

## TIG Part B: Ashley Elementary School

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (narrative)

Ashley Elementary School is located in the Near Northeast region of Denver with a boundary that serves the neighborhood surrounding the school. In 2013-2014, 336 students were enrolled at Ashley with the following demographics: 96% FRL, 58% ELL, 7% SPED, 64% Hispanic, 21% African American, 10% White, 2% American Indian, 2% Multiple Races, and 1% Asian/Pacific Islander.

Ashley Elementary School has demonstrated persistently low academic achievement and declining academic growth rates of students over the last several years resulting in the school's performance being identified as "Accredited on Probation" or "Red" on the SPF in 2012. While Ashley made growth on the 2013 SPF that moved the school back to "Accredited on Watch" or "Yellow." Ashley Elementary students are still performing significantly below state expectations.

Ashley was identified for "Intensive Supports" through Denver Public School's tiered support process, a data driven process that identifies struggling schools and matches them with the needed level of support. In the spring of 2013, Ashley Elementary School teachers and community members were notified by the district that due to the persistent low performance of its students, the school principal would be replaced and the school would undergo an intensive strategic planning process to improve student academic performance. Teachers and community members were invited by the DPS Office of School Reform and Innovation to participate in: 1) the selection of a new school principal, and 2) the strategic school design process.

Zachary Rahn was selected as the Ashley Elementary School principal in May 2013 to lead the school transformation process. Zach was a Principal Resident at STRIVE Preparatory Schools through the Office of School Reform and Innovation's Residency for the Educational Development of DPS Intrapreneurs (REDDI) and spent the prior six years working within DPS as Assistant Principal and 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELA-S teacher at Denver's flagship Innovation School, Cole Arts and Science Academy. An alumnus of Teach For America and the Ritchie Program for School Leaders at DU, Zach has a track record of success as a teacher and a leader. As a teacher he saw continually high growth from his students. As a leader supporting the turnaround efforts at Cole, he helped to turn a school from "red" or unsatisfactory to "green" or meets expectations on the School Performance Framework within three years. In the past year, Zach has been recruited for leadership positions both locally and nationally and has decided that the opportunity at Ashley is the best fit. Through his residency at STRIVE Prep schools last year, Zach visited and worked in high performing schools across the country, collecting information on effective practices that has been used to inform the development of the innovation/transformation plan.

The Ashley Strategic School Design (SSD) team began working on May 15, 2013 and included 12 teachers and 3 parents. The SSD team selected an external consultant to facilitate the design team and the plan development process. Six research areas were identified by the SSD team, with input from surveys of teachers and parents, and studied over the summer. More than 90 parents responded to surveys providing input on the design features and programming that was most important to them. Areas of change identified by the SSD team included: technology integration, language development model, literacy curriculum and instruction, math curriculum and instruction, school culture, and strategic use of resources (time, money, and people).

The strategic planning process included identifying the school's vision, mission, and goals, and using these to create an innovation plan. The SSD team conducted in depth data analyses, root cause analyses, and identified priority performance challenges. Major improvement strategies and actions steps to address the priority performance challenges were identified by the instructional leadership team and SSD team. The Ashley Elementary School teachers voted to support the innovation plan developed through the strategic planning process and the innovation plan was approved by the DPS board in December, 2013. Having completed a comprehensive innovation plan, Ashley is well positioned to begin its turnaround efforts in 2014-15.

In summary, during the winter and spring of 2013, Ashley families had multiple opportunities to engage in hiring their next leader and shaping the high level vision and mission of their school. Several community members became more deeply involved in the school design process, contributing dozens of hours per week to the process of detailing a new school model. All community members had access to frequent design sessions at which they could both hear updates and provide feedback. Once hired, now principal Zach Rahn launched a series of opportunities for continued community engagement.

## **SECTION I: Needs Assessment and Program Plan**

### **A. *Submit the Unified Improvement Plan Addendum (Attachment E)- Transformation Model***

Based on the school's performance history, the DPS leadership selected the transformation intervention model for Ashley Elementary. The Ashley SSD team conducted a thorough needs assessment analyzing data from a variety of sources including: student achievement on TCAP and interim assessments; student attendance; teacher effectiveness; and a diagnostic school review by SchoolWorks focused on instruction, culture, professional development, and leadership; and surveys of parents and teachers. See Attachment E for details on the transformation model.

### **B. *Analyze the current conditions in the proposed school(s) by providing student performance and other relevant data in relation to intervention selected for each school site.***

As a part of the strategic school design process, Ashley teachers and leaders engaged in an in depth data analysis to diagnose the school's current performance. This process resulted in identifying some key performance concerns.

