DPPS in designing objective evaluations for this CSP application cycle, outlined in greater detail in *Section II.E*.

II. RESPONSES TO SELECTION CRITERIA

A. QUALITY OF THE ELIGIBLE APPLICANT

1. NETWORK OVERVIEW

The mission of Democracy Prep is to educate responsible citizen-scholars for success in the college of their choice and a life of active citizenship. DPPS has established a national reputation for producing breakthrough academic results for students historically deprived of access to quality educational opportunities. In our first decade, DPPS has grown from a handful of Harlem classrooms to a network educating nearly 5,000 students in four states. In that time, we have not only maintained our quality of programming and our commitment to serving *all* students regardless of socioeconomic status, special education classification, or the academic level at which they enter our schools, we have become both *more* effective and *more* inclusive.

As seen in Figure 1, the animating impulse behind Democracy Prep’s growth as a network has been to cluster high-performing schools in those neighborhoods most urgently in need of quality alternatives to the status quo both by creating new schools and turning around failed ones. Not only are Democracy Prep’s schools overwhelmingly composed of the student populations described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (collectively, “ESEA subgroups”), they are located in communities afflicted with some of the nation’s most stark achievement gaps.

Figure 1: Democracy Prep Public Schools 2015-16 Network Profile

Turnaround schools denoted by yellow shading

	Democracy Prep Charter School	Democracy Prep Harlem	Harlem Prep ²	Democracy Prep Endurance	Freedom Prep	Bronx Prep	Democracy Prep Congress Heights	Democracy Prep Baton Rouge ³
Location	Harlem, NY	Harlem, NY	Harlem, NY	Harlem, NY	Camden, NJ	Bronx, NY	Washington, DC	Baton Rouge, LA
Year Founded	2006	2010	2011	2012	2012	2014	2014	2015
Grade Levels Served	6-12	K-2, 6-11	K-8	6-9	K-10	6-12	PreK-6	K, 6
Total Enrollment	722	816	691	440	847	709	582	132
FRPL	77%	79%	89%	87%	93%	84%	100%	96%
SPED	18%	17%	20%	22%	14%	14%	15%	12%
Black / Latino	97%	97%	97%	99%	98%	98%	98%	99%

In New York City, 90 schools serving student populations similar to those being educated by DPPS schools in Harlem and the South Bronx failed to prepare a single Black or Latino student to pass the 2014 state exam in ELA or Math.⁴ Camden is the lowest performing school district in New Jersey and the city in which 14 of the state’s 21 lowest performing schools are located.⁵ In 2013, only *three Camden students* who sat for the SAT scored at a “college-ready”

² Three of these schools — Bronx Prep (2000), Harlem Prep (2001), and Freedom Prep (2004) — were originally chartered under different management before engaging DPPS as a turnaround provider in response to dramatic declines in student learning outcomes. Democracy Prep Congress Heights is a turnaround of Imagine Southeast Public Charter School, which relinquished its charter, dissolved its corporate existence, and transferred its assets in 2014.

³ DPBR received SIG funding to conduct a restart of Prescott Middle School.

⁴ Families for Excellent Schools, *A Tale of Two Schools* (2014), available at http://www.familiesforexcellentschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Tale_of_Two_Schools_V4.pdf.

⁵ New Jersey State Board of Education, Monthly Meeting Agenda (Jan. 2014), available at <http://www.state.nj.us/cgi-bin/education/sboe/sboe.pl?y=2014&m=January&t=public>.

level.⁶ In Southeast Washington, D.C., students in Ward 8 exhibited the lowest levels of reading and Math proficiency on their 2014 DC CAS exams,⁷ and are the least likely in the District to graduate from high school.⁸ Democracy Prep’s Baton Rouge facility falls within the Baton Rouge Achievement Zone, a special district established as a partnership between the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board and the Louisiana Recovery School District to transform the district’s lowest performing schools.⁹

In these disparate settings, serving these high-need student populations, DPPS has unequivocally demonstrated that *demographics do not determine destiny*. Two independent experimental evaluations of Democracy Prep’s innovative model have found the causal impact of attending a DPPS school on student achievement to be “enormous”¹⁰ and “large by any standard in education research.”¹¹ These outcomes are particularly striking given that lottery data reveal Democracy Prep applicants and admitted students to be disproportionately likely to be

⁶ Associated Press, *Only 3 students scored college-ready in Camden* (Dec. 18, 2013).

⁷ OpenData DC, *DC CAS Results by Ward*. <http://www.opendatadc.org/dataset/dc-cas-results-by-ward/resource/67e9b94e-9f7e-4bdf-a5ff-743b56d627f8>.

⁸ Office of the State Superintendent of Education, *DC State Education Fact Sheet*, available at <https://sled.osse.dc.gov/Pages/SLED%20Pages/Reports.aspx>.

⁹ Sheila V. Kumar, Recovery School District launches Baton Rouge Achievement Zone Advisory Board, *New Orleans Times-Picayune* (March 8, 2013).

¹⁰ Will Dobbie, *The Impact of the Democracy Prep Public Schools*, HARVARD UNIVERSITY EDLABS (Feb. 2012) (hereinafter, “Dobbie”).

¹¹ Sean P. Corcoran and Sarah A. Cordes, *The Continuing Impact of Democracy Prep Public Schools: Preliminary Report*, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY (July 2015) (hereinafter, “Corcoran”).

economically disadvantaged, classified with learning disabilities, limited English proficient, or foreign-born relative to those attending public school alternatives.¹² Moreover, incoming DPPS students are “substantially lower achieving at baseline than those attending other traditional or charter schools,”¹³ indicating that DPPS is not only attempting to reach high-need students, but in fact serving them in high numbers and significantly improving their achievement.¹⁴

2. EDUCATIONAL MODEL

In building schools designed to rival the best in the country, DPPS has maintained unwaveringly high expectations. DPPS schools feature seven common elements:



(1) *Rigorous college-prep academics.* Democracy Prep operates academically rigorous, college preparatory campuses. Low-income children, often not as fully exposed as their more affluent peers to a broad and deep array of topics, can

enter school at a disadvantage: their weak subject-matter knowledge leaves them less prepared to assimilate new information. DPPS’s content-rich curriculum provides the basic knowledge that makes low-income students more effective learners later in their academic careers.



(2) *More time to learn.* By lengthening the school day and calendar year, DPPS provides extended literacy and math instructional blocks while building content-rich courses in music, speech, debate, art, physical education, design, and

Korean into the regular academic program. The school year includes approximately 190 days of

¹² *Id.* at 13.

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ Corcoran’s finding echoes Dobbie’s assertion that the demographics of DPPS’s lottery applicants demonstrate that, “at least compared to many other urban charter schools, Democracy Prep is not ‘cream-skimming’ the best students from traditional public schools.” *Dobbie* at 3.

instruction, and students in need of additional individual support or required remediation receive after-dismissal tutoring and attend school on additional Saturdays.



(3) *Data-driven decision-making.* DPPS relies on a sophisticated feedback loop of frequent data collection and analysis including a network-wide dashboard tool, interim assessments, and comparative academic measures to drive effective instruction at the student, class, teacher, grade, school, and network levels. DPPS utilizes student-level data (including nationally normed assessments and individually administered reading inventories) to inform all decisions around instruction, staffing, and spending.



(4) *Safe and supportive school culture.* Democracy Prep is founded on the belief that a safe, structured, and supportive school community is essential to ensure dramatic academic gains for all students. School culture is based on the “DREAM Values”: Discipline, Respect, Enthusiasm, Accountability, and Maturity. DPPS focuses relentlessly on school culture and maintains high expectations, not just for our students, but also for the adults charged with creating and maintaining high standards.



(5) *Exemplary talent.* Democracy Prep has an extremely selective staff application process. Lead teachers receive a base salary that exceeds the local scale and are eligible for performance-based raises and benefits designed to incentivize excellence and longevity. All staff members receive weekly professional development (PD) during the school year and are afforded ample opportunities for growth.



(6) *Educating all students, in all subjects, in all grades.* DPPS actively recruits

districts. Special Education students and ELL students (i.e. students supported by DPPS’s



(7) *Authentic civic leadership and engagement.* Unique among its peers, DPPS

3. CURRICULUM & EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Democracy Prep’s academic program is rooted in research-proven curricula that have been shown to accelerate progress to mastery for low-income students, including those with disabilities and English-language deficits. Our curriculum is based on an accelerated introduction to the Common Core State Standards or their equivalent. The core academic program provides more time, and frequent evaluations ensure that teachers and families know exactly where each student stands and what each student needs to do to make progress.

Focus on Literacy. Literacy is the key academic skill on which all future skill and knowledge acquisition is predicated; to build reading comprehension, students need a deep knowledge base in order to apply skills such as inferring and drawing conclusions. Although DPPS middle schools have repeatedly demonstrated that it is possible for students to overcome these deficits, doing so requires tremendous academic remediation. Facets of our academic

program that closely reflect the findings of the National Reading Panel include dedicating significant time to teaching reading and writing, explicitly teaching phonics and comprehension strategies, and fostering fluency through extensive practice reading and writing.

Research-Proven Curricula. Democracy Prep instruction is based on the fundamentals of education outlined by E.D. Hirsch in his Core Knowledge series using highly effective, research-based curricula. Teachers use clear, direct instruction to explicitly teach what students are expected to know at all grade levels, and in turn, students are given opportunities to demonstrate mastery of all content and skills learned. The DPPS math curriculum is designed to help students recognize that they need basic factual knowledge and “automaticity” with procedural computation, coupled with a deep conceptual understanding of mathematics, in order to solve complex mathematical application problems. In social studies, science, music, and art, teachers rely on a content-rich curriculum of basic subject-area and cultural knowledge.

DPPS uses six-week interim assessment cycles to assess student mastery. Following each assessment, teachers analyze student performance data, identify which standards are causing the most difficulty, and create six-week “reteach” plans to address these deficiencies in conjunction with the preexisting scope and sequence for that time period. Additionally, teachers use interim assessment data to create tutoring groups and to help determine which students receive push-in assistance from instructional support personnel during class periods.

Civics. DPPS staunchly believes in principles that have been central to public education since the establishment of the first public schools: that American democracy cannot endure without an educated citizenry; that all students deserve to become informed and proud participants in American self-government; and that every generation must prepare the next to understand, protect, and perfect the institutions of American freedom.

Consequently, DPPS cultivates civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions in our students. By strategically infusing history content into our reading curriculum, incorporating Socratic seminars, oral presentations, and group discussions into our syllabi, and thoughtfully reducing the amount of teacher talk-time in classrooms, we work to develop poised public speakers who not only *can* lobby their elected officials, delivery oral testimony on the record at public hearings, and participate in Get Out The Vote campaigns, but in fact *must* do so in order to receive a Democracy Prep diploma. Additionally, we require each of our high school seniors to pass the civics portion of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services Naturalization Test with a minimum score of 83% prior to graduation, and high school students must complete a capstone Change the World Project through which they research and design a year-long intervention to address an issue about which they are passionate.

Korean. DPPS high school students receive four years of Korean language instruction. In addition to Korean being a challenging discipline that allows students to build confidence by going outside of their comfort zones and succeeding in a difficult endeavor, mastery of Korean language is a unique skill that distinguishes DPPS alumni in the college applicant pool. Since all ninth graders enter with no prior experience, students who may lag behind grade-level in other content areas often excel in Korean as the course material does not require them to overcome knowledge and skill gaps that have compounded throughout elementary and middle school.

Speech and Debate. Democracy Prep’s heralded Speech and Debate program has received international acclaim.¹⁵ Among the accolades compiled by our students at invitational competitions across the country are a first-place finish by t

¹⁵ See, e.g., The Guardian, *From the Bronx to Yale: the Power of “Speech”*, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/news/video/2016/jan/18/speech-bronx-yale-high-school-video>.

the Duo Interpretation Competition at the 2015 National Speech & Debate Tournament in Dallas,

The Speech and Debate

program was a signature feature of Bronx Prep’s model that DPPS not only preserved after being engaged as a turnaround provider in 2014 but amplified and expanded across network schools.

Arts. Democracy Prep views arts education as central to student engagement. DPPS has developed a robust program that utilizes in-class and enrichment offerings — including comprehensive written middle school exams. STEP, musical theater, dance, and jazz bands — to engage students, build character, and reinforce concepts being taught in core subjects.

