



## SFUSD School Improvement Grant (SIG) Application Summary

### NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCESS

To better understand the needs and challenges of our schools and district, SFUSD leaders worked in partnership with university colleagues to understand how schools and districts have beat the odds for low performing students. The new study, “Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago” (2010) particularly shaped the Needs Assessment of this grant. In this study, researchers Tony Bryk and colleagues look longitudinally at the improvement efforts in Chicago public schools and identify specific factors in place at the schools that made dramatic improvements in reading and mathematics as compared to schools that languished or performed worse over time. These schools shared five characteristics:

- (1) **Clear instructional guidance:** Schools that made dramatic gains in improvement all had a clear, organized curriculum content map and sequence that specified high expectations for student performance, and provided effective pacing to ensure student mastery. All programs, materials and resources were clearly linked to the curriculum content.
- (2) **A focus on assessing and building professional capacity:** To beat the odds, schools must have capable teachers with subject-matter knowledge, an orientation toward continuous improvement, and a sense of urgency for improving their practice and student outcomes. To build teacher capacity, schools that experienced consistent growth institutionalized data-driven continuous improvement processes and had teachers collaborating regularly to improve their practice. Finally, the schools invested in high-quality professional development, and ensured that the professional development was linked to teachers’ inquiry practices and embedded within their everyday work.
- (3) **A student-centered learning climate:** Schools that beat the odds begin by creating an environment of order and safety for students. Then, teachers work to provide engaging, rigorous learning within the classroom. By combining a strong “academic press” with supports for achievement, all students eventually master high standards. Classroom teaching required the balance between developing students’ basic skills with the importance of tasks that push higher-order thinking. In Chicago, the schools that improved the most emphasized the development of students’ critical thinking and analysis skills, engaged students in solving real-world problems, and assessed student learning with complex tasks, writing, and projects.
- (4) **Parent-community ties:** Low performing schools cannot improve without strengthening the ties to families and the surrounding community. In Chicago, schools that beat the odds made parent involvement the highest priority. They made sure all school personnel went above and beyond to know students, their families and home lives. Additionally, schools that raised achievement did so by making links with community organizations, integrating community issues into the curriculum, and helping to coordinate the services offered by local agencies.
- (5) **School leadership:** Fundamentally, all of these strategic actions are driven by competent, visionary school leaders. In the Chicago schools that beat the odds, principals established a clear course of action, specified high expectations for teachers and students, and built relationships with the community.

The research is clear: These are the essential supports necessary to improve persistently low-performing schools. A school lacking any one of these elements is likely to suffer from chronic failure. Indeed, it is not enough to be moderately proficient on these elements—to make dramatic gains in improvement, low performing schools must quickly redress specific challenges in each of these domains, comprehensively, intensively and with full implementation.

### **DISTRICT & SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY**

While the SIG application is made on behalf of individual school communities, and identifies some individualized school improvement efforts to ensure student academic success, the high number of schools eligible for the School Improvement Grant within SFUSD suggests that the problem of low performance is a systemic one, requiring a systemic solution.

SFUSD approached the school Needs Assessment using these domains as a guiding framework. The Needs Assessment was designed to pinpoint the specific areas for development within each of the ten schools. As the assessment process unfolded, it became clear that although each school had particular strengths and challenges, the narrative for all schools was very similar. This analysis provided further evidence of a systemic problem.

Thus, the premise of the district's application is that it is the responsibility of the district—in collaboration with school communities—to remedy the problem of persistent low-performance in the ten schools identified. SFUSD's plan for systemic change is critical, and cannot be implemented fully without the funds available through the School Improvement Grant.

### **AREAS OF FOCUS**

The following represents a summary listing of the main components included in SFUSD's SIG application. The proposed items are meant to address a combination of the needs and priorities identified by school leaders and their communities, as well as systemic areas of focus across the school district (i.e. implementation of core curriculum, balanced literacy, continuous improvement, etc.) In lieu of the lengthier narrative and actual text of the application, the following summary aims to list in short-form the relevant aspects of the SIG.

Any aspects of the grant that may impact on the working conditions of collective bargaining members would also require negotiation with the respective units; the SIG compensates professionals for any voluntary service beyond traditional working duties.

