



**PROJECT NARRATIVE**  
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 1 – EQUITAS OPERATES HIGH-QUALITY CHARTER SCHOOLS ..... 1**

**ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 2 – LOW-INCOME DEMOGRAPHICS..... 5**

**COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 1(B) – EQUITAS’ GROWTH WILL SERVE STUDENTS WHO OTHERWISE WOULD ATTEND SCHOOLS IDENTIFIED FOR IMPROVEMENT (4 PTS). 5**

**COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 2 -- PROMOTING DIVERSITY (3 PTS) ..... 7**

**COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 3 -- NOVICE APPLICANT (2 PTS)..... 9**

**INVITATIONAL PRIORITY – RIGOROUS EVALUATION..... 10**

**SELECTION CRITERION (A). EQUITAS IS A HIGH-QUALITY APPLICANT (50 PTS)..... 10**

**SELECTION CRITERION (B). EQUITAS’ GROWTH IN PICO-UNION WILL HELP THOUSANDS MORE EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS MEET/EXCEED STATE STANDARDS AND BE COLLEGE AND CAREER-READY (10 PTS)..... 29**

**SELECTION CRITERION (C). QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN (10 PTS)..... 37**

**SELECTION CRITERION (D). QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PERSONNEL (20 PTS) ..... 41**

**SELECTION CRITERION (E). QUALITY OF THE EVALUATION PLAN (10 PTS) ..... 55**

**APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS ..... 58**

## **ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 1 – EQUITAS OPERATES HIGH-QUALITY CHARTER SCHOOLS**

Equitas Academy Charter Schools (Equitas), a small Los Angeles charter network, meets Absolute Priority 1, as all three of our schools are "high-quality" and have increased student achievement and closed historic achievement gaps for "educationally disadvantaged" students with academic outcomes that exceed neighborhood, district and statewide averages. Equitas' scholars are 97% Latino (the remaining 3% non-white) with 95% qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL); 11% have disabilities (SpEd). In 2015-16, 47% of our scholars were English Learners (EL) – including 80% of incoming Kindergarteners. (cde.dataquest.gov.<sup>1</sup>)

Our Founder and CEO, Malka Borrego, was raised in the Pico-Union community in which all of our Academies are located. Pico-Union is a densely populated, impoverished neighborhood adjacent downtown Los Angeles, comprised largely of recent Latino immigrants. Ms. Borrego's commitment to and success in improving educational options for this high-need community was recently recognized with the California Charter Schools Association's **2016 Hart Vision Leader of the Year Award**, established to "annually recognize and honor individuals demonstrating outstanding leadership and excellence in education." (See App. H.2.) Prior to opening the first Equitas Academy, Ms. Borrego participated in the prestigious Building Excellent Schools (BES) fellowship, a national program that has led to the opening of 95 charter schools operated by 47 different organizations located in high-need urban areas nationally. (App. H.2., BES 2015 Report Card.) Today, BES also has recognized Equitas as a member of "The Network," a select group of the highest performing BES schools nationwide: "Network schools

---

<sup>1</sup> Per grant instructions, detailed citations are included in the Bibliography at App. H.1. Student demographic and achievement data throughout this application is sourced from California's publicly available Dataquest system unless otherwise noted. (cde.ca.gov/Dataquest.)

demonstrate strong academic results, sound organizational practices, and the genuine ability to close the achievement gap in their communities.” (*Id.*) The Network challenges and supports high-capacity leaders to examine and improve the quality and growth of their organizations.

Equitas currently includes the following schools:

**Equitas Academy Charter School (EQ)** opened in 2009 and currently serves 450 scholars in grades TK-4.<sup>2</sup> EQ achieved a 2013 Academic Performance Index (API) score of 894/1000, a statewide rank of 9/10 and a similar schools rank of 10/10 (DataQuest). This ranking indicates that Equitas is one of the highest achieving schools in the state of California.<sup>3</sup> As detailed in Section “Selection Criterion” (SC) A., below, in 2015 EQ – both school-wide and for every subgroup -- outperformed the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and state averages in both ELA and Math on California’s new CAASPP/Smarter Balanced Assessments.

---

<sup>2</sup> While not required for charter schools under the CA Education Code, Equitas offers Transitional Kindergarten (TK) to all eligible students who turn 5 between Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup> and December 2<sup>nd</sup>. (Cal. Ed. Code §48000(c).)

<sup>3</sup> California recently transitioned from the old CA Standards Test (CST) and Academic Performance Index (API) measures, to a new Common Core-aligned system. The CSTs were given in grades 2-11 for ELA and Math, and select grades for science, with CDE issuing APIs based on demographics and test scores. API scores (school-wide and statistically significant subgroups) were used both for state and NCLB AYP accountability criteria.

In spring 2015, the new CA Assessment of Academic Performance and Progress (CAASPP) was administered in grades 3-8 and grade 11, though a new accountability metric will not be released until 2017. There is no state test data available for 2014. For EQ, we have included data from 2011-2013 and 2015; Equitas Academy #2 opened in 2013-14 and thus only has 2015 CAASPP data; Equitas Academy #3, which opened in 2015-16, does not yet enroll students in the grade levels tested, but we have included what data we have for the life of these schools. (81 FR 28837, grant Notice of Invitation (NIA).)

EQ recently was recognized as a ***Gold Ribbon School*** by the California Department of Education (CDE). This prestigious recognition has been awarded to fewer than 13% of the schools in California (in 2015, the designation was awarded to middle and high schools; 2016 recognized elementary schools). (App. H.2.) EQ previously was recognized in 2014 as a ***California Distinguished School*** under CDE's former recognition program. The new Gold Ribbon recognizes schools that have made gains in implementing the new Common Core-aligned content and performance standards adopted by California's Board of Education.

**Equitas Academy #2 (EQ2)** opened in 2013-14 to serve middle grades with a class of 100 5<sup>th</sup> graders; in 2016-2017 it will reach full capacity with 400 scholars in 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades. EQ2 also has been designated a ***Gold Ribbon School*** by the CDE. On the 2015 CAASPPs, EQ2's 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders Math and ELA proficiency rates were higher than neighboring middle schools and LAUSD averages. (See more details in Section SC.A.1.b., below.)

**Equitas Academy #3 (EQ3)** opened in 2015 to help meet overwhelming demand. Our flagship school, EQ, receives more applications each year than total enrollment – 647 applicants for 2016-17, with a total of 450 scholars enrolled in the entire school. In 2015-16, EQ3 served 100 TK/K scholars. The school will grow one grade level and 100 scholars each year to ultimately serve 500 in TK-4 by 2019-20. While state test data is not yet available, NWEA MAPs assessments and other data are all very promising. (See Section SC.A.1.c., below.)

**Equitas Academy #4 (EQ4)** already has been authorized by LAUSD (all four of our charters are authorized by LAUSD). EQ4 will be our second middle school and open in 2017 with 100 5<sup>th</sup> graders, growing annually to 400 5-8<sup>th</sup> graders.

In addition to recognition within California, Equitas also has been recognized nationally for success in closing the achievement gap. In March 2016, Education Cities released the ***Education Equality Index***, the first national comparative measure of a socio-economic

achievement gap, focused on the nation’s 100 largest cities. The report’s methodology gathered publicly available test data from 2011 to 2014 and compared statewide standardized test scores from low-income students with their more advantaged peers. The data – the largest data set of its kind -- spans 42 states, 15,000 cities, 78,000 schools, and 43 million children.

(educationequalityindex.org.) Both California and LAUSD were rated as having “massive” socio-economic achievement gaps.

Nationwide, the achievement gap stagnated or grew between 2011 and 2014 . . . . [O]nly two of 10 students in the[se] cities attend schools that are closing the achievement gap. . . . Only six percent of students from low-income families in the largest 100 U.S. cities attend a school with no achievement gap.

(*Id.*) In the 42 states that were evaluated, the Index identified up to 10 schools per state serving a majority low-income population that have demonstrated “small or nonexistent achievement gaps.” *EQ was one of the 10 schools in all of California recognized for having the lowest achievement gaps in the State.*

*Equitas*, a Latin word for justice, equity, and fairness, has a mission to provide a structured, achievement-based community that prepares students to graduate from four-year colleges and universities. A recent White House Report noted that “While half of all people from high-income families have a bachelor’s degree by age 25, just 1 in 10 people from low-income families do.” (White House Report 2014; NSC Report 2014.)<sup>4</sup> That ratio is even lower in Pico-Union, where only 6.7% of our neighborhood’s residents over age 25 have a four-year degree and **46.6% of our neighborhood residents did not complete high school.**

(factfinder.census.gov.) At *Equitas*, we believe “College Prep Begins in Kindergarten,” and we infuse a college preparation mindset into every aspect of school life. Through a strong culture

---

<sup>4</sup> See also Hammond, 2007 (students from families with low levels of parental educational attainment are at a greater statistical risk of dropping out of secondary school).

and a relentless mission-driven focus on ensuring that our students are college and career-ready, we have demonstrated that even our City’s most “at-risk” children can achieve academic success.

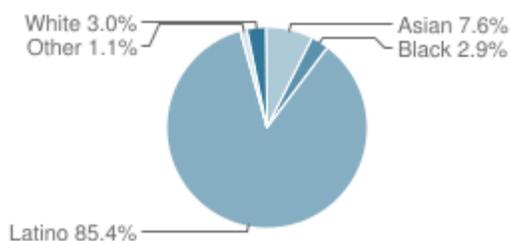
### **ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 2 – LOW-INCOME DEMOGRAPHICS**

Equitas meets this Absolute Priority: Equitas' three existing schools each serve 93-95%

### **COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 1(B) – EQUITAS’ GROWTH WILL SERVE STUDENTS**

Equitas’ expansion and replication “will occur in partnership with, and will be designed to assist, one or more LEAs in implementing academic or structural interventions to serve students attending schools identified for improvement, corrective action, closure, or restructuring under section 1116 of the ESEA.” (NIA (referencing 75 FR 66363).) All Equitas Academies are intentionally located in Pico-Union, a 1.67 square mile neighborhood centered by the intersection of Pico Boulevard and Union Avenue, adjacent to downtown Los Angeles.

The population growth pattern in Pico-Union illustrates an extraordinarily high density in this predominantly Latino community (adjacent to Koreatown, thus with a growing Asian population): there are 25,352 people per square mile, compared to 2,420 in L.A. County and



8,092 per square mile in the City of L.A. (Census.)

In addition:

- 64.6% of residents are foreign-born; Mexican (43%) and Salvadoran (9%) are the most common ancestries. (*L.A. Times Mapping*, 2016.)
- 90% of residents > age 5 in zip code 90006 speak a language other than English at home.
- Median household income is just \$31,403 in zip code 90006 and \$28,953 in 90015, and more than 40% of families with children under 18 live below the federal poverty line.<sup>5</sup> Only 9.5% of occupants in the neighborhood are home-owners. (Census.)
- Pico-Union ranks 38<sup>th</sup> for violent crimes out of 209 neighborhoods tracked by the *Los Angeles Times*. Over the past three months, this small 1.67 square mile neighborhood averaged 7.5 violent crimes and 17.7 property crimes *per week*. (*L.A. Times Mapping*.) Not surprisingly, gang involvement in the neighborhood is significant.

In Pico-Union, the majority of students are attending schools that are, by the State’s own definitions, failing. The five nearest elementary schools, three nearest middle schools, and three nearest high schools to EQ have been designated “Program Improvement” (PI) by the CDE – determined via two years of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measures for Title I schools. Schools in PI must meet all AYP criteria for two cycles in order to exit PI. Most of the Pico-Union neighborhood schools have been in PI for seven or more years; Berendo MS and Belmont HS have been in PI for 19 consecutive years, since the program was established. (See App. F.) This grant will help ensure that 2,400 more students in Pico-Union can access small, safe, high-performing public schools.

---

<sup>5</sup> A family of four qualifies for free lunch in 2016-17 with an annual income of \$31,590 (Food and Nutrition Service, 2016); most Equitas families are well below that threshold.

**COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 2 -- PROMOTING DIVERSITY (3 PTS)**

**(a) Equitas promotes diversity:** 100% of our scholars are non-white, 95% qualify for FRPL, 37% are current EL (with another 46% reclassified fluent-English proficient (RFEP)), and 11% are students with disabilities. Across our three schools, an average of 40% of our scholars’ parents do not have a high school diploma, and only 14% have a college degree.