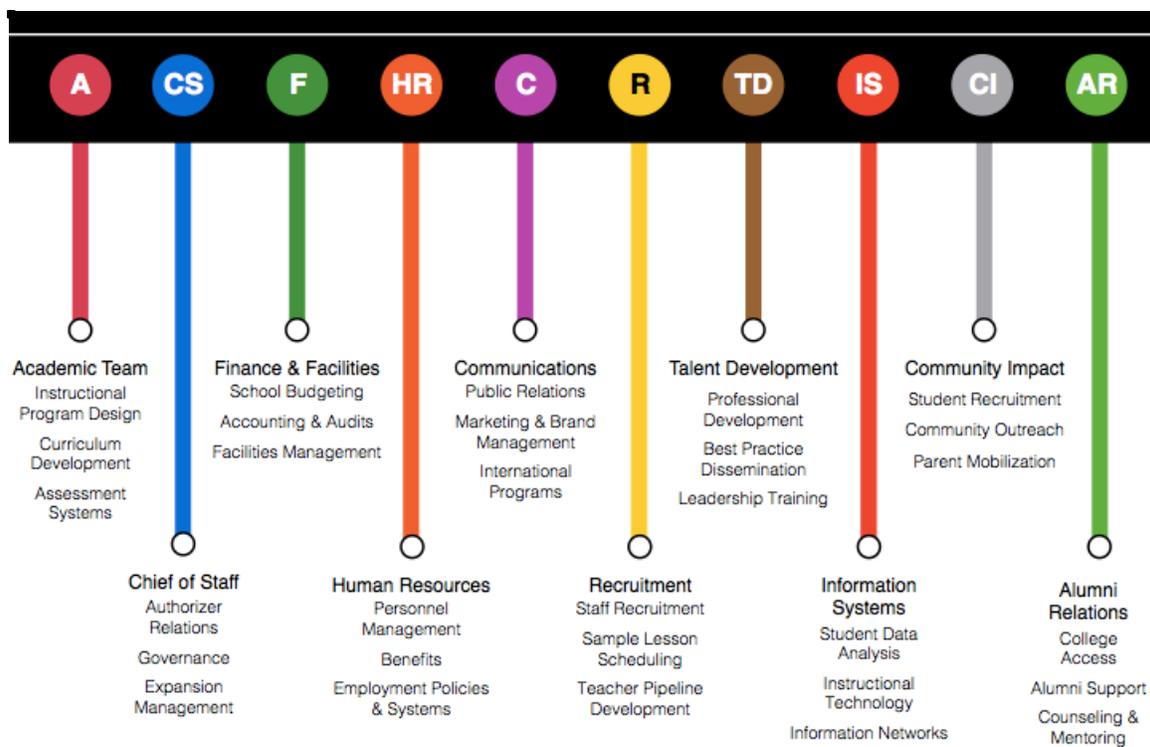
Accommodations that Maintain Rigor. DPPS realizes that all students, regardless of whether they are classified as at-risk, learn at varying rates. Schools that expect all students to meet high standards must be prepared to support them — regardless of the pace at or style in which they learn — until they reach mastery. At DPPS, this support comes through clear, engaging, quality lessons with low student-to-teacher ratios; increased learning time; pull-out and push-in instruction and related services such as counseling, speech, and occupational and physical therapy; and mandatory after-school and Saturday program tutoring for students who require additional individual and small-group attention. These strategies and supports ensure that students with disabilities, students with limited English language proficiency, and students at-risk of academic failure who may not have an official classification are given the remediation and intervention they need to meet the high standards at Democracy Prep.

4. CMO MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

DPPS has an extensive track record of driving student outcomes and narrowing achievement gaps in high-need communities. After receiving a 2012 CSP grant, DPPS

successfully scaled our model via regional expansion, school turnaround, school creation, and the organic growth of existing schools to reach our goal of providing a high-quality education to nearly 5,000 students in traditionally educationally disadvantaged neighborhoods. Having proven capable of efficiently replicating our program in a variety of high-need settings without compromising its treatment effect, DPPS is well-positioned to implement a project that will address a national challenge for which proven scalable solutions are urgently needed.

Figure 2: DPPS Core Services and Key Functions



Democracy Prep has expanded the suite of lean and efficient central administrative functions that guide school start-ups and support ongoing school operation. By centralizing many administrative and financial tasks, DPPS has established a safety net and rapid response system to address school-level problems, gained efficiency and decreased per-student administrative

costs, and demonstrated sustainable success at scale to spark broader systemic change. *Please see Appendix H for a management agreement delineating the services provided to DPPS schools.*

Democracy Prep’s network team possesses extensive experience in building new organizations, strategic planning, and instructional leadership. DPPS supports schools operationally and academically in order to free principals to serve as true instructional leaders who can focus the entirety of their energies on leveraging teachers to maximize student achievement. DPPS has developed an array of core services and key functions — including school leader and teacher development, governance, financial management, human resources, and facilities — that have allowed us to maintain school quality while attaining scale.

Leadership Development. The linchpin of Democracy Prep’s success has been our relentless commitment to attracting, developing, and retaining exceptional adults to work in our schools. Aspiring DPPS principals receive training through *Leader U*, a selective, rigorous, and integrated school leadership development program that prepares education entrepreneurs to lead high-performing DPPS schools in educationally disadvantaged communities.

By cultivating principals who are able to implement the DPPS model with fidelity, *Leader U* is designed to ensure effective principals lead all DPPS schools.

Leader U offers one and two-year programs to develop leaders for Democracy Prep an intensive one-year program guided by the Fellow’s vision and plan for launching, taking over, or turning around his or her ideal Democracy Prep school. Fellows participate in a leadership residency at an existing Democracy Prep school, are given extensive professional development by proven DPPS leaders, and work on developing their school launch. Under the guidance of Lisa Friscia, Vice President of Talent Development,

and Ajaka Roth, Assistant Director of Talent Development, Fellows design initiatives that address a range of school leader responsibilities including maintaining strong adult and student cultures, differentiating teacher feedback, leading and supporting teams, and engaging families.

The *Leader U Residency* is a two-year program that provides an extended runway to prepare for school leadership. Residents remain in the classroom during their first year with a reduced teaching load to ensure dedicated time for leadership growth and planning. During this time, they are assisted by Associate Teachers, first-year teachers who study their craft under *Leader U* Residents and gradually assume more classroom responsibility. To prepare for entry into the *Leader U Fellowship*, Residents complete instructional, cultural, and operational initiatives that push them to utilize multiple data sources to identify a need within the school that directly impacts student culture and achievement, design clear plans that target the root causes of the identified issues, invest other stakeholders, and work with an appropriate sense of urgency.

Teacher Development. Relying on data to inform decision-making about educator practice, DPPS has honed a multidimensional approach to enhancing teacher effectiveness.

Every summer, prior to the first day of school, teachers receive three weeks of uninterrupted PD. In addition, during a weeklong “Prep Academy,” administrators inculcate newly arriving teachers and students in the “DREAM” values that animate our educational philosophy. With one day devoted to reifying each of these core concepts within the framework of daily practice, teachers quickly become primed to instill our rigorous expectations.

New and early-career DPPS teachers receive calibrated coaching and mentoring based on qualitative and quantitative data collected at the school and network levels. DPPS leverages the capacity of our veteran teaching population to nurture emerging and developing teachers through their first few years. Teacher-Leaders, identified primarily for their classroom excellence, are

provided explicit training on how to develop their voices, manage difficult conversations, lead thoughtful PD sessions, and explore different protocols for examining student work. Emerging and developing teachers are afforded support from peers who maintain full teaching loads in addition to the coaching they receive from principals and designated network personnel.

DPPS also creates exemplar lesson plans for dissemination across all schools via shared server. Accordingly, as the network grows and these model materials become better aligned with prevailing standards, the instructional programs on existing campuses derive significant benefits. Materials become more broadly accessible to teachers who would otherwise be individually responsible for generating content, and teachers' work becomes sharper and more sustainable.

Our PD program aims to prepare teachers to be strategic, deliberate, and purposeful. The PD program is aligned with school-wide systems, strategies, and tools. Its design is geared towards ensuring consistency of culture and rigor, appropriate use of ongoing assessments, and the efficient use of instructional time. Teachers have a preparation block twice a week with both grade-level and subject-area colleagues to collaborate, discuss pertinent student issues, and observe their peers. Principals and Teacher-Leaders routinely observe and deliver feedback to all teachers. Whereas emerging teachers receive weekly coaching on classroom management and instruction, veterans are pushed to further develop their students' critical thinking.

DPPS utilizes an array of indicators — quantitative and qualitative measures of academic achievement and school culture, comprehensive semi-annual reviews conducted by school and network leadership, dynamic internal platforms that isolate student-level characteristics — to evaluate schools and teachers relative to exceedingly high expectations. Struggling teachers receive rapid-response coaching and customized supports to ensure classroom-level issues are

remediated before they adversely affect student-learning outcomes. *Please see Section II.D.2 for additional information on the school review process and network data platforms.*

Governance. The DPPS board plays a central role in formulating the network’s growth plan, assisting with the identification and recruitment of executive-level talent, and providing high-level strategic, legal, and financial guidance. Additionally, each school is governed by an independent board of trustees ultimately responsible for fulfillment of the terms set forth in its charter and compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. Benjamin Feit, DPPS’s Chief of Staff and the proposed CSP Project Director, has been responsible for transmitting best practices in governance from well-established DPPS boards in Harlem to newly constituted and turnaround boards in the Bronx, Camden, Baton Rouge, and Washington, D.C., and will ensure that the boards of schools opened pursuant to this project are poised to responsibly discharge their fiduciary obligations in the service of Democracy Prep’s mission.

Financial Management. Democracy Prep attempts to dispel the notion that public charter schools benefit from raising substantial sums through private philanthropy by demonstrating that a superior civic and college-preparatory education can be provided using approximately the same financial resources wielded by traditional public schools. Our budget model and financial plan ensure that our core educational program will operate exclusively with public funds (i.e. per-pupil allocations and federal or state entitlement grants) after the initial start-up replication costs. If there are additional costs of charter expansion after the initial stage (e.g. continued talent recruitment and leadership training), these costs will be borne exclusively by DPPS, which already specializes in providing these services to the schools in our network.

Each Democracy Prep school board has a steadfast commitment to prudent fiscal management of both public and private resources. A cautious budget model assumes

conservative revenues and zero fundraising, yet allows us to balance our budget and focus resources in the classroom. Each board appoints an independent auditing firm to conduct annual reviews of cash flow, retrospective budget, and financial controls, and the board’s Finance and Audit Committee works in concert with the DPPS CFO both to review budgetary projections on a monthly basis and to make any necessary adjustments given the school’s financial forecast.

Human Resources. Success of the proposed project is largely dependent on the retention and growth of the talent our leaders have attracted and maximizing the capacity of those who have internalized the network’s mission. Teachers are treated as professionals, provided with all necessary technology, appropriate classroom supplies, a personal PD budget, and essential support at all times. In order to incentivize longevity and reduce turnover, employees receive a competitive benefits package that improves over time and are eligible for merit-based raises of up to 10% of their previous year’s salary based on the results of their formal year-end evaluations. Additionally, teachers are eligible for tuition reimbursement totaling up to \$15,000 over a five-year period for pre-approved coursework related to their certification areas.

Facilities. DPPS provides support with facilities location, acquisition, financing, leasing, construction, and dealing with governmental entities and private landlords. DPPS also assists school staff in areas of compliance and management, such as maintenance and safety plans.

5. RESULTS

A. EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS

Two studies comparing outcomes of students randomly selected for admission to Democracy Prep (“lotteried-in” students) with those of students who applied but were not selected for admission (“lotteried-out” students) have found statistically significant favorable impacts for large sample populations that overlap with the beneficiaries of the proposed project.

In 2012, Will Dobbie conducted the first independent experimental evaluation of the casual impact of attending a Democracy Prep school. Using an experimental design that contrasts the outcomes of students randomly lotteried-in to those lotteried-out, Dobbie found what he described as an “enormous” effect of attending Democracy Prep on student achievement. According to that study, students gained 0.238 standard deviations (σ) in Math ($se = 0.108$) and 0.232 standard deviations in ELA ($se = 0.121$) for each year they attend the school, relative to students who applied but were not selected by the lottery.¹⁶

With Democracy Prep’s enrollment having increased “by a factor of 20” between 2006 and 2014, Dr. Sean P. Corcoran conducted a follow-up analysis in 2015 to determine whether students continued to experience “the same measurable benefits” from attending a DPPS school found by Dobbie.¹⁷ In a report spanning six additional years of lottery data, Corcoran found that the effects of attending Democracy Prep “remain positive and substantial, and are approximately as large as those reported in the original study.”¹⁸

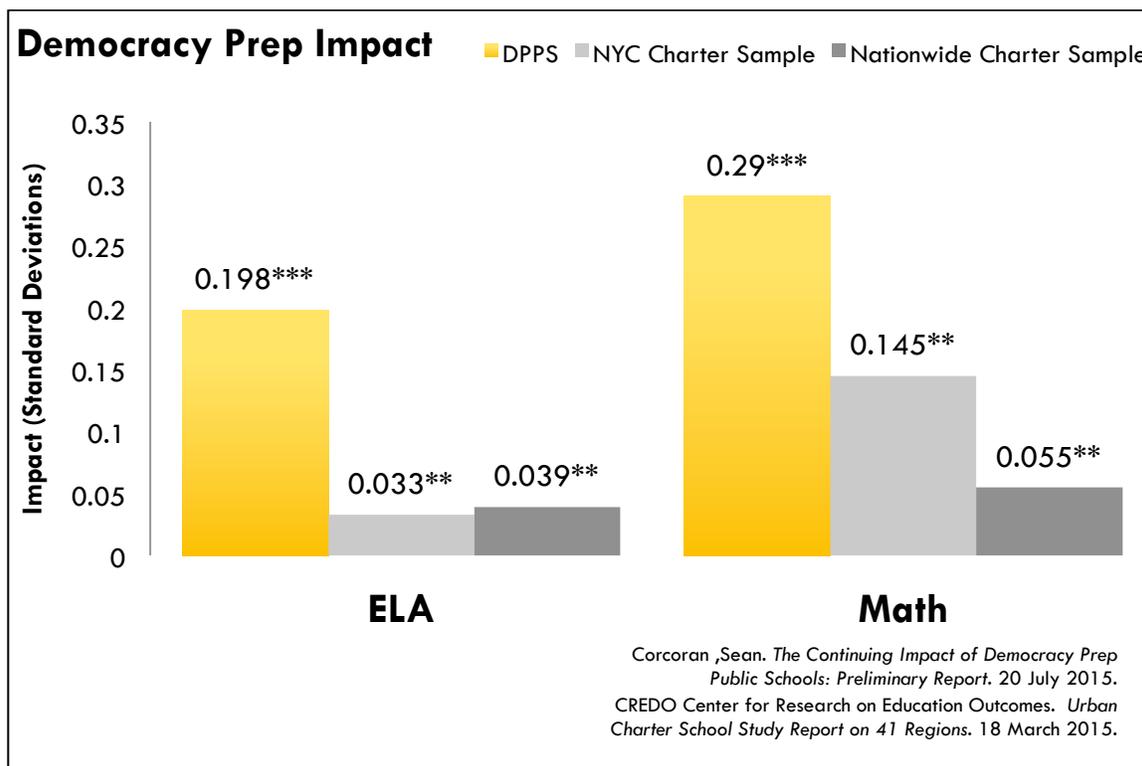
Corcoran found that spending an additional year in a DPPS school is associated with a 0.198 to 0.216 σ increase in ELA achievement and a 0.259 to 0.290 σ increase in Math. These effect sizes are “more than . . . 2.5 times as large as the effect of attending the well-known Harlem Children’s Zone.” Furthermore, effect sizes for students in ESEA subgroups were larger (0.244 σ in ELA and 0.316 σ in Math for FRPL-eligible students, and 0.316 σ in ELA and 0.220 σ in Math for students with disabilities).

