

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (narrative)

Cheltenham Elementary is a neighborhood school serving families in Northwest Denver; it currently serves 522 students in grades ECE – 5. The school is dedicated to a well-rounded education that develops learners into thoughtful and productive citizens, with options for technology, dance, art and music. Cheltenham values the linguistic and cultural diversity of its students, which are 32% English Language Learners. In addition, 98% of Cheltenham’s students are eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch. Cheltenham is currently rated as “Accredited on Probation” (red) on the district’s School Performance Framework. The overall rating dropped by six percentage points from 2012 to 2013, due to a significant drop in student growth and overall achievement.

In the 2013-14 school year, Cheltenham 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. Dr. Kal Rao was hired in early May to lead the 2013-2014 transformation process at Cheltenham Elementary. Dr. Rao has extensive experience working in chronically low-performing schools engaged in turn around efforts. Prior to taking on the principal position at Cheltenham, Dr. Rao was a Principal Resident at Trevista in 2012-13 and Assistant Principal at McGlone in 2011-12. She also has district level experience working on the LEAP evaluation system where she designed the peer observer role and was primary author for the initial framework for effective teaching. Dr. Rao’s strengths include her understanding of quality instruction, unwavering belief in what kids are capable of doing, and holding herself and others accountable to high standards.

Cheltenham participated in the district’s 2013-14 UIP Plus strategic planning process, identifying the school’s vision, and goals, and using these to create an improvement plan. An external consultant was hired to facilitate the strategic planning process. The school’s leadership team, faculty, and community were included throughout the process. To begin, leadership and staff conducted in depth data analyses, root cause analysis, and identified priority performance challenges. Major improvement strategies and actions steps to address the priority performance challenges were then identified by the instructional leadership team and confirmed with the full staff. The result of this process was not only a deeper understanding of the school’s priority performance challenges, but a clear plan for improvement that identified goals for the next three years. Having completed this phase of the work during the 2013-14 school year, Cheltenham is especially well positioned to begin a turnaround effort in 2014-15.

SECTION I: Needs Assessment and Program Plan

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

Based on the needs assessment, the transformation intervention model was selected for Cheltenham. See Attachment E for details.

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 UIP Plus process, the leadership and staff at Cheltenham engaged in an in depth data analysis to diagnose the school's current performance. This process resulted in identification of the following three key performance concerns:

- The percent of students who scored proficient or advanced in reading has consistently been 30-40% below state expectations.
- Teacher effectiveness has been inadequate relative to rigor, challenging instruction, identifying at risk students, and collaboration.
- The school lacks consistent data utilization systems and structures.

In October of 2013, Cheltenham had a two-day external quality review conducted by SchoolWorks. The review team produced a report that included several areas for concern. The following concerns were highlighted because they negatively impact the effectiveness of instruction and the ability of students to achieve academic success:

- Declining and dramatically low student engagement including low re-enrollment and declining average attendance.
- Teachers do not have high expectations for the achievement of all students and do not have intentional/challenging instruction for all students.
- Teachers do not intentionally and effectively use data to inform instruction.

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 in the report:

- Leadership is beginning to align operations to address improvement goals, which are key to enabling staff to improve school culture and student achievement.
- A significant additional focus and utilization of data to refine instruction is providing critical support to meeting goals.

These findings indicate that the new leadership at Cheltenham has already begun to drive positive improvements to school culture, and is properly positioned to make dramatic gains with the current staff if provided the appropriate resources and support. The priority performance challenges identified at Cheltenham as well as progress made by the new leadership indicate that the best fit school intervention model is transformation.

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?*

Three root causes related to Cheltenham’s declining student growth and achievement were identified:

- Lack of consistent implementation of the curriculum
- Lack of effective, rigorous, and engaging instruction
- Lack of use of formative assessments to monitor, adjust, and differentiate daily instruction.

Cheltenham teachers struggle to plan and deliver consistent and rigorous instruction and the school lacks systems of support for developing, monitoring and supporting consistent, high quality instruction across grade levels. Cheltenham needs added resources and support to design and implement the systems that will provide crucial training and coaching to teachers. In addition, the school needs to implement strong structures and tools for teacher collaboration and data driven instruction.

Additionally, Cheltenham lacks the structures to consistently identify students in need of intervention and provide the targeted supports they need. With a student population that is 32% ELL and 11% SPED, Cheltenham needs to improve its RTI model and put systems in place to deliver effective interventions to students who are behind.

