

March 22, 2016

Dear Indiana Charter School Board:

Thea Bowman was founded 13 years ago by African-American leaders who believed in the power of education to transform lives. Since the school's inception, Thea Bowman has provided a strong public education to over 10,000 children.

Today, the need for high quality educational options in Gary is stronger than ever. Families in Gary are facing increasingly difficult challenges that are putting our children's futures at risk. Currently, 39% of families in Gary live in poverty, and the unemployment rate is nearly 20% (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2014). And poverty is having its effect. In addition to witnessing bleak prospects for their futures, far too frequently our children are being exposed to violence and hopelessness – according to recent reports, Gary had the highest homicide rate of all cities in the state, and among the top ten in the country, at 69 homicides per 100,000 residents, which is double than the homicide rates in Indianapolis and Chicago combined (Federal Bureau of Investigation). For our children to rise and secure the futures that are deserving of their true potential, they must have high quality schools.

As one of the longest-running charter schools in the city, Thea Bowman is very proud to have served in that capacity for our children and families. Academic excellence is a top priority for us and we are pleased to share that last year, 98% of our third grade students passed IREAD. In comparison, 74% of third graders at Gary Lighthouse Charter School and 83% at Gary Community Schools Corporation passed IREAD. Indeed, 95% of students at Thea Bowman graduate from high school. This exceeds the four-year graduation rate of 89% for the state and 82% for Gary Community Schools.

For several years, Thea Bowman was an “A-rated” school as a result of our strong student performance. While we have slipped in our performance in recent years, we still have a strong foundation we know we can build on. We are taking major actions, as is detailed in this application, to address every area of improvement and to once again ensure Thea Bowman is a high quality school. For example, we have formed a new Board of Directors composed of exceptional educational, business, legal and community leaders. We are making key staffing changes in order to ensure that our school has the combination of skillsets and experiences that we previously lacked. Along with these changes, we are putting in place tighter controls, systems, and processes to ensure complete compliance with authorizer, state, and federal regulations. Furthermore, we have selected Phalen Leadership Academies as a high performing Educational Services Provider (ESP) to lead school operations and help us raise Thea Bowman back to excellence.

We are pleased to share with you additional information about our plan to ensure that we can continue to provide children in Gary with the high quality education that they need and deserve.

Sincerely,

Thea Bowman Leadership Academy

Additional Information for the Indiana Charter School Board

1. Pursuant to the letter from Ball State University Office of Charter Schools (“OCS”) to the Drexel Foundation dated January 15, 2015 granting a provisional one (1) year renewal (“Renewal Letter”), TBLA was required to submit to OCS an action plan identifying a common set of instructional tools per grade level and the school’s focus to increase ISTEP+ and NWEA, as well as maintaining or improving IREAD-3 scores. Please provide a copy of this plan.

We have submitted a formal action plan to OCS; it is attached.

Selection of a new and high performing ESP

In addition to the plan that we submitted to the OCS, we believe that our decision to select a full service Education Service Provider (ESP), and to select Phalen Leadership Academies as our ESP, will have a powerful impact on the educational achievement of our students. A draft of the ESP agreement is attached. In short, Phalen will be responsible for oversight of all school operations; and Phalen will be accountable to the Thea Bowman Leadership Academy’s governing board.

Students attending schools managed by Phalen perform extremely well. Last year, 100% of their scholars passed I-READ. Additionally, 71% of their students passed ISTEP – this exceeded the state average and outperformed students in its district, Indianapolis Public Schools, by 28%.

Ultimately, our goal is that Thea Bowman students will outperform the state average on ISTEP, IREAD, high school graduation rates and more. We believe that with our newly constituted board and with Phalen as ESP, we will realize our vision for our children and families.

Below are some of the operational changes that will be effectuated as a result of the new selection of any ESP:

Rigorous selection process for all staff

Next year, Thea Bowman will ensure the hiring of highly qualified teachers through a rigorous, multi-stage screening process that will be led by Phalen.

The hiring process will only be open to credentialed teachers, and Phalen will have complete oversight of the process, including all final decision-making rights regarding staff hiring. We have evaluated Phalen’s process, and it is both rigorous and proven.

There are three phases through which our teachers must pass to continue in service to our students next year. During the first phase of the interview process, candidates will:

- Complete an online application, which includes the submission of all official credentials and other required employment records;
- Receive a recommendation from their principal;
- Participate in a phone interview with the Director of Recruitment; and
- Complete a writing sample and leadership assessment test.

If successful during the first phase of the selection process, candidates will be advanced to the second phase of the selection process which includes an Interview Day with a panel of our educational experts. There are four components to this interview day: (1) candidates present a 5-7 slide PowerPoint highlighting their background, reasons for becoming a teacher, and their teaching

and leadership accomplishments; (2) candidates watch a video of a teacher teaching and highlight the teacher's strengths and areas for improvements; (3) candidates respond to a range of scenarios involving issues that might arise with scholars, parents and their peers; and (4) candidates will be presented with NWEA data for several scholars and are asked to explain how they would work to help each child succeed.

The third phase of the process will include observation of the candidate's classroom teaching. This will be an unannounced visit and observation by the Recruitment Department.

A final roster of staff will be presented to the board, with their proof of credentials, by June 30, 2016.

This thorough selection process, through which all staff must participate, will ensure that all of our teachers next year are both highly qualified and highly effective.

High quality professional development for all staff

If a candidate is selected to become a teacher, they will also be required to successfully complete a full week of pre-service professional development to ensure that they are set up to succeed in the classroom. Our teacher orientation and training will use a blended learning approach including online and classroom-based learning; online content will focus on pedagogy and theory, and classroom-based content will place emphasis on practice and application. The primary goals of our professional development program will be: (1) to prepare team members to effectively implement the pedagogical model; (2) to prepare our staff to successfully implement our educational program; (3) to communicate expectations for collaboration and professional behavior; (4) to prepare our teachers to build positive partnerships with scholars and families; (5) to prepare our team to effectively execute approved curriculum, instructional texts, and materials; and (6) to prepare our staff to uphold school-wide scholar behavior management and maintain school culture policies.

Ongoing teacher professional development will be hosted on a regular basis for over 60 hours throughout the school year. Ongoing teacher training will include content related to instructional quality, differentiated instruction, innovative teaching techniques, best practices in the field, age appropriate classroom and behavior management techniques, and strategies to more deeply partner with parents. Professional development will also serve to support additional time for teacher planning, collaboration and team work.

Some of the specific modules that will be covered during training include:

- Effective classroom management;
- Effective behavior management;
- Authentically partnering with parents;
- Fully implementing the ELA, math, social studies and science curricula;
- Homework policies, practices and expectations;
- Testing and assessment at Thea Bowman;
- Using data to drive instruction; and
- RTI process.

In the past, professional development was an event at Thea Bowman. We are moving beyond this philosophy next year. Professional development will consist of the more rigorous training program, which was mentioned above; and it will include on-going coaching and feedback. On a daily basis,

our principals/assistant principals, who are instructional leaders with expertise in coaching and effective teaching, will spend significantly more time observing classrooms and modeling effective instruction. Leaders will be held accountable to spending at least 50% of their days in classrooms. Teachers will also be supported each day through coaching, modeling, and feedback from Instructional Coaches, who possess expertise in all critical areas of effective teaching. These opportunities will provide immediate, specific, and highly relevant training to our educators. On a monthly basis, we will host workshops that target skills our teachers and leaders have determined are essential to improving student engagement and learning.

