
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: ICSB

FROM: EARL MARTIN PHALEN

SUBJECT: GRADE EXPANSION AND

DATE: NOVEMBER 22, 2017

CC: JAMES BETLEY

Thank you for being such strong partners on behalf of children. As a result of our work together, Phalen Leadership Academies in Indianapolis are providing hundreds of children with the high quality education they deserve.

Some highlights of our work include:

- The George and Veronica Phalen Leadership Academy (GVP), our inaugural school located at 2323 N. Illinois, has boasted an average 96% passage rate on IREAD over three years – 6% higher than the state average, and approximately 20% above our host district, IPS;
- GVP improved its state grade to a B, marginally missing an A-rating by 1.5%;
- GVP's ISTEP passage rate is 18% above our host district, IPS; and
- Our Innovation Schools (PLA@93 and PLA@103) are [ranked #4 and #5](#) for state test score growth in IPS for the 2015-2016 school year, with growth of 8.2% and 8.1% on ISTEP respectively.

In addition to strong academic growth, our scholars had wonderful enrichment experiences including college campus visits, guest speakers, including Super Bowl Champion cornerback Marlin Jackson from the Indianapolis Colts, exciting educational field trips, and more. Last year, we developed a powerful partnership with STEMNASIUM Academy at GVP. Through this partnership kindergarten scholars learn computer programming, 4th grade scholars learn to engineer drones, 5th grade scholars build underwater remote operated vehicles, and 7th graders learn to rebuild computers from the ground up! Next year, every scholar in the PLA network will have these experiences.

With your support we were also able to launch an incredibly successful middle school, the James and Rosemary Phalen Leadership Academy. As a result, over 125 7th and 8th grade scholars are receiving the high quality education that eluded children on the Far Eastside for so long. Our doors are open, and we certainly encourage you to visit our school any time to see and experience what now exists for children on the Far Eastside.

Thank you for considering our request to further expand educational opportunities for our children!

I. Grade Expansion at our Middle School

There are several reasons why we are requesting to expand our middle school from serving grades 7-8, to serving grades 7-9.

First, we ultimately believe that the Far Eastside needs a high quality high school. Previously, John Marshall Middle and High Schools were the only options there—only 4% of students attending Marshall passed ISTEP last year. The lack of high quality educational options for children and families is not a new development. For decades, children and families on the Far Eastside have had no high quality high school options in their community, and we are committed to changing the narrative. We believe children and families deserve more.

Second, John Marshall Middle and High Schools are closing. Now, the nearest school for our rising 9th graders will be Arsenal Tech. This is not a neighborhood school for our students. In addition to not being in the community of our families, many of our scholars enjoy participating in extracurricular activities. Transportation for both students and parents—if forced to attend Tech—will be a challenge, and will limit their ability to participate and fully engage in all of the school's offerings.

Finally, scholars and families have grown to both trust and succeed at Phalen. Our families want to stay in the neighborhood school that they trust, and with the school where their children are succeeding. They do not want to disrupt, what in many cases is their child's first positive learning experience. We truly hope that you will allow our students to continue to flourish.

Our middle school facility currently has 60,000 square feet of available space. Allowing JRP to include 9th grade will allow us the time necessary to ensure that our scholars have a high quality 9th grade option in the community where they live while we work to identify a high quality high school partner to share our space as a way provide a clear pathway to educational excellence for our scholars.

We are currently working to identify high quality charter high school operators with current schools, or those with a track record of success who are opening new schools to partner with PLA as our feeder high school on the Far Eastside. Specifically, we are looking for schools with strong administrative leadership, a data driven educational model with high emphasis on technology integration, and an emphasis on life planning after high school with a focus on post-secondary education. If our partner school offers 9th grade we will allow them to absorb our 9th grade program. If not, our 9th grade will remain as an intermediate grade between middle and high school. This detail will be primarily determined by the partnership we establish with the high school operator.

If we are unable to identify a high school partner, we hope to use one of our existing charters, and would plan to open a PLA high school in 2019. In this case, we plan for our 9th grade to become a part of our high school.

II. Request to Amend Roll Out of Charters

The central goal of our organization is to identify pockets of need, and ensure that all children and families have access to high performing schools where they can flourish.

A perfect example of this focus is the creation of the James and Rosemary Phalen Leadership Academy (JRP) last year. As mentioned previously, before JRP, the only offering on the Far Eastside was John Marshall, a school where only four percent of the students passed ISTEP. Because of our partnership with you, we are now positioned to provide hundreds of children with a safe learning environment and a quality education that will enable them to realize their full potential.

Phalen's initial perspective for its charter roll out was developed several years ago. Since then, there have been many changes in the educational landscape – a large increase in the number of innovation schools, growth and saturation of charter schools around the state, and improvement in public school offerings in many communities. We believe that allowing us to have the strategic flexibility to expand, and create new charters where there's a significant gap in service is entirely aligned with the charter board's mission. We hope that you will continue to allow us to be strategic and thoughtful in the rollout of our schools.

If your decision is to reject this request, we would like to activate the charters according to our initial plan. In either case, we remain committed to our work of serving children and families in Indianapolis and on the Far Eastside.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and we look forward to working closely with you to ensure more and more children and families have the quality education they deserve to learn and thrive.

Sincerely,



Earl Martin Phalen
Founder & CEO
Phalen Leadership Academies