

# 24TH STREET ES



Located in the Historic West Adams District in urban Los Angeles, 24th Street Elementary School has been rooted in this community since 1904.

## 24<sup>th</sup> Street ES PSC 4.0 Proposal 2012-2013

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# A New Hope

## Realigning our school vision and philosophy

*24th Street Elementary School is committed to educating responsible, caring, respectful, trustworthy, and inquisitive students, prepared to contribute to an ever-changing world. We are a school that fosters a personalized learning environment including tiered instruction and interventions that address the individual, social, emotional, and academic needs of the whole child. We continually strive to improve academic achievement in meaningful, authentic ways that reach the individual child. Most importantly, 24th Street expects and encourages students to take responsibility and accountability as active participants in their own learning. Our highest priorities revolve around the central belief that our students are fully capable of becoming productive and influential members of society. It is this belief that drives our staff and volunteers to encourage life-long learning, high academic achievement, and concern for others. And yet, while these are exemplary values for a school to hold, none of these are new.*

Ostensibly, our vision is sound, but where we have failed our students is in our practices, addressing their immediate needs and deficiencies so that they can be prepared for the next step in their educational journeys. We still hold these values in high regard, but they do not necessarily speak to the urgency with which we must operate. The

**“...teachers must inspire; principals must lead; parents must instill a thirst for learning, and students, you’ve got to do the work. And together, I promise you – we can out-educate and out-compete any country on Earth.**

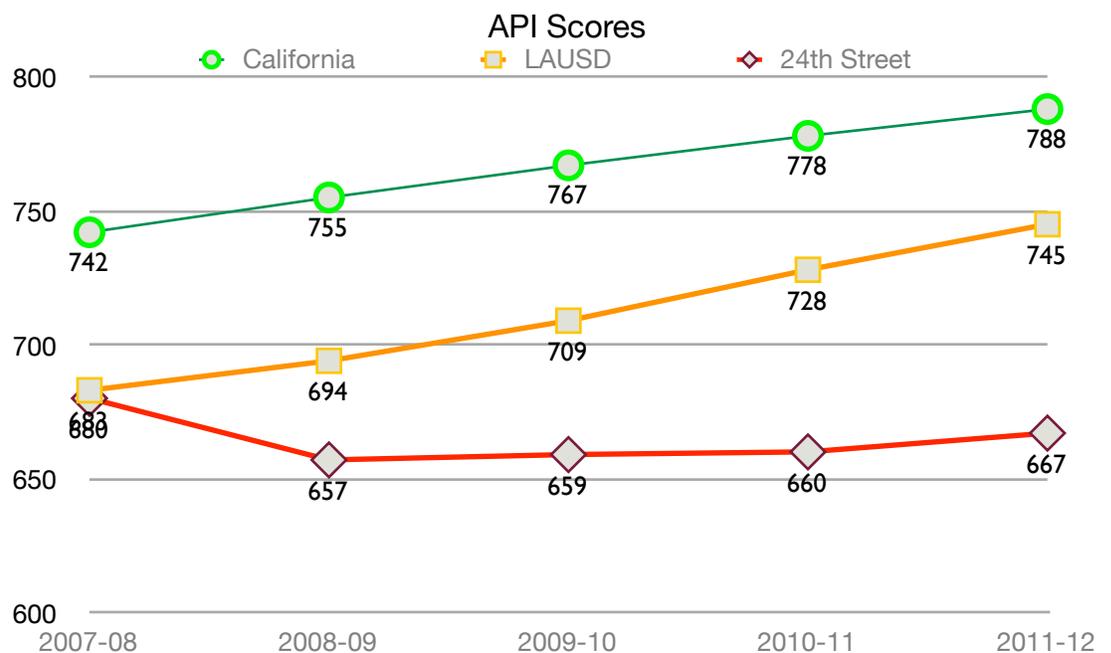
**President Barack Obama**

community, staff, and leadership of 24th Street have always wanted the best for our students, however, wanting the best and getting desired results have been two worlds apart. We have continued to operate in the same manner for years and have consequently yielded the same ineffective results. Rather than learn from our operational miscues and poor communication and look to our past for guidance, we have allowed the accretion of our failures to weigh us down. Accordingly, we must now revisit our school vision and ensure that it not only speaks to the ideal, but to our current reality as well.

While we are a school that proudly promotes college and career readiness, the more pressing issue for our students is being prepared for the requirements of the current grade level. Not only

### Reality Check

At 24th Street Elementary School, our current reality is that we are not making the grade when it comes to school improvement. The numbers only tell a part of the story, but one we cannot ignore.



are our students unprepared for the academic rigors, they are also unprepared for the social expectations and stresses that come with moving on from grade to grade. Our vision supports a learning environment where college and career readiness raise the expectations for the students. Unquestionably, our end goal still remains college and career readiness, but our daily practices are now shifting to align with a school vision based on mastery of the fundamental academic and social skills necessary to succeed both today and in the future. This includes, but is not limited to: understanding foundational mathematics and algebraic concepts in the upper grades, analyzing informational text for content, unpacking narrative text for significance and relevance in both written and verbal forms, interpreting the world around them to make informed decisions, building and maintaining relationships with peers, and showing empathy and sympathy when appropriate. We recognize the importance of depth of factual knowledge for success in life, but we also believe that students thrive as young adults if provided the tools and instruction in how to access knowledge for themselves.

Just as importantly, we emphasize developing a student's social emotional skills because the community of 24th Street is only a small representation of the rest of the world they will have to interact with as adults. We will equip our students with the skills necessary to work well with and respect people from all backgrounds because we embrace diversity. Our students will walk away with the understanding and experiences that show we do more than just reach for our own dreams, we try to help others do the same. Once students develop a strong foundation, this intensive focus lends itself greatly towards developing the higher level thinking skills and social emotional tools required for personal growth. Throughout their lives, we hope that students will look back on their time at 24th Street as a period of personal growth that prepared them for the challenges we saw ahead and those that we could not.

Over the next five years, we are committed to setting higher expectations for all stakeholders, including students, parents, and the staff. Each

member of the triad plays an essential role in the development and success of our young students. For years, we have assumed the responsibility and carried the burdens as separate entities, only to find that our expectations have varied, results have been disappointing, and bilateral communication has been nonexistent. It should come as no surprise then, that our work has yielded nominal gains over the past three years when we refuse to change the way we approach our students. If anything, this is evidence why we need to renew our commitment because what we have done has not been effective. It is time to work together to build on learned lessons after reflection on years of data and teaching practices. It is time to recognize that our vision is not intended to be a new name for old ways of doing business. It is time that our common goals, plans, vision, and values become the focal point of everyone's efforts. These are not just promises to our children, but promises we intend to keep (NGACBP & CCSSO, 2010, p. 4).

For many of us, this will be a difficult transition, but a necessary one. Not only does this mean taking the initiative to implement new ideas, but to also follow through with those ideas. We are entering a new age of accountability at 24th Street, one where each stakeholder plays an integral role in the decision making process as well as the implementation of those decisions. With the assistance of dedicated parents, a rigorous Common Core State Standards-based academic program, inspirational teachers, and visionary administration, 24th Street will foster a culture where children are empowered to be responsible and accountable partners in their learning. We believe that the following three guiding commitments will help achieve the vision of the successful student here at 24th Street:

- **A commitment to consistent, quality first instruction developed on engagement with the Common Core State Standards**
- **A commitment to increased responsibility for personnel through the Teaching and Learning Framework, clearly defining ways to hold each other**

**accountable through the School Leadership Framework, and fostering an inclusive decision making process**

- **A commitment to developing “socially responsible” students through a school-wide positive behavior support (PBS) system**

We know that school improvement does not happen overnight, nor is it possible without buy-in from the entire school community. With that in mind, we are united in our efforts to support our students and embrace a common mission that establishes a collaborative relationship between both internal and external publics. We are confident that this cooperative approach will yield significant improvements in relation to suspension rates, attendance, and ultimately student achievement. By understanding the importance of these school culture factors and by discovering the practices and strategies taking place in schools that positively influence these variables, we can more effectively shape school improvement initiatives. To begin, we must identify each of our purposes here at 24th Street. Collectively, we have an obligation to our students as members of their community, but within that body, we also have our individual roles to play as a staff, parents, and students.

As a staff, we are highly committed and dedicated educational professionals, working collaboratively to meet the needs of all students in order to maximize their full learning potential, develop personal character, and utilize technological skills to interact successfully in a rapidly expanding global community. With the stark reality that resources will continue to disappear, we must commit to taking on the added responsibilities necessary to ensure that our students are receiving an equitable opportunity, while still honoring the spirit of our contracts. Moreover, we must take advantage of the rare and unique community resources already present at 24th Street, such as a fully-funded garden classroom and education program via the Garden School Foundation, a 501 (c) 3 not-for-profit that has been at the school for over 7 years.