### **INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDANCE**

***Key finding:*** *All of San Francisco's lowest performing schools share an incoherent, fragmented approach to curriculum, assessment and programming, due in part to insufficient instructional guidance from central office.*

All persistently low-performing schools have adopted State Board of Education approved curriculum in language arts and mathematics. The needs assessment for all schools shows that the availability of these materials did not always set a rigorous standard of expectations. For example, in English/Language Arts, teachers have decreased the amount of time students spend engaged in authentic reading and writing tasks. Additionally, the current materials do not adequately specify the scope and sequence of instruction that is most responsive to high needs students. Lacking a common core curriculum, teachers have been left to their own unsupported devices, in both curriculum and assessment.

At the district level, programs to improve teaching and learning have been piecemeal and ad-hoc and have lacked sufficient resources to keep them tightly aligned and focused. When asked about the nature of innovations in the district, particularly whether they were ever taken to scale,

one administrator said, “We have never taken anything to scale because nothing has been sustained more than two or three years. “ This has had a particularly significant impact on the lowest performing schools. To address this problem, the district has developed the following critically important solutions. If supported by the resources specified in this grant application, these solutions will immediately begin to produce results in the ten lowest-performing schools with the intensive resources and support provided by the district.

- ✓ **A common core curriculum** that clearly specifies what students should know and be able to do and sets high standards for rigor and instructional quality has been developed in the spring of 2010 to address this problem. The curriculum, currently available in grades K-12 for English/Language Arts and Mathematics, integrates the new National Core Standards with the California State Standards to provide a rigorous, robust content scope and sequence, model lessons for differentiation, and high quality materials for implementation, including SBE adopted texts. Where they once lacked instructional guidance, teachers at the ten persistently low-performing schools will now have a clear roadmap to follow.
- ✓ **Common Interim Assessments** that track students’ progress in meeting the standards set forth by the curriculum. These assessments will be given four times per year and be followed with intensive coaching in data-driven instructional planning.

#### **PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY: ENSURING TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS**

**Key finding:** *Professional development has reflected the lack of instructional guidance, and schools have had to broker for resources and support. Many teachers in the lowest performing schools are doing the best they can with limited guidance.*

A common core curriculum will do much to solve the incoherence problem. However, professional development resources must be aligned accordingly. The SFUSD needs assessment recognized the need for **professional development on proven instructional strategies** that is job-embedded, and features one-on-one coaching. Not surprisingly, given the lack of instructional guidance specified above, the Needs Assessment revealed common weaknesses in the schools, particularly in implementing a rigorous, high-quality literacy program in the elementary grades, and building students’ ability to comprehend complex texts in the upper grades. Additionally, professional development resources must support the district’s commitment that all students—and especially those in persistently low performing schools—are proficient in Algebra by the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Specifically, this proposal includes the following to build teacher capacity:

- ✓ **Creating an effective balanced-literacy program K-5**
  - **Teachers College Reading and Writing Project:** K-5 teachers will have professional development from Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (a nationally proven literacy training program from Teacher’s College, Columbia University, New York), including access to summer institutes (for literacy coaches and leadership teams in the 1<sup>st</sup> year, and all teachers in the second and third years)
  - **WRITE Institute:** All schools will have teams of teachers trained across three years by the WRITE Institute, a National Academic Excellence model for sustained professional development in model, proven to be effective for writing improvement, especially for English Learners needing to master academic language
- ✓ **Focus on adolescent literacy needs in secondary schools**
  - **Strategic Literacy Initiative (Reading Apprenticeship):** West Ed’s Reading Apprenticeship program is one of the few programs for adolescent literacy approved by the Institute for Education Sciences “What Works Clearinghouse.” All secondary teachers who teach an academic subject will receive training from SLI to ensure students can access grade-appropriate texts in every academic subject. This program is also designed to increase student engagement in academic subjects by

developing their identities as discipline-specific consumers of texts (i.e., teaches students how to read like scientists). This program will be implemented intensively for two years with specific attention to sustainability and building internal district capacity.