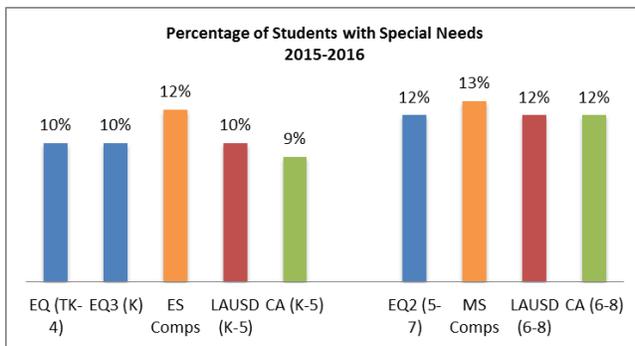
2015-2016 Demographic Data				
	Equitas	Equitas #2	Equitas #3	Equitas Network Average
Enrollment	450	298	100	848
2015-16 % of students who are:				
FRPL	95%	95%	93%	95%
English Learners	40%	17%	80%	37%
RFEP	50%	51%	10%	46%
Special Education	10%	12%	10%	11%
Hispanic/Latino	97%	96%	98%	97%
African American	1%	2%	2%	1%
Asian	2%	1%	0%	1%
White	0%	0%	0%	0%
Two + Races	0%	0%	0%	0%
Parent Education Levels				
No HS Degree	39%	44%	26%	40%
HS No College	30%	28%	31%	30%
Some College	17%	14%	17%	16%
College / Grad School	12%	14%	23%	14%

Equitas ensures that all families in our community learn about our schools and have an equal opportunity to attend, as described in our charter petitions.<sup>6</sup> Board members, the leadership, operational staff, teachers, and parents have walked door to door to ensure enrollment goals were met. Mailing lists are used to invite prospective families to our schools, school

---

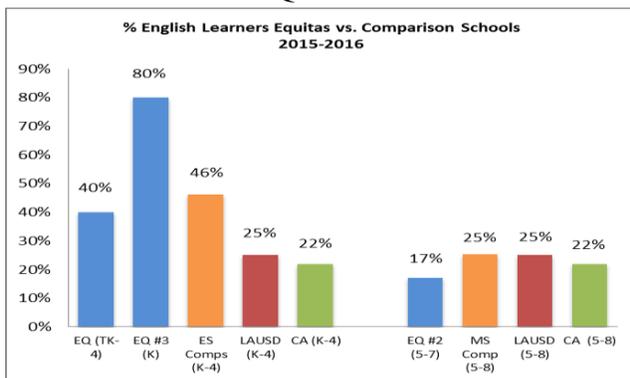
<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that in California, charter schools do not receive funding for transportation of students. (LAO Report, 2016). While the CA Education Code requires that all charters make enrollment available to any resident of California, the reality for Equitas is that the overwhelming majority of our scholars come from within walking distance of our schools.

leaders organize open houses, and school staff partner with local agencies to inform the community about Equitas. In addition, existing families assist in the recruitment of new students. Our admissions and enrollment policies and procedures are consistent with California law, LAUSD policies and federal requirements, including the Charter Schools Program Non-Regulatory Guidance. As required in California, Equitas does not consider a student's race/ethnicity, disability, gender, or other protected characteristics in the enrollment process. (Cal Ed. Code § 47605(d)(1) and §220; CA Prop. 209.) Equitas receives far more applications for enrollment than spaces available, thus admission is determined by a lottery. Currently enrolled students, siblings of admitted students, and children of teachers and staff (up to a cap of 10% of enrollment) are exempt from the lottery. California law requires that preference be given for in-district residents. Equitas has and will conduct its lotteries in compliance with all applicable laws and guidance, including the terms of this grant.



**(b) Equitas serves SpEd students at**

school rate of 9%. EQ2 middle school has a 12% SpEd rate, comparable to LAUSD's middle



school rate of 13% and equal to the state's

1

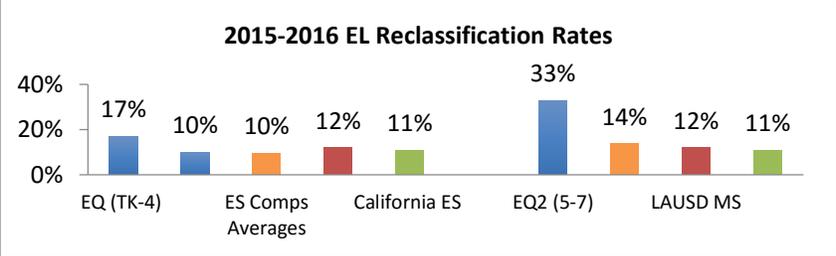
(

ls

(

14% SpEd respectively, slightly higher yet comparable to Equitas.

**(c) Equitas serves ELs at a comparable rate:** as illustrated in the graphic, 40% of EQ’s elementary students are ELs and a full 80% of EQ3’s enrollment in 2015-16 (all in grade TK/K) were EL. The nearest five elementary schools’ EL enrollment ranges from 34-65%. District and statewide data are not available by grade level, but LAUSD’s total K-12 enrollment is 25% EL



and the rate is 22% statewide. (See App. F.) At EQ2, 17% of our middle grades students are EL,

comparable to 23-29% at the MS Comps. Notably, as illustrated here, Equitas has realized a high reclassification rate each year – from 17-51% annually at EQ and 33-44% at EQ2 -- significantly higher than the Comps, district and state averages each year.<sup>8</sup> (Appendix F contains detailed data sets across each several metrics with school-, district- and state-wide analysis including subgroup comparisons, for at least three years, as available.)

**COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 3 -- NOVICE APPLICANT (2 PTS)**

Equitas Academies and its three charter schools have never received a Charter Schools Program Replication and Expansion Grant, either individually or as part of a group application, and have not had any active federal discretionary grant in the past five years.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> While the 10% reclassification rate for EQ3 in 2015-16 is lower than Equitas averages, the overwhelming majority of these very young EL scholars in grades TK/K are on track to be reclassified within 2-3 years of enrollment.

<sup>9</sup> Equitas has received competitive, peer-reviewed grants from the CDE’s Public Charter Schools Grant Program (PCSGP) for start-up funding for each of its three schools; the grant for EQ3 is

## INVITATIONAL PRIORITY – RIGOROUS EVALUATION

In partnership with the RAND Corporation, Equitas proposes in this grant to engage in a formal external evaluation of its replication and expansion efforts. (See Section SC.E., below.) In addition, RAND and Equitas plan to seek additional private funding to engage in a random control trial or a quasi-experimental design study (school by school comparison) of Equitas’ academic outcomes compared to schools with similar student demographics, to help identify the key replicable elements of Equitas’ success: which specific aspects of the Equitas model are leading to higher student academic achievement outcomes and closing the achievement gap. We anticipate that this study will meet *What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards* and provide important proof points for further replication of the Equitas model.

### SELECTION CRITERION (A). EQUITAS IS A HIGH-QUALITY APPLICANT (50 PTS)

#### **(1) EQUITAS CONSISTENTLY DEMONSTRATES EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT FOR OUR SCHOLARS, ALL OF WHOM ARE “EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED.” (20 PTS)**

Across all metrics, Equitas has realized remarkable student achievement outcomes over the past seven years with a population that is entirely “educationally disadvantaged,” (“low-income, . . . English learners, . . . children with disabilities, and neglected or delinquent

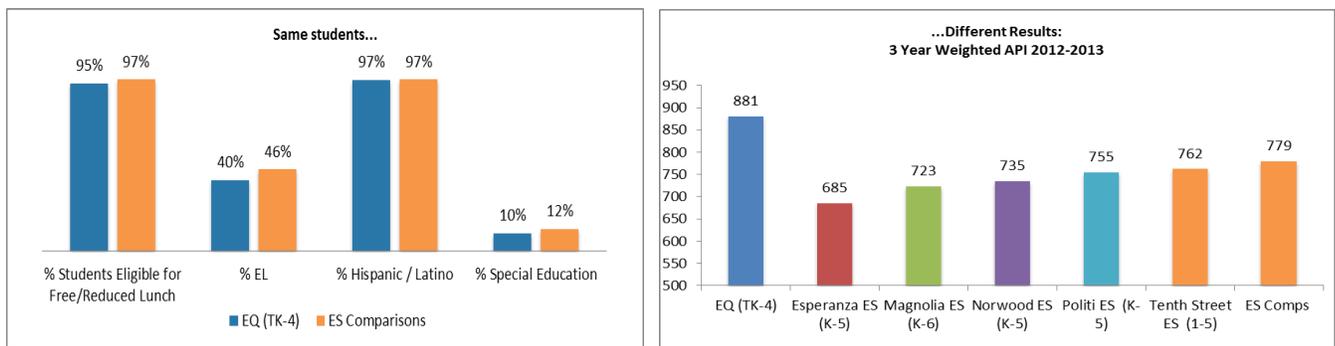
---

due to end on July 31, 2016, before our 2<sup>nd</sup> year of operations commences. Another PCSGP grant has been awarded for EQ4, though the official Grant Award Notice has not yet been issued. We anticipate a two-year term starting May 2016. In accordance with grant instructions/regulations, we are requesting “expansion” funding for EQ3 and EQ4 for the growth of these schools (2-3 grade levels and >50% enrollment) to a cap of \$800,000 per school, including the PCSGP funds already received. (See NIA; Budget Narrative) Funds requested will be used to facilitate each school’s move into a permanent facility in Year 3 or 4 of its operations, and will not duplicate funds already received from PCSGP grants.

children”).<sup>10</sup> (NIA.) Equitas enrollment is more “educationally disadvantaged” than LAUSD and state averages, but consistent with the neighborhood Pico-Union schools. Yet, school-wide and for each of our statistically significant subgroups (Hispanic/Latino, FRPL, EL, SpEd), Equitas consistently has demonstrated outcomes that outperform the Comps, district and state.

**(a) API Scores/CST Proficiency Rates**

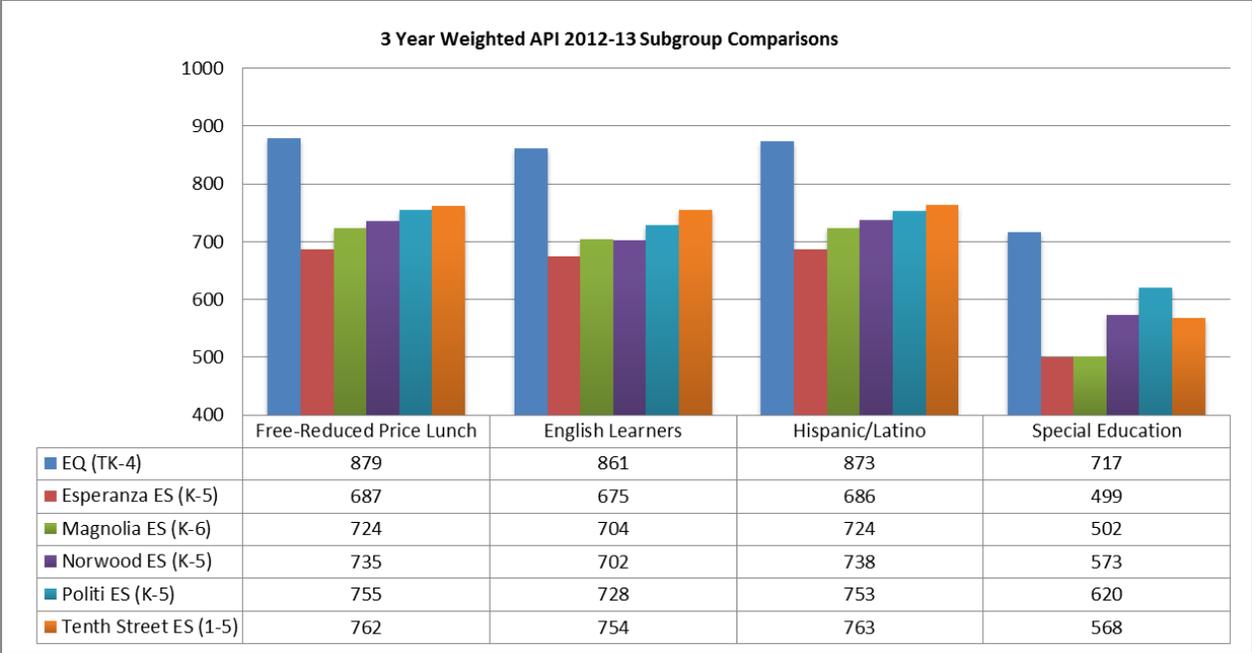
EQ’s school-wide and subgroup API scores consistently have been among the highest in California both compared to every elementary school in the state as well as schools serving similar demographics, as evidenced by the school’s 2013 state ranking of 9/10 and similar schools ranking of 10/10. Compared to schools in Pico-Union, the results – with a virtually



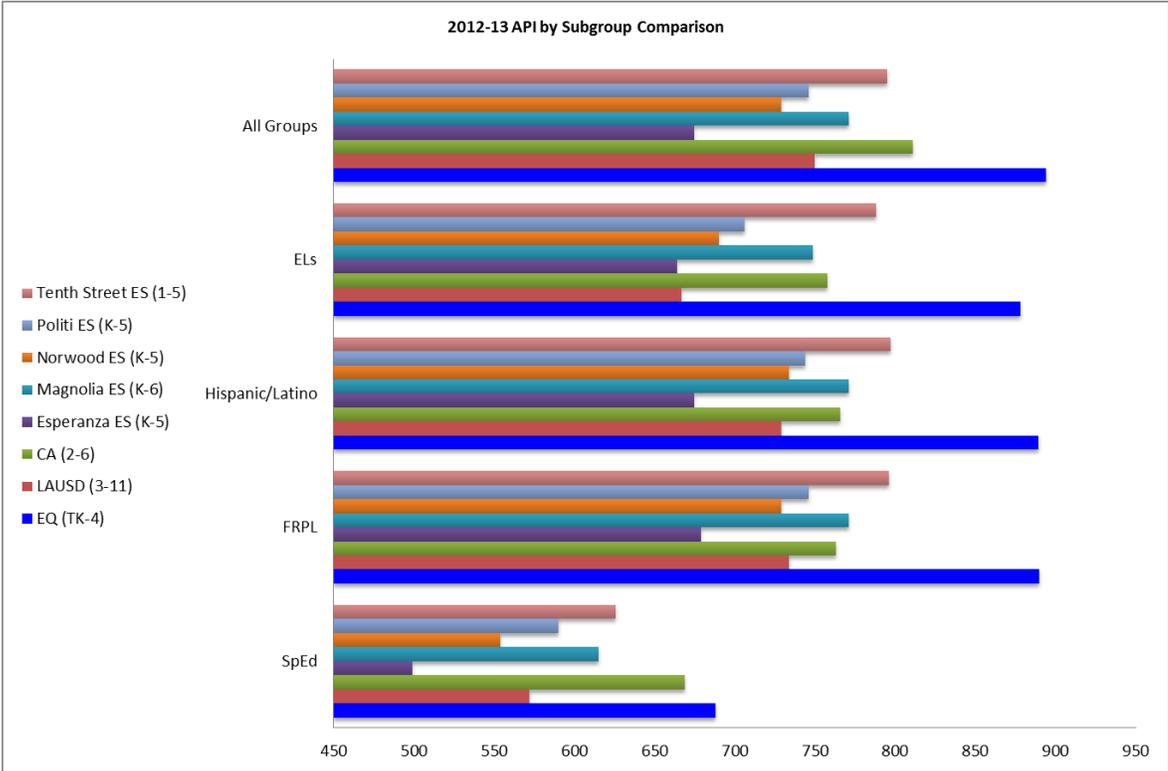
identical population – are particularly illustrative:<sup>5</sup>

