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Denver Public Schools

Aligning DPS Teacher Performance Systems to Drive Increased Student Achievement

Proposal to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

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I. PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

1.

The Denver Public Schools vision is clear: Denver Public Schools will be the best big city school district in the nation. We will lead the nation's cities in student achievement, high school graduation, college preparation, and college matriculation. Our students will be well prepared for success in life, work, civic responsibility and higher education.

For over a decade, Denver Public Schools (DPS) has known that a human capital strategy focused on teacher effectiveness is a critical lever to help us achieve this vision. In 1999, DPS launched the DPS-DCTA Joint Task Force on Teacher Compensation to pilot ProComp. ProComp, one of the first teacher pay-for-performance programs in the country, was rolled out with the support of the Denver voters in 2005. In 2008, DPS and DCTA revised ProComp to increase by more than ten times the incentives available for driving student achievement, and more than doubled the incentives for serving in hard-to-serve schools and hard-to-staff positions.

While DPS has made significant steps to advance teacher effectiveness through its compensation system, we have realized the importance of aligning our entire human capital system, including recruitment, selection and placement, professional development, evaluation, tenure and compensation, around a common teacher effectiveness strategy centered on student achievement. Over the last several years, Denver Public Schools has put in place several critical systems that will underpin our human capital strategy. DPS recently implemented a School Performance Framework (SPF), one of the nation's most thorough school evaluation tools and one that is based primarily on student achievement growth. Using a variety of longitudinal measures, it provides a comprehensive picture of how schools in DPS are performing in terms of student achievement and overall organizational strength. This year, DPS is rolling out a Teacher Portal, which will provide teachers with online access to student data and analytics, as well as curricular resources.

With the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), DPS and the Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA) developed a comprehensive strategy to improve student achievement through a focus on teacher effectiveness. As a finalist to become an Intensive Partnership Site, DPS and DCTA worked closely with the BMGF to build a human capital strategy that would align our systems, policies and practices for retaining, developing, recognizing, advancing, and rewarding talented educators around a common vision of effective teaching. This strategy was developed collaboratively with the Denver Classroom Teachers Association (DCTA), with the extensive input of the broad DPS community, and has the support of the DPS board of education and DPS leadership team. While DPS is not moving forward as an intensive partnership site, we are committed to the strategic plan we developed and believe the work outlined in this proposal will lay the necessary foundation for our long term human capital strategy.

As articulated within this proposal, DPS will work with DCTA to develop and implement a new evaluation system, one that includes multiple measures of effectiveness and centers on student achievement. The system would be implemented to ensure high levels of inter-rater reliability and extensive training of evaluators and participants. We will realign our professional development and key elements of ProComp to this new evaluation system. In year one of the grant, DPS will develop the systems, processes and tools to support teacher performance management, and integrate preliminary MET research findings into its evaluation tool. In year two, DPS will pilot and refine its evaluation and feedback loop and the evaluation tools and roll out the new system to 4500 classroom teachers and 300 administrators at 125 schools. In year

three, we will conclude the first school year with the new system, and will also introduce new student performance measures to teachers who do not have classroom responsibilities. This evaluation system, aligned to compensation and professional development, will anchor the other elements of our broader human capital strategy, including recruitment, advancement and retention, and provide the necessary infrastructure for DPS to ensure a high quality teacher in every classroom and accelerate our student achievement gains.

DPS is requesting \$10 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to fund the design and implementation of a holistic performance management system, one that ensures that the focus of both individual and school level accountability is student growth, that compensation incentives are more effectively tied to performance and to communicated expectations, that teacher evaluations accurately reflect a teacher's effectiveness with his or her students, and that teachers are provided with a path forward to improving their practice.

At the end of the grant, DPS will be a national model for performance management for our instructional staff. Student achievement will be at the center of an integrated system. Teacher and school leaders will have access to information and tools that will enable ongoing feedback loops grounded in clear expectations. In the future, every teacher, in every school, will be engaged in ongoing, data-driven conversations with their school leader and others regarding the academic performance of their students.

This integrated performance management system will set clear expectations around effective teaching, will support teachers in their efforts to achieve these standards and will differentially reward our best teachers. It will be grounded in an agreed upon definition of effective teaching, backed by research, and will include a teacher evaluation system incorporating multiple measures, professional development tied to identified needs, and an alignment of rewards and incentives around demonstrated teacher performance and student achievement outcomes. It will be the foundation from which DPS will develop a comprehensive human capital management strategy to ensure we recruit, develop, retain and incent high quality teachers, a cornerstone to improved student achievement.

In the development of a performance management system, DPS will deliver upon three critical outcomes:

- 1. A comprehensive teacher evaluation system that effectively articulates a teacher's performance, beyond the current Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory ratings provided today.** DPS's teacher new evaluation system will be based upon an agreed upon definition of effective teaching and grounded in student outcomes. The evaluation system will include multiple measures of effectiveness, with student growth data as the central measure, in addition to student work, student perceptions and frequent observations of teacher performance by supervisors and by peers. This revised evaluation scale will enable a more differentiated performance management system. The measures within the evaluation will be at the core of ongoing conversations around student achievement and professional development.
- 2. Professional Development tied to the information captured within the teacher evaluation,** including formative and summative student achievement data and skill gaps identified through observations and student feedback. We will establish a direct linkage between professional development offerings, including the Professional Development Units compensated through ProComp, and identified teacher needs. All elements will focus on improving

performance of teachers against the effectiveness measures within the evaluation as measured by student growth.

