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## Absolute Priorities

### Absolute Priority 1 – Experience Operating or Managing High-Quality Charter Schools

#### Background and History of Propel Schools

Propel Charter Schools (“Propel”) is a network of 10 not-for-profit public charter schools operating as eight (8) LEA’s and serving 3,000 K-12 students in economically disadvantaged areas in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and surrounding areas. Propel’s mission is to catalyze the transformation of public education so that all children have access to high performing public schools. This mission is pursued by opening and operating high-quality schools of choice in educationally underserved communities, filling a community need for a quality school option where they are otherwise not available. Propel does not accept the premise that poverty or personal circumstance determines educational performance or life outcome. Across Propel’s schools, 77% of students are eligible for the Federal free/reduced price lunch program, 75% are a minority, and 16% have special needs.

Propel has become one of the larger charter management organizations in Pennsylvania, and the only Charter Management Organization (CMO) in the Pittsburgh region. Propel also delivers superior outcomes measured in a variety of ways as will be detailed in the proposal herein. Propel has become both a regional asset and a national model, providing measurable evidence of how innovative public schools can expand opportunity for children and families.

Propel’s first school opened in 2003 with 170 children occupying a small hospital basement. As of 2016, more than 3,600 K–12 students are educated at one of eight (8) Allegheny County locations. Table 1 lists Propel School locations and the grades served.

**Table 1. Propel Schools – Allegheny County**

1. Propel Homestead (grades K-8)	6. Propel Hazelwood (grades K-5)
2. Andrew Street High School (grades 9-12, located in Munhall)	7. Propel McKeesport (grades K-8)
3. Braddock Hills Elementary (grades K-8)	8. Propel Montour (grades K-8)
4. Braddock Hills High School (grades 9-12)	9. Propel Northside (grades K-8)
5. Propel East (grades K-8, located in Turtle Creek)	10. Propel Pitcairn (grades K-8)

Propel parents rate the schools highly and students are succeeding, so it is not surprising that more than 3,000 children and families are on Propel's waiting lists. To accommodate the growing demand, Propel proposes to build on its substantial successes and expand two of its schools to serve more children. Propel Montour, now serving 400 students in grades K-8, will expand to add grades 9 through 12 and increase enrollment by 565 students and Propel Northside, now serving 420 students in grades K-8 will expand its facility space to serve 205 additional students.

### **Absolute Priority 2 – Low-Income Demographic**

Propel Schools has consistently served a predominantly low-income student population from its inception and by intention. Across the network 77% of students are eligible for the federal free or reduced price lunch program. Some of the Propel's schools have a higher rate of low-income students such as Propel Hazelwood with 89% of the students identified as low income. Even the school with the smallest low-income rate, Propel East, still exceeds the low-income threshold of 60% with 62% of students eligible for the Federal free or reduced lunch program. The two schools proposed for expansion, Propel Montour and Propel Northside have 66% and 81% respectively of low-income students, meeting the required threshold for the Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools Grants competition.

### **Competitive Preference Priorities**

#### **Competitive Preference Priority 2 – Promoting Diversity**

##### **(a) Promote student diversity, including racial and ethnic diversity, or avoid racial isolation.**

Propel has deliberately sought to create racially and ethnically diverse student bodies at its schools. Because the Pittsburgh region lacks a significant Latino population, this has meant striving to open and maintain schools where neither white, nor African American students, constitute more than 80% of the student body. Overall, African Americans compose 65% of the Propel student body; whites the remainder. Propel considers 8 of its 10 schools to be diverse by the aforementioned definition. This includes considering both geographic access and perceptions of safety (which can vary greatly among

white and black parents). Secondly, Propel purposely markets its schools through churches, door-to-door, and community events in both white and black communities. Finally, Propel makes conscious efforts to ensure that its education program is appealing and responsive to both white and black families. For example, in selecting books for literacy instruction, deliberate efforts are made to include authors that reflect the diversity of the school. In selecting partners for Propel's arts program (about half of which is delivered with community partners), Propel includes African American drumming, Asian martial arts, and traditional musical theatre.

The demographic distribution of the Propel Schools network has remained notably consistent throughout its history. The two schools identified for expansion serve different populations - Propel Montour where 63% of students are white and Propel Northside where 80% of students are African American. Propel achieves diversity by locating schools in communities where both white and black families are comfortable sending their children. The expansion of both of these schools in the western side of Pittsburgh will balance the demographic trends and continue to support the historic diversity across Propel. The Propel Schools network also has seen a slight increase in the percent of students classified as economically disadvantaged. The percent of students eligible for the federal free or reduced lunch program in the 2010-2011 school year was 74% and the percent of eligible student in the 2015-2016 school year rose to 77%. The two schools slated for expansion, Propel Montour and Propel Northside, have remained generally consistent at 65% and 80% respectively. Students and families living in poverty have diminished exposure to life experiences, in addition to the challenges present in higher poverty communities. Propel sees this isolation as one of the defining challenges of poverty and has made reducing that isolation a central part of its decisions concerning school location, marketing and programming.

#### Approach to Supporting and Promoting Diversity

Propel Schools is committed to creating and sustaining diverse students and family communities in our schools. Diverse communities that span racial and ethnic groups, economic diversity and lived experiences contribute to the learning and growth of all students and families.

The design of Propel's expansion project is to grow enrollment at both Propel Montour and Propel Northside by expanding the facilities for both schools. Both Propel Montour and Propel Northside have diverse student bodies. Thirty-eight percent of Propel Montour students identify as African American and 10% of the student body identifies as having multiple racial or ethnic heritage. Seventy-eight percent of students at Propel Northside identify as African American and nearly 10% of students at Propel Northside identify as having multiple racial or ethnic heritage. Propel Montour and Propel Northside also have notable economic diversity with 66% and 81% (respectively) of students meeting the criteria for being economically disadvantaged as outlined by the free and reduced lunch program.

The diversity that is present in the schools identified for expansion, and across the Propel Schools Network, is essential to the school's model and success. This critical component of Propel's mission is continually curated through three (3) systems that support the benefits that flow from a diverse student body. The first system is the intentional placement of Propel schools in locations that are in close proximity to diverse communities. For example, the proposed site of the Propel Montour expansion is central to the higher poverty McKees Rocks community and the more affluent Robinson Township community. The diversity of the schools is facilitated by the Pennsylvania law that provides free bussing for any student who resides in a district within ten miles of the district where they desire to attend school. This legal benefit of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania enables Propel students to travel from all over Allegheny County and beyond to attend schools whose diversity reflects the values and mission of the Propel School Organization. The second component of Propel's commitment to diversity is our intentional focus on culturally relevant pedagogy in Propel programming. Propel Schools has multiple programs that are geared towards including experiences and curricular models that address the diverse and culturally distinct communities that are a part of the larger school community. These programs may take the form of the Arts, such as our ongoing collaboration with the Civic Light Opera or Hip-Hop On Lock, or they may be based in the community such as our Braddock Urban Beekeeping project or the Propel Northside Urban Outdoor classroom. The third component of the Propel Schools' commitment to diverse and engaged school communities is the ongoing targeted and focused recruitment activities

undertaken throughout the network. Propel's marketing and recruitment efforts, from radio advertisements to bus shelter displays are structured and distributed to support the ongoing diversity and success of the Propel Schools model.

Expanding the Propel Montour K-8 school and the Propel Northside K-8 school to include grades 9 through 12 in each community will require Propel to build upon its existing intentional systems of school location, culturally relevant pedagogy, and community marketing and recruitment strategies to support the growth and community engagement for each of these schools.

**(b) Serve students with disabilities at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area.**

Propel serves students with disabilities at rates comparable to the state of Pennsylvania and surrounding school districts. Overall 16.1% of Propel students have Individual Education Plans (IEPs), a rate higher than Pennsylvania's at 15.6%, and within a few percentage points of the districts where the majority of Propel students reside. Pittsburgh Public School District has a special education rate of 17.6%, while Propel Northside, which is located in that district, has a rate of 16.7%. At Propel Montour, 12.8% of the student body has an IEP, a rate comparable to the Montour School District, where that charter school is located which has 14.1% of the student body with an IEP. The special education rates of the proposed expansion schools are both within 1.5% of the local school district where the Propel school resides.

**(c) Serve English learners at a rate that is at least comparable to the rate at which these students are served in public schools in the surrounding area.**

Propel has a very low population of English Language Learners (ELL) at .1%, and this rate is comparable to the schools in the surrounding area. In fact, there are only 2,000 ELL students among Allegheny County's 212,000 public school students (<1%). The remaining districts from which Propel Schools draws the majority of its students have modest ELL rates in line with the Propel Schools rates, including school districts surrounding Propel Montour. Only one of the districts from which Propel draws students (Pittsburgh Public) has more than 1% ELL at 3.1%.

## Selection Criteria

### (a) Quality of the eligible applicant

**(1) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which Propel Schools has demonstrated success in significantly increasing student academic achievement and attainment for all students.**

Propel Schools is committed to providing high quality schools for student from educationally disadvantaged communities. The teachers, leadership, families and communities of Propel Schools are committed to closing the achievement gap and the experience gap for our students. Propel has demonstrated consistent and effective results in providing students with opportunities for learning across academic, social and experiential disciplines, preparing them for college, career and life beyond high school. The narrative included in this proposal is focused on the results of Propel Schools' students on the most recently available data for student achievement at the local and state level. Propel Schools has a long track record of student results that is both consistent and strong. Propel Schools has consistently outperformed identified subgroups at the State and local level and has been able to provide a curricular model that enhances the career and college readiness of each Propel student.

Propel's track record of success is evident in the continuous achievement of Propel students above and beyond that of their peers in the school districts where they reside. Propel has been able to provide an opportunity for students from lower performing districts to increase their achievement by attending a Propel location, as students are more likely to succeed at a Propel school than in their home district. These sustained increases, in comparison to students' resident districts, are indicative of Propel's efficacy. Table 1 shows the performance of Propel students against a weighted (by relative contribution to Propel's enrollment) average of the performance of students attending the district schools where 78% of Propel's students reside (the remainder of Propel's enrollments is scattered among a dozen other districts). **In each of the last three years, Propel students have performed better on the Pennsylvania State System of Assessment (PSSA) than students in**

**district schools in both English Language Arts (ELA) and in Math.** For example, in 2012-2013, 61% of Propel students were proficient or advanced on the ELA PSSA exam compared to 49% of student in the resident districts. This Propel advantage persists in subsequent years. In 2014-2015 (2015-2016 data is not yet available), Propel students still have an advantage of +11 percentage points (48% vs. 37%) over those attending district schools. Not only is the advantage present in the aggregate, but **Propel students outperform students in every one of these districts in both ELA and Math in each of the last three years—even districts like Penn Hills which have a lower incidence of poverty than Propel (64% vs. 77%).**

Table 1: PSSA Proficient or Advanced-All Students						
	All Students-Math			All Students-ELA		
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
<b>Propel Schools</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>Resident Districts</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>37%</b>
Pittsburgh SD	58%	60%	25%	51%	52%	43%
Woodland Hills SD	57%	54%	22%	51%	52%	37%
McKeesport Area SD	53%	52%	22%	44%	45%	35%
Penn Hills SD	63%	57%	19%	51%	52%	38%
Sto-Rox SD	46%	35%	8%	43%	34%	17%
Steel Valley SD	61%	60%	24%	52%	55%	41%
Notes:	Resident Districts is weighted average of districts where 78.7% of Propel students reside					

These positive results are also present in earlier school years than those shown above and are also found in historically underperforming subgroups as well. In fact, Propel’s economically disadvantaged and African American students show an even larger advantage over their peers in district schools than the school population taken as a whole does. Table 2 shows the performance of the African-American subgroup over the last three years on PSSA state tests in both ELA and Math. **African-American students at Propel outperform their peers in the school districts in all three years in both ELA and Math.** For example, in 2012-2013, 67% of Propel’s African-American students were proficient or advanced on the math PSSA compared to 46% of their peers in the district schools. That Propel advantage continues in subsequent years. **Not only are African-American**

students performing better than peers in every one of the individual resident districts in each of these years, but they are also outperforming their peers statewide in all three years in both subjects. For example, in 2014-2015, the Propel advantage in ELA is +6 to the state (39% v 33%) and +14 percentage points to school districts (39% vs. 25%).