Additionally, and perhaps more painfully, there will also need to be a willingness to give up the limelight in the classroom. To use some educator jargon, the days of “sage on the stage” have passed. Teachers are still there to provide quality first instruction and support for our students, but more so as a “guide on the side.” Best practices have historically focused on what the teacher is doing and saying in the classroom because most evaluations are based on those aspects. However, as part of a changing culture at 24th Street, teachers will not be evaluated on how they direct lessons, rather how they work towards mastery of key standards through effective planning and student-led discussions. The teachers will be held accountable for student progress as well as the instructional process through the ELD portfolios and the Teaching and Learning Framework. This is a crucial paradigm shift for both teachers and administrators who are required to truly equip our students with the independent work skills they need for college readiness and professional success.

For the administrator’s role in ensuring quality instruction in the classroom, part of the challenge is to build relationships and trust with the staff and parents and show them his/her intent of staying at and investing in the school long-term. Understandably, visibility and relationships are integral parts of the administrator’s position, however, instruction is the cornerstone of academic achievement and must be addressed appropriately. It is the collective responsibility of the entire staff, as the instructional leaders, to communicate with all stakeholders and give them the opportunity to be heard—what they see as the school’s strengths as well as its challenges. This increased communication will be fostered via the administrator’s increased presence and visibility on campus for increased interaction with parents to build rapport. From there, all conflicts must be mediated and situations must be resolved. If it becomes clear that certain stakeholders are uninterested in finding solutions to the disturbingly low performance of the school, or fail to acknowledge that there is even a problem, then appropriate steps must be taken by the administrator which includes: in-depth mentoring

and support for struggling teachers, looking at school data to identify the trouble areas based on student achievement dips, and planning future matrices appropriately.

Another key aspect to explore is the involvement of the Parent Center and parents at large. This group represents a vital—and underutilized—resource that can provide insight into the issues beguiling the school. Here, it seems that the dissemination of intelligible and clear data would be the most useful step towards effective collaboration. Parents are bombarded with data and statistics, but without guidance and explanation, most parents are not able to sift through the numbers to find what applies to them. It is the duty of 24th Street staff and administration to present information to parents in a clear and respectful manner, so that both parties feel equipped to discuss the success of the students. In addition, there needs to be a forum for open discussion as well as a clearly outlined system for keeping the staff and administration accountable for actions regarding the concerns raised in those discussions. If our aim is to partner with an actively involved and informed parent base, then it behooves us to build up their capacity and knowledge of the policies and programs that affect their students. Many of our policies need refinement and that can only happen when parents are aware and present to help develop new policies focused on student safety and achievement. Parents will be a part of the decision making process, rather than spectators receiving notices about decisions that have already been made.

One of the many lessons we have learned at 24th Street over the years is that what works for one school will not necessarily work for us. We have tried generic plans and we have failed with generic outcomes. What we need is to find what works for us. We need a vision to see what lies ahead and to tackle the various impediments in the present. We need a plan that is tailor made to our school's needs. We need an instructional philosophy that eclipses policies, programs, and even personnel. We need active collaboration amongst parents, teachers, students, support staff, administrators, and the local community toward setting and achieving a common

goal. It is these common goals, plans, visions and values that become the focal point of everyone's efforts (Schein, 1992). For this reason, as part of our new instructional philosophy, we believe that the following items, in order, need to be addressed: commitments, programs, personnel, and practices.

**Commitments** - the guarantees that make our school's intents known. The crux of our new perspective at 24th Street is the belief that our instructional commitments trump programs. By keeping our commitments focused and tangible, we are allowing ourselves the opportunity to unite with a clearly outlined vision and system for holding each other accountable. That will, in turn, allow us to do our individual jobs without having to worry about whether each stakeholder is keeping up his/her end of the bargain.

**Programs** - theory put into action. The majority of our programs at 24th Street are District adopted, but that should not determine the quality of our instruction or how we choose to supplement our given curriculum. In the past, we have relied heavily upon programs, but programs come and go and are more supplemental vitamin than panacea. As part of our response to low performance, we have blamed them for our failures, while taking credit for any successes as our own. This can no longer be the case. Our programs and curriculum are tools to be used, and not the end all to our professional creativity. We must be cognizant of how we incorporate the Common Core State Standards and systems for supporting ELs and SELs outlined in the Master Plan. What changes now is that we will dedicate ourselves to implementing them with fidelity.

**Personnel** - reflective of the diversity in the school and community, sensitive to student needs. Staff members come and go, taking with them their institutional memory and cultural understanding of the school. On one hand, we are fortunate to have a staff with such a rich institutional memory, but we must proactively design a plan for a future 24th Street where we might not have that luxury anymore. We can no longer rely on individuals for their ability and willingness to carry the bulk of the workload without the full support of the staff. This

applies to our instructional leaders as much as our grounds and building maintenance workers. Part of this change includes rethinking our hiring process, empowering staff members to take on more active roles outside the classroom, and offering meaningful acknowledgment of our successes.

**Practices** - the actual conduct of our school and its stakeholders. To be clear, our motives are sincere and the staff is highly qualified to carry out the task, but we have yet to see positive results sustained over time. With consideration to our current staff members, a change in instructional practices in the school is essential—not only in what and how we teach, but how we prepare and evaluate ourselves as well. In the same way, existing leadership can signal change by radically altering leadership practices. Through taking steps like increasing visibility on campus and providing transparency with decisions affecting the school, we believe that we can start to rebuild a community of trust and collaboration here at 24th Street.

In truth, we have relied on any number of excuses to carry us from year to year. Whether we thought the root cause of our failure was a high transiency rate, student behavior issues, or a lack of parent involvement, these should be tertiary factors at best, not determining. What we failed to realize was that neither our vision, programs, personnel, nor student demographics were unique as individual elements. Many of these elements are commonly found throughout the city, and yet, schools have found ways to be successful. What is different now, and what we need to understand moving forward, is that while each aspect of the school is significant, our perspective needs to shift from treating the different symptoms individually to approaching the problem holistically. By that, we mean changing the way we think about our school as an integrated system as opposed to fragmented components. However, qualitative analysis of basic systems such as communication and data analysis show they are ineffective. Addressing our greatest needs are contingent on the development and inclusion of these systems to support instruction. Each aspect of the school directly affects another, but it all stems from strength and integrity of our collective

instructional philosophy. After all, the school is a place for academic instruction, first and foremost.

Success does not come easily, nor does it come quickly. It starts with acknowledging your mistakes, then presses on to find and implement solutions, and revise those solutions as the years go on. A “means to an end” attitude cannot drive the planning and implementation of the new vision and achievement of goals. In order to build and maintain a successful educational and working environment for the school community as a whole, specific elements need to be implemented—as will be covered in later parts of this plan. Careful thought and planning of a comprehensive plan of action involving a clear school vision, opening the lines of communication within the school community, identifying every group’s role in the system, and data driven planning will help to make the goal a success.

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# Understanding Data

## Taking a deeper look at the numbers

Quantitative or qualitative, empirical or anecdotal, take your pick. Whether we look at outcome data or process data, the reports all highlight the same grim truth—students graduating from 24th Street are not ready for the demands of middle school and beyond. This section of the plan aims to explore the greatest areas of need as well as determine root causes where possible. In order to provide context for the reader, information is foregrounded here regarding student demographics and academic results. Knowledge of this information will contextualize the significance of the need for this school’s turnaround.

To frame this analysis, it is particularly important to know the demographics of the school because we are part of a diverse community with several factors influencing student achievement, many beyond the school’s control. Some examples that we see in our student demographics include the number of students with disabilities (12%), English learners (45%), and economically disadvantaged students (100%). Additionally, 24th Street serves a community that includes three shelters, subsidized housing, situationally homeless families, and students who live in foster care placement. All of these factors contribute to a transiency rate of over 25%. Complicating matters further, the only consistency with attendance is that we have students who are consistently absent. Our attendance rates indicate that we only have roughly 60% of our students on campus for 96% of the year or more. So, not only are we struggling to educate our students, we are essentially trying to win without a reliable set of players on the field. Certainly, one could easily consider these factors as part of a deficit model, but

| Total Students Enrolled: 685 |     |                                  |      |
|------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------|------|
| African American             | 18% | English Learners                 | 45%  |
| American Indian              | 0%  | Reclassified ELs (RFEP)          | 6%   |
| Asian                        | 1%  | Students with Disabilities       | 12%  |
| Filipino                     | 0%  | Economically disadvantaged       | 100% |
| Latino                       | 80% | Identified Gifted - All          | 2%   |
| Pacific Islander             | 0%  | Identified Gifted - African Amer | 0%   |
| White (not Latino)           | 1%  | Identified Gifted - Latino       | 2%   |

our perspective is now changing to emphasize the assets and strengths these students bring with them, for whatever amount of time we have them.