3. **The performance elements of teacher compensation linked more directly to student outcomes.** We will further the direct linkage between teacher incentives, teacher evaluation, and increased student outcomes. Specifically, DPS will focus on ensuring that compensation for achieving a Satisfactory evaluation and for meeting Student Growth Objectives (SGOs) – classroom level goals each DPS teacher sets around student growth – reflects the ability of a teacher to drive student outcomes. These elements will be fully aligned with our new evaluation system and the centrality of student outcomes to that framework.

II. **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

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3. Within three years, DPS will implement an aligned performance management system, utilizing national best practice and incorporating the research learnings from the BMGF MET study. Through the rollout of this system, DPS will be able to better identify and retain high performing teachers and principals, increase teacher performance, effectively identify and replace low performers, and identify and recruit high potential teachers into the pipeline. DPS will have restructured key elements of ProComp and have in place the systems to inform the next evolution of our pay for performance system. The ultimate beneficiaries of this work are the students of DPS. Using student CSAP growth as an imperfect proxy for college readiness, today, only 33% of our teachers are making the required gains to effectively close the achievement gap. By 2012, 41% of our teachers will be highly effective, producing 11,000 more students on the track to college readiness¹.

4. Over the next three years, DPS plans to develop and implement the core foundations of its comprehensive performance management system:

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7.

Develop and implement a comprehensive and distributed teacher evaluation system centered on student outcomes.

The teacher evaluation process will be designed in concert with a vision for our teacher performance management system. To design this performance management system, DPS will engage in a collaborative process with DCTA that will include extensive conversations with DPS teachers and administrators, an appraisal of the work currently in place within DPS, including our coaching and evaluation tools, and national best practice.

The current DPS evaluation system does not align tightly enough to student outcome data, as student data is not consistently or rigorously considered in the evaluation process, nor

1 Based on proportion (32.9%) of teachers in classes assessed by the CSAP that are able to drive 60th percentile growth or higher from their median student (the growth percentile estimated based on the Colorado Department of Education's "catch-up" measure for a student below proficiency to graduate college ready)

was it effectively implemented. The evaluation also lacks credibility with teachers: only 38% say they agree with the survey statement “the evaluation process allows accurate assessment of performance.”² Today, all non-probationary DPS teachers receive only one evaluation every three years, and this evaluation rarely provides teachers with the feedback necessary to improve. The New Teacher Project (TNTP) found that the current system in Denver does not provide meaningful information to teachers and administrators about performance and development needs. In the past three years, 98.5 % of non-probationary teachers were rated “satisfactory” and only 40% of DPS teachers had development needs, according to their evaluations.³

This project will enable DPS to develop a multi-measure evaluation system with growth in student achievement at the center. The evaluation system will include observations from multiple sources, including principals and peers and will have ratings along a continuum that reliably reflect a teacher’s performance. This multi-measure, research-based approach, combined with a revised evaluation scale, will enable a more differentiated performance management system and will drive decisions around placement, compensation and professional development.

To design and implement a new evaluation tool, DPS will develop a clear, definition of effective teaching using the initial MET findings. The definition will come through collaboration with DCTA and extensive conversations with teachers and principals. DPS will integrate the research findings of the MET project to determine the specific measures and the appropriate weightings of each attached to each element of our effective teaching definition. To ensure broad buy in around the MET data findings, so that they can become a cornerstone of a fair and transparent DPS evaluation system, we will engage teachers and administrators in understanding the six components of the study. These conversations will focus on identification of potential gaps between the DPS definition of effective teaching and the performance elements captured within the MET research. For example, the MET project does not capture a teacher’s leadership in their school or their level engagement with parents, both factors DPS might consider.

Where the MET project data does not inform how we should measure specific elements such as collaboration with peers, or parent and community engagement, DPS will actively engage teachers, school leaders and central office staff in the development of the criteria to assess the core elements of effective teaching in DPS, the measurement mechanism and the appropriate weightings of each measure. In addition to CSAP (state assessments), we plan to include additional student achievement data sources, student perceptions, portfolios of student work, and frequent observations from multiple trained observers.

The longitudinal CSAP growth measure is an important measure of student growth, but it only reaches approximately 1/3 of DPS teachers. Additionally, its use as a foundation for ongoing conversations and professional development, given the availability and timeliness of the data, is limited. DPS will work to develop standards and guidelines to ensure non-CSAP student outcome goals are being set to the appropriate level of rigor as part of the teacher evaluation. These new growth objectives, and the way in which they are used to inform professional development and instruction, will be used as the foundation for the Student Growth Objectives (SGOs) going forward, as discussed below.

2 TNTP, *Teacher Performance Management in Denver Public Schools* (2009)

3 TNTP, *Teacher Performance Management in Denver Public Schools* (2009)

DPS will increase the perspectives that contribute to an evaluation, enhancing the quality of the evaluation,⁴ the capacity of school leadership to provide frequent feedback, and reducing concerns of arbitrariness. In addition to principals, instructional experts and teacher leaders will observe and provide formative feedback for teacher evaluation and development plans. DPS will invest extensively in the training and support of those providing and receiving observations and feedback. DPS will also develop a process to ensure inter-rater reliability and distribution of ratings. DPS will identify resources within either the existing school support structures or externally to act as Teacher Leaders. These Teacher Leaders will be held accountable for performing accurate, calibrated evaluations of their peers and for identifying the professional development required for a teacher's growth and development. Teacher Leaders will have demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom and will be trained and then evaluated on performance indicators measuring their ability to deliver fair, accurate evaluations and support.