Table 2: PSSA Proficient or Advanced-African American Students						
	African American Students-Math			African American Students-ELA		
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
<b>Propel Schools</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>39%</b>
<b>Resident Districts</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>25%</b>
Pittsburgh SD	46%	49%	12%	38%	41%	29%
Woodland Hills SD	50%	47%	13%	40%	40%	28%
McKeesport Area SD	43%	40%	9%	30%	30%	20%
Penn Hills SD	55%	47%	10%	42%	42%	28%
Sto-Rox SD	35%	25%	5%	25%	19%	10%
Steel Valley SD	42%	36%	7%	33%	33%	18%
<b>State Wide</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>33%</b>
Notes:	Resident Districts is weighted average of districts where 78.7% of Propel students reside					

The performance of Propel’s Economically Disadvantaged subgroup is also very strong. Table 3 sets forth the performance of the Economically Disadvantaged subgroup over the last three years on PSSA state tests in both ELA and Math. **Table 3 shows that Economically Disadvantaged students at Propel outperform their peers in the school districts in all three years in both ELA and Math. Not only are Economically Disadvantaged students performing better than peers in every one of the resident districts in all three years in both subjects, but they are also performing comparably or better than their peers statewide as well.**

Table 3: PSSA Proficient or Advanced-Economically Disadvantaged students						
	Economically Disadvantaged students-Math			Economically Disadvantaged students-ELA		
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
<b>Propel Schools</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Resident Districts</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>30%</b>
Pittsburgh SD	51%	54%	18%	44%	46%	35%

Woodland Hills SD	51%	49%	16%	42%	42%	29%
McKeesport Area SD	48%	47%	17%	38%	38%	29%
Penn Hills SD	57%	51%	14%	44%	46%	31%
Sto-Rox SD	46%	34%	6%	36%	29%	15%
Steel Valley SD	50%	48%	16%	43%	43%	28%
<b>State Wide</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>42%</b>
Notes:	Resident Districts is weighted average of districts where 78.7% of Propel students reside					

Propel Schools has clearly demonstrated that it can achieve high quality academic results.

In considering the achievement of Propel Schools it is important to note that the state of Pennsylvania made the transition to their version of the Common Core Standards, the Pennsylvania Core Standards during the period for which data is provided. The advent of the new standards and the associated changes not only in curriculum, but also in the underlying pedagogy, had a notable impact on test scores across the state. The implementation of the Pennsylvania Core Standards included a realignment of the PSSA to reflect the new expectations and pedagogy. In the first year of implementation the state of Pennsylvania experienced a notable decline in both Math and English Language Arts scores. The year prior to the implementation, the percent of students (across Pennsylvania) scoring proficient or advanced in English Language Arts was 70% and the percent of students' proficient or advanced in Math was 71%. Following implementation, the percent of students scoring proficient or advanced in English Language Arts was 61% and the percent students scoring proficient or advanced in Math was 43%. These sharp decreases were experienced universally across the state of Pennsylvania in urban, rural and suburban districts. Additionally, the change in assessment coincided with general stagnation in the closing of achievement gaps throughout the commonwealth.

Propel Schools was not immune to the impacts of the changes in the standards and the associated state assessments. The performance of Propel students declined in English Language Arts and Math, in line with the trends in the state of Pennsylvania. In spite of these changes, Propel students continue

to achieve. Even when accounting for the generalized drop in scores throughout the state, our students are still outperforming their peers who attend district schools where the live.

To support the fact that Propel students are continuing to achieve in light of the changes to the standards and the assessments used in Pennsylvania, it is also valuable to consider an assessment which has not changed over the course of the past three years. Propel Schools is demonstrating consistent achievement on the North West Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) assessments in both reading and math, as shown in Table 4. The MAP is a nationally normed assessment used across the country and its accuracy and efficacy have been validated through numerous studies. Propel students have been taking the MAP assessment for many years and have demonstrated both within year and across year gains.

<b>Table 4. Propel Average NWEA MAP RIT Scores Snapshots</b>						
	<b>Math</b>			<b>Reading</b>		
	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	<b>2015-2016</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	<b>2015-2016</b>
Kindergarten-8th Grade	204.7	204.6	204.2	198.0	197.9	197.8
9th-12th Grades	227.0	227.0	230.0	219.8	219.8	218.2

**(2) (ii) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which there have not been significant achievement gaps between any of the subgroups of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA at the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant and to which significant gains in student academic achievement have been made with all populations of students served by the charter schools operated or managed by the applicant.**

Propel has demonstrated significant success in eliminating student achievement gaps in comparison to the State of Pennsylvania. These successes have been broad and sustained. At all grade levels in Mathematics, Propel’s African American students have not only closed, but also eclipsed the gap with African American students at the state level. In the most recent school year for which data is available, 6th and 8th grade African American students at Propel exceeded the levels of African American performance at the state level by 7%. These negative gaps are even stronger in English Language Arts with 8th grade Propel African American students outperforming

Pennsylvanian African American students by 15 percentage points. Students in 5th and 7th grade also exceeded the gap with state performance by 10 percentage points. African American students at Propel are clearly more likely to achieve than African American students in the State of Pennsylvania. Propel has succeeded not only in closing the performance gap with the state, but overcoming that gap to such a degree that African American students are more likely to succeed in a Propel school than in a Pennsylvania school.

Propel has established a consistent and notable track record in providing all students, students of color, and low-income students with an educational experience that produces better results than they would have experienced in their home district. Furthermore, Propel has a consistent record of demonstrating academic performance results for identified subgroups that are above those of the State of Pennsylvania, where all Propel schools are located. This trend is especially true for African American students. Table 5 shows that in all grade levels, Propel’s African American students have exceeded the achievement of African American students in the state of Pennsylvania for the past three years in mathematic achievement.

<b>Table 5. African American Student Mathematics Performance</b>				
	<b>Grade</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>
Propel	3	64%	56%	21%
State	3	52%	49%	19%
Propel	4	69%	64%	17%
State	4	52%	50%	15%
Propel	5	60%	53%	16%
State	5	40%	38%	14%
Propel	6	73%	63%	20%
State	6	48%	46%	12%
Propel	7	71%	60%	12%
State	7	53%	52%	10%
Propel	8	68%	60%	16%
State	8	50%	49%	9%

Propel has also demonstrated African American achievement in English Language Arts above that of African American achievement in the State of Pennsylvania with the exception of two grade levels over the past three years (See Table 6).

<b>Table 6. African American Student English Language Arts (ELA) Performance</b>				
	<b>Grade</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>
Propel	3	52%	49%	35%
State	3	49%	44%	37%
Propel	4	45%	55%	30%
State	4	40%	44%	31%
Propel	5	39%	39%	44%
State	5	33%	32%	34%
Propel	6	60%	47%	38%
State	6	41%	38%	32%
Propel	7	53%	61%	42%
State	7	45%	49%	32%
Propel	8	67%	67%	47%
State	8	58%	60%	32%

Propel’s Economically Disadvantaged students continue to achieve in all grade levels and in most of those, they consistently exceed the achievement of similar students in Pennsylvania. Tables 7 and 8 illustrate Propel’s ongoing success in supporting the achievement of Economically Disadvantaged students.

<b>Table 7. Economically Disadvantaged - Proficient and Advanced - Mathematics</b>				
<b>School</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>
Propel Schools	3	68%	60%	27%
Pennsylvania	3	63%	61%	30%
Propel Schools	4	75%	67%	20%
Pennsylvania	4	63%	62%	26%
Propel Schools	5	64%	56%	19%
Pennsylvania	5	52%	49%	24%
Propel Schools	6	73%	66%	20%
Pennsylvania	6	58%	57%	21%
Propel Schools	7	75%	60%	17%
Pennsylvania	7	62%	61%	16%
Propel Schools	8	64%	64%	20%
Pennsylvania	8	58%	58%	14%

<b>Table 8. Economically Disadvantaged - Proficient and Advanced - ELA</b>				
<b>School</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>
Propel Schools	3	57%	50%	41%
Pennsylvania	3	58%	55%	45%
Propel Schools	4	48%	59%	33%
Pennsylvania	4	49%	52%	40%
Propel Schools	5	46%	41%	49%
Pennsylvania	5	43%	42%	43%
Propel Schools	6	61%	52%	41%
Pennsylvania	6	48%	47%	42%
Propel Schools	7	59%	60%	45%
Pennsylvania	7	53%	56%	40%
Propel Schools	8	67%	68%	51%
Pennsylvania	8	62%	65%	39%

Propel students demonstrate especially notable achievement in the middle level grades. This is important as Propel Montour and Propel Northside middle level grades are the grade levels targeted for expansion. This is especially true in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade as Propel students complete 8<sup>th</sup> grade with significantly higher proficiency rates than their demographically-like peers across Pennsylvania. This data shows that Propel has successfully implemented its model across the Pittsburgh region and has been able to maintain its successes throughout the transition to the new PA Core standards and pedagogy. The continued agility of the network and the support that is offered to students, teachers, educational leaders, families and community members will enable Propel Schools to continue to succeed and provide high quality schools to even more students from educationally disadvantaged communities.

**(3) The degree, including the consistency over the past three years, to which applicant has achieved results (including performance on statewide tests, annual student attendance and retention rates, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates where applicable and available) for low-income and other educationally disadvantaged students served by the charter schools operated or managed by applicant that are significantly above the average academic achievement results for such students in the State.**

Propel has consistently been able to achieve positive results for students compared to students in the State of Pennsylvania across multiple measures. This is particularly noteworthy considering the fact that Propel Schools serves students from significantly higher poverty backgrounds and with greater racial and ethnic diversity than the state of Pennsylvania. The most recent School Performance Profile released by the Department of Education indicates that only 15% of Pennsylvania students identify as African American, while at Propel 67% of students identify as African American. Propel also has a higher percentage of students identified as economically disadvantaged. In the state of Pennsylvania 50% of students qualify as economically disadvantaged whereas at Propel, 77% of students qualify as economically disadvantaged. The rates in some of the schools exceed the state rate of 50% to an even greater degree. Propel McKeesport, Northside and Homestead all exceed 80% of the student body eligible for free and reduced lunch. All of Propel's schools exceed the Pennsylvania average percentage for African American students and Economically Disadvantaged students.

The demographic comparison between Propel and Pennsylvania illustrates the deep impact of Propel's success in academic and non-academic measures. Propel has consistently demonstrated that although it has a higher percentage of Economically Disadvantaged students, it is able to consistently achieve academic results that exceed those at the state level. This is especially notable for the middle school data, the grade levels targeted for expansion as proposed herein. Propel's 8<sup>th</sup> grade Economically Disadvantaged students have increased their out- performance gap in English Language Arts from 5% in the 2012-2013 school year to 12% in the 2014-2015 school year. In Mathematics, the same students have maintained a 5% or 6% out-performance gap in Mathematics. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade Economically Disadvantaged students at Propel have also demonstrated consistent out-performance of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade Economically Disadvantaged students in Pennsylvania. In English Language Arts, the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students have out-performed comparable students at the state level at a consistent 5% or 6% rate for the past three years. In Mathematics, the 7<sup>th</sup> grade students have maintained parity with state results over the last two years.

The performance trends are even more notable for African American students in the Propel Schools network. In English Language Arts, results for Propel’s African American students have consistently outperformed African American students in Pennsylvania and in the local district where nearly 80% of Propel students reside. Propel established schools such as Propel East, McKeesport and Montour have even more substantial margins of outperformance for African American students against the state and the students’ resident districts. In the most recent school year data, the veteran schools African American students outperformed the state by +24, +15 and +19 percentage points respectively. The comparisons to resident districts are even more striking with Propel overall outperforming the Sto-Rox School District by +29 percentage points and Propel Montour, where many students from Sto-Rox are, students outperform the district, by +38 percentage points.

The out-performance trends are present for Economically Disadvantaged students as well. Propel’s Economically Disadvantaged students have outperformed Economically Disadvantaged students in Pennsylvania and in all the school districts that make up nearly 80% of Propel’s enrollment every year over the past three years. As with African American students, the Economically Disadvantaged Propel students from established school have even higher rates of outperformance of both Pennsylvania and resident district peers. Propel Montour, site of one of the expansions outlined in this proposal, has consistently outperformed both Pennsylvania and all of the resident districts by +10 percentage points or more every year over the last three years. In English Language Arts, Propel demonstrated its ability to meet the needs of all students and provide educationally disadvantaged students with academic success greater than that found in their home district or elsewhere in Pennsylvania (See Table 9).

**Table 9. PSSA Proficient and Advanced Achievement by School  
English Language Arts (ELA)**

School	Black or African American			Economically Disadvantaged			All Students		
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
<b>Propel Schools</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>48%</b>
Homestead	45%	51%	39%	44%	49%	39%	46%	52%	41%

McKeesport	63%	59%	57%	64%	63%	59%	68%	62%	62%
East	65%	57%	48%	69%	61%	53%	74%	69%	60%
Montour	47%	55%	51%	62%	66%	58%	69%	73%	63%
Braddock Hills	53%	46%	31%	58%	46%	32%	61%	55%	38%
Northside	33%	43%	23%	33%	47%	26%	38%	50%	28%
Pitcairn	34%	42%	33%	43%	42%	36%	49%	51%	42%
Hazelwood	N/A	N/A	21%	N/A	N/A	27%	N/A	N/A	30%
<b>Resident Districts</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>State Wide</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>60%</b>

Notes:	The comparative school districts were chosen because 78.7% of Propel students come from these resident districts. The results for each year are a weighted average and reflect contribution to Propel enrollment.
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In Mathematics, results for Propel’s African American students have consistently outperformed African American students in Pennsylvania and in the local district where nearly 80% of Propel’s students reside. The 2014-2015 school year and the implementation of the new PA Core Standards and new PSSA did result in a decline in Mathematics performance, but African American students at Propel continue to outperform African American students in Pennsylvania and in the resident districts of Propel students. At Propel’s more established schools, the Mathematics performance is nearly double that of the state and resident districts.

