

Colorado Department of Education School Redesign RFI:
Charter Management Organizations, Networks and Schools

Organization name: Phalen Leadership Academies (“PLA”)

Summary
<p>Phalen Leadership Academies (“PLA”) is a charter management organization that currently operates 10 schools in Indiana and Michigan, where the vast majority of children are from traditionally underserved populations. Network-wide, 89% of the children PLA serves are African American and Latino, 82% live in poverty, and 9% are English Language Learners.</p> <p>PLA is a proven turnaround operator with a track record of turning around existing, underperforming schools, as well as launching new, high quality schools. Students in PLA schools have achieved high academic growth and achievement on state assessments, and PLA schools, as a result, have improved their overall school ratings. The application provides clear information regarding PLA’s educational model, strategies for community engagement, processes for opening up new schools and partnering productively with school districts.</p> <p>PLA notes: “We are a learning organization that is dedicated to deeply understanding the needs and context of any community we serve. It is this adaptive and collaborative approach that has enabled us to successfully work within a variety of communities, and that we believe will enable us to successfully work with districts in Colorado.”</p>

Application Question	Completed Sufficiently? (Yes, No, Partially)	Notes
Describe your organization’s mission and educational model. Describe how your model meets the needs of historically underserved students (students living in poverty, English language learners, and racial/ethnic minority students).	Yes	Phalen Leadership Academies (“PLA”) clearly describes their mission and educational model, stating that their “model is specifically designed to raise the achievement of historically underserved students by providing a rigorous, personalized, and well-rounded educational experience for all students.”

		<p>PLA outlines the key components of their model, their major instructional methods and their approach to serving English Language Learners and students with special needs. They note that “PLA schools that have implemented the model for at least two years, where 89% of students are students of color, have produced on average 11% increase in math and 6% increase in ELA on the state exam.” Further, the narrative emphasizes that PLA not only serves communities of color but is staffed with senior leaders of color. Additionally, their model focuses on family engagement and supports, including out-of-class learning opportunities.</p>
<p>What do you anticipate would be the greatest challenges making your educational approach successful at a turnaround school or as a new school in a new community, and how would you go about working to address those challenges?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>PLA describes common challenges they have faced based on their experiences and how they address those challenges, which include maximizing instructional time, developing teachers and leaders, embracing culture shifts and partnering with families. PLA states they “know that every community is unique with regards to the challenges it faces on the path to creating high quality schools. PLA is a highly collaborative organization that is ready to work closely with our partners to meet their specific needs.”</p>
<p>When considering operating a school in a district that you have not operated in before, what would be the key aspects or conditions of an agreement you would need to have in place with the district (or authorizer) in order to make your school successful?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>When creating a new charter school, PLA seeks to ensure that the school has full operational autonomy as delineated by state law.</p>

<p>Please describe your action plan for engaging with local communities. How might the charter network, management organization or school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engage with parents, community members, school and district staff and leaders, and local school board members to design a school that meets the community’s needs and has community support? ● Address the varied funding models found in different districts? ● Address the unique authorizing requirements and policies of different districts? ● What do you perceive would be the likely differences in districts other than the ones you currently work with? ● How would you approach facility acquisition in other districts? 	<p>Yes</p>	<p>PLA notes that “engaging authentically with our communities and stakeholders to design and develop our schools is part of our ‘DNA’ as an organization.” PLA conducts intentional outreach to parents, school and districts leaders, and community members when entering a new community to understand what stakeholders are looking for in a school.</p> <p>The application provides clear and thorough answers to all of the sub-questions that demonstrate PLA has built solid processes for opening new schools and establishing new partnerships.</p>
<p>Evidence of Track Record of Improved Student and School Outcomes: Please illustrate your organization’s track record in dramatically improving schools or districts and radically increasing outcomes for targeted groups of students. Include a description of the criteria and the data that you use to determine the impact of your work. Please highlight the context and location of where this work has occurred. Formal research studies are preferred, if available.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The application highlights the strong overall performance seen at PLA schools. For example, PLA has transformed five F-rated schools into A-rated schools in the Indianapolis Public Schools district. Students within PLA schools have had above-average academic growth and achievement results based on statewide assessments.</p>

References	
Are there three references listed?	Yes
Comments about references	The provided references are appropriate. CDE will be contacting references and notes from those calls may be requested by districts. However, CDE strongly encourages interested schools and districts to reach out to the references on their own.