Educational model

We will build on our school’s strong educational foundation, which has created strong results for children in some areas and needs additional enhancements in others:

2014-15	Thea Bowman Leadership Academy	Gary Community Schools	Gary Lighthouse Charter School
IREAD	98.0%	82.5%	73.7%
ISTEP ELA	58.9%	38.2%	35.2%
ISTEP Math	41.5%	29.1%	19.9%
Four-year high school graduation rate	94.7%	82.1%	91.5%

Through our partnership with Phalen, we will be able to enhance our model and increase the level of accountability at our school. Our guiding philosophy remains the same: we believe that regardless of socio-economic status, every child deserves to be inspired, educated and transformed into life-long learners through a quality education where high expectations, community collaboration and best practices are facilitated at every level of operation. In order for effective teaching and learning to occur, instruction must be rigorous, relevant to student’s experiences and supported by positive relationships. The Thea Bowman educational design is rooted in this foundation and, under Phalen, will be focused on creating a highly rigorous, challenging, and well-rounded experience for every child. Below you will find our core educational pillars:

Highly effective, data-driven educators: Our model focuses on selecting and developing exceptional teachers who are able to use extensive student assessment data to customize and continuously improve the quality of instruction. We will establish a culture of transparency and accountability, where both teacher and student improvement and excellence are encouraged by frequent assessment of student progress and by sharing achievement data across the school.

Rigorous curricula: Our school will utilize a cumulative, rigorous, and evidence-based academic curriculum to push students to perform beyond the required expectations of their grade level in the main subject areas of literacy and math. The goal of literacy instruction at our school will be to create lifelong readers that are able to not only decode the written word but comprehend information that is presented in academic and everyday life. We will also aim to give scholars the foundational math knowledge they will need to succeed in higher-order math courses, and also make clear how math is important to everyday life. Our curricula and instruction will engage children in math by creating multiple points of entry into the subject so that scholars are actively constructing their knowledge of mathematical concepts while becoming proficient at performing math.

Rigorous, frequent, and standards-aligned assessments: Assessments will be both cumulative, in that they evaluate skills learned both in a current week and in all previous weeks, and are aligned in

substance and grading scheme with the ISTEP+ exam to familiarize students to the format of this state standardized assessment. In addition, assessments are designed to be both highly rigorous and to provide immediate feedback to students, teachers and parents.

Differentiated, small-group, and standards-aligned instruction: Differentiated instruction will be provided through daily small group and one-to-one instruction. Based on the analysis of data from regular assessments, teachers will be able to develop lessons that truly meet children where they are and allow them to achieve at their highest capacity. Staff assignments will also be adjusted. In the past, Teacher's Assistants have been largely used for administrative roles (i.e., correcting papers, making copies). Next year, they will play a much larger role in providing small group and one-on-one instruction to students.

Enrichment experiences: We believe that every child benefits from well-rounded, enriching learning experiences. As we have found through the decades we have worked in the field, children learn most effectively when they are engaged. Each day, we will aim to have our students participate in a variety of enrichment courses and elective courses that fall into one or more of five main areas: STEM, citizenship, arts, health and fitness, and entrepreneurship. In our Citizenship track, for example, scholars take courses that teach the fundamentals of social studies, but also courses that go further and allow scholars to explore topics like concepts of "citizenship" in the digital age. In addition to courses, our students will also hear from inspirational guest speakers; participate in educational field trips to museums, professional workplaces, cultural landmarks, and college campuses; and lead service projects to build connections to their communities and their futures. Through these courses and out-of-class experiences, we will help scholars explore their talents in science, art, music, and other fields by participating in hands-on guided exercises, like developing computer applications, while learning from professionals about careers in those fields. In addition, we will introduce scholars to the fundamentals of college planning, career pathways, and financial literacy, helping our scholars to design their pathway to future career and life success.

Strong parental engagement: We will have an authentic partnership with families. Some of the ways we will work to achieve that include training teachers to effectively partner with parents; creating a welcoming environment for our families; holding an orientation that outlines our expectations of parents and what they can expect from us; regularly communicating with parents about their child's performance; and hosting fun events throughout the year that celebrate their children. Our parents will also be invited to sit in classes, participate in field trips, support service projects, or participate in any way that they feel comfortable.

Curriculum

Our school will utilize a cumulative, rigorous, and evidence-based academic curriculum to push students to perform beyond the required expectations of their grade level in the main subject areas of literacy and math. The goal of literacy instruction at our school will be to create lifelong readers that are able to not only decode the written word but comprehend information that is presented in academic and everyday life. Our instructional model will place a unique emphasis on drilling down on the core skills to help children master literacy by grade three, and our approach is structured to help children gain skills in all domains of language development, including reading, writing and speaking. We also aim to give scholars the foundational math knowledge they will need to succeed in higher-order math courses, and also make clear how math is important to everyday life. Our curricula and instruction in this subject will engage children in math by creating multiple points of entry into the subject so that scholars are actively constructing their knowledge of mathematical concepts while becoming proficient at performing math.

Our teachers will develop and/or procure detailed and customized pacing guides for ELA and math to serve as a roadmap for teachers, and these will guide the specific skills taught and the academic standards a child should master each week. During weekly planning meetings, our teachers will carefully structure lesson plans in both core subjects to align to Indiana state standards, as well as to provide a clear progression of skill over the course of the calendar year. Teachers will submit prepared lesson plans to our leaders by Friday each week and will then create a variety of projects for use in class, morning work, or during small group rotations that are based on the specific skills identified in lesson plans and, by extension, in the pacing guide. Principals and instructional coaches will observe classrooms daily to ensure that lessons are being implemented as designed and that content is appropriately challenging.

Teachers will use students' weekly and interim assessment data, during planning meetings, to determine the appropriate curricula and tools to use each week for core instruction, as well as for supplemental instruction in small groups. This process is described in detail in the Assessment section and will ensure that the resources teachers select derive directly from the needs of students. Our teachers will have access to a wide variety of pre-selected research-based curricula to provide content for instruction in ELA and math and to supplement core instruction. Two examples are Reading Street (literacy) and GO Math! (mathematics). Each curriculum provides a set of tools and resources to help teachers develop differentiation strategies based on student skill levels, and each is designed so that the cognitive demands on scholars are appropriate for their developing abilities. These curricula are supplemented by a wide selection of age-appropriate and culturally relevant materials, such as novels, e-books, and more that students can use for independent study.

Reading Street, developed by Pearson, is a comprehensive English Language Arts curriculum. We selected Reading Street for instruction in literacy because it will allow us to implement core features of our instructional model, which include providing both research-based and differentiated instruction. Reading Street builds on the Scott Foresman textbook series, which is one of the most widely used literacy curricula in the United States. It is designed to facilitate explicit, systematic, and high quality instruction focusing on the five critical elements in reading that have been identified by research: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Extensive research demonstrates the effectiveness of Reading Street as an introductory literacy text. For example, a 2006 study by the independent company Magnolia Consulting used randomized, controlled methods to examine the impact of Reading Street on early student literacy achievement. Researchers found that students who used Reading Street achieved statistically significant gains in reading during the one-year study period, as measured by performance on the Gates-McGinitie Reading Test 4th Edition and the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessments. In addition, the study examined the curriculum's impact on student engagement and found that children were highly engaged, as well as that it was easy to use the program to differentiate learning in a variety of types of settings (i.e., independent work, small group). These are exactly the features that support the high quality learning environment we want to create, and that is why we have selected Reading Street for our students.

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's GO Math! is a comprehensive, research-based mathematics curriculum. The curriculum is designed to align with Indiana State Standards and provides children with a strong foundation in mathematics. Five major research strands underpin the design of the program, each of which target the key components of math instruction as identified by recent research: Writing to Learn, Vocabulary, Scaffolding, Metacognition, and Graphic Organizers. We

have adopted GO Math! because it is a leader in the field. A 2015 curriculum review by Edreports.org, an independent and nonprofit organization focused on reviewing educational curricula, gathered a panel of mathematics experts to evaluate the quality and structure of 20 top math curricula. For grades four through eight, GO Math! ranked in the top three in terms of focus, coherence, rigor, and mathematical practice-content connections.