We recognize that new teachers take time to fully develop their skills. Building off of the standards we set within the teacher evaluation, DPS will develop a performance trajectory for novice teachers. This trajectory will recognize the unique needs of novice teachers, provide clear guidance around the expectations to which novice teachers are held accountable, and allow for professional development targeted to a novice teacher's needs.

By setting clear expectations of a new teacher's performance curve, DPS will have the ability to make higher quality, more informed tenure decisions. DPS plans to set a high bar for tenure. The tenure decision should be a meaningful one that recognizes success in teaching, rather than determined based solely on a somewhat arbitrary time period with limited information. While changing the tenure granting process may require statutory and process changes not included in the scope of this proposal, this performance management system will provide DPS with the data systems and performance expectations required to effectively manage a new tenure granting process.

DPS will develop an easy-to-use, aligned performance management system, which will include a web-based tool that captures the elements of the teacher evaluation, formative and summative evaluations, student growth data, and professional development resources and objectives in a single, integrated interface. DPS will fund the purchase of these new systems internally and is asking for assistance from the BMGF for the integration of these systems, and the training associated with their initial roll-out.

Align professional development for teachers based on performance on the teacher evaluation

Today, DPS lacks a system of targeted professional development and supports. DPS teachers are presented with a vast menu of options from which they are expected to choose, without the evaluative feedback to guide their choice. Teachers find the DPS professional development offerings undifferentiated, inconsistent in quality, and often disconnected from their work. Just 38% of DPS teachers find our professional development options useful.⁵

4 Donaldson

5 TNTF

DPS professional development will be re-structured to align to and support the standards of effective teaching articulated within the Teacher Evaluation. Professional development must link directly to the information collected through formative and summative student achievement data, observations and student feedback. We will work with design teams comprised of teachers and administrators to establish a direct linkage between professional development offerings and identified teacher needs, focused on improving performance of teachers against the effectiveness measures within the teacher evaluation and keeping student growth at the center of the conversation. All teachers will have identified improvement areas and will receive targeted professional development against these need areas: Teachers who are recognized as struggling within the teacher evaluation framework will be required to take PD in their identified need areas.

The way in which DPS utilizes its resources to provide professional development will be redesigned to support this new strategy. DPS will evaluate how we can repurpose our current resources to deliver targeted PD and refocus its centrally managed support structure to be mobilized to work directly with teachers on their identified needs.

DPS will ensure that the broader performance management technology system includes a platform that allows teachers and administrators to access professional development as a part of the evaluation and feedback process. The system will track the effectiveness of targeted professional development to drive improvement in a teacher's skills and performance, as demonstrated in student performance and observations.

This new professional development model will be used as the foundation for the redesign of ProComp's Professional Development Units (PDUs), to focus an individual teacher's development against identified need areas of effectiveness. In the future, the successful completion of a PDU will be linked directly to teacher effectiveness and to demonstrated improvement in teacher performance, as captured within the teacher evaluation.

Align current compensation incentives to better reward teachers who drive strong student outcomes in their classrooms

ProComp has two elements that reward teachers at the school-wide level for driving academic growth and performance. ProComp has two additional elements rewarding individual teachers who drive student achievement in their classrooms. The first of these individual awards is a purely quantitative incentive based on longitudinal growth on state assessments and is available to the roughly one third of our teachers whose student year on year growth is captured by state assessments. All teachers (including those available for the CSAP longitudinal growth incentive) are also eligible for incentives for meeting the Student Growth Objectives that they collaboratively set with their principals.

Currently, the degree of consistency and principal input into the SGO are varied. In content areas where expected growth is well defined with assessments that are aligned and valid, highly effective principals can drive the conversation to ensure the SGO is appropriately rigorous and meaningful and is discussed and monitored frequently throughout the year. However, in other areas, where expectations are unclear and tools are varied, principals get overwhelmed by the complexity, do not have a clear understanding of how to utilize the available student data tools, and more readily approve low quality SGOs. In too many cases, SGOs are largely a compliance-driven exercise that occurs twice- once in approval and again in "signing off" at the close of the school year. The current structures do not ensure that the SGO process leads to

conversations between and among teachers, administrators and instructional superintendents focused on formative assessment data, strategies for meeting goals, and reflections on why goals were met or missed and does not adequately align compensation with teacher performance management. For this reason, the third piece of our proposal is an audit of both our assessment tools (formative and summative) and corresponding structures within a new performance management system. The audit will inform the redesign of our SGOs to align them directly with the teacher performance management system and ensure SGOs are focused on the same reliable and valid tools to measure student growth as the evaluation system.

DPS will use the information from the audit to design needed assessment tools that meet clear, rigorous district expectations for student outcomes and thereby drive reformed accountability measures. Audit data will also inform the development of school and district-based structures that bring teachers and administrators together to determine areas of focus, select instructional strategies, continuously review formative data to make instructional adjustments, and finally, to reflect on results from the summative assessments. These structures will form the foundation for a newly designed SGO process.

Within this new structure, DPS will provide clearer, more rigorous district expectations for which assessments to use, what constitutes a quality SGO as well as exemplars for each content area and grade level. Teachers and principals will participate in conversations around SGO-setting as a component of the evaluation training. Using the audit findings and new assessments as a foundation, DPS will work with the ProComp Transition team and a design team comprised of DPS teachers and administrators to set the new standards and exemplars for teachers and principals to use at the beginning of each year, when setting student achievement goals for every classroom. DPS will develop and train the necessary systems and tools to support the setting and tracking of student achievement growth and proficiency goals.

