

Freedom and Democracy Schools, Inc: Expansion & Replication Proposal Narrative

Section I. Absolute and Competitive PRIORITIES

Absolute Priority I – Serving a low-income student population

Freedom & Democracy Schools Inc., (dba as Northwood Appold Community Academy (NACA) in Baltimore), serves 510 students in grades K-12 of which 414 (81%) are designated as low-income students based on their enrollment in the Free and Reduced-priced Meals (FARM) program. Our students reflect the high rates of poverty characteristic of the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) as evidenced in the 84% of students enrolled in FARM in the city’s traditional schools. In accordance with definitions from the National Center for Education Statistics, this large percentage of FARM students qualifies NACA as serving and operating “high-poverty schools”, and as such, it confirms that NACA serves students considered “at-risk”. Given BCPSS’ comparable demographic and NACA’s commitment to serving students from throughout the City of Baltimore with targeted emphasis extending to the city’s Sandtown neighborhood as detailed in later sections of this proposal, we anticipate and intend to educate similar student populations throughout the course of the project timeline and beyond in our expansion and replication efforts.

Competitive Preference Priority 1 – Promoting Socioeconomic Diversity

NACA’s current socioeconomic demographic is comprised primarily of children from struggling families. This has not always been the case¹. By returning to aggressive, strategic recruitment at targeted professional organizations (e.g., National Association of Professional Women – Baltimore Chapter, MD Bar Association, Home Builders Association of MD and the National Black MBA Association, to name a few), community

¹ In its first 3 years of operation, NACA I’s Inaugural cohorts averaged 35% non-FARM.

liaisons and NACA leadership anticipate a marked shift in enrollment to ensure that approximately 35-40% of our students come from non-FARM homes.

Competitive Preference Priority 3 – Novice Applicant

Freedom and Democracy Schools, Inc/NACA, the K-12 Charter Management Organization (CMO) that is submitting this proposal for expansion and replication of its K-5 elementary school and expansion of grades 6-8 at its secondary school, has never applied nor been a recipient of such a grant or any other discretionary grant from the Federal Government in the five years preceding this application. Although a Novice Applicant, FDS/NACA's team has the experience and expertise necessary to manage and operate all aspects of the project successfully during and after the grant period as evidenced throughout the data presented in this application.

Section II. SELECTION CRITERIA

(A) Quality of Applicant

The Freedom and Democracy Schools, Inc. opened the doors of its elementary school in August 2005 as NACA I (Northwood Appold Community Academy I) to an inaugural cohort of 113 K-2 students, having successfully received a 3-year initial charter authorization from the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS). After two years of more than 220 community meetings from 2002-2004 with Baltimore families, children, retired and current teachers and administrators, business leaders and politicians, NACA's founding leadership successfully petitioned its LEA (BCPSS) for a charter school based on the following six foundational priorities as identified by the community and supported by research of effective practices (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Meier, 2000; Delpit, 1997; Freire, 1970):

1. High academic standards linked to rigorous-and-relevant academic content as taught by masterful, creative and caring teachers; (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Littky, 2004; Meier, 2000)
2. Personal attention that helps to build each student's character to ensure conscientious participation as an American and global citizen (Meier, 2000; Littky, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1995 and 2001);
3. Affirmation of each child's cultural background(s); (Nieto, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Delpit, 1995)
4. Incorporation of state-of-the-art technology as a tool in teaching and learning in all disciplines and subject areas in authentic preparation for college and/or a career (Cuban, 2009);
5. Intentional teaching and modeling of creative, nonviolent approaches to resolve conflicts (Goleman, 1995); and
6. Multiple extra-curricular opportunities available year-round to enrich academics and help produce well-rounded, multi-dimensional graduates (Massoni, 2011).

Of the initial 35 second graders that joined NACA in its inaugural year (2005), 28 graduated from its secondary school – The Victoria Jackson Gray Adams Freedom and Democracy School (a.k.a. NACA II) – in June, 2016. (The remaining 7 graduated from some of Baltimore's most prestigious private high schools.) Of the 28 NACA II graduates, 21 or 75% were accepted into 4-year colleges (the first in their families to do so). This numerically small but statistically significant measure in which a far greater percentage of NACA's graduates will attend college in comparison to their peers from BCPSS (28.8%) and the State of Maryland (29.3%) underscores the consistently high quality of a NACA education. And while the numbers of this first graduating cohort have led to more

reflective and aggressive program planning to ensure even greater numbers have the option of pursuing a college education in the future, NACA is encouraged with this early success.

Ongoing academic achievement for the 81.2% low-income, 100% African American students that comprise NACA's population reflects our core mission and values of preparing students to "make a living and a life founded on high academic achievement and advanced character development so that they navigate the life journey effectively and with integrity, participating meaningfully, peacefully and constructively in freedom and democracy".

A1. Mission and Model - The Northwood-Appold Community Academies (NACA) as managed by the Charter Management Organization of Freedom and Democracy Schools, Inc. (FDS) are committed to "***preparing students to make a living and a life***" ***so that they "navigate the life journey effectively and with integrity."*** In other words, NACA's mission is to educate and nurture young people to be academically, intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically proficient to serve as college-educated leaders in our community at local and global levels. In fulfillment of this mission, the cornerstone of our unique model incorporates a rigorous and innovative ***culturally relevant*** "Freedom and Democracy (F&D) Curriculum" together with a rigorous "Advanced Character Education" curriculum. Both are aligned with national and state academic standards in the core disciplines and involve active, interlocking partnerships with community members at all levels from all domains (e.g., business, healthcare, economic development, higher education, to name a few).

An overview of NACA's key components in meeting this mission of ensuring students reach high levels of achievement reveals a four-fold, over-lapping and mutually reinforcing model:

1) ***Strong, culturally relevant and standards-based academics*** [e.g., Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards based on “Habits of Mind” (Meier, 2000)] in preparation for college and career via Project-Based Learning pedagogies and authentic, performance assessments (e.g., student portfolios and exhibitions) through a rigorous cognitive and meta-cognitive cycle of identifying **evidence**, considering multiple **viewpoints**, looking for **connections and** citing **patterns, conjecturing** alternative **outcomes** and/or causes, and establishing **relevance** of material studied to students’ lives (Ibid, 2000);

2) ***Explicit and implicit teaching and modeling of non-cognitive qualities and practices*** (i.e., social-emotional education) simply defined as sets of behaviors, skills, attitudes, and strategies (e.g., motivation, time management and self-regulation) that have a direct positive relationship on students’ current academic performance and future persistence in post-secondary education and careers;

3) ***Intentional teaching of non-violent social justice principles*** as manifest throughout US social and political histories, rooted in the core American values of ***Freedom and Democracy*** and supported through our partnership with the Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute’s Liberation Curriculum program at Stanford University in which NACA is a founding member in the program’s Pilot Schools Portfolio; and

4) ***Explicit instruction in “Advanced Character Development”***©, a delineated curriculum of 18 desirable traits taught throughout the year at every grade level through a spiral curriculum that includes but is not limited to: emphasis on self-knowledge and love of self, commitment to truth and honesty, sharing with and empathy for others, demonstrating courage, strength and confidence without condescension or arrogance, reliability and consistency in pursuit of excellence with humility.

In light of NACA's mission and model, all stakeholders measure success in myriad ways and at varying periods, both short-term and long-term. For the purposes of brevity in this application, focus is given to the annual quantitative benchmarks of test scores, attendance, promotion rates, and suspension/expulsion rates. The data in this section compare NACA to its authorizing LEA (Baltimore City Public Schools-BCPSS) and to the State of Maryland on all said measures over the 4-year period for which data are available in aggregate and disaggregate formats².

A2. Demographic Contexts – According to the US Census, Maryland is one of the country's most affluent states with a median annual household income of \$74,149 with 10% of its population living in poverty while the national median household income is reported at \$53,482 with 14.8% living in poverty. Conversely, the City of Baltimore falls far below national and state income averages with a median household income of \$41,819 and 24.2% of its families living at or below federal poverty levels. Education attainment is equally unbalanced. While 29.3% of the country's citizens hold a Bachelor's degree, Maryland reports 37.3% of its residents with a BA degree, but only 10.4% of Baltimore City residents have reached this same level of education. These two factors, income and parents' education levels, have frequently been cited by educational researchers as predictors of student academic readiness and subsequent success (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Tyack, 1974). While not necessarily a causal relationship, there is indisputably a correlational relationship between income and parents' education levels as they impact

² Note that the State of Maryland changed its standardized assessments of student achievement and growth from the MSAs (Maryland State Assessments) to PARCC (Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Career) in 2014, and subsequently designed the 2015 and 2016 years as transitional and baseline years accordingly.

and frame the foundations for students' academic success. It is within these contexts that NACA readily embraced its mission of serving the historically under-served.

NACA's Demographics are similar in some ways to those of Baltimore City's Public School System (BCPSS), our LEA-authorizing entity. Conversely and like BCPSS, NACA differs substantially from traditional schools throughout the State in other domains. Ethnic composition and socio-economic³ distributions at the elementary and middle schools reflect that the majority of students at NACA and BCPSS are primarily from a traditionally under-represented "minority" group: African American (100% at NACA, 83.9% for BCPSS). These numbers are inconsistent with Baltimore City's ethnic composition of 31.7% White, 62.9% African American and 2.8% Asian as reported by the US Census Bureau (2010). Also missing from city data are the noteworthy numbers of Latino students (6.2% of BCPSS' population), and the fact that less than half of all school-aged Asian American Baltimore residents (1% enrolled in BCPSS) and approximately one-quarter (8.5% enrolled) of all school-aged White/European-American Baltimoreans are enrolled in BCPSS. These discrepancies, together with the disproportionately higher percentage of poor Baltimore students enrolled in the public schools, underscore the commonly held belief and practice that those parents who can afford it tend to place their children in private schools. In other words, the 10-year trend of declining enrollment in BCPSS can be attributed to the preferred private schooling option when at all possible.

Chart 1. Elementary School Demographics: NACA, BCPSS and MD State

³ In accordance with federal definitions of poverty/low-income, we define this population based on the numbers of students who qualify for Free and Reduced-priced Meals (FARM)

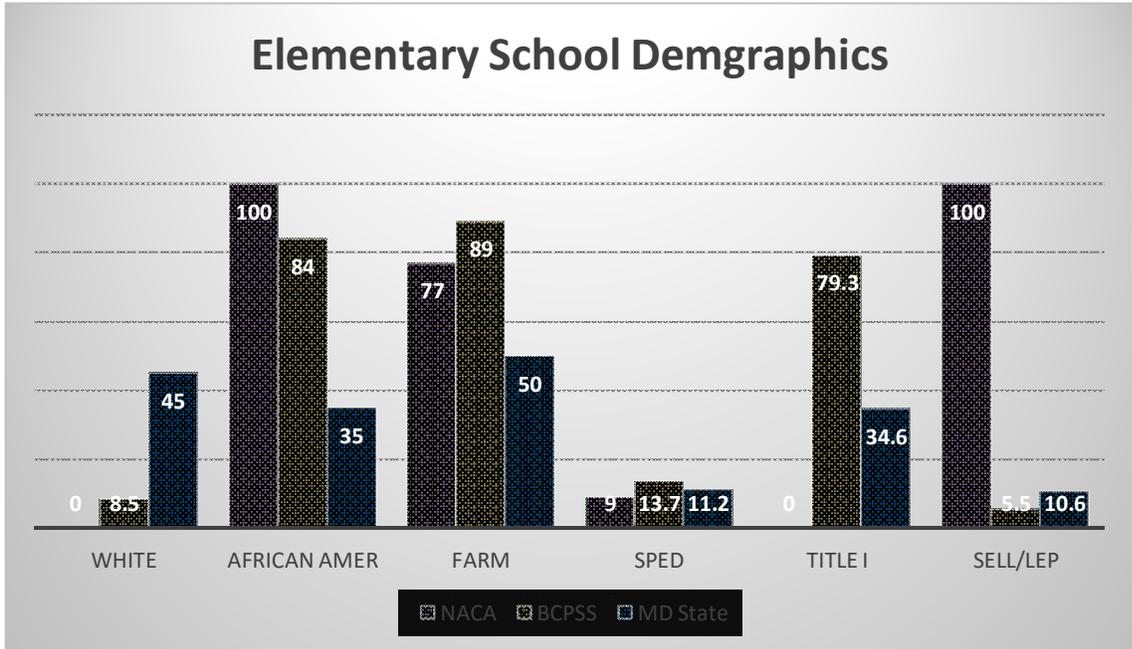
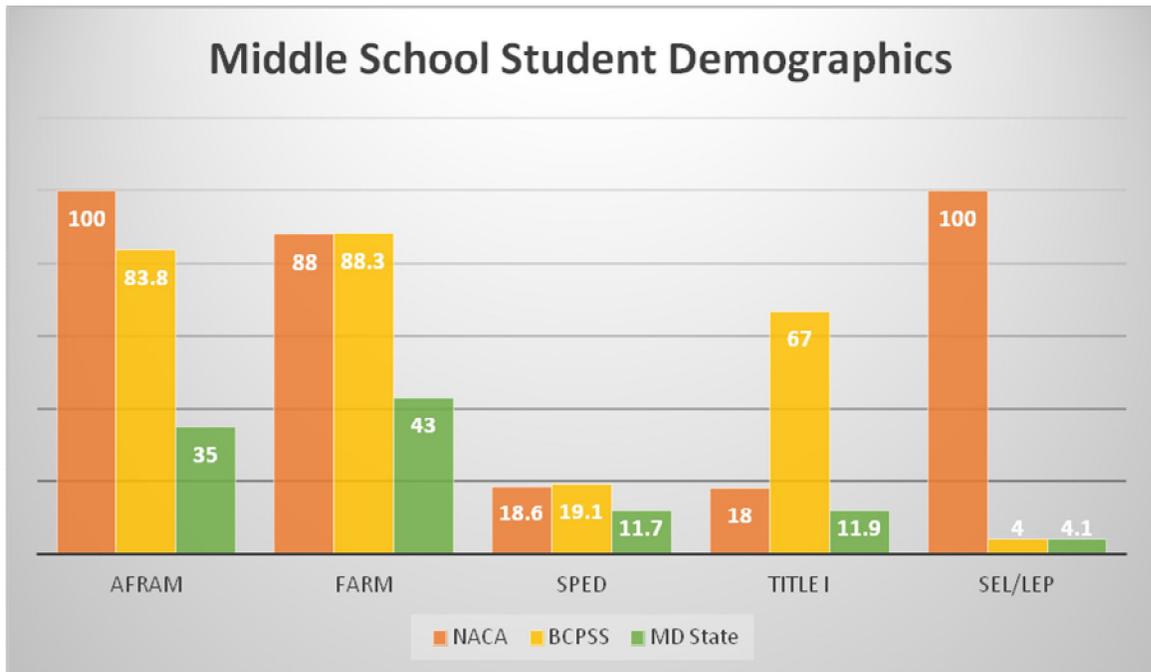