GO Math! has also been shown to have a strong, positive impact on students' mathematics performance. A 2016 study by Harvard University found that the average student using GO Math! as their primary curriculum achieved a statistically significant increase in math assessment scores when compared to students in a control group; specifically students using GO Math! scored 0.1 standard deviations higher ($p < 0.05$) than similar students using other math curricula or no curriculum at all. These substantial positive outcomes give us confidence that Go Math! will serve our scholars well.

A day in the life of a scholar

While we will ensure that our school is structured to be responsive and adaptive to our students' needs, below is one possible configuration of what a typical day would look like for a scholar at Thea Bowman.

After breakfast and before the tardy bell, I make my way to my classroom to begin my morning work. The hallways are quiet and orderly as teachers stand in their doorways to personally greet me. Teachers are held to a high standard when it comes to morning work; the school expects the atmosphere to be rigorous and conducive to learning. Then we transition to whole group instruction.

As I progress through my day, I will have a 90-minute language arts block in which teachers review previously taught skills and introduce new ones in a variety of engaging ways. I rotate between small groups, peer to peer tutoring, and guided intervention, where I am taught by teachers and Instructional Coaches. The format for math instruction is similar to that of the 90-minute language arts block. Teachers review previously taught skills with me and introduce new ones, while I interact with other students and utilize hands-on learning materials. Teachers follow their pacing guide and can ask for assistance in tailoring and personalizing instruction for me from one of the school's rotating Instructional Coaches, if necessary.

Teachers' employing instructional techniques that ensure I master key academic skills according to pacing guides is essential to my performing strongly on our regular assessments. On Wednesday and Friday mornings, a positive buzz is in the air. Every Tuesday, all students in complete a 55-minute writing assessment. These are scored and returned to each classroom teacher by Wednesday morning. Friday mornings, when the results of the weekly math assessment are announced, are similarly exciting. The classroom that has the highest percentage of students passing marches through the hallways exclaiming to be the weekly math champions. This culture of high expectations, coupled with the push for children to compete academically against classrooms and classmates, is a driving force in my school's educational model.

This particular afternoon, after lunch and recess, I participate first in an engineering course for my STEM track. Here, I receive instruction in scientific topics and then apply that knowledge by designing and building a robot. This track contains several program components that weave throughout my school week, beyond the course; this Friday, for instance, a graduate student from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology – a top-ranked engineering school nationwide – will speak to

our class about careers in engineering. Then, we will tour the college and meet with admissions personnel and professors.

The remainder of my afternoon courses go by quickly and before I know it, the school day has ended. By the time I leave, either for extracurricular activities or for home, I have a lot to share with my family!

A day in the life of a teacher

A teacher who works at Thea Bowman has one goal in mind: to make sure that every student who attends this school is successful. As a teacher, I set extremely high standards for students in both academics and behavior. I expect my children to follow our school's procedures as soon as they walk through the door, as well as to know that their education is of the utmost importance.

As a teacher at TBLA, I arrive at least an hour before the school day begins at 8 a.m. Whether I am grading papers, creating an authentic quiz or morning work to target essential skills, making copies, or creating hands-on learning centers during this time, I put in hours of planning time beyond the typical eight hour work day to ensure that all of my students achieve at high levels. I may lead up to three classes per day, depending on my subject and grade level. Typical instructional hours in core academic subjects take place from 9:30 to 3:30, with classes in ELA and math separated into 90-minute instructional blocks.

Each day, I have "morning work" ready prior to my students arriving. Morning work consists of mini-lessons, typically created by teachers, to be given in the time between when students finish breakfast and when they start their primary lessons for the day. It is rigorous but can be completed in a short amount of time, and students are aware of the expectation to complete morning work in a timely manner. The morning work I create strategically targets specific academic skills relevant to what my students have been learning that week and is designed to motivate students to learn; my students know that morning work period is a time to stretch their "mental muscles" and grow, not a time to finish homework.

Each morning I stand in my usual position in front of my classroom door, coffee in hand. As the students make their trek from the cafeteria where they have eaten breakfast to the classroom, I am ready to greet each one of my students by name. Students know they will get a cheerful "good morning!" and a hug, high five, or fist bump. As I stand at the door, I have no concerns as to what is happening behind me in the room – morning procedures are run like clockwork. Students hang their coats and backpacks; they make sure they have sharpened pencils; they are ready to learn, because as a teacher at our school, they know this is what I expect. I finish greeting children as students sit quietly and complete their morning work. If they complete their morning work, they then reach inside their desk for extra work or a book, or turn to quietly assist a peer with his or her work.

At 9:30 a.m. on the dot, students know they are to be finished with their morning work. I collect their work, and we are ready to begin core instruction. After collecting homework, my students and I greet each other as a whole classroom, and I share my expectations and goals for our day. I know that starting each day in the same way will set the tone for a successful learning day.

A 90-minute reading block follows our gathering meeting. In my classroom, I begin with a whole-class mini lesson. I lead a lesson on a specific novel, pausing to ask the class questions about the text. As I read, students are able to practice the reading strategy using the "turn and talk"

method with a partner; this allows for students to use higher-level thinking to analyze and discuss the text. Following the read-aloud session, I instruct students to return to their seats for our 30 minutes of essay-writing. This time allows students to put into practice their higher thinking skills to analyze a topic or key theme in the book.

After this, we move on to Leveled Reading Sets. Leveled Reading Sets are my students' favorite part of the day. I have worked to identify the reading levels of my students, and have placed them in groups accordingly. During this time, my five reading groups move around the room completing their teacher made, hands-on "learning center" for the day. Centers change daily, and I make sure the work is appropriately meeting the needs of my low-ability students as well as my high achievers and grade-level "middle" students. During this time, I also meet with a different group every day to closely monitor their reading fluency and mastery of our new reading skill for the week.

After lunch and recess, my students return to class ready for a math test. Today is Thursday, and we have worked hard all week learning a specific new math skill. As a teacher at our school, I use the pacing guide, complemented by our curriculum. Every Friday, I introduce a new math skill that will be tested the following week. Throughout the week, I have given hand-made quizzes targeting previous and new skills, monitored peer tutoring, and have worked closely with my lowest-performing students to ensure their success on our math test.

We near the end of the day and get ready for dismissal. Before dismissal, I distribute homework, reminding students to make sure charts are signed and homework is turned in first thing tomorrow morning. I walk my class silently to the appropriate staging area for dismissal, as talking in the halls is not permitted during this time. In the gym or office, I closely monitor my class and expect no talking or noise as they wait to get on their bus or wait for their parent/guardian.

The school day is over, but the work day is not. I, and many other teachers, exchange exhausted chatter as we head back to our classrooms to prepare for the next day. Long after the final bell, many of us spend hours continuing to grade, make copies, create quizzes and homework, filling out behavior and effort charts, and brainstorming ways to enhance learning in our classrooms. Being a teacher, especially at our school, is a very rewarding and challenging job. There is always room to improve, there are always new approaches to teaching, and there are always new and better ways to deal with a behavior problem. There is not a minute I am not focused on improving as a teacher and ensuring my students are successful. Setting high expectations for my students is a critical part of our approach and, I believe, the only way to guarantee achievement.

New system to measure impact of our educational program on our students

We will implement a robust assessment system that includes the administration of diagnostic, formative, benchmark and summative assessments; protocols to ensure rigorous analysis of data and valid and reliable results; and procedures for using results to inform instructional planning, program evaluation and accountability. We intend to be a learning organization dedicated to continuous improvement based on measurable indicators of performance and growth.

We understand that our charter agreement will be a performance contract and fully expect to be held accountable for achieving mutually-agreed upon, measurable goals. We take our responsibility for educating each child seriously and view our charter as a commitment to parents to provide them with a life-changing option for their children. We have therefore designed the school with the future in mind and created an assessment system that will provide us with timely information with which to measure our progress and ensure we are on track to meeting all requirements for charter renewal.

