Turnaround for New Jersey Schools (TurnNJ) Project Abstract

Uncommon Schools is a nonprofit charter management organization that starts and manages outstanding urban public schools that close the achievement gap and prepare low-income students to graduate from college. Uncommon currently manages 44 schools that serve nearly 14,000 students in six regions: Boston, Camden, Newark, New York, Rochester, and Troy. In five years, Uncommon will operate 66 schools serving more than 23,000 students.

The proposed i3 project, TurnNJ, is a partnership between Uncommon (a novice i3 applicant) and two LEAs it manages: Camden Prep and North Star Academy of Newark. TurnNJ is a regional level innovation in two cities with the country's greatest need to improve low-performing schools, including one federally designated Promise Zone.

TurnNJ will turn around persistently low-performing schools through a Renaissance Schools model, in which Uncommon manages schools that remain part of Camden City School District, and through charter restarts in Newark. These models build on prior successes for which there is moderate evidence of effectiveness and represent promising new strategies with the potential to scale nationally.

TurnNJ is already underway in two schools, where initial student achievement results have shown that proficiency rates have grown by factors of 2.5 to more than 5 times in math and ELA since Uncommon took over management of the schools.

For the next five years, TurnNJ has four goals:

1. **Scale:** Apply the TurnNJ whole-school turnaround model in at least six of the lowest-performing schools in the state, serving at least 2,000 high-need students across two cities in all grades K-12 by the end of the grant period.
2. **Impact:** Implement the TurnNJ whole-school turnaround model with fidelity to substantially improve attainment and achievement for educationally disadvantaged students.
3. **Evaluate & Disseminate:** Evaluate the TurnNJ through methods that meet WWC standards without reservations and share information broadly to facilitate future replication.
4. **Cost Efficiency:** Maintain a low cost per student and overall financial model that will ensure sustainability for TurnNJ schools during and beyond the grant period.

TurnNJ will create an evidence base for restart and Renaissance models to improve low-performing schools, and it will demonstrate conclusively that CMOs can scale the highest levels of academic achievement even to the highest-need school settings: turnarounds. TurnNJ will achieve all of these outcomes while creating schools that can be sustained on the public dollar. Ultimately, TurnNJ's promising strategies are designed for scale: they can and will be replicated nationally in the next decade.