The out-performance trends are present for Economically Disadvantaged students as well. Propel’s Economically Disadvantaged students have outperformed Economically Disadvantaged students in Pennsylvania and in all the school districts that make up nearly 80% of Propel’s enrollment every year over the past three years. The one exception, the economically disadvantaged student performance against that of Pennsylvania for the 2014-2015 school year is still on par with students across Pennsylvania while outperforming all of the resident districts. As with African American students, the economically disadvantaged Propel students from established schools have even higher rates of outperformance of both Pennsylvania and the resident districts. Propel Montour, site of one of the expansions outlined in this proposal has consistently outperformed both Pennsylvania and all the resident districts by +10 percentage points or more every year over the last three years. In

Mathematics as well as in English Language Arts, Propel demonstrated its ability to meet the needs of

all students and provide educationally disadvantaged students with success greater than that found in their home district or elsewhere in Pennsylvania (See Table 10).

**Table 10. PSSA Proficient and Advanced Achievement by School  
Mathematics**

	Black or African American			Economically Disadvantaged			All Students		
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
<b>Propel Schools</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>27%</b>
Homestead	64%	52%	9%	62%	50%	14%	65%	53%	14%
McKeesport	85%	83%	34%	86%	84%	37%	88%	83%	43%
East	68%	64%	28%	74%	72%	28%	80%	77%	40%
Montour	54%	52%	16%	71%	64%	26%	77%	72%	35%
Braddock Hills	74%	57%	13%	78%	59%	15%	80%	64%	21%
Northside	52%	55%	13%	52%	58%	16%	53%	61%	18%
Pitcairn	36%	34%	9%	52%	46%	13%	56%	54%	17%
Hazelwood	N/A	N/A	8%	N/A	N/A	7%	N/A	N/A	10%
<b>State Wide</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>Resident Districts</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>23%</b>

Notes:	The comparative school districts were chosen because 78.7% of Propel students come from these resident districts. The results for each year are a weighted average and reflect contribution to Propel enrollment.
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Although this gap has declined with the change to the new standards, and as Propel students and teachers continue to adjust to the new curriculum and pedagogy, Propel is confident that the out-performance gap will again rise to levels resembling the nearly 20% average out-performance gap in Mathematics prior to the implementation of the PA Core standards.

**(b) The contribution the proposed project will make in assisting educationally disadvantaged students served by the applicant to meet or exceed State academic content standards and State student academic achievement standards, and to graduate college- and career-ready.**

Propel is committed to assisting educationally disadvantaged students. In this application, Propel is proposing to take two strong schools that are already successful and expand the number of students in one, and create a high school option for the other. Propel Montour and Propel Northside will continue the effective efforts and positive results that Propel has demonstrated in founding, growing and sustaining high quality schools in diverse communities. Propel Montour and Propel Northside

will build upon the success of the Propel Schools network through two expansion strategies. First, the expansion of Propel Montour to include a 9-12 High School will establish a high quality secondary school in a community of high need and high diversity. Second, the expansion of Propel Northside to include a new middle school and reconfiguration of the existing K-8 school will support expansion in a community of high poverty and high rates of educational disadvantage.

The expansion of Propel Montour to include the addition of a high school establishes a new option at the center of part of Allegheny County that is notable for its diversity. Propel has identified a former public elementary school as the location for the new high school. It will be located at the junction of moderate and low-income communities. The proposed school is 4.8 miles from McKees Rocks, a community whose school district, Sto-Rox, classifies 61% of its students as economically disadvantaged. This is contrasted by the Mt. Lebanon School District, only 9 miles from the proposed location, which identifies only 10% of its students as economically disadvantaged. The Propel Montour high school is intentionally situated to provide opportunities to students from communities such as McKees Rocks to have the same high quality educational opportunities as students in the more affluent communities in Allegheny County. The current Propel Montour demographic profile mirrors the educationally disadvantaged districts like Sto-Rox. In fact, Propel Montour has a slightly higher rate of Economically Disadvantaged students at 63%. The new high school will draw primarily from Propel Montour's K-8 population, as it will be an extension of the existing charter. Therefore, the demographic profile for the new school will be in alignment with the existing Propel school located in this community. This expansion strategy will maintain the high performance and the high diversity profile present at the current Montour location.

The expansion strategy for Propel Northside is a response to a different community with different needs and therefore requires a distinct expansion design. The North Side community of Pittsburgh has a higher concentration of low-income families and a higher concentration of low performing schools than many of the more affluent neighborhoods in the City of Pittsburgh. The Pittsburgh Public Schools King K-8 school located on the North Side is one of the lowest performing school in

the City with a Title I: Priority designation and low ratings on the Pennsylvania School Performance Profile. The current Propel Northside school is attended primarily by students from the North Side of the City of Pittsburgh and almost exclusively from the Pittsburgh Public School District. The school is 74% African American and 77% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The expansion of Propel Northside, therefore, is focused on increasing the enrollment opportunities for students residing in this community. The expansion model will increase the number of classrooms per grade level from 2 to 3, enabling students in all grade levels a greater opportunity to attend a school with a 2013-2014 School Performance Profile ranked well above the 70-point threshold for positive school performance.

In comparison to the state of Pennsylvania, with the exception of two early grade levels, Propel's African American students have consistently outperformed African American students in the state. Even more indicative of the efficacy of the Propel model is All Propel students, Economically Disadvantaged students and African American students have continuously outperformed like groups in the districts where the majority of the students reside.

Additionally, Propel has demonstrated its efficacy in supporting students of all backgrounds with an education that provides them with an increased chance to experience successful post-secondary outcomes. With more students graduating from our high schools in recent years, Propel is increasing its post-secondary preparation and persistence programming. Propel's Beyond Propel Coordinator assists other school staff in working with current students and alumni to support them in college, vocational school, certificate programs and workplace pursuits. These efforts range from facilitating dual enrollment options, scholarship applications, career exploration and networking opportunities, honing job interview and internship skills, discussing effective ways to balance college and family responsibilities and others. As many of Propel's graduates will be first generation college enrollees, Propel seeks to provide information and support for students to promote their academic success in their new post-secondary learning and employment environments.

**(c) Quality of the project design**

**(1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified, measurable, and attainable.**

The project design of Propel’s Expansion Project is to expand two (2) of Propel’s existing K-8<sup>th</sup> grade schools. The two schools identified for expansion are Propel Montour, located in Kennedy Township, and Propel Northside, located in the City of Pittsburgh. Propel Montour was opened in 2007 and now successfully serves 420 predominantly low-income K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students who reside mostly in Pittsburgh’s western neighborhoods and in the immediately adjacent Sto-Rox School District. Propel Northside was opened in 2011 and now successfully educates 400 K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students most of who are from the City of Pittsburgh. The impetus for the expansion of these schools came from parents. Both schools consistently have very long waiting lists which are substantial enough to justify the expansion. In addition, parents at both of these schools have been vocal in advocating for a Propel high school option that is geographically convenient to them. Propel’s existing high schools are in the Mon Valley and are not feasible alternatives for most Northside and Montour families. The following is a description of the planned expansion activity for each school that will increase the availability of a high performing charter school education for students in need.

***Propel Montour:*** The plan is to increase enrollment capacity from 420 to 950 at Propel Montour by adding one classroom of students to each grade from Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade and adding grades 9-12 as detailed in the following table:

	<b>2015-2016 Capacity</b>	<b>Post Expansion Capacity</b>	<b>Change</b>
K-5	270	405	+135
6-8	150	225	+75
9-12	0	300	+300
Total Students =	420	930	+510

The expansion will be sequenced in a careful way that balances the likelihood of a successful outcome against the desire from parents for immediate growth in seats. In year one of the expansion (2017-2018), all of the proposed additional K-5 classrooms will be added. Also, the 9<sup>th</sup> grade will be added in the new high school allowing Propel Montour and Propel Northside 8<sup>th</sup> grade students a

higher quality option than enrolling in their low-performing district high schools. In subsequent years, grades 6-8 will expand as larger 5<sup>th</sup> grade groups move up, and grades 10-12 will be created in the high school as 9<sup>th</sup> grade students move up. The expansion will be complete in 4 years.

The expansion of Propel Montour requires a charter amendment which the charter authorizer (Montour Area School District) approved unanimously in December 2015. It also requires additional space. Propel is currently negotiating a lease with the School District for a school building that will provide the additional space the expansion requires. Grades 6-12 will be housed in the additional space; grades K-5 in the current space.

***Propel Northside:*** The plan is to increase enrollment from a capacity of 420 to 840 K-8<sup>th</sup> grade students by adding one classroom of students at each grade level. Again, expansion will be sequenced in a way that balances the likelihood of a successful outcome against the desire from parents for immediate growth in seats. See table below for results:

	<b>2015-2016 Capacity</b>	<b>Post Expansion Capacity</b>	<b>Change</b>
K-5	270	405	+135
6-8	150	225	+75
Total Students =	420	630	+210

In year one of the Propel Northside expansion (2019-2020), all the proposed additional K-5 classrooms will be added. In subsequent years, grades 6-8 will expand as larger 5<sup>th</sup> grade groups move up. The expansion of Propel Northside will be complete in 4 years. The school expects to lease additional space and plans use it to accommodate grades 6-8. Grades K-5 would remain in the existing building. Further detail on the objectives and measurable outcomes for the expansion project can be found in Application Requirements (a) on page 37.

**(d) Quality of the management plan and personnel**

**(1) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

Under the supervision of the very experienced and adept Project Director, the management plan for executing the expansion project at both Propel Montour and Propel Northside will include clearly defined activities to take place during each year of the grant period, and oversight by key Propel management staff to ensure that all activities are in conformance with the project objectives, outcome measures and performance measures, budget and timelines as indicated in Application Requirements (a) on page 37 of the proposal herein. This plan is based on past implementation and monitoring of expansion projects in the Propel network.

Financial oversight will be managed by Propel's Chief Financial Officer who will be accountable for resource allocation and all aspects of the budgetary management of Federal grant funds in accordance with funding guidelines and in compliance with Propel's long-term strategic financial model. Following are project timelines for the expansion of Propel Montour and the expansion of Propel Northside, the experienced project staff responsible for ensuring the management and completion of the activities, and the timeline for activities by quarter for each year of the 5-year project.

<b>Project Timeline: Expand Propel Montour</b>													
<b>ACTIVITY:</b>	<b>Responsible Person(s):</b>	<b>Activity Timeline:</b>											
		<b>Y1 Q1</b>	<b>Y1 Q2</b>	<b>Y1 Q3</b>	<b>Y1 Q4</b>	<b>Y2 Q1</b>	<b>Y2 Q2</b>	<b>Y2 Q3</b>	<b>Y2 Q4</b>	<b>Y3 Q1</b>	<b>Y3 Q2</b>	<b>Y3 Q3</b>	<b>Y3 Q4</b>
Secure charter modification	Executive Director	Already complete											
Secure additional facility	CFO, Director of Non-Instructional Operations	C											
Inform communities of enrollment opportunities and process; Outreach; Advertising; Application Lottery; Enrollment follow-up	Sr. Director Communications & Engagement	X	X	C									
Recruit/hire additional school leadership	Superintendent, Pod Director	X	C										
Recruit/hire staff	Pod Director, Principal	X	X	C									
Purchase equipment and materials for expansion	Superintendent, CFO		X	X	C								
Prepare buildings for student use (repurposing of existing building and additional facility)	CFO, Director of Non-Instructional Operations			X	C								
Orient staff and families	Principal				C								
First school year of expansion with first group of students at grade 9 and expansion of grades K-5.	Principal				X	X	X	C					
Second school year of expansion with first group at grade 10 and expansion of grade 6.	Principal								X	X	X	C	
Third school year of expansion with first group at grade 11 and expansion of grade 7.	Principal												X
Third school year of expansion with first group at grade 11 and expansion of grade 7.	Principal	X	X	C									
Fourth school year of expansion with first group at grade 12 and expansion of grade 8.	Principal				X	X	X	C					

Note: "X" indicates "in progress" and "C" indicates "completed."