Our focus on data-driven instruction begins with selecting administrators and staff who demonstrate the experience and ability to analyze data effectively in their previous experience. We have a rigorous staff selection process that evaluates specific competences from multiple angles. All Thea Bowman teachers and school leaders will be subsequently trained on data-driven instruction and decision-making. As described previously, data-driven training is a core module of our pre-service training and throughout professional development sessions during the school year. The rigor of our training empowers teachers to make informed and immediate decisions about addressing scholar learning needs.

We will measure the progress of individual scholars, scholar cohorts, and the school population as a whole at major learning milestones and during regular intervals between those milestones. Scholars' performance on ISTEP and on other diagnostic and summative assessments, described below, will be used to evaluate scholar yearly growth. Teachers and the adaptive learning programs will also be able to use formative and interim assessments, also described in greater detail below, to individualize instruction and target specific content areas. In small group sessions, teachers will be able to differentiate assignments by assigning specific standards according to each scholar's performance on these assessments. Conversely, teachers will also check for understanding during small group and use the feedback to assign particular standards for scholars to work during their online learning session. Scholars who have mastered standards will be able to expand their breadth of knowledge through guided assignments in teacher-led small group; rigorous assignments that tap into student interests during independent study; and higher grade-level materials that teachers provide for students to work on at home.

Our academic evaluation approach will consist of the following combination of standardized and teacher-developed assessment instruments:

Diagnostic Assessments: We will use diagnostic assessments to determine our incoming students' knowledge, skill levels and interests and to identify signs of special needs as part of our Response To Intervention (RTI) process:

- NWEA MAP: At the beginning of each year teachers will administer the MAP in literacy and mathematics. The MAP for Primary Grades includes screening assessments that measure the foundational skills of letter and number understanding. This assessment will serve as baseline data against which growth will be measured throughout the year.
- DIBELS: We implement the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) exam at the beginning of the year to evaluate scholars' initial reading fluency skills.
- Curriculum-tied diagnostic surveys/quizzes: We use placement tests within our best-in-class reading and math curricula to round out our diagnostic assessments and to help teachers appropriately differentiate instruction.

Formative Assessments: Teachers will be expected to identify formative assessments in their lesson plans and conduct regular checks for understanding during instruction. Students will also be taught how to use formative feedback to maximize their own learning:

- Questioning: Teachers will be trained to use appropriately rigorous levels of questioning based on Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge to ascertain students'

content knowledge and conceptual understanding.

- Checklists: Teachers will develop grade-wide checklists to identify student mastery of specific skills. NWEA MAP includes ten Skills Checklist Reading tests and twenty-eight Skills Checklist Mathematics tests. These tests extend student assessment beyond the Screening tests and are used to inform instruction relative to the skills of phonological awareness, phonics, number sense, and computation.
- Observation: Teachers will be expected to document anecdotal evidence of student learning, especially through interactions during one-on-one conferencing and small group instruction.
- Rubrics: With guidance from instructional leaders, teachers will develop grade-wide rubrics to evaluate student work, especially writing and projects.

Benchmark/Interim Assessments: Teachers will administer several benchmark assessments to measure progress towards goals:

- NWEA MAP: The MAP uses an equal interval RIT scale, which provides student performance levels regardless of grade level and allows evaluation of growth over time. In addition to baseline assessments at the beginning of the year, MAP tests will be administered mid-year in mathematics and literacy to measure progress towards goals.
- Curricula-based benchmark tests: In other subjects and based on our curriculum maps and scope and sequences, teachers will create benchmark assessments to evaluate student mastery of content in each subject.
- Reading Inventory: Teachers will use quarterly reading inventories to measure student progress in reading levels. Students identified through the RTI process for Tier 2 and 3 interventions may be assessed more frequently.
- Writing Prompts: As part of our writing program teachers will develop grade-wide writing prompts and use rubrics to evaluate mastery of skills.

Summative Assessments: Students will be regularly evaluated on their mastery of skills and knowledge as defined by state standards and other additional assessments:

- ISTEP: Beginning in 3rd grade, all eligible students will take the state's standardized exams. We understand that this testing system may change and will administer all assessments required by the state.
- NWEA MAP: At the end of the year students will take the MAP tests to evaluate growth over the course of the school year and for comparison of year to year progress.
- DIBELS: We administer the DIBELS exam at the end of the program year to evaluate increases in reading fluency.
- Unit Tests: Teachers will use assessments provided with curriculum programs and/or develop their own assessments to determine mastery of unit objectives. Emphasis will be placed on performance-based assessments that require students to demonstrate mastery of

skills and content knowledge.

We will put in place the staffing, programs, and systems that allow us to quickly and accurately collect, isolate, and analyze the wealth of student achievement data generated by these assessments.

Implementation of a new RTI process

We will strive to educate scholars in an academic environment that meets the individual educational needs of all scholars. To that end, all staff members are charged with monitoring scholar academics and behavior to identify scholars that may need additional support. If a determination is made that a scholar may need additional support, we will utilize our Response-to-Intervention (“RTI”) process to determine the specific interventions needed by the scholar. Generally, in the RTI process, a struggling student is provided with increasingly intensive instruction in his or her areas of academic weakness, such as reading. Based on frequent progress monitoring, if the scholar is not responsive to these instructional interventions (i.e., he or she is still not making progress) then an evaluation may be conducted to determine if he or she qualifies for special education services.

RTI is a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of scholars with learning and behavior needs. Scholar progress is closely monitored at each stage of intervention to determine the need for further research-based instruction and/or intervention in general education, special education, or both. The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening of all scholars in the general education classroom. Struggling learners will be provided with interventions at increasing levels of intensity to accelerate their rate of learning. These services may be provided by a variety of personnel, including general education teachers, special educators, and specialists. Progress will be closely monitored to assess both the learning rate and level of performance of individual scholars. Educational decisions about the intensity and duration of interventions are based on individual scholar response to instruction. RTI is designed for use when making decisions in both general education and special education, creating a well-integrated system of instruction and intervention guided by scholar outcome data. Components of our RTI Process include:

- Tier 1: High-Quality Classroom Instruction, Screening, and Group Interventions: All scholars receive high quality, scientifically based instruction provided by qualified personnel to ensure that their difficulties are not due to inadequate instruction. All scholars are screened on a periodic basis to establish an academic and behavioral baseline and to identify struggling learners who need additional support. Scholars identified as being “at risk” through universal screenings and/or results on state- or district-wide tests receive supplemental instruction during the school day in the regular classroom. The length of time for this step can vary, but it will generally not exceed 8 weeks. During that time, scholar progress is closely monitored using a validated screening system such as curriculum-based measurement. At the end of this period, scholars showing significant progress are generally returned to the regular classroom program. Scholars not showing adequate progress are moved to TIER 2.
- Tier 2: Targeted Interventions: Scholars not making adequate progress in the regular classroom in TIER 1 are provided with increasingly intensive instruction matched to their needs on the basis of levels of performance and rates of progress. Intensity varies across group size, frequency and duration of intervention, and level of training of the professionals providing instruction or intervention. These services and interventions are provided in small-group settings in addition to instruction in the general curriculum. In the early grades

(kindergarten through 3rd grade), interventions are usually in the areas of reading and math. A longer period of time may be required for this tier, but it will generally not exceed a grading period. Scholars who continue to show too little progress at this level of intervention are then considered for more intensive interventions as part of TIER 3.

- **Tier 3: Intensive Interventions and Comprehensive Evaluation:** At this level, scholars receive individualized, intensive interventions that target the scholars’ skill deficits. Scholars who do not achieve the desired level of progress in response to these targeted interventions are then referred for a comprehensive evaluation and considered for eligibility for special education services. The data collected during TIERS 1, 2, AND 3 are included and used to make the eligibility decision.