- ✓ **English mastery for English-Learners and Standard-English learners**
  - **Structured review of all programs serving English Learners.** As part of the Lau Action Plan, SFUSD's English Learner Support Services department has created a sophisticated tool for assessing schools' ability to serve English Learners. This tool will be used to regularly monitor all schools with high percentages of English learners and provide guidance to address challenges.
  - **A common core curriculum for English Language Development (ELD)** In 2009-10, SFUSD's English Language Support Services department (ELSS), in collaboration with national experts, developed a core curriculum for ELD. This curriculum is ready for implementation in 2010-11.
  - **On-site ELD Specialists:** To support implementation of the ELD curriculum and ensure effective use of ELD strategies, all schools will have an ELD/SEL Specialist/Coach delivering in-class professional development, peer coaching & lesson development, linguistic interventions to newcomer students and organizational support for the analysis of CELDT and other language development data.
  - **Academic English Mastery Program (AEMP):** Schools with high percentages of standard-English learners (Carver, Muir, Revere and Mann) will have groups of teachers trained in AEMP (Academic English Mastery Program) across the first and second year to learn a groundbreaking approach to ensuring the language and literacy acquisition of speakers of non-standard English, such as speakers of African American English, and other Standard English Learners, such as speakers of Chicano English, or speakers of Pacific Islander English.
- ✓ **Providing the foundations for mathematic excellence in elementary school**
  - **Project Seed:** all elementary schools will have access to materials and training in the third year from Project SEED, a National Staff Development Council touted staff development program which makes mathematics exciting for students and teachers, and also raises students' test scores by building algebraic and critical thinking and reinforcing basic skills.
- ✓ **Ensuring that all students can access algebra in middle school**
  - **Algebraic Thinking:** All middle school math instructors and high school Algebra teachers will have training and resources during the second and third years from Algebraic Thinking (a nationally recognized effective teacher training program focused on student development of mathematical thinking and the study of fundamental algebraic ideas) proven to be effective pedagogy with struggling math students.
- ✓ **Job-embedded coaching that integrates all strategies:**
  - **Literacy:** all five elementary schools will have two literacy specialist/academic coaches delivering in-class professional development, peer coaching & lesson development, literacy interventions to far below and below basic students and organizational support for the analysis of the common interim assessments and other language arts data for student differentiation during language arts instruction. Secondary schools will also have access to district literacy coaches who will support the implementation of Strategic Literacy Initiative strategies and the Reading Apprenticeship program.
  - **Mathematics:** all five schools with elementary students & John O'Connell High School will have a math specialist/academic coach delivering in-class professional development, peer coaching & lesson development, math interventions to far below and below basic students and organizational support for the analysis of the common

interim assessments and other math data for student differentiation during mathematics instruction.

In addition to high quality professional development, professional capacity must be developed through a professional **performance management system** that ensures a **data-driven approach** to instruction and professional learning that uses common interim assessments and other evidence of student learning as well as research-based strategies to improve teacher practice. Although the school Balanced Scorecards were designed to push evidence use in schools, the district quickly realized that absent a culture of evidence use or professional development in strategic planning, the Scorecards proved far too complex and sophisticated for schools to use reliably as a data-driven improvement tool. Through monitoring BSC implementation it became evident that the lowest performing schools need training and follow-up coaching in using data for instructional improvement. Realizing that the district does not have sufficient man-power to build schools' capacity for using data, this application asks for resources to support schools' enculturation toward data-based inquiry, peer collaboration for lesson planning, tighter school organization for student academic needs analysis, restructuring for literacy/math/ELD foci, and professional learning communities. External partners for this work include:

- **Partners in School Innovation:** the seven elementary & middle schools/classrooms will have assistance from Partners for School Innovation for the first two years (presumed to be managed internally by the schools by the third year).
- **Pivot Learning Partners:** both high schools will have assistance of Pivot for the first two years (presumed to be managed internally by the schools by the third year).

Finally, SFUSD is committed to **ensuring that 100% of teachers in our persistently low-performing schools are effective**. To do so, we will continue work already begun with our union partners to define standards of effectiveness, and an evaluation system that is fair and reliable and includes student growth as a factor. This will involve challenging but culture-shifting conversations about good instruction, acceptable and unacceptable practices in the classroom, and the very best practices that support different groups of students. We believe teachers at our persistently low-performing schools should meet the standards of National Board Certification, and if they engage in all of the professional development opportunities provided in this grant, we will help them through the process. The district has partnered with **Pivot Learning Partners** to support the collaboration between United Educators of San Francisco and district leaders in developing this evaluation system.