Through the work on a redesigned evaluation system, DPS will better align another performance element of ProComp. Today ProComp compensates 98.5% of our teachers for receiving a Satisfactory rating on their evaluation. With a new evaluation system in place, appropriate assessment tools, and mechanisms to connect ongoing work in schools with assessment data, the SGO incentive will differentially benefit those teachers who are effectively driving growth in student achievement.

Changing the culture of DPS through extensive communications and training to ensure rigorous and frequent evaluation and feedback loops

To ensure that the changes articulated within this proposal are successfully implemented and become a part of the DPS culture, DPS will work closely with the DCTA to develop a robust teacher engagement strategy and training plan, which may include “key communicators” to help with engagement, education, implementation and feedback. The Professional Practices Work Group (PPWG), a group comprised of DPS employees, DCTA members, and outside experts and charged with making recommendations to the district and the DCTA aimed at improving teacher effectiveness, will be a key component of this partnership. This group of engaged teachers and DPS employees has already been active in the collaborative development of these performance management strategies, and will continue to act as a sounding board and advisory group as we move forward.

To design and implement the teacher evaluation tool, DPS will create design teams comprised of a broad cross-section of teachers and administrators. DPS will also utilize multiple

communication channels and methods, to build support for and understanding of the new evaluation system and ProComp tools. DPS will use its website, the Teacher Portal, webinars, school visits, and town hall meetings with DPS leadership to build buy-in among teachers, school leaders, principals, and other staff. DPS and DCTA will work together to ensure that there is a genuine feedback model to the communication strategy, to maximize the effectiveness of the tool and the rollout.

To inform the communications strategy, DPS will work with one of the design teams to develop and conduct a survey of all teachers in 2009-10 and use that information to develop a teacher segmentation analysis (e.g., by years of experience, levels of tech savvy, degree of buy-in to specific strategy components). The segmentation will assist DPS in developing its messages and channel management strategy. DPS will use information from the segmentation analysis to invest in producing promotional and informational videos and toolkits, including the design and printing of communication and marketing collateral such as brochures, newsletters, websites, and press kits.

An essential element of change management involves changing school cultures and skill sets to support productive ongoing feedback. Today, too many of our teachers and principals do not engage in conversations around common expectations centered on student learning. Teachers are used to receiving evaluations where they do not have a single development opportunity identified. They are not used to having knowledgeable principals visit their classrooms to help teachers improve their practices. Similarly, principals have grown accustomed to systems where feedback was never expected nor provided. Principals receive only one hour of training around evaluation and many of the district's principals are uncomfortable providing formal feedback that indicates a teacher is anything less than exemplary. We must deliver extensive training to our school-based staff to develop a culture of feedback, where feedback is valued, and provided to all teachers, not just struggling ones.

Principals and assistant principals will participate in an intense professional development and accountability system to support their implementation of the teacher evaluation system. To ensure the evaluation system drives improvements in practice through clarity of expectations and corresponding systems of support, principals need to be engaged in professional learning about the standards of effective teaching, the multiple measures of effectiveness, **how to engage the teacher leaders in their schools in this work, and how to** provide high quality feedback to teachers.

In the spirit of "what is tested is what gets done", DPS will need a new principal evaluation system that aligns to these new expectations of effective principal practice. The new administrator evaluation will ensure that principals and assistant principals are providing clear feedback and support to the teachers in their building. Additionally, the multiple measures evaluation will incorporate an assessment of the principal's performance as the instructional leader and utilization of frequent performance assessment and feedback loops to support improvements in teacher effectiveness.

DPS will develop a training plan to ensure that all of our 4500 teachers and 300 administrators, across 125 schools, are all effectively engaged in the performance management process. DPS will collaborate with DCTA on the development of training for peers providing evaluations and feedback, as well as to those who are receiving new levels of evaluation and coaching. The training will address the new evaluation system, giving and receiving feedback, and ways to link professional development to student data, observed behaviors and the other elements of the evaluation tool.

The training to support the performance management system will be piloted and refined in year two, along with the evaluation tools and will be fully rolled out alongside our new evaluation and professional development system in 2011-12.

Alignment with the Measures of Effective Teaching Research Project

DPS plans to participate in the two-year multi-district Measures of Effective Teaching research project being funded by the BMGF. The research study will tightly integrated with the work articulated within this grant proposal, as it will inform our definition of effective teaching, teacher evaluation tool and corresponding observation and feedback loop process. There are several areas where the two projects intersect, and DPS has designed this proposal to take advantage of the work and timeline of the MET project. Specifically:

1. The Student Perception Tool will be piloted as a part of the MET research, and the findings around the tool will be integrated into the DPS rollout of this component of the evaluation in year two.
2. The MET project will provide DPS with a preliminary report of the observable teacher behaviors that tie most directly to student achievement in Fall, 2010. DPS will incorporate these indicators into its pilot and full rollout of the observation component of the evaluation tool.
3. The technology platform and self-reflection protocols being used to capture video and provide ratings and commentary against videotaped lessons will be integrated into our evaluation and feedback process and utilized as a key component of our technology platform.
4. DPS will participate in collaborative learning projects with the other districts participating in the MET project, and will incorporate additional elements of this effort into the teacher performance management system.