Long-term vision/Clear goals and objectives

By implementing the educational program described herein, we will aim to ensure consistent scholar academic growth from year to year. Socially, we also expect our scholars to be honest, to persevere, to have a superior work ethic, and to commit to serving others. As part of this vision, we will hold ourselves accountable for achieving the following student outcomes (school year 2014-2015 data is provided as a baseline):

	SY 14-15	SY 16-17	SY 17-18	SY 18-19	SY 19-20
IREAD	98%	>90%	>90%	>90%	>90%
ISTEP ELA	59%	65%	70%	75%	80%
ISTEP Math	42%	50%	55%	60%	65%
Four-Year High School Graduation Rate	95%	>95%	>95%	>95%	>95%

2. Please address what steps the Board has taken, or will take, to address concerns that TBLA has had significant issues with state and federal financial reporting, management, oversight and legal compliance.

Thea Bowman is working actively to address past compliance issues and we will have the systems and personnel in place to ensure we are in full compliance by the start of the next school year. First, we recognize that one of the main causes for our compliance challenges in the past was that our board did not have the right combination of skills and focus. To address this issue, we have reconstituted our board: ***dissolving the previous board completely and bringing on leaders who have skills that we need.*** For example, one of the weaknesses we had was a lack of legal expertise, so we are pleased to have Tony Walker on board, who has over 20 years of legal experience, and was appointed to represent the First Congressional District on the State Board of Education. We will describe our new board members in greater detail later in this application, but the newly reconstituted board will bring to our school the diverse range of skills and expertise that a high-performing school needs, including organizational management and compliance; academic programming; nonprofit management; business and financial administration; facilities and community engagement.

Just as important as background and experience is having a laser focus on ensuring compliance. Working in close collaboration with Phalen, our new board will have a structured focus on key issues related to financial oversight, IDOE compliance, Title spending, academic programming and assessments. We will ensure adequate preparation for each board meeting, and that the agenda for each meeting is effectively utilized with concrete, detailed reports from our most important

compliance-driven departments, including Finance, Programming, Operations, and Development.

Secondly, we recognize that our previous school administrator did not have adequate experience in financial reporting and compliance, and often over-rode correct recommendations from the Title office. That will no longer be a problem. We have restructured our organization and our Title program is now being overseen by a proven leader who has a thorough understanding of state and federal compliance. Additionally, now our Title I Compliance Officer is directly accountable to both our ESP and our board treasurer on all communications related to compliance.

Finally, as we alluded to earlier, we chose Phalen to serve as our Education Service Provider because it has a strong record of effective governance and educational excellence. To ensure proper compliance moving forward, we are upgrading key personnel, systems and processes up and down the accountability system. The quality of the ESP directly impacts the quality of compliance, and having Phalen as our ESP, which has a consistent track record of both financial and educational compliance, we are well-positioned to restore accountability to our school. Phalen has exceptional Finance and Legal Offices that will ensure state and federal financial, and legal compliance.

3. Please address what steps the Board has taken to address the issues identified in IDOE's 2015-16 Title I and Title II Monitoring Report, including: 1) The lack of highly qualified teachers; 2) Improper or incorrect payment of instructional personnel from Title I and Title II funds; 3) A lack of financial and monitoring controls over the use of Federal dollars; 4) A failure to submit required reports and submitted reports not aligning with the approved grant; 5) A failure to properly design and implement a Schoolwide plan; 6) The provision of programming using federal funds that doesn't match was approved in the FY2016 grant; 7) A lack of compliance with the required Title I federal equipment and inventory list; 8) Missing/unaccounted for Title I equipment. Please address what specific steps the Board has taken to ensure Title compliance in the future.

We have taken several steps to address the issues identified in IDOE's monitoring report. First, our answer to question (1) provides an in-depth discussion of our schoolwide plan. In that section we also discussed our staff selection process which will ensure that our school is staffed with high quality and highly qualified teachers. This is one of the many areas of strength and capacity that Phalen brings to our school. Phalen has a highly experienced and successful Recruitment Team that has over 40 years of experience recruiting exceptional talent. All teachers apply to Phalen, and hiring decisions will be approved by Phalen. Not only will Phalen provide monthly reports to the board regarding staffing and school performance, our new board will also have a HR advisory committee that will verify the credentials of all candidates. Candidates will not be hired until their credentials are cleared.

There are three phases through which our teachers must pass to continue in service to our students next year. During the first phase of the interview process, candidates will:

- Complete an online application, which includes the submission of all official credentials and other requirement employment records;
- Receive a recommendation from their principal;
- Participate in a phone interview with the Director of Recruitment; and
- Complete a writing sample and leadership assessment test.

If successful during the first phase of the selection process, candidates will be advanced to the second phase of the selection process which includes an Interview Day with a panel of our

educational experts. The four components of interview day were described in detail above. The third phase of the process will include observation of the candidate's classroom teaching. This will be an unannounced visit by our ESP's Recruitment Department. These three-phase process will ensure that all of our teachers next year are both highly qualified and highly effective.

We also understand that retention is a critical factor too. Phalen has a strong record of creating the conditions in which teachers and leaders want to serve, and below you will find more details regarding our plan to retain exceptional school leaders and classroom teachers:

- High-performing culture: Educators teach and grow professionally in a mission-driven culture that satisfies high quality teachers' desire to transform the lives of children. Under our new ESP, Thea Bowman will be a highly entrepreneurial school culture that appeals to highly effective teachers' intrinsic desire to succeed and contribute to the success of the school.
- High quality pre-service training: Our teachers have the opportunity to participate in intensive pre-service professional development to gain highly relevant skills like data-driven instruction, culturally relevant teaching, and more, by learning in workshops led from some of our nation's most renowned educators.
- Regular and substantive support, coaching, and feedback: Teachers will receive daily informal coaching and modeling from highly effective peers, Instructional Coaches, and school leaders on particular skills or subject matter. Our leaders spend each day in our classrooms monitoring instruction and modeling effective instruction when necessary; for example, an Instructional Coach or Principal may demonstrate how to deliver a lesson based on an analysis of weekly assessment data. In addition, teachers constantly hone their skills through our monthly professional development sessions which both reinforce and teach new skills. High performing teachers will be provided opportunities to model instruction for teachers, as well as to provide feedback and mentoring to help our instructors excel.
- Opportunities to take leadership roles: In addition to receiving peer support, next year we will provide extensive opportunities for teachers to take on training and leadership roles themselves, such as by leading common planning sessions or creating enrichment experiences for scholars. An experienced teacher can develop greater staff leadership and instructional skills by serving as a peer mentor for a newer staff member or by leading a workshop on a given topic during professional development. In addition, we ensure our existing staff members are able to take on more senior positions when appropriate and after sufficient mentoring, such as by asking an Assistant Principal to take over the role of the Principal.

As we shared in the previous section, we are taking a number of key steps to address compliance issues: reconstituting the board by dissolving previous board and developing a new one that has the requisite combination of skills and background to effectively govern the school; restructuring reporting relationships and elevating a leader who has proven experience with federal and state reporting; instituting a consistent, monthly reporting structure to the board; partnering with Phalen that brings the experience, capacity, systems, and track record to help ensure full compliance for our school. We have put in several checks and balances to ensure that payments of instructional personnel are correctly made from Title I and Title II funds. At the school level, the principal works with the Title I Coordinator. Phalen's Finance and HR Departments provide support and oversight.

Monthly reports to the board enable the Board Treasurer and HR Committee to approve payments from Title I and Title II funds to ensure compliance. We will institute a similarly rigorous process to ensure proper compliance with the use of federal dollars. We are putting in tighter controls and transparent processes around the use of funds, inventory, and accounting to the board.

The Board of Directors ensures that the school is in a financially healthy position through monthly reviews of finances in which it compares financial reports against budget and cash flow projections. The board will also ensure that Thea Bowman, with the participation of Phalen's CFO and Chief Development Officer, has multiple monitoring processes in place to ensure that we are meeting our cash flow projections; for instance, the finance and development departments monitor cash flows on a weekly basis, we have a chart of accounts, we have strong financial controls, and we post transactions to the general ledger on a daily basis. In addition, we have a strong review procedures in place when disbursing payroll. Through the leadership of ESP's Finance and HR Department, we ensure that all employees follow proper accounting and financial policies and procedures.