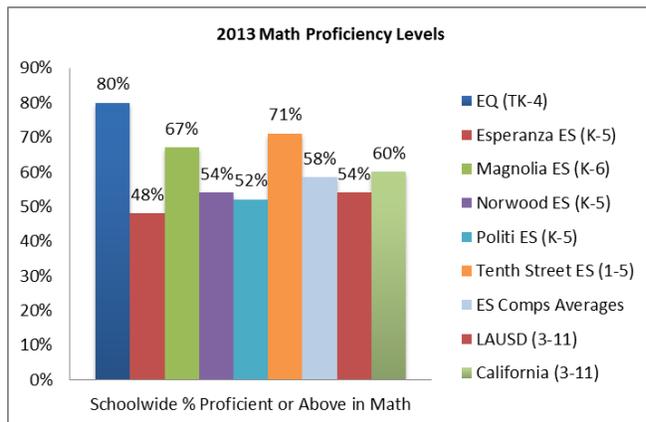
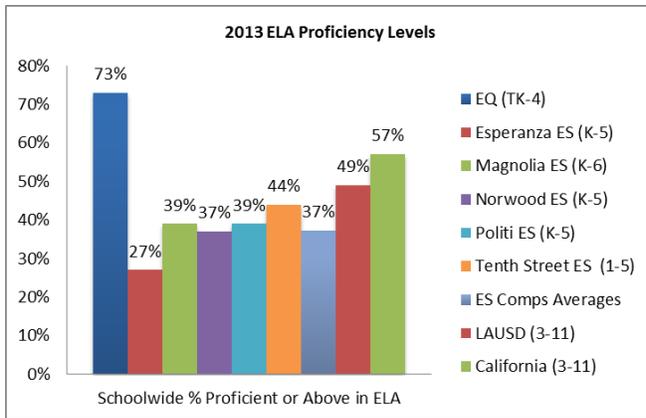
<sup>10</sup> California’s new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) requires an “unduplicated count of pupils,” counting students who are FRPL, EL, homeless, migrant or foster youth once each, even if they meet more than one criteria. (Cal Ed. Code §2574(6)(2) and 42238.02(6)(1).) Equitas’ unduplicated count is 100%. (CALPADS 2016.)

<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that our elementary schools include grades TK-4, while middle schools are grades 5-8. Under the older API system, completely accurate grade level comparisons are challenging, as schools across LAUSD and California serve different grades. The Pico-Union elementary schools, for example, include schools serving grades 1-5, K-5 and K-6.



While 3-Year Weighted API scores are not issued for districts and the state, a comparison of 2013 API scores shows that EQ outperformed every ES Comp, LAUSD and CA both school-wide and for every subgroup (see App. F):

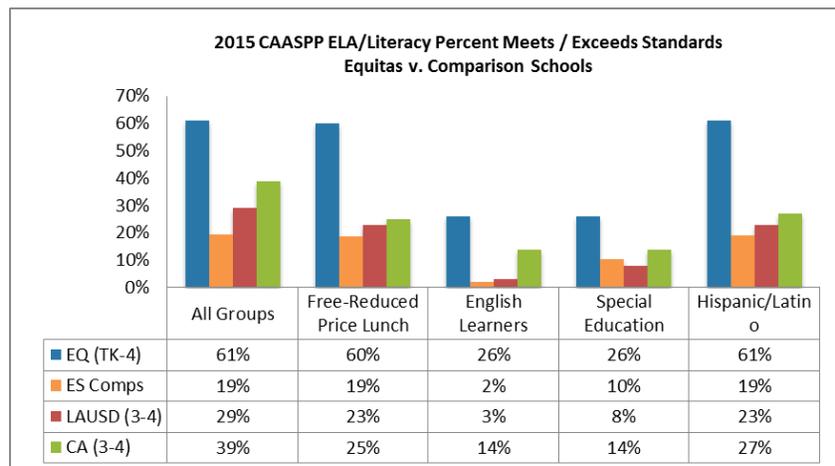




On the **California Standards Tests (CST)** in ELA and Math (given to 2<sup>nd</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> graders in the state and used by CDE to compile API scores), EQ’s scholars have achieved far higher proficiency levels than school-wide averages for ES Comps, LAUSD, and California averages (though the latter include all tested grades, 3-11, and are not available for a more accurate grade level comparison) -- including all races/ethnicities, EL status and socio-economic levels.

**(b) 2015 CAASPP Scores**

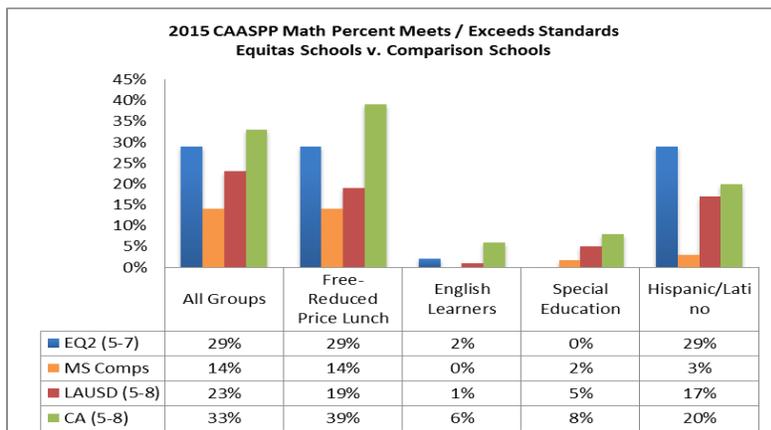
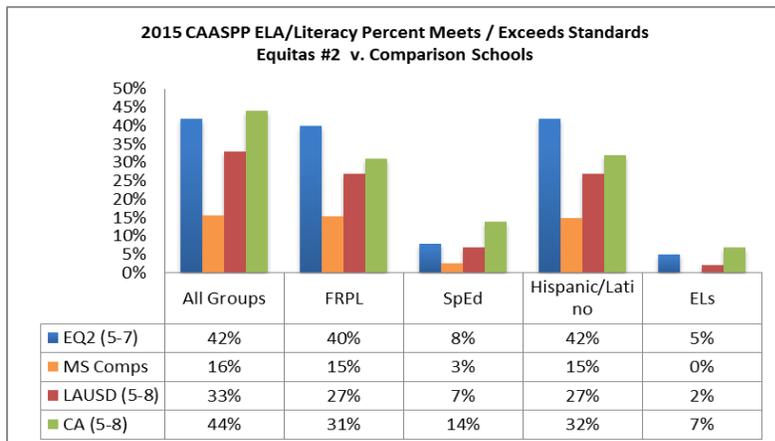
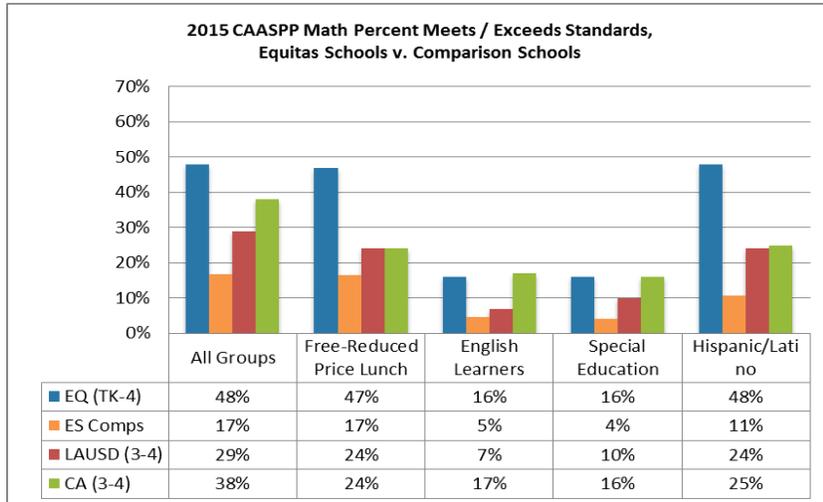
After a year’s hiatus in 2014 from state testing, California’s new CAASPPs were administered for the first time in 2015 to grades 3-8 and grade 11. Both EQ and EQ2 scholars participated and



demonstrated very strong performance on these new, more complex tests.

In both ELA and Math, EQ outperformed the ES Comps, LAUSD and CA

in overall proficiency and subgroup proficiency rates in 29 out of 30 measures. As illustrated in these charts, EQ1's overall 61% Met/Exceeded rate in ELA is 42 percentage points higher than the nearby ES Comps, 32 percentage points higher than all LAUSD students (every race, economic and EL level) in the same grades, and 22 higher than the overall CA proficiency rates. EQ Math rates



outperform the overall comparisons by 10 to 31 percentage points. Subgroup comparisons are equally strong. The sole exception was that 16% of EQ's EL scholars

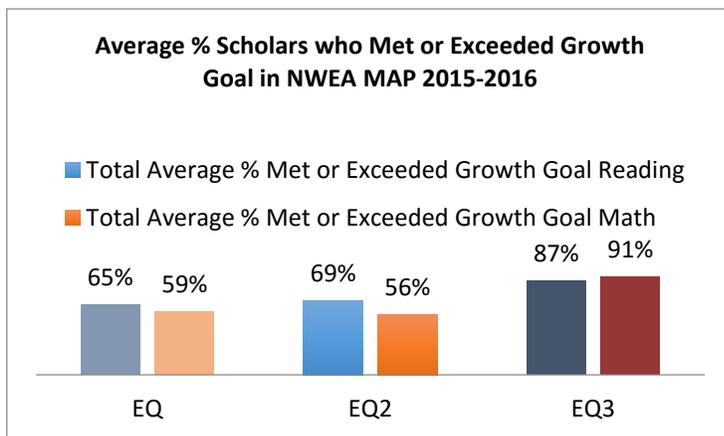
Met/Exceeded Math standards compared to 17% of CA's EL students in grades 3 and 4, still a comparable rate.

EQ2's 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders performed within two points of, or

exceeded, the comparisons on 24 out of 30 measures. Notably, 47% of the 5<sup>th</sup> graders who

(2014-15), 31% of newly enrolling scholars were new to Equitas.<sup>6</sup> These scholars arrived at EQ2 in many cases performing well below 5<sup>th</sup> grade proficiency levels. Yet, with the exception of the EQ2 SpEd subgroup in Math, our 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade scholars in 2015 outperformed the nearby schools

### (c) NWEA MAPs Data



While we have not yet received 2016 CAASPP data, Equitas does track each student’s growth annually through use of the nationally-normed NWEA MAPs benchmark assessments, given to all Equitas scholars at the beginning, mid and end-of-year. Each

scholar is assigned specific growth targets by NWEA based on his/her individual status. In 2015-16, a remarkable 87% of EQ3’s new TK/K scholars met/exceeded their Reading growth goals and 91% met/exceeded their Math growth goals. Across our schools, students demonstrated strong growth over the year.

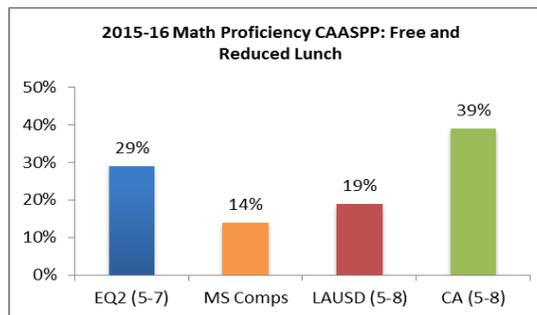
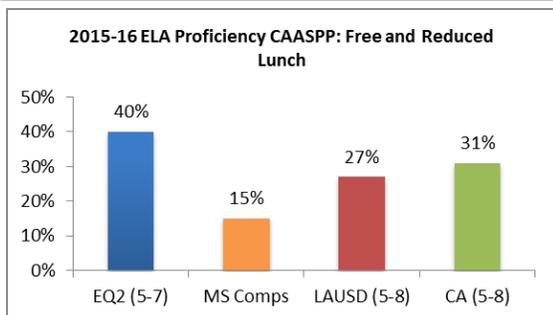
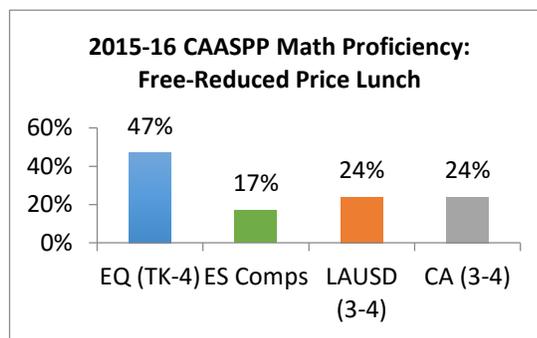
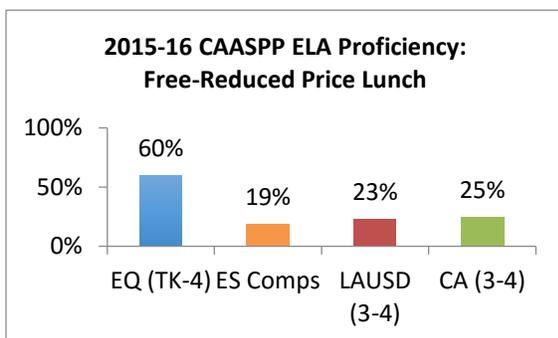
---

<sup>6</sup> Under current laws/regulations governing enrollment to charter schools, Equitas is not permitted to give priority to its scholars matriculating from another Equitas Academy.