Project Timeline: Expand Propel Northside													
ACTIVITY:	Responsible Person(s):	Activity Timeline:											
		Y1 Q1	Y1 Q2	Y1Q 3	Y1 Q4	Y2 Q1	Y2 Q2	Y2 Q3	Y2 Q4	Y3 Q1	Y3 Q2	Y3 Q3	Y3 Q4
Secure charter modification	Executive Director			X	X	C	X						
Secure additional facility	CFO, Director of Non-Instructional Operations					X	X	C					
Inform communities of enrollment opportunities and process; Outreach; Advertising; Application Lottery; Enrollment follow-up	Sr. Director Communications & Engagement									X	X	C	
Recruit/hire additional school leadership	Superintendent, Pod Director									X	C		
Recruit/hire staff	Pod Director, Principal									X	X	C	
Purchase equipment and materials for expansion	Superintendent, CFO										X	X	C
Prepare buildings for student use (repurposing of existing building and additional facility)	CFO, Director of Non-Instructional Operations											X	C
Orient staff and families	Principal												C
First school year of expansion at grades K-5	Principal												X
First school year of expansion at grades K-5.	Principal	X	X	C									
Second school year of expansion with expansion of grade 6.	Principal				X	X	X	C					

Note: "X" indicates "in progress" and "C" indicates "completed."

**(2) The business plan for improving, sustaining, and ensuring the quality and performance of charter schools created or substantially expanded under these grants beyond the initial period of Federal funding in areas including, but not limited to, facilities, financial management, central office, student academic achievement, governance, oversight, and human resources of the charter schools.**

Propel's business plan is dedicated to supporting the quality and performance of its schools and ensuring that each school developed and expanded is sustainable and continuously improved. Propel's leaders are experienced in disseminating its educational model, because each new Propel school since the first one, has been, in effect, a replication. Propel pays careful attention to effective transmission of its core principles and distinctive culture into each school, by ensuring teachers with previous Propel experience are transferred into a new school. Propel's leaders have amply shown their capacity to manage financial issues related to school startup and sustenance. They have carried out complex facility renovations and financing in conjunction with establishing all 10 school startups, demonstrating their ability to deliver a robust, inspiring educational program with successful academic outcomes, hiring, and retaining highly competent teacher contingents while relying fully on regular per-pupil funding levels.

The operational quality and performance of Propel Montour and Propel Northside will be sustained by the organization's boards and committees, closely monitored academic and financial performance, capacity of Propel's Central Administrative Office, facilities and other personnel including school-level management. Beyond the initial period of Federal funding, Propel Schools has confidence in the organization's shared common management and common governance that supports the consistent implementation balancing the needs of all schools within the Propel Schools network *(See Appendix G: 5-Year Financial Forecasts)*.

**(3) A multi-year financial and operating model for the organization, a demonstrated commitment of current and future partners, and evidence of broad support from stakeholders critical to the project's long-term success.**

Propel has a strategic long range financial model for its schools and network. This financial model is based on historical financial data and the recently adopted budget for FYE 2017 with each school separately modeled. The following is the Network Financial Projection for FYE 2017 through FYE 2021.

<b>Propel Charter Schools</b>						
<b>Network Projection</b>		<b>FY17</b>	<b>FY18</b>	<b>FY19</b>	<b>FY20</b>	<b>FY21</b>
		<b>Budget</b>	<b>Projected</b>	<b>Projected</b>	<b>Projected</b>	<b>Projected</b>
<b>Enrollment</b>						
Regular		3,202	3,424	3,556	3,813	3,945
SPED		593	631	649	692	710
	<b>Total</b>	<b>3,795</b>	<b>4,055</b>	<b>4,205</b>	<b>4,505</b>	<b>4,655</b>
<b>Revenue:</b>						
Regular Tuition		45,929,309	50,577,021	53,782,636	59,033,516	62,254,409
SPED Premium		8,511,361	8,791,983	8,776,686	9,092,014	9,500,087
Other Sources		3,211,440	3,758,391	3,093,691	3,562,005	3,327,947
<b>Total Revenue</b>		<b>57,652,110</b>	<b>63,127,395</b>	<b>65,653,013</b>	<b>71,687,535</b>	<b>75,082,442</b>
<b>Expenditures:</b>						
<b>Instructional</b>						
Regular Programs		26,614,635	28,816,148	30,207,621	32,798,549	34,415,224
Special Programs		8,224,905	8,790,849	9,206,670	9,855,713	10,378,262
Support Services		11,430,279	12,558,726	13,145,530	14,211,801	15,013,559
Building Operations and Maint.		7,917,129	8,792,598	8,982,980	9,703,589	9,967,574
Central Support Services		1,974,299	2,881,070	2,957,490	3,058,733	3,146,509
Other		878,518	885,251	933,804	983,092	999,689
<b>Total Expenditures</b>		<b>57,039,765</b>	<b>62,724,642</b>	<b>65,434,095</b>	<b>70,611,476</b>	<b>73,920,817</b>
<b>Net Surplus/(Deficit)</b>		<b>612,345</b>	<b>402,753</b>	<b>218,918</b>	<b>1,076,058</b>	<b>1,161,624</b>

The assumptions used in developing this projection are based on Propel’s experience in opening and operating charter schools. Financial assumptions were conservative with revenue growth at rates less than expense growth. The Projection shows a Net Surplus for FYE 2017 and throughout the 5 year period. Because the Business Plan for each new school is to be at financial break even or better within 2 years, Propel has used internally generated funds, debt, and prior CSP grant awards to support startup and operations of new schools. While substantial partner support for operations has not been needed, over our history, the foundation community has been a partner on capital needs including those providing letters of support for this proposal. (*Refer to Appendix C: Letters of Support*).

**(4) The plan for closing charter schools supported, overseen, or managed by the applicant that do not meet high standards of quality.**

While Propel does not anticipate that any of its schools will fail to attain improved student achievement, it already has a plan in place for cases of unacceptable performance. Constant interface with parents, rigorous review of student assessment data, regular meetings with teachers and principals, and annual evaluations are used to identify problems at an early stage. In the few cases where groups of Propel students have failed to achieve acceptable academic growth, suitable professional development and subject-area coaching has been provided; in some of those cases, teacher contracts were not renewed. Propel believes that dedicated professionals who remain faithful to Propel's educational model will produce, in most instances, students who are both academically and personally successful. Only after several rounds of staff changes that failed to produce better results would Propel begin to consider closure the best response to a school's difficulties in meeting quality standards.

**(5) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of the project director, chief executive officer or organization leader, and key project personnel, especially in managing projects of the size and scope of the proposed project.**

All Propel staff assigned to work on this expansion project have participated in prior Propel school's growth and have the educational background, training/ certification, and employment experience required to ensure effective implementation of the expansion of Propel Montour and Propel Northside. The expansion project staff identified have all been involved in the administration of federally-funded grant programs at Propel, including its 2010 award of this funding competition – the Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools Grant Competition. Key project personnel involved in the expansion of Propel Montour and Propel Northside include:

- **Project Director** - *Jeremy Resnick, Executive Director of Propel Schools Foundation*

Mr. Resnick is Executive Director of Propel Schools Foundation and is co-founder of Propel

Schools. Prior to starting Propel, he was a founder and the Administrative/ Educational Leader at

Northside Urban Pathways Charter School, a founder and Director of the Charter Schools Project at Duquesne University, founder and Director of the Steel Center Technical Academy, and a teacher in the Pittsburgh Public School District. Under Mr. Resnick's leadership, Propel Schools has grown to be a regional force in efforts to reform Southwestern Pennsylvania public education. Mr. Resnick continues to spearhead new initiatives at Propel and support the school's growth through planning and fundraising. His work has been recognized with a Pittsburgh Social Venture Partners' Social Venture Award and the Distinguished Individual Leadership Award from Coro Pittsburgh. \*\*\* Mr. Resnick holds a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics and his teaching certificate from the University of Pittsburgh. He is currently a Pahara-Aspen Education Fellow and a member of the Trade Institute of Pittsburgh's Board of Directors.

- **Superintendent** – *Tina Chekan, Ed.D., Superintendent/CEO, Propel Schools*

Dr. Tina Chekan serves as the Superintendent/CEO of Propel Schools and has overall responsibility for educating Propel's 3,600 students. Dr. Chekan began her career with Propel Schools in 2003 as a kindergarten teacher at the Propel Homestead site. Since then, she has served as a Literacy Coach, Principal, and Assistant Superintendent. Under her leadership as Principal of Propel McKeesport, she received three Effective Practice Incentive Community Awards from the national organization, New Leaders for New Schools. Prior to her career at Propel, she was a teacher in the Wilkinsburg School District and Behavioral Specialist at Pressley Ridge. \*\*\* Dr. Chekan holds a Bachelor's of Science degree in Elementary Education from Ball State University and a Master's of Education degree in Deaf Education from the University of Pittsburgh. She received her K-12 Principal Certification from Gannon University and doctorate in Administration and Policy Studies and Superintendent Letter of Eligibility Certificate from the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Chekan is a member of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum (ASCD) and recently received the Business Women First Award from the Pittsburgh Business Times.

- **Randall K. Bartlett, Jr., Ph.D.**, - *Senior Director of Teacher Residency, Research, Reporting and the Arts, Propel Schools*

Dr. Bartlett serves as Propel's Senior Director of Teacher Residency, Research, Reporting and the Arts has spent his professional career in education. He worked as a substitute and elementary level teacher in several New England schools. In 2007, after moving to Pittsburgh, Dr. Bartlett served as a principal at two Propel schools. Following a number of years in building level administration, Dr. Bartlett moved to the Central Office, serving as the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment and Data prior to his current position. \*\*\* Dr. Bartlett holds a Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership and Change from Antioch University, a Master's Degree in Education and his teaching certification from Antioch University, and a Bachelor's of Arts Degree in Religion and History from Oberlin College. He received his principal's license from Keene State College and recently completed service as President of the Board of Trustees for the Waldorf School of Pittsburgh. Dr. Bartlett currently serves on The Sprout Fund's Remake Learning Grant Committee and is an adjunct faculty at Chatham University for its Master of Arts in Teaching program.

- **Charles Daane** – *Chief Financial Officer, Propel Schools*

Mr. Daane serves as Propel's Chief Financial Officer and brings over 35 years of experience in the finance arena to this position. As CFO, Mr. Daane focuses his efforts on accounting and budget development, human resources and facilities, board finance and investment committee work, short and long-term planning and resource allocation. Prior to coming to Propel in 2015, Mr. Daane worked as a CFO for several entities including Breakthrough Charter Schools in Cleveland. His earlier career encompassed investment banking, strategic planning and healthcare finance consulting responsibilities. \*\*\* Mr. Daane holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Princeton University. He serves on the Boards of Judson Retirement and the Help Foundation, including their finance committees.

- **Teresa O’Neill, M.Ed.**, - *Pod Director, Propel Schools*

Ms. O’Neill serves as Propel’s Pod Director; she oversees the educational programming at five Propel schools, supervises Principals and Instructional Coaches, and fosters a collaborative, cohesive learning environment that promotes student achievement. Most of Ms. O’Neill’s tenure in education has been with Propel Schools, where she commenced working in 2004. After teaching at the elementary level for several years, Ms. O’Neill moved into positions as a Literacy Coach and Coordinator of Curriculum and Instruction, before assuming her current position. She also initiated the Propel Writing Program that helped improve PSSA scores and was part of Propel McKeesport Effective Practice Incentive Community program award winning leadership team. \*\*\* Ms. O’Neill received a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania; a Masters of Education from California University of Pennsylvania; and a District-Wide Supervisory Certificate in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Pittsburgh. Ms. O’Neill has also received certifications as a K-12 Reading Specialist and PA Instructional Level II, Elementary Education K-6.

- **Jamie Chlystek, M.Ed.** - *Pod Director, Propel Schools*

Ms. Chlystek currently serves as Propel’s second Pod Director; she oversees the educational programming at five Propel schools, supervises Principals and Instructional Coaches, and facilitates an educational setting that encourages academic achievement. She has been with Propel since 2004. Prior to that, she worked with children with special needs: as a special education teacher for students with autism for a local charter school; and as a Behavioral Specialist Consultant/Mobile Therapist for a local mental health service provider. At Propel, Ms. Chlystek was employed as a special education teacher at the elementary and middle school levels and a middle school English Language Arts teacher prior to her promotion to principal at Propel Montour. \*\*\* Ms. Chlystek received a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Pittsburgh and a Masters of Education in Special Education from Slippery Rock University. She also holds the following

certifications: K-12 Principal’s Certification from Edinboro University; and a Pennsylvania K-6 Certification in Elementary Education from the University of Pittsburgh.

**(e) Quality of the evaluation plan**

**The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data.**

Propel Schools has contracted the RAND Corporation to conduct an independent evaluation of the proposed expansion of two Propel schools. RAND is nonprofit, nonpartisan, and committed to the public interest. RAND Education rigorously evaluates a wide range of educational programs, measuring effects on student and staff outcomes and providing recommendations to help improve program design and implementation. RAND’s portfolio of educational program evaluations includes studies of summer and after-school programs, programs intended to reduce educational disparities, and choice- and standards-based reforms.