Our finance system will be maintained to Generally Accepted Finance Principles utilizing commercially available finance software. Accrual basis finance will be used and a chart of accounts will be maintained in accordance with state and authorizer requirements. The fiscal year starts July 1st and ends June 30th. All financials will be managed and reviewed against an approved budget and reviewed with management and the Board of Directors. We will have an external auditor that will review all financial controls, systems and processes annually. For payroll, we will contract with Paychex. Our school will implement a fiscal management system that accurately processes, records, and reports transactions. Under this system, there will be six main functions:

1) Revenue and Cash Receipts: a) processing cash receipts; b) depositing funds; c) recording cash receipts in the general ledger and subsidiary records; d) performing month-end reconciliation procedures for all account balances; e) processing general ledger integration for private donations/revenue.

2) Purchases and Cash Disbursements: a) processing purchases (credit card, check, and reimbursement); b) processing invoices; c) issuing checks; d) recording checks in the general ledger and in cash disbursement journals; e) performing month-end reconciliation procedures.

3) Payroll: As shared earlier, we will utilize Paychex, an outside service provider to perform the payroll process. All payroll is reviewed and approved by The Director of Operations and then submitted to the payroll processor to ensure that payroll is processed accurately and in accordance with state and federal rules and regulations. All taxes due will be withheld and deposited by the payroll provider.

4) General Ledger and Financial Statements: The general ledger process consists of posting the period's transactions to accounting software, which produces the financial statements. Our ESP's Director of Finance will reconcile all bank and credit card accounts monthly and review with Senior Management. Financials and bank reconciliations will also be provided to and reviewed by the Board. We will have a strict monthly close to ensure that all accounts are reconciled and reviewed on a monthly basis. All monthly close reports and financial records including receipts, expenditures, payroll and journal entries will be a part of the annual audit.

5) Budgeting and Forecasting: Finance will work closely with the Board and principals to develop the school budget. The budget will be approved by the Board and submitted to all State Agencies as

required. Once approved the school financials will be managed monthly against the operating budget and all variances will be identified and explained. A detailed cash flow forecast will also be maintained on a monthly basis to project revenue, expenses and cash balances for the fiscal year.

6) Grant Management Reporting: The school will have established accounting methods to identify, assemble, classify, record and report grant expenditures. This methodology enables us to:

- Identify and record all of the grant's transactions.
- Describe the transactions in detail to allow classification for financial reporting.
- Provide the time period in which transactions occurred in order to record them in the proper accounting period.
- All grant expenditures will be assigned to the grant in the accounting system and also in external grant management financial models that monitor YTD spending and available funds.

Additionally, we have a detailed and rigorous segregation of responsibilities and expenditure control system in place. Practices are reviewed annually and detailed in our fiscal policies and procedures. These include:

Segregation of Responsibilities: All financial functions have multiple authorizers to ensure that all transactions are thoroughly reviewed and approved before being processed. All invoices are reviewed and approved by the principal and the ESP Director of Operations. Once approved the invoices are submitted to Finance for entry into the general ledger. The CEO of Phalen reviews all payables and approves release of payment. All checks and bank statements are received at the Corporate office and once approved by the CEO they are submitted to Finance for entry into the accounting system.

Authorizations: All expenditures will be subject to a tiered approval structure:

- All expenses will be proposed to and approved by a supervisor.
- The Director of Operations approval is required for purchases of \$1,000 or more.
- CEO approval will be required for purchases of \$2,500 or more.
- All expenditures require supporting receipts.
- To enhance control procedures all petty cash type expenditures will be purchased via a PEX card system that requires multi-level approvals before any funds are made available. The principals and Director of Operations will maintain the PEX cards for the school and will request.

To ensure that all fiscal practices and procedures are best practice, Phalen will engage in an annual audit of financial and administrative operations. We will adhere to the state's accounting, auditing, and reporting procedures and requirements that apply to public schools.

Ensuring proper reporting and grants compliance is one of the key services that Phalen is providing to Thea Bowman. Phalen has a proven system that has consistently produced reports that are submitted on time, with high quality, and aligned with the approved grant. Phalen will be leading this effort, with report to and oversight from the Board.

With regards to inventory, we have kept and will continue to keep all relevant records at our school in a place where IDOE can access. Attached you can find records of federal equipment and inventory that demonstrate proper recordkeeping and use of federal funds.

4. Please describe the proposed Board's collective qualifications for operating a high-quality school in Indiana and assuming stewardship of public funds. Explain how the proposed Board's skills and experience support its ability to effectively govern, monitor and provide oversight of the financial, academic and performance of the school and to hold the proposed ESP accountable. Please describe how the proposed Board's composition differs from the previous Board.

The new board is highly qualified to lead Thea Bowman. As we shared earlier, our previous board has completely dissolved and our current board is composed entirely of new members. As we developed our plan to reconstitute the board, we did extensive research regarding high performing non-profit charter school board best practices. This resulted in us reevaluating and changing our governance structure; by-laws; nomination processes; term limits; orientation/on-boarding process; committee structures; board member job descriptions; and more.

Part of our reconstitution plan also included a reflective process of identifying the key skills that would be required to effectively lead our school. Our new board represents a diverse range of skills and expertise including educational program development, school leadership and talent identification, non-profit leadership, systems development, law, facilities, business and financial administration, and parent and community engagement.

Our new board members are:

Tony Walker: Mr. Walker has been a practicing attorney since 1995. He is the Chairman of The Walker Law Group, P.C. with offices in Chicago, Atlanta, Indianapolis, and Gary, Indiana. Attorney Walker's practice includes representing churches, schools, and government agencies with focuses on real estate and litigation. He is a graduate of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Thought and Political Economy. Attorney Walker continued his post-baccalaureate education studying political science at Clark Atlanta University and then law at DePaul University where he received a Doctor of Jurisprudence. After completing law school, Attorney Walker clerked for Indiana Supreme Court Justice Robert D. Rucker, then of the Indiana Court of Appeals, and later entered private practice with the firm Meyer, Lyles & Godshalk. Attorney Walker served as Legislative Counsel to the late Congresswoman Julia Carson on Capitol Hill.

He has previously been Chief of Staff of Radio One, Inc., a national broadcasting company targeting urban listeners, and Chief Operating Officer and Vice-President of Business and Legal Affairs for its gospel recording label, Music One. Attorney Walker executive produced more than ten radio shows on WLTH Radio in Northwest Indiana where he also hosted a weekly public affairs talk show for seven years.

In 2009, the Indiana Supreme Court appointed Attorney Walker as a Commissioner of the Supreme Court Attorney Disciplinary Commission where he was elected Chairman and continues to serve until 2019. In 2011, Governor Mitch Daniels appointed him to represent the First Congressional District on the State Board of Education. He served on the SBOE until 2015. Attorney Walker has also served as president of the board of trustees of the Gary Public Library and is a past chairman of the board for the Urban League of Northwest Indiana. Attorney Walker is licensed to practice law before the United States Supreme Court, as well as the highest courts in New York, the District of Columbia, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania and in federal courts throughout the country.