**(2) AS RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY, EQUITAS IS A LEADING CA SCHOOL IN CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP FOR EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS (15 PTS):**

The Education Equality Index recognized EQ as one of the top 10 schools in the entire state of California -- out of more than 9,200 K-12 public schools -- in closing or eliminating the achievement gap for low-income students. The test data cited above and detailed further in Appendix F shows that for FRPL students in particular, Equitas has virtually eliminated the achievement gap. Specifically:

- EQ's FRPL subgroup outperformed the *overall API scores for three years* for the nearby comparison schools, LAUSD, and the state, by 79-215 points (see chart on p. 13 and App. F.)
- Similarly, on the 2015 CAASPPs, 60% of EQ's 3rd and 4th grade FRPL students Met or Exceeded state standards in ELA, compared to 29% of the 3rd and 4th graders across all of LAUSD (and 23% of LAUSD's FRPL students in those grades) and 39% overall across the state (25% FRPL). In Math, 47% of the FRPL scholars Met/Exceeded Standards, compared to 29% overall at LAUSD (24% FRPL) and 38% in CA (24% FRPL).



On the 2015 CAASPPs, 40% of EQ2's 5th and 6th grade FRPL students Met or Exceeded state standards in ELA, compared to 33% of the 5th and 6th graders across all of LAUSD (and 23% of LAUSD's FRPL students in those grades) and 29% in Math versus LAUSD's 23% overall and 19% FRPL. In response to this data, EQ2 implemented a new, CCSS-aligned math curriculum, Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI), which has proven particularly effective with significant EL populations and students struggling to master Common Core problem-solving components.

As illustrated in the data and charts in Appendix F, Equitas also is demonstrating remarkable results for its Hispanic/Latino scholars:

- In 2013, the API score across LAUSD (all grades tested, 2-11) for white students was 871, and the California average API for White students in grades 2-6 was 874. EQ's Hispanic/Latino scholars' exceeded both of these rates with an API of 889.
- On the 2015 CAASPPs, EQ's ELA Met/Exceeded rate of 61% for Hispanic/Latino students matched the LAUSD White students in the same grades (61%) and exceeded the statewide White students in the same grades (57%); in Math, EQ's Hispanic/Latino scholars achieved at 48% versus LAUSD White students at 60% and statewide at 55%.<sup>15</sup>
- For EQ2, while our Hispanic/Latino scholars outperformed their peers in both ELA and Math at the district and state levels (42% v. 27% and 32% for ELA; 29% v. 17% and 20% for Math), they fell short of their White peers' Met/Exceeded rates (42% v. 63% and 61% for ELA; 29% v. 50% and 48% in Math). Again, however, our scholars dramatically outpaced their neighborhood peers as demonstrated above. Based on this and other data, in 2015-16,

---

<sup>15</sup> Of course, we continue work towards eliminating all achievement gaps of any percentage, within our school and in comparison to external measures, but in comparison to far larger disparities across the state, these results are promising.

EQ2 increased services for EL and SpEd scholars -- and in particular SpEd scholars who are also EL, in many cases now "Long-Term English Learners" (LTEL) by virtue of not being redesignated after five years of ELD instruction. EQ2 increased teachers PD on language acquisition for LTELs and other older EL students, and is partnering with other charter schools to fund a specialist that will coach LTEL/SpEd middle school students. Across the curriculum, including in Math, EQ2 teachers are adapting new strategies to support these scholars, with the large focus on discussion and problem solving.

While the proficiency rates for EL and SpEd students are not as strong compared to overall scores, Equitas' EL and SpEd scholars are still outperforming their peers in the same subgroups across all metrics as demonstrated in the charts above (e.g., 3-year Weighted API of 861 for EL and 717 for SpEd at EQ, 97-218 points above the nearby ES Comps, with 2013 API (no 3-year available) for LAUSD and CA both below EQ1's EL and SpEd rates, and so on). As the new CAASPPs are more challenging, proficiency rates across the state are lower, particularly for EL and SpEd students. EQ's EL and SpEd Met/Exceeded rate in ELA (both 16%) is comparable or better than the ES Comps (5% and 4%, respectively), LAUSD (7% and 10%) and CA (17% and 16%). EQ2's EL scholars struggled with 5% Met/Exceeded in ELA and 2% in Math, but again, the EL scholars were stronger than the local MS Comps and LAUSD in both ELA (0-2%) and Math (0-1%). Our SpEd scholars out-performed the MS Comps and LAUSD in ELA, but had lower rates in Math. Both EL and SpEd - like their peers across LAUSD -- were slightly lower than state averages. (See App. F.) EQ2 and across the network have a clear focus on supporting these scholars and reviewing data to determine the most effective strategies for individual students.

Finally, on the 2015 CSTs for Science (administered to 5th and 8th graders), EQ2's 5th graders overall, FRPL subgroup and Hispanic/Latino subgroup proficient/advanced rates of 60-61% outperformed the LAUSD overall 5th grade rate of 51% and California 5th grade rate of 60%, as well as the district and state FRPL and Hispanic/Latino subgroup rates (46% and 47%).

**(3) “EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED” STUDENTS AT EQUITAS ACADEMIES ARE SIGNIFICANTLY OUT-PERFORMING SIMILAR STUDENTS AT NEARBY SCHOOLS, THE DISTRICT, AND STATEWIDE DUE TO EQUITAS’ EXEMPLARY MODEL (15 PTS):**

**(a) Equitas Subgroups Are Closing the Achievement Gap**

As illustrated in the preceding two sections (with further data in Appendix F), Equitas has demonstrated that educationally disadvantaged students can achieve at comparable and higher levels than their more "advantaged" peers.

**(b) Additional Measures of Success**

In addition to academic achievement data, each Equitas site has had strong **Average Daily Attendance** (ADA) over the last five years, ranging from 96% to 97% annually at each campus.<sup>16</sup> (See App. F.) At each school site, a Culture Coordinator or Office Coordinator tracks attendance, chronic absenteeism, truancy, suspensions, and supervision of our scholars. These reports are provided to the School Director for further action, and possible referral to Student Success Team as needed (see Section SC.A.3.c., below). **Attrition** has averaged 4% over the last three years. **Suspension rates** have been 0% at the elementary schools (EQ and EQ3) each of the last three years. After a first year suspension rate of 9% at EQ2 middle school,

---

<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, ADA rates for schools, districts and the state are not currently available as the state transitions to new accountability systems. California has historically averaged 91% ADA across all grades.

a restorative justice model has helped dramatically reduce that rate to 2-3% the last two years; **expulsion rates** have been 0% at all three schools. (LAUSD has had 1-2% suspensions across all grades; California has had 4-5% each of the last three years across all grades.)

Approximately half of our students attend the on-site **after-school program** daily. In 2015-16, an average of 92% of **parents/families volunteered** at Equitas, with EQ3 having a 100% participation rate in volunteerism for the school. In total, 786 families contributed 4,590 volunteer hours this school year. Notably, recent **parent satisfaction survey** results include 92% overall satisfaction, 98% with the quality of the instruction, and 97% with academic standards and expectations.

### **(c) The Equitas Model**

Equitas' instructional model, originally designed by our founder during her participation in the prestigious Building Excellent Schools fellowship, is based on a merging of directed learning (objectivist) and cognitive learning theories to meet the specific needs of our scholars. In directed instruction, behavioral theories concentrate on immediately observable changes in performance (e.g., tests) as indicators of learning. There is a focus on memory and how a student receives and stores memories, building on previously learned material. Robert Gagne's systematic approach to instructional design and training includes nine steps of instruction: (1) gain attention, (2) inform learner of objective, (3) stimulate recall of prior knowledge, (4) present the material, (5) provide guidance for learning, (6) elicit performance, (7) provide feedback, (8) assess performance, and (9) enhance retention and transfer. (Gagne, 1985.) Directed instructional models focus on teaching a sequence of skills beginning with lower level skills in order to build to higher level skills as well as clearly stating skill objectives with assessments to match.

In conjunction with the work of behavioral theorists, we rely on cognitive learning theories such as Vygotsky's social development theory and Bandura's social learning theory. (Vygotsky, 1978; Bandura, 1972.) Vygotsky's *Mind and Society* asserts that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development. Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), or the distance between a student's ability to perform a task under guidance and/or collaboration and the student's ability to solve problems independently, informs our teaching methodology. Teachers use language and shared experiences to scaffold until the child is able to accomplish the task or learning independently. Bandura asserts that people learn from one another through observation, imitation, and modeling, and that behavior and environment have a reciprocal relationship and affect each other.

The core values defined prior to founding EQ have proven highly effective and continue to drive our model today: *curiosity, optimism, gratitude, grit, self-control, social intelligence and zest*. These principles align with new Common Core emphasis on inquiry, creativity, critical thinking and deeper learning, and directly support our efforts to ensure every scholar at every grade level is making progress towards college and career-readiness. At all of our Equitas Academies five key tenets support our model:

- 1. We hold high academic and behavioral expectations for every scholar.** Each and every adult at Equitas believes that all of our scholars are college-bound; we hold every scholar to high academic expectations at every grade level. Teachers actively model and teach the values of the school and communicate to scholars that they *can learn to be smart*. Our teachers focus on scholars' mindset, which directly influences their achievement and self-confidence, and is especially important for students who are laboring under negative stereotypes about their abilities. (Dweck, 2010.) Our college-going culture instills a growth mindset in every scholar,

where intelligence can be developed and is not fixed. Effort is celebrated and rewarded in the classroom. (Rothman, 1996.)

*Teaching to mastery* is critical, and includes multiple formal and informal checks for understanding. Since all scholars are expected to meet or exceed grade level standards, if a student does not meet passing scores on frequent assessments, our Student Success Team ensures that multiple supports are put in place until s/he has mastered the material. (See SST details below.) *Consistent behavioral expectations* include explicitly taught common courtesies (please, thank you). We create a positive, caring atmosphere where scholars feel safe and successful while being held to high standards of behavior. Scholars wear uniforms, provided free of charge.

**2. We engage and grow competent and experienced school leadership and staff.** For a school to be successful, *effective leadership* must be present. Section SC.D.5. below includes descriptions of each of the network office positions that have been added as the organization has grown. Through network staff support, our School Directors are able to focus on daily issues of teaching and learning, including curriculum and assessment planning, teacher PD and coaching, and engaging families and our scholars in school life.

Teachers are credentialed and highly qualified as required by No Child Left Behind. To develop and ensure teacher effectiveness, School Directors, Assistant Directors (added as the schools reach 50% of capacity) and instructional coaches (lead teachers) conduct *daily observations of teachers*. Teachers are provided informal feedback once a week and formal evaluations twice per year aligned with the acclaimed Danielson Framework. (Danielson, 2013.) We provide *intensive formal professional development* (PD): 15-days of Summer PD for all teachers plus 5 additional days for new hires, 9 days of PD on non-instructional days throughout the year, weekly PD for 2 hours (Fridays), and weekly staff collaboration time for lesson

planning by grade level/subject. School leaders and teachers are invited to attend off-site workshops, conferences and visit high performing schools. Based on student data, teacher surveys and observations, the following areas already have been identified as points of focus for the 2016-17 school year: Common Core State Standards (CCSS) ELA/ELD and Math Frameworks, CA Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), Eureka and CGI Math Curriculum, Fine-Tuning Lucy Calkins Writer's Workshop, Analyzing Data, How to Improve Instructional Practice, Differentiation & Scaffolding Instruction, SST Process, Lemov's *Teach Like a Champion*, Mindfulness, and more. Each School Leader develops a customized summer PD program based on specific needs, in close collaboration with network staff and the other School Leaders. The year-long PD program includes joint PD days that occur every four to six weeks where all schools gather at one site. Each PD session is evaluated and results are reviewed the following week by the School Leader team. Teachers are encouraged to plan and lead PD session for their peers. Outside experts are also brought in to support learning and growth in instruction, mindfulness and restorative justice, and school culture.

*We cultivate new school leaders* in-house through the Equitas Academy School Director Fellowship. Under the supervision of our Founder and CEO, Fellows receive substantial access to school leadership, work intensively on challenging projects for the assigned school, and participate in school operations. Fellows develop technical skills and critical people management and organizational skills necessary to run a high performing Equitas Academy.

*Accountability* is crucial at all levels of the organization. Equitas uses the services of the High Bar, a national consultancy that helps Boards implement "best practices" in charter school governance. The High Bar annually evaluates the CEO on goals jointly determined with the Board in the areas of academic achievement, staffing, financials and private fundraising and

more. Each network department leader and School Director are similar evaluated annually by the CEO based on pre-defined annual goals, score-cards, and detailed job descriptions prepared in collaboration with our Human Capital Director. The High Bar also works with our Board annually on self-reflection and goal setting.

**3. We offer a rigorous, standards-aligned academic program with intentional supports.** Our academic program is centered on mastery of foundational skills in literacy and math (with extra instruction in both each day), along with social studies, science, character education/ethics and enrichments. Equitas employs a *longer school day* (7:30 am-3:30 pm for K-4, and 7:30-4:00 pm for 5-8)<sup>17</sup> and school year that includes 80,535 instructional minutes (compared to state requirements of 36,000 (K) - 54,000 minutes (4<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup>) depending on grade level). A 20:1 teacher ratio and rotating block schedule ensure daily small group instruction so our scholars get the time and individual supports they need to close the achievement gap. (Dodd, 2002; Thernstrom, 2003.) All curricula is based on the CCSS and Frameworks published by CDE, with state-approved texts as the basis for all instruction. Specifically:

**English Language Arts** in TK-8 instruction emphasizes the development of skills and strategies scholars need to thrive as readers, writers, speakers and listeners in high school, college and in life. According to the National Research Council, “academic success, as defined by high school graduation, can be predicted with reasonable accuracy by knowing someone’s reading skill at the end of 3rd grade. A person who is not at least a modestly skilled reader by that time is unlikely to graduate from high school.” (NRC, 1998.) Equitas employs a research-

---

<sup>17</sup> In addition, students are encouraged to participate in the afterschool program that focuses on enrichment as well as homework support, including dance, art, yoga and theater.

based, balanced-literacy program that is founded on five components outlined by the U.S. Department of Education: phonemic awareness and phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension and writing. (NICHD, 2000.)