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 Cheltenham engaged in a goal setting process as a part of the UIP Plus. As a result, clear annual targets are in place and can guide the turnaround effort; specific goals for student achievement and growth will be used as an annual measure of whether Cheltenham is on track. Cheltenham has also set some long term goals around adult culture and effectiveness that explicitly address the root causes of low student achievement. The table below is Cheltenham’s long term goal setting tool, included in the UIP Plus.

GOAL	Current Performance (2012-13)	2013-14 Goal	2014-15 Goal	2015-16 Goal	Vision for Cheltenham
% of students Proficient or above on TCAP Reading (3 – 5 th grade)	34%	48%	55%	65%	75%
% Students Reading at or above grade level on DRA (ECE – 5 th grade)	43%	53%	63%	73%	75%
Academic Growth in	54 MGP	60-65 MGP	60-65 MGP	60-65 MGP	60-65 MGP

Reading					each year
% of students Proficient or above on TCAP Math	32%	47%	54%	64%	74%
Academic Growth in Mathematics	56 MGP	60-65 MGP	60-65 MGP	60-65 MGP	60-65 MGP each year
Attendance	91%	94%	94%	95%	95%+
Average LEAP rating for teachers on I1 (Standards Based CLO)	4.52	4.5*	5	5.5	6
Average LEAP rating for teachers on I2 (Rigor)	4.28	4.5*	5	5.5	6
Average LEAP rating for teachers on I3 (Instruction Methods)	4.79	4.5*	5	5.5	6
Average LEAP rating for teachers on LE3 (Clear Expectations)	5.47	4.5*	5	5.5	6
SPF Section: Growth	YELLOW 39.6%	Yellow 45%	Green	Green	Green
SPF Section: Student Engagement	RED 16.7%	Red 33%	Yellow	Green	Green

The goals identified by the Cheltenham leadership and staff address the root causes of the low academic performance and student engagement. The goals address factors within the control of administrative leaders and teachers as well as students, and they are strongly aligned with the Denver Plan focus on high expectations for all students and prioritization of teaching and learning. The combined effort of work toward these goals has the opportunity to significantly improve the SPF rating.

To effectively progress monitor progress toward goals, Cheltenham uses a UIP Tracker in Google docs and holds two monthly progress monitoring meetings. The UIP Tracker includes high leverage action steps for each Major Improvement Strategy and lays out measures, metrics, and benchmark goals by action step in order to assess whether the step is on track on a monthly basis. By having the UIP Tracker in google docs, it is accessible to all stakeholders – leadership, staff, and district support partners – and can be updated on an ongoing basis. In the first of two monthly progress monitoring meetings, the School Leadership Team (which includes staff) meets to share the data they’ve collected for the action steps they are responsible to, and update the tracker to reflect the current status of each action step. In the second of each progress monitoring meeting, school leadership meets to trouble shoot mid-course corrections to the strategies that action steps that are not on track. This meeting is facilitated by a strategic planning consultant, and includes the Instructional Superintendent, who uses the updated tracker and current school data and observations to determine the priority focus areas for the meeting.

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 Cheltenham Elementary are in compliance with the required components of the transformation model.

In addition, the improvement plan developed by the school in the UIP Plus process shows how the Major Improvement Strategies and the associated Action Steps are indeed a plan for dramatic improvement. The “UIP Plus” process is a new process developed by DPS, which provided Cheltenham with a consultant to guide the school through a strategic planning process. The consultant met with the School Leadership Team consistently throughout the 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. The Diagnostic Review Grant awarded by CDE supported this process. Cheltenham now seeks to secure funding to implement the major improvement strategies identified through this diagnostic process.

Through the UIP Plus process, schools identified high level goals that will lead to dramatic improvement, a theory of action for how to reach the goal, and strategies that are aligned to the theory of action.