Additionally, SFUSD has partnered with the **New Teacher Project**, a nationally-recognized program designed to recruit and place highly effective teachers in the schools that need them most. The New Teacher Project has already increased the percentage of effective teachers serving in the persistently low performing schools, and its high quality selection process will be used to screen candidates for the schools identified in this grant.

#### **A STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING CLIMATE**

**Key Finding:** *All schools, with the exception of Willie Brown, were found to provide attractive, safe environments for student learning. However, all elementary school classrooms lacked sufficient classroom libraries with leveled texts and texts reflective of students' family lives and culture. The lack of robust classroom libraries especially inhibits independent reading. Teachers had varying levels of capacity with respect to implementing the Houghton-Mifflin Reading program and the Everyday Mathematics program, and in particular need both support and accountability for ensuring rigorous, engaging lessons. The middle and high schools struggled with low levels of student engagement, as shown by relatively high rates of chronic truancy. Some schools have begun to address these problems by focusing on classroom management*

*procedures or teaching strategies to support African American students. No schools have a comprehensive way to target students for interventions and track their progress.*

Across all persistently low-performing schools, there is a clear need for (1) A **system of interventions and supports**, including an early-warning monitoring system that will flag students for intervention and a system for diagnosing student needs, placing students in interventions and tracking their progress over time, and (2) innovative solutions to the problem of persistent low-engagement (evidenced by high truancy rates) in the middle and high schools.

- ✓ **Response to Intervention:** All identified schools will adopt a “Response to Intervention” (Rtl) approach to ensure all students have access to high quality, differentiated instruction and interventions where appropriate, as well as reduce the number of students inappropriately identified for Special Education services. O’Connell, Carver and Chavez will have a Director of Instruction made responsible for the Response to Intervention (RTI) services, student study team organization and securing of academic interventions.
  - **Appropriate diagnostic and formative assessments** in K-12, including the Fountas & Pinnell benchmark assessment system in elementary school and the RISE (Reading Inventory & Student Evaluation) for secondary schools. The RISE is an innovative and highly researched diagnostic assessment for literacy co-developed by multi-university members of the Strategic Educational Research Partnership (SERP) & Educational Testing Services (ETS).
  - **Advanced monitoring of student progress** through Common Interim Assessments and other formative assessments currently available in the district data system “Data Director” and an “early warning” system that will quickly identify students in need of additional supports.
  - **High quality interventions** including one-on-one tutoring with literacy specialists, research-based independent tutorial programs and extended day learning. Specific interventions will include:
    - *EPGY* (Educational Program for Gifted Youth at Stanford University), a multimedia on-line course & academic intervention program for English and math known to be successful even for struggling learners;
    - *Read 180*: Research-based reading intervention for middle and high school students;
    - *ALEKS*: Research-based mathematics intervention for middle and high school students.

In addition to a Rtl model of interventions, the grant focuses on supporting the **development of engaging, academic learning environments**, particularly in the middle and high schools.

- ✓ **Creating an environment conducive for learning:**
  - **Tools for Schools:** To enable teachers and administrators to concentrate on instruction rather than student misbehavior, all schools will have access for all three years to Noah Salzman’s Tools for Schools, a classroom/behavior management program known to effectively reduce office referrals, tardies, absences and suspensions.
- ✓ **Supporting high engagement among middle and high school students:**
  - One middle school and two high schools will receive support from the San Francisco Coalition for Essential Small Schools (SFCESS) to specifically increase student engagement. As described in a recent study by MDRC (June, 2010), the personalized environment exemplified by the small schools approach is showing dramatic success in turning around low performing schools in New York City. Although the schools working with SFCESS are already small in size, they need

support in implementing the strategies that make small effective, including project-based learning, equity-centered instruction and student advisories.