***Evaluation overview.*** The Propel expansion will increase the number of K-5 classrooms and students in established schools and relocate grades 6-8 to a new school. RAND will use quantitative analysis, including quasi-experimental methods, and qualitative approaches to evaluate whether Propel’s expansion meets three performance objectives: (1) maintaining the pace of learning for continuing students, (2) closing the achievement gap between new expansion students and continuing students, and (3) maintaining school culture and climate. The main evaluation design will leverage the 50% increase in the capacity of grades K-5 in two established Propel schools to provide high quality evidence on the potential for effective charter schools to be scaled up without harming students that are already enrolled and to successfully integrate new students. The specifics of this proposed analysis are the focus of the narrative that follows. As an additional analysis to support more frequent monitoring of performance related outcome measures throughout the expansion, RAND will compare post-expansion outcomes measures, including fraction of satisfied parents, teacher and student retention rates, and academic proficiency rates,

to pre-selected performance targets. Specific outcomes and progress measures for both analyses are in Application Requirements (a) on page 37.

***Evaluation research questions.***

- RQ1. How does expansion of grades K-5 in Propel schools and relocation of grades 6-8 affect the achievement of continuing Propel students?
- RQ2. How does the achievement of new Propel expansion students compare to that of continuing Propel students and non-Propel students over time?
- RQ3. Is there an increase in student disciplinary actions for grades K-8 students in Propel expansion schools?
- RQ4. How does the Propel school expansion affect students', principals' and teachers' perceptions of school climate?

***Methodology.***

***RQ1. Academic achievement of continuing Propel students***

RAND will estimate the effect of school expansion on the achievement of continuing Propel students with a quasi-experimental difference-in-difference (DD) analysis of administrative test score data. This analysis addresses Propel's performance objective of maintaining the pace of learning for continuing students. The analysis will compare the NWEA Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) fall-to-spring and spring-to-spring math and reading score gains of continuing Propel expansion school students in grades 1 and up to the test score gains of continuing students in comparable non-expansion schools. Two comparison groups will be used – (a) non-expansion Propel schools and (b) a national sample of schools that use the MAP assessments, via the Virtual Comparison Group (VCG). A similar approach will be employed to assess the effect of school expansion on achievement as measured by the spring-to-spring Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) math and ELA score gains of grades 4-8. RAND will compare the expansion year test score gains of continuing students in each Propel expansion school to the

same year gains in non-expansion schools. For the first expansion school (school year 2017-18), RAND will also track the relative achievement of continuing students for three additional years.

The DD analysis will control for changes in expansion school test score gains that are due to changes in Propel policies affecting all schools and general trends in student achievement, by using the achievement changes in non-expansion schools as the counterfactual for what would have happened in the expansion schools if the expansion hadn't occurred. This analysis also accounts for preexisting differences in test scores across schools.

### *RQ2. Relative achievement of new Propel expansion students*

RAND will estimate the difference between the achievement levels and gains of new Propel expansion students and those of (a) continuing expansion school students, (b) students in non-expansion Propel schools, and (c) non-Propel students. This analysis addresses Propel's performance objective of closing the achievement gap between new and continuing students.

RAND will compare the fall-to-spring MAP gains of Propel new expansion students in grades K-5 in the expansion year to the gains of similar continuing students in the same school and other Propel schools using propensity score weighting (PSW) analysis, which will compare the outcomes of new expansion students to those of continuing students with similar characteristics. RAND will also compare the school year MAP gains of new expansion students to similar students in non-Propel schools using the MAP VCG. In addition, RAND will compare student level PSSA test scores (grades 3-5) of new expansion students to those of continuing Propel students in the expansion school and to similar students in non-expansion schools using PSW. RAND will use a weighted school-level comparison group (generated using public data) to make comparisons to non-Propel schools. As in RQ1, for the first expansion school (school year 2017-18), RAND will estimate the time trend of the difference in test scores and test score gains between new and continuing students for 3 years following the expansion.

### *RQ3. Incidence of student disciplinary action*

RAND will estimate the effect of school expansion on student disciplinary action using a difference-in-difference analysis that will compare the change in the school-grade level office referral and suspension rates in grades 1-8 in the Propel expansion schools to that of comparable Propel schools that are not expanding. This analysis addresses Propel's performance objective of maintaining school culture through the expansion. The DD analysis controls for changes in discipline due to changes in Propel policies across all schools in the expansion year and general trends in disciplinary action in the Propel system by using the discipline change in non-expansion schools act as the counterfactual for what would have happened in the expansion schools if the expansion hadn't occurred. For grades 1-5, the estimated effect will be the combined effect of changes in behavior of continuing students in expansion schools and differences in the baseline behaviors of new and continuing students. The RAND team will conduct a separate DD analysis (similar to RQ1) to estimate the effect of the expansion on the referral and suspension rates of continuing students in grades 1-5.

*RQ4. Student, parent, teacher and principal perceptions of school climate*

RAND will estimate the effect of school expansion on student, parent and staff perceptions of school climate and safety using survey, focus group, and interview methods. This analysis addresses Propel's performance objective of maintaining school culture through the expansion.

RAND will assess students' perceptions of school safety and climate using a DD analysis that will compare the expansion schools' anonymous student school climate survey results (aggregated to the school or school-grade level) to the survey results of a comparison group of similar non-expansion Propel schools. The DD analysis controls for changes in perceptions of school climate due to changes in Propel policies across all schools and general trends in students' perceptions of school climate, while accounting for preexisting differences across schools. The estimated effect will capture changes in the perceptions of continuing students in expansion schools and differences in baseline perceptions of new students relative to continuing students. Survey anonymity prevents identification of new and continuing students for separate analysis.

RAND will also conduct a qualitative analysis of perceptions of school climate, culture, and safety using focus groups with parents, teachers, and students, and interviews with principals. The RAND team will conduct half-day visits to Propel expansion schools each spring. They will work with school leaders to (1) identify a timeframe for the visit that will be minimally disruptive to school operations and (2) sample teachers, students, and parents that represent the range of characteristics, grades, and tenure at Propel schools for each population.

At each visit, RAND will interview the school principal and conduct teacher, student (limited to 7<sup>th</sup> grade and up), and parent (limited to the expansion year) focus groups – one for each group with 6-8 participants each. The principal interview and teacher groups will focus on perceptions of school climate (e.g., adjustment of new and continuing students to the school, administrator support, professional development, Propel network support, staff collegiality, safety, student culture, and discipline) and perceptions of the expansion (e.g., implementation strategies, successes and challenges). The student focus groups will include questions about students’ perceptions of their academic experiences at Propel since the expansion as well as their perceptions of school climate and discipline. The protocol will be designed to include questions that align with student survey constructs. The parent focus groups will focus on similar topics related to school culture and the expansion, such as how their students are adjusting to Propel (if new students) or adjusting to the larger school (if continuing students), perceptions of safety and school culture, and communication with teachers and administrators.

Interview and focus group protocols will be semi-structured to promote consistency in the questions asked and to ensure coverage of important content while also allowing for respondents to elaborate or offer unsolicited input. However, because the number of participants is small, findings from the qualitative analysis will need to be interpreted cautiously.

**Power.** RAND examines power for the DD designs noted above. Pre-post MAP outcomes will be available for 50 existing Propel students in each of five expansion grades (1 through 5), for a total of 250 treatment students pooled across grades. RAND estimates a minimum detectable effect size of between

0.30 (for a pre-post correlation of 0.75) and 0.34 (for a pre-post correlation of 0.25) for a pooled grade analysis. Additionally, RAND may consider 250 pooled treated students as a lower bound for the analyses in Research Questions 3 and 4.

***Evaluation challenges and limitations.***

*Student attrition.* Attrition (10% annually on average) will impact estimates of the post-expansion time trends of continuing student achievement and the achievement gap between continuing and new expansion students if, for example, continuing students that are negatively impacted by the expansion leave the school. RAND will characterize the leavers and use information about them to provide context for its estimates.

*Confounding.* As is the case with all analyses based on propensity scores, while the PSW analyses to compare the experiences of expansion students to that of existing students will account for all available covariates, an unobserved covariate could explain any differences between the expansion and existing Propel students after weighting.

**Application Requirements**

**AR (a) Describe the objectives of the project for replicating or substantially expanding high-quality charter schools (as defined in the Federal Register Notice) and the methods by which the applicant will determine its progress toward achieving those objectives.**

The following table identifies the project objectives for the expansion project at Propel Schools and the methods by which Propel Schools will determine its progress toward achieving those objectives.

<b>Replication and Expansion Objectives</b>		
<b>Project Objective</b>	<b>Outcome Measures</b>	<b>Progress Measures</b>
Expanding the number of seats in high quality charter schools	1) Expanding Propel Montour to serve 75 students per grade (up from 50) in grades K-12 (up from K-8) 2) Expanding Propel Northside to serve 75 students per grade (up from 50) in grades K-8.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each school expands on schedule in accordance with the plan.</li> <li>• Each school is fully subscribed (because of inevitable turnover issues, Propel considers a school fully subscribed if average daily enrollment is at least 95% of the school’s planned capacity).</li> </ul>

<b>Performance Objectives</b>		
Maintaining school culture through the expansion	Parent satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each school continues to receive A or B from at least 90% of parents.</li> </ul>
	Parent perception of safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At each school, 90% of parents continue to have positive perception of school safety.</li> </ul>
	Parent perception of teacher care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At each school, 90% of parents continue to report that teachers care about their children's success.</li> </ul>
	Office referrals and suspensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At each school, no increase in referral and suspension rates and no relative increase compared to other Propel schools.</li> </ul>
	Teacher retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At each school, no decrease in teacher retention rates from the average pre-expansion rate.</li> </ul>
	Student retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At each school, 90% of students beginning the academic year at each school complete the year at the same school.</li> <li>At each school, 90% of students completing the academic year at each school return for the following year (not counting graduates).</li> </ul>
	Student perceptions of safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At each school, no decrease in students' perception of school safety and no decrease relative to the average change in comparable non-expansion Propel schools.</li> </ul>
	Student perception of teacher care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At each school, no decrease in the percentage of students reporting that teachers care about their success and no decrease relative to the average change in comparable non-expansion Propel schools.</li> </ul>
	Student sense of belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At each school, no decrease in the percentage of students reporting that they felt like they belong at the school and no decrease relative to the average change in comparable non-expansion Propel schools.</li> </ul>
	Propel-ness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualitative report of principal interviews and focus groups of parents, students and teachers discussing their sense of whether the school continues to feel like a Propel school.</li> </ul>
Maintaining pace of learning for continuing students (those already enrolled before the expansion)	Within year academic growth rates	For continuing students, fall to spring learning gains in both reading and math (as measured on NWEA MAP) will continue to exceed or equal (a) gains in the national norm reference group and (b) expected gains relative to comparable Propel and non-Propel schools.
	Year-to-year academic growth rates	For continuing students, learning gains reading/ELA and math as measured by spring-to-spring NWEA MAP scores in all grades, and spring-to-spring state PSSA scores in grades 3-8 will continue to exceed or equal expected gains relative to comparable Propel and non-Propel schools.
	Academic proficiency rates	For continuing students, academic proficiency rates (as measured on state tests in both ELA and Math) will not fall.
Closing the achievement gap between new (students enrolling during the expansion) and continuing students	Within year academic growth rates	For students enrolling during the expansion, fall to spring learning gains in both reading and math (as measured on NWEA MAP) (a) will exceed or equal gains in the national norm reference group within two years and (b) will be indistinguishable from continuing students' gains within three years.
	Academic proficiency rates	Proficiency rates (as measured on state tests) for students enrolling during the expansion will be within 5 percentage points of students enrolled prior to the expansion with three years of enrollment.

**AR (b) Describe how the applicant currently operates or manages the charter schools for which it has presented evidence of success, and how the proposed new or substantially expanded charter schools will be operated or managed. Include a description of central office functions, governance, daily operations, financial management, human resources management, and instructional management. If applying as a group or consortium, describe the roles and responsibilities of each member of the group or consortium and how each member will contribute to this project.**

The Propel network of schools has built strong, stable management and governance teams to ensure that the education its students receive is delivered efficiently and is of consistent high quality, and that expansion is done with fidelity and without compromising the excellence available at existing schools. A key strength of Propel’s existing Pennsylvania schools is that Propel functions as both their owner and operator. Because its schools share both common management and common governance, Propel is able to provide consistent implementation that balances the needs of new and existing schools in an optimal way. The expansions of Propel Montour and Propel Northside, as proposed herein, will be delivered under the same common management, governance and consistent support that lead to superior results at existing Propel schools.

#### Oversight Boards and Committees

**Board of Directors.** Propel’s governance is anchored by a single group of trustees. Seventeen (17) respected community leaders, committed to high-performance schooling and to Propel’s mission. They serve staggered four-year terms on the board of the applicant, Propel Schools Foundation. A subset of eight (8) of the 17 directors serve as the trustees of the schools, along with one non-board member. Shared governance is a uniquely powerful way to ensure the strength of the network. The expansion proposed will not require recruiting new trustees or creating new entities.