Between 2011 and 2013, the percent of students at Ashley who scored proficient or advanced on Reading TCAP increased from 25% to 40%, but is still significantly below the state expectation of 72%. The percent of students who scored proficient or advanced on Math TCAP increased from 32% to 48%; but is still significantly below the state expectation of 71%. The percent of students who scored proficient or advanced on Writing TCAP increased slightly from 15% to 17%; but is still significantly below the state expectation of 54%. In the first year of ACCESS testing, 69% of English Language Learners (ELLs) received a L2, L3 or L4 overall rating, with the largest percentage, 29.8%, being in the developing category (L3).

In October of 2013, Ashley had a two-day external quality review conducted by SchoolWorks. The review team found the following areas of concern:

- Curriculum is not standards based nor is classroom instruction intentional, engaging, and challenging for all students.
- The school has not created a performance--driven culture in which the school leaders, teachers, and staff effectively use data to make decisions about instruction and the organization of students.
- The school's culture does not yet indicate high levels of collective responsibility, trust, and efficacy.
- While the principal is committed to improving student learning, school leaders do not yet effectively guide teachers in the central processes of improving teaching and learning.

The data analysis revealed positive trends as well, which indicate that with the right supports in place for teachers, instruction and culture will be able to improve. The October 2013 School Quality Review included the following positive findings:

- School wide interactions, both in and out of the classroom, result in a supportive and structured environment.
- The school identifies and supports special education students, English Language Learner (ELL) students, and students who are struggling or at risk.
- The school provides a safe environment to support student learning.
- The school is in the process of designing professional development and collaborative supports focused on cultural and instructional improvements.
- The school actively engages families in support of students' learning.
- The principal effectively manages operational processes and operations.

These findings indicate that the new leadership at Ashley has already begun to drive positive improvements to school culture, and is positioned to make dramatic gains with existing staff members who are committed to the vision for the school, if provided the appropriate resources and support. Nearly 40% of the teaching staff is anticipated to voluntarily leave next year as a result of the transformation. The priority performance challenges and recent growth identified at Ashley further indicate that the best match for a school intervention model is the transformation model.

**C. Analyze the current conditions in the proposed school(s) by identifying root causes. What is preventing the school from increased academic performance? To what does the district attribute the failure of student academic growth over time?**

Five root causes are preventing Ashley from dramatically improving student achievement:

1. The school does not use consistent high impact instructional strategies across the school, leading to inconsistent implementation and expectations for learning.
2. There is no consistent curriculum used throughout the school, leading to differing levels of rigor and academic consistency.
3. There has never been a focus or accountability measure for differentiation to happen within classrooms at the levels necessary to support all students.
4. The administration did not provide professional development nor coach teachers throughout the school year.
5. Evaluations did not accurately reflect classroom instruction.

**D. Provide evidence to demonstrate that overall goals and performance targets are included by year. Annual math and reading/language arts academic goals are set for each school site the grant will serve. Expectations for growth after one year must be clear.**

The leadership and staff at Ashley engaged in a goal setting process as a part of the Innovation Plan development. As a result, clear annual performance targets are in place and can guide the turnaround effort; specific goals for student achievement and growth will be used as annual measures of whether Ashley is on track. Reaching the following performance goals will ensure that Ashley Elementary School meets or exceeds district and state expectations for school performance, resulting in significantly increased academic achievement and growth for students and a rating of “meets expectations” or “green” on the School Performance Framework (SPF).

The table below is Ashley’s long term goal setting tool, included in the Innovation Plan.

School Performance Targets (Innovation Years 1-4) <sup>1</sup>							
	Expected TCAP (MGP) (Grades 4-10)	Expected TCAP % Proficient - Reading (Grades 3-10)	Expected TCAP % Proficient- Math (Grades 3-10)	Expected TCAP % Proficient – Writing (Grades 3-10)	Expected TCAP % Proficient - Science (Grades 3-10)	Expected Early Rdg Assmt % on grade level (Grades K-3)	Expected MGP on new WIDA-ACCESS
<i>Meets Standard on SPF</i>	<i>Above 50</i>	<i>At least 50%</i>	<i>At least 40% (elem.) 50%</i>	<i>At least 40%</i>	<i>At least 30%</i>	<i>At least 50% of students at or above grade level</i>	<i>*Current CELA MGP at or above 50</i>