¹⁶ Dobbie at 11.

¹⁷ Corcoran at 16.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 23.

Figure 3: Causal Impact of Attending a DPPS School (Lotteried-In/Lotteried-Out)



As compared to data from a CREDO study using comparable methods, Corcoran’s study found the impact of attending a DPPS school on ELA achievement to be **six times larger** than the impact of attending a comparable New York City charter school.

The Corcoran and Dobbie studies are enclosed in Appendix H.

B. TRACK RECORD OF IMPACT

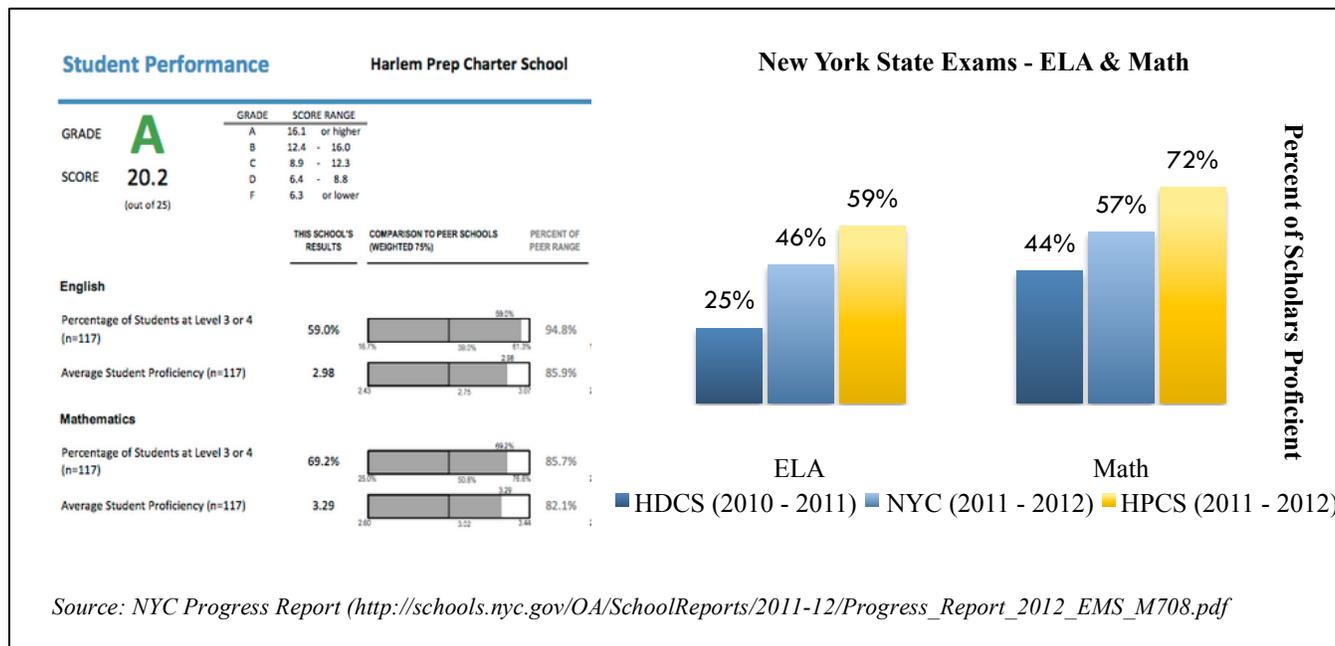
DPPS has an extensive track record of promoting educational outcomes for high-need students in grades K-12 across a variety of settings. Key highlights are summarized below, and a full list of student achievement trends over the past three years is enclosed in *Appendix E*.

I. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

At the **elementary school** level, Democracy Prep’s pioneering turnaround of Harlem Day, a failed East Harlem charter school, provided unmistakable evidence of Democracy Prep’s

ability to alter the life trajectories of students who had previously attended schools unlikely to provide them with reliable paths toward college, career, and civic preparedness.

Figure 4: Harlem Prep Charter School Turnaround Results (2012)

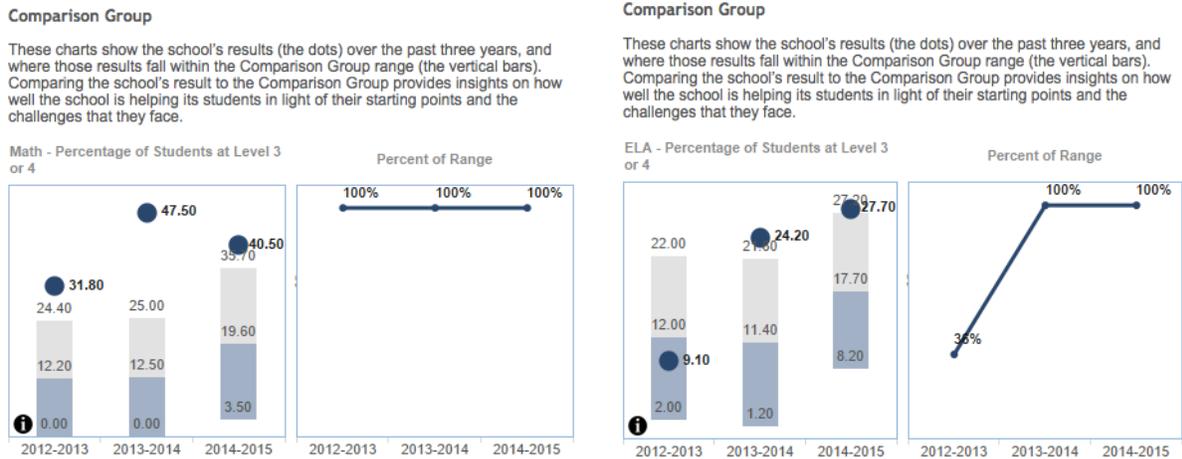


In 2011, the New York City Department of Education Progress Report ranked Harlem Day in the 3rd percentile of all public schools in the City. In 2010, it was in the bottom 1% citywide and the lowest performing school in Harlem. In 2012, after DPPS began its turnaround, Harlem Prep grew a staggering 93 percentile points to reach the 96th percentile of New York City Schools. The school received an overall “A” on its Progress Report in 2012, and student performance on state assessments improved dramatically from the prior year at Harlem Day (“HDCS”). During the first year of the turnaround, Harlem Prep students

At the **middle school** level, Democracy Prep Endurance Charter School achieved proficiency levels in ELA and Math in 2015 that placed the school in the 100th percentile compared to peer schools (i.e. those that serve demographically similar student populations).

Figure 5: Democracy Prep Endurance Charter School Achievement Data (2015)

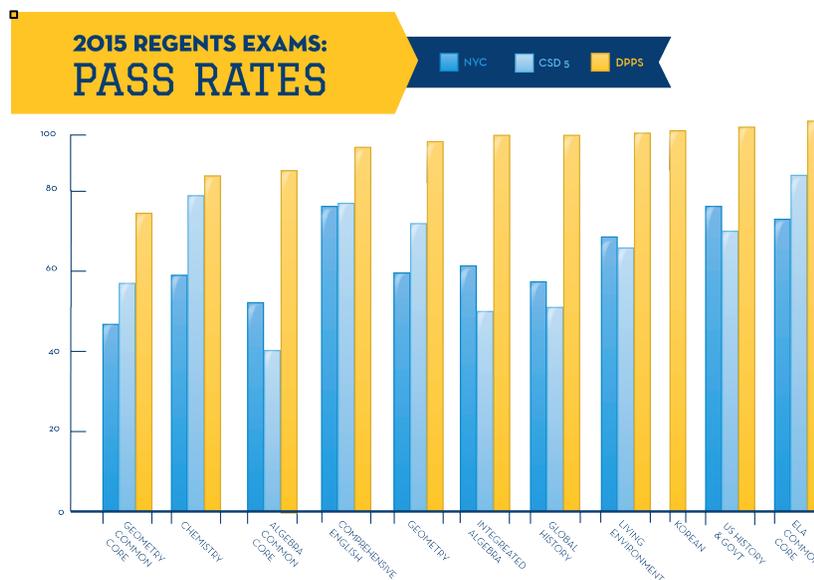
ELA and Math: Percentage of Students at Level 3 or 4



Source: NYC School Quality Guide (http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/2014-15/School_Quality_Guide_2015_EMS_M065.pdf)

And at the **high school** level, Democracy Prep has perennially achieved Regents pass rates that are well above the city average, demonstrating that attaining for challenging exit exams is an expectation to which *all* Democracy Prep students — not merely a uniquely motivated subset — are held,

Figure 6: Democracy Prep Charter School Regents Exam Results (2015)



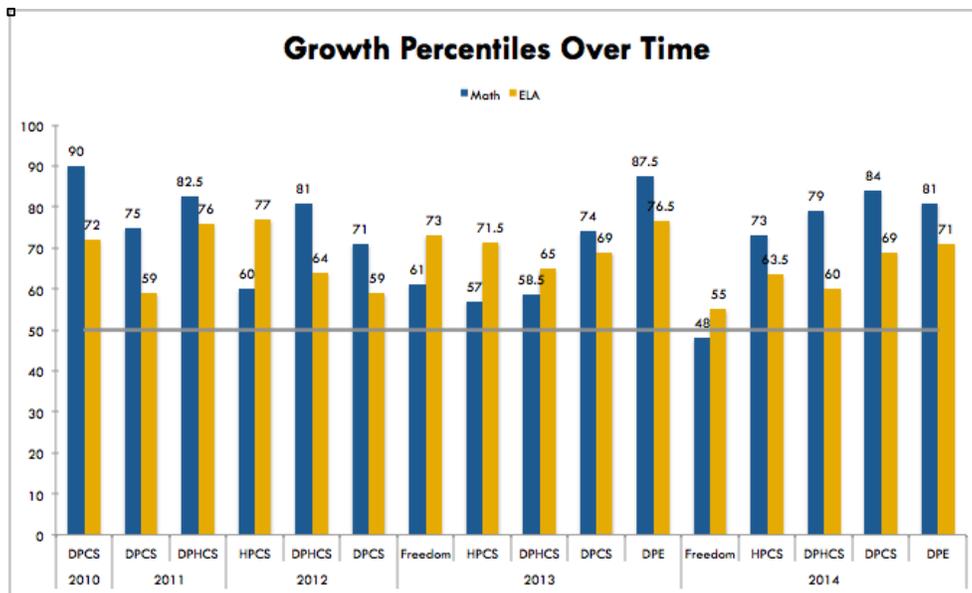
Source: data.NYSED.gov (2015)

II. STUDENT GROWTH

Despite proficiency scores that far exceed those of schools serving demographically similar student populations, DPPS prioritizes student growth over absolute proficiency throughout elementary and middle school grades. Whereas fixating on proficiency metrics may distort enrollment incentives, placing foremost emphasis on growth ensures that DPPS remains committed to serving the students whose need for an excellent education is most pressing.