Chart 2. Middle School Demographics – NACA, BCPSS and MD State



Aside from glaring differences between NACA and its LEA and SEA peers in basic demographics, the low numbers of **Special Needs** students (9%) at NACA I is due to our commitment of working with struggling students more extensively in the primary grades before officially labeling them as in need of intervention or ‘special’ services. In our 11 years of service to Baltimore students, we have found through the leadership and guidance of Ms. Geneva Ferguson, our resident Special Education expert with more than 40 years’ experience in the field, that the continuum of middle childhood cognitive development is extensive enough to merit moving cautiously through the identification and ‘labeling’ process. Consistent with the literature (Bernard, 2006), we have had several students who appeared to have learning challenges early in their academic careers, but who blossomed academically through later growth spurts as they found their proverbial sea legs in academe. This trend changes at the middle school where approximately half of our students (35-40 of 70 at each grade level) come from other Baltimore elementary schools, thereby several arrive with a ‘special needs’ designation that results in percentages comparable to those of other BCPSS middle schools.

Title I and **SEL/LEP**⁴ are sub-groups in which NACA differs dramatically from BCPSS and Maryland State in policies and practices (and subsequently in demographics) that reflect our pedagogical philosophies and sociolinguistic awareness. NACA’s leaders do not consider economic disadvantage to be synonymous with being academically ‘at-risk’ or to lead necessarily to ‘at-risk’ behaviors. Our approach to **Title I** will be discussed in greater detail later in this narrative (See Social Emotional and Character Development sub-sections in “Curriculum and Instruction” section). The short, immediate description,

⁴ Standard English Language Learners (SEL) and Limited English Proficient (LEP) are grouped together here exclusively for the purpose of addressing language and dialectal differences that can (and often do) pose challenges in the acquisition and learning of Standard, Academic English, and subsequently, interfere with advanced literacy skills.

however, is that NACA has devised successful interdisciplinary research-based instructional practices that have proven effective in teaching successful study habits and metacognitive “Habits of Mind” before ‘at-risk’ behaviors can take root (Krovetz, 2016; Wiersema, et.al, 2015). Additional narrative describing our instructional programs for bidialectal students (i.e., **SEL**- Standard English Language Learners) is likewise detailed in later sections of this proposal, but can immediately be described as a constructivist’s use of students’ home language (aka “dialect”⁵) as a bridge to teaching Standard American English and the academic language within those contexts. (See “Balanced Literacy” sub-section in “Curriculum and Instruction” segment).

(A3). Academic Performance – Evidence of the effectiveness of NACA’s approach is most readily evident in its standardized test scores from Maryland’s School Assessments (MSAs). The most recent reliable and valid achievement reports are provided in the charts below. Note that these are aggregate data for *grade 3-5 students* at NACA I, and for *grade 6-8 students* at NACA’s secondary school (the schools that we are seeking to expand and replicate) in comparison to their grade level peers at our neighboring LEA (BCPSS) and our SEA’s traditional schools.⁶

Please note that Maryland’s State Department of Education (MSDE) replaced the MSAs by beginning to pilot new assessments with small, random groups of students throughout the state in 2014 (PARCC⁷) with assessments believed to be better aligned with the Common Core and Next Generation of Science Standards. PARCC’s statewide (i.e., all students’) transitional and baseline testing occurred in 2015 and 2016

⁵ Sociolinguists contend that non-standard dialects of English interfere with literacy and academic language development, and as such, they deserve the same consideration in creating curriculum and instruction responses as do programs for speakers of languages other than English (Alim and Rickford, 2016; Baugh, 1999; Rickford and Rickford, 2000; Smitherman, 1999).

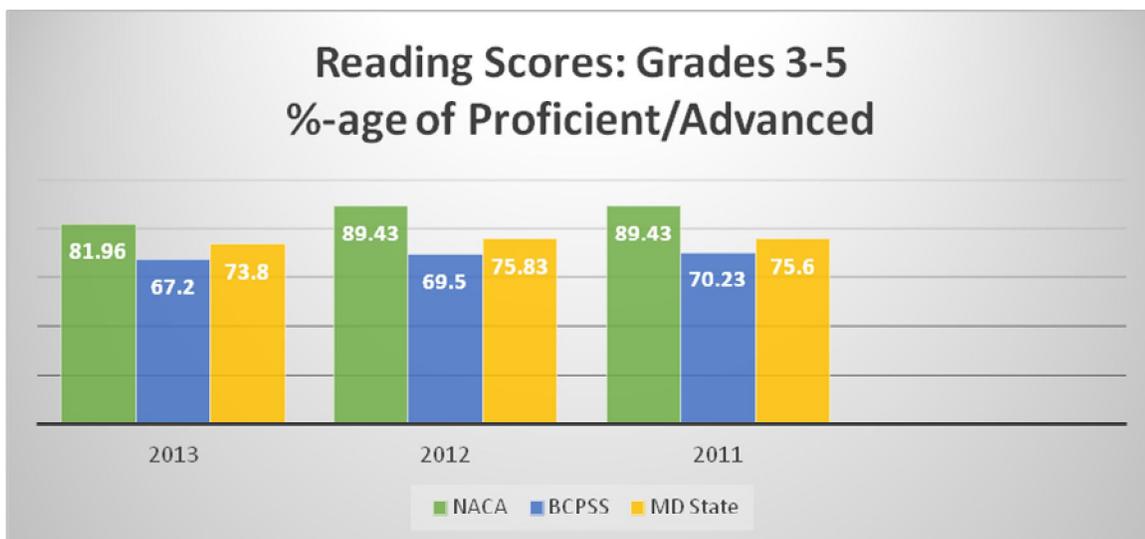
⁶ Disaggregated grade level data for grades 3 through 8 are provided in Appendix B.

⁷ PARCC – Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers)

respectively, with the first year's 'growth' scores expected in 2017. In short, the Maryland State Department of Education has changed its state testing requirements each year for the last three years, making it impossible to compare schools with district or state outcomes for the most recent academic years. Nonetheless and in an effort to demonstrate consistency, we provide test data for the previous three years for which the MSAs were administered: 2011, 2012 and 2013.

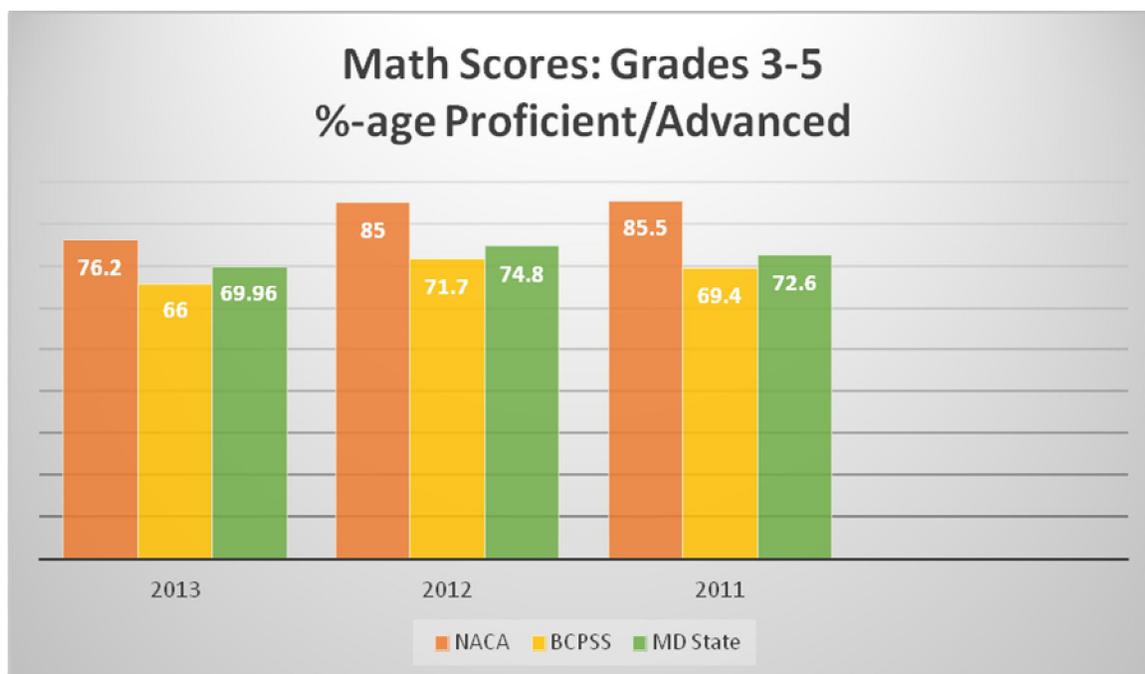
As evidenced in Charts 3 and 4 below, NACA's elementary students consistently outperformed their peers at both Baltimore City schools and all other traditional schools in the State of Maryland in reading and mathematics. When taken as an aggregate and controlling at the LEA and State groups for race/ethnicity and socio-economic levels to mirror NACA's demographics, NACA students outperformed their peers in Reading with more than 80% scoring at grade level (Proficient) or above (Advanced) for all three years. BCPSS students averaged 67% to 70% and MD State's students averaged 74% to 76% Proficient/Advanced.

Chart 3. Percentages of students on or above grade level in Reading for Grades 3-5



Student achievement in math is comparably compelling as 76% to 85% of NACA’s 3rd through 5th graders scored proficient and/or advanced while their LEA and SEA peers achieved at rates of 66% to 72% and 70% to 75% respectively. Despite these successes, NACA operators and faculty note the opportunities for improvement as indicated by slight declines in overall student achievement that occurred between 2011 and 2013. A detailed review of contributing factors revealed two major yet unavoidable changes in NACA’s model and operations in the 2011-’12 and 2012-’13 academic years: 1) Decreased budget allocations from BCPSS, NACA’s authorizing LEA, required NACA to reduce Instructional Aides to one per grade level contrary to the school’s original vision and practice of **one Instructional Aide** as teacher-in-training **per classroom** (in addition to a highly qualified certificated teacher) as allocated in all previous years of operation, thereby compromising

Chart 4. Percentages of students on or above grade level in Math for Grades 3-5⁸



⁸ Scores are disaggregated for FARM and African American groups to ensure more accurate comparison between NACA and traditional local schools.

our instructional model of embedded personalization and reduced class size/increased student-instructor contact; and 2) NACA engaged Teach For America (TFA) candidates for the first time who were not yet fully credentialed and who did not participate completely in extensive summer professional development trainings in NACA's Freedom and Democracy philosophy and pedagogies⁹. Reduced resources, diminished personalization in instruction, increased pupil to instructor ratios and under-preparedness of novice teachers compromised the NACA model and subsequently, student achievement, despite best efforts on the part of all stakeholders in those interim years.