<sup>1</sup> 2012 SPF Rubric for Elementary School Level can be accessed at the following website- [http://spf.dpsk12.org/documents/current/documentation/SPF\\_Rubrics\\_ES.pdf](http://spf.dpsk12.org/documents/current/documentation/SPF_Rubrics_ES.pdf)

<i>Rubric</i>			<i>(middle) 20% (high)</i>				
<b>2013-14</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>2014-15</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>2015-16</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>2016-17</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>60</b>

In addition to annual goals, Ashley will set interim reading, writing, and math achievement targets and will monitor progress monthly to ensure that the school is on track to reach its goals. Baseline and targets will be set at the start of the 2014-2015 school year when the school first implements new curriculum and assessments. STEP reading assessments will drive the instructional focus on reading in the first year of implementation. Ashley will also monitor increases in consistency and rigor of instruction using monthly LEAP data as a measure and holding leaders accountable for frequent observations and feedback on instruction.

**E. Provide evidence to demonstrate interventions are consistent with the final requirements.**

Please see the attached UIP Transformation addendum to see how Denver Public Schools and Ashley Elementary are in compliance with the required components of the transformation model.

In addition, the Innovation Plan and UIP show how the Major Improvement Strategies and the associated Action Steps will result in dramatic improvement. Through the strategic school design process, Ashley elementary teachers and leaders worked with an external consultant to develop the Innovation Plan. The consultant met with the SSD team weekly throughout the summer and fall of 2013 to engage in this process. The team discussed the school’s mission, vision, values, and goals; conducted quantitative and qualitative data analyses; identified priority performance challenges and their root causes, and brainstormed major improvement strategies and action steps. In addition, Ashley engaged in a school quality review conducted by SchoolWorks and used the findings as a key source of data. The Diagnostic Review Grant awarded by CDE supported this process. Ashley now seeks to secure funding to implement the major improvement strategies identified through the strategic planning process.

Through the SSD process, Ashley identified goals that will lead to dramatic improvement, a theory of action for how to reach the goal, and strategies and actions aligned to the theory of action.

<b>Goal</b>
Dramatically increase achievement in reading, writing, and math
<b>Theory of Action</b>
If we create a culture of achievement and consistently implement a rigorous curriculum and high impact instructional strategies, use data to differentiate interventions, and provide robust

targeted professional development, coaching, and feedback on instruction, teacher effectiveness will increase resulting in significant increases in student achievement.

<b>Major Improvement Strategies</b>		
<p><b>1. Culture of Achievement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Conduct a Parent Orientation/Culture Camp</li> <li>b. Hire a Dean of Culture</li> <li>c. Implement a Behavioral System</li> <li>d. Morning and Community Meetings</li> <li>e. Classroom Meetings</li> <li>f. Hire a Parent Consultant</li> <li>g. Hire a School Events Coordinator</li> <li>h. Marketing &amp; Communications</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. High Impact Instructional Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Implement weekly PD time</li> <li>b. Participate in External PD focused on high impact instructional strategies</li> <li>c. Engage Teachers in Book Studies on Instruction</li> <li>d. Implement Weekly Planning Team Meetings</li> <li>e. Extend day to increase instructional time</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. Differentiation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Use Blended Learning to differentiate instruction</li> <li>b. Differentiate instruction in literacy through Grouping &amp; Stations</li> <li>c. Implement STEP reading assessments every 6 weeks</li> <li>d. Implement Weekly Data Team Meetings</li> </ul>

**F. Provide evidence to demonstrate proposed plan is aligned with the district Unified Improvement Plan.**

One of the Major Improvement Strategies in the district UIP is to differentiate support to schools, with a focus on the equitable distribution of resources in order to improve our lowest performing schools. Ashley’s transformation plan helps the district to fulfill this mission by contributing significant additional resources and supports to one of our lowest performing schools. DPS seeks to provide support to these schools that leads to both dramatic improvement and sustainable change. We believe the proposed plan will lead to both of these results, by immediately beginning to build the capacity of Ashley’s leaders, teachers, and systems.

The district UIP also includes “Help our educators grow” and “Shift our teaching practices with students” as Major Improvement Strategies. The proposed plan at Ashley is very much aligned to this strategy, described below.

**G. Provide evidence to demonstrate sustainability after the implementation of the changes.**

Since Tiered Intervention Grant funding expires in three years, the bulk of efforts focus on developing capacity within these schools. During the three year time period, the goal of the district is to use these additional funds to make dramatic improvements in school culture and the instructional practices of teachers, which will in turn increase staff retention. This stability and increased capacity will allow the school to function effectively when the funding ends,

because the right systems and structures have been put in place. The district structures for turnaround work show how our system has oriented operationally in support of our lowest performing schools. Since the beginning of the grant, the focus has been to start with intensive interventions – and the most costly supports related to those interventions – and then to scale back over time as more students are brought to grade level and the school moves out of intervention and into continuous improvement.

