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March 30, 2011

Dear Innovation Status Proposal Review Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Diploma Plus in support of the innovation proposal being submitted by Vista Academy a Denver Public School Multiple Pathway Center opening in Far Northeast Denver in the fall of 2011. Vista Academy is online to implement the Diploma Plus model. Diploma Plus schools are developed in a response to address the high dropout rate and barriers to post-secondary success for underserved youth, and are designed to provide a high quality alternative to traditional high schools.

The Diploma Plus model combines high expectations for every student, a rigorous competency-based and standards-aligned approach, a small personalized learning environment, opportunities to make real world connections, and pathways to becoming successful adults. Diploma Plus has identified Four Essentials of success that allow schools to directly target this unique population: a performance based approach, a supportive school culture, future focus on college, careers, and civic engagement, and effective supports for teachers and schools.

We are in support of Vista Academy's proposal for innovation status. This opportunity will allow Vista Academy to provide an excellent education and bring out the best in every young person. Vista Academy students will strive to think critically and demonstrate competency of their learning in real world situations. An innovation status would allow Vista Academy the autonomy and resources to meet the diverse needs of at-risk youth. An award of innovation status would be very complimentary to and would likely be supportive of the Diploma Plus model. Principal Rhonda Juett, understands the Diploma Plus™ Model and how it can work under an innovative status. She is ready to lead her staff to be truly innovative for the betterment of students in need.

Diploma Plus™ highly recommends innovation status for Vista Academy so they can provide rigorous, relevant and engaging academic programming to nurture out the S.W.A.G.G.E.R* of the future leaders of the Denver metro area.

Peace,

Akili Moses Israel
Executive Director

*S.W.A.G.G.E.R. - **S**cholars, **W**orld Class, **A**ctively engaged in our community, **G**o getters, **G**lobal thinkers, **E**nterprising, and **R**elentless in our pursuit of an education