Closing the Achievement Gap – Irrespective of the 'minority' as majority demographics for both BCPSS and NACA, the standard-bearers for academic achievement nation-wide remain middle-class (i.e., non-FARM) White/European-American students. In Charts 5 and 6 below, NACA's progress in closing achievement gaps between its economically disadvantaged, exclusively African American 3rd through 5th graders and their White/European-American, non-FARM peers is compelling. As evident in the data, NACA's students generally outperform all groups in Reading with a noticeable dip in the third year that reliable data are available. Economically-disadvantaged White/European American students continue to outperform middle-income African American students in both the comparison LEA and SEA, including slightly outperforming NACA for two of the three years in Math (by 6 percentage points in 2013 and 2.5 percentage points in 2012 for reasons discussed above), thereby begging the questions: *Does race matter? And if so, why?* Data for BCPSS and MD State suggest that it does to some extent. NACA's data indicate that it doesn't have to when all essential elements are

⁹ Though TFA candidates are still considered for teaching positions at NACA, it is a condition of their employment that they participate fully in all professional development institutes and workshops provided by Freedom and Democracy Schools, Inc.

present: teachers with high expectations who facilitate explicitly anti-racist teaching and learning while employing social-emotional “Habits of Mind” and character education in academically rigorous content infused with principles from the Freedom and Democracy curriculum.

Chart 5. Closing the Achievement Gap in READING – BCPSS, MD State and NACA

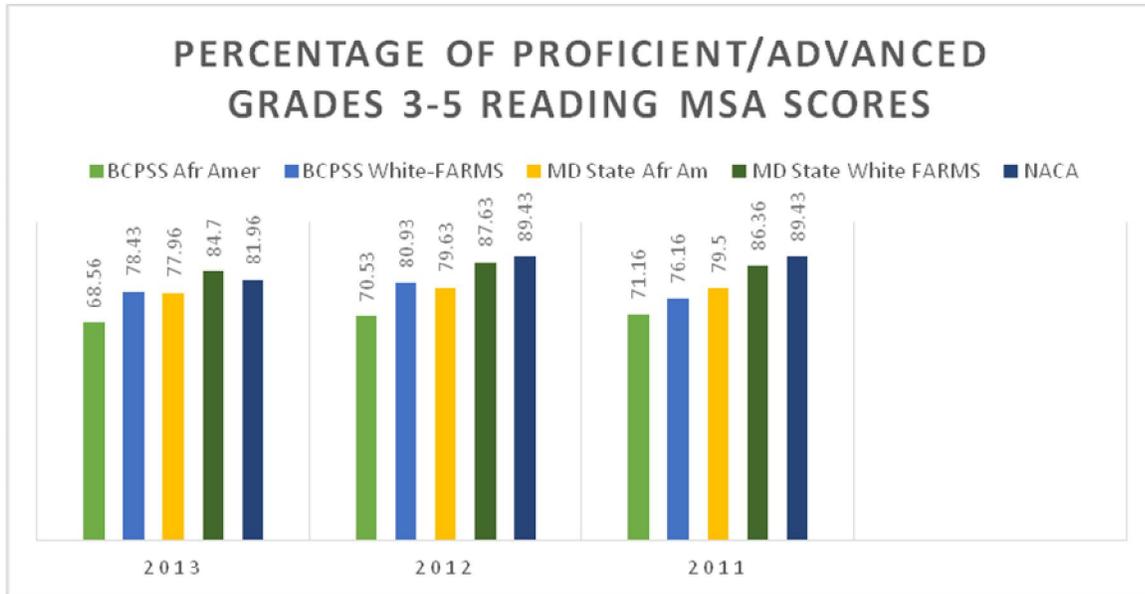
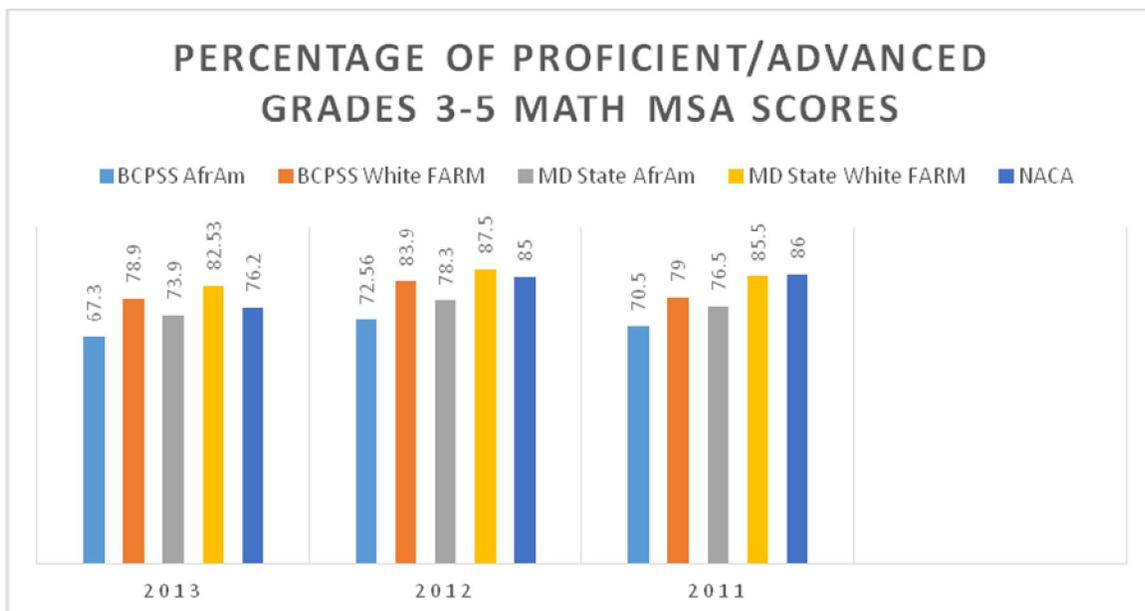
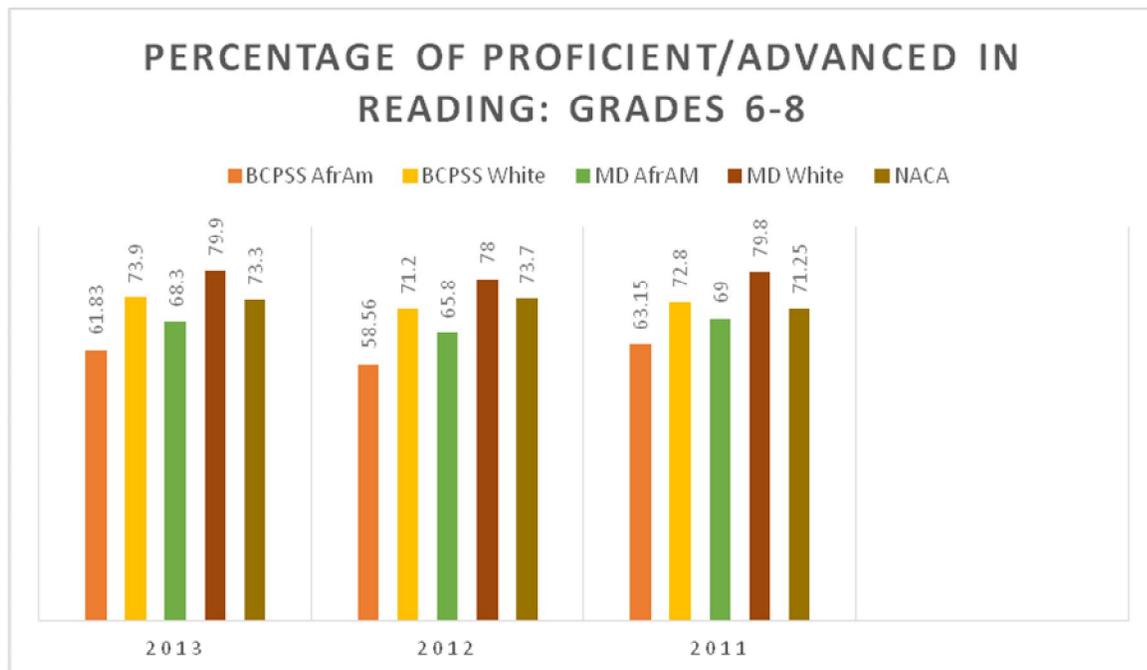


Chart 6. Closing the Achievement Gap in MATH – BCPSS, MD State and NACA

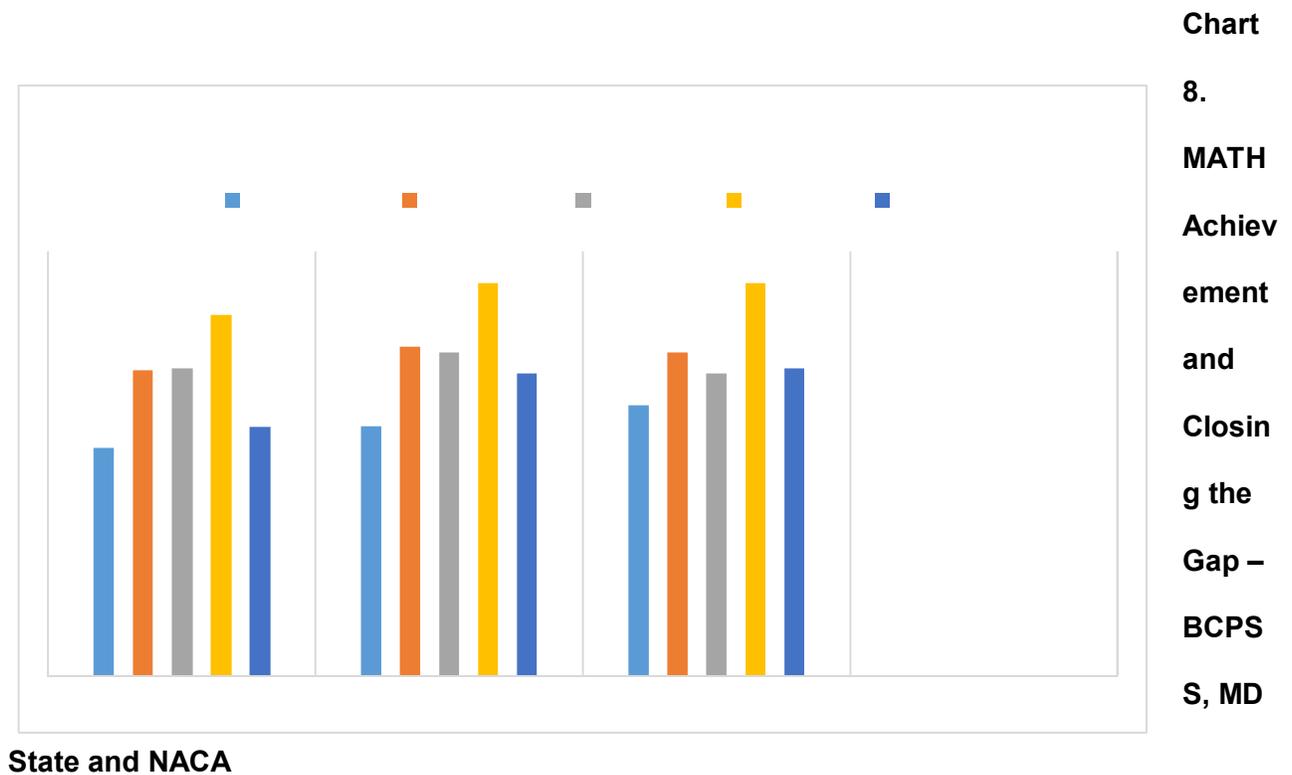


Academic achievement among NACA’s middle school students similarly demonstrates program effectiveness. Chart 7 illustrates NACA’s consistently higher achievement in Reading compared to that of demographically similar students from traditional LEA and MD State schools, with NACA’s students scoring sometimes as many as 15 percentage points more than the comparison group (NACA’s 73.7% compared to BCPSS’ 58.56% in 2012). It also demonstrates our progress in gradually closing the achievement gap between NACA students and the traditionally highest performing demographic of middle-class White/European Americans. Our students come as close as 0.6 percentage points (compared to BCPSS in 2013) and as far as 8.6 percentage points (compared to MD State in 2011). These data are encouraging yet signal room for improvement.

Chart 7. Achievement and Closing the Gap in Reading – BCPSS, MD State and NACA



NACA's middle school math program is in greater need of attention according to data in Chart 8. Although more successful than BCPSS students from the same demographic, NACA's students are lagging behind other sub-groups in the sample. With our full-scale adoption of the Common Core in 2014, teachers began to implement the *Engage NY* math curriculum as a supplement to our extant *Integrated Mathematics* approach (See "Curriculum and Instruction" sub-section). The increased classroom time spent on problem-solving and reflection have helped to improve students' grades and engagement according to teacher reports. Solid quantitative data supporting these reports will be available in September of this year with the release of PARCC results.