One of the most straightforward ways to depict the consistent progress DPPS students

Figure 7: Democracy Prep Student Growth Percentiles (2010-14)¹⁹



Source: NYC Progress Report Data (<http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm>) and New Jersey School Performance Report Data (<http://education.state.nj.us/pr>)

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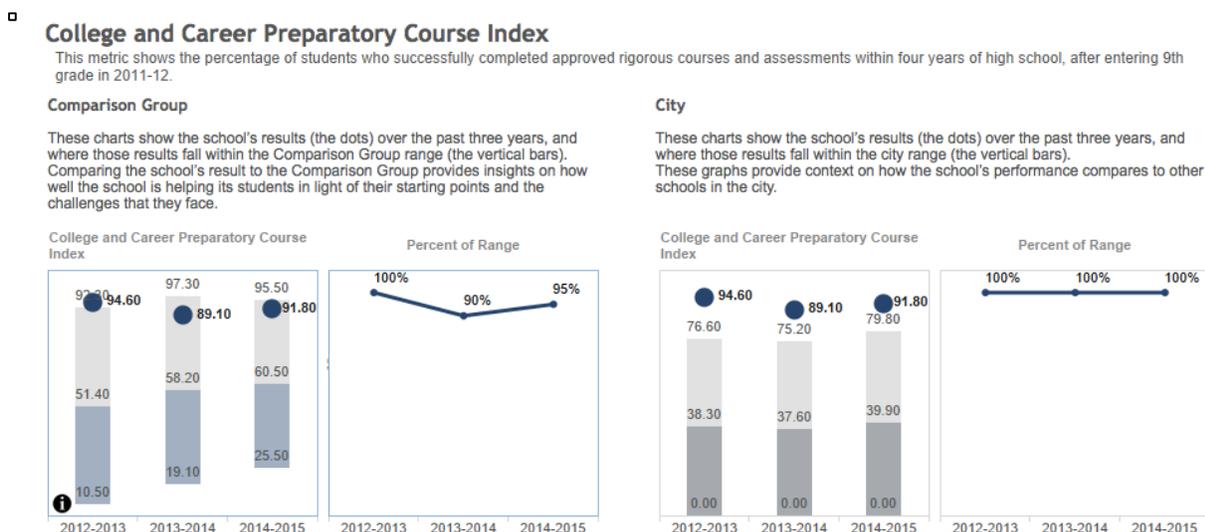
III. CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

DPSS has narrowed, and in some cases, reversed, achievement gaps that have historically affected ESEA subgroups. In New York City, where schools are evaluated on their success in closing the achievement gap via metrics that isolate performance for high-need students, DPSS has consistently achieved noteworthy scores. For example, at-risk students at Democracy Prep Charter School made notable growth in 2015, as 88% of students in the lowest third citywide and 88% of Black and Latino males in the lowest in the lowest third citywide scored in the 75th median growth percentile or higher on the New York State Math assessment.²⁰

IV. HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION & COLLEGE READINESS

One of the foremost barriers to college persistence and completion for educationally disadvantaged students is the need to take remedial, non-credit-bearing coursework immediately upon matriculation. Democracy Prep’s rigorous promotional criteria and elevated graduation standards ensure alumni are prepared to grapple with the demands of college-level coursework. In 2014-15, DPCS students completed college preparatory coursework at a rate that was 100% of the city range and 95% of its peer range.

Figure 8: Democracy Prep Charter School College Readiness Indicators (2014-15)



Source: NYC School Quality Guide (http://schools.nyc.gov/OA/SchoolReports/2014-15/School_Quality_Guide_2015_HS_M350.pdf)

Democracy Prep is producing graduates primed to succeed at the next level. In 2014, 68% of DPPS seniors satisfied New York State’s Aspirational Performance Measure (APM), a metric correlated with and predictive of college completion (compared with 38% statewide and 25% in Community School District 5).²² In 2015, 66% of DPPS seniors earned a Regents

Rochester	5%
Syracuse	6%
Buffalo	8%
Yonkers	9%
NYC	18%
NYS	32%
Democracy Prep	66%

Diploma with Advanced Designation — a percentage that well exceeded that of both New York City and New York State.

V. COLLEGE ENROLLMENT & PERSISTENCE

DPCS has conferred diplomas to three graduating classes. One-hundred percent of the 148 students who received a diploma were accepted to multiple four-year colleges and universities, and DPPS graduates have matriculated at such schools as Yale, Princeton, Howard, Duke, Dartmouth, Vanderbilt, and the United States Naval Academy. Nevertheless, DPPS’s mission speaks to college “success” rather than merely to college “enrollment,” and a highly publicized recent study revealed the college completion rate for students from the lowest income families to be frozen at an appalling 9%.²³ DPPS works to find selective schools with high graduation rates that have historically met financial need for low-income students. This approach has led to an 88.5% continuation rate for the first group of DPPS alumni into their current junior

²¹ data.nysed.gov

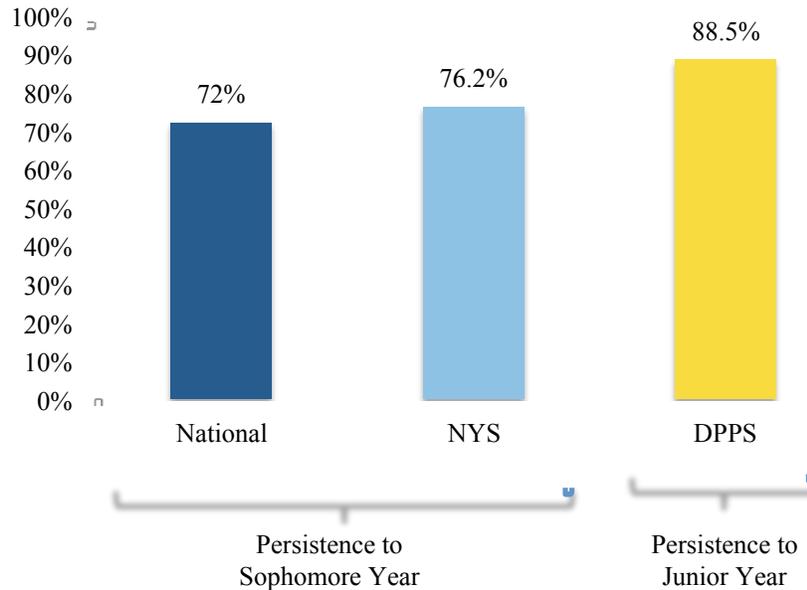
²² New York State Education Department, *Graduation Rate Data — December 18, 2014*; available at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20141218/home.html>

²³ The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, *Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States* at 31 (2015 Revised Edition).

year.²⁴ As a comparison, the first-year persistence rate for college students entering in the same cohort was 72% nationally and 76.2% in New York State.²⁵

□

Figure 10: College Persistence Rates



VI. ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION

Democracy Prep schools stress the importance of timeliness and attendance for all students. As a result, the average daily attendance across our New York schools in 2014-15 was 94.7%, compared to the city's attendance rate of 92.0%.

²⁴ DPPS determines persistence, retention and enrollment by using a combination of Clearinghouse data, information received directly from the colleges where our alumni are enrolled, information obtained from college transcripts, and self-reported information.

²⁵ National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, *Snapshot Report - Persistence and Retention*, May 2016.

B. CONTRIBUTION IN ASSISTING EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

1. IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

As demonstrated above in Section II.A.5, DPPS has demonstrated considerable success in improving educational achievement and outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students.

A. DEMOCRACY PREP PATHWAYS

During the 2015-16 school year, DPPS piloted an intensive, one-year transitional program that provides targeted academic, social, and emotional services to middle school students who are significantly behind grade level and who require special education services for more than 60% of the day. The students who participate in this novel Democracy Prep Pathways program are selected based on the services required by their IEPs, classwork and assessment results, and through consultation with school leaders and parents. Within the small-group setting of Pathways, students are pushed to achieve their best while receiving individualized supports that allow them to meet the high expectations set for them. During their participation in the program, Pathways students remain a part of the community at their home school, returning to the main campus to participate in extracurricular activities and school-wide events, which eases their eventual transition back into the general education classroom.²⁶

B. TURNAROUNDS

Additionally, data from Democracy Prep's turnaround schools provide particularly compelling evidence of our ability to improve educational achievement and outcomes for

²⁶ Duncan Scherer, the Executive Director of Democracy Prep Pathways, was named the first place winner of the Lynn Hall Teacher Action Research Prize at the 2016 Yale School of Management Education Leadership Conference for a paper surveying key data points from the program's first year. *See <http://yaleeducationconference.com/teacher-action-research-prize/>.*

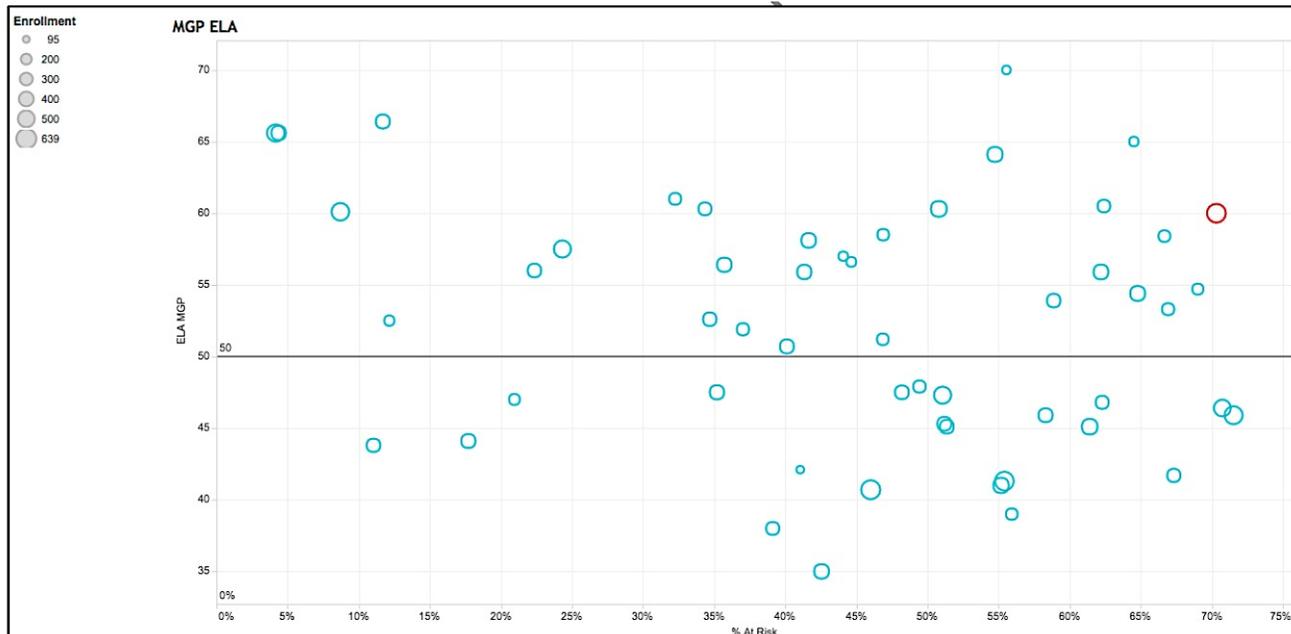
educationally disadvantaged students, as the students enrolled in those schools both overwhelmingly fall within one or more ESEA subgroup and have previously attended schools unlikely to have prepared them to master academic content and achievement standards.

Subsequent to the trailblazing Harlem Prep turnaround, data for which are located above in Section II.B.5.b.i and in Figure 4, Democracy Prep undertook similarly daunting efforts in Camden, NJ and Washington, DC. In Camden, after DPPS assumed management of Freedom Academy and re-launched the school as Freedom Prep Charter School, students demonstrated exceptional growth in proficiency levels on the NJ Assessment of Skills and Knowledge. In Camden, Democracy Prep assumed operation of a school that had been placed on academic probation and in a single year propelled it from the 23rd growth percentile statewide to the 94th.²⁷

In 2014, as it prepared to relinquish its charter, dissolve its corporate existence, and transfer its assets to the board of Democracy Prep Congress Heights PCS, Imagine Southeast Public Charter School was the lowest performing school in the DC Public Charter School Board’s portfolio. Data from the first round of STEP Literacy Assessments administered in September 2014 revealed *not a single student in grades 3-6* to be reading on grade level upon entry into Democracy Prep’s program. Nevertheless, during the first year of the turnaround, students at Democracy Prep Congress Heights demonstrated impressive growth. In 2015, DPCH had the 12th highest ELA growth score on the PCSB’s Performance Management Framework of the 53 public charter schools assessed on that metric. This measure is even more impressive when taking into account that 100% of DPCH students are economically disadvantaged and 73.2% are considered “at-risk.”

²⁷ New Jersey School Performance Report Data (<http://education.state.nj.us/pr>).