Teachers engage in vertical articulation, following the instruction and integration of high leverage strands through the implementation in the ELA and other core classrooms. With the implementation of CCSS, all teachers have made the shift to emphasizing close reading and informational text, which is articulated at different levels of rigor in accordance to the specific grade level standards.

ELA instruction in early grades is divided into four reading blocks, with read aloud and independent reading time (IRT) daily. Literacy instruction in upper grades makes the transition from emphasizing phonics and phonemic awareness to intermediate grammar and novel reading. Scholars read classical texts from a wide-range of authors in fiction, non-fiction, and poetry. All scholars are expected to complete their fifth grade year *above* grade level in reading proficiency, with more than 120 minutes per day of ELA instruction in grades 5-8. Daily IRT helps cultivate middle grade scholars as avid, active readers with the guidance of their reading teacher who helps them choose appropriate books at “their just right reading level.” (Fountas & Pinnell, 1999.) As the CCSS strands increase in rigor at each grade level, the teachers appropriately plan to strategically pace and scaffold lesson plans to ensure all scholars can successfully achieve grade level rigor.

In **Mathematics**, teachers deliver both inquiry-based lessons and traditionally structured lesson cycles through the Eureka Math program and online, interactive programs such as Dreambox. Math teachers implement an appropriate release of responsibility, adding fluidity to the traditional lesson cycle and giving scholars the opportunity to grapple with complex tasks

and constructively build their knowledge through cognitively challenging activities, with appropriate supports. The standards-based curriculum (including new CA CCSS) focuses on the mastery of procedural fluency and problem solving as a foundation for mathematical success. From K-3, scholars take two daily math classes with one focused on computation and another on application and other critical math skills (calendar, money, number line, etc.). In 4-8<sup>th</sup> grades, math classes include mathematics operations (focusing on math computation) and mathematics problem solving (focusing on math application). The curriculum recognizes that scholars need both basic fact knowledge and “automaticity” with procedural computation as well as deep understanding of conceptual concepts and the ability to solve complex mathematical problems.

**Social studies** and **Science** curriculum follows the comprehensive and challenging California standards, including the new Next Generation Science Standards which include: Asking Questions and Defining Problems, Developing and Using Models, Planning and Carrying Out Investigations, Analyzing and Interpreting Data, Using Mathematics and Computational Thinking, Constructing Explanations and Designing Solutions, Engaging in Argument from Evidence and Obtaining, Evaluating, and Communicating Information. Teachers expect students to master key concepts and vocabulary, and they also teach them to analyze primary sources, hone their non-fiction reading skills, learn important content, and apply and retain new learning. Our new EQ2 MS facility includes a state of the art Science lab.

In addition to core subjects, Equitas incorporates a rigorous and developmentally appropriate **character education/ethics program**. Established curriculum such as Second Step informs the structure of the program in primary grades, along with direct instruction and developmentally appropriate texts that highlight and teach the school’s core values. The middle grades Life Skills program emphasizes practical application of our core values and critical tools

for success, providing a forum for learning how to problem solve, communicate and listen to peers. An in-house created Violence Prevention program offered the first week of each trimester helps stave-off physical manifestations of violence and teach anger management. Role-playing helps scholars practice handling challenging situations.

Finally, for scholars to become competitive and college bound, they must be well rounded and have access to as many **enrichment** opportunities as possible. Enrichment classes are offered on a rotating trimester basis and include art, music, movement, yoga, foreign language, technology and drama. P.E. occurs daily, including messages about nutrition, teamwork, and fair play.

**4. We provide clear standards and frequent assessments.** In our mastery-based program, teachers plan benchmark assessments (beginning, mid-year and end-of-year), along with daily, weekly, and trimester-based systems monitor the effectiveness of instruction and student learning and inform weekly lesson plans, teacher coaching and PD. Assessments include the following (including planned 9-12 grades):

Assessment	Purpose	Grade	Administration Timeline
Internally-Created Tests	Measure standards mastery in all subjects.	TK-12	Daily and /or weekly
Interim Assessments (IA)	Measure standards mastery in ELA, Math, SS and Science. Aligned to CCSS	TK-12	Beginning of the year, each trimester, and/or the end of the year
Publisher-Designed (including online) Assessments	Measure standards mastery in ELA, Math, SS and Science.	TK-12	Beginning of the year, end of the unit, each trimester, and/or the end of the year
Fountas & Pinnell Reading Assessments	Assess reading level, decoding, and comprehension	TK-8	Every 6 weeks
Writing Assessment (Lucy Caulkins)	Timed Writing Assignment with rubric scoring	5-8	Upon enrollment and every trimester
CAASPP	State Criterion-Based Assessment in ELA and Math	3-8, 11	Once a year
CST in Science (will be replaced with NGSS test)	State Criterion-Based Assessment in Science	5, 8	Once a year
AP Exams	National subject-based exams	10-12	End of Course
NWEA MAPs	National Normed-Referenced Assessments in ELA and Math	TK-8	Three times a year: Fall, Winter, Spring
CELDT/ELPAC	Measure language acquisition	TK-12	Every Year

Each scholar has a Data folder that includes all previous assessments (CAASPP, CELDT/ELPAC, interim benchmarks, NWEA MAPs, etc.), attendance, report cards, (and for high school students, will include course/credit and the state’s “a-g” course completion for admissions to the UC/CSU system), that serves as an archive from previous levels and years. Data folders are reviewed by teachers at the beginning of the year and end of each trimester. If a scholar is performing below grade level or is in danger of falling behind/not achieving at least one grade level of growth in ELA or Math, they are referred to the Student Success Team (SST) for additional evaluation and support in our Response to Intervention (RTI) model. Each school site’s SST, comprised of the scholar’s grade-level teachers, School Leader, School Counselor, and the scholar’s parent(s), with support from the network office, identifies strengths, areas of concern, goals, objectives, evaluation and timelines for addressing the needs of low-achieving students. The SST monitors progress every three weeks. The SST may implement flexible ability groupings, customize a scholar’s individual work folder, provide additional tutoring during or before/after school (including Saturday sessions led by credentialed teachers), or customize homework to meet SST objectives. The SST continuously communicates progress with scholars, teachers, and parents. After implementation of an SST and follow up, if the scholar continues to experience challenges, revisions to the plan may be discussed, or if necessary, a referral made for special education or Section 504 assessment.

**5. We are a mission-driven school community.** For organizational success, we believe key stakeholders must come together around a shared mission and vision: “Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice, and discipline.” (Collins, 2001.) All members of the school community – Board, staff, parents, and supporters -- continuously channel our collective energies towards our unrelenting goal of

academic achievement and college readiness for every child.

Parent engagement is a critical element of Equitas’ model. Equitas provides family orientation sessions at the beginning of the year and regular parent workshops that include how to help your child read, do math, increase language development, and complete homework in the upper grades, we cover the transition from elementary to middle school and college readiness. Even our young students – *and their parents* – take field trips to local colleges and universities to help them envision college as a reality for their future. (Oakes, 2003.) Our schools hold monthly *Cafecitos* (coffee talks) where parents join School Leaders to discuss important topics. School Leaders, teachers and office staff provide frequent written communications between school and home. Parent members of each School Site Council and EL Advisory Committee develop school policies and lead efforts to engage the support of the community, make recommendations about issues related to the school, and review parental and community concerns. Parents also participate in the annual goal setting and review process for the school site (see Section SC.D.1). As noted above, parents are also active volunteers on our campuses and planning events.

### **SELECTION CRITERION (B). EQUITAS’ GROWTH IN PICO-UNION WILL HELP THOUSANDS**

Equitas already has demonstrated significant accomplishments in helping some of Los Angeles – and our nation’s -- most educationally disadvantaged students excel in meeting rigorous CA content standards. As detailed above, the Equitas model is designed explicitly to serve educationally disadvantaged students, with specific supports for EL and SpEd students in particular through our RTI model and SST process, along with schoolwide structures such as a

low student: teacher ratio (20:1 at lower grades) and rotating block schedule. Our expansion and replication plans will enable thousands more families in Pico-Union to access high-quality educational options for their children, including graduating from a rigorous, college-preparatory high school, and dramatically increase the percentage of residents in the community who attend and complete college. (See Comp. Pref. Priority 1(B) above.)

**(1) EQUITAS’ PROVEN METHODS PROVIDE CRUCIAL SUPPORT TO ENGLISH LEARNERS  
(INCLUDING RECENT IMMIGRANTS) AND STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

**English Learners:** Equitas meets all state and federal requirements for ELs as pertains to annual notification to parents, EL identification (via the state-required Home Language Survey and California’s CELDT test – soon to be replaced by the Common Core-aligned ELPAC), placement, program options, English Language Development (ELD) and core content instruction (aligned with the new *ELA/ELD Framework for California Public Schools*), teacher qualifications and PD, re-classification to fluent English proficient status, monitoring and evaluating program effectiveness, and standardized testing requirements. Each school’s EL Advisory Committee recommends and oversees policies to ensure proper EL placement, evaluation, and communication.

To reach the goal of strong English fluency and respect for the mother language of our native speakers, we provide a developmentally appropriate and highly structured approach to teaching English in our core and enrichment classes. Three relevant themes guide our EL support system: (1) the critical role of vocabulary in language development; (2) the critical role that oral language plays in the development of academic English language proficiency, including vocabulary, reading, and writing skills; and (3) the critical relationship between English language acquisition and instruction in other academic subjects. All teachers are trained in using Integrated

ELD instruction (academic language development across all disciplines), with GLAD/ SDAIE strategies through small group instruction. (Rea and Mercuri, 2008)

Scholars at the beginning and early intermediate stages of language acquisition are still learning how to read, write, listen and speak in academic English, and benefit most from ELD strategies. Students at the Intermediate level are taught using Academic English skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking to learn content and benefit most from SDAIE strategies.

All EL scholars learn with their English-proficient peers in the regular classroom, with dedicated ELD tutoring time in small groups twice weekly. For our significant EL population, Equitas dedicates two blocks each week specifically to oral language development. EL instruction is differentiated by grouping scholars homogenously by academic proficiency and ELD level. We also provide more intensive support to “new arrivals” (recent immigrants with little to no English exposure) – and now, at the upper grade levels, our LTEL scholars -- that includes daily dedicated and integrated ELD instruction.

Teachers regularly evaluate scholar progress by reviewing EL data from formative and summative assessments and change their instructional practices to better serve each scholar. All teachers receive an ELD folder for each of their EL scholars that include the ELD standards by level (Beginning, Early Intermediate, Intermediate, Early Advanced, and Advanced). Teachers use these folders to check mastery towards each ELD standard. Portfolios are submitted for review three times a year. The goal is for each scholar to progress by at least one level per year on the CELDT/ELPAC until they are able to be reclassified. Every year, school leaders, network staff and the Board reviews the EL program, surveying teachers, scholars, and parents, analyzing reclassification rates, and examining assessment data to evaluate program efficacy.

**IDEA Compliance:** Equitas supports students with disabilities through the general

is/her IEP or suspected disability.

***Search and Serve:*** Each year, all scholars are evaluated for general class placement, based on prior year data and benchmark assessments. No evaluation is used for admissions. Staff

collaborate with parents to identify scholars who do not have an IEP but may be in need of pre-referral interventions.

**Assessment:** All assessments for potential special education services comply with SELPA policies regarding parent/guardian consents and participation, bias-free assessments, qualified professionals and due process rights.

**IEPs:** Equitas complies with the federal mandate of the least restrictive environment. The IEP

All special education services are delivered by individuals/agencies qualified to provide special education services under the California Education Code and the IDEA.

**Discipline:** Equitas follows the correct disciplinary procedures to comply with state and federal mandates. Prior to imposing any discipline on a special education scholar that would legally constitute a change in placement, a manifestation determination will first be convened to determine whether the conduct at issue was a manifestation of the student's disability or caused by a failure to implement the scholar's IEP.

**Due Process:** Equitas will inform parents of procedural safeguards and dispute resolutions procedures, including the right to file a complaint with the CDE or SBE.

**(2) THIS GRANT WILL ENABLE EQUITAS TO MEET COMMUNITY DEMAND IN PICO-UNION WITH 500 EXPANSION SEATS AND 1,900 NEW SCHOOL SEATS, INCLUDING EQUITAS' FIRST HIGH SCHOOL**

The demand for more Equitas schools is evident. For 2016-17, Equitas' three schools received almost four times as many applications as there were spaces available (1,227 applications for 316 openings). Our expansion and replication efforts will align with our goal of expanding college access and opportunities for children in Pico-Union. Teachers, staff, parents and other members of the community will be involved in the planning, program design, and implementation of all of our new/expanded schools, as they have through our strategic planning process (see below), annual LCAP process and goal setting, ELACs and School Site Councils, parent engagement efforts, volunteer opportunities on campus and at events, and more. We will engage currently enrolled families in our recruitment efforts, survey them for school design ideas, and engage interested parents of new scholars in the community in decisions about campus life and their ideals for the new/expanded grades schools.