**School Council.** Each Propel-managed school has its own school council, which provides a vehicle for involving parents and local community members meaningfully in school decision making. The main purpose of the school council is to give those most affected by the day-to-day operation of the school—students, parents, teachers, staff, and concerned community members—a formal mechanism for

participating in its governance. In practice, this body enables each Propel school to take on a unique flavor and to be responsive to the needs of its immediate constituency while remaining faithful to Propel's core educational principles and strategies.

### Central Administrative Office

**Central Office Functions.** The Central Administrative Office guides all activities described in the proposal herein and is staffed by knowledgeable professionals who have the experience and capacity to lead and oversee the expansion of Propel Montour and Propel Northside. Propel's Central Administrative Office is responsible for managing the daily operations of Propel Schools including governance, financial management, human resources, instructional management, special education, marketing, information technology, resource management, fundraising and development. The primary Central Administrative Office team consists of the Executive Director, the Superintendent of Schools, the Chief Financial Officer, POD Directors who oversee clusters of schools, and the Directors and teams in each of the following areas: Human Resources, Talent, Accounting, Enrollment, Special Education, Data and Research, Creative Arts, Innovation, Communication, Non-Instructional Operations, Technology, Development and After-school Programming.

**Financial Management.** Propel's Chief Financial Officer carries primary responsibility for financial management. The Chief Financial Officer reports to the Executive Director and fulfills the following:

*Financial administration:* (1) communicates financial strategy to external stakeholders including lenders, underwriters, and funders; (2) establishes effective financial controls; (3) produces financial reports to support decision making at the staff and board level; (4) manages budget development; (5) oversees financial records; (6) maintains oversight over all Propel accounts; (7) maintains general ledgers, trial balances, financial reports, and balance sheets; (8) ensures the timely filing and payment of all employee salaries; (9) arranges and facilitates audits; (10) ensures completion of all required financial filings, and (11) constructs facility financing plans, including debt financing where necessary. Current department staff has demonstrated successful management of a combined budget in FYE 2016 of \$55 million and Federal Program grants for Title I, Food service and CSP of \$3million.

***Human Resources Management.*** The Human Resources and Talent Development department is to assist the organization with attracting, developing, and retaining talented individuals. The joint department is responsible for hiring staff, assessing, maintaining, and improving staff competence; and promoting staff self-development and learning. The department is led by two experienced and talented Directors who have led the expansion of services, outreach and human resources development for the organization. The department has implemented Human Resources software to manage talent acquisition, onboarding, credentialing, performance evaluation, payroll and benefits and is responsible for the Pittsburgh Urban Teaching Corp (PUTC) to identify, train and provide urban-focused Masters degreed teachers for Propel Schools. The program is designed to educate, train and employ 150 teachers over the next 6 years.

***Instructional Management.*** Propel’s Superintendent of Schools, with assistance from her Directors, carries primary responsibility for instructional management including: school operations, personnel and leaders, professional development, curriculum and instruction, and outreach to community groups, representatives of business and industry, and postsecondary educators to develop partnerships and collaborations.

***Non-instructional Operations.*** Propel’s Central Office also employs a full-time Director of Non-Instructional Operations, who reports to the Chief Financial Officer and covers the following areas of responsibility: 1) Facility identification, design, development (i.e., construction or renovation), and ongoing maintenance; 2) Human resource management; 3) Oversight of office arrangements at both the Central Administrative building and individual schools; 4) Administering physical plant management, custodial care, sanitation, and security; and 5) Administering and supervising food programs.

*(See Appendix H: Propel Schools Organizational Chart)*

### **School-Level Management**

The principal is the on-site manager of each individual Propel school. Propel has established a practice of appointing, as the first principal of each new school, someone with prior experiencing working in another Propel school; the principal thus becomes the leader who ensures effective replication of the

educational model. Other responsibilities of each principal include: management, administration and teacher development; educational curriculum and instruction; maintaining the educational/learning environment, and maintaining relationships with parents and the community.

#### Additional Key Features of Propel’s Educational Management

***Accessible leadership.*** Propel’s Superintendent is in constant communication with principals, visits each building often, meets with principals and teachers, observes classroom instruction, leads professional development efforts and is available at all times to answer questions or address urgent issues.

***Regular team meetings.*** The Superintendent leads various administrative team meetings that occur frequently, including those with principals and Directors.. Key issues and strategy related to school programming are discussed; updates on input collected from Central Office and educational research are other topics.

***Balancing essentials with site-based autonomy.*** Propel’s curriculum, foundational instructional methods, and Creative Arts programs are essential components of each Propel school. Within this structure, principals have extensive autonomy to manage their own schools; for example, the specific content of character education programs or music offerings may differ between schools.

Within each Propel school, communication is fluid and frequent. Principals conduct frequent formal meetings with their school leadership teams, including Assistant Principals and Math and Literacy Coaches. Principals also hold instruction-focused meetings which include teachers from each grade level and content area. A wide range of issues are discussed at these meetings, including assessments, performance data, and school programs.

***Evaluation.*** Principals are formally evaluated by the Superintendent and the POD Directors at the end of each year. Performance standards include facilitating a schoolwide vision of learning; school culture and instructional program; school management; collaboration with families and communities; and acting with fairness and integrity. Teachers, parents, and students also complete an evaluation of the principal; results are shared with principals during their evaluation.

***Teacher employment.*** Teacher selection is a crucial component of Propel’s success. Teachers interview with Propel as an organization, not for an individual school position. The multifaceted interview process, including demonstration of teaching and collaborative capacities. Teachers, like all Propel staff, are reviewed for retention each year. Salary increases are based on teacher evaluations. To ensure successful implementation of Propel’s unique culture in a new school, teachers with prior Propel experience are invited to transfer into first-year schools.

Managing the Expansion of Schools Project.

The implementation of the proposed expansion of Propel Montour and Propel Northside will be managed by Propel’s Central Administrative Office staff, led by Propel’s Executive Director. Central Administrative Office staff will assist with all areas of implementation and transition including acquisition of new facilities, expansion of existing buildings, construction and renovation, equipment purchasing, hiring and training teachers and support staff, and outreach and information efforts to Propel parents and to the Montour and Northside communities. Implementation and logistics of the expansion process will be supported at the school level by the principals of both Propel Montour and Propel Northside.

Propel’s robust management and operations structure and the organization’s current staffing capacity will ensure effective planning, coordination, and control over the various tasks involved in the expansion of Propel Montour and Propel Northside. Propel is growing in a very responsible way and has the organizational capacity to expand the number of students without needing to expand Central Office staff.

**AR (c) Describe how the applicant will ensure that each proposed new or substantially expanded charter school receives its commensurate share of Federal education funds that are allocated by formula each year, including during the first year of operation of the school and any year in which the school’s enrollment substantially expands (as defined in the Federal Register notice).**

Propel maintains an ongoing relationship with appropriate officials at the Pennsylvania Department of Education to ensure that a master agreement for federal programs is promptly executed for each new school. This relationship has enabled Propel to receive its share of federal program funds promptly.

Pennsylvania uses a procedure under which preliminary allocations are revised based on a fall pupil census; any increase in pupil count (including an increase from zero during the first year of a charter's operation) results in an appropriate increase in the amount of federal education program funds. This process is already in place at Propel Montour and Propel Northside and will be maintained with the expansion of both schools.

**(d) Describe the educational program to be implemented in the proposed new or substantially expanded charter schools, including how the program will enable all students (including educationally disadvantaged students as defined in the Federal Register notice) to meet State student academic achievement standards, the grade levels or ages of students to be served, and the curriculum and instructional practices to be used.**

Propel embraces a three-fold vision specifically designed to empower resource-poor students and to combat the discouragement, apathy, and alienation that frequently grip inner-city youth. It continues with an innovative set of six “Promising Principles” that derive from this vision and create vibrant, high-energy schools that inspire teachers, students, and families to work together as motivated educational communities. The three components of Propel’s educational vision are designed particularly to help disadvantaged children, who often feel abandoned or devalued by their social and economic circumstances, to thrive. Every Propel school focuses on ensuring that these three goals are reinforced every day in every classroom including: 1) Academics – leading children and teens to academic accomplishment by placing supreme importance on the development of literacy, the ability to think deeply and intellectual engagement; 2) Community – prepare children and teens to build and be part of the community and lead teachers, parents and community partners through an open exchange of ideas; and 3) Personal Power – the belief that every child is endowed with unique interests, abilities, and potential and is therefore personally powerful and should pursue personal passions, participate in the arts, physical activities and community service. Propel’s vision and “Promising Principles” will be extended to the newly expanded Propel Montour and Propel Northside schools.

*The Core “Promising Principles” of Propel’s Educational Model*

Propel’s educational model centers on the comprehensive application of six “Promising Principles.” Developed by Propel’s experienced senior educational leaders, the Promising Principles draw on educational research and evidence-based practices and are innovative, not imitative. The following summary of the Promising Principles highlights concrete ways in which each principle results in distinctive forms of educational delivery and in a school culture typified by respect, collaboration, engagement, and high student achievement. The “Promising Principles” include the following:

*Principle 1: Agile Instruction*

*Principle 2: Embedded Support*

*Principle 3: Culture of Dignity*

*Principle 4: Fully Valued Arts Program*

*Principle 5: Vibrant Teaching Communities*

*Principle 6: Quest for Excellence*

*(See Appendix H: Promising Principles and Powerful Practices)*

The Promising Principles are supported by important structural features of Propel Schools including small schools and small classes. Propel’s K-8 schools have no more than 420 students in grades K-8 and a class size of 20-25 in grades K-4. They can thus provide each student with personal attention and ensure that no student falls through the cracks. Similarly, Propel’s high schools are limited to 100 students per grade, enabling development and ongoing management of individualized learning plans for each student. Propel Schools also promotes more instructional time. Propel allots the extra time for those who need it by establishing a school year of 190 seven-hour days, thus providing 150 to 200 more instructional hours each year than most elementary and middle schools. Elementary students spend a minimum of 3.5 hours a day on the core subjects of reading, writing, and Mathematics. All Propel schools have full-day kindergarten. On the other hand, students achieving standards more quickly are encouraged to use available time to pursue personal passions, gifted student options, or to enhance the school community. Beyond that, Propel schools remain open for two to three hours each afternoon beyond the official end of

the school day, opening up opportunities for students to receive tutoring or extra help or benefit from other academic and enrichment activities in the Afterschool Program.

### *Ample Support for Children and Parents*

Propel's high expectations for all students can collide with some disadvantaged families' inability to provide the kind of supportive, literacy-enriched home environment that gives other youths a big leg up in academic pursuits. Propel solves this challenge by providing both individual student support, so that each child can achieve success in the school's rigorous instructional program, and parent engagement, helping parents find ways to support their children's learning. Aspects of support for children include positive behavior support with clear behavioral expectations both within school and outside of school, mentoring to work with students to tie goal setting and reflection to long-term personal and social development, support networks through after-school, evening, weekend and summer programming, and special education providing specialized instruction and support to children with disabilities. Aspects of support for Propel parents include involvement in their child(ren)'s education by reviewing school assignments, attending parent-student-teacher conferences, volunteering in the classroom, participating in the activity-focused parent organization and School Council, and referring parents to community resources such as preschools, and mental health providers.

### *Training and Supporting Teachers*

Propel recognizes that enthusiasm is only one of the ingredients of effective instruction. For most of those who choose to teach at a Propel school, implementing the Propel model effectively and reaching all children entails learning new skills. Propel teachers benefit from an extraordinary professional development system with activities that mirror the kind of learning experiences that teachers are creating in their classrooms. Propel teachers participate in trainings and workshops where specific instructional practices are introduced and refined and where student work is reviewed; they receive individual coaching in their classrooms; they observe their peers and welcome them into their own classrooms; they collaborate with their peers during planning times; and they maintain a portfolio that details their own goals and growth. Academic Coaches, selected for their years of demonstrated success at the classroom

level, play a crucial role in mentoring all the teachers at their school toward effective performance. Other professional development support is provided through a new teacher Orientation & Induction process, annual teacher development and evaluation, after-school workshops that reinforce classroom practice and clarify expectations for student work, coaching by the school principal and academic coaches to model instructional practice and provide feedback, and teacher teaming to share joint planning time, classroom instruction, teaching goals and peer support.

### *Propel's K-12 Curriculum: A Research-Driven Program That Works*

Propel schools offer a unique program—anchored in research and best practice—that and is strong enough to direct students from diverse circumstances toward ambitious academic and personal goals. In accordance with the threefold educational vision, Propel's curriculum combines rigorous **academic** instruction in reading, writing, Mathematics, science and history; core studies that emphasize applied learning and development of the skills required to create **community**; and enrichment studies that cultivate a sense of **personal power** and allow individual passions to thrive. Propel's curriculum uses data-driven, evidence-based instruction. All educational strategies Everything Propel does is to advance student learning are based on data. On a daily basis, Propel educators continually collect, review, and analyze data to inform instruction. The curriculum combines proven strategies for developing fundamental skills and knowledge with ample opportunity for teachers to continually adapt and adjust instruction regularly and to design activities that meet the specific needs of their students.