Figure 11: 2015 PMF ELA Median Growth Percentile vs. At-Risk %



2. PROPOSED LOCATIONS & STUDENT POPULATIONS TO BE SERVED

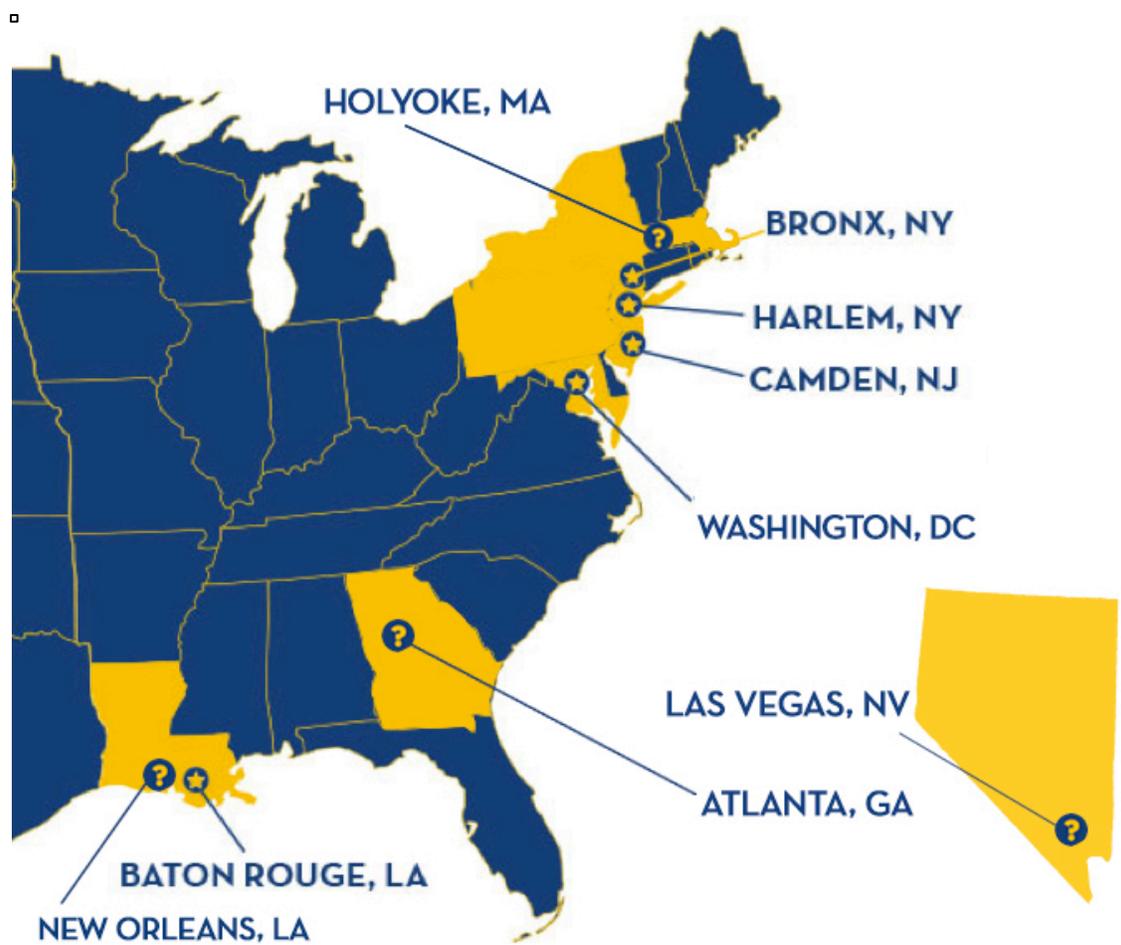
Demand for the Democracy Prep program continues to intensify both within existing DPPS regions and across the nation in other communities serving high concentrations of at-risk children. As evidence of the insistent demand for our proposed project, DPPS has included in this application letters of support from the following individuals:

- The Hon. Charles B. Rangel, whose congressional district is home to Democracy Prep’s schools in Harlem and the South Bronx, and the Hon. Donald Norcross, whose congressional district is home to Freedom Prep, Democracy Prep’s flagship school in Camden, N.J;
- The Hon. Kirsten Gillibrand, United States Senator for New York;
- Dana Redd, the Mayor of Camden, N.J., and lead applicant of a Promise Zone designee;
- Susan Miller-Barker, Executive Director of the State University of New York’s Charter Schools Institute, which authorized DPPS’s turnarounds at Harlem Prep and Bronx Prep;

- Steve Canavero, Nevada Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Jana Wilcox Lavin, Superintendent of the Nevada Achievement School District;
- Patrick Dobard, Superintendent of the Louisiana Recovery School District;
- Russell Johnston, Senior Associate Commissioner of Accountability, Partnerships & Targeted Assistance at the Mass. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; and
- Bonnie Holliday, Executive Director of the Georgia State Charter Schools Commission.

The letters from authorizers in Nevada, Louisiana, Massachusetts, and Georgia express interest in partnering with DPPS to transform the educational landscapes in their states.

Figure 12: DPPS Regions and Potential Expansion Sites



3. ASSISTING EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS IN MASTERING STANDARDS

A. THE ACADEMIC COLLABORATION TEAM

DPPS implements an inclusive educational model that serves all students in a manner that maximizes their academic potential and prepares them for success in the college of their choice. In order to provide all IEP and Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act) services, DPPS has designed a model that is flexible and compliant with applicable laws. DPPS teaching staff is supported by an Academic Collaboration Team — teachers who support students at academic risk, including but not limited to special education students and English learners. ACT Team Members are assigned to specific grades, to subject areas, or to a particular caseload of students based on what is the most educationally effective model for the needs of students. ACT Team Members are responsible for implementing classroom-based IEP services, integrated co-teaching services, pullout services, and ensuring access to the general curriculum for all students on IEPs through differentiation, accommodations, and necessary modifications. The co-taught classes are led by at least one general education teacher and an ACT Team Member who meet regularly to review instructional materials, plan the presentation of content, and ensure lessons are accessible.

B. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Special educational students at DPPS receive a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). To the maximum extent allowed by each student's circumstances, IEP, and all applicable federal laws, including the Individuals with Disabilities Act, DPPS educates students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE), with their non-disabled peers.

The robust evaluation and assessment system at DPPS ensures all students who enter the school are routinely monitored to ensure that they are making effective academic progress. Students admitted through the lottery process are required to take a nationally normed

standardized assessment such as the MAP as well as a battery of criterion-referenced assessments for each of the core subjects. The results of these exams are used to determine which students are in immediate need of remediation. Students with particularly low scores are monitored closely by the ACT team and provided with support and accommodations as needed.

DPPS seeks to *modify* curriculum as *infrequently* as possible, yet faculty provide *accommodations* as *frequently* as necessary to help students progress. Students with IEPs or 504 Accommodation Plans receive appropriate accommodations or modifications as identified in their plans, and parents receive three IEP progress reports each year in addition to report cards, weekly progress reports, weekly behavioral reports, and regular personal contact from faculty members who are available by email, phone, and in person to all families. Additionally the school holds meetings with parents of ACT students each trimester, during which time they advise parents on any changes to the administration of special education services and offer suggestions on changes they would like to see made to the program.

C. ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

DPPS serves any and all students who are classified as ELL through a process of structured English immersion (SEI) that provides the extra supports needed to rapidly achieve proficiency in English. Through our extended school day and year, ELL students benefit from dramatically increased exposure to English speaking, listening, reading, and writing, which speeds language acquisition. The ACT Team is charged with supervising teachers as they diagnose each student's needs, providing and adjusting instruction according to data and feedback, and closely monitoring student progress. ELL students are assessed annually using nationally normed assessments, teacher-created exams, and informal teacher observation in the

classroom to determine progress in English proficiency. Students no longer deemed ELL based on assessment results still have access to language and academic support services.

D. ENGAGING THE SPECIAL NEEDS COMMUNITY

DPPS is committed to explicit and intentional recruitment of special education and hard to reach students. In the extensive publicity surrounding our yearly admissions lotteries, DPPS highlights our special education services. As a result of this strategy, many DPPS schools regularly educate a disproportionately high number of special education students each year. DPPS will continue to aggressively publicize our lotteries and school openings and will reach out to the special education community through activities such as informing local guidance counselors and special education teachers of our success with special education students.

E. SPECIAL EDUCATION COMPLIANCE

DPPS works closely with the schools in our network and the local educational agencies responsible for the provision of special education services to ensure full compliance with sections 613(a)(5) and 613(e)(1)(B) of IDEA, including FAPE, appropriate evaluations, an IEP, LRE, and ensuring commensurate funding for special education services.

C. QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN

1. REPLICATING AND EXPANDING THE DEMOCRACY PREP DREAM

Through *Replicating and Expanding the Democracy Prep DREAM to Educate Over 11,000 Students*, DPPS will open at least 5,000 seats for high-need students in 16 schools nationwide, raising total network-wide enrollment to over 11,000 by the end of the project period. These seats will be located in both new and existing regions in which demand for high-quality schools continues to outstrip supply and will derive from newly authorized fresh-start

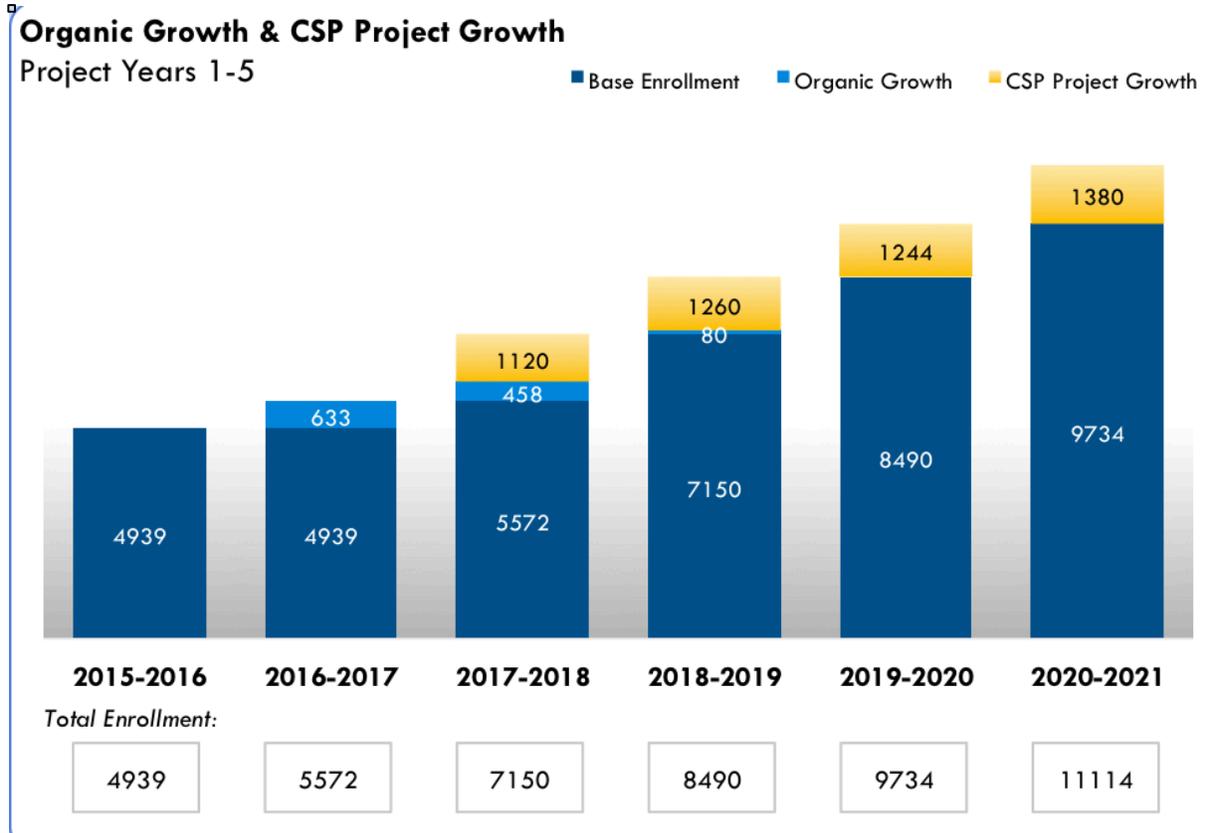
schools, turnarounds of failing schools, and acquisitions of schools that lack the capacity to continue operating without a network support infrastructure.

2. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND OUTCOMES

A. GOAL

As outlined below in Figure 13, DPPS’s goal is to replicate our model, using proven practices to improve achievement and growth, close achievement gaps, increase the proportion of high-need students graduating high school at “college ready” levels, and increase college enrollment and completion rates for over 5,000 new high-need K-12 students in 16 schools nationwide within the project period. Through the implementation of the replication, turnaround, and acquisition strategies outlined below, DPPS will open an average of four schools annually from 2017-18 to 2020-21 with 2016-17 serving as a planning year for impending expansion.

Figure 13: DPPS Five-Year Growth Schedule (2016-21)



B. OBJECTIVES

Within the ultimate goal of opening 16 schools to educate at least 5,000 additional high-need students, DPPS has the following objectives:

Figure 14: Project Objectives and Key Metrics

Objective	Key Metric
1. DPPS will expand access to quality public school seats for high-need K-12 students.	1a. Seats & Schools Opened
	1b. Serving High-Need Students
2. DPPS will expand the implementation of proven practices that have generated substantial improvements in student achievement for high-need K-12 students.	2a. Student Achievement
	2b. Student Growth
	2c. Closing the Achievement Gap
	2d. High School Graduation
	2e. College Enrollment
	2f. College Completion
3. DPPS schools will maintain high standards of instructional and operational excellence.	3a. Academic Success
	3b. Financial Health
	3c. Organizational Viability

C. MEASURABLE OUTCOMES & PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Outcome 1a. DPPS will open at least 5,000 seats in 16 schools across both new and existing regions, raising total network-wide enrollment to over 11,000.

Outcome 1b. DPPS will enroll students in ESEA subgroups at rates that meet or exceed not only those of the sending districts but also those of charter schools in the state.

Outcome 2a. 100% of DPPS cohorts will exceed district average proficiency on state exams in all core subjects at all grade levels tested.

Outcome 2b. 60% of DPPS students will meet or exceed their individual growth targets on the NWEA MAP Reading and Math Exams.

Outcome 2c. DPPS students in ESEA subgroups will outperform those attending peer schools serving demographically similar populations on state exams in all core subjects at all grade levels tested.

Outcome 2d. DPPS’s high school graduation rate will exceed the national average.

Outcome 2e. In the year following high school graduation, 90% of DPPS alumni will enroll and persist at a post-secondary institution, and 85% of Democracy Prep alumni will remain enrolled in higher education two years after graduation.