In 2016-17, EQ and EQ2 will each be enrolled at capacity with a total of 850 students in grades TK-8. EQ3 will serve 200 students in grades TK/K-1; EQ4 will open in 2017-18 with 100 students in TK/K and 200 students TK-1 in its second year.<sup>7</sup> As noted above, grant funds are requested to support EQ3 and EQ4 as each moves into its permanent home in Years 3 or 4 of their operations (500 expansion seats). At capacity, these four schools will serve 1,950 students in TK-8. To meet demand in the community, Equitas will replicate these schools and open two

---

<sup>7</sup> The first 200 seats at EQ 3 and EQ4 are funded by CDE-administered PCSGP grants and not part of this grant request.

more elementary (TK-4) and one more middle (5-8) school in the next five years, adding 1,400 TK-8 scholars. Equitas also will open its first high school in 2018-19 with 125 scholars in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, growing to 500 in 9-12; TK-12 will serve 3,650 scholars.

	Existing Seats		Expansion Funded by Grant			New Seats Funded by Grant		
	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
EQ (TK-4)	450							
EQ2 (5-8)	400							
EQ3 (TK-4)	200	300	400	500				
EQ4 (5-8)	Planning	100	200	300	400			
EQ5 (TK-4)	Planning	100	200	300	400	500		
EQ6 (9-12)		Planning	125	250	375	500		
EQ7 (K-4)			Planning	100	200	300	400	500
EQ8 (5-8)				Planning	100	200	300	400
Total New Seats/Year	0*	200*	325*	525	525	425	200	200
Total Cumulative Seats	1050	1350	1775	2300	2825	3250	3450	3650

\*In addition, 400 new seats (in gray) will be added to existing schools independent of CSP Grant funding.

As with elementary and middle grades, the need for a high-performing high school in Pico-Union is evident: the three surrounding high schools have been in Performance Improvement for 6-19 years; their 2013 state rankings were each a 1 or 2 – among the lowest performers in the state, with similar schools rankings of 3-7. Their 3-Year Weighted API scores of 637-655 fell far short of the state’s 800 target for all schools in California. At the largest nearby high school, West Adams Prep (1500+ students), only 16% of their 11<sup>th</sup> graders Met/Exceeded standards on 2015 CAASPPs in ELA and 14% in Math. (See App. F for additional details.) Equitas will offer a small, safe, rigorous high school alternative.

The Equitas Academy High School will be developed as our previous schools have been, with thoughtful planning and strategic consideration of “best practices” in serving our students in Pico-Union, guided by Equitas’ core beliefs:

- 1. High academic and behavioral expectations:** All scholars will be expected to graduate on time, eligible for UC/CSU admissions by completing California’s “a-g” requirements. We

will expect each scholar to be admitted to at least one four-year college or university, and will

**4. Clear standards and frequent assessments:** Individual Graduation Plans with frequent check-ins with College Counselors and Advisors will ensure each scholar and his/her family knows what is expected and their status towards graduation and college enrollment. Our intensive data-driven focus on individual student mastery of content standards will ensure individual scholar success, particular as content builds upon prior understandings.

**5. Mission-driven:** While we believe college prep begins at Kindergarten, in grades 9-12, college and career-readiness will include practical application: assistance with essays, applications and financial aid; class time devoted to SAT and AP test prep; school visits and mentoring opportunities; intensive parent/family education about college admissions and success; practical life skills lessons; and more. Starting in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, every scholar and his/her parents will meet with a College Counselor at least twice annually to develop and review his/her Individual Graduation Plan. Literally everyone in the Equitas community will be focused on helping our high school scholars graduate and succeed in their chosen post-secondary plan.

#### **SELECTION CRITERION (C). QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN (10 PTS)**

In 2013, Equitas engaged in a comprehensive Strategic Planning process that engaged the Equitas Board and Senior Leadership in discussing Equitas' plans for growth. This initial growth planning process helped define our overarching goals for replication, including Equitas' five core beliefs as discussed herein, to guide the launch of future schools. Our network office has grown to ensure that schools and their leaders have the resources and support needed to fulfill the Equitas mission. Network staff work to remove barriers from schools and provide leadership development and academic guidance to school leaders. (See Section SC.D.5. for a detailed description of network staff.)

Each Equitas school will be guided by the outcomes and objectives detailed in its Local

Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), required of all LEAs (including independent charter schools) under California’s new public school funding system, the Local Control Funding Formula. An LCAP must be submitted by each LEA by June 30 of each year for the upcoming fiscal year (starting July 1), involving all types of stakeholders in the process. A version of the LCAP also is required by LAUSD in each new charter petition. (See sample LCAP template in App. H.4.) The LCAP includes specific goal setting (school-wide and subgroup), objectives, actions tied to expenditures, identification of measures to assess progress, timelines (over a three year period) and specific funding allocations across eight state priorities (many of which have several sub-parts). Each LCAP includes both Absolute Measures (enrollment, standardized test data, graduation rates, etc.) tied to objective data, and Comparative Measures, tied to our comparison schools/districts’ performance outcomes. Aligned with the LCAP structure, the following is a brief summary of anticipated school site goals and activities:

PRIORITIES	GOALS	ACTIONS
<p><b>Priority 1: Basic Services</b> <i>degree to which teachers are appropriately assigned pursuant to Education Code section 44258.9, and fully credentialed in the subject areas and for the pupils they are teaching; pupils have access to standards-aligned instructional materials pursuant to Education Code section 60119; and school facilities are maintained in good repair pursuant to Education Code section 17002(d).</i></p>	<p>Ensure all core classroom teachers hold a valid CA Teaching Credential as defined by the CA Commission on Teaching Credentialing and appropriate EL authorization; all teachers will be appropriately assigned. Provide scholars with a safe, and clean school facility site.</p>	<p>Verify teacher credentials, CLAD certifications and ensure Live Scans are completed/documented.  Secure appropriate facilities and oversee regular inspections and safety checks, including annual Facility Inspection (FIT) Report.</p>
<p><b>Priority 2: Implementation of State Standards</b> <i>implementation of academic content and performance standards and English language development standards adopted by the state board for all pupils, including English learners. (Priority 2)</i></p>	<p>Provide all scholars in all grades, including subgroups, with high quality instruction through a rigorous Common Core aligned curriculum by providing relevant learning experiences that support scholar engagement; and supports to ensure academic success among all subgroups.</p>	<p>Continue to utilize data and teacher observations to refine K-8 curriculum and provide teacher PD; develop new 9-12 CCSS-aligned curriculum, pacing, assessments and interventions within Equitas model. Provide all teachers with Professional Development (PD) including 15 days in Summer (+5 for new hires) and 9 days during year on the research-based pedagogical strategies and Common Core; provide onsite coaching, classroom observations, and support from Reading Coach, Aids and enrichment teachers and more to close the achievement gap and prepare all scholars for College &amp; Career Readiness (CCR). Survey teachers annually.</p>

<p><b>Priority 3: Parent Involvement</b> <i>efforts to seek parent input in decision making at the district and each schoolsite, promotion of parent participation in programs for unduplicated pupils and special need subgroups.</i></p>	<p>Engage parents through education, communication, and collaboration to provide scholars with a safe, welcoming and inclusive, positive learning environment to ensure scholars are in class ready to learn; ensure parent involvement in decision-making.</p>	<p>Host: monthly “Cafecitos” with parents to address schoolwide topics, Back-to-School and Family Nights 4x/year, parent-teacher conferences 2x/year; administer annual parent surveys. Coordinate English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC) and School Site Council (SSC) meetings at each site address the school’s Title I and EL programs.</p>
<p><b>Priority 4: Pupil Achievement :</b> <i>performance on standardized tests, score on Academic Performance Index, share of pupils that are college and career ready, share of English learners that become English proficient, English learner reclassification rate, share of pupils that pass Advanced Placement exams with 3 or higher.</i></p>	<p>All scholars, including all scholar subgroups, will meet or exceed state and federal targets for growth on the CAASPP and API/AYP (or new measures), EL reclassification rates; at new HS, all scholars will complete a-g requirements, be accepted to at least one college.</p>	<p>Implement data-driven instruction and differentiation based on scholar need, including monitoring progress of EL and RFEP scholars; provide intensive PD and coaching as detailed in charter petitions; provide additional support and intervention services for scholars including counseling/psycho-social support, after-school tutoring and enrichments. Develop rigorous college-prep HS curriculum including AP courses.</p>
<p><b>Priority 5: Pupil Engagement</b> <i>school attendance rates, pupil expulsion rates, other local measures including surveys of pupils, parents and teachers on the sense of safety and school connectedness.</i></p>	<p>Maintain a high ADA rate, low chronic absenteeism rate and low dropout rates. Achieve a high graduation rate for all scholar subgroups.</p>	<p>Implement strategies to increase scholar engagement including Weekly Community Events, field trips, Family Nights, and enrichment courses (PE, yoga, art, music). Provide PD for character ed/ethics curriculum and Advisory strategies.</p>
<p><b>Priority 6: School Climate</b> <i>pupil suspension rates, pupil expulsion rates, other local measures including surveys of pupils, parents and teachers on the sense of safety and school connectedness.</i></p>	<p>Maintain a low suspension and expulsion rate. Achieve 85% satisfaction on surveys regarding safety and school connectedness.</p>	<p>Implement consistent Tiered Behavior System and award “Scholar Dollars” for positive behavior exemplifying the school’s core values, redeemable for free dress days, special field trips, dances and other events, and recognition at assemblies. Train all teachers on Mindfulness techniques.</p>
<p><b>Priority 7: Course Access</b> <i>pupil enrollment in a broad course of study that includes all of the subject areas described in Education Code section 51210 and subdivisions (a) to (i), inclusive, of Section 51220, as applicable.</i></p>	<p>All scholars, including all scholar subgroups will have access to a rigorous college prep program including enrichment opportunities as outlined in the schools’ charters, particularly in the arts and technology.</p>	<p>Develop HS course offerings with a wide variety of opportunities and supports. Develop college-prep Advisory program including assistance with testing, applications and financial aid.</p>
<p><b>Priority 8: Other Pupil Outcomes</b> <i>pupil outcomes in the subject areas described in Education Code section 51210 and subdivisions (a) to (i), inclusive, of Education Code section 51220, as applicable.</i></p>	<p>All scholars will graduate having developed skills and attributes defined in Equitas’ core values: <i>curiosity, optimism, gratitude, grit, self-control, social intelligence and zest.</i></p>	<p>Provide frequent informal and at least twice-annual formal evaluations of all teachers and other staff with regular reporting to the CEO and Board on progress towards individual and school-wide goals, to ensure mission-driven accountability at all levels of the organization.</p>

The LCAP will provide an important tool for our new schools’ leaders to both engage stakeholders in a collaborative planning process and to set clear goals and objectives, allocate resources, and reflect on strengths and weaknesses. The LCAPs will serve as the primary

vehicles by which we measure the success of each of our new/expanded schools, hold school leaders accountable for achievement of objectives, and provide support from our network office.

As an organization, our network will be held accountable to the CEO and Board for key measures of success as well. Our strategic planning process has defined the following goals in addition to school-site LCAP goals:

*Instructional Program:* Ensure that each new Equitas school embodies the core principles of the Equitas model and implements the program with fidelity; develop an Equitas high school to serve a full K-12 span.

*Enrollment:* Fully enroll each new school within 90% of charter petition projections annually; ensure student population is >90% FRPL, and reflective of the local community.

*Staff Recruitment and Retention:* 90% of open positions are filled by May 1; 80% annual retention excluding life circumstances turnover; >80% annual satisfaction rates on staff surveys.

*Accountability:* Twice-annual formal reviews of all teachers and annual reviews of all leadership will ensure mission achievement. Annual LAUSD evaluations of each school,<sup>18</sup> accreditation by

---

<sup>18</sup> LAUSD, as the charter authorizer, performs a thorough and intensive annual evaluation of each school. The most recent performance evaluations have yielded the following rates (on a 1-4 scale with “1”/Unsatisfactory, “2”/Developing, “3”/Proficient, and “4”/Accomplished):

	3	3	3
	4	4	4
	3	3	2*
	4	4	3

\*As a school in its first year of operations, LAUSD will not issue higher than a “2” in fiscal operations.

LAUSD also engages in a very rigorous five-year charter renewal cycle that, per the Ed Code, includes specific academic benchmarks and a comprehensive review of each school.

the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)<sup>8</sup> and 5-year charter renewals will all result in consistently strong external evaluations.

*Fiscal Responsibility:* Revenues and expenses within 5% of financial projections; ensure government funding allocations support school site operations other than start-up costs; secure private funds and financing for facilities development and program enhancements.

*Governance:* Continue to ensure diverse (racial and expertise) representation and active participation on Board of Directors ; continued training and adherence to applicable laws; continued positive reviews by LAUSD and other agencies (WASC, etc.) on governance metrics.

**SELECTION CRITERION (D). QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PERSONNEL (20 PTS)**

**(1) MANAGEMENT PLAN: RESPONSIBILITIES, TIMELINES AND MILESTONES (4 PTS)**

Equitas utilizes a common management and governance structure to leverage resources and expertise across each of our campuses. All our schools are overseen by Equitas Academy Charter School, Inc., a California non-profit corporation, led by a highly qualified Board of Directors that includes a diverse array of community leaders:

BOARD MEMBERS	RACE					OCCUPATION	EXPERTISE							COMMITTEE				
	White	Asian	Latino/a	Black	Other		Accounting/Finance	Fundraising	Constr./Real Estate	Legal	Technology	PR/HR/Commun.	Education	Community Development	Real Estate	Education	Finance	Governance
Aarthi Sowrirajan		X				Director, Turner Impact Capital, LLC	X	X						X	X			
Alyssa Valentine	X					Realtor, Courtney + Kurt Real Estate	X	X						X	X			
Oliver Bajracharaya	X	X				Attorney, Christie, Parker, Hale, LLC				X	X			X			X	X
Pilar Buelna			X			Exec. Dir. of Social Services, The Salvation Army	X	X			X	X	X				X	X
Brett Snyder	X					President, Cranky Flier LLC	X	X	X	X				X	X			
Jesse Creed	X					Attorney, Munger, Tolles & Olson, LLP				X		X					X	
Olympia Ammon				X		VP, Development, L.A. County Museum of Art		X						X				X
Lindsey Phillips	X					Director of Operations, Citizens of the World	X	X	X			X	X					
Sarah Chandler	X					Deputy Dir., Broad Residency in Urban Education		X				X	X		X			
Claudia Chung Sanii	X					Simulation Superv., Walt Disney Animation Studios	X							X				

EQ and EQ2 have both been granted full six year accreditation by WASC.