Several sets of data were used for our analysis, including: the Data Summary Sheet, School Accountability Report Card (SARC), Academic Performance Index (API), Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and CoreK12. These databases highlight different assessments and academic factors, which is why we often treat them as separate indicators. However, when you put them all together and begin to consider the larger narrative of where our school stands, disappointment is the only word that comes to mind. To get a better understanding of the scope of our struggles at 24th Street, we begin with the Data Summary Sheet and our API numbers.

What stands out most to us is the glaring lack of growth we have made over the past six years. The one year (2007-2008) where we experienced a significant jump in our API scores, we followed it with a 24 point drop. This decidedly apropos achievement dip speaks volumes about the lack of structures and systems in place to cultivate sustained growth. In the years since, we have started to make progress towards the 800 benchmark, but as the statewide and similar schools ranks indicate, we are falling behind at a pace too slow, with progress too little. The most disappointing facet of this initial analysis is that our past success attests to the fact that our students are just as capable as the rest of the District, yet they now find themselves at a

| Year      | API +/-<br>668 in<br>2006 | Statewide<br>Rank | Similar<br>Schools<br>Rank |
|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 2006-2007 | -6                        | 2                 | 5                          |
| 2007-2008 | +23                       | 2                 | 3                          |
| 2008-2009 | -24                       | 1                 | 1                          |
| 2009-2010 | +2                        | 1                 | 1                          |
| 2010-2011 | +1                        | 1                 | 1                          |
| 2011-2012 | +7                        | 1                 | 1                          |

competitive disadvantage with those same peers. We desperately want to affirm our students for their efforts, but it can often seem hopeless when we continue to remain at the bottom 10% of the state. As a counter measure, we hold award ceremonies and pep rallies to celebrate the achievements of individual students, but the logistics of holding schoolwide assemblies only work out because we produce so few high achievers. This ignominy is not lost on our students—they are just as perceptive as the adults when it comes to the disproportional wealth of public affirmation. This alone is a poignant indictment of our state of disrepair.

A prime example of our current culture is how we treat data. What we have always talked about, but never actually done with integrity, is examine

student achievement data to identify gaps and weaknesses in student learning as a staff. The inconsistency and lack of fidelity when it comes using data analysis to impact instruction is now catching up to us. Individuals have stepped up in the past, but it has yet to take off as a schoolwide initiative despite the witless banter we throw out during staff meetings. At least knowing that we have individuals who are willing and able, we can start by assigning data teams to organize and lead the effort. Along with proposed efforts to support data analysis in the grade levels, these data teams can examine student learning through standards-based assessments and classroom assessments while teaching staff members how to pore through data with purpose.

As research shows, using the state assessments or other measures aligned with the state standards helps ensure that the progress in learning will result in higher achievement on high-stakes tests. This process will change over the years as the Common Core State Standards begin to roll out, but we need to proactively establish the good habits now before that time comes. We currently do not have access to many of the necessary reports, however, a movement towards increased transparency includes providing access for our team leaders. In our defense, we did try to establish a Data Room for this current school year, but that effort—like many others—fell flat on its face. The room is currently under utilized and serves

| Subgroup   | 2009-10<br>ELA | 2010-2011<br>ELA | 2011-2012<br>ELA | 2009-10<br>Math | 2010-11<br>Math | 2011-12<br>Math | <b>AYP Criteria</b><br><br>2009-2010<br>Met 11 of 21<br><br>2010-2011<br>Met 14 of 21<br><br>2011-2012<br>Met 15 of 21<br><br>The focus of<br>this chart is on<br>the percent of<br>P/A students |
|--|----------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--|
| All  | 24.3%*         | 27.6%*           | 33.9%            | 32.1%*          | 41.6%           | 36.7%*          |  |
| AA   | 21.4%*         | 28.4%            | 36.7%*           | 19.7%*          | 33.8%           | 28.8%*          |  |
| Lat.   | 24.9%*         | 26.7%*           | 33.1%            | 35.6%*          | 42.3%*          | 38.3%*          |  |
| EL   | 17.7%*         | 18.5%*           | 26.2%            | 35.1%*          | 37.8%*          | 35.2%*          |  |
| SwD  | 9%*            | 6.2%*            | 10.2%            | 22.4%*          | 16.7%*          | 11.5%*          |  |
| SED  | 24.8%*         | 27.6%*           | 33.9%            | 33%*            | 41.6%*          | 36.7%*          |  |
| <b>*Did not meet Safe Harbor for this subgroup</b> |                |                  |                  |                 |                 |                 |  |

as a reminder of our lack of followthrough. This must change if we intend to use data as part of our instructional planning both as a school, individual teachers, and grade levels.

Even with a cursory glance at the rest of performance meter figures, our school falls behind every District annual target in each of the four applicable categories (proficiency, attendance, engagement, and safety). Without knowing any of the specifics, one could easily get the sense that our school is in chaos—students are at least 40 percentage points below target in both math and ELA, instructional days lost to suspensions have been more than 100 for each of the past five years, and only 80% of students feel safe on school grounds. As a high school, these numbers might be shocking, but as an elementary school, we find these figures reprehensible. We cannot start our children in a learning environment as torrid as the one we currently have. We are essentially robbing them of the joy of learning that they might otherwise be basking in at a different school.

When given a locally designed survey at the beginning of this school year, the 4th and 5th grade students’ responses revealed a huge disparity between adult perception and student reality. On average, 27% of our students openly admit that they do not like school. 39% do not feel safe at school either always or most of the time. 30% feel that bullying is the number one issue on campus, followed closely by school cleanliness at 23%. These numbers vividly paint a picture of a school where students are facing daunting odds before they even step into the classroom.

| Grade         | Red        | Yellow     | Green      |
|---------------|------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Kinder</b> | <b>59%</b> | <b>19%</b> | <b>22%</b> |
| <b>First</b>  | <b>39%</b> | <b>18%</b> | <b>43%</b> |
| <b>Second</b> | <b>38%</b> | <b>13%</b> | <b>49%</b> |
| <b>Third</b>  | <b>35%</b> | <b>14%</b> | <b>51%</b> |

Student outcome data in our primary grades (K-2) is limited, but a combination of anecdotal records and DIBELS data indicate major



deficiencies in reading and comprehension. The Beginning of the Year (BOY) data from this school year clearly shows that the vast majority of our kindergartners enter school as Intensive. There is a significant uptake in the first grade, but by the third grade, we see that more than a third of our primary students are still falling behind. As we wait for additional data to help guide our instructional practices, we are addressing the known areas of concern by reallocating our personnel resources to support the primary grades. Instructional aides and teachers are working together to place students into skill-focused small group intervention during class time.

What never shows up on data, but we know to be true, is the willingness and overwhelming dedication of our staff to help our students achieve. Our API growth might not be as impressive as other schools, but we have still managed to grow ten points over the past three years. Given the context of the turmoil and loss of personnel on our campus last year, we are incredibly proud of our seven point increase. That type of growth in the face of adversity goes to show the character and grit that our students, staff, and parents have. At the same time, we are continuing to meet more AYP criteria each year. We fear that these types of accomplishments get lost in the shuffle for the sake of more headline worthy numbers, but we will continue to press on.

Chronically low performing schools like 24th Street need to maintain a sharp focus on improving instruction at every step of the reform process. Our

staff feels strongly about this emphasis, but it will require a cohesive professional development calendar focused on data and aligned to meet the needs identified in our data analysis. As such, we are presently reevaluating our . To improve instruction, we need to use data to set goals for instructional improvement, make changes to immediately and directly affect instruction, and continually reassess student learning and instructional practices to refocus the goals.

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# The Turnaround

## Outlining our plan for success

A common misconception about the purpose of the Public School Process is that the District wants failing schools to simply emulate the practices of more successful schools. One cannot reasonably lift something from one cultural context and expect it to work in another, which is exactly the District’s point in this revised Public School Process. Try as we might, we simply cannot copy a Balboa Gifted Magnet piece by piece, nor should that be our aim. However, we will challenge many of our common assumptions about education and investigate alternatives to what we are doing. This is far from the avant-garde often coveted by agents of change looking from the outside in because we are taking it upon ourselves to fix what we have broken. We embrace this opportunity as a *carte blanche* to usher in a new renaissance at 24th Street—one that is neither zeitgeist nor Great Man theory at work. This is about finding what works best to help our students regardless of who came up with the idea or who claims credit for it. The answers are out there, but it will take time, persistence, and a committed body to get our school where it needs to be.

It is important to note that what we are writing as part of our turnaround plan is only a small fraction of the changes that need to occur at 24th Street for school improvement. We fully expect and intend to treat this plan as a living document, one which we will frequently revisit, revise, and reevaluate as we continue to go through the process over the years. We would be foolhardy to think that the planning and work put in during a few months of the initial writing process could carry us through the next three to five years without taking the time to periodically review these preliminary findings.