## **SECTION II: Budget Narrative**

Ashley Elementary is requesting TIG funds to implement the major improvement strategies and high leverage actions included in its UIP and innovation/transformation plan in order to significantly increase student achievement and turn around the school’s persistent low performance.

### **Major Improvement Strategy 1: Culture of Achievement**

**Dean of Culture** (\$34,000) Grant funds will be used to fund half of the dean of culture position, a position created last year to launch the transformation plan. The dean of culture position is a short term position focused on developing sustainable systems and structures, and providing staff with training, coaching, and support to build their capacity to maintain a positive school culture focused on achievement.

**Parent Orientation and Culture Camp** (\$3,000) Grant funds will be used to host a parent orientation / culture camp day prior to the start of school to share the school’s vision, mission, values, and goals and to set expectations for parental involvement in and support of the new school culture. Funds will cover the cost of materials and food.

**Behavior System Supplies** (\$5,000) Grant funds will be used to purchase materials, signs, and incentives needed to implement the new school culture and behavior support systems.

**Family & Community Engagement Parent Consultant** (\$10,000) Grant funds will be used to contract with a parent consultant to engage families and community members, and organize events, communications, and translations. In the past, school resources were used to hire a parent & community liaison. If the new model is found to be more effective, SBB or Title I funding will be reallocated to continue with the family & community engagement parent consultant.

**School Events Coordinator** (\$54,000) Grant funds will be used to hire a School Events Coordinator to organize events and manage communications, internal and external visuals, and office greeting protocols. This new position has been used effectively at Uncommon Schools. If the new model is found to be effective at Ashley, SBB or Title I funding will be reallocated to continue with the position.

**Marketing and Communications** (\$5,000) Grant funds will be used to develop marketing and communication materials to recruit students and highly effective teachers to Ashley.

### **Major Improvement Strategy 2: High Impact Instructional Strategies**

Professional development in high impact instructional strategies will be used to build capacity of Ashley teachers, new and returning, to effectively implement the innovation/transformation plan. Once capacity is increased, the cost of professional development will be significantly reduced.

**Reading Professional Development** (\$10,000) Grant funds will be used to provide training in the Reading Mastery program. Training costs include a trainer, facility, materials, and food.

**Writing Professional Development** (\$10,000) Grant funds will be used to provide training in the Thinking Maps. Training costs include a trainer, facility, materials, and food.

**Math Professional Development** (\$6,000) Grant funds will be used to provide training in the Go Math! program. Training costs include a trainer, facility, materials, and food.

**Dual Language Enrichment Professional Development** (\$11,000) Gomez & Gomez training – travel, registration, materials for 3 days – 3 teachers and 1 administrator

**Books for Professional Learning** (\$2,000) – Grant funds will be used to purchase books for professional learning. Ashley teachers will engage in two book studies each year focused on increasing the effectiveness of instruction.

**Stipends for Additional Responsibilities** (\$10,000) – Grant funds will be used to provide stipends to 5 Team Leads to compensate them for taking on additional responsibilities of facilitating team meetings, analyzing data, and supporting team planning and implementation of data-driven instructional strategies.

**Stipends for Additional Time** (\$31,000) – Grant funds will be used to provide stipends to teachers to compensate them for additional time required to implement the extended day and year programming. At the end of the grant period, if additional funding has not been secured for extended learning time, the Ashley SLT will review and revise teacher schedules to ensure that instructional time is maximized while not requiring additional teacher time. This could be done by staggering teacher schedules or reducing teacher professional development time that was included to build teacher capacity at the launch of the transformation plan.

**Additional Paraprofessional Support** (\$70,000) – Paraprofessional support to differentiate instruction for students in the classroom as well as run interventions to deliver small group instruction to students identified through RtI

### **Major Improvement Strategy 3: Differentiated Instruction**

**Blended Learning Programs** (\$10,000) licenses

**iPad student device implementation costs** (46,000) Grant funds will be used to purchase materials,

and app fees and cases for student devices, mobile device management license, Apple server, Apple PD, and materials and distribution costs



**STEP Reading Assessments** (\$25,000) licenses, kits, and professional development

**District Technical Assistance and Grant Support**

**Turnaround Admin (\$16,000)** 5%

**Indirect Costs (\$22,274)** 7.59%

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Unified Improvement Plan Addendum
- Electronic Budget Form