EQUITAS Project Narrative

(Board Resumes are included in App. B.) In accordance with California’s Brown Act, all Board meetings are open public meetings, with notice provided in advanced to the public and minutes published on the schools’ websites. The Board meets at least monthly, with an annual retreat yearly. (See also Governance in Subsection (2) below.)

As Equitas grows and scales our network of high quality schools, our Board and CEO will lead an organizational design that 1) maximizes both local school autonomy and network functional expertise; 2) maximizes collaboration between the schools and network office, and 3) promotes organizational clarity through well-defined decision rights and roles and responsibilities. Our network office, led by the CEO, has been created to support the instructional and operational needs of all Equitas schools and ensure accountability. (See detailed Organizational Chart at App. H.4.) Weekly meetings between the network office and school leadership provide an open-minded and reflective environment for continuous improvement and professional growth. Equitas requires each school to implement a core curriculum and teacher development; however the specifics of instructional delivery and school culture are made in partnership with the schools. Equitas requires that each school use the same technology platforms (Illuminate was implemented network-wide in 2015-16) to ensure seamless collection and analysis of data in real-time. The functions outlined in the matrix below provide a high level overview of the areas to be handled by both the schools and network office. The bars show the level of responsibility that falls between schools and network for each given function.

Area	School	CMO
Human Capital		
Facilities		
Technology		
Finances		
Communications		
Curriculum		
Instruction		
School Culture		
Assessment		

Through Equitas’ “slow growth” model, each school’s opening will be preceded by a full year of dedicated planning, led by our Strategic Growth Director, with the new School Director working full-time six months before opening. This will give our instructional and operational teams sufficient time to accomplish critical start-up tasks, listed below. Once each new site is open, network staff will continue to provide intensive and daily support as each school grows to scale and operates at full capacity, continuously refining programs and operations based on student achievement data, stakeholder surveys, evaluation outcomes and other feedback.

Activity	Timeline	Person(s) Responsible
<b>Charter Authorization/Oversight:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare and submit new petition to LAUSD including detailed description of educational program, goals/assessments, discipline, enrollment, health and safety, governance, founding team qualifications, 5-year budget and monthly cash flow projections and more; appeal to LA County Office of Ed if necessary.<sup>9</sup></li> <li>Collaboratively prepare initial LCAP with stakeholder input (as</li> </ul>	12-14 months prior to opening  June 30 annually	Strategic Growth Director (SGD)  School Directors

<sup>9</sup> Under CA law, a start-up charter school must first submit a petition to the local district in which the school plans to operate (with very limited exceptions), voted on by that school board. If the petition is denied, it may be appealed to the County Office of Education, and if necessary, to the State Board of Education. Equitas has enjoyed a strong, collaborative partnership with LAUSD since founding its first school and we anticipate their support as we grow. (See App. C, Letters of Support from LAUSD School Board Members Garcia and Rodriguez.)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>available) and submit to County; prepare annual updates.</li> <li>• Provide required reports to authorizer, County and State; prepare and support annual LAUSD site visit</li> <li>• Secure WASC Accreditation</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Year 2 of operations</p>	<p>(SDs); SGD COO; SDs</p> <p>SGD; SDs; CEO</p>
<p><b>Human Capital:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify internally or recruit School Director; ID and recruit candidates for School Leader Fellows</li> <li>• Recruit and hire teachers and site staff; complete required clearances and background checks</li> <li>• Induction of all new staff (1 week) and 3-week Summer Institute for all instructional staff</li> </ul>	<p>6-8 months prior to school opening</p> <p>3-5 months prior to each grade launch</p> <p>Annually July/August</p>	<p>CEO/Human Capital Director (HCD)</p> <p>SDs/HCD</p> <p>SDs/Curriculum Director (CD)</p>
<p><b>Operations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit Prop 39 application to LAUSD for co-location facilities if no private temporary facility available (e.g., classrooms at existing school site that is not yet at capacity)</li> <li>• Set up school site systems and administrative procedures, including attendance, accounting, etc.</li> <li>• Vendor/services contracts: insurance, SELPA, food service, substitutes, etc</li> <li>• Purchase FF&amp;E, books, instructional materials, technology, health/safety, other equipment and supplies, etc.</li> <li>• Prepare classrooms &amp; facility for occupancy including tech, communications and safety systems</li> <li>• Set up accounts receivable/payable, payroll/benefits, reporting (ADA, demog., etc.), etc. with back-office</li> <li>• ID and secure lease of long-term private facility and complete necessary renovations</li> <li>• Secure private funds to support facilities development and supplemental programs (evaluation, enrichments, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>Prop 39 application due under Ed Code by 11/1 year before 1 month prior to school opening</p> <p>1-3 months prior</p> <p>1-3 months prior</p> <p>1-3 months prior</p> <p>1-3 months prior</p> <p>Prior to Y3 of operations</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Facilities Director (FD)</p> <p>COO/Office Mgrs (OMs) COO</p> <p>COO/SDs/OMs</p> <p>FD/Operations Director (OD)/SDs COO/SDs/Oms</p> <p>FD/COO</p> <p>Development Director</p>
<p><b>Outreach/Enrollment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host open house meetings, conduct outreach with partner orgs and in Pico-Union, distribute application forms</li> <li>• Conduct lottery, host family info sessions</li> <li>• Distribute enrollment packets, track enrollments and offer spots to wait listed families</li> <li>• Set up student folders and reporting</li> </ul>	<p>Post-petition approval - lottery each year</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Spring-ongoing</p>	<p>SGD/Enrollment Coord. (EC)/SDs SDs/EC EC</p> <p>EC/Oms</p>
<p><b>Instructional Program:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine curriculum and assessments (and for new HS, develop curriculum and assessments tied to Equitas mission and principles) for each grade level as it is launched</li> <li>• Conduct initial assessments of all new students; EL and SpEd assessments as needed; plan interventions as needed</li> <li>• Conduct Interim Assessments, continuously analyze data</li> <li>• Plan and implement ongoing teacher PD, coaching and common planning time/collaboration weekly and daily</li> <li>• Plan, implement and refine psycho-social supports at each grade level including character ed/ethics and college counseling/Advisory for HS</li> </ul>	<p>Spring + ongoing for each new grade level</p> <p>First 30 days of school</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>CD/SDs</p> <p>SDs/SpEd Director</p> <p>SDs/CD SDs/CD</p> <p>CD/SDs</p>
<p><b>Accountability/Evaluation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update Board at each meeting re: progress towards LCAP and</li> </ul>	<p>Monthly</p>	<p>CEO/COO</p>

<p>organizational goals (enrollment, staffing, acad. Achievement and financials/cash flows).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RAND Evaluation: Conduct annual site visits, interviews and data analysis as detailed in Eval Plan with annual reports to CEO and Board (See App. ___)</li> <li>• Prepare for annual LAUSD Site Visit; ensure ongoing communications and compliance with District requirements</li> <li>• Prepare WASC Self-Evaluation and secure accreditation</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing through grant</p> <p>Fall of Y1 and annually</p> <p>Y2 of operations</p>	<p>Evaluators, SGD</p> <p>SDs/COO</p> <p>SDs/COO</p>
--	---	--

Daily school operations will include Equitas’ relentless focus on individual scholar outcomes, leveraging resources to maximize our organizational talent and support our highly-qualified teachers in doing what they do best, and weathering the myriad contingencies, challenges, and obstacles that we know we – and our scholars/families – will encounter every day. We do this with the same degree of persistence and motivation that we expect of our scholars, continuously collaborating and supporting one another towards our common goals.

**(2) EQUITAS’ BUSINESS PLAN: ENSURING QUALITY BEYOND FEDERAL FUNDING (4 PTS)**

Through conservative fiscal planning, slow growth, and realistic assessment of the potential risk factors involved, we will establish a solid foundation for each new school, with comprehensive network support and accountability. CSP funds will provide critical one-time start-up money for planning, teacher and staff recruiting/hiring/training, outreach and enrollment, and acquisition of critical equipment and supplies. It is important to note that in California, funding for charter schools does not include any start-up allowance for furniture, books, computers or other instructional materials, or a facility (including any necessary improvements). The same is true of charter schools that expand grade levels. Furthermore, California’s per-pupil funding, while improving in recent years, lags far behind other states. (\$11,329 per student in K-12 in 2015-16, compared to a high of \$25,283 for Vermont and \$22,333 for New York).<sup>10</sup> (NEA

---

<sup>10</sup> Despite this low funding rate, California has the 4<sup>th</sup> highest average teacher salaries in the

Report 2016.) In order to sustain and ensure the quality and performance of the new and expanded schools under this grant beyond the grant term, our plans include the following:

**Facilities:** In Los Angeles, the greatest contingency in our financial projections is facilities, which we anticipate will continue to pose challenges for our growth. In California, charter schools are neither guaranteed a district facility nor provided any start-up funding for a private facility.<sup>11</sup> (*See. e.g.,* Cal. Ed. Code §47614; NCSRC 2015.) While schools that rent a private facility and meet certain FRPL minimums (currently 60%) receive reimbursement of some rent expense (currently a maximum of \$750 per pupil, well under market rates for most urban charter schools), there are no reimbursements for facilities improvement costs, including potentially significant expenses to bring a facility up to Code, traffic studies, Conditional Use Permits for zoning changes and so on. While we believe there are suitable facilities available for renovation in Pico-Union, the costs are significant: our facilities for EQ and EQ2 cost approximately \$12M to develop; projections for EQ3’s currently developing facility are \$11M.

Pacific Charter School Development (PCSD), headquartered in Los Angeles, has proven a valuable partner for Equitas in identifying affordable facilities, and subsidizing part of the

---

nation at \$72,842 in 2015-16. (*Id.*)

<sup>11</sup> While Prop 39 theoretically ensures that charters have equivalent access to district facilities, the implementation is inconsistent. (The CA Charter Schools Association recently won a lawsuit against LAUSD seeking more equitable allocation of Prop 39 facilities, yet the program continues to face significant challenges in the district.) Even when a facility is offered by the district, the process requires an intensive annual application process and has no assurances of facilities stability from year to year or accommodation of planned growth. Prop 39 offers commonly fall far short of a charter school’s reasonable needs, and/or are located an unreasonable distance from the community served. (Safal, Griffin, et al 2015; NCSRC 2015.)

costs. PCSD is a non-profit real estate development organization that finds, acquires, finances, and builds low cost facilities to high quality charter schools. PCSD has committed to assisting secure affordable facility options for future Equitas schools as needed. (See App. C, Letters of Support.) Currently, EQ3 is temporarily co-located with EQ2 until its new facility is ready in 2017-18; we anticipate a similar facilities sharing plan for future new schools as the organization grows, relocating new schools to their own facility in Year 3 or 4 of operations. We will maximize district resources through Prop 39 requests where possible, especially for temporary smaller facilities as enrollment scales to capacity.

**Financial Management:** As our enrollment grows, government funding increases significantly. Our sustainability plan ensures that: (a) Ongoing revenues generated by enrollment cover ongoing activities; (b) Positive cash flow will be maintained continuously, with a reserve of at least 5%; (c) Conservative revenue and expenditure assumptions; (d) Exclusion of private fundraising in charter petition 5-year budget projections; (e) Training of staff and board in charter school's finance, governance, personnel, operations and other areas to ensure responsible management and stewardship; (f) Monthly monitoring of cash flow and budget, along with ongoing monitoring of student achievement data as described above to determine appropriate resource allocation based on identified school needs to meet goals. (See also Section (3), below.)

**Network Office:** Our experienced network staff will continue to oversee all financial functions of each school in collaboration with ExEd, our non-profit back-office services provider. Bill paying, cash-flow management, financial reporting, accounting, budgeting, payroll, retirement reporting, funding research and projections, audit preparation, internal controls, compliance, attendance accounting and much more are coordinated through the network office under the supervision of Equitas' COO. Ultimately, the Board is responsible for fiscal management,

including approving and submitting annual LCAPs for each school. (LCAPs include detailed expense allocations aligned to specific activities; see App. H.3.) The Board receives detailed financial reporting at each meeting, including revenues and expenses against budget, cash flows, and other financials; the COO reviews similar reports weekly. Accounting systems adhere to generally accepted accounting principles, with strong internal controls. All staff and the Board are trained to ensure responsible fiscal management and monitor cash flow and budget. The Board reviews and analyzes annual independent audit reports, identifies (if applicable) areas of improvement or concern and any changes in policy or procedure. (See App. G for Equitas's 2016-17 Draft Consolidated Budget, most recent audited financials and Fiscal Policies.)

**Academic Achievement:** Our CEO and Board ultimately are responsible for each school's success. Equitas is an intensively data-driven community, as detailed herein. In 2015-16, Equitas adopted the sophisticated Illuminate database system organization-wide, enabling a customizable and broad array of lateral and longitudinal data analysis in real time. Through LAUSD's rigorous annual oversight visits, charter renewal process, and the WASC accreditation process, each school undergoes a significant external review of all facets of operations and the educational program. (See also Section SC.E., Evaluation.)