To help get us started, we turned to The National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, which has outlined four recommendations that, “work together to help failing schools make adequate yearly progress. These recommendations are: (1) signal the need for

dramatic change with strong leadership; (2) maintain a consistent focus on improving instruction; (3) provide visible improvements early in the turnaround process (quick wins); and (4) build a committed staff” (2008, p. 3). As such, we have developed our commitments to reflect strong, collaborative leadership amongst all constituents, an intense instructional focus, ways to find measurable success in our early leading indicators, and support systems to develop and maintain highly effective teachers. Sadly, most of the structures and systems we need in place are already being used at the District level, just not at 24th Street. This easily avoided derogation from District recommendations to our actual practices is in large part why our school is unable to succeed while schools similar to us do. District initiatives such as PATHS, the Teaching and Learning Framework, School Leadership Framework, and Master Plan are all underutilized resources at our disposal that will now be a part of our instructional identity.

In addressing our failed practices and outlining new ones, our first step is to establish priority areas for instructional focus and make the necessary changes in those areas to strengthen teaching and improve student learning. As indicated by our data, we have struggled in two significant areas: supporting targeted subgroups (EL and SWD) and reaching Safe Harbor goals in math. We feel strongly that we can improve our achievement in both areas by attending to the planning and evaluation of our lessons in a highly effective collaborative setting as described in the District’s School Leadership Framework.

### **Instruction and Planning**

We know that the interaction between teacher and student is the primary determinant of student success. A great teacher can make the difference between a student who achieves at high levels and a student who slips through the cracks. For that very

reason, the first key to our school’s turnaround is a **commitment to consistent, quality first instruction developed through engagement with the Common Core State Standards**. We believe that the following actionable items speak to this commitment:

- Use the Common Core State Standards to guide our instruction and use programs and textbooks as tools for instruction (requires training and ongoing professional development on effective vertical and grade-level planning)
- Pacing plans are flexible and designed with an “80/80” goal in mind (where 80% of a class is passing a given assessment at 80% or higher before moving on to the next standard)
- Differentiating instruction for EL and SWD populations

While we are in the early stages of actively exploring the many aspects of the Common Core State Standards as a staff, we clearly see the myriad benefits to a set of standards that concentrates on depth as opposed to breadth. We acknowledge that our teaching methods have been ineffective for quite some time, which is why our future professional development will focus on instructional goals. Once teachers identify specific subject areas to focus on, the instructional team will identify and commission intensive professional development to improve teaching in those areas. We need to relentlessly focus on improving teachers’ skills and shoring up gaps in their content knowledge and instructional skills if we are to help our students do the same.

Instructional practices at 24th Street must provide a wide range of resources and support to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed in college and in a career, but most importantly at their current grade level. Our instructional focus must be one that helps our school meet the special educational needs of children working to learn the English language, students with disabilities, homeless students, the children of migrant workers, and neglected or delinquent students. Unfortunately, we do not have the structures in place to support the type of professional learning necessary to foster that focus. Hence, the

nucleus of our proposed instructional reform emphasizes building the capacity of our staff.

One strategy that addresses both vertical planning and instruction on the Common Core State Standards is to rethink how we design our pacing plans. Undoubtedly, data must be a critical piece of our instruction from this point, but we are limiting ourselves if we only use data from periodic assessments and state testing. Instead, grade levels can more effectively design their lessons and pacing plans if they have current data that is evaluated on a weekly basis. The standards for mathematics lend themselves perfectly to this task with the clearly outlined domain progression as a conversation guide. For example, we know that fractions are a key standard in grades three through five, which means that a team of teachers from each grade level can use the opening narratives as a way to bridge the expectations between grade levels. Locally developed assessments can then serve as a way to measure the gaps and highlight areas of need. In turn, that information can then be used to help plan instruction that intelligently balances time spent on review and new content based on student needs.

Each week, teachers will generate a test for the key math standards and examine data sheets showing the results of the previous week’s tests. The previous week’s data will guide team planning, just as with our bridge assessments. Teachers can discuss individual student progress and identify areas where students need additional instruction. In this way, teachers can begin to truly differentiate instruction.

Taking it a step further, we can also use weekly test data to regroup students across the grade level and to plan targeted intervention to address the students’ particular learning needs. Teacher collaboration with available resources like our Title III Coordinator and District specialists is integral to the success of future intervention. This intervention model is still developing, but small groups and focused standards are key elements.

Our planning will be reflective of a culture of mastery, where teachers are encouraged to reteach and revisit key standards using different modalities and strategies. The goal of each standard, or group of standards, being taught should be an 80/80

passing rate; 80% of a class should pass an assessment with at least an 80% before moving on. Naturally, a great deal of the proposed 80/80 plan is contingent on effective planning. How our planning will look and is different from our current practices will be explained in more detail later on.

Getting back to the ideas of vertical planning and an 80/80 pacing plan, research shows that these strategies are tried and true for the general population. Having said that, we are also responsible for meeting the educational needs of an increasingly diverse student population and our plan should reflect that diversity. We feel that any plan we write must include a thorough explanation for how we intend to serve the subgroups that have historically struggled the most at 24th Street. In this case, those two subgroups are our English Learners and students with disabilities.

District data shows that nearly half of our students are identified as English Learners. What we have found is that within that category, many students seem to be fluent in conversational English, but not proficient in the academic language of English. While we may not expect them all to be proficient in English, we often assume that they will do well in mathematics because mathematics is not a subject dependent on language proficiency. However, a student who is an EL is likely to struggle in mathematics because the new concepts are taught exclusively in English. To help link this disconnect in mathematics, our teachers must provide explicit language instruction, contextualize instruction, encourage meaningful engagement in learning activities, and provide a low-anxiety learning environment. The purpose of mentioning these strategies—which are all important and must be included in future instruction—is to focus on the low-anxiety learning environment, which lends itself greatly to working with the SWD demographic.

We are continuing our efforts in supporting our SWD population because this subgroup represents an exceptional part of our student body, both in academic potential and size. In fact, in some years our SWD numbers are just as statistically significant as our African American population in determining the AYP. One can only imagine the uproar if an

entire ethnic group was being disenfranchised at a school, but that is essentially what many schools have done with their SWDs. Schools often treat their SWD populations in a perfunctory manner because of the capricious and often brutally taxing nature of the work, but we shun that notion and champion a model of integration. Thankfully, many of the right steps were taken long before the Public School Choice process began. What we aim to do now is maintain our progress while learning from any missteps along the way. An example of how we are bridging the achievement gap and the general sense of ennui that many SWDs struggle with is by providing before school coaching and tutoring. Our special education teachers have taken the initiative to meet with their students in the early mornings as a way to front load them for the day's work ahead. During the school day, SWDs are integrating with general education classes with the support of teaching aides. In addition, several of our students are receiving targeted intervention in remedial math during the afternoons. With an extra measure of reinforcement and support, these students are able to succeed in the general learning environment, build a sense of pride in their work, and feel like they truly belong at our school.

Regrettably, EL and SWD students fall under two pivotal AYP criteria for our school that we have failed to consistently meet over the years. There have been great successes from time to time, but our Program Improvement status requires sustained growth. For this reason, many of our teachers with EL classes feel an unfair obligation to cut out subjects like science, social studies, and art because of the pressure to raise test scores. Likewise, teachers with SWDs integrating into general education classrooms during the day are scrambling to find the time to address the other core content areas. In these cases, our teachers must keep in mind that they are not only teaching mathematics, but are also assisting in language acquisition, thus freeing them to delve into the other subjects with confidence. By no stretch of the imagination is this an easy task, or one that we assign and leave unsupported. We will continue to press on and press in because, as a school, we believe that all of our students can learn to access the entire

breadth of curriculum we offer. We know this because our classrooms are designed to provide access for every student and assure high standards and support while students are learning English *and* mathematics.

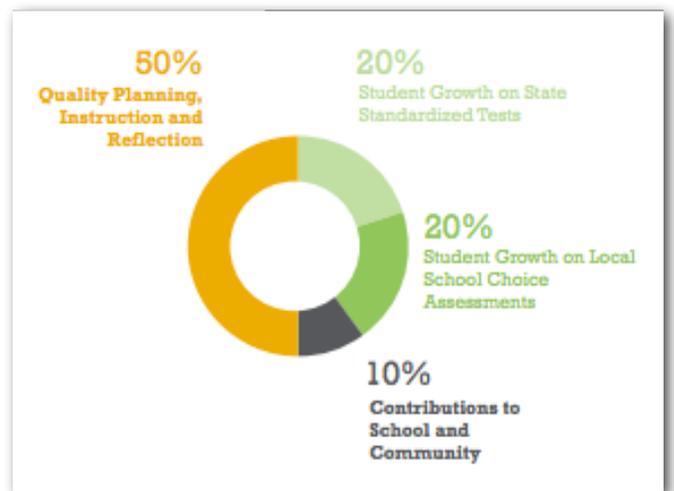
**Accountability and Inclusion**

Parents and teachers alike feel that past collaborative efforts have largely been ineffective because of a lack of followthrough, which is why our second component is **a commitment to increased responsibility for personnel, clearly defining ways to hold each other accountable, and fostering an inclusive decision making process with all stakeholders at the table.** We believe that strengthening the following relationships speak to this commitment:

- *Administrator - Teacher:* develop a more comprehensive teacher evaluation system—tailored to our needs—with the goal of providing instructional support for teachers
- *Teacher - Teacher:* create a support system for teachers to share best practices and ideas, as well as develop and evaluate unit plans
- *Student - Teacher:* develop student maintained portfolios to track growth and use during student conferences
- *Parent - School:* promote increased parent involvement on campus in support roles and on school committees, as well as providing relevant training through the Parent Center and our partner organization, Parent Revolution
- *School - Community:* develop committees with clearly defined purposes and procedures; properly allocate resources—both financial and human—where they are needed, before they are “needed”

*Administrator - Teacher:* As the instructional leader, the principal needs to be highly visible in classrooms. Strong instructional leadership shows the importance of strengthening instruction that is aligned to standards, curricula, and assessments and guided by ongoing data analysis of both achievement and non-achievement outcomes. The

principal needs to set an example, lead the effort, and maintain vigilance toward the targeted, measurable goals. To that point, we have identified that evaluation and support are two key components in this process. We envision an informal evaluation system where the principal and the assistant principal make short, regular classroom observations. These observations can give school leaders informal and impromptu opportunities to see what instruction is like in classrooms throughout the school. In turn, the instructional team will prepare a one-page summary of the observation within 24 hours to share and discuss with the teacher. Rather than become part of the teacher’s formal professional record, the summary will be used to hone instructional practices. As for the formal evaluations, we are proposing a modified evaluation system designed to be more reflective of our new instructional philosophy. This new evaluation will not only address our instruction and planning, but include peer observation, student growth on both state and local assessments, and how the individual teacher strengthens the profession and school community.



While this is just a sample model for how we could approach our new evaluation system, it gives the community a reassurance that real change is happening at 24th Street. Parents have questioned the quality of instruction and teachers at our school over the years, which is why having a clearly defined process and scale will speak to that concern. The evaluations are not meant to be punitive, rather, a

tool to help support teachers in meaningful ways. Just as the school is committed to nurturing student aspirations, it is equally committed to increasing the level of excellence of the professionals teaching those students. By doing so, we hope to achieve the following goals:

1. Bridge the gap between those who make policy and those of us implementing these policies in our schools
2. Move beyond polarizing rhetoric to have a solutions-oriented conversation about students and our careers
3. Open our classrooms to feedback and support

A major consideration though, is that conducting a thorough multiple-measure process requires significant time and resources. Teachers deserve meaningful evaluation once a year, but we recognize that our school has limited capacity, particularly during these deep cuts to our budget and office personnel. These are radical changes from our current practices, but something we feel has been missing from our campus and should continue to push for regardless of our “limitations.”

*Teacher to Teacher:* Meaningful accountability happens when we start organizing teachers into teams across grade levels with the goal of creating professional learning communities. The theory behind creating teams with multiple perspectives and grade levels present is that it eliminates the assumptions teachers make about the other grade levels. Through these communities, teacher teams can plan lessons to ensure alignment across grade levels and revisit those lessons for further evaluation. The research clearly shows that effective PLCs provide pedagogic and structural supports to deepen the learning experience and foster greater collaboration among teachers. Getting to that point of effectiveness however, will require the organizational factors supporting professional learning communities, which include both structural conditions and human and social resources.

The structural conditions found to aid professional learning communities consist of time to meet and talk, physical proximity, interdependent teaching roles, communication structures, and school

autonomy. The human and social resource factors that support professional learning community are a supportive principal, respect, openness to innovation, feedback from parents and colleagues, and focused professional development. Communication is singularly important in professional learning communities, not only to collaborate on ideas to increase student learning, but also to understand how to work within the confines of schooling to ensure student success. Thus, communication in professional learning communities must strike a balance among members having the belief that they can express themselves without censure, helping other teachers learn by encouraging them to contribute to large group discussion, pressing others to clarify their thoughts, eliciting the ideas of others, and providing resources for others’ learning (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001). The difficulty that often arises, though, is when teachers de-privatize their practice through reflective dialogue (Louis & Kruse, 1995). This kind of communication requires a level of vulnerability that many teachers would rather not experience. Yet, having teachers consciously and critically looking at their own classroom instruction practices is essential to improving student learning. We want to move from an isolated teaching experience to one that embraces collaboration and communication.

The evidence of our potential capacity to effectively collaborate is there—we are simply out of practice. Teachers at 24th Street have worked closely with the Garden School Foundation on LAUSD’s first and only Common Core State Standards-aligned garden-based curriculum. These lessons were developed with the instructional pressures at 24th Street in mind, so that garden lessons enhance rather than distract from classroom teaching. Each lesson includes pre and post activities that happen in the classroom and require collaboration between school and garden staff to be fully realized. Our teachers are proud of this collaborative effort with Los Angeles’ leading garden-based education organization. We are committed to implementing this curriculum at 24th Street and giving our students the chance to benefit from everything our gardens have to offer, from seeing firsthand how the

world around them operates, to giving students opportunities for self-directed learning through individual and small team investigations. Moving forward, 24th Street administrators and staff will continue meet with the Garden School Foundation on a regular basis and have regular PD time set aside to make sure that student learning in the garden is effective and consistent. We have an invaluable resource in our gardens and see this opportunity to support both student growth and professional development.

*Student - Teacher:* It is important that we recognize that every constituent has a stake in the success of future graduates, which is why we are also bringing the student voice to the discussion. On an individual classroom level, accountability begins in the tasks that students are asked to do. If the tasks do not reflect our best ideas about what students should know and be able to do, then we should not expect to see the results reflected in external measures of performance. We want our students to be more accountable for their education, but we have yet to give them a structure to work with. This is why we are actively changing the way we approach our student expectations. An example of our shifting mindset is how we now value the folk knowledge and home culture of our EL and SEL populations. Moving away from a deficit model to an asset model, we are convinced that complex school based thinking is learned from repeated experiences and recurring social contexts. It then behooves us to provide these types of opportunities for our students, drawing on their prior knowledge and establishing connections to the classroom curriculum. Rather than asking the students to fit their knowledge and abilities to the lesson, the onus is on the teachers to know their students well enough that he/she can guide conversations using the familiar to understand the unknown. Our approach is linguistically responsive in that it seeks to add standard and academic English to the students' existing language repertoire. "Research has shown that the ability to learn something new depends on an ability to accommodate the new to the already known" (Hirsch, 2002, p. 6). If our aim is mastery,

but our starting point is a blank slate, then it will take more than mere repetition to get us there.

The results of this effort will be projects and student work that can then be a part of a larger student-developed portfolio. As part of aligning our practices with the Master Plan, we see these portfolios as an essential strategy to increase student ownership and pride in their work. We already have EL portfolios in place, but now we want to use these student-developed portfolios to leverage success for our SELs as well. The portfolios contain their self-selected best work, are based on key standards, follow the students through the grade levels, and are periodically revisited as a way of showing students their growth over time in a relevant and personal way. We believe that the portfolios will be an effective tool in showing students how to set personal goals with their academic growth as well as manage their progress. Moreover, we see these portfolios as a useful tool for addressing our instructional practices.

As teachers revisit the portfolios with their students, discussion should focus on teacher expectations and what the student actually understood the expectations to be. Additionally, if we intend to use the portfolios as part of a student accountability system, the teacher must also be held accountable for active progress monitoring and supporting students with their work selections. In this way, teachers and students are both mindful of the expectations we have as a school and the growth we plan to see. Through this process, we want to empower students to lead or participate in formal daily structures that explicitly link student aspirations and achievement. While this change might seem banal to outsiders, it is a central part of the larger transformational effort taking place here at 24th Street.

*Parent to School:* Clearly, the core customers are our students—those who experience our instruction and our school environment every day. However, parents are also customers who provide valuable input on the educational environment and experience provided within our school. Indeed, shrinking student enrollment numbers reveal that some of our parents, as customers, are "voting with their feet" and flocking to suburbs or public charter

schools in pursuit of a high-quality education. We can see this play out clearly as a significant numbers of parents have enrolled their 5th grade students in the charter school, Crown Prep Academy, with whom we share our campus.

For those parents who have stayed or whose children are too young to attend, their patience is wearing thin. Consequently, a recent wave of parent-led advocacy efforts—particularly the passage of Parent Trigger legislation—is inspiring parents to be change agents in our school. This advocacy, however, is most powerful when parents and educators solve problems together. Our parents deserve to be treated as equal partners in the education of their children. As partners, we believe that we can accomplish what we could not as separate entities. We value the importance of parent feedback for the following reasons:

- To create a culture of open communication and transparency around school climate and safety
- To strengthen communication between parents and faculty
- To gain family perspectives in order to teach “the whole child”

Through this process, we are starting to see individual parents emerge as potential leaders and influencers on campus. It is imperative that school leadership incorporate their opinions regarding school policies and utilizes their services on committees. Without assigning blame, we must abandon the practice of appointing parents who are simply willing and actively recruit those who are willing and able. For our parents, the image of their role is important and they have to be viewed by their peers as credible and legitimate. This new wave of leaders must figure out what they can realistically do for the school. They need to know how to reach the staff members and parents and discover what they want, which helps to create empathic communication.