- ✓ **Creating a College-Going Culture in all Secondary Schools**
  - **A.V.I.D:** All secondary schools will focus on effective implementation of A.V.I.D (Advancement Via Individual Determination), a research-confirmed program designed to help students in the middle prepare for and succeed in colleges and universities by committing themselves to improvement and preparation for post-secondary learning (A.V.I.D is a rigorous program of instruction in academic “survival skills” and college level entry skills, such as teaching students how to study, read for content, take notes, and manage time).

#### **EXTENDING LEARNING TIME FOR STUDENTS:**

Research suggests that students who are far below grade level need additional hours of learning to catch up. The SIG grant includes extended learning time as a requirement of the application.

- ✓ **Kindergarten transition program:** All elementary schools will have a summer transition program to prepare incoming Kindergarten students for the routines of school, familiarization of site classrooms, early diagnostic assessments of students with high academic needs, and parent indoctrination for a college-going expectation.
- ✓ **Summer School:** All schools will have enough funding to hire summer school teachers for up to 25 days for students with high academic needs (for all incoming grades, such as graduated 5<sup>th</sup> graders entering middle school); all high schools will be able to offer courses for up to 10 credits of credit recovery; all summer programs will take place in the school of origin; all elementary summer programs will have an afterschool program for enrichment for additional hours of support to students beyond the formal classroom day.
- ✓ **High quality after-school learning opportunities:** After school learning opportunities will be seamlessly connected to school-day instruction and topics in the elementary schools, but feature engaging, hands-on projects and activities designed to increase use of academic speaking, reading and writing and mathematics. All schools will have increased numbers of students served in the afterschool programs during the school year; afterschool staff will have additional hours to provide in-class support during the last hours of the school day in high needs classrooms and more instructional resources (e.g., curricular materials, academic intervention programs, supplies) for assisting high needs students.

#### **PARENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

***Key Finding:*** *All of the ten persistently low performing schools in the SIG have shown a strong commitment to family engagement, but have lacked the resources to effectively engage all families, particularly those struggling financially. Standard approaches, such as regular “coffee chats” or parent workshops have sometimes been successful, but have not comprehensively addressed the needs of the community.*

Instead of attempting piecemeal solutions like more parent workshops, all ten schools will be driven by a **community-schools approach** that builds family involvement by integrating and coordinating the many services San Francisco community based organizations can provide to students and their families that have so far been fragmented, misaligned and/or unnecessarily duplicated.

#### **SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

***Key Finding:*** *The district conducted a careful analysis of principal effectiveness, based on the Chicago dimensions of inclusive-facilitative and instructional leadership. All principals demonstrated strengths, especially in the ability to connect with parents and students. However,*

*some principals did not have sufficient expertise in instructional leadership necessary to dramatically turnaround student performance.*

The School Improvement Grant insists upon the removal of principals who have been at each low performing school for more than two years. As described in more detail in the grant narrative, there will be new principals at these sites. Principals that had less than two years experience at the school, demonstrated potential for growth, and had taken significant strides in improving their schools were retained. The district will establish strict expectations for principal performance, and evaluate principals based on their knowledge of data-driven school improvement, teaching and learning and the communities they serve.

Careful attention to principal support, mentorship and evaluation is a key component of the SFUSD district reorganization to support the lowest performing schools. Assistant Superintendents and other area-level administrators will be trained in cutting-edge supervision practices so principals will have clearly defined performance objectives, regular and specific feedback, and mentoring where necessary. SFUSD is fortunate to have a cadre of committed principals who will flourish under this new performance management system.

## **DISTRICT REORGANIZATION TO SUPPORT MANAGEMENT, OVERSIGHT AND SCHOOL OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY**

### **✓ Creation of the Superintendent's Zone**

In recognition of the systemic problems described thus far, San Francisco Unified School District has undergone a massive reorganization, starting in the spring of 2010. To ensure effective management and continuous support to schools, as well as alignment and coordination of services and supports, such as professional development, departments have been restructured, and each Assistant Superintendent will have a nimble team of instructional coaches and operational experts. The restructuring is also designed to focus more intensive services on the needs of the district's lowest performing schools. Most schools within SFUSD will be supervised by an Assistant Superintendent responsible for approximately 15 to 20 school sites; however, a special "Superintendent's Zone" has been created for the district's lowest performing schools, including the schools participating in a Transformation or Turnaround process. These schools will be supervised by an Assistant Superintendent responsible for only a small cohort of schools. Assistant Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero will supervise the improvement efforts at Bryant Elementary School, Chavez Elementary School, Muir Elementary School, Horace Mann Middle School, Everett Middle School, John O'Connell High School of Technology, and Mission High School. Assistant Superintendent Patricia Gray will supervise the improvement efforts at Carver Elementary School and Paul Revere, K-8 school as well as the closure and reassignment process at Willie Brown Academy.