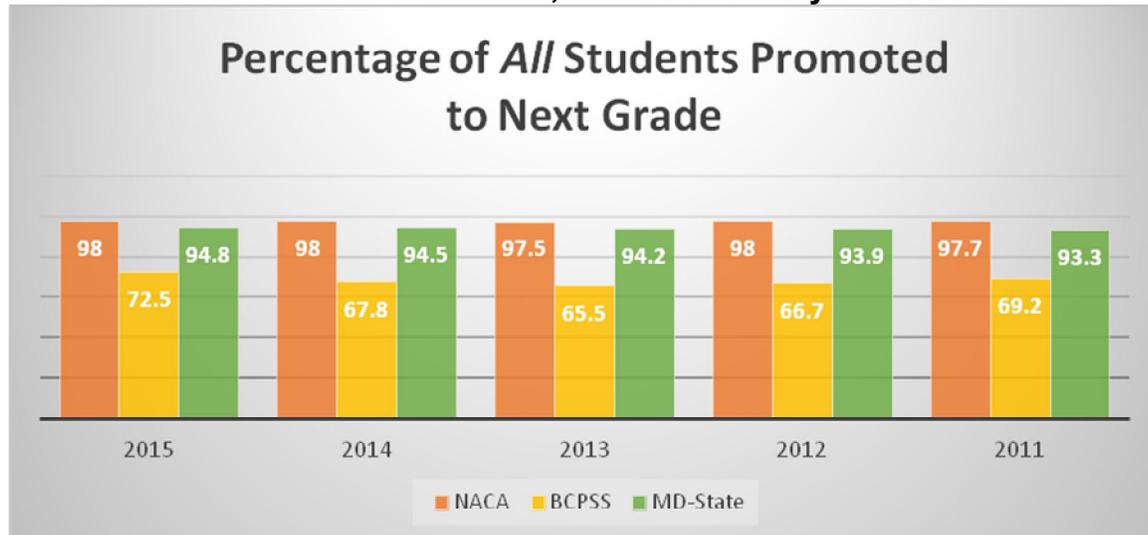
Attendance – Students can only learn if they attend school and are engaged everyday. NACA’s average daily attendance has remained at 97% to 98% for the past five years at the elementary school compared to Baltimore City’s 93% and Maryland State’s 94% among its elementary students. Attendance among NACA’s middle school students remains at an average of 96% for the past five years, while average attendance for BCPSS’ middle school students is consistently lower in comparison at 92.1% while attendance for Maryland State middle school students is also lower than NACA’s averaging 94% over the past five years. NACA school administrators recognize the need to address the drops in average daily attendance rates at NACA II for its high school students where averages hover at 91.4%, a full percentage point below the state average of 92.4%, but still 10 percentage points higher than the authorizing LEA’s traditional high schools at 82.4%.

Suspension and Expulsion Rates at NACA I are considerably lower than those at the traditional schools in its authorizing LEA (BCPSS) and throughout the State of Maryland. NACA’s elementary school reported 7 suspensions over the past five years (less than 1%) with no expulsions, compared with 8.9% for BCPSS and 8% for the State of Maryland. Suspensions are somewhat higher at NACA II (7.5% or an average of 22/year for past 5 years for 6th through 12th graders) but still lower than BCPSS (12.5%) and the State of Maryland (8.9%). In recognition of our need to reduce suspensions at the secondary

school, NACA has adopted a restorative justice disciplinary model that is in its pilot year. To date, suspensions are on the decline in comparison to last academic year at this time.

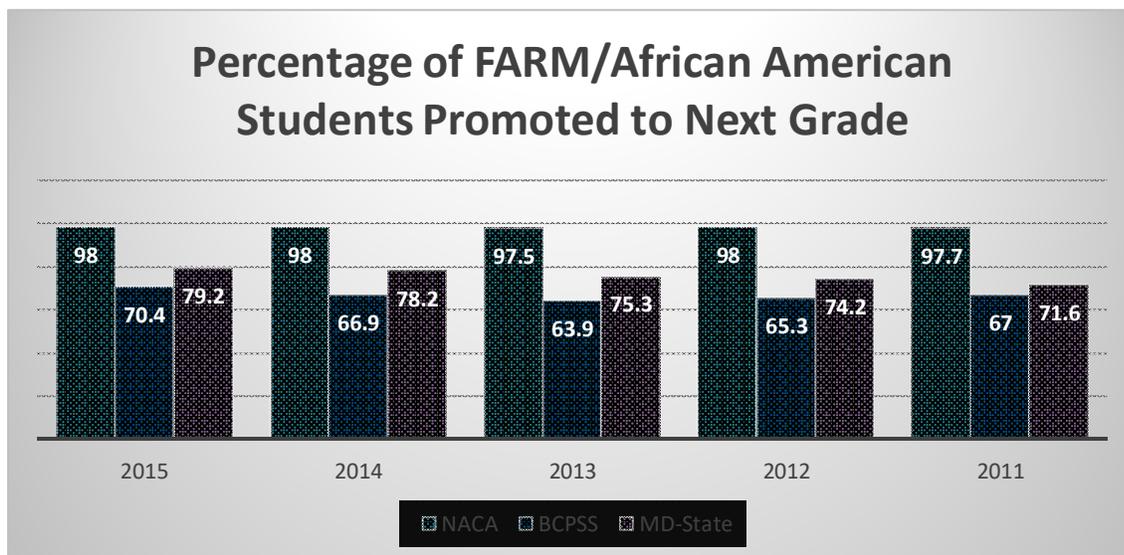
Promotion Rates – NACA’s commitment to supporting student progress is evident in the numbers of its students who are ready to advance each year to the next grade as demonstrated in the charts below.

Chart 9. Student Promotions: NACA, BCPSS and Maryland State



While Maryland’s overall student population progressed an average of 94.14% over the five years, and Baltimore City’s students were promoted on an average of 68.34% during the same time period, 97.84% of NACA’s students outperformed both City and State in their earned promotions. Data are even more compelling when data are disaggregated for Maryland State and BCPSS so that they are more accurately comparable to NACA both socio-economically and racially.

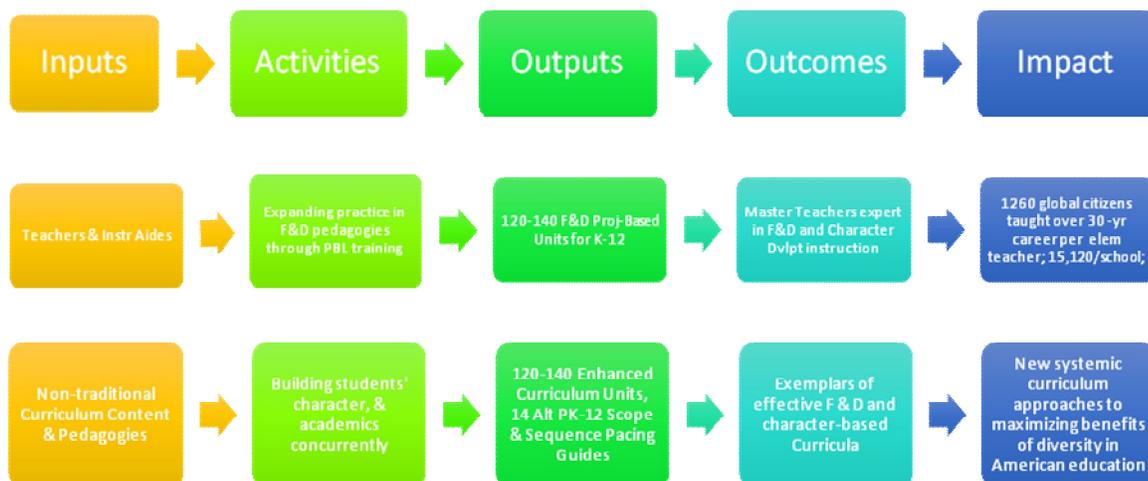
Chart 10. Student Promotions: Disaggregated by Income and Ethnicity

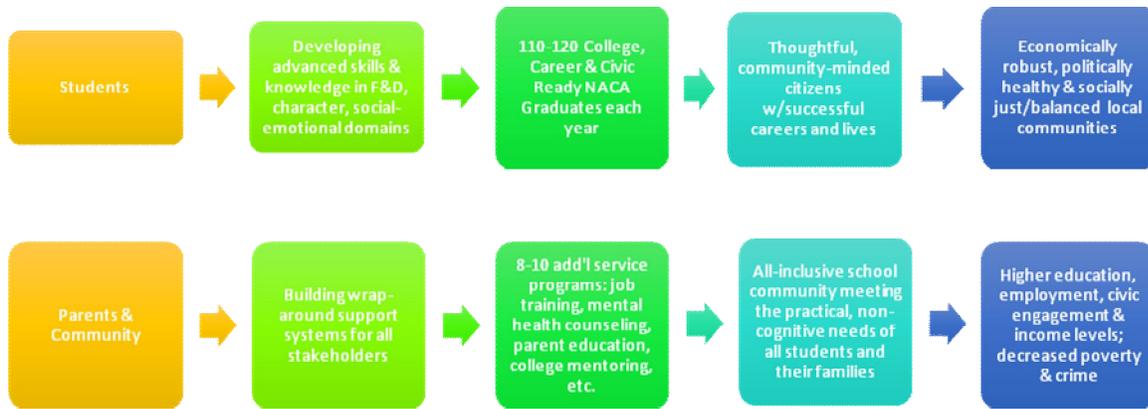


As evidenced in the chart above,

NACA students’ growth as measured by annual promotions exceeds those of both Baltimore City Public Schools as well as their peers in all of the other state’s school districts. Such success is attributed to both rigorous academics utilizing NACA’s personalized instruction structures *and* to the systemic incorporation of explicit teaching of Habits of Mind skills and “advanced character development”.

Table I. LOGIC MODEL for Freedom & Democracy Schools, Inc.





NACA’s Logic Model (Table I above) graphically illustrates the short- and long-term goals our approach to education seeks to achieve. NACA board and administrators liberally invest in our greatest resources: students and their families; teachers and instructional staff; and local community partners (e.g., Morgan State University, United Methodist Church, etc.) in systemic efforts to eliminate both opportunity and achievement gaps. We recognize the unique opportunity our F & D curriculum combined with character education and the development of Habits of Mind metacognitive skills provides. Taken as a whole, we graduate college and career ready citizens who are as prepared for civic engagement as they are ready to pursue additional education and/or employment.

(B). Pedagogical Philosophy

NACA’s Educational Model is founded on a pedagogical philosophy that synergistically combines Comer’s (2002) character development, Vygotsky’s (1962, 1978) constructivism, Piaget’s (1936) cognitive development, Dewey’s (1938) progressivism, Gardner’s (1983) multiple intelligences, and Freire’s (1970) liberation pedagogy. When applied collectively, these teaching and learning principles provide a strong rationale for an education program that includes rigorous

instruction using a balanced literacy¹⁰ approach to build strong readers and writers at the elementary level; integrated mathematics¹¹ to ensure proficiency in numeracy across all grades; and project-based learning(PBL)¹² rooted in Habits of Mind metacognition to foment the analytical and higher order thinking required of our emergent historians, scientists and other professionals who recognize their roles and responsibilities as global citizens. Authentic assessments, both formative and summative, define and guide our practice. An ongoing cycle of inquiry ensures academic integrity as we immediately modify content and/or pedagogy in response to students' learning needs measured and reported through continuous monitoring of their progress.

As the name "Freedom & Democracy Schools, Inc." indicates, explicit instruction in the founding principles that distinguish our great nation as a global standard bearer for democratic republics serves as the requisite cornerstone upon which NACA's schools are built. Like the more than 30 Freedom Schools that filled the state of Mississippi in 1964 as part of the Civil Rights Movement's struggle to educate, inspire and support disfranchised African Americans in their struggle for full participation in the electoral process, F&D/NACA is dedicated to preparing its scholars for full participation in global citizenship as well-informed, responsible, self-confident

¹⁰ Our definition of "Balanced Literacy" incorporates the explicit teaching of phonics and phonemic awareness in the primary grades with the healthy, constructivist approaches found in guided reading, shared reading, read-alouds, literacy centers and literature circles. Additionally, modeled, shared, guided and interactive writing for grades K-8 combined with explicit efforts to develop a love of literature and reading complete our "Balanced Literacy" program.

¹¹ "Integrated mathematics" balances procedural and conceptual understanding with whole group and small group instructional delivery methods utilizing both teacher directed and student focused instructor's roles, promoting strategic competence through meaningful problem-solving investigations at all grade levels.

¹² NACA concurs with the Buck Institute for Education's definition of PBL as "a systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks." (Markham, 2003).

change agents cognizant of the sacrifices sometimes required to ensure freedom and equal opportunity in governance for everyone. This necessarily includes character development education which is interwoven as integral components of our humanities and science instruction. Both constructivism and liberation pedagogy enable us to demonstrate immediate relevance of what is taught in the classroom to students' lives and communities, thereby re-affirming the urgency and importance of their agency as young citizens.