Because poor communication has been such a prevalent issue for us, these new leaders must also be well connected with the parent group at large. We find it troubling that groups of parents meet off campus because they feel unwelcome at school.

While the groups may not be ready to sit down with the principal and hash out their sentiments, the parent leaders can serve as a liaison in the community at large in the same way that our Parent Representative does on campus. By engaging in open and supportive communication, these leaders will create a nonjudgmental environment where reason and emotion come together to find solutions. It is important to build a support group so work, growth, and change can be collective and collaborative, and no one will be singled out. Ideally, we want them to feel safe to have those same conversations at school, and this is a way to start to bring them back into the fold. As for a “quick win” with parent outreach, something as simple as having a parent leader deliver the weekly ConnectEd sends the powerful message to the rest of the parents that the school values their voice, both literally and figuratively. This is how we see creating productive working relationships with shared influence as an obtainable goal.



*School to Community:* Community apathy and unrest, coupled with an entrenched attitude of failure, prevail throughout both the school and the community. Rather than see this as a low point, we plan to use it as a turning point. We have numerous vital resources throughout the community ready to contribute to this effort. However, it is incumbent on us to take advantage of these resources through outreach and active engagement with our community. Given that our school is in a neighborhood without many safe parks and that we

are in great need of rebuilding our school community, this is a prime opportunity to promote our unique partnership with the Garden School Foundation which has channeled millions of dollars into the 24th Street landscape including a soccer field, a Native Woodland, a 3/4 acre vegetable garden and fruit tree orchard, and a reading garden.

Our obligation remains to collaborate with community partners to promote the success of all students by welcoming and responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources. Many of the alliances we had in the past have been strained over the years, leaving us encumbered with memories of “happier” days while living with the reality of our isolation.

As part of our effort to invigorate our existing partnerships and reconnect with our community, we are opening up committee meetings and leadership roles to parents and community members as well as staff. These committees will continue to operate with the full support of the school’s resources, in addition to clearly outlined expectations and duties. By doing so, our school priorities are made public with a common understanding or short and long term goals. This plan, for example, was written through a collaborative effort between staff, parents, and community partners. Our continued efforts will be ones that continuously inspire the school and community to adopt, enact, and own a shared vision of high expectations. Likewise, our results and assessments need to be publicly shared with the members of our community to help keep us accountable. If we are asking for their reinvestment in the school, then we must exude nothing but transparency and an unflinching determination to improve. In short, we must lead the campaign to make 24th Street a desirable commodity in West Adams community once again.

### **Developing the Whole Student**

Academic rigor and quality instruction tied to the Common Core State Standards are essential parts to student success. However, we believe that personal development is just as crucial for our students. Advances in learning happen when school

is a place that students want to be, where they are challenged and inspired in a place they feel supported and nurtured to perform at the best of their abilities. Consequently, the challenge is to provide a learning environment where such a conflation is the new norm. As such, the third and final area of focus is **our commitment to developing “socially responsible” students through a school-wide positive behavior support system.** We believe that the following actionable items speak to this commitment:

- Early identification of and support for behavioral and emotional problems, focusing on grades K-2
- Intervention training for teachers on referral rates for misbehavior and alternative solutions
- Target groups of students and build up their capacity to demonstrate skills such as using self-control, avoiding trouble, and accepting consequences

The community, staff, and leadership of 24th Street have always wanted the best for our students. However, wanting the best and getting desired results have been two worlds apart. In fact, 24th Street has a shameful history when it comes to student referrals and suspensions, with a rate anywhere from two to three times as high as the District average over the past five years. Many of these students are repeat offenders for whom suspension has seemingly reinforced and encouraged negative behavior. To make matters worse, the scope of this epidemic is wide and pervasive.

Referral records show that this has been a problem throughout the grade levels regardless of the school year or time of year. The implications of this are serious: loss of instructional time, creating a “push-out” mentality, feeding a culture of exclusionary discipline, and lowering social expectations for our students. Teachers are constantly having to react to discipline issues in the classroom, taking away from precious instructional time. Although a study has not been done to establish the direct correlation between time discipline and instructional time lost at 24th Street, the evidence overwhelmingly points to the need for a uniform approach, implemented with fidelity. As

part of addressing that knowledge gap, a major goal is to provide “teachers with myriad techniques that can literally change school outcomes for significant numbers of children who are often referred to special education because they have not developed the prosocial and proacademic behaviors necessary for school success.” (Polirstok & Gottlieb, 2006, p. 355)

Historically, our approach to discipline has followed an exclusionary model with few alternatives offered to students. As explained by Noltemeyer and McLoughlin (2010), “Exclusionary discipline describes suspension, expulsion, and other disciplinary actions leading to a student’s removal from the typical educational setting.” Research has shown that the implementation of punishment, especially when it is used inconsistently and in the absence of other positive strategies, is ineffective. Despite our awareness of this, we have yet to implement an effective alternative to suspension, as indicated by the number of students with multiple offenses. With this historical context in mind, we hope to implement at 24th Street is a system where introducing, modeling, and reinforcing positive social behavior is an important piece of a student’s educational experience. Teaching behavioral expectations and rewarding students for following them is a much more positive approach than waiting for misbehavior to occur before responding.

To put things in context with our current reality, teachers feel that they are unable to provide quality instruction in the classroom because of the overwhelming behavior issues both in the class and on the yard. Polirstok & Gottlieb (2006) confirmed what researchers and teachers typically say about classrooms: “That successful behavior management is a critical prerequisite for successful academic instruction. Less time spent on managing behavior translates into more time available for instruction.” As pressure mounts to increase academic achievement, teachers suffer under the intense stresses in their classrooms. In short, many are ill-equipped to deal with the multifarious trials they face on a daily basis.

Parents have asked for cameras in the hallways and bathrooms to help keep the campus clean and

safe. Fourth and fifth grade student surveys overwhelmingly point to bullying and student misbehavior as the number one detractor from a quality education here at 24th Street. All across the board, discipline and behavior are pressing issues for the member of our school community. Our exclusionary methods of student discipline have failed us and our students alike. The reality now is, if there are simple steps that we can take—both as individual classroom teachers and as an entire school—that might profoundly have an impact on our ability to teach and improve student achievement, then they must be examined. What we are facing is an operational issue, in addition to being a cultural and philosophical one. We have been sending our students out of the classroom as a reactionary method to address superficial problems, rather than implementing a proactive solution. Not only do we need to keep these students in the classroom, we need to find a way to make them successful as well.

We believe that the turnaround process for implementing a positive schoolwide behavior starts with raising our social expectations. Even for our younger students, we should expect students to demonstrate genuine caring for one another and monitor one another’s treatment of peers, correcting classmates respectfully when needed, and assume and demonstrate personal responsibility. To meet this ambition, we have already begun Student Safety and Play Leader programs to foster peer instruction between upper and primary students.

Restructuring our current student discipline model and encouraging positive behavior can also serve as a quick win for our school. Visitors on campus should be able to see a clear difference in our classrooms. A carefully designed student behavior plan facilitates learning by reducing disruptions and increasing the time and attention that teachers can devote to instruction. What makes this an attainable goal in a substantive and meaningful way is that we already have the tools for success at our disposal. The District has a proven plan in the PATHS model for discipline foundation—it is now our responsibility to hold to the guidelines set forth in said plan. As part of this proactively preventative approach, teachers and administrators

will be a visible presence throughout the school during class changes and before and after school. Many of our conflicts begin before school and carry over throughout the day until tensions boil over.

Of course, simply being visible cannot realistically address all of our out-of-classroom behavior issues. After all, we can only be in so many places at once. At times, additional strategies might need to be put into place, such as reducing transitions between classes, eliminating bells, limiting unsupervised time (bathroom usage and student monitors in the hallways), and minimizing interactions between younger and older students in the building. We will continue to study student discipline referral data to understand when and why disciplinary problems occur. As a school, we need to also examine why students were assigned to in-school and out-of-school suspensions. Schools that have gone through the data have discovered that the majority of students were there for minor problems. To solve the discipline issue and keep students from missing instruction, our school staff will develop new guidelines for dealing with students before they become potential suspension cases. In this case, we see another opportunity to build staff capacity and understanding of how to do data analysis.