***K-8 Curriculum.*** At the elementary and middle school levels (grades K-8), Propel's unique program focuses on three key components: 1) academic instruction in major content areas; 2) learning tied to community building; and 3) Creative Arts—studies that encourage self-expression, confidence and exposure opportunities. This curriculum balances the need to use tested strategies for developing fundamental skills and knowledge with the need to provide ample opportunity for teachers to design activities that meet the specific needs of students in their classrooms.

***High School Curriculum.*** At the high school level (grades 9-12), Propel's unique program focuses on three key components: 1) a small learning community encourages student motivation and engagement; 2)

Propel’s project-based learning feature is personalized for each student to encourage independent learning and post-secondary/career exploration; and 3) authentic assessment provides transparency regarding the high academic standards and the process to evaluate student progress towards Propel’s rigorous expectations (*See Appendix H: Propel Schools Academic Curriculum*).

**(e) Describe the administrative relationship between the charter school or schools to be replicated or substantially expanded by the applicant and the authorized public chartering agency.**

In Pennsylvania, the only authorizers for brick-and-mortar charter schools are the school districts. However, in the event that a charter school is in conflict with the school district—either during the initial application, during charter renewal (which occurs once every five years), or during a request for an amendment to expand or modify a charter school—a State appointed Charter Appeals Board is empowered to be the arbiter of disputes. Over the years, Propel has had to turn to the Charter Appeals Board many times and has had almost universal and unanimous decisions in its favor.

Propel has worked hard to build positive relationships with the school districts that are its charter authorizers and has had significant success in doing so—especially with the authorizers of the schools proposed for expansion. The Montour Area School District voted unanimously to approve the expansion of Propel Charter School Montour in December 2015 (with expansion to begin in school year 2017-2018). The Charter School is currently in final negotiations to lease a school building from the School District to provide the additional space that the expansion requires. Propel views its relationship as one that is positive with a clear understanding and respect on both sides of its particular strengths and roles.

The Pittsburgh School District voted to authorize Propel Northside—the other school proposed for expansion—and Propel has had a constructive relationship with that District also. The building that houses the school is a former District school which Propel rented and then purchased from the District. The District fulfills its oversight role with on-site visits to the school and regular data sharing by Propel (including on student performance). There is good communication between staff at this Charter School and staff at the District at multiple levels.

**(f) Describe how the applicant will provide for continued operation of the proposed new or substantially expanded charter school or schools once the Federal grant has expired.**

One of the most important strengths of Propel’s school model is its fiscal sustainability. Unlike many other charter school models, Propel does not rely on private funds to sustain ongoing school operations. Both Propel Montour and Propel Northside will be fully sustainable from recurring public sources once each school’s population reaches targeted student enrollment numbers. Again, in contrast to many CMOs, Propel’s Central Office does not require private funds to cover ongoing expenses; these are allocated among the Propel schools and amount to approximately 10% of total spending. (*See Appendix G: 5-Year Financial Forecasts*).

Propel Schools will ensure that Propel Montour and Propel Northside exercise the same care to keep its programs fiscally sustainable, based on anticipated public funding levels. Accordingly, the investment of federal funds in Propel school expansions can be expected to yield dividends for a very long time. None of the positions or expenditures contemplated in this project are for recurring items or for permanent positions. Once the federal grant has expired, both of the expanded schools and Propel’s central office will be self-sustaining from recurring public sources.

**(g) Describe how parents and other members of the community will be involved in the planning, program design, and implementation of the proposed new or substantially expanded (as defined in the Federal Register notice) charter school or schools.**

Propel maintains an exceptional level of transparency, accountability, and collaboration with parents and community members throughout each phase of planning, implementing, and operating a school. Parent and community participation enhances Propel’s effectiveness in educating students and significantly shapes Propel’s school development decisions.

*Planning a school expansion.* Propel is keenly aware that communities and schools need to coexist, so the support of parents, community members, business leaders, and other key stakeholders are essential to Propel’s success. Parents played a pivotal role in the planning of the expansion of Propel Montour and Propel Northside. Parent input on annual surveys, parent-teacher conferences, and other regular feedback

processes within Propel schools indicated a growing academic need for these schools to be expanded to accommodate demand.

***Program design and implementation.*** Propel considers building strong family and community relationships essential to its schools' eventual success. As a result, Propel uses numerous methods to reach out to its communities, both to share Propel's school vision and to hear and respond to the unique needs and expectations of each family and community member. An overview of those methods follows.

#### Means of Establishing and Maintaining Community Participation

***Community visibility.*** Propel's schools primarily serve communities in need. Propel proactively communicates with public officials (e.g., mayors, borough councils) early in its school development process. As a result, despite the often turbulent politics surrounding a charter school proposal, most local leaders have viewed Propel as a valuable community asset. Once the school opens, Propel invites elected officials and other leaders to attend open houses, and other activities throughout the year who often attend and consistently leave with a favorable view of Propel's educational programs.

***Rotary clubs and chambers of commerce.*** Propel collaborates with local Rotary Clubs as a means of both community service and staying informed about key local issues. Similarly, Propel holds memberships in local chambers of commerce as an important means of networking with local leadership.

***Service learning.*** Propel has made service learning a fundamental educational method, teaching students of all ages to become participating agents of change in their school and greater communities. In fact, Propel high school students must complete 80 hours of community service as a graduation requirement. To fulfill this expectation, Propel students have worked in local soup kitchens, nursing homes and community centers; cleaned up local parks; and participated in neighborhood beautification projects, among others.

#### Means of Establishing and Maintaining Parent Participation

***Open door for parents.*** Propel's distinctive "open door policy" permits parents, with minimal advance notice and by a simple written request, to visit classes or meet with teachers and administrators. Similarly, prospective parents are encouraged to tour a Propel school and observe classes, with teachers and

administrators available to answer questions. Propel believes that its atypical openness to parents leads to stronger parent-school collaboration and thus helps attain higher student achievement.

***Parent orientation.*** Propel’s heavy emphasis on parent involvement begins with an orientation at the start of each academic year, providing an opportunity for all parents to meet the principals, teachers, and administrators and to become (more) familiar with the Propel culture. At orientation, staff explain plans for the upcoming school year, discuss volunteering opportunities, and present Propel’s open door policy.

***School Council.*** Part of Propel’s governance structure, the School Councils have become an integral way to involve parents in school operations and to provide a convenient way for all Propel parents to make their voices heard through their fellow parents who serve on the Council.

***Surveys.*** Consistent with its commitment to building a Culture of Dignity, Propel’s annual parent surveys is administered each spring and collects information in four (4) key areas: overall satisfaction with Propel, school safety, academic rigor, and teacher sensitivity. Survey results are shared openly with the Propel community and other stakeholders, and are used for planning and shaping school practices and behaviors in the upcoming year. Overall, parents are overwhelmingly positive about their children’s experience at Propel, with 94% giving Propel an A or B, compared to just 71% in a recent Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup public school survey.

***Math and literacy nights.*** At the K-8 levels, Propel holds two math and literacy nights a year for each grade. Facilitated by each school’s Math and Literacy Coaches, these evenings involve hands-on activities to help parents develop a better understanding of classroom content, as well as information on how parents can work with their children at home to reinforce and extend subjects learned in school. Propel’s independent reading program, “The Hundred Book Challenge,” is incorporated into literacy nights as a way for parents to support their child’s K-8 reading development. This program offers incentives to students who read independently or with a parent for at least 30 minutes per day.

***Volunteer opportunities.*** Propel welcomes parent and community volunteers in many aspects of the school’s operation. Volunteer opportunities are introduced at school orientation and reinforced on the school’s website, at parent workshops and conferences, and in school-to-home communications. Popular

volunteer activities include working with primary grade students on letter and number recognition, reading to students, and participating in field trips and school activities. Parents are welcome on Propel field trips at no cost.

***Parent workshops.*** Propel hosts periodic parent workshops each school year, on themes like technology, science, and culture. At these workshops, parents engage in conversations with teachers and administrators about what their children are learning in the classroom and how they can complement academic content with activities at home.

***Parent-teacher conferences.*** Virtually every school has parent-teacher conferences, but few value them as much as Propel values its two conferences per year. Propel typically achieves 100% parent participation in teacher conferences, because Propel teachers and administrators go to students' homes and accommodate parents' schedules, if necessary, to make these imperative conferences happen.

***Celebrations of Learning.*** Each multi-week Creative Arts module culminates with a Celebration of Learning, at which students have the opportunity to share and celebrate what they learned with parents and the community. These assemblies enable families to see their children perform, meet the visiting artists/instructors, and meet fellow parents. Celebrations of Learning offer a unique way of connecting students and parents to the arts and community around them.

***Skyward Information System.*** Skyward, Propel's online information portal, gives parents instant, unlimited access to their child's school performance and attendance records. Teachers and administrators offer Skyward training sessions throughout the year and encourage parents to check their child's data frequently. Skyward training sessions, organized by the school, are available for families throughout the year.

**(h) Include a request and justification for waivers of any Federal statutory or regulatory provisions that the applicant believes are necessary for the successful operation of the proposed new or substantially expanded charter schools.**

Propel Schools does not envision any need to seek federal or state waivers beyond the operating flexibility it already receives under Pennsylvania's charter law.

**(i) Describe how the grant funds will be used, including how these funds will be used in conjunction with other Federal programs administered by the Secretary, and with any matching funds.**

Propel is submitting a five-year request for \$1,350,000 from the U.S. Department of Education under the Replication and Expansion of High-Quality Charter Schools Competition (ED-GRANTS-051016-001) for the expansion of two (2) charter schools within the Propel Schools network – Propel Montour and Propel Northside. At each newly expanded school, grant funds will be used to cover the cost of expansion expenditures that include the purchase of furniture, laptops, Smartboards, wireless connectivity, and supplies and textbooks at each school identified for expansion. At Propel Montour, \$765,000 is allocated for these expenditures and \$315,000 is allocated for the same expenditures at Propel Northside. Additional expenditures include [REDACTED] (shown as Personnel, Fringes and Supplies) and \$190,000 for contracted consulting services (RAND Corporation – external evaluator). Funds awarded to Propel under this competition will not be used in conjunction with any other Federal programs administered by the Secretary, nor will Propel provide any matching funds.

**(j) Describe how all students in the community, including students with disabilities, English learners, and other educationally disadvantaged students (as defined in the Federal Register notice), will be informed about the proposed new or substantially expanded (as defined in this notice) charter schools and given an equal opportunity to attend such schools.**

Propel’s outreach is intentionally aimed at families in educationally underserved communities. Not only does Propel seek to locate its schools in economically disadvantaged areas, but when it places a school in a socioeconomically mixed region, it focuses its outreach on the communities of greater need. As a result, Propel has maximized the extent to which its high-performing schools of choice benefit those who need them the most. This is combined with outreach to current Propel families, who may desire to enroll their children in the expansion sites. In addition to school communications and meeting opportunities, other avenues for providing potential and/or existing families with communications regarding new or expansion opportunities are listed below.

**Community Outreach:** When preparing to expand a school, Propel will begin its outreach campaign with grassroots activities, conventional advertising channels as necessary. Content of marketing materials highlights Propel’s mission, vision and instructional program, small class sizes, rigorous academic expectations, and arts emphasis. Families are encouraged to apply for enrollment online and/ or to contact Propel for more information or a school tour.

**School location.** Propel’s primary way to target families of need is to place its schools in needy communities with a scarcity of affordable educational alternatives. The space needed for the expansion project will be near the existing schools of Propel Montour and Propel Northside and are already in communities where low-income, not low-income, and both black and white parents are comfortable.

**Targeted promotion.** When Propel schools are located in middle-income areas, promotional activities are targeted at the nearby neighborhoods of greatest need. For example, Propel Montour is located in Kennedy Township, a modest suburb about 10 miles west of downtown Pittsburgh, but adjacent to the economically and educationally disadvantaged Sto-Rox School District (which serves the lower-income communities of McKees Rocks and Stowe Township) and the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Propel concentrated its publicity in Sto-Rox and nearby neighborhoods of the City of Pittsburgh, with the result that 70 percent of the Propel Montour student enrollment comes from these communities. For each school expansion, Propel will use census data, community feedback, and firsthand experience to identify the communities it will target with promotional materials, as needed.

**Word of mouth.** Parents of Propel students are the best and most persuasive advocates for Propel schools. When promoting the expansion of Propel Montour and Propel Northside, Propel will provide parents at those schools with informational materials that describe the schools, what they can offer to students and families, their track record of success, and how to navigate the application process. Propel will encourage parents to share this information with friends who live in the vicinity of the new school. This word-of-mouth approach is highly credible, effectively counteracts false rumors spread by opponents of charter schools, and typically begins a rising trajectory of grassroots enthusiasm that leads to dozens of student applications.