In 2010, the MET project will be focused on collecting and analyzing primary research. In parallel, DPS will lay the structural and cultural framework for its teacher performance management system. We will engage teachers in the conversations around what it means to be a great teacher in DPS, design the system that will support performance management, research best practices within DPS and nationally, and identify the technology platforms and processes required to seamlessly integrate formative and summative teacher assessments, student achievement data, and professional development. We will also use this baseline year to audit our student assessments to identify where our assessments need to be re-designed to ensure that we will have fair but aspirational and rigorous measures of growth for all teachers to drive the student achievement component of the evaluation process and compensation.

In 2010 and beyond, as research findings and technology platforms become available, DPS will integrate these findings and tools into its performance management system. We are committed to the belief that our performance management system must continually evolve to

reflect increasing knowledge, and will communicate this philosophy broadly throughout the rollout and implementation of the system.

Addressing the achievement gap through a comprehensive performance management system

In 2005, DPS adopted the Denver Plan, a reform effort that emphasizes great teachers, strong school leaders, and increased community involvement. In the last four years, DPS has shown greater achievement growth than any other major district in Colorado and led the state in improvement in practically every tested subject at every grade level. At the same time, DPS has cut both its student dropout and teacher attrition rates by a third.

Nevertheless, we remain far short of where we must be as a school system if we are to prepare students to compete in the economy of the 21st century and participate in our civic democracy. Our overall proficiency rates on Colorado's state measures remain below 50% in reading and 40% in writing and math. Our graduation rate remains only 50%. And most sobering in a district where 80% of our students are of color, there is a persistent 35% achievement gap between African-American and Latino students and their counterparts in the Anglo and Asian-American population. We are failing to meet the civil rights challenge of our generation—to give all students, regardless of race or economic status, a strong and equal chance to succeed.

Today, DPS has strong data systems in place to track student achievement, the support of the voters to provide \$27 million/yr in incentive pay to teachers through ProComp, and a collaborative relationship with the DCTA. Inhibiting the ability for these elements to materially advance student achievement is a fundamental lack of alignment around a singular vision of effective teaching. This misalignment is demonstrated through the presence of a human capital management system that does not adequately differentiate top performers from struggling performers, an evaluation system that does not align with the incentive pay system, and a professional development strategy that operates independently from the evaluation system.

DPS has many of the foundational elements in place to drive student achievement gains and close the achievement gap, but must work to align these foundational elements behind a singular standard of effective teaching. With the teacher evaluation system in place, DPS will be able to align all of the elements of the human capital lifecycle – recruitment, new teacher support, the receipt of tenure, ongoing professional development, identification and development of teacher leaders across the district, and compensation. As a direct result of this work, DPS will materially impact the ability of ProComp to drive student achievement.

Key partner organizations, sub-contractors, and sub-grantees

The district has always maintained a healthy balance between building required internal capabilities and forging partnerships to bring in the most innovative thought leaders and expert service providers to address specific reform needs. We will adopt the same approach to executing this strategy. To ensure appropriate ownership over the work, DPS will look to hire and repurpose internal resources to serve as the core team to build out and manage the new evaluation system. Where DPS does not have the internal expertise or where there is an increase in resources required for 6-12 months, while the initiative is in its research and development phase, DPS will hire external consultants or contractors.

DPS will leverage external consultants in the areas of thought leadership and analytic expertise, including the development of our overall evaluation system and the observation tool, the development of a change management and communications strategy, and the data analysis to evaluate the success of our current SGOs and guidance around setting performance expectations against the selected assessments. We have identified a few potential partner organizations that will be thought leaders for specific elements of the project work. The New Teacher Project has been a partner to DPS in other areas of our human capital work, and we are considering working with them as a thought partner on the overall evaluation system. DPS will work with a research organization, like RAND or CRESST, on the development of our guidelines and standards for setting student data goals against our assessments and in non-tested subject areas. DPS has not yet identified partners to assist with the communications strategy and training development, or with the observation tool, but will do so within the first six months of the project. In these and other cases, DPS will collaborate with DCTA to ensure appropriate internal ownership, at both the central office and school level, while taking full advantage of strategic partnerships to ensure we are leveraging the expertise available at the national level and to augment our own knowledge and capacity and to deal with identified deficiencies.

III. STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

For almost a decade, DPS has also been a leader in the national discussions on how to leverage effective teaching to drive improved outcomes for students. With ProComp's passage in 2005, DPS and DCTA changed the national discussion around teacher performance pay. With this initiative, we plan to lead the nation again, in the area of teacher performance management. The nation is at a pivotal point in its history. Innovation at the district and state level is being encouraged, and the status quo has been rejected as a viable option for the future. To ensure that every child in America graduates from high school ready to succeed in college, districts must be clear about the standard of excellence expected from our schools, our teachers and our students. At the end of year three of this proposal, DPS will have in place a system that sets clear, aligned expectations at the school and teacher level, provides focused supports to teachers to achieve these standards, in the form of ongoing feedback and targeted professional development, and rewards teachers based on their ability to achieve these standards. Teacher effectiveness is at the core of the BMGF work, as well as the Race to the Top and other national initiatives. DPS will continue to be a pioneer in education reform and will provide a clear example to the nation of the way to put in place a holistic performance management system with high expectations that demonstrates meaningful progress toward closing the achievement gap. DPS will use its relationships at the national level, including DPS alumni Michael Bennet and Brad Jupp, and former President of the Colorado Senate Peter Groff, to further our efforts to showcase the performance management innovations underway in the district.