Understandably, we know that the culture of exclusionary discipline and student misbehavior will not change overnight. There will be cases where suspension is still the correct decision in order to remove the student from the classroom if he/she is being violent. However, there are several alternatives to suspension, as outlined by Peterson & Skiba, which we feel can be successful at 24th Street. We have identified the following practices as viable alternatives to suspension because they include elements of increased responsibility and accountability for the students. They include, but are not limited to:

- Problem solving/contracting with reinforcers for success and consequences for continuing problems
- Parent supervision in school, or “suspending” the parent to school
- Mini-courses related to their behavior as a disciplinary consequences

- and Community Service, such as campus beautification or working with the Garden School Foundation staff

With all of these strategies set to take effect over the course of the 2012-2013 school year, the focus of this plan needs to shift to the culture and climate we see as being central to a successful school turnaround. The original format of the RFP outlines that this section be treated separately from the significant barriers we foresee, but it is the opinion of this writing team that what we want cannot be understood without knowing what we already have. As such, we are treating the description of our ideal culture and climate in relation the current reality we face as a community. We cannot overstate the significance of this component of the RFP because fostering the culture and climate that we anticipate is central to turning around our school is just as much of an operational issue as it is a relational one.

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# Roadblocks, Barriers, and Pathways

## How to get past ourselves

We believe this school cannot endure, permanently, torn between philosophies and constituents. As it is right now, we are a school divided.

Depending on who you ask, the specifics will differ, but the tone does not. Parents are indignant, and rightfully so, because their children continue to suffer in a school that has flatlined academically. Teachers are weary from years of top-down mandates and the loss of longtime colleagues—nearly 75 staff members have left over the past five years through Reduction in Force, transfers, dismissals, and death. The administrative and support staff is overwhelmed with the daily disruptions and incidents on campus—operational disturbances consume entire days at a time. Even the students are tired of a school where they feel helpless to make things better. We are a school divided by years of frustration and the fault lines are widening. As bad as things are however, we do not expect the school to be reconstituted—we do not expect the school to fail—but we do expect it will cease to be divided. Either the opposing factions will press on with their agenda until they find satisfaction, and place it where the public mind that it is the best course of action; or all parties will unite and work towards rebuilding an institution dedicated to the success of our students. In this case, and with this plan, we believe that we can combine our efforts and concerns to help drive us towards our vision.

According to the Department of Education, “A faulty plan, a resistant staff or community, or a feeble or inept commitment to change can derail the turnaround.” To change instructional practices and improve learning, we have kept our learning goals realistic, and written our changed practices to be sufficient and appropriate to produce the desired results. Our turnaround plan is grounded in good data, understood by the school community, executed competently, and modified with experience. To reach

**“A house divided against itself cannot stand. It will become all one thing or all the other.”**

Abraham Lincoln

the levels of improvement being set forth in this plan, the entire school community must come together in agreement that this is not “the principal’s plan” or a way to cover up falsely perceived administrative shortcomings. There are

grumbings about petitioning the District for a new principal with the hope that he or she can save our failing school, but according to Fullan (2005, p. 178), “Turnaround leadership must be a real but subordinate component to an overall strategy of capacity building.” In truth, we have given too much credit—and assigned too much fault—to the work of one person. Our tendency has been to blame “leadership” for our deficiencies and weaknesses rather than take it upon ourselves to redefine what leadership is at 24th Street. Instead, we need to start thinking of every member of our school community as a leader in their own right. In particular, this means empowering individuals to step into non-traditional roles as teacher leaders and parent leaders in a new partnership focused on what we can do as a sum of our parts.

A significant hurdle for our community is getting to the point where turnaround leadership must be put in perspective with and connected to comprehensive strategies that combine positive pressure (accountability) and capacity building. The determining factor of our school’s success is greater than a single person. There exists an acrimonious relationship between what we have and what we think we want, when in fact, the transformational leadership that some are so desperately seeking out is already here, in us. The potential for phenomenal success is, and has always been, at 24th Street if we would just allow ourselves to move past our defeatist mentality. This is our collective plan and we are all responsible for the success of the students. Gone are the days of complaining, blaming, and self-pity.

Inevitably, there will be some members of the community who will continue their call for new leadership at the top, but the majority of us believe that the whole purpose of the plan is to design a school based on ideals and common values that transcend the influence of a single person. Those of us with a broader perspective of the school and the chaotic nature of educational administration understand that no leader, no matter how much of a Svengali he or she may be, can control the destiny of a school if the people are willing to fight for it. What we are beginning to see at 24th Street is an uprising of constituents filled with righteous anger, deeply motivated to see change—and this is a good thing.

As reported by our community partner, Parent Revolution, “Parents have little confidence in the school, feeling that many students do not receive a quality education.” We openly acknowledge that there are relationships that need mending as a result of years of neglect and distrust, but those very people are now sitting at the planning table, engaged in meaningful conversation because we recognized the need to bring our attention back to the students we are failing to serve. Accordingly, bridges are being rebuilt, new relationships are being established, and parents and staff alike are taking the necessary steps of good faith with the belief that we can make this work. The misconceptions rooted in poor communication that permeate our campus have led to a negative perception of our school, both internally and externally. We recognize that establishing proper lines of communication is paramount to creating a successful atmosphere, which has been a missing element for years. A top priority then is to launch an aggressive public relations campaign to help restore confidence in our school.

From a public relations standpoint, determining who the important publics are is the first step. The teachers, parents, students and invested community members must each be addressed in a manner that best suits their needs and allows for the most effective communication. Speaking with faculty members one-on-one or in small groups to hear their concerns and ideas may be more plausible than setting up meetings with individual parents of all

700 students. It is crucial, though, that each group be given an avenue for communication. As pointed out by Gallagher, Bagin, and Moore, “the school in a dynamic, changing social order cannot adapt itself to change or make the necessary improvements in its program without involving citizens in its affairs” (2006, p. 12). To bolster the community’s trust, the principal has initiated early morning meetings with parents when they dropped off their children at school and invited parents to observe classes.

To involve our community and parents, we have reached out to local organizations such as Planned Parenthood, Cedars Sinai, and Emergency Preparedness. The school is also utilizing the school garden for community-building events that reflect and bring out the most positive aspects of the school community and encourage communication, collaboration, and dedication. Through these partnerships, we see a number of opportunities for increased parent and community involvement. Working together to hold more events and offer more services for the community are both quick wins for our school that can help boost morale. Still, while this sounds good and well in October, we must actively continue to build trust and rapport within the internal and external publics if we are to ever see our labor come to fruition.

On the instructional front, a likely roadblock is the data itself. We are moving towards instruction and planning based on data analysis, but careful data analysis of student achievement to improve instruction may be new and unfamiliar to teachers. Teachers may also fear reprisals or negative consequences if their classroom data are carefully scrutinized. To move past this fear, the systematic use of data requires teachers to shift their attitudes toward solving problems rather than pointing fingers. The PLCs and instructional teams will facilitate and model this change in attitude and practice. The principal will also become immersed in the data to support and guide teachers. At times, an outside facilitator or specialized training may be necessary to help teachers fully understand the different types of data and the ways to use these data to further student learning. What makes this exciting,

is that teachers are now willing to put in the extra effort to attend conferences, network with other schools, and bring new strategies back to 24th Street.

In the past, we might have been anxious to cling onto the newest program, but one thing we learned through all this; this is not about a program. Administrators go to conferences and hear about programs. There are boxes and boxes of unopened programs at 24th Street that have come through here in recent history. We found out in the research that success is not found in a program. Instead, our success will be as a result of our collective vision and the people who live it out everyday in our practices. PLCs are part of a system that can help us navigate through data and otherwise uncomfortable conversation, but even that model will only be successful if we make it our own.

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# Measuring Up

## Monitoring our progress

The change benchmarks that our team will use to assess progress in implementing the strategies will be both quantitative and qualitative. In the classroom, we will look at data from locally designed assessments that are standards specific and vertically aligned throughout the grades. Grade level planning will include the creation and use of standards based tests given weekly and collaboratively planning to reteach specific areas and to also provide enrichment for students. From there, schoolwide measurements are examined through the use of the Data Room. It will be a site to plan, discuss student progress, and develop a schoolwide focus of a particular strand such as Number Sense. Each room will have a Data Board that contains an Action Plan that states specifically how the students will progress.

Trailing data will provide end of year information as to how teachers and students performed. This data is key to establishing a baseline for improvement for the next school year. Leading data begins with DIBELs BOY assessments across the primary grades (K-3) and fluency running records for the upper grades. Key standards tests, vertically aligned through the grades, will guide weekly instruction including differentiation in reteaching and enrichment. The quarterly math and language periodic assessments will give a cumulative view of how students and teachers have performed thus far. This is where the process of reteaching specific standards that were not mastered and introducing new standards with weekly assessments to monitor understanding will come into play. The process of good first instruction, assessment, analyzing weekly data, reteaching and enrichment, will become the key to success.

Of the non-academic leading indicators we will use to monitor the implementation of our proposed turnaround efforts, parent involvement ranks highest the list. We will know by as early as December 2012, whether or not this plan has shown the parents that their opinions are valued and their voices have been

heard. Parent and staff feedback will be a crucial part of the evaluation process, as it should be.