Goal #1
Significantly increase achievement in reading (from 34% P/A to 65% P/A) and math (from 32% to 64%)
Theory of Action
If we implement research based core curriculum aligned to CCSS and deliver data-driven, rigorous, and engaging instruction; then achievement will increase for all students.
Strategies
<p>Design and implement systems & structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborative Planning Structures ▪ Observation & Feedback System ▪ Discipline Systems and Structures ▪ Data Cycle/Team Systems & Structures supported by Achievement Network
<p>Communicate clear and high expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide professional development on guided reading (Guided Reading Plus) ▪ Provide PD to support understanding Common Core expectations ▪ Increase rigor including use of higher order questioning ▪ Score writing prompts using CCSS rubric
<p>Create and track accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor student progress using school wide assessments in reading and math ▪ Teachers communicate progress data and provide feedback to students ▪ Grade level teams review student work and student data and plan for next steps

- Leadership team conducts a mid-year review of a body of evidence from multiple assessments

The needs assessments for all four elementary schools that are being supported by the EED turnaround network reveal gaps in the use of data and consistent structures for supporting instruction throughout the building. Therefore, the new network will be specifically designed to support improvements in these two areas: use of data to drive instruction and literacy instruction. The network will provide support at scale, making the partnership with Achievement Network and the implementation of Guided Reading Plus strategies more efficient and economical.

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. Cheltenham’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 Cheltenham’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 Cheltenham is very much aligned to this strategy. The “School Development Teams” initiative provides financial incentives and additional responsibilities to highly performing teachers in order to attract and retain them in turnaround schools; these teachers will be leveraged to help the rest of the faculty improve their instructional practices. Additionally, the partnership with Achievement Net, Blueprint Schools Network, and other providers ensures job-embedded, high quality professional development for all teachers in a turnaround school.

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

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

Major Improvement Strategy #1: Implement research based core curriculum and rigorous instruction

Professional development in curriculum and instruction will be used to build capacity of teachers, new and returning, to effectively implement the transformation plan. Once capacity is increased, the need for external professional development will be significantly reduced.

Extra Duty Pay (\$17,000) – Grant funds will be used to compensate teachers for additional professional development time (1 hour additional per month for 31 teachers).

PD Supplies (\$2,000) – Grand funds will be used on supplies necessary for professional development.

Guided Reading Support/PD Supplies (\$1500) – Grant funds will be used to purchase materials and supplies related to Guided Reading Plus, including network-based materials. Some funds will support the literacy coordinator's PD, so she can lead network-wide trainings.

Professional Books (\$1,000) – Grant funds will be used to purchase books for a professional Book Study on Teaching with Poverty in Mind.

School Development Team Training (\$15,000) – Grant funds will be used to provide training to school development team members (2 Data Culture, 2 Staff Culture, and 2 Planning & Instruction Leads).

Release Time (\$26,000) – Grant funds will be used to pay substitutes to release teachers for professional development.

School Technology Specialist (\$65,000) – Grant funds will be used to hire a technology specialist to provide professional development, model technology integration, coach teachers and co-teach. This short term position is focused on building the capacity of teachers to effectively implement technology based instruction.

Major Improvement Strategy #2: Implement consistent data analysis processes to drive instruction

Achievement Network (\$34,000) – Grant funds will be used to contract with the Achievement Network to provide high quality formative assessments and analysis of the results in a user-friendly platform. These assessments are aligned to DPS curriculum and CCSS, and are designed to provide meaningful data on progress toward grade level proficiency and TCAP growth. In addition to the data and assessments, A-Net will provide on the ground training and coaching,

in order to empower teachers to use the data to drive instruction. Data teams at the school site, led by School Development Team teachers, will enhance and sustain this work.

Major Improvement Strategy #3: Implement systems and structures for a culture of accountability

Executive Coaching for Principal and Assistant Principal (\$10,000) - Grant funds will be used to provide school leaders with executive coaching to support their development and increase their leadership effectiveness.

Staff Culture PD (\$5,000) – Grant funds will be used to provide two days of professional development to teachers on school systems and structures and to establish a strong staff culture of accountability and team work. Professional development builds staff capacity and systems ensure that implementation is sustainable.

Extra Duty Pay (\$17,000) – Grant funds will be used to compensate teachers for participating in the Staff Culture PD in addition to the established calendar.

Dean of Student Culture (\$66,200) – Grant funds will be used to hire a dean of student culture to design and implement systems to foster a positive student culture and to address negative student behaviors. The dean of student culture is a short term position intended to support students through the transformation process. Once a strong student culture is established, ongoing implementation of behavior support systems will be the responsibility of teachers and leaders.

Community Liaison (\$40,000) – Grant funds will be used to hire a community liaison to increase the intensity of support for students and families through the transformation.

TIG Administration Costs:

Turnaround Admin (\$16,000) 5%

Indirect Costs (\$23,772) 7.59%

ATTACHMENTS

- Unified Improvement Plan Addendum
- Electronic Budget Form