Earl Martin Phalen¹: Widely recognized as one of the nation’s top social entrepreneurs, Earl Martin Phalen is the Founder and CEO of Summer Advantage and the George and Veronica Phalen Leadership Academies. Mr. Phalen is deeply committed to the education of children and is a proven leader with a track record of success. While at Harvard Law School, Mr. Phalen founded Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL), which operates after-school and summer education programs in several major U.S. cities. Under Mr. Phalen’s leadership, the organization grew from a local community service project to a national non-profit educating 15,000 children annually, and from \$12K annual budget to \$27.5M annually. Phalen then founded Summer Advantage USA, a summer reading program that partners with school districts to provide quality summer learning programs for children in grades K-8. The program is one of only two scientifically-proven models in the country and has served over 15,000 children in five states since its inception in 2009. As a result of the impact of Summer Advantage, Earl and his team were encouraged to expand their 25-day summer program model into a school. This new network of K-8 blended learning schools is called the George and Veronica Phalen Leadership Academies in honor of his parents. The Phalen Leadership Academies, or “Phalen,” was awarded an unprecedented 10 charters, which will ultimately enable them to serve 10,000 students each year. Their first academy opened in August of 2013. While the vast majority of Phalen’s students live below the poverty line, 100% of its third graders passed the IREAD-3, demonstrating reading proficiency on the state exam. Additionally, students across all grades also increased from 49% to 76% proficient in reading; and from 66% to 77% proficient in math. Because of its demonstrated results, Phalen was selected to take leadership of one of Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS)’ persistently low-performing schools and partner with IPS to transform the school into the state’s first “Innovation School.”

For his impact on the lives of children, Phalen was awarded the President’s Service Award in 1997 by President Clinton. He is also a Mind Trust and Ashoka Fellow; was awarded the Black Entertainment Television (BET) National Hero Award; and is a three-time recipient of Fast Company’s Social Capitalist Award. Earl also earned recognition from numerous national media outlets, including the cover story of TIME Magazine; feature interview on MSNBC’s Education Nation; coverage in Parent Magazine’s feature on summer learning slide; highlighted in Education Week for innovatively using technology; and more. Earl holds a B.A. in political science from Yale University. In 2014, the NCAA awarded him their Silver Anniversary award – along with NFL stars Troy Aikman and Rodney Peete, and 12-time Olympic winner Dara Torres – for being an exceptional student-athlete, and for his impact in the community.

Eve Gomez: Ms. Gomez is President of EG Spanish Interpreting & Consulting, which specializes in translation for legal affairs with a focus on depositions, hearings, and trials. She is also currently the Director of Hispanic/Latino Affairs Outreach Coordinator for Safety By Design Consultant Services, where she serves as both a consultant/interpreter to provide training to companies on critical employment safety issues. She has over 30 years of customer service/sales experience, with 12 years of experience as a mortgage consultant for Wells Fargo and Primerica.

Ms. Gomez is a longtime resident of northwest Indiana, as well as a dedicated community advocate and motivational speaker. Throughout her life, she has had a passion for helping people, as well as being a community advocate for youth and the elderly in particular. Most recently, she serves as the host of two bilingual radio shows on WLTH radio to discuss community issues and raise awareness of topics relating to health, education, politics, and more.

¹ Earl Martin Phalen will serve a one-year term only. He will be recused on all matters related to ESP and any other matter that may pose a conflict of interest. His years of experience in educational management and nonprofit governance will be critical to supporting the successful transition of TBLA to the new board.

Ms. Gomez has served as the Vice President of the Hispanic Organization Promoting Excellence since 2012. She graduated from Purdue University Calumet in a Bachelors in Business Management in 2013. Ms. Gomez is also a single mother to two children.

Michael Suggs: Mr. Suggs serves as Operations Integrations & Strategy Director for Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO). He is based at NiSource’s corporate headquarters in Merrillville, Ind. In this position, Suggs partners with the Chief Operating Officer to develop the Operations team, facilitate operating plans and serve as the liaison between Operations and Public Affairs. He is also a member of the NIPSCO Inclusion and Diversity Council, where he advances Diversity and Inclusion initiatives and represents NIPSCO and NiSource at diversity focused events. Suggs joined NIPSCO in November 1981.

Mr. Suggs began his career at NIPSCO as a Distribution Engineer, and since then has been promoted to different departments and positions, including Electrical Inspector, Customer Service Supervisor, Marketing Representative, Gas Field Supervisor, Planner and Public Affairs Manager, prior to his current position. Before joining NIPSCO, Suggs taught at Indianapolis Technical High School and West Junior High School. Suggs graduated from Indiana University in 1979 with a degree in Physical Education and has obtained a Diversity Management Practitioner Certificate from Cornell University. He is also a graduate of Leadership of Northwest Indiana and the FBI Citizens Academy.

Mr. Suggs also serves the community in a variety of ways. He is currently the 1st Vice Chairman of the Indiana Chapter of the American Association of Blacks in Energy, a member of the Chancellor Advisory Board at Purdue University Calumet, and serves on the Indiana University Northwest School of Business Advisory Board. His other volunteer involvement and board service includes the Legacy Foundation, the United Negro College Fund’s Northwest Indiana Regional Council, the Urban League of Northwest Indiana, and Indiana Blacks in Philanthropy. He is also a member of Phi Eta Psi National Fraternity and a Lifetime Member of the NAACP.

We are planning to bring on our fifth board member at our next board meeting on March 29th.

Below you can find a summary matrix of our board members’ skill-sets:

Board Member	(1) School leadership	(2) Administration, governance, legal	(3) Curriculum, instruction and assessment	(4) Financial, business and school operations management	(5) Performance management	(6) Parent and community engagement	(7) Facilities management
Tony Walker		✓		✓	✓		✓
Earl Marin Phalen	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Eve Gomez		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Michael Suggs		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

	(1) School leadership	(2) Administration, governance, legal	(3) Curriculum, instruction and assessment	(4) Financial, business and school operations management	(5) Performance management	(6) Parent and community engagement	(7) Facilities management
Board Member							
New Board Member ²	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	

The board will hold the school and ESP accountable through a consistent reporting structure. We described earlier our schoolwide assessment and evaluation system which will serve as the core engine for ensuring not just proper oversight, but more importantly for ensuring that when issues arise, adjustments are made on a timely basis. Our school leaders will be held accountable for 3-5 measurable goals. These goals will be agreed upon prior to the start of the year, and progress will be monitored on an on-going basis. Goal areas will include academics (i.e., 1.5 years of academic growth for students every school year; annual growth of 5% passage on ISTEP); employees (i.e., retention of over 85% of high performing teachers); parental satisfaction (i.e., over 90% retention of families within the school year and year-to-year); school culture; and more. Additionally, members of the board will conduct announced and unannounced visits to the school, unaccompanied by the ESP, observe and record the quality of instruction, staff morale, school culture, student engagement, and other key measures.

On a monthly basis, the school and ESP will report to the board and discuss progress against these critical benchmarks using a balanced scorecard framework. Furthermore, regular lines of communication will be maintained between the ESP and the board, both formal (monthly board meetings) and informal (phone check-ins, school visits). During these regular check-ins, we will discuss solutions to any relevant issues and highlight successes that we can build on.

In addition to academic oversight, compliance, and school leadership and ESP performance, the board will implement several systems and processes to ensure effective financial compliance and oversight. This year, the Board will work with our ESP and school leadership to develop and approve the annual budget at least 60 days prior to the start of the school year. There will also be strong controls over expenditures and monthly processes to monitor budget versus actual.

The Board will review finances monthly, including comparing financial reports against budget and cash flow projections. With the participation of the Chief Financial Officer, the Board will implement multiple monitoring processes to ensure that we are meeting our cash flow projections. For instance, the Finance department will monitor cash flows on a weekly basis; implement the SBOA-approved chart of accounts; and post transactions to the general ledger on a daily basis. In addition, all payrolls will be subject to multi-level authorizations. The Board will also complete and submit all required quarterly ICSB reports. Finally, through the leadership of our CFO and school leaders, we will ensure that all employees follow proper accounting and financial policies and procedures. These actions, and more, will ensure that the Board has strong financial controls and oversight.

Ultimately, the aforementioned systems and processes will ensure strong Board oversight of academic outcomes, financial health, organizational compliance and school leadership performance.

² Desired skill areas are shown.

5. Please describe the results of the facility review required by the Renewal Letter to identify and address health and safety issues, i.e., a recently reported mold problem. Provide evidence that issues identified during the review have been addressed.