NACA's K-8 students study all core subjects throughout their elementary and middle school years. Social Studies and Science are taught in inter-disciplinary blocks as integral parts of the English curriculum, with mathematics having its own block though science is frequently infused and integrated with math instruction as needed.

(C). Curriculum and Instruction

NACA continues to rely on our original instructional framework as detailed in E.D.Hirsch's *Core Knowledge Curriculum* series (recently adopted by our authorizing LEA), our own *Freedom and Democracy Curriculum*© and teacher-generated content in response to students' interests and current events. All fall within the guiding contexts of Maryland State Department of Education's Curriculum Frameworks. We continuously monitor our enacted curricula to ensure that all materials and instruction are aligned with Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards.

Families are kept abreast of our approaches to curriculum and instruction (including discussion of the impact of MSAs and PARCC) through monthly Parent Council meetings, SST meetings, IEP meetings, individual consultations, bi-monthly family literacy/math game nights, parent-teacher conferences, monthly newsletters and informal conversations

at school drop-off and pick-up times. NACA also communicates with families and community stakeholders through extensive use of various technologies and media (e.g., NACA Mobile App, BCPSS Parent-Portal as well as Principal and Teacher web-sites).

NACA's school administration and its teachers work collaboratively to consistently provide the best relevant instruction. Teachers use a wide range of research-based effective practices in order to deliver rigorous learning opportunities. While teacher creativity and instructional autonomy are encouraged and supported, F&D/NACA is committed to balancing thematic- and project-based, student-centered approaches with teacher direct instruction when needed and appropriate. This approach manifests in the following system-wide practices:

- Our ***Freedom & Democracy Curriculum*** is best described in the seminal work *Hope and History: Why We Must Share the Story of the Movement* (2009) by the late Dr. Vincent Harding, noted historian, civil rights activist and friend to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. NACA's story is featured prominently in his Preface to the 2nd edition as an exemplar of how schools can successfully "Make Democracy a Reality". Consistent with Dr. Harding's contention that a Freedom and Democracy education "teach for and move toward our common American calling—the creation of 'a more perfect union,' a more compassionate, democratic community for us all"¹³, NACA's constructivist approach uses current issues to initiate in-depth, student-conducted and teacher-facilitated research into the history of the Black-led, multi-culturally supported and implemented U.S. freedom movements of the 1950s and 60s. Like Dr. Harding and other proponents of liberation pedagogies (See the *Liberation Curriculum* web-site: <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/liberation-curriculum>) we believe that some of the

¹³ Harding, Vincent. *Hope and History, Why We Must Share the Story of the Movement*, 2d ed. Orbis Books. Kindle Edition

best exemplars of applied American democracy were enacted by ordinary people self-educated in the content and precepts of the US Constitution who risked everything to secure freedom and self-governance. Like the founders of the “Common School”, the term used to describe the first public schools established in the 19th century designed to educate poor children of European immigrants (Tyack, 1974), we recognize that one of the key purposes of a free, American education is to educate all of our citizenry to participate proudly in self-government, and that it is each generation’s responsibility to prepare the next for this uniquely American task. Consequently, NACA purposefully infuses civics education in content and practice throughout our reading, math and science curricula (See Socratic Seminars and Project-Based Learning sections), thereby developing in our NACA scholars “Children of hope” and promise who “inspired” Dr. Harding’s “messages to President Obama, which appear as the final chapter” of his 2nd edition of *Hope and History*.¹⁴

- **Character Development Education** is essential in building and shaping the values and functions necessary for civic participation and leadership. NACA’s version is a K-12 spiral curriculum that integrates social-emotional education as it teaches the principles of: Truth; Continual Growth; Self-Knowledge and Self-Love; Peace; Sharing and Caring with Empathy and without Condescension; Confidence without Arrogance; Justice and Fairness; Respect; Integrity; Dependability and Consistency; Responsibility; Perseverance with Optimism; Excellence with Humility; Courage and Wisdom; Strength with Gentleness. These characteristics constitute a collection of social-emotional dispositions designed for developing emotional intelligence. These qualities help our students care for, identify with and honor others while respecting the

¹⁴ Ibid.

emotions and rights of others and how they see the world. These skills refer to NACA scholars' ability to perceive, assess and manage their own emotions and behaviors that emotionally intelligent people do when they find themselves involved in problems whose resolution is not immediately apparent.

- **Habits of Mind** are a set of thinking dispositions that not only help our students develop their critical and creative thinking skills, but also support development of the mental habits that force our students to understand and know their own learning modalities (e.g., how they learn; what are their personal 'intelligences' as summarized by Gardner) and subsequently, what self-regulating behaviors they need to maximize their own intellectual potential. We adopted the 5 Habits of Mind introduced by education reformer and activist, Debbie Meier, from her Mission Hill K-8 pilot school in Boston. This includes applying the habits of: Evidence, Viewpoint, Connections (Cause & Effect), Conjecture and Relevance in solving regular academic tasks – as well as engaging in the interdisciplinary problem-solving required in navigating everyday life. (See Appendix B for complete description).
- Implementation of Grant Wiggins' "***Understanding by Design***", a backwards-planning approach to unit and lesson construction that starts with 'the end in mind'. In other words, it starts with the question(s) of "what do we want our students to know and be able to do?" then poses essential questions based on core learnings that our students are expected to master and demonstrate during and at the end of each learning segment. UbD ensures student-based inquiry supported by teacher facilitation that allows for more in-depth study of student-identified topics (with teachers' masterful leadership and facilitation) as they develop skills delineated in the Common Core and

NGSS. Like its complementary “Universal Design for Learning” lesson planning approach, UbD fosters differentiated instruction and facilitates project-based learning for authentically assessing student understanding and knowledge.

- **Balanced Literacy** instruction (Calkins) coupled with the equally student-centered **Guided Reading and Writing** approach to literacy development (Fountas and Pinell) ensures our emergent readers can begin as early as kindergarten to develop healthy life-long habits of scholarship that will serve them well beyond their compulsory schooling experience. This approach also ensures that no struggling reader at any grade level is ever left behind as the weekly (sometimes bi-weekly) benchmark assessments (Fountas and Pinell) diagnose status and monitor progress while the teacher concurrently facilitates higher levels of proficiency and independent reading through Guided (Reading) instruction in small groups and individually as needed.
 - NACA’s **Standard American English curriculum** is a unique and critical component of our Balanced Literacy program for all of our native speakers of African American Vernacular English (AAVE, also known as “Ebonics”), a formally recognized dialect of American English (Linguistic Society of America, 1997) that embodies a system of rules and patterns in pronunciation, grammar, register and social usage (e.g, call and response, signifyin’, playin’ the dozens, etc.). (Baugh,1983; Rickford and Rickford, 1999). In addition to its legitimate sociolinguistic status, AAVE is known to function in much the same way as a ‘foreign’ or ‘second language’ functions in interfering with literacy development in English, and as a potential learning challenge/obstacle in the development of academic language in English. In recognition of these issues, NACA

utilizes the constructivist, culturally relevant approach of employing both AAVE and Standard American English as bridges to academic language development.

- **Socratic seminars** and **Literature Circles** naturally extend the guided facilitation begun with balanced literacy at the elementary level into the higher grades. This instructional method requires mutually supportive processes in which students are responsible for facilitating discussion around ideas in a common text by listening, making meaning and finding common ground, so that everyone understands the text's core tenets and the author's intended 'teachings'.
- NACA's **Integrated Mathematics** is based on the premise that students need basic factual knowledge and 'automaticity' with procedural computation, coupled with a deep conceptual understanding of mathematics, in order to solve complex mathematical application problems.
- **Project-Based Learning** (PBL)¹⁵ is a student-centered pedagogy in which learners go deeper into topics as they engage in problem-solving to find solutions to nontrivial problems using our adopted "**Habits of Mind**" (e.g., asking and refining questions, debating ideas, making predictions, designing plans/experiments, collecting and analyzing data, etc.) to draw conclusions and communicate their ideas and findings to others via authentic assessments (i.e.,

¹⁵ PBL's effects have been well documented by the work of Thomas Markham (2011), JAS Greeno (2006) and others (Blumenthal, et. al., 1991). NACA's pedagogical philosophy in adopting PBL is rooted in the theories of John Dewey (1938/1997), Lev Vygotsky (1974), Howard Gardner and Jean Piaget.

real-life products). Working in teams (well-structured **cooperative learning/complex instruction groups**), students focus on ‘essential questions’ that require them to conduct authentic research and produce artifacts in a variety of previously agreed-upon media that represent their newfound knowledge (i.e., formative and summative assessments that include oral panel presentations, videos, essay reports, news articles, three-dimensional representations, photography, technology-based productions, etc). This approach requires extensive advanced planning which, in turn, enables teachers to serve more as facilitators of inquiry (vs. sages that transmit knowledge through lecture) as they guide and assess student work throughout an extended learning timeframe. The dynamic nature of this pedagogy ensures that instructors **differentiate instruction** to meet diverse students’ learning needs (i.e., English Learners, Special Needs, Gifted and Talented, etc.). It can be supplemented with the use of **blended learning** as teachers integrate technology when appropriate to develop individualized learning plans for each student while concurrently making the teacher more available for individual and small group instruction. In all instances, PBL is infused with **culturally relevant pedagogy** as part of the **differentiated instruction** to ensure that the conditions are always present for high academic achievement as an equitable educational outcome for all students in the class.

- **Culturally relevant pedagogy**, a product and manifestation of Banks’ multicultural education¹⁶, is grounded in the constructivist practice of learning

¹⁶ James Banks’ Multicultural Education theory lay the foundation for culturally relevant pedagogy in the first three of his five tenets: 1) **content integration** of a variety of cultures in subject matter; 2) **knowledge construction** - a process by which students question and analyze biased, extant curricula;

from students what their beliefs, motivations and social group norms are and using this knowledge to tailor instruction (e.g., learning tasks, subject matter content and assessments) so that students from different cultures experience “equitable pedagogy” as a means to their academic success. NACA recognizes that culture is not limited to race/ethnicity, but encompasses far more intangible characteristics that inform how students prefer to learn and thereby have more opportunities to succeed academically. Culturally responsive teachers adapt their instruction (i.e., differentiate) by tailoring teaching and learning tasks to students’ cultures.

NACA has maintained fidelity to its contract and to the school’s implementation of key design elements: rigorous academics, inclusion of Special Needs students, a safe and peaceful school climate and culture, advanced character development, and an ongoing emphasis on freedom and democracy. In addition to the quantitative measures of student performance, NACA’s curriculum and pedagogy are designed to prepare students to read complex texts, think critically, and solve real-world problems across all disciplines, both in the core courses as well as electives in the Arts, Physical Education, and World Languages.

(D). Student Recruitment/Enrollment – Educationally “Disadvantaged” Students

NACA’s recruitment and enrollment efforts intentionally target hard to reach populations through widespread media coverage, extensive information sessions in

and 3) explicitly **anti-racist** teaching, the use of cross-cultural interactions to reduce/eliminate prejudice. The presence of these three leads to the fourth of Banks’ tenets: 4) **equity/equitable pedagogy** in which the instructor changes teaching approaches by tailoring methods along with content to ensure all students’ success, regardless of their culture(s). When successful, equity pedagogy lays the foundation for an **empowered school culture** in which students, faculty and staff examine the ubiquitous institution of education for inequities in the quest to eliminate them. Successful implementation of these five tenets results in what Banks deems as “transformative multicultural education”.

schools and churches throughout Baltimore, and home visits in all neighborhoods in the City. NACA's support services in special education and general education are highlighted throughout these processes. Consequently, NACA serves a special needs population of 9% at the elementary level, 18% at the middle school level and 31% at the high school level, varying in ranges but generally higher than BCPSS' average of 16% and the State's average of 11.3%. This reflects BCPSS' recognition of NACA's commitment and ability in providing a college preparatory education to anyone who wants one, including those labeled 'educationally disadvantaged'.

Special Education Compliance - As public schools, NACA schools are subject to Part B of IDEA and Federal civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability. Students with disabilities and learning differences attending NACA charter schools and their parents retain all rights under Part B of IDEA. We understand that children learn in different ways and are fully aware that children across the spectrum should be instructed in the ways that they learn best. Toward this end, NACA makes the following assurances:

- NACA provides parents of potential students with accurate information about the programs and services available. In compliance with federal law, recruitment efforts target all populations in the community, regardless of race, disability, ethnicity, or gender.
- NACA complies with all applicable state and federal laws in serving students with disabilities, including, but not limited to, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and is categorized as a public school of the District for purposes of special education in accordance with Education Code Section 47641(b).
- NACA complies with all state and federal laws related to the provision of special education instruction and related services, policies and procedures,

including appropriate evaluations, an IEP, participation in decisions regarding the IEP, and appropriate procedures to resolve disputes.