Outcome 2f. DPPS alumni will exceed the national six-year graduation rate for first-time,

Outcome 3a. DPPS schools will meet high expectations as set forth on a comprehensive

Outcome 3b. DPPS schools will operate at a surplus on public allocations and have

Outcome 3c. DPPS schools will meet high expectations as set forth on a comprehensive

3. REPLICATION AND EXPANSION STRATEGIES

A. THE PARENT DEMAND REPLICATION STRATEGY

This strategy is a variation on the fresh-start model in which a charter school begins with one or two grade levels and expands by one grade a year until it reaches full growth. This strategy is distinguished by its explicit aim of turning around failing schools by leveraging parent demand. Essentially, the idea is that once DPPS presents a better school alternative in close proximity to a failing school, parents who previously sent their children to the failing school will “vote with their feet” by sending their children to a DPPS school. This will result in declining enrollment at the failing school as the DPPS school grows, and, ultimately, closure of the failed school. Typically, fierce opposition is provoked when schools are “forced” to close or families are “forced” to transfer by bureaucratic mandate. The DPPS strategy is predicated on giving DPPS time to build its communities’ trust and giving the community time to ask questions and

adjust to our presence. This strategy maximizes community buy-in and minimizes opposition. This is the strategy that played out in 2006 when DPPS opened DPCS in a co-located facility with the low-performing Academy for Collaborative Education, which has since been shuttered.

B. THE TURNAROUND REPLICATION STRATEGY

This strategy, which is based on the model of Harlem Prep Charter School and has been implemented in network expansion to New Jersey, Washington, DC, and the Bronx, offers a truly innovative approach to the proliferation of high-quality charter school seats. By pursuing a turnaround strategy, DPPS seeks to replicate the model of Harlem Prep by working with authorizers to identify other schools whose charters are in danger of being revoked or non-renewed due to lagging academic performance, applying to acquire these charter corporations, and restructuring these schools to meet academic, operational, and financial goals.

A sample timeline for the acquisition and turnaround process is included in Section II.D, but the process is outlined here. First, members of the DPPS turnaround portfolio team incubate in turnaround schools in the application phase prior to acquiring and re-opening the school, assessing strengths and weaknesses of processes, facilities, and human capital. All current staff members must reapply for their positions, but all current students are guaranteed a seat in the restructured school, thus maximizing the potential for positive cultural shift within the building while minimizing disruption for students and families. DPPS staff recruits and provides PD for newly hired and returning staff. During the first two years of the turnaround, DPPS floods the school with additional staff and increased oversight to ensure fidelity to the DPPS academic and cultural model and satisfaction of quality benchmarks. Following the transition phase, the school is operated as is any other DPPS school, with a lean school-based staff, and, after three years will be expected to meet standard network-wide academic and cultural goals.

C. THE ACQUISITION REPLICATION STRATEGY

As the charter sector has matured and successful operators have scaled proven models to educate a larger share of high-need students, it has become increasingly difficult for stand-alone schools to source and retain instructional and leadership talent. Simultaneously, operators that attempted to scale a model that proved effective at a single site have often struggled to develop the requisite capacity at the CMO level to sustain quality while expanding. A growing number of schools not yet in need of the more dramatic turnaround intervention strategy are either struggling to devise credible leadership succession plans or are currently affiliated with networks whose growth outpaced their capabilities. Accordingly, DPPS will look to acquire schools and small networks whose boards have determined that preservation of the status quo will likely result in a rapid diminution in seat quality. This novel approach to replication and expansion will permit DPPS to accelerate our impact, leverage our economies of scale, and provide stable and sustainable support to schools serving high concentrations of at-risk students.

D. QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PERSONNEL

1. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND TIMELINES

In order to achieve the ambitious goals outlined in our proposal, DPPS will expand with an initial focus on turnaround and acquisition schools followed by the organic growth of new schools to reach their full K-12 continuums. While not exhaustive, the timelines below highlight some of the major milestones in the expansion process. The CMO takes the lead during the pre-opening process, gradually relinquishes operational autonomies to local leadership, and eventually transitions into the support role that it maintains after the school opens.

Figure 15: Pre-Opening Project Management Plan (Fresh Start Schools)

ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY
PHASE I (12 – 8 months before school opens)	
Recruit and appoint Executive Director (ED)	CMO Leadership
Research community demographics and determine the best site/facility for new school	CMO Leadership
Apply for charter from authorizer	CMO Leadership
Publicize school opening date and create plan for brand management	CMO Communications
Recruit board, identify chair, and submit bylaws for approval	CMO Leadership
Align curriculum, school policies, and operating procedures with local laws, regulations, and learning standards	CMO Human Resources, Legal, Facilities, Finance, Academic
Hire Founding School Principal & Operations Manager	ED
Submit pre-opening documents to authorizer	ED
Determine recruitment needs and timeline; post open positions	ED, CMO Recruitment
Plan enrollment events, distribute lottery application form, develop process for student registration	CMO Community Impact
PHASE II (8 – 3 months before school opens)	
Develop summer PD materials	ED, Principal, CMO Academics
Order curriculum materials	Operations Manager
Develop family handbooks and academic calendar	ED, CMO Leadership
Conduct Board of Trustees training and submit any required assurances	CMO Leadership
File for nonprofit status, tax exemption, DUNS number	CMO Leadership
Build school website and distribute promotional materials	CMO Communications
Develop move-in plan and secure Certificate of Occupancy	Operations Manager
Obtain all required permits & begin RFP process for service providers	Operations Manager
Develop multi-year finance plan and open school bank accounts	CMO Finance
Hire teachers and key staff	ED, Principal, CMO Recruitment
Set up school systems (attendance, student files & registration, meals, scheduling, inventory, security, student transportation, etc.)	ED, Operations Manager, Principal
Purchase technology and licenses for information systems	Operations Manager
Hold student lottery	Director of Community Impact
PHASE III (3 – 0 months before school opens)	
Identify auditor and submit budget to authorizer	CMO Finance
Develop plan for ongoing parent outreach and engagement, including the formation of the Family Leadership Council	Community Impact Team
Review, revise, or create IEPs for special education students	ED, Principal, ACT Teams
Collect student records and complete student registration process, including MAP testing	Operations Manager, CMO Information Systems
Deploy technology and create tracking system	Operations Manager, CMO Information Systems
Submit any necessary school plans to local regulatory bodies and ensure authorizer has all needed paperwork	ED, CMO Leadership
Train new staff	Principal
Outfit all classrooms with branded materials	Operations Manager, CMO Communications

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Prepare academic and behavioral data trackers	Operations Manager, DPPS Data
Prep Academy (systems and routines acculturation) for students	ED, Principal, Teachers

Figure 16: Pre-Opening Project Management Plan (Turnaround and Acquisition Schools)

KEY TASK	INITIATION TIME	RESPONSIBILITY
Meetings with Boards of Directors regarding turnaround opportunities	T – 10 months	CMO Leadership
Submit turnaround proposals to board/authorizer	T – 10 months	CMO Leadership
Community meetings to discuss turnaround process	T – 10 months	Community Impact Team
Recruit new board members and appoint chair	T – 10 months	CMO Leadership
Parent and family introduction and planning meetings	T – 8 months	Community Impact Team
Turnaround Director (TD) on the ground	T – 8 months	TD
Teachers & staff reapply for positions	T – 7 months	TD and CMO Recruitment
Leader U Fellows on the ground	T – 7 months	TD, Leader U Fellows
Hiring process begins	T – 6 months	CMO Recruitment
Collect baseline data via MAP assessment	T – 6 months	TD, Operations Manager, CMO Information Systems
Hiring decisions determined	T – 4 months	TD
Charter authority transitioned to new board	T – 3 months	TD, Authorizer, Board Chair
Facility set up & summer PD planning	T – 3 months	TD, School Leaders
School support planning	T – 3 months	TD, CMO Leadership, HR, Finance, Operations
Summer PD for staff	T – 1 month	TD, School Leaders
Prep Academy for students	T – 1 week	TD, School Leaders

Figure 17: Operational Project Management Plan (All CSP Schools)

TASK	MILESTONE	PARTY RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	RESOURCES
LEADER U				
Leader U Fellow Training	Two week Intensive Training	VP of Talent Development	Opening – 1 yr.	All CMO senior directors, Existing Campuses, AD of Talent Development, CEO
	Residency	VP of Talent Development	Opening – 1 yr.	Existing DPPS Campus, AD of Talent Development
Leader U Resident Training	Application and Selection	VP of Talent Development	Opening – 3 yrs.	Principal, AD of Talent Development
	Training	VP of Talent Development	Opening – 2 yrs.	Asst. Superintendent, Principal, AD of Talent Development

GENERAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL STAFF				
DP You	Network-wide Professional Development led by Leaders throughout network	VP of Talent Development	Years 0-5	Asst. Superintendent, AD of Talent Development, School Leaders, Master Teachers
Ongoing PD	Differentiated PD based on specific teacher needs	School Leaders	Years 0-5	Asst. Superintendent, Leader U Director, CMO specialists
GRANT MANAGEMENT AND YEAR 0 LAUNCH				
Grant Management	Budget	Chief Financial Officer, School Leaders	Year 0	Senior Director of Finance, Chief of Staff
	Create compliance rubric	Chief of Staff	Year 0	General Counsel
	Review performance	Chief of Staff	Year 1-5	CEO, School Leaders
Board Development	Board Recruitment	Executive Director	Year 0	CEO, Chief of Staff
Student Enrollment	Parental Outreach	Executive Director	Year 0	SD for Community Impact/ Family Impact Coordinators
Review of Curriculum	Integrate network curriculum with state standards	Asst. Superintendent	Year 0	Network curriculum specialists
YEAR ONE LAUNCH				
Biweekly Meetings	Review of School Dashboard	CEO	Year 1	Asst. Superintendent
Weekly Coaching Meetings for Fellows and New Leaders	Dashboard and School Review feedback driven goals	VP of Talent Development	Year 1	CEO, Asst. Superintendent, AD of Talent Development
School Reviews 2x annually	School visit, report and debrief school leaders	Asst. Superintendent	Year 1	CEO, VP of Talent Development r, School Leaders

Community engagement is a key part of the project-planning phase of this CSP proposal. In order to actualize a comprehensive outreach strategy, DPPS brought community engagement and student recruitment services in-house prior to the 2015-16 academic year, hiring a Family Impact Coordinator (“FIC”) at each school and a Senior Director of Community Impact at the network level. This team works tirelessly to ensure that all families are engaged with the school, that family and community events are held on a regular basis, and that families are involved in the recruitment of students for new and existing schools. In 2015-16, our New York Community

Impact Team led an enrollment drive, spearheaded by parent canvassers, that resulted in over 17,000 lottery applications for only 1,400 open seats.

In order to better integrate family and community feedback into the planning process for new or turnaround schools, the Senior Director of Community Impact will be on the ground at new sites to form a Family Leadership Council (“FLC”) as early as possible and to train an FIC. The FIC will hold regular meetings in the community in the months leading up to the school’s opening to share information about the schools’ program and to collect feedback from families on the type of events, extracurricular programs, and services they would like to see at the school. The FLC will then play an integral role in planning events based on community feedback and marketing them to the community. The FIC will also lead a team of parent canvassers who will be instrumental in the recruitment of students for a new school.

Community engagement is also an integral part of our student recruitment strategy. As mentioned previously, DPPS intentionally recruits educationally disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities and English learners, by publicizing our services for these students as much as possible during the enrollment process. DPPS also uses traditional marketing techniques, such as the use of advertisements (bus stop, billboard, newspaper), flyers and other promotional materials, and a community open house to introduce prospective families to the DPPS model. Direct mailings, literature drops, and targeting canvassing in low-income housing complexes attracts a large number of students. Additionally, we have included in our application a letter of support from the PVBLIC Foundation, which aggregates unused static and digital advertising space in order to amplify the impact of limited nonprofit marketing budgets and with which DPPS has partnered over the past two student recruitment cycles.

2. BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

DPPS has adopted a hybrid model that incorporates the most effective elements of centralized control at the CMO level and principal autonomy at the school level. To preserve network-wide excellence while encouraging principals to put a unique stamp on their schools, DPPS maintains uniform academic, behavioral, and cultural standards. Organizationally, DPPS believes in relinquishing decision-making authority to the individual most intimately familiar with a specific environment. At the classroom level, teachers are empowered to make instructional choices based on their qualitative and quantitative assessment of how students are absorbing challenging material. At the school level, principals have the authority to implement norms and practices that drive student achievement to the target measures specified in their charter agreements. At the regional level, executive directors have the power to establish standards suitable to unique local operating conditions. In exchange for these specific spheres of autonomy, individuals are held accountable for well-defined outcomes.

To support the development of schools that will help students succeed in college and citizenship, DPPS prioritizes the following organizational support strategies:

Intellectual property and best practices. Educators in the DPPS network have developed a wealth of experience in best practices for classroom instruction and school development. DPPS transforms the best elements of this knowledge into a slate of accessible tools — including materials, lesson plans, curricular services, assessments, data analysis platforms, and classroom management techniques — culled from the efforts of master educators.

Information sharing. As a network of high-performing schools, DPPS encourages principals to innovate in appropriate instructional and organizational ways and affords leaders the latitude to experiment and to document which practices result in improved student learning

outcomes. Subsequently, DPPS facilitates knowledge sharing by using our cloud storage service, staff portal, network-created data platforms, videoconferencing, and in-person summits. When leaders and teachers interact across the network, they build supportive relationships that smooth the transmission of useful information and strategies.

Technical assistance and training. Democracy Prep works with principals, teachers, and operational staff to provide the information, technical assistance, training, and tools needed to improve and expand their schools. Executive directors, principals, and operations managers turn to DPPS when they face specific, acute challenges to gain perspective, expertise, and support.