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# Governance Model

## The autonomy to see things through

We are hungry for change, but we plan to approach it with wisdom and discernment, especially for the selection of our governance model. Given the time sensitive nature of this document and how much time is really necessary to make a decision of this magnitude, the staff of 24th Street is currently undecided about which governance model to move forward with. We have started the conversation, but are still reviewing many of the key differences between the governance options. As of mid-October 2012, we have created a spectrum of autonomy and accountability where the Traditional model sits at one end with the Pilot model on the other, but charts and graphs can only go so far when it comes to understanding how these models affect the culture of a school. The staff is eager to explore how these models impact daily classroom instruction as well as the larger school operations, which will require campus tours, interviews, and research. We want to be confident with our choice because this is not a change we take lightly.

While we have not decided the autonomy that is best for us. We feel the following waivers will fit into our plans for implementation. Flexible scheduling is a strategy will allow us hold bank time professional development on a weekly basis and grade level planning more consistently. Amending the mutual consent requirement for employees will ensure that future staff members have the same commitments and agree with our strategies for school improvement. Autonomy with professional development allows us to focus on specific development of the issues outlined in our plan, that to date, have not been addressed with rigor. We need the ability to request specific support from the District, develop in-house professional development, and/or when funds are available, hire speakers that will meet our instructional needs. We see these waivers as an opportunity for increased latitude and protection from unnecessary mandates, given the tumultuous nature of the current fiscal realities.

Preliminary surveys and informal conversations indicate that both Local School Initiative and Pilot models appeal to us, however we feel that further review is necessary before we make a decision. Our limited discussions with staff members from schools currently following the Pilot school model have been enlightening, but far from the intimate knowledge we need to make a well-informed decision on behalf of our students. We do see a potential problem in finding a wide enough range of similar schools to examine, but are willing to go out of our way to meet with those who are. Understandably, the lack of schools with a LIS model, specifically elementary schools, will make it harder to get a sense of what it could look like at 24th Street. That being said, we think of LIS as a hybrid model between Traditional and Pilot, which is why we believe that taking the time to study Pilot more closely will ultimately answer our bigger questions about LIS until further data becomes available. Ideally, we hope to visit several sites operating under Pilot, such as New Open World Academy, Gratts ES, and the UCLA Community School, to help us gain a working knowledge of the tone and climate of these schools.

Moving forward, we feel strongly that both LIS and Pilot offer many of the changes we have identified as necessary components of our school turnaround. For this first year of implementation however, with consideration to the deadline for this plan, we feel applying for certain LIS waivers (to be determined) will at least get us moving in the direction towards change. It sends a strong message to our community that we are on the right path, without being reckless by signing on for something we are not ready for. Rather than make wholesale changes overnight, we are opting for what we expect to be a smooth, gradual transition over the next school year. The shift from Traditional to anything else is going to be a momentous change for 24th Street, which is why we want to do everything possible to ensure that our staff and community are

able to adjust appropriately. Ultimately, whichever model we decide on will speak to the instructional focus that is the primary commitment of our plan.

We understand that permanent and effective change takes time and only happens when there is complete buy in from all stakeholders. It would be irresponsible of us to dive into a decision with such weighty ramifications without vetting it thoroughly. We expect that this decision will be one of many where staff, administrators, and parents come to the table as partners, ready to discuss what will benefit the students the most. It is unfortunate that it took an event like the Public School Choice process to finally bring all of our constituents back to the decision making table, but we wholeheartedly embrace a future where collaboration is now the norm.

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## Design Team

### The people behind the plan

The leader of the planning team is Elijah Whang. He volunteered for the position and has experience writing SPSAs and an affiliated charter school application.

The other members volunteered and some were selected by the principal based on their track history of developing highly effective programs and accelerating student performance. We made an effort to ensure that all stakeholders were well represented on the design team, especially our parents.

Ms. Trinidad, our parent representative, set up a meeting between the writing team and the parents. After that initial meeting, parents began attending meetings with the writing team as active participants. She also coordinated Public School Choice workshops for the parents which fostered collaboration and built enthusiasm about our proposed changes. Through the process, the parent members of our writing team were able to take information from our team meetings and discuss it with the parents working with Parent Revolution and other parents. The feedback from parents was then incorporated into the working draft and reevaluated as part of our writing process.

| Name             | Title  |
|------------------|--|
| Renee Dollberry  | Principal                                    |
| Stephanie Austin | Categorical Program Adviser                  |
| Jacqueline Saiki | Title III Access to Core Instructional Coach |
| Dolores Smith    | Teacher Grade 1                              |
| Elijah Whang     | Teacher Grade 4                              |
| Craig Hinkel     | Teacher Grade 3                              |
| Kris Keiser      | Special Education Grades 4,5                 |
| Lisa Van         | Special Education Grades 2,3                 |
| Craig Douglas    | Physical Education Teacher                   |
| Brenda Steppes   | LASDI Consultant                             |
| Maria Trinidad   | Parent Community Representative              |
| Aida Rodriguez   | Parent Revolution Organizer                  |
| Yuritzzy Anaya   | Parent Revolution Lead Organizer             |
| Marbella Jacobo  | Parent                                       |
| Maria Alcala     | Parent                                       |
| Martha Gonzalez  | Parent                                       |
| Amabilia Villeda | Parent                                       |

## Public School Choice 4.0 Waiver/Autonomy Checklist

**School Site:** 24<sup>th</sup> Street Elementary School

**Proposed School/Design Team Name:** Young Scholars College Preparatory Academy

**Proposed Governance Model** (mark all that apply):

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Traditional  | <input type="checkbox"/> Pilot                | <input type="checkbox"/> Expanded School Based Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Initiative School | <input type="checkbox"/> Affiliated Charter   | <input type="checkbox"/> Technical Assistance Partner     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Network Partner | <input type="checkbox"/> Full Network Partner |   |

**Waiver/Autonomy Requests**

Mark all the autonomies requested in your plan and provide a page reference to where the rationale for the request can be found in the narrative of the application.

- Methods of improving pedagogy.** Rationale on page(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
*School-determined methods to improve pedagogy and student achievement, such as articulation between grade levels and departments, intervention strategies and intervention/special support programs (such as parent contacts, homework clinics, directed focus of services to assist struggling students and after-school reading rooms or math coaching on a rotating basis).*
- Curriculum.** Rationale on page(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
*Locally determined curriculum (subject to State and District minimum curriculum standards); local instructional standards, objectives, and special emphases (supplementing District standards).*
- Assessments.** Rationale on page(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
*Local interim benchmark assessments, tests and pacing plans, aligned with and equivalent to District requirements (e.g., GATE, Algebra Placement), and complying with any State and Federal requirements.*
- Scheduling.** Rationale on page(s): p. 25  
*Local instructional schedules and strategies, including modified daily instructional days/minutes, the school's schedule of activities and events, and special schedules such as those designed to accommodate additional prep time for elementary teachers ( all of the above being subject to District-mandated annual number of school days and minimum annual minutes of instruction and calendar requirements, and contractual pay in the case of additional required hours of regular daily instruction).*
- Internal organization.** Rationale on page(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
*School's internal organization plan, such as division into academies, small learning communities, houses etc. within the assigned student population.*
- Professional development.** Rationale on page(s): p. 25  
*Local professional development plans aligned with the School's Instructional Plan/Single Plan for Student Achievement, except as to training relating to legal/compliance mandates.*

**Budgeting control.** Rationale on page(s): \_\_\_\_\_

*General fund budget control, pursuant to the District's evolving site-based funding system, which currently provides local discretion but neutralizes the impact of differences such as those among certificated staff salaries, and subject to the other applicable related district requirements such as those governing "guided purchases."*

**Mutual consent requirement for employees.** Rationale on page(s): p. 25

*A requirement for "mutual consent" by school and applying employee with respect to the filling of UTLA-represented, site-based openings at the school, meaning no District-mandated priority placements, but school must still comply with return rights or other placement rights to the school that are created by legal mandates or by the District-UTLA Agreement.*

**Teacher assignments.** Rationale on page(s): \_\_\_\_\_

*Local process/methods for determining assignment of teachers to grade levels, departments, subjects and classes (e.g., looping, team-teaching, ungraded instruction, multi-age classrooms).*

**Staff appointments (e.g., department chairs).** Rationale on page(s): \_\_\_\_\_

*Local process/methods for selecting teachers as grade level or department chairs, coordinators, deans, instructional coaches, etc.*

**Discipline & codes of conduct.** Rationale on page(s): \_\_\_\_\_

*School's student discipline guidelines and code of student conduct, aligned with the District-wide standards and rules governing student conduct, suspensions, expulsions and transfers.*

**Health and safety.** Rationale on page(s): \_\_\_\_\_

*School's health/safety matters, aligned with District-wide health/safety mandates.*

**Additional Waivers:** (list waivers requested) \_\_\_\_\_

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*Applicants selecting "Additional Waivers" must provide a rationale for the request(s) by completing the Waiver-Side Letter Request Form (Appendix D). These additional waivers are subject to separate consideration and approval from the District and UTLA before becoming effective.*