- NACA shall be solely responsible for its compliance with Section 504 and the ADA. Recognizing that the charter school may operate in a privately held or District-owned facility, the facilities to be utilized by the charter school shall be accessible for all students with disabilities.
- NACA schools make available, as required by law, a student's general education teachers and SST Members (and other required school personnel) for meetings convened by official bodies charged with special education compliance.
- NACA schools ensure that parents of children with special needs are informed of how their children are progressing on annual IEP goals and in the general curriculum at least as frequently as are parents of regular education children.
- NACA schools' SST Members retain such data and prepare such reports as are needed by each disabled child's school district of residence or the State Education Department in order to permit such entities to comply with federal law and regulations.
- NACA schools will comply with their obligations under the Child Find requirements of IDEA, including 34 CFR § 300.125, and will provide appropriate notification to parents in connection therewith, including notifying them prior to providing a child's name for potential evaluation.

(E). ACCOUNTABILITY: Highly Effective Instructional Staff

From its inception, NACA adopted National Board Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) as a supplemental framework to BCPSS extant evaluation tools (also adopted)

for assessing teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. Created by teachers for teachers, NBPTS bases both National Standards and National Board Certification on the following core principles:

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning (*Professional ethics*)
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students (*pedagogical content knowledge*)
3. Teachers are responsible for monitoring and organizing student learning (*creating and maintaining safe, effective learning environments/classroom management*)
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from their experience (*reflective practitioners*)
5. Teachers are members of professional learning communities (*professional ethics*)

In 2013, the State of Maryland modified teacher evaluation protocols to incorporate Charlotte Danielson's Framework as part of a merit-based system in which 50% of teachers' evaluations were based on student growth and the other 50% was based on Danielson's four core domains of professional practice: Planning and Preparation, Instruction, Classroom Management, and Professional Responsibilities. Like the NPBTS Framework, Danielson's Framework is research-based and focuses on constructivist learning and teaching with additional emphasis on equity and access for all students. Consequently, NACA leadership has combined both NBPTS and Danielson's Frameworks in its professional development workshops and coaching models to support NACA teachers in their development of culturally relevant pedagogies. An overview of the Danielson Framework follows:

<p>DOMAIN 1: Planning and Preparation</p> <p>1a Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of the content and structure of the discipline • Knowledge of prerequisite relationships • Knowledge of content-related pedagogy </p> <p>1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child and adolescent development • Learning process • Special needs • Student skills, knowledge, and proficiency • Interests and cultural heritage </p> <p>1c Setting Instructional Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value, sequence, and alignment • Clarity • Balance • Suitability for diverse learners </p> <p>1d Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For classroom • To extend content knowledge and pedagogy • For students </p> <p>1e Designing Coherent Instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning activities • Instructional materials and resources • Instructional groups • Lesson and unit structure </p> <p>1f Designing Student Assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congruence with instructional outcomes • Criteria and standards • Design of formative assessments • Use for planning </p>	<p>DOMAIN 2: The Classroom Environment</p> <p>2a Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher interactions with students – both words and actions • Student interactions with students – both words and actions </p> <p>2b Establishing a Culture for Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of content and learning • Expectations for learning and achievement • Student pride in work </p> <p>2c Managing Classroom Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional groups • Transitions • Materials and supplies • Non-instructional duties • Supervision of volunteers and paraprofessionals </p> <p>2d Managing Student Behavior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations • Monitoring student behavior • Response to student misbehavior </p> <p>2e Organizing Physical Space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and accessibility • Arrangement of furniture and use of physical resources </p>
<p>DOMAIN 4: Professional Responsibilities</p> <p>4a Reflecting on Teaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy • Use in future teaching </p> <p>4b Maintaining Accurate Records <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student completion of assignments • Student progress in learning • Non-instructional records </p> <p>4c Communicating with Families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About instructional program • About individual students • Engagement of families in the instructional program </p> <p>4d Participating in a Professional Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships with colleagues • Involvement in a culture of professional inquiry • Service to school • Participation in school and district projects </p> <p>4e Growing and Developing Professionally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of content knowledge / pedagogical skill • Receptivity to feedback from colleagues • Service to the profession </p> <p>4f Showing Professionalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity/ethical conduct • Service to students • Advocacy • Decision-making • Compliance with school and district regulations </p>	<p>DOMAIN 3: Instruction</p> <p>3a Communicating With Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations for learning • Directions for activities • Explanations of content • Use of oral and written language </p> <p>3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of questions/prompts • Discussion techniques • Student participation </p> <p>3c Engaging Students in Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities and assignments • Grouping of students • Instructional materials and resources • Structure and pacing </p> <p>3d Using Assessment in Instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment criteria • Monitoring of student learning • Feedback to students • Student self-assessment and monitoring of progress </p> <p>3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson adjustment • Response to students • Persistence </p>

Table 2. Danielson’s Framework for Teacher Development and Evaluation

In alliance with BCPSS and MD State evaluation practices, NACA’s instructional leaders mentor, coach and evaluate using this framework. Teachers identify professional learning goals from within the framework and utilize these to inform their practice and outcomes for students. NACA site administrators use this framework during formal and informal classroom observations and subsequently use these data to inform professional development.

(F). Home & Community-School Partnerships:

Parent, family and community engagement are critical to NACA’s ability to meet its mission. Parent and family engagement helps to ensure student academic success,

create and sustain an academic culture, and provide vital governance and accountability for each of its schools. Parent and family involvement creates a culture of community, demonstrates to students that their parents care about their education, and enables parents to be a part of the movement to get every student to and through college and/or career.

NACA faculty and staff actively create an environment where parents feel comfortable being on campus and participating in school activities. Specifically, parents participate in school advisory committees; attend Parent University classes related to middle and high school transition and college readiness; and participate in academic events, school assemblies and community field trips.

NACA also engages parents and families in its strategic planning. NACA employs a Director of Community Engagement to serve as staff liaisons, working with the Parent Council to inform the development and monitoring of the schools' strategic plans.

Parent feedback is also captured through surveys, regular parent meetings for all grade levels, on-campus volunteer opportunities, parent field trips, seminars and open houses. This feedback is discussed with staff in an effort to maintain a high level of parent engagement.

Expanded Learning Opportunities – NACA's after school program (Academic Excellence Program), gives students an opportunity to increase their academic skills, with a segment of the afternoon used primarily for completing homework and reading materials that can be attached to students' reading logs. Educational games and the opportunity to spend time on the playground allow kindergarten students to develop gross motor skills that are necessary as classroom tasks move from gross motor to fine motor capabilities. Local universities (Morgan State and Towson State) continue to send students into NACA, offering help with our children in the afternoons and during our

spring Saturday School.

WORK WITH BCPSS – Model for reform

NACA currently works with Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) in several ways, one of the most notable being the High Quality Schools Compact, a collaborative agreement and initiative funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation begun in 2011. This multi-year alliance enables collaboration between NACA as a member of Baltimore’s Charter Consortium to work with the City’s traditional public schools, the mayor’s office and the City of Baltimore to make high quality education available to all students. Toward that end and as part of regular Charter Consortium meetings with BCPSS, NACA has consistently shared best practices around our use of curricula that promote the development of non-cognitive factors (e.g., Character Development) in building the requisite skills and habits of mind that lead to academic achievement, and the impact of civics education through our Freedom and Democracy curriculum, especially with traditionally under-served students. With the expansion and replication of our K-8 schools within the next five years, NACA will further leverage this relationship as it exemplifies and demonstrates both curricula for other schools in BCPSS.

(G). Program and School Management

NACA has a proven educational model for closing the opportunity gap for educationally underserved students in Baltimore, and in so doing, eliminating the achievement gap. This successful history has only been possible due to the dedication of a seasoned leadership team with a strong track record of opening and managing high-quality schools that utilize this model. In seeking to further replicate and substantially expand schools in this network, the NACA organization and team bring the following: (1) A strong management plan to ensure project objectives are met on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and

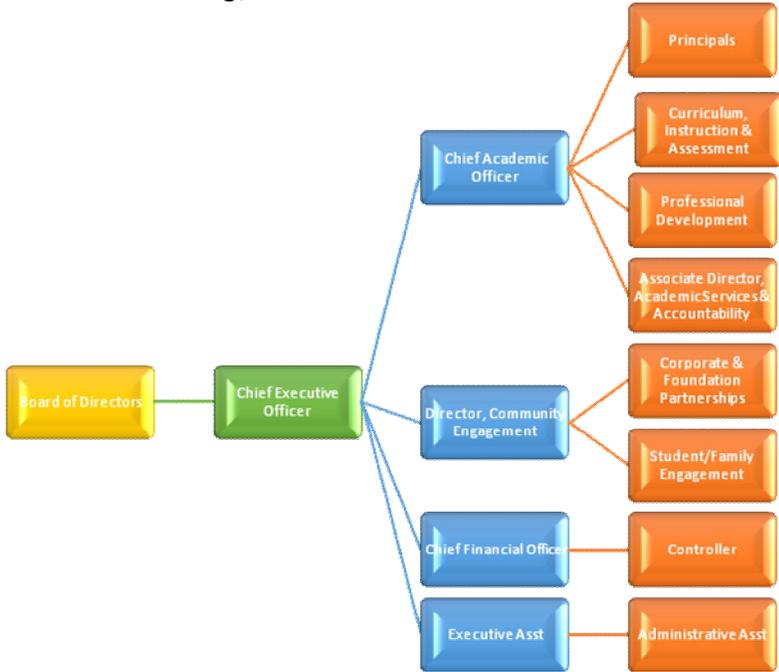
milestones for project tasks, (2) A proven business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of the new and substantially expanded schools, (3) A sound multi-year financial and operating model, with demonstrated commitment and support from key stakeholders, (4) A plan for closing charter schools, if needed, that do not meet high standards of quality, and (5) Highly qualified personnel, with successful experience managing projects of this size and scope.

1. Strong Management Plan - NACA Structure and Institutional Capacity

As evidenced in the 12 years' of effective management and strong academic performance, NACA has developed a highly effective network configuration which provides individual school sites and leaders with the autonomy to lead their schools supported by a central office in providing critical support in key functional areas to ensure efficient and effective instruction and operations.

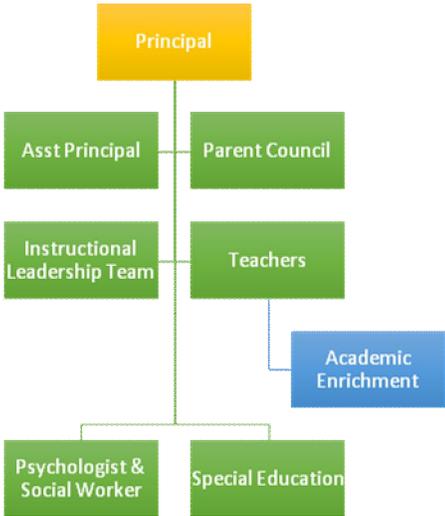
NACA's Central Office provides support in finance, operations, community engagement, and achievement. The Organizational Chart below provides an overview of the Central Office roles and key functionalities. With this support, NACA Principals are able to focus on serving as instructional leaders in support of student achievement.

Table 3.1 Central Office Organizational Chart – Horizontal Leadership (Shared Decision-Making)



At the school site level, NACA administrators are able to dedicate themselves and their expertise to instructional leadership, nurturing relationships with students and their families, and creating innovative ways to meet students’ social and emotional needs by linking them with community resources. This is achieved by providing them with site-based resources and staff supports that facilitate autonomy where it matters - in the classrooms. The following School Organizational Chart illustrates some of these supports.

Table 3.2 School Site Organizational Chart



2. Business Plan

Freedom and Democracy Schools Inc.’s Senior Management Team developed a multi-year Strategic Plan that provides institutional direction, accompanied by a multi-year Business Plan that allows NACA schools to maintain and grow within our network while ensuring strong operations, high-quality programs, and financial stability. Key areas of this plan are: finances, operations, community engagement, and student achievement.

Finances- NACA schools are funded exclusively by state and federal revenues. We dispel the myth that public charter schools must enjoy substantially larger budgets than their traditional counterparts by regularly receiving large, discretionary grants from private philanthropists in order to operate. NACA further dispels the popular urban legend that public charters operate to the fiscal detriment of their authorizing LEAs by taking much-needed State-appropriated revenues from local schools to provide private-like institutions for the children of well-to-do families. A review of our audited financial

statements (and enrollment demographics) illustrates that NACA is fiscally sound relying exclusively on federal and state funds while operating successfully for economically disadvantaged students **at half of the costs as our authorizing LEA.**

Our average per pupil expenditures of \$8,400 are *necessarily* half of the \$16,474 that BCPSS spends per pupil because that is all BCPSS allocates for and sends to its charter schools. Despite the more than \$16,000 that the State of Maryland sends to Baltimore City Public Schools for each student enrolled in the district – whether in a traditional, magnet or charter school – BCPSS sends roughly half of that amount to its charter schools to pay for faculty and staff salaries, buy students' books and other instructional materials, maintain facilities, purchase snacks and meals for after-school enrichment programs, train teachers, engage parents and conduct other necessary operations expected of traditional schools.