Brand management. DPPS has established a reputation for producing breakthrough results that raises the profile and credibility of the proposed project. Critically, DPPS sees brand management as mission-critical because of its importance in college admissions and in efforts to recruit principals, teachers, and students.

Quality assurance. DPPS schools and leaders embrace a performance assessment and accountability system. Perhaps most significantly, DPPS conducts intensive semiannual reviews of each school in our network with the twin aims of assessing whether schools are meeting internal expectations and arming leaders with actionable feedback on how to strengthen their schools. Review teams consisting of CMO and school leaders observe instruction, interview staff and students, and scrutinize systems and procedures according to a comprehensive rubric.

DPPS principals complete self-assessments prior to the review, scoring the school against the rubric — which is enclosed in *Appendix H* — and highlighting categories for the review team to emphasize. Once the review has been completed, principals debrief with the review team and receive a written report that captures reviewer notes, unattributed responses from staff interviews, scores within each category, and an overall score for the school. Principals subsequently create

action plans that outline the discrete steps the school will take to address the areas identified in the review report, and network leadership references the reports and the action plans while monitoring for implementation during check-ins over the course of the school year.

During the 2014-15 school year, DPPS launched DP-SPAN, an online platform that affords principals, teachers, and network personnel access to dynamic information on attendance, achievement, and culture. Shared with all staff, DP-SPAN encourages DPPS team members to identify trends, locate areas for improvement, and compare data against other DPPS schools serving similar grade-level configurations. The charts on the site can be manipulated to isolate specific classes, grades, and IEP status. Principals are expected to complete reflections and lead a professional development session for teachers based on their DP-SPAN report every trimester.

Furthermore, DPPS school leaders collaborate with the DPPS Data team to create a monthly dashboard that tracks students' academic and behavioral data and includes other leading indicators such as attendance and student time on task. School leaders and teachers use this data to analyze student behavior trends and how they relate to academic performance before identifying and targeting strategic areas for improvement. These dashboards are summarized in monthly reports distributed to the board of trustees for analysis and ongoing evaluation of school and network leadership and are modified or supplemented if the board requests additional information. This structure enables DPPS to ensure schools are measuring and reporting impact in real time, identifying potential issues proactively, and forging solutions before they escalate.

Strong Authorizer Relationships. Benjamin Feit, Democracy Prep's Chief of Staff, manages the relationships with authorizers, providing new schools and new schools leaders with access to the wealth of experience that the CMO expansion team has in matters of compliance, reporting, and charter development. DPPS also has the support of the authorizers who currently

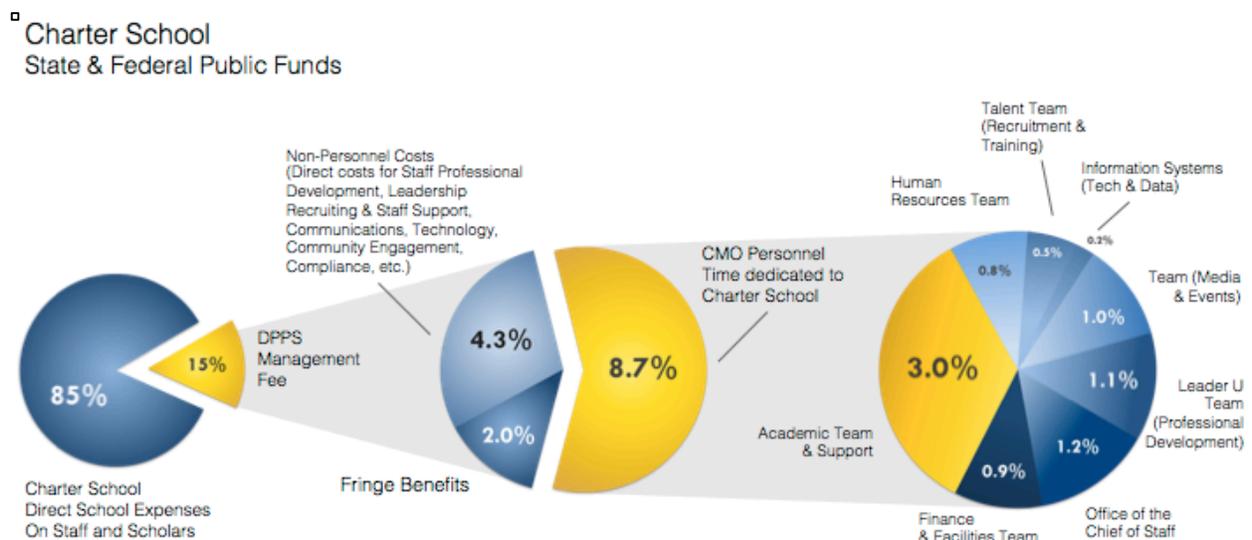
oversee Democracy Prep schools to fairly review additional charter applications from DPPS to serve students attending the persistently low-performing schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, closure, or restructuring under section 1116 of the ESEA.

DPPS has cultivated relationships with authorizers and education departments in existing and potential expansion regions as the letters of support enclosed in *Appendix C* demonstrate.

3. FINANCIAL PLAN AND OPERATING MODEL

DPPS prides itself on operating its schools with the public funds we receive from the city, state, and federal government. Democracy Prep’s financial model has allowed both our existing schools and the CMO to be sustainable exclusively on public funds from inception. At the school level, DPPS uses data to drive decision-making around resource allocation, spending money as close to the student as possible and much less on our comparatively lean administration. At the network level, DPPS receives a management fee for services rendered, structured as a portion of each school’s “non-competitive public revenues” (i.e. funds provided on a per-pupil or entitlement basis). Therefore, the CSP grant will cover the initial planning and start-up costs of opening each new school, but the schools will be entirely self-sufficient once they reach scale.

Figure 18: Management Fee & CMO Services



The schools created through this project will be fully sustainable on public dollars. As schools mature, DPPS is able to cover upfront expenses with central reserves, ensuring there is no delay in service to schools even if a per-pupil or federal grant disbursement is delayed. DPPS also expects to continue to receive additional pre-opening funds for all additional schools built after the period of the grant for school operations. During our initial CSP term, we received planning grants from NewSchools Venture Fund and New Schools for Baton Rouge, and we will actively pursue pre-opening support from the Andre Agassi Foundation For Education, Opportunity 180, New Schools for New Orleans, and the Bainum Family Foundation, each of which has provided a letter of support for Democracy Prep’s proposed CSP project.

Please see Appendix G, the ED524 Form, and the Budget Narrative for additional information on how DPPS will use CSP funding to fulfill our project objectives.

4. PLAN FOR SCHOOL CLOSURE

If a school under DPPS operation is struggling, we will reallocate resources to the school for a fixed period of up to three years depending on the magnitude of the issues. Intervention strategies mirror those DPPS uses to turnaround other failing charter schools, including replacing the school leader with a proven leader, replacing a large number of staff, and flooding the school with extra staff familiar with the DPPS model. Should these interventions fail (which has not happened to date), DPPS will work with its authorizer to find the least disruptive way to cease operation of the school, rather than simply ceasing the CMO relationship with the school and allowing it to continue to ill-serve students. This will include the transfer of students and student records to the school district in which the charter school is located, either to a public school or to another charter school, and the disposition of the school’s assets. Upon dissolution, any funds and equipment remaining in the possession of the failing school that can be attributed to public

funding (after the school's debts and obligations have been paid) shall be paid over to each school district having resident children served by the failing school in the academic year in which the school was dissolved. Each school maintains an escrow account of no less than \$70,000 to pay for expenses that would be associated with a dissolution, should it occur.

5. QUALIFICATIONS OF KEY PROJECT PERSONNEL

The team described below is largely responsible for the successful implementation of Democracy Prep's first CSP grant award, managing a project of similar scope and size to fruition. With an empirically validated record of successful expanding and replicating a proven model, the diverse project team is uniquely well qualified in their complementary capacities to further lead the expansion of Democracy Prep's network of high-performing charter schools.

Please see Appendix B for resumes of key personnel and a 2016-17 organizational chart.

Katie Duffy, Chief Executive Officer. Over the past nine years, Ms. Duffy has held positions of progressively increasing responsibility at DPPS. First as Director of External Affairs, then as Chief of Staff and Chief Operating Officer, and finally assuming the role of Chief Executive Officer in 2013, Ms. Duffy has strengthened and energized Democracy Prep's DREAM Team of school leaders, led a diverse team of senior directors, worked closely with our FLCs, and built deep relationships with our boards of trustees. In 2011, Ms. Duffy led New York's first successful charter school turnaround as Interim Executive Director of Harlem Prep. As CEO, Ms. Duffy continues to ensure that we sacrifice neither instructional quality nor institutional identity while providing transformational educational opportunities at scale. Ms. Duffy wasted little time putting her imprint on the organization, restructuring the network academic team, placing a renewed focus on developing and retaining top internal talent, revamping *Leader U* to ensure new and existing schools continue to be helmed by well-prepared and mission-aligned

adults, and charting the network’s growth plans. As DPPS matures, we continue to rely heavily on Ms. Duffy’s leadership, vision, and familiarity with the culture and values that set us apart from other networks doing outstanding work for students who desperately need great schools.

Lisa Friscia, Vice President of Talent Development. Ms. Friscia joined Democracy Prep in 2007 as a founding history teacher, and in 2009 became the founding principal of Democracy Prep’s first high school. Under her leadership, Regents scores consistently outpaced the district by a large margin, and Democracy Prep Charter High School earned an “A” on its first graded Progress Report in 2013. The high school’s inaugural class graduated with 100% of students accepted into at least two colleges and universities. In 2013, Ms. Friscia transitioned to Assistant Superintendent of High Schools, helping to found the network’s second high school, and ensuring our second graduating class earned 100% college acceptance. In her new role, Ms. Friscia develops Democracy Prep’s leadership and educator talent pool. She graduated *magna cum laude* from Amherst College with degrees in American Studies and Economics, and has earned a Master’s in Social Studies Education from Queens College and a Master’s in School Leadership from Teacher’s College Summer Principal Academy.

Benjamin Feit, Chief of Staff (Project Director). Mr. Feit joined Democracy Prep in 2012 and has served as Chief of Staff since 2014. He is responsible for the coordination of interdepartmental output, the submission of all major reports and compliance filings, and the development and execution of organizational regional expansion strategies. Notably, Mr. Feit oversaw the successful growth of the DPPS network into three new regions after DPPS was awarded the federal CSP grant in 2012, providing critical pre-opening and operational guidance to school leaders and staff as the network expanded to serve nearly 5,000 students. Mr. Feit holds

a BA in History *cum laude* from Yale University and a JD from Duke University School of Law *magna cum laude*. He is a licensed member of the New York and Massachusetts State Bars.

Gregory Spreeman, Chief Financial Officer. Mr. Spreeman joined DPPS as Chief Financial Officer in October 2015. Prior to joining the DPPS team, Mr. Spreeman held the position of CFO or Controller with several large firms, including Sims Metal Management, where he managed over \$3 billion in revenues. His first projects with DPPS included tightening management of credit card services and streamlining the procurement process. Mr. Spreeman holds an MBA from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Finance degree from City College, New York.

Linda Jones Easton, Vice President of Human Resources. Ms. Easton is a Manhattan resident whose career has included positions with the Montclair, NJ Board of Education, Harlem Dowling Children’s Services, and Sheltering Arms Children’s Service, where she served for over 20 years. Ms. Easton has been a member of the Board of Directors of the Immaculate Conception Elementary School in Montclair, Manhattan’s Creative Arts Workshop for Children, Upward, Inc., the Brooklyn Charter School, BELL New York, and the District Council 1707, Local 215 Health and Benefit Fund. She is a founding Board member of Harlem Day Charter School.

Jonathan Howard, Vice President of Recruitment. Mr. Howard joined Democracy Prep in its second year after serving as a teacher and Teach For America Corps Member, where he taught students with special needs in Harlem. Mr. Howard also serves the Harlem community through his work as a member of the Board of Trustees of St. HOPE Leadership Academy Charter School. An Arizona native, Mr. Howard is a proud alumnus of Arizona State University, from which he earned a degree in Management in 2006. He has since earned a Master’s degree in Teaching from Pace University in New York City and an MBA from the University of North Carolina’s Kenan-Flagler Business School.

Kent Anker, General Counsel. Mr. Anker is DPPS’s chief legal officer responsible for compliance with federal and state laws, special education, student discipline, employment matters, real estate and other transactions, contracts, and litigation. Mr. Anker joined DPPS in 2014 after having previously served on the Board of Trustees of Harlem Success Academy 1 and Education Reform Now Advocacy and as Chair of the Committee on Education of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York. Prior to joining DPPS, Mr. Anker was a litigation partner at Friedman Kaplan Seiler & Adelman LP, a Manhattan-based law firm, specializing in complex commercial litigation and white-collar defense. Mr. Anker is currently on the Board of the American Swiss Foundation and serves as President of the American Swiss Foundation’s Young Leaders Alumni Council. Mr. Anker graduated from Harvard Law School *magna cum laude* and from Wesleyan University with departmental honors.

Alice Maggin, Senior Director of Communications. Ms. Maggin began her career in the television production field, working at various times as a producer and researcher for WCBS-TV News, assignment editor to the CBS Dallas Bureau, and a producer for both ABC News and World News. She joined the Democracy Prep DREAM Team in 2012 and has overseen DPPS’s Branding and Communications strategies, ensuring that all schools are provided with consistent and high quality promotional services and branded materials. Ms. Maggin’s team is also responsible for expanding Democracy Prep’s online presence through use of social media channels and website development. Ms. Maggin graduated *cum laude* from Connecticut College with a bachelor’s degree in Power and Oppression Studies, with a minor in Studio Art.