**Governance:** Equitas Academy Charter School, Inc. is a California non-profit public benefit corporation with 501(c)(3) status from IRS. (App. D.) The Board hires, supervises, and evaluates the CEO and ensures the organization and each school is meeting academic, operational, fiscal, and other goals per the LCAPs and overall organization goals and objectives defined in the Board annual planning retreat. The Equitas Board approves and monitors each school's annual budget, budget revisions, LCAP, and monthly cash flow statements to ensure long-term financial stability; the Board also hires an external independent auditor and reviews

and approves annual independent fiscal audit and performance reports. The Board has, and will continue to, receive training to ensure proper understanding of their role in overseeing academic operations, including a thorough understanding of state testing and state/federal accountability measures, and other data. School Directors formally report to the Board on progress towards annual goals in the LCAP.

**Oversight:** Equitas operates autonomously from its authorizer, LAUSD, with the exception of supervisory oversight as required by statute and other negotiated contracted services (e.g., Prop 39 facilities, SpEd). The Equitas Board maintains control over each school’s operations (subject to authorizer oversight, including a charter renewal process every five years pursuant to CA law) and is fully responsible for the operation and fiscal affairs of the school.

**HR:** As noted above, exceptional teachers (and staff) are the key to our success. Our Human Capital Director staff leads recruiting and collaborates with the CEO to hire School Directors, and in turn helps School Directors hire highly-qualified teachers and staff. As discussed in Section SC.A.3.c., our staff all receive intensive training, coaching and formal evaluations.

**(3) EQUITAS'S MULTI-YEAR FINANCIAL AND OPERATING MODEL, PARTNER AND STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT (4 POINTS)**

Rather than a typical district-wide top-down approach to funding, each of our schools is an independent LEA and thus receives funding directly; each school in turn allocates revenues to the network office (approximately 10% of non-discretionary government revenues) rather than vice versa. Thus each school receives its commensurate share of federal education funds that are allocated by formula each year, including during the first year of operation and any year in which the school’s enrollment substantially expands. Consistent with California Ed Code, the charter authorizer retains a 1% fee. Additional grant and private funds are dispersed to the school sites

on a per project basis in accordance with the specific grant or award terms. (See App. G.) To date, Equitas has raised \$5.8M in grants and other fundraising, ranging from 6-20% of each year's annual organization-wide operating budget. The bulk of these funds have been used for facilities development.

Equitas partners with individuals and organizations through outreach efforts to business, policy makers, community leaders, and key stakeholders that are dedicated to helping students obtain academic success. Our relationships with community organizations have led to enhanced resources for our scholars. For example, EQ and EQ2 both received a KaBoom playground, valued at more than \$75,000, free of charge, and all classrooms have SMART boards provided by the Ahmanson Foundation. Major grants from the Weingart Foundation (\$500,000), Partners for Developing Futures (\$300,000), Charter Schools Growth Fund (\$450,000) and others have funded critical facilities and other start-up costs. Most recently, the new Great Public Schools Now announced that Equitas would receive one of its first grants -- \$2 million -- to help fund new facilities development. (See App. C.) Equitas is a growing community leader in Pico-Union and collaborates with other service organizations such as Pico-Union Neighborhood Council and the Magnolia Community Initiative to provide opportunities and services to our students and their families. These communities will in turn benefit our new schools in Pico Union. Appendix C includes Letters of Support from national, state and local elected officials; foundation and community partners; and current parents/scholars.

CSP funding will facilitate one-time pre-opening planning and initial operational costs. Due to the lack of start-up funding for new charter schools in California among other factors (e.g., smaller enrollment -- and thus revenues -- at founding before a school reaches a fiscally viable operational capacity), new schools typically operate at a loss for their first few years.

Thanks to conservative fiscal planning and leveraging combined purchasing power and other economies of scale, Equitas has established a solid reserve of \$1.8M at the end of this fiscal year (June 30) and projected \$2.3M by the end of 2016-17. Within three years of operations, each new school's enrollment will sustain daily operational costs through per pupil funding provided by the LCFF and other state and federal sources. (See Budget Narrative.) Equitas will continue to pursue additional private funding to further expand our network office capacity as enrollment grows, fund facilities acquisition and renovations, and provide additional program enhancements. We are confident this success will continue to grow under the leadership of our new Development Director, hired in Spring 2016. CSP grant funds will be used to supplement, not supplant, any federal, state or local funds, and will not be used to pay for existing levels of service funded from any other source such as Title I or Title II (e.g., instructional aides), or any non-allowed costs, in accordance with applicable regulations and CSP Nonregulatory Guidance.

**(4) PLAN FOR CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS NOT MEETING HIGH STANDARDS (2 PTS)**

The California Ed Code contains detailed school closure procedures, included in each charter petition, which Equitas will follow should any closure action become necessary. Cal. Ed. Code § 47605(b)(5)(P). Equitas' Board of Directors will complete all applicable steps following a decision by the Equitas Board or the charter authorizer (including upon non-renewal or revocation) to close a school, documented as a "Closure Action," including: immediately designate a person(s) responsible for conducting all closure-related activities as detailed in the petition; send written notice of the Closure Action to parents/guardians of all students currently enrolled (with detailed instructions about transfer, student records, etc.), school employees, vendors, the County Office of Education, SELPA, state retirement systems, CDE, and any school district(s) that may be responsible for providing education services to the former students

including a list of potentially returning students and their home schools based on student residence, all within 72 hours of the Closure Action; complete an independent final audit within six months identifying the disposition of all liabilities and appropriate disposal of any net assets; file any reports and taxes (payroll, etc.), return any and all property, and ensure proper transfer and maintenance of school and student records; and more.

**(5) KEY PROJECT PERSONNEL (6 PTS)**

Equitas' network office includes highly qualified individuals who have the experience and expertise to lead our growth in the coming years. The leadership team is intensively mission-focused, with an unwavering belief that every scholar can reach mastery for every standard with the right interventions. Equitas also is firmly committed to in-house leadership development, as evidenced by our new School Leader Fellowship program; two of our three current School leaders started as teachers at Equitas and the third participated as Fellow before assuming leadership of EQ3. We anticipate additional network staff and new school leaders will be developed, wherever possible, from within Equitas. Current network staff includes:

**Malka Borrego, Founder/CEO**, is an accomplished and recognized charter school leader, recently receiving the California Charter Schools Association's *2016 Hart Vision Leader of the Year* award at its annual conference. She founded Equitas in 2009 as the culmination of her year-long fellowship with BES

school literacy program, as Director of Family Literacy at Families in Schools, and as Executive

**Jon Host, COO,**

**Kelley Hampton, Strategic Growth Director, most**

**Joelle Barrios, Human Capital Director,**

college while working full-time, earning a BA in English and Latin American Studies from the

**Curriculum Director**, currently vacant. Responsible for collaborating with and coaching School Directors in designing and refining curriculum and assessments and overseeing instructional quality across all Equitas locations.

**Special Education Director**, currently vacant. Responsible for supervising and the SpEd program across all schools, developing and implementing appropriate educational curriculum, providing leadership in the timely assessments of students including completion of the Evaluation Report (ER) and Individual Education Plan (IEP) related paperwork.

**Michael Menjivar, Development Director**, joined Equitas after working at UCLA for four years in several development departments throughout the campus, starting during his time as an undergraduate student there. Through his work at UCLA, he

Mr. Menjivar holds a BS in Biology from UCLA.

**Quang Nguyen, Operations Director**, worked in operations for two prominent CMOs, Camino Nuevo and Green Dot Public Schools, for nearly seven years prior to joining Equitas. He has extensive experience in compliance, student information systems, IT and knowledge management.

**David Torres, After School Program Director**, previously worked for Para los Ninos for more than 10 years, where he

Current School Directors include: **Kelli Kilty, EQ**, has been a teacher and administrator for eight years, including four years with Equitas.

**Heather Mund, EQ2**, has 13

**Cristina Lowry,**

**EQ3**, has worked as

Equitas plans to hire a **Facilities Director** in the fall of 2016, and add additional administrative support positions to the network office as the organization grows in enrollment, including an Enrollment Coordinator and Data Manager.

#### **SELECTION CRITERION (E). QUALITY OF THE EVALUATION PLAN (10 PTS)**

Equitas is partnering with RAND Corporation, one of the nation's most preeminent nonprofit research organizations, to conduct an independent evaluation of our replication efforts under this grant. RAND researchers will use qualitative and quantitative methods to monitor the implementation of the replication and expansion plans, assess fidelity to the replication model, provide ongoing feedback to support improvement, and apply quasi-experimental methods to estimate impacts on student outcomes. The proposed evaluation plan will contribute high-quality evidence on the impacts of the Equitas school model, and will provide insights to the field with regard to best practices in charter school expansion and replication. The evaluation includes both a *formative* component (Q1-Q4) and a *summative* component (Q5-Q6) and seeks to answer the following research questions (brief synopsis of research methodologies included for each):

- Q1.** What are the key components of the Equitas school model for grades K-8? What aspects of the model are essential, and what aspects can be modified to meet local needs (or the specific needs of high schools)? (*via interviews with Equitas leadership and document review to develop a logic model that shows the relationship between key features of the Equitas model and anticipated short, medium, and long-term impacts.*)
- Q2.** To what extent is the Equitas replication implemented with fidelity to the intended model at each new school? (*via interviews with principals, assistant principals, and CMO administrators; focus groups with teachers and parents; document review; school visits and classroom walk-throughs in school year 2016, 2017 and 2018*)
- Q3.** What factors hinder or facilitate effective replication of the Equitas model, and what lessons can be drawn to inform future replications, or to inform best practices in charter school expansion and replication? (*same as Q2*)
- Q4.** What features or aspects of the Equitas model present special challenges and opportunities for the development of high schools? (*same as Q2*)
- Q5.** Are the new Equitas schools successful at positively impacting student achievement, both overall and for students from key socio-demographic groups (ELLs, students of color, students in poverty), and how does this compare to other similar schools? (*student achievement on state tests, EL reclassification rates, CELDT/ELPAC results, by year*)
- Q6.** How does the point of entry into the Equitas system impact student growth and student success? (*same as Q5 plus attendance and discipline data, grade progression/grad rates by year; non-cognitive measures (including grit and social/emotional intelligence)*)

RAND has over 40 years of experience designing experimental and non-experimental research studies, and findings from their research have contributed to the general body of

research on policies, conditions, and trends in education, workforce development and labor markets. Dr. Jonathan Schweig is an Associate Social Scientist at RAND and will serve as principal investigator (PI). Currently, Dr. Schweig is PI on a National Science Foundation funded project investigating the use of student surveys in teacher evaluation. Prior work includes a DoE-funded evaluation of magnet schools and an evaluation of the Green Dot CMO's transformation of Locke HS in Los Angeles, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Dr. Schweig has a PhD in Advanced Quantitative Research Methods and a MS in Statistics from UCLA, and an MA in Curriculum and Teacher Education from Stanford University.

Dr. William R. Johnston, co-PI, is an Associate Policy Researcher at RAND and a Postdoctoral Fellow at Harvard University. He is leading a three-year study of the NYC Community Schools Initiative as well as supporting an ongoing evaluation of North Carolina's school turnaround program. A former charter school teacher, he is particularly interested in studying interventions in high poverty urban contexts. He holds a BA in English from The Ohio State University, an MEd from the University of Pennsylvania, and an EdD from Harvard.

Dr. Andrew McEachin, Associate Policy Researcher, will serve as principal researcher. He earned his PhD in Education Policy and MA in Economics from the University of Southern California. Dr. McEachin's research focuses on the design and impact of teacher and school accountability policies, school choice, and math education policy. He is currently working on charter school evaluations in New Orleans, North Carolina, and Ohio.

RAND's research team will provide annual reports to Equitas' Board and CEO and report directly throughout the project to the Strategic Growth Director, who will serve as the Project Director for this grant.

## APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Application Requirement	Selection Criteria	Pages
(a) Project objectives and methods to measure progress	Selection Criteria (SC) C: Quality of the Project Design; SC E: Quality of the Evaluation Plan; App. G: Financials; App. H.3. (Sample LCAP template).	37-41, 55-57
(b) Operations and Management (Central office, governance, daily ops, finan. Mgmt., HR, instruct. Mgmt.)	SC D: Quality of the Management Plan; App. B: Resumes; App. H.4.: Organizational Chart	41-55
(c) Ensuring commensurate share of federal funds where determined by formula for each new or expanded school (Y1 and any expansion years)	SC D (3): Equitas' Multi-Year Financial and Operating model; Budget Narrative	49-51
(d) Educational Program, including how will enable all students (including subgroups) to meet state standards, grade levels to be served, curriculum & instruct practices to be used	SC A(3)(c): The Equitas Model	20-29
(e) Admin relationship between school(s) and authorizer(s)	SC D: Management, (2) Business Plan: Ensuring Quality Beyond Federal Funding	49

(f) Continued operations post-grant	SC D: Management, (2) Business Plan: Ensuring Quality Beyond Federal Funding	45-51
(g) Parent/Community involvement in planning, design and implementation of new/expanded schools	SC A(3)(b): Additional Measures of Success; SC A(3)(c): The Equitas Model; SC B: Growth Will Help Families	20, 29, 34
(h) Waivers	<i>Not applicable</i>	
(i) Use of grant funds in conjunction with other federal programs and matching funds	SC (D): Management Plan, (3) Equitas' Multi-Year Financial and Operating model	51
(j) Outreach and equal opportunity to attend (lottery)	Competitive Preference Priority (2); SC (D): Management Plan	7-9, 44
(k) IDEA compliance	SC A(3)(c): The Equitas Model	32-33
(l) Compliance issues	<i>Not applicable.</i>	
(m) Schools Operated by Applicant; Student Achievement Data	Absolute Priority 1; SC A: Equitas is a High-Quality Applicant; Appendices E and F	1-5, 10-28
(n) Objective Data on Applicant Quality	Absolute Priority 1; SC A: High-Quality; Appendices E and F	1-5, 10-28