Because NACA also serves special needs students, additional revenues above and beyond basic per pupil are realized through the Federal program designated for students in Part B of IDEA.

NACA's Central Office works collaboratively with principals, site Instructional Leadership Teams and Parent Councils to project revenues, define needs, and allocate resources in a way that maximizes achievement and advances NACA's mission. The NACA Board of Directors meets regularly to review finances, approve expenditures, and monitor and approve budgets. In addition, they review internal control policies and require an independent audit on an annual basis. Please see *Appendix C: Supplemental Organization Budgets and Financial Information* for examples of a Three-Year Budget and Cash Flow Balance for a mature school within the NACA network and the 2015 Audit for NACA, as evidence of ability to maintain sound financial practice after the life of the grant. We have a proven track record of fiscal responsibility and educational excellence while

operating within the parameters of state and federal funding for general operations, a practice we will continue long after expansion/replication grant funds have been expended. Our budget model and financial plan ensure that our core educational program will operate exclusively with public funds (i.e. per-pupil allocations and federal and state entitlement grants) after the initial start-up replication costs, thereby freeing any additional funds raised beyond that to be used for enrichment programs and activities.

Operations: Human Resources, Governance, Compliance, and Facilities –

As indicated above, NACA cannot meet its mission without qualified personnel. The Central Office is instrumental in supporting individual school sites in identifying, attracting, developing, and retaining top talent. While individual schools have autonomy over their hiring practices, the targeted focus on Baltimore and surrounding areas allows NACA's Central Office to support these sites in initial recruitment efforts such as job posting, information sessions, and social media; gathering and screening of initial application materials; scheduling of interviews, performance tasks and demonstration lessons; and onboarding for successful hires.

In addition, the NACA Board of Directors and Central Office provide oversight and support in the areas of governance and compliance. Each individual school is authorized by the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) in accordance with Maryland State charter school laws. The Central Office supports individual school sites in meeting the reporting requirements to BCPSS, the State of Maryland, the Maryland State Department of Education, and any other programs within which the individual school participates.

Finally, facilities can be one of the largest obstacles in school start up. NACA's

Chief Executive Officer and Director of Community Engagement have a proven track record of leveraging relationships with community partners and local districts to secure long-term and affordable facilities for each of our schools. NACA I is currently housed in a building owned by one of our faith-based partners, the United Methodist Church. The secondary school is currently located on district-owned property. Our proposed replication, Ames-Sandtown Freedom and Democracy Elementary School (Ames-Sandtown), will occupy a local church-owned building until our faith-based partner completes construction of the new school edifice which will be leased to the CMO at slightly less than market rates.

Community Engagement

The Community Engagement Director and team support schools with their marketing, public relations, recruitment, and stakeholder engagement efforts. They also support schools in key elements of NACA's emergent College Success curriculum, including developing financial literacy and multi-year college curriculum (coursework) plans with families. This includes family field trips to college campuses with their children, assistance in completing college and financial aid (FAFSA) forms, and arranging social-emotional supports in the way of peer mentors on the college campuses.

Student Achievement

The Chief Academic & Achievement Officer and team provide organizational cohesion and direction for the curriculum and instructional program. This includes researching and disseminating best practices, analyzing data to inform school and network improvement efforts, supporting school and network professional development

efforts, and monitoring and further developing NACA's keystone "Advanced Character Development" and College Success Curricula in support of NACA's mission.

II. EXPANSION AND REPLICATION: Management Plan

Program Design – Goals, Activities and Performance Measures

Freedom and Democracy Schools, Inc. started with 113 K-2 students when it opened Northwood Appold Community Academy I (NACA I) in 2005. Among its goals was adequate expansion to encompass full-service K-12 schools by 2015-2016 so that it could send an average of 40 of its high school graduates from the inaugural cohort to college each year. As of this writing, NACA has succeeded in building the K-12 schools it envisioned, and has graduated 28 college-bound students. In this project and as a response to the more than 5,000 Baltimore students currently on waiting lists for registration at a high quality charter school, NACA proposes the addition of one elementary school through replication, the expansion of its flagship elementary school, and the expansion of its middle school. In addition to creating 534 new seats to meet increased demand, this project will ensure a more robust feeder pipeline for our academically rich college preparatory high school (slated to expand after this 5-year project period). As a result of this expansion/replication, a total of 924 of Baltimore's economically disadvantaged students will be achieving at the highest academic levels by the end of the project period in 2022.

Table 4. LOGIC MODEL: Expansion and Replication



In meeting the desired outcomes and making the subsequent intended impact on our communities, NACA’s Management Plan is based on two primary goals with multiple objectives (activities) and performance measures. These are supported with a multi-year timeline that outlines staff responsibilities for each of the goals and accompanying activities with projected deadlines. See Table 5 below.

TABLE 5. Project Goals, Activities and Performance Measures

Goal	Activities	Performance Measures
<p>Increase the NACA network of high quality schools in high need urban areas to meet growing community demand.</p>	<p>Expand NACA I (elementary) at 72 new seats for a total of 252 at existing K-5 school in East Baltimore’s Northwood Appold community -</p> <p>Replicate NACA’s elementary model for a total of 252 new seats in Ames-Sandtown neighborhood’s new K-5 site</p> <p>Both schools will feed into NACA’s middle school in Baltimore</p>	<p>324 new students from all sections of Baltimore City attend NACA’s high-quality operationally sound and financially stable elementary schools as measured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High academic performance on State, district and school measures, including but not limited to PARCC exams¹⁷, project exhibitions, avg. daily attendance, and low expulsion & suspension rates • Annual budget audits
<p>Extend the elementary to middle school pipeline to ensure early preparation for college and career opportunities.</p>	<p>Expand enrollment in NACA’s extant elementary school by 72 new students</p> <p>Replicate NACA’s elementary model at 252 seats for new site in Sandtown¹⁸ that will feed into NACA’s middle school for a total of 324 new seats at the elementary level in Baltimore</p>	<p>Two NACA elementary schools in Baltimore serving a total of 504 students (324 new seats added to existing 180)</p> <p>An expanded NACA middle school serving a total of 420 students, of which 210 are new seats (added onto extant 210)</p>

¹⁷ In this instance, NACA defines “high academic achievement” as 96% or more of its students achieving ‘proficient’ or ‘advanced’ on the PARCC State assessment in Reading and Math for grades 3 through 8 after two consecutive years’ enrollment in a NACA school. Additionally, NACA defines success for this measure as 98% average daily attendance, 98-100% grade promotion rates, and less than 3% annual suspension and less than 1% annual expulsion rates.

¹⁸ Please see the “Replication School – Sandtown” section on page 48 for a more detailed description of the Ames-Sandtown project.

Timeline - NACA’s strategic plan requires a five-year timeline for successful implementation of this project, including staggered periods for planning and execution of each new and expanded school as seen in the chart below. Please note that the light yellow shaded areas indicate activity for expansion and the pale peach shaded areas indicate replication activity. Also note that for the purposes of this application each project year begins August 1 and ends July 31. Adjustments can/will be made to project year start/end dates if necessary upon grant award (e.g., September 1 start and August 31 ending time).

Table 6. Expansion and Replication Timeline

		Year 1 2017-18		Year 2 2018-19		Year 3 2019-20		Year 4 2020-21		Year 5 2021-22		
		Grades	Seats	Total Seats								
NACA I Elementary	Expansion 180 existing	K-5	30	K-5	42	K-5	0	K-5	0	K-5	0	252
Ams-Sandtown NACA Elem	Replication	K-5	0	K-2	126	3	42	4	42	5	42	252
NACA Middle Sch	Expansion 210 existing	6-8	0	6-8	0	6	70	6-7	70	6-8	70	420
Total Seats			420		588		700		812		924	924
Total New Seats			30		168		112		112		112	504

NACA’s comprehensive management plan will ensure the proposed project is completed on time, within budget and at the highest levels of quality. The program will be managed by the NACA Central Office in collaboration with Site Leaders, including Teacher-Leaders from the Instructional Leadership Team and Parent Representatives from the Parent Council. The following chart summarizes program activity, responsible personnel and timelines.

Table 7. Management Plan

Task	Milestones	Person Responsible	Time-line	PY 1	PY 2	PY 3	PY 4	PY 5
CMO Capacity Building								
Grant Administration	Train staff involved in grant administration	CEO, CFO, CAO	Sept – Dec	CO				
	Provide ongoing PD in financial and grant management	CEO, CFO, CAO	Jan, May	CO	CO	CO	CO	CO
	Submit annual reports to USDOE	CEO, CFO, CAO	June	CO	CO	CO	CO	CO
New and Expanding Schools								
Staffing	Create job postings and distribute widely	CEO, SP, HRA	Jan Aug	CO, AS NE	AS M2	AS M2	AS M2	AS M2
	Screen candidates	HRA, SP	Aug April	NE	AS M2	AS M2	AS M2	AS M2
	Hire principal for following AY	CEO, CAO	Aug	AS				
	Hire office staff for following yr	CEO, SP	Jan	AS				
	Hire teachers for following Academic Yr	CEO, CAO, SP	Jan – April	NE	AS M2	AS M2	AS M2	AS M2
	Complete HR Processing	HRA	May -Jun	NE	NE AS M2	AS M2	AS M2	AS M2
	Planning year with extensive PD for school leader	CAO, SP	Aug – July	AS	AS M2	AS M2	AS M2	
	Pre-opening PD for new staff	CAO, SP	Aug	NE	NE AS	AS M2	AS M2	AS M2
	Year-long PD planning	CAO, SP	Aug	AS	AS M2	AS M2	AS M2	

Develop and institute enrollment plan, including community outreach and communication across subgroup constituencies	DCE, CCE, SP	Aug – Feb	AS NE	NE AS M2	NE AS M2	NE AS M2	NE AS M2
Hold lottery and mail acceptance letters	DCE, CCE, SP,	Mar	AS NE	NE AS M2	NE M2 AS	NE AS M2	NE AS M2
Hold enrollment meetings and registration	DCE, CCE, SP,	Apr -	NE AS	NE AS M2	NE AS M2	NE AS M2	NE AS M2
Negotiate lease for new or additional space	CEO, CCE, DCE, CFO	Aug – Jan	NE AS	NE AS M2			
Complete tenant improvements	CEO, CFO	Jan – Jun	NE AS	AS M2			
Furnish and outfit classrooms	CFO, CEO, SP	Aug	NE AS M2	AS M2	AS M2		

Key	
CEO = Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director	CO = Central Office
CAO = Chief Acad/Achiev Officer	AS = Ames-Sandtown (Elem replication)
OP = Chief Executive Officer	M2 = Victoria Jackson Gray (NACA II) Middle School
CFO = Chief Financial Officer	Expansion
DCE = Director of Community Engagement	NE=NACA I (Elementary Expansion)
HRA = Human Resources Assistant	
SP = Site Principal	

STAFFING:

Professional Development, Coaching and Evaluation to Ensure High Quality Staff

Ongoing professional development of the highest quality is essential to ensure NACA’s instructional model is implemented with fidelity. NACA aims to recruit, train, support and retain outstanding teachers and staff who are experts in content

knowledge, pedagogical content skills, proficient in diverse teaching strategies, and most importantly, love children and adolescents. NACA is committed to creating new and challenging opportunities so staff can fully employ their talents and improve their skills. Our professional development targets two vitally important stakeholder groups:

- **Supporting School Leaders** - Site administrators play a vital role in setting the direction for successful schools. Principals and Assistant Principals derive substantial benefit from meeting with their peers in learning communities structured to enhance their knowledge about effective instruction. NACA devotes quality time to strengthening the skills of our site leaders by holding an annual summer Administrative Retreat, scheduling monthly Administrative Meetings, and providing weekly one-on-one coaching from the Chief Academic Officer's Curriculum & Instruction Team.
- **Developing Great Teachers and Instructional Assistants** – NACA's teachers and instructional aides receive professional development on an ongoing basis and through a variety of structures. These include but are not limited to 12 days of Professional development, before, during, and after the school year; weekly Early Release for Professional Development; flexible release time to facilitate peer observation and collaborative instructional and curricular planning; and on-going coaching sessions with a site administrator, Induction Coach and/or content specialist.

NACA's staff evaluation system is based on goals set by individual employees in collaboration with their immediate supervising manager. For teachers, this entails three formal principal or vice principal observations each semester of classroom practice with pre- and post-observation briefings to discuss instructional objectives of the

unit lessons, teaching strategies and student progress in attaining the articulated goals, and unspecified number of informal observations by site and Central Office administrators. The Maryland Teacher Evaluation protocols, aligned with NBPTS and Danielson Frameworks, determine the degrees to which teachers have met their targeted domains within the course of the year.