Ralph Johnson, Senior Director of College Success. Mr. Johnson manages the college access and college persistence strategies for the network. As Democracy Prep continues to grow, preparing an ever larger number of students for success in the college of their choice, Mr.

Johnson leads an expanding team of college counselors and alumni support managers who ensure that all DPPS students match with an appropriate institution of postsecondary education, successfully transition to the college environment, and remain engaged in their education beyond their time at Democracy Prep. Prior to joining DPPS, Mr. Johnson was the program director of the College Advising Corps at Brown University and served on the mayor of Providence's Children and Youth Cabinet. Mr. Johnson earned a BA from Brown University.

Adrienne Nyamsi, Senior Director of Community Impact. Ms. Nyamsi is a campaign operative and education equity advocate who has worked on political and issues-based campaigns in leadership capacities across New York State. In her role as Senior Director of Community Impact, Ms. Nyamsi oversees a team of school-based Family Impact Coordinators and drives the network's strategy for parent engagement and student recruitment. Under her guidance, the DPPS student enrollment campaign in 2016 yielded a record 17,400 applications from families in New York for 1,400 available seats. Prior to rejoining DPPS, Ms. Nyamsi directed campaign efforts for Tutor Our Children and successfully organized more than 5,000 parents and tutoring providers to save free tutoring for 90,000 low-income children across New York State. Additionally, Ms. Nyamsi has developed talent at numerous education nonprofit organizations including New Leaders for New Schools and Achievement First. Most recently, Ms. Nyamsi was the Program Manager, Elected Leadership at Leadership For Educational Equity, a nonpartisan leadership development organization working to inspire a diverse group of leaders to become civically and politically engaged. Ms. Nyamsi holds a BS from Hunter College in Political Science and Music Theory and has received campaign operations training through Emily's List.

Carlos Mojica, Senior Director of Information Systems. Mr. Mojica joined Democracy Prep in 2012 as a Data Analyst and has ascended through several data, reporting, and systems support

roles. As Senior Director of Information Systems, Mr. Mojica has overseen the expansion of the network's technology integration plan, including the optimization of data management systems, ensuring every school and every classroom is equipped to provide the best possible education to our students. Mr. Mojica also leads the federal and state accountability processes for each school, overseeing grants administration and reporting. He holds a BA from Johns Hopkins University.

Margaret Marrer, Assistant Regional Superintendent. Ms. Marrer joins the CMO in the role of Regional Assistant Superintendent while continuing her tenure as Executive Director of Democracy Prep Endurance Charter School. A seasoned educator, Ms. Marrer brings nearly a decade of experience in teaching, developing and leading schools to the project team. In her new role she will coach and support DPPS principals leading schools outside of New York while continuing to set the vision and provide oversight for the Harlem schools that she helped found. Ms. Marrer holds a BS from Georgetown University, a Master's in Teaching from PACE University, and a Master's of Educational Leadership from Columbia University.

Ajaka Roth, Assistant Director of Talent Development. Ms. Roth joined DPPS in 2010 as a founding teacher at Democracy Prep Harlem and has held a variety of positions within the network including Summer School Director, Network Literacy Coach, Assistant Principal, Principal, and now Assistant Director of Talent Development. Ms. Roth uses her experience in school leadership to coach and develop aspiring school leaders to take on their own DPPS schools, creating a pool of well-developed talent to help the network achieve its expansion goals. Ms. Roth is a certified special educator, holding a Master's degree in Special Education from Long Island University as well as a BA in Communications from the University of Maryland.

E. QUALITY OF THE EVALUATION PLAN

As a prior CSP grant recipient, DPPS has proven our capacity to collect and report on the performance data required by a grant of this magnitude. During the grant period, we will report annually on progress towards project objectives as set forth above in Section II.C.2.

As DPPS replicates and expands, we will continue to work with external evaluators to perform independent quantitative and qualitative analyses of our program and its impacts. We are also committed to widely disseminating the findings of our independent evaluations, making our results and best practices available to educators, policymakers, and the public. Quantitative impact analyses will continue to use designs that meet the highest standards for evidence as defined by the Institute for Education Sciences' What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards.

Going forward, we will engage with independent researchers to conduct studies on four project-related outcomes: (1) the impact of attending a DPPS school on student achievement and outcomes, including (but not limited to) achievement on state assessments; (2) the impact of exposure to the newly-implemented DPPS model on students attending turnaround schools; (3) variation in outcomes across DPPS schools, particularly ones that can be linked to specific policies or practices; and (4) our impact on civic engagement of students, alumni, and parents.

Student Achievement. As it has with Dobbie and Corcoran in the past, DPPS will contract with with Dr. Corcoran and Dr. Cordes as external, independent evaluators to design and conduct an experimental study to provide updated estimates of the causal impact of attending a DPPS school on student outcomes. The Corcoran and Cordes study will be a randomized control trial designed to estimate the causal effect of attending a DPPS school on daily attendance and student performance on state standardized tests of mathematics and reading. Its design, which relies on DPPS' randomized admissions lottery, is expected to meet the What

Works Clearinghouse’s (“WWC”) standards without reservations.²⁸ Each year, significantly more students apply to DPPS than can be admitted. Through our lottery, DPPS effectively creates equivalent treatment and control groups, in which “treated” students have the opportunity to attend DPPS, while “control” students do not. The equivalence of these groups at baseline is a necessary condition to meet WWC’s highest standards for evidence.

Phase one of the Corcoran and Cordes study (in 2014 and 2015) estimated the impact of attending a DPPS school on average daily attendance and student performance on state tests in mathematics and reading. In this second phase, the researchers will use earlier cohorts from DPPS to estimate effects on longer-run outcomes, including New York State Regents exams (taken in high school), credit accumulation, high school graduation, and college enrollment, as well as student engagement and parental satisfaction. Through an agreement with New York City Department of Education, the research team successfully matched more than 90 percent of all lottery participants—both treatment and control students—to administrative data on student outcomes. The availability of data for students who enrolled in DPPS *and* students who applied to DPPS but were (at random) not selected to attend permits a rigorous estimate of the impact of attending DPPS.

²⁸ The study design is identical to the one used by Angrist, Cohodes, Dynarski, Pathak, and Walters (2014), which was found in April 2016 by the What Works Clearinghouse to meet WWC group design standards without reservations. See <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/singlestudy/review.aspx?sid=223>. The research team estimated both “intent-to-treat” and “complier average causal effects” (CACE). The former is the difference in outcomes between those given the opportunity to attend DPPS (some of whom opted not to do so) and those not awarded this opportunity. The latter is the impact of actually attending a DPPS school.

As Democracy Prep continues to expand, it is imperative that growth does not come at the expense of quality. With each additional DPPS cohort and school, we have greater statistical power to detect overall impact on academic outcomes, and causal effects for subgroups of interest, including low-income students (those eligible for free or reduced price meals), English language learners, and special education students.²⁹ With additional years of data, we will have more opportunities to track students over time and estimate long-run effects for earlier cohorts. Special attention will be paid to new schools funded under the CSP grant, and these analyses will inform DPPS efforts to improve its model, as well as provide information for further replication.

Turnaround. As a national leader in charter school turnaround, DPPS has consistently and purposefully demonstrated that better results do not derive exclusively from higher spending. Whereas the traditional slow-growth, *de novo* model of charter school expansion lends itself to greater predictability and ease of programmatic replication, turnarounds of fully-grown schools slated for closure or required to take dramatic remedial actions are fraught with unique challenges. Overhauling a culture inimical to student learning and achievement that has taken root in a school is profoundly difficult and requires highly skilled leaders and teachers. Nonetheless, DPPS has succeeded in doing exactly that. Accordingly, DPPS is determined to provide the empirical foundation for convincing policymakers and practitioners that turnarounds are viable interventions that must be funded and pursued on a broader scale.

²⁹ Statistical power has not been a concern for the earlier studies, at least for estimating overall impact, since (1) the number of DPPS applicants in each cohort was large, and (2) effect sizes were substantial, ranging from 0.10 to 0.25 standard deviations. These studies did not, however, have large sample sizes for every subgroup of interest.

DPPS research partners will combine two rigorous designs for estimating impact in its turnaround schools. The first, a randomized control trial, will meet WWC Evidence Standards without reservations. The second, a quasi-experimental within-student difference-in-difference design is expected to meet WWC Evidence Standards with reservations. The dual approach is necessitated by the fact that only newly admitted students will be admitted via random lottery. Legacy students will be guaranteed a seat in the school, and remain at their parent’s discretion. That families who choose to remain may differ in unobservable ways from those who leave complicates a comparison with students admitted randomly.³⁰

For legacy students, the difference-in-difference analysis will instead compare year-to-year changes in outcomes with: (1) year-to-year changes for the same students, prior to the turnaround; and (2) year-to-year changes for observationally similar students attending other district and charter schools. The objective will be to test whether learning gains are significantly larger for legacy students after the transition than before, as compared in both periods to observationally similar students. Outcomes to be studied include: achievement on the year-end state assessments for students in tested grades, attendance, and responses to surveys of student and parent satisfaction.

Variation in outcomes across schools. As the DPPS network of schools grows, our research partners will have opportunities to examine variation in student impact across schools, and connect this variation to differences in policies, practices, and leadership. For example, special attention will be paid to new schools funded under the CSP grant, to determine whether

³⁰ See also Abdulkadiroğlu, A., Angrist, J. D., Hull, P. D., & Pathak, P. A. (2014). *Charters Without Lotteries: Testing Takeovers in New Orleans and Boston*. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 20792.

effect sizes are comparable to those in older DPPS schools. Along the same lines, we will be able to test for differences in impact across schools led by principals trained under the *Leader U* program. These analyses will inform DPPS efforts to improve its model, as well as provide information for replication.

Civic Engagement. Using the same lottery-based, experimental design described above, researchers will focus on the impact of DPPS on students' (and their parents') civic outcomes. Specific outcomes of interest include: parental and alumni voter registration and participation; citizenship exam registrations and results; and incarceration rates. We expect that these and other outcomes can be analyzed by matching DPPS and district records with administrative records from other agencies, following proper safeguards for confidentiality. This study will function in tandem with the analysis of Democracy Prep's ongoing impact on academic outcomes to address the concern that a substantial focus on civic engagement might detract from students' core academic competency.

DPPS has included in this application letters of support from Mathematica Policy Research, an organization with deep expertise in conducting experimental and quasi-experimental impact analyses in education, and the Institute for Education and Social Policy at New York University indicating their willingness to work with DPPS indicating their willingness to work with DPPS in designing objective and rigorous evaluations that will address each of the analyses described above.

Dissemination

DPPS will actively disseminate all lessons learned and results obtained through the proposed project through a variety of mechanisms including:

- Publishing all data related to the project and its demonstrated effectiveness in a highly-accessible final report issued by the independent evaluator and actively sharing interim data about program design;
- Releasing a best practices manual derived from the findings of the evaluation;
- Presenting at national and local charter school conferences, such as the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools Conference, and to traditional public school audiences;
- Supporting presentations by the independent evaluator at relevant policy and education conferences and for interested federal and state policymakers;
- Encouraging school visits by interested stakeholders to enable them to observe the DPPS model in action.

Implications

The findings of these studies, especially the examination of Democracy Prep’s impact on students throughout the school turnaround process, will have important implications for DPPS’s future expansion strategies. If the long-term results yielded by these studies prove that our model has a similar effect on students in a turnaround environment as in a nascent school environment, then it will become all the more important to focus our expansion strategy on turnarounds, where we can make a positive impact quickly on a large number of students from a failing school. These studies will also yield results that show the effectiveness of our civics program, which could require us to reevaluate the program in order to share best practices more broadly or to redesign our programs to ensure that they have as much impact as possible on our student and parent community.

III. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- (a) See Section II.C.2 and II.E for descriptions of expansion objectives and the methods by which DPPS will determine our progress towards meeting them.
- (b) See Sections II.A.1-3 for a description of DPPS’s educational model, program, and CMO operations including governance, daily operations, financial management, human resources management, and instructional management.
- (c) See Section II.D.3 for a description of how each school receives its share of federal funding.
- (d) See Sections II.A.2-3 and II.B for descriptions of Democracy Prep’s educational program.
- (e) See Section II.D.2 for a description of the administrative relationship between DPPS and its authorized public chartering agencies.
- (f) See Section II.D.3 for a description of the financial sustainability plan that allows for the continued operation of DPPS schools after the grant period has ended.
- (g) See Section II.D.1 for a description of how community members will be involved in the planning of new schools.
- (h) This application does not request waivers.
- (i) See Section II.D.3 and the *Budget Narrative* for a description of how grant funds will be used.
- (j) See Section II.D.1 for a description of student recruitment processes.
- (k) See Section II.B.3 for a description of LEA compliance with IDEA.
- (l) In the past three years, DPPS and its schools have not had any significant compliance issues, as defined in the Federal Register Notice, that could lead to the revocation of a school’s charter.
- (m) See Section II.A.1 and Appendices E and F for information on each DPPS-operated school.
- (n) See Section II.A.5 and *Appendix F* for information on student academic performance, attendance and retention, graduation, and college attendance and persistence data.