DPS also has a strong history of collaboration within Colorado. DPS is currently working closely with the Colorado Department of Education, the Lieutenant Governor's office and other Colorado districts to develop the state's Race to the Top proposal. With teacher effectiveness at the center of the Race to the Top proposal, DPS and DCTA have been critically involved at all levels of the state and national policy discussion around teacher effectiveness are taking leadership roles to ensure that the state's strategy is ambitious and reflects the strategy the district developed with the support of the BMGF. At the core of the state's strategy are more effective systems for evaluating teacher performance. DPS will work with the state to ensure

that state law supports effective evaluation systems that set high expectations for teacher effectiveness, reflect a continuum and distinguishing degrees of effectiveness more closely aligned with student outcomes, and provide a basis for human capital management decisions on compensation, tenure, placement, promotion and dismissal. To do this, we will scan the national landscape to identify emerging best practices in other states. We will work with our local partners, local partners in this effort, including citizen organizations such as CommonGood, Colorado Succeeds, and A+ Denver, to develop a communications strategy to ensure the messaging around the need for change is broad reaching, compelling and clear. In line with these efforts, DPS will also advance a 2009-10 legislative agenda to change the statute pertaining to teacher evaluation.

8. DPS has taken this leadership role in the state before – in working with the state to develop the Innovation Schools Act of 2008 and in partnering with DCTA and CEA to advocate for the successful merger of the DPS retirement system with the state retirement system in 2009. DPS will use its plan to develop the performance management system outlined in this proposal to aggressively push the state strategy and ensure Colorado receives a Race to the Top award.

9. DPS is honored and humbled by our role as a state and national leader on human capital reform. We are frequently referenced as an example of innovation, and have welcomed numerous districts, researchers and foundations to visit our schools and learn from our successes and struggles. With the implementation of our Performance Management system and accompanying human capital strategies, we expect this visibility to increase, and welcome the opportunity to share best practices and lessons learned with the broader education community.

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11. **IV. IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS**

This grant request is tightly focused to support the development and rollout of a teacher evaluation system aligned to professional development and compensation. Please see Appendix A for the full list of Outcomes and Execution Milestones. With regards to sequencing, DPS will use year one to inventory its current measures of effective teaching and assess best practices nationally, utilizing all available data to inform decision making. We will use the research to determine the various inputs in the teacher evaluation that will allow us to accurately assess teacher effectiveness and the weightings of each input, as well as identify how both tool design and implementation have contributed to the success or limitations of the current DPS evaluation tool and other national tools.

In parallel to the MET work, year one of this project will also focus on the foundational elements of culture change within DPS. We need to engage all stakeholders in developing a shared definition of an effective teacher. (The MET results will drive the indicators, descriptions and measures under each value statement.) The engagement work behind the definition of effective teaching will initiate conversations across the district that will lay the groundwork for our increased accountability and targeted support systems. In order to successfully implement increased accountability measures to include teachers providing high quality feedback to peers and openly discussing practices that lead to effective teaching, we must engage our community early in the project.

DPS will also use this foundational year to influence state policy, and ensure a climate where changes to the evaluation system are possible. In 2010-11, DPS will develop and pilot the various elements associated with each of the grant outcomes. The pieces of the performance management system are interdependent, and this pilot year will provide the district with the time

to test each element, refine as necessary, and ensure interdependencies are addressed and built into the system. The first two years are also the time period where DPS will focus on a robust communications and training strategy, to ensure organizational support for the new evaluation tool, clear expectations and new approach toward frequent feedback on performance against standards. Year three of the grant, 2011-12, will be the rollout year, where the evaluation tool and redesigned ProComp elements are in place in every classroom throughout the district.

Risks to Achieving Outcomes and Milestones

The critical grant outcomes articulated above, are contingent on a few external factors and structural challenges. First, we would like to see the state of Colorado change the current law, which limits the frequency of teacher evaluations, and mandates an evaluation structure that culminates in an S/U rating. DPS has been working with the state to elevate this issue onto the legislative agenda in 2009-10 and is confident that the political climate will support this change. State law also allows for waiver of state statute by a 51% vote of teachers. Should DPS fail to effect changes to any of the state laws at issue, DPS could also pursue a waiver to state law. DPS is confident in its ability to manage necessary change through one of these two routes.

The current DPS/DCTA contract supports a process where, with the input of teachers, DPS can develop and rollout a new evaluation system. Both DPS and the DCTA are committed to putting in place a fair, transparent evaluation and rewards system, one that supports teacher development and rewards behaviors linked to student achievement. DPS plans to actively collaborate with the DCTA and our teachers in the development of the evaluation system and will work with DCTA to examine the effectiveness of the current system and identify changes to the contract that will be necessary to support the use of the teacher evaluation as a foundation to inform compensation, tenure, placement and dismissal.

The timeline of this project is also dependant on the timeline of the MET project. We are expecting to receive preliminary analysis and foundational tools in 2010, for pilot in early 2011. Should the MET project research be delayed into 2011, it will impact our ability to test our evaluation and feedback system prior to our planned 2011-12 full rollout and materially impact our ability to confidently rollout in that school year.

12.

13. **V. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY**

14.

History of successfully managing complex projects

DPS brings a demonstrated ability to execute against large foundation grants and manage complex projects through design and implementation, on time and within budget. DPS has put in place a sophisticated project management methodology that it will use to manage this project as well.