The Superintendent's Zone will provide a greater degree of operational flexibility for teams working under the Assistant Superintendents and the schools themselves. District level decisions that impact on schools in the "Zone" will be more carefully scrutinized, this includes a more careful analysis of whether there exists an equitable distribution of educational programming and resources, as well as looking more closely at how student assignment and teacher placement policies exacerbate the challenges faced at low-performing school sites. Teachers working in the Zone will continue to receive special compensation, as per existing district policy negotiated with our labor partners. Additionally, the Superintendent will also work closely with university researchers, the United Educators of San Francisco, the Department of Human Resources, principals and teachers in schools in the Superintendent's Zone, and other district leadership to develop and implement a system of teacher evaluation that includes student achievement as a factor. This group will also develop appropriate incentives for teachers and school leaders making exceptional progress in increasing student achievement.



✓ **Mentoring and Networking for Schools Working in Isolation**

Low performing schools working in isolation must have access to the expertise and mentorship of schools that are improving. Although SFUSD has many low-performing schools, the district also has some of the most high performing and innovative schools in the state, including high achieving Title I schools with similar populations as the SIG schools. SFUSD is home to San Francisco International, a newcomer high school housed at Mission High School. Already successful in New York, this model enables newcomer immigrant to read and write in English by the end of one school year. Rather than reinventing the wheel, our lowest performing schools deserve the chance to learn from their neighbors.

In the past, SFUSD has provided schools with insufficient tools for cross-site communication and collaboration, which has exacerbated schools' feeling of isolation among teachers and school communities. There has been no system for central office administrators to communicate regularly with all teachers, other than an online newsletter of announcements. Our Information Technology Department has acquired new tools for online learning environments and our district administrators will be working with these schools to arrange for opportunities to release teachers for site visits and shared meeting opportunities.

**BUDGET SUMMARY**

The budget summaries below approach the grant application maximums, and will likely require a prioritization of activities as actual funded supports are contingent on award amounts, if any.

School	State Model	Year 1 2010-2011	Year 2 2011-2012	Year 3 2012-2013	Three Year TOTALS
Brown, Jr.*	Closure	\$43,597	\$0	\$0	\$43,597
Bryant ES	Turnaround	\$1,935,457	\$1,937,378	\$1,942,035	\$5,814,870
Carver ES	Turnaround	\$1,820,514	\$1,840,419	\$1,812,514	\$5,473,448
Chavez ES	Transformation	\$1,972,598	\$1,986,238	\$1,982,950	\$5,941,786
District	Central Support	\$1,252,827	\$1,128,511	\$1,023,915	\$3,405,253
Everett MS	Turnaround	\$1,365,637	\$1,342,237	\$1,167,170	\$3,875,044
Mann MS	Transformation	\$1,458,070	\$1,411,336	\$1,161,528	\$4,030,934
Mission HS	Transformation	\$1,870,241	\$1,951,683	\$1,505,765	\$5,327,688
Muir ES	Turnaround	\$1,849,872	\$1,863,400	\$1,842,522	\$5,555,793
O'Connell HS	Transformation	\$1,665,832	\$1,636,855	\$1,085,098	\$4,387,786
Revere ES	Transformation	\$1,886,721	\$1,999,258	\$1,747,020	\$5,632,999
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$17,121,366</b>	<b>\$17,097,314</b>	<b>\$15,270,519</b>	<b>\$49,489,199</b>

\* Willie Brown Jr. Academic College Preparatory School is closing by the end of school year 2010-2011 in order to rebuild a state of the art facility. The school is eligible for up to \$50,000 for closure and, if granted, funding will go to support a parent/community outreach coordinator to assist families in transitioning to new schools.