**Community organizations.** Propel will focus communication efforts on community organizations located near Propel Montour and Propel Northside and serve families who lack school choices. The organizations typically include youth-serving nonprofits like the Boys and Girls Clubs; places of worship; public libraries; family resource centers; lower-income housing developments; and public libraries. Parents with students already enrolled at Propel Montour and Propel Northside will participate in these presentations; to emphasize that students with special needs are welcome in Propel schools, a parent of such a student is almost always among those speaking.

**Daycare centers.** Propel will work with community day care centers to reach families with children entering kindergarten. Propel will provide each child care center with information about how to become a part of Propel for the Kindergarten year, using literature describing Propel and application instructions. These materials have been well received as a means for child care centers to educate families.

**Advertising.** Propel occasionally places advertisements in local newspapers and radio to ensure that a broad audience, not reached through other outreach methods, is aware of its schools. Propel places advertising in, on and around public transportation as well. Bus shelters and bus placards allow Propel to reach target audiences both in their own neighborhoods as well as throughout the entire City of Pittsburgh. Specific routes within underserved areas are chosen for these ads. Billboard advertising is also used, to bring Propel's message to the neighborhoods and travel routes of families who have very limited choices in public education.

**Social Media.** Propel uses social media as a means of communicating with both current and prospective families. Beyond posting about engaging activities and regular school events, advertising and 'boosting' posts are common during enrollment periods (August - December.) Families who 'follow' Propel are encouraged to 'share' the webpage with their online connections. The social media pages also contain evergreen information that can link families to both the Propel website as well as directly to the application page.

**Propel Website & Blog.** Propel's website is optimized for use for both current and prospective families. The news page will give both the latest updates, plus important dates for application processes.

During peak enrollment periods, the Propel Blog is used to bring the experiences of both students and faculty to prospective families (and is linked to the news page, as well as promoted on our social media channels.) The “Apply” section of Propel’s website gives families clear instructions on how to become a part of Propel schools.

***Community Engagement Specialists.*** Propel engages with the communities it serves through employees known as “Community Engagement Specialists” who move fluidly within communities, working with local elected officials, thought-leaders and families to bring the good news about Propel to a larger audience. Connections are made with local businesses, public spaces such as libraries and places of worship -- to bring positive brand recognition regarding Propel, thus leading families to heightened desire to be a part of a Propel community of learners.

Propel utilizes a blind lottery process for all stages of enrollment. Siblings and residents of the Propel school's home district receive preference. It is noteworthy that Propel does not ask about any student disabilities on the enrollment application, thus promoting access to a high quality school for this student group. Open Enrollment occurs from October 1 and ends on December 31 and those applicants are part of the January lottery drawing. If any class is oversubscribed, families from the lottery are placed on a ranked waiting list; families applying after the December deadline are subsequently placed on this list in chronological order. Spaces do become available throughout the year. If a child on the waiting list isn't offered a space in a single school year, they must reapply each year for admission to Propel.

**(k) Describe how the proposed new or substantially expanded charter schools that are considered to be LEAs under State law, or the LEAs in which the new or substantially expanded (as defined in the Federal Register notice) charter schools are located, will comply with sections 613(a)(5) and 613(e)(1)(B) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).**

The schools proposed as part of this project are considered LEAs under Pennsylvania state charter law, so the provisions of section 613(a)(5) are not applicable. Section 613(e)(1)(B) prevents SEAs from forcing charter schools into consortiums that could have the effect of limiting access to IDEA Federal funds. In Pennsylvania, charter schools are being treated equitably with funds distributed proportionally

based on head counts by Intermediate Units across the state. The schools proposed for expansion are already receiving Part B funds from their respective Intermediate Units. Propel will leverage its existing knowledge of these statutes and its existing relationships with those administering these funds to ensure that its schools continue to be treated in accordance with these provisions and receive the funds to which they are entitled.

**(l) Provide information on any significant compliance issues (as defined in the Federal Register notice) identified within the past three years for each school managed by the applicant, including compliance issues in the areas of student safety, financial management, and statutory or regulatory compliance.**

There have been no audit findings which indicate any significant compliance issues for Propel Schools.

**(m) For each charter school currently operated or managed by the applicant, provide the following information: the year founded, the grades currently served, the number of students, the address, the percentage of students in each subgroup of students described in section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA, results on the State assessment for the past three years (if available) by subgroup, attendance rates, student attrition rates for the past three years, and (if the school operates a 12<sup>th</sup> grade) high school graduation rates and college attendance rates (maintaining standards to protect personally identifiable information).**

Table 11 shows the profile of each school within the Propel Schools network including the year each school was founded, the grades currently served, the number of students per school, the school address, the percentage of students in each subgroup (as per Section 1111(b)(2)(C)(v)(II) of the ESEA), attendance rates, student attrition rates for the past three (3) years, high school graduation rates, and college attendance rates. Propel student performance on state PSSA assessment tests for the past three years are reflected in Tables 1-8 in Selection Criteria (a)(1).

**Table 11. Propel Schools Network Profile 2013-2015**

	Propel Schools	Homestead	McKeesport	East	Montour	Braddock Hills	Northside	Pitcairn	Hazelwood
<b>Year Founded</b>	2003	2003	2004	2005	2007	2010	2011	2012	2014
<b>Grades Currently Served</b>	K-12	K-12	K-8	K-8	K-8	K-12	K-8	K-8	K-5
<b>Number of Students</b>	3569	584	390	404	427	748	406	360	250
<b>Address</b>	3447 East Carson St., Suite 200 Pittsburgh, PA 15203	129 East 10th Ave Homestead, PA 15120	2412 Versailles Ave McKeesport, PA 15132	1611 Monroeville Ave Turtle Creek, PA 15145	340 Bilmar Dr Pittsburgh, PA 15205	1500 Yost Blvd Braddock Hills, PA 15221	1805 Buena Vista St Pittsburgh, PA 15212	435 Agatha St Pitcairn, PA 15140	5401 Glenwood Ave Pittsburgh, PA 15207
<b>Percentage of Students in Each Subgroup</b>									
Economically disadvantaged students	77%	87%	82%	63%	66%	75%	81%	79%	89%
Black or African American students	73%	95%	75%	47%	47%	76%	87%	64%	86%
Students with disabilities	16%	18%	11%	14%	12%	19%	17%	17%	17%
Students with limited English proficiency	0.1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
<b>Attendance Rates</b>									
2014-2015	94%	91%	93%	98%	95%	94%	94%	94%	92%
2013-2014	94%	92%	93%	98%	95%	93%	94%	95%	N/A
2012-2013	94%	92%	93%	98%	94%	94%	94%	95%	N/A
<b>Student Attrition Rates</b>									
2014-2015	14%	14%	11%	9%	6%	16%	13%	25%	14%
2013-2014	12%	8%	13%	9%	9%	11%	13%	19%	N/A
2012-2013	12%	14%	13%	5%	8%	14%	9%	20%	N/A
<b>High School Graduation Rates</b>									
2014-2015	78%	79%	N/A	N/A	N/A	77%	N/A	N/A	N/A
2013-2014	90%	87%	N/A	N/A	N/A	92%	N/A	N/A	N/A
2012-2013	85%	83%	N/A	N/A	N/A	91%	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>College Attendance Rates</b>									
2014-2015	Not Yet Available	Not Yet Available	N/A	N/A	N/A	Not Yet Available	N/A	N/A	N/A
2013-2014	63%	73%	N/A	N/A	N/A	56%	N/A	N/A	N/A
2012-2013	77%	79%	N/A	N/A	N/A	70%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Notes:	<p><b>Attrition</b> is calculated by counting the total number of students who withdraw from Propel for a full year period from October 1 through September 30, divided by the enrollment during the beginning of the measurement period on October 1. The following students are not included in this calculation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students who were promoted from a school</li> <li>- Students who graduated from a school</li> <li>- Students who registered but never attended Propel</li> <li>- Students who did not attend for ten straight days are not included in this calculation</li> </ul> <p><b>College Attendance</b> is calculated by dividing the total number of graduates who attended 2 year or 4 year college within a year from graduating high school by the total number of students in a graduating class.</p> <p>Federal Race codes were used to calculate the percent of Black or African American student enrollment.</p> <p>Propel uses the National Student Clearinghouse to track college attendance and persistence for graduates. At this point in time, data for the 2014-2015 graduating class is not yet available.</p>								

The data show that Propel has grown from one (1) school in 2003 to eight (8) LEA's in 2016. From 2013 to 2015, Propel's student population has been, on average, 77.6% economically disadvantaged (as per student eligibility for the free/reduced meal program), 65.6% Black or African

American, and 7.6% multi-racial with .6% of students with limited English proficiency and 15.7% of students having disabilities. Since its founding in 2003, Propel has consistently maintained attendance rates above 90% across all schools (*See Appendix F: Student Academic Achievement* )

**(n) (1) Performance (school-wide and by subgroup) for the past three years (if available) on statewide tests of all charter schools operated or managed by the applicant as compared to all students in other schools in the State or States at the same grade level, and as compared with other schools serving similar demographics of students.**

As indicated in Table 2, Selection Criteria (a)(1), Propel’s African American and Economically Disadvantaged student subgroups have outperformed their peers in their resident school districts for the past three years on PSSA tests for both English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. Not only are African American students performing better than peers in every one of the individual resident districts in each of the past three years, but they are also out-performing their peers statewide in all three years in both ELA and Math. Comparably, Propel’s Economically Disadvantaged students outperform their peers in the school districts in all three years in both ELA and Math. Not only are Propel’s Economically Disadvantaged students performing better than peers in every one of the resident districts in all these years in both subjects, but they are also performing comparably or better than their peers statewide as well (See Table 3, Selection Criteria (a)(1)).

**(2) Annual student attendance and retention rates (school-wide and by subgroup) for the past three years and comparisons with other similar schools.**

See Table 11 above (Application Requirement (m)) for detail on annual student attendance and attrition rates (school-wide and by subgroup) for each Propel school over the past three years as compared to students in resident districts.

**(3) Where applicable and available, high school graduation rates, college attendance rates, and college persistence rates (school-wide and by subgroup) for the past three years (if available) of students attending schools operated or managed by the applicant, and the methodology used to calculate these rates (maintaining standards to protect personally identifiable information). When**

reporting data for schools in States that may have particularly demanding or low standards of proficiency, applicants are invited to discuss how their academic success might be considered against applicants from across the country.

Propel’s successes in meeting the needs of Economically Disadvantaged students and African American students are not limited to solely academic achievement. Propel Schools has consistently met or outperformed the same subgroups in the state of Pennsylvania in attendance and high school graduation rates. Table 12 shows that over the past three school years, and with available data at the time of this proposal for the 2012-2013, 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, Propel Schools’ African American students’ graduation rate has exceeded the African American graduation rate in Pennsylvania every year.

<b>Table 12. Graduation and College Attendance and Persistence Rates by Subgroup</b>									
	12-13			13-14			14-15		
	Andrew Street HS	Braddock Hills HS	Propel Schools	Andrew Street HS	Braddock Hills HS	Propel Schools	Andrew Street HS	Braddock Hills HS	Propel Schools
<b>Graduation Rates</b>									
All Students	83%	91%	85%	87%	92%	90%	79%	77%	78%
Black or African American	83%	89%	85%	87%	93%	90%	81%	75%	79%
Economically Disadvantaged	81%	89%	85%	81%	95%	87%	79%	72%	76%
<b>College Attendance Rates</b>									
All Students	73%	60%	70%	73%	56%	63%	Not Yet Available		
Black or African American	73%	60%	71%	68%	50%	58%			
Economically Disadvantaged	73%	63%	71%	63%	52%	57%			
<b>College Persistence Rates</b>									
All Students	67%	33%	60%	47%	53%	50%	Not Yet Available		
Black or African American	68%	33%	46%	68%	73%	70%			
Economically Disadvantaged	68%	40%	63%	71%	76%	74%			
Notes:	<p><b>College Attendance</b> is calculated by dividing the total number of graduates who attended 2 year or 4 year college within a year from graduating high school by the total number of students in a graduating class.</p> <p><b>College Persistence</b> is calculated by dividing the total number of students who are still enrolled in 2 year or 4 year college one year after graduating divided by the total number of students who attended college.</p> <p>Local Race codes were used to calculate the percent of Black or African American graduation.</p> <p>Propel uses the National Student Clearinghouse to track college attendance and persistence for graduates. At this point in time, data for the 2014-2015 graduating class is not yet available.</p>								

Propel’s Economically Disadvantaged students’ graduation rate has exceeded the graduation rate for Economically Disadvantaged students state wide. Over the past three years African American and Economically Disadvantaged students in Propel schools have had equal or better attendance than the same subgroups in Pennsylvania. Propel has consistently demonstrated that in measures both academic and non-academic educationally disadvantaged students are more likely to succeed at a Propel school than

others in the state of Pennsylvania. This consistent success combined with the strength of Propel’s programming and support enables Propel to expand to provide educational excellence for more students in Western Pennsylvania.

**(o) Provide such other information and assurances as the Secretary may require.**

Not applicable.