Most recently, DPS has demonstrated its ability to manage large, cross-functional, performance management projects through the successful execution of initiatives funded via a \$4.75 million grant from the Eli & Edythe Broad Foundation and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation. This 2008 grant funded the first phase of Performance Management, which was focused on developing the School Performance Framework and data tools for Principals and Teachers. At the conclusion of this 15-month grant, the MSDF foundation made Denver a showcase district and asked us to share best practices with other districts getting started with this

work. The Broad Foundation hosted their performance management summit in Denver, to showcase the work underway here in DPS. Both foundations also demonstrated their confidence in DPS's ability to deliver by recently approving additional grants. MSDF chose DPS as an extension site, and awarded us the largest per student grant in their history. The Broad Foundation, while no longer involved in performance management initiatives, approved an investment in the human capital transformation work underway in DPS.

15. DPS and DCTA have strong and committed leadership teams in place, with significant collective experience in education both nationally and in Denver. The DPS leadership team is committed to the scope of work within this proposal, and will play an active role in ensuring the district executes the vision effectively and meets its milestones. The Superintendent, Tom Boasberg, the Chief Academic Officer, Ana Tilton, and the Chief Human Resources Officer, Shayne Spalten, have all been actively engaged in the development of this strategy and recognize the importance of this work to the success of the district. DCTA is also an active and committed partner to this work and played a significant role in the development of this strategy through the participation of some of its members in the working team over the summer. DCTA's leadership, Henry Roman and Carolyn Crowder, are similarly committed to ensuring the success of DPS students through the investment in the work outlined in this proposal.

DPS organizational design to ensure project success

To develop and implement an aligned performance management system with extensive teacher and administrator buy-in, DPS will put in place a cross-functional team that will be matrixed within DPS and accountable to a Steering Committee. (See Appendix B for team design). The Steering Committee that will oversee this work will be comprised of the Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, Chief HR Officer, Chief of Staff, Chief Communications Officer, Chief Technology Officer, DCTA Executive Director and DCTA President. It will provide leadership to this project, ensure that the teacher effectiveness work is a continued priority of the district and is developed and implemented on schedule, provide ongoing feedback to the work team and problem solve as issues arise. They will make certain that, by the end of the project implementation, the business owners have been deeply involved in the design and rollout of the system, and are ready to take on ongoing ownership over the evaluation system, professional development and coaching processes, and new compensation protocols. The Steering Committee will also ensure that the project team is working with the broader DPS community to develop the capacity and culture change required for long-term success.

Shayne Spalten, the Chief HR Officer, will be the Executive Sponsor of this work. Shayne has led the development of DPS' human capital strategies, including strategies regarding recruitment and staffing, performance management and compensation. As Chief HR Officer, she has led the significant transformation of HR from a compliance and transactional organization into an organization focused on supporting schools in the management of human capital to drive student achievement gains. Through her leadership, DPS will ensure that the teacher evaluation system is integrated with the other human capital management strategies the district is pursuing.

Jennifer Stern, The Executive Director of Teacher Quality Performance Management, will directly oversee this project and will be accountable to the Executive Sponsor, the Steering Committee and to the BMGF for its success. Jennifer worked closely with the DPS leadership

and the BMGF to lead the work to create a DPS strategy around teacher effectiveness. Debbie Hearty, Director of Teacher Professional Development will serve as the primary liaison for the CAO team, and DPS will also assign a primary owner from IT and from the newly created department of Assessment and Research. In addition, the project team will ensure that each of the business owners impacted by this project, including the Instructional Superintendents who oversee the networks of principals, Teaching & Learning, Professional Development, HR School Support Partners, and the Assessment team, are actively engaged in the development and rollout of this performance management system and feel ownership over maintaining and moving forward this work at the conclusion of the grant.

The development of the new evaluation system, and the alignment of professional development and compensation to this system, will be informed by perspectives and experiences of teachers and administrators. Each project stream will utilize focus groups and design teams, largely comprised of teachers and administrators, to incorporate the deep knowledge at our schools into the system design and development. The design teams will be co-chaired by DPS administration and teacher representatives with release time. The Professional Practices Work Group (PPWG), comprised of teachers, administrators and third party experts, will act as an Advisory Board and will provide significant input into the development of the evaluation system. DPS and DCTA will evaluate whether this core team can absorb the role of the 1338 Committee, a committee designated by state statute to advise on district evaluation tools.

16. As with our other large grants, the DPS Foundation will act as our fiscal agent to administer and oversee the grant funds. We will hire a full-time budget manager, who will be responsible for tracking all of the expenses, ensuring we operate within budget, and preparing reports for the BMGF. DPS will prepare a MOU articulating how the grant will be managed between DPS and the DPS Foundation within the first 30 days of the grant.

17. VI. BUDGET

18.

The DPS budget reflects our proposed design and implementation strategy to leverage internal resources, build internal capacity to complement our current skill sets, and supplement our staff with consultants and contractors to accelerate the work. The performance management system will be built with teacher and administrator input and will require extensive training during rollout. As a result, 30% of our budget is allocated toward extra time for teachers and principals, a critical element to ensure a successful implementation and ongoing viability of the project after implementation. Another thirty percent of our budget is allocated for the full-time team of program managers and subject matter experts to administer the work streams, keep them on schedule, and make sure that we incorporate input from our diverse stakeholders. This structure is designed to help us build systems and change the district culture as quickly as they can be adjusted, as well as accommodate for sustainability and lasting success.

This \$10 million, three year ask to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation builds on a foundation of reform within DPS. We have been supported in these reforms, particularly in the areas of performance management, strategic compensation, and human capital management, by several national foundations, as well as local foundations and the Denver community.

In the last several months, DPS has received a pledge of \$4.6M from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation to continue a set of Performance Management initiatives focused on developing and implementing 1) data and curricula tools for our teachers, 2) an Employee Performance Management Process to put a goal setting and evaluation process in place for

central office employees, and 3) systems of accountability for the central office operating alongside continuous improvement processes. DPS also received a pledge of over \$1M from the Broad Foundation to reengineer HR processes and systems, develop a toolkit for principals to inform the non-probationary status granting process, and to improve ProComp communications.

The Janus Education Alliance, a \$3 million, 3 year grant from the Janus Capital Group, has enabled the district to launch the Denver Teacher Residency, and improve our recruiting and new teacher support structures. The Denver community supported the largest bond in Colorado education history in the November 2008 election, enabling the district to update buildings and enhance technology over the next five years at a cost of \$454M. Additionally, the pay for performance pilots and ProComp rollout were supported by the Denver-based Piton and Rose Foundations. Over the next three years, the district will be looking to continue the partnerships with these organizations and the community, and is likely to seek supplemental funding for key initiatives that advance the work outlined in this proposal. DPS will also actively seek federal grants to accelerate our work, and has already submitted a request for a TQP grant. We plan to submit grant proposals for a TIF grant as well as for Innovation Grants over the next 12 months. With this history of philanthropic and taxpayer support, and aggressive strategy to capture national funds, DPS is optimistic in our ability to accelerate progress through the use of additional resources.

VII. RISKS

The risks highlighted in the Implementation and Results section are critical to the achievement of specific Grant Execution Milestones. More broadly, DPS recognizes the risk to successful execution associated with the necessary culture changes across DPS. While DPS has made significant progress shifting its culture away from the adult-focused, compliance-driven culture typical of many school districts, and towards a student-focused, performance-driven culture marked by continuous improvement, the district still has significant work to do to drive this culture change. The new evaluation system requires a culture that embraces ongoing feedback and frequent evaluation. The teacher evaluation system will set a high bar, and lay out a path for teachers to achieve that bar. This is significantly different from the expectations communicated today, where 85% of our teachers achieve at least one SGO and 98% receive Satisfactory evaluations. Teacher support for this strategy is critical to its successful implementation. Creating a culture of performance management cannot be something that is done “to teachers” but rather must be done “with teachers”.

To ensure the necessary buy-in, DPS will collaborate with the DCTA on the development and implementation of core aspects of the proposal, such as the standards of effective teaching and the evaluation framework, and seek teacher input on effective leadership, feedback, and coaching. We will also use survey data from multiple surveys, including the TELL survey, and feedback from interviews and focus groups to design the initiatives in a teacher-focused way to ensure teacher support, while maintaining a commitment to improving student achievement outcomes. When we change these standards and more teachers are asked to strive for improvement in their performance, we will work collaboratively with the DCTA to make sure that the communications, training, and support are in place, to mitigate the risk that the new systems will not be embraced by our teachers and school leaders.

VIII. LESSONS LEARNED AND EVALUATION

DPS and DCTA are committed to ensuring that the evaluation system, professional development structure, and ProComp elements put in place through this grant are successful in driving improvements in teacher effectiveness and student achievement. To make certain that we are effectively assessing and documenting progress and lessons learned, DPS will incorporate into the project a feedback loop to capture the data gleaned from research currently in place, such as the ProComp evaluation work, **as well as structures to ensure integration of the MET research and tools into this project**. We will also put in place both internal and external analytical capacity (internal and external) around each of the prioritized research questions below. The district will leverage its strong relationship with local universities to enhance its capacity to address its prioritized list of research questions and will coordinate its efforts with BMGF to leverage the learnings of the Foundation into the work we pursue.

Key Research Questions

19. How are performance ratings over time correlated with value added outcomes?
20. What is the change in teachers' faith in/trust of the evaluation process?
21. What is the relationship of performance on qualitative measures with student outcomes?
22. Do performance ratings of teachers within schools align with teachers' relative ability to drive student outcomes with similarly evaluated teachers across schools?
23. What are the right student performance measures for non-tested subjects?
24. Do we see equal levels of inter-rater reliability across different types of evaluators?
25. Does the relationship between student achievement, compensation, and professional development enhance our ability to hire effective teachers who are both new and experienced?
- 26.
27. In addition to capturing lessons learned, DPS will also hire an external evaluator to assess progress on an annual basis.

IX. SUSTAINABILITY

DPS and DCTA are committed to having an effective teacher in every classroom. The first priority of the 2005 Denver plan is that “all children will learn from a highly skilled faculty in every school” and it remains central to our strategy to close the achievement gap. We are focused on ensuring that the instructional core – the interaction between students, teachers and content – is strong, and that we are effectively defining and measuring the quality of that interaction. With the teacher evaluation system and improvements to ProComp in place, DPS will have a performance management system that sets clear and aligned standards for schools, teachers and students. The evaluation system, and its tight linkage to professional development and compensation, will put student achievement at the center of everything we do.

Several elements within the scope of work ensure ongoing sustainability for these new systems, including extensive teacher and administrator engagement in the design of the tools and extensive training and support during rollout. The online systems will give teachers and administrators access to student and teacher performance data and will also

hold teachers and evaluators accountable to setting high student growth objectives and to meeting expectations of inter-rater reliability