Managers are evaluated by a panel comprised of NACA's Chief Executive Officer, a BCPSS Administrator, and feedback submitted via anonymous surveys from teachers, parents and school site staff. Site managing instructional leaders (principals and vice/asst principals) are assessed on how well they provide regular constructive feedback, whether or not they follow up on commitments to students, faculty and the community, and how often and how well they provide opportunities for diverse opinions/solutions to be heard and implemented. In short, their overall evaluation is based on whether or not and to what extent they contributed to NACA's instructional mission and students' academic achievement.

REPLICATION SCHOOL: Ames-Sandtown

The Sandtown neighborhood is located in West Baltimore and is most recently known for the violent protests following the death of Freddie Gray in 2015. Once considered "Baltimore's Harlem" due to frequent performances by Billie Holiday and Cab Calloway, Sandtown is now one of the city's poorest neighborhoods with more than 34% of its residents living below federal poverty levels, 20% of working-aged adults unemployed and 32% of its housing abandoned. NACA's leadership has been working with a consortium of Sandtown residents, community leaders, business owners and city leaders for the past 8 months in planning a comprehensive neighborhood pre-K through 12 school and community center.

Sound Multi-Year Financial and Operating Model with Stakeholder Support

NACA requests \$1,506,200 over five years for the grant activities described in this application and further detailed in the budget and budget narrative. All of these funds will be used at the school site level to open one new elementary school (Ames-Sandtown), and expand the existing elementary and middle schools. This includes grant funds to be utilized by the NACA Central Office to build upon its existing infrastructure and expand its capacity to (1) benefit the extra seats being created by coordinating Central Office support in each functional area of support, and (2) enhance program data and evaluation protocols while overseeing implementation and financial management of grant funds.

Beyond the grant period, schools will continue to be operated locally with support from NACA's Central Office. All of the operating expenses will be covered by state and federal public revenue, with targeted fundraising to support select expenses such as student enrichment and family college prep education (e.g., workshops, parent-student fieldtrips to college campuses, etc).

Stakeholder Support – NACA has received enthusiastic support from key partners since it opened more than 11 years ago. Their engagement is critical to our success to date, and will undoubtedly prove crucial in our ongoing success. These include:

- The families and students of Baltimore City, who attend NACA schools and help guide our process of continual improvement through participation on student and family site leadership councils.
- The NACA Board of Directors, who volunteer their knowledge and expertise in continuing to further our mission.

- Baltimore City Public Schools, NACA's charter authorizers and district of residence, with whom NACA collaborates in an effort to improve educational outcomes for educationally disadvantaged youth as described in earlier narrative.
- Baltimore's institutions of higher education and education departments, who inform the NACA model and share its commitment to first-generation college completion. This includes Johns Hopkins University, Morgan State University, Coppin and Towson State University.
- Our community partners: Good Samaritan Hospital, The United Methodist Church, St. Matthew Roman Catholic Church, The Family Tree Family & Social Services, Inc., Faith Presbyterian Church, Northwood-Appold United Methodist Church, Little Flowers Early Childcare Education Center, Ames United Methodist Church, and the Board of Child Care of the United Methodist Church, Inc.

Each of these groups has been engaged - and will continue to be engaged - in the NACA strategic planning process through surveys, interviews, focus groups, committee work, and expert guidance. NACA continues to engage and leverage stakeholders in an effort to grow and maintain the high-quality schools our students, parents and communities demand and deserve. Please see *Appendix C: Letters of Support* for a selection of letters from key stakeholders.

Plan for Closing Non-Performing Schools

NACA expects every school in its network to succeed. Multiple data are collected and analyzed to develop baselines and measure growth toward meeting

high standards. In the rare, yet to occur scenario that a NACA-initiated and supported school does not meet these standards, multiple steps are taken immediately to rectify the failures before closing the school.

NACA maintains a proactive stance in ensuring high-quality within its schools. The Central Office personnel provide targeted expertise, support, and coaching to schools in the key functional areas of Curriculum and Instruction, Data Analysis, Community Engagement, Human Resources, Finance, and Facility Management. Professional Development for individual school sites and school leaders, is data-driven and designed to address needs based on previous successes within specific school sites and across the network.

Should a school in the network struggle to meet these standards, NACA provides increased interventions to support improvement efforts. This includes increased time on-site by Central Office staff aligned to the area of need. For example, a school with low academic achievement would receive additional support from the Chief Academic/Achievement Officer in the areas of instructional design, data analysis, student and/or peer observation, feedback, and evaluation. Likewise, a school with low enrollment would receive additional support from the Director of Community Engagement. Support is on a case by case basis, with interventions aligned to a specific area of need.

Should a school be unable to improve despite these support efforts, NACA has established clear guidelines for school closure.

- The decision will be documented by official action of the NACA Board of Directors, identifying the reason and the entity responsible for closure-

related activities.

- Notification will promptly be made to the authorizing LEA, the retirement systems in which the school's employees participate, and the Maryland State Department of Education.
- Parents and students will be notified as soon as possible when it appears that school closure will be imminent and promptly if official closure action is taken by the Board of Directors. This notification will include information and assistance in transferring to another school and the transfer of school records.
- Parents will be provided with a certified packet of student information that will include the closure notice, grade reports, discipline records, immunization records, etc. For high school students, it will include completed courses and credits that meet graduation requirements and college entrance requirements.
- Final financial records will be prepared, with an independent audit completed within 6 months after the closure of the school by a qualified Certified Public Accountant to determine net assets or net liabilities.
- All assets of the School will remain the sole property of Freedom and Democracy Schools, Inc (also known as NACA) and shall be distributed in accordance with the Articles of Incorporation upon the dissolution of the non-profit public benefit corporation. Any assets acquired from the District or District property will be returned upon closure to the District. To the extent feasible, any assets of Freedom and Democracy Schools, Inc. will be liquidated to pay off any outstanding liabilities. All liabilities remain the responsibility of Freedom and Democracy Schools, Inc.

Evaluation Plan

NACA evaluates its instructional programs annually through quantitative and qualitative data analyses that occur quarterly through internal assessments and annually in a summative evaluation using external measures. This cycle of ongoing inquiry is intended to ensure consistently high quality in all areas of operation. Toward that end, formative and summative evaluations are designed to:

1. Identify program strengths and their underlying practices so as to replicate them in other classrooms and schools as appropriate;
2. Identify challenges and their possible causes in order to remediate any problems that may arise and allocate resources as necessary; and
3. Inform goals, action plans and measures for all stakeholders at the classroom, school and CMO levels.

To measure the effectiveness of this project, NACA will conduct a quasi-experimental evaluation of all its schools to inform future practice and design. The following chart summarizes data to be collected and analyzed as aligned with measurable performance objectives.

Table 8. EVALUATION PLAN – Data Tools and Objectives Measured

Data Tool & Purpose	Grade & Timeline	Analysis & Use	Performance Objective
PARCC – Provide criterion-referenced data on mastery of grade level standards and growth over time	3-8 ELA, Math 5/8 Science Annually	Data are disaggregated by subgroups Data are used to guide curriculum design, determine instruction, intervention and enrichment programs and support individualized learning	94% of all students, regardless of subgroup designation, achieve at the Proficient and Advanced levels (at or above grade level) of understanding in Reading & Math for all students, and Science (5 th and 8 th graders)

Attendance, Discipline, Mobility and Drop-Out Rate – Indicators of requisites for a healthy, positive learning environment	K-8 Ongoing	Determines behavioral interventions for students Determines family-level and/or group level interventions needed to maintain excellent attendance Determines professional development and coaching needs for staff.	98% Attendance >3% Suspensions >1% Expulsions >1% MS dropout
PBL products scored against appropriate rubrics – Provide data on the depth of students' understanding and mastery of subject matter content	K-8 Science, Social Studies Annually	Data exhibit student mastery of CCSS & NGSS Informs instructional program	94% of all students achieving proficient or advanced on rubrics for each of the projects

To ensure timely modification of program services and/or activities, data collection and analysis occur on an ongoing basis and in alignment with the following milestones and their targeted completion dates – based on the project component being assessed – so that adjustments can be made as needed.

Table 9 - PROGRAM EVALUATION TIMELINE

	Responsible	Timeline	PY1	PY2	PY3	PY4	PY5
Administration of internal and external academic assessments	CAO, SP	Sept, Dec, Mar, June	NE	NE MS	NE AS (3 rd grade) MS	NE AS MS	NE AS MS
Administration of climate surveys	CAO, SP	Jan, May	NE	NE AS MS	NE AS MS	NE AS MS	NE AS MS
Collection of all data (attendance, enrollment, test scores, etc)	CAO	Oct., Jan, Apr, July/Aug.	NE MS	NE AS MS	NE AS MS	NE AS MS	NE AS MS

Analysis of Fiscal Health	CEO, CFO	Sept, Dec, Mar, June	NE MS	NE AS MS	NE AS MS	NE AS MS	NE AS ME
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Key	
CEO = Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director	CO = Central Office
CAO = Chief Acad/Achiev Officer	AS = Ames-Sandtown (Elem replication)
OP = Chief Executive Officer	MS = Victoria Jackson Gray (NACA II) Middle School
CFO = Chief Financial Officer	Expansion
DCE = Director of Community Engagement	NE=NACA I (Elementary Expansion)
HRA = Human Resources Assistant	
SP = Site Principal	

Qualifications of Key Personnel

NACA’s Chief Executive Officer, Senior Management Team, and School Site Principals will each play an integral role in the replication and expansion of NACA schools as detailed in this project. They bring a depth of experience in support of NACA across the sectors of educational program, data and assessment, college and career readiness, student services, community engagement, finance, development, and fundraising.

Together, these members have a proven track record of operating NACA in support of its students for the last 12 years. They have successfully grown the NACA network from one to three schools and hold the relevant training and expertise necessary to ensure that this next phase of growth - replication of a new elementary school along with expansion of the existing middle school and elementary school - is completed on time, within budget, and at a high level of quality. They have the demonstrated ability to successfully operate and manage these new and substantially expanded schools during and beyond the grant period. These members are as follows:

Dr. Cecil Conteen Gray is the founding **Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer** and has several years' experience in program management, having served as a consultant at local national and international levels in various industries. His areas of expertise include curriculum design, educational instruction, and multicultural/international pedagogies. As CEO, Dr. Gray is responsible for organizational leadership and strategy, resource development and financial management, community outreach and collaboration, and meeting the mission. Prior to founding NACA, Dr. Gray taught African and African American Studies at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania. He holds a Ph.D. from Temple University in African Studies; Master's of Divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary, and BA from The University of Virginia.

Dr. Julie Henderson, **Chief Academic Officer**, has more than 25 years' educational experience in bilingual and multicultural education as a classroom teacher, program administrator, charter school principal and school reformer. She holds a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction from Stanford University, MA in US History – also from Stanford, and a BS in Languages & Linguistics from Georgetown University. As CAO, Dr. Henderson is responsible for developing and monitoring goals, actions, and measures across the NACA network in support of student achievement. Prior to joining NACA, Dr. Henderson taught world languages in Washington DC, bilingual elementary school in San Jose, served as principal for a California dual immersion charter school which she co-founded, and was the founding director of Liberation Curriculum for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project at Stanford. She has authored and directed several federally-funded school redesign

programs, including district-wide bilingual and multicultural programs throughout California.

Gloria Billiups, **Chief Financial Officer**, oversees finance, accounting, and financial reporting and compliance. She came to NACA with 25 years progressive business and management experience in accounting and finance for operations ranging from start-up environments to fortune 500 corporations. Ms. Billiups holds a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from Morgan State University and CPA Certificate from the State of Maryland.

Ms. Veris Lee, **Director of Community Engagement**, ensures that NACA develops and sustains strong and lasting relationships with families, neighbors, community partners and alumni. Ms. Lee manages student recruitment, parent leadership and education, community outreach and government relations. Ms. Lee is one of our resident literacy experts with more than 45 years' experience, and frequently uses her expertise in mentoring new teachers in the myriad literacy pedagogies. Ms. Lee holds a Bachelor's of Science in Elementary Education, a Master's in Urban Education, and a Master's in the Teaching of Reading. She is certified as an Administrator in Education Policy with Emphasis on Planning and Administration as part of her doctoral studies.

Senior Executive Assistant, Mrs. Jean Mitchell, is a Morgan State University graduate and serves as NACA's Administrative Lead. She is supported by **Co-Executive Assistant**, Geneva Ferguson, who holds a Bachelor's in Arts Education, a Master's in Urban Education with emphasis on teaching 'at-risk' students, and is

certified as a Special Education Teacher. Ms. Ferguson is a Retired Special Educator from the Baltimore City Public School System.