Our facility has successfully passed the review; a full description of the results is in the attached.

6. Please describe the proposed Board's policy with regard to compliance with Indiana Open Door and Public Access Laws. Please address the concerns that the Board had been failing to comply with Indiana's Open Door Law by failing to post notification of its meetings, failing to post notification of its executive committee meetings and improperly convening (and documenting the statutory reasons for) executive (i.e., closed) sessions.

The Indiana Open Door Law provides public access to meetings held by public agencies in Indiana. TBLA Board meetings are subject to this law. Our Board has developed a plan to comply with all applicable regulations specified in Indiana's Open Door Law and been in full compliance for the past year.

Part of the challenges with compliance existed because there were two boards. This was addressed in December 2014 when the Boards for the Drexel Foundation for Educational Excellence and TBLA were merged to clarify our school's governing entity, as well as to streamline the process for compliance with public access laws. Since that merger we have been in compliance. Some of the policies and practices that we have implemented to ensure compliance include:

- All annual and regular meetings have been posted and open to the public in a manner necessary to comply with the Indiana Open Door Law. Any parent, guardian, or member of the public may attend our Board meetings.
- Information regarding Board meetings, such as the time, place and agenda, have and will continue to be posted on the school website and in specified locations in the school, minimally 48 hours prior to the meeting.
- Executive sessions will only be held to cover subjects explicitly allowed by the Open Door Law. Notices pertaining to executive sessions shall state the meeting's subject matter, making reference to the permissions specified in the Open Door Law. Any votes on motions, proposals, resolutions, or ordinances covered in an executive session will be taken at a meeting open to the public.
- Notice of Board meetings, including the information specified above, will be sent to any media that have requested such notice by January 1 of the relevant calendar year.
- Minutes and memoranda of each Board and committee meeting will be kept, be open for inspection, and will be made available to the public via posting on the school website or in other methods requested by members of the public.
- All meetings will be accessible to persons with disabilities.

These steps have already been taken and will continue to ensure that we are in full compliance with the Indiana Open Door and Public Access Laws.

7. Please describe the Board's current governance policies, what kind of training will new Board members be required to complete and by what date, and what you see as the nature of the board's contractual relationship with, and accountability to, the ICSB as a public school.

As stated previously, Thea Bowman has undergone a complete reconstitution of its Board. All board members who were previously on the board will no longer be on the board as March 31, 2016.

Additionally, as part of this reconstitution, we have re-examined our governance practices and policies; TBLA has studied and will implement best practices in governance and member selection from high performing public schools and nonprofit charter management organizations. Previously, TBLA Board members were selected through an informal process, with selection largely based on personal relationships. New Board members are now selected through a formal process that includes:

- The submission of a resume/curriculum vitae and a letter of interest;
- A phone interview with the nominating committee; and
- A face-to-face meeting which includes a review of key board member responsibilities, such as attending and preparing for Board meetings, defining the school's mission, reviewing the performance of the ESP, ensuring that the school manages resources effectively, monitoring school performance outcomes, and ensuring compliance with applicable laws and ICSB regulations.

All future board members will also be required to go through a similar nomination process. We have elected to have Board members serve three-year terms that are renewable one time. Members will initially have staggered term limits, with some members serving one or two-year terms, to ensure that our Board is constantly rotating new members through while maintaining a core group of experienced members at any given time.

A Board orientation will be held on April 28 at TBLA's Junior and Senior High Campus, located at 3401 W. 5th Ave in Gary, Indiana. It will provide a high-level overview regarding the school's educational program and academic performance; an assessment of the current financial health of TBLA; and a review of governance-related rights, responsibilities, and accountabilities. This orientation will be led by an independent consultant, Dr. James Halik of Compass Keynote Consulting, who is a nationally-recognized coach and facilitator for school Boards and administrative teams. As part of the onboarding and orientation process, all Board members will also visit both TBLA school campuses and meet with a select group of administrators, staff, and parents.

We will also provide a mid-summer Board training event led by Dr. Halik, which we anticipate will take place June 17th, 2016. This will be a review of critical topics in effective governance such as board ethics and legal issues; effective financial oversight; the distinction between governance and management; strategic planning; addressing parent concerns; and more. We expect that there will be an annual training for Board members, with topics determined based on the needs of the school.

Ultimately, the Board is accountable for the success or failure of TBLA. While we will be working with an Educational Services Provider to ensure high levels of student and staff performance, the Board will be responsible for providing effective oversight and fulfilling all compliance responsibilities with the ICSB. As a partner, beyond meeting our formal reporting requirements, we will also plan on over-communicating with the ICSB regarding potential successes and challenges. We believe that this will be critical to establishing a very positive working relationship with the ICSB and to demonstrating our strong commitment to accountability.

8. Please describe how the Board has or plans to address the items described in the February 29, 2016 Notice of Bond Default, including: 1) Inadequate recordkeeping with respect to financial and human resources matters; 2) The Drexel Foundation's failure to

provide the Bond Trustee with (i) its 2015 audit, (ii) its calculation of compliance with its Debt Service Coverage Ratio, and (iii) its officer's certificate certifying compliance with its covenants under the Loan Agreement; and 3) The Drexel Foundation's inability to produce audited financial statements for its prior Fiscal Year.

We have contacted both the IDOE and the bondholder, and to this point have cleared all previous findings. The major way in which the human resources and financial deficiencies as identified by the bondholder will be prevented moving forward is first by the selection of a new ESP, Phalen Leadership Academies. As described previously, Phalen has been an extremely successful ESP and its financial and human resources records have been without deficiencies. Phalen will implement a comprehensive oversight system over all staff and financial matters; Phalen's financial and human resources record keeping and compliance systems have been described in detail throughout this application.

The second way in which these deficiencies will be prevented is through much stronger board oversight. New board members have extensive experience with compliance and legal affairs; as one example, Mr. Tony Walker is a practicing attorney who has served as both President of the Board of Trustees of the Gary Public Library and is a past Chairman of the Board for the Urban League of Northwest Indiana. In addition, Michael Suggs has over 35 years of experience in operations oversight with the Northern Indiana Public Service Company and is currently NIPSCO's Operations Integrations & Strategy Director. The entire board will receive extensive orientation and training, which include a detailed overview of their fiduciary and compliance responsibilities and duties. As previously described, the Board will ensure that our schools are in compliance and are in a financially healthy position through monthly reviews of financial reports and staffing compliance.

During the 2014-2015 school year, our ESP was American Quality Schools (AQS). After TBLA changed our ESP to the Leona Group, AQS would not provide key financial information needed to complete the audit until recently. That said, we have been working quickly to ensure that we are able to obtain and provide our 2015 audit. The audit is currently in progress with Donovan Certified Public Accountants and Advisors, and we expect to receive the completed and final audit by April 15, 2016.

The Leona Group is performing the calculations of their Debt Service Coverage Ratio; they will finalize their calculations and provide a certificate of compliance upon receipt of the final audit.

Thank You

Thank you so much for your time and consideration. We truly hope to work together to provide a high quality education to children in Gary.

Other Items

1. In order to be compliant with Indiana Code, the Drexel Foundation must amend its Bylaws or Articles of Incorporation to include the statutory requirements for dissolution contained in Indiana Code § 20-24-3-3: “Upon dissolution: (1) the remaining assets of the charter school shall be distributed first to satisfy outstanding payroll obligations for employees of the charter school, then to creditors of the charter school, then to any outstanding debt to the common school fund; and (2) remaining funds received from the department shall be returned to the department not more than thirty (30) days after dissolution.”

We have added the statutory requirements for dissolution indicated above to our bylaws and are scheduled to adopt the new bylaws at our board meeting on March 29, 2016.

2. Organizational Chart

Please find our organizational chart in the attached.

3. ESP Agreement

Please find a draft of our ESP Agreement in the attached.

4. Communications Plan

Please find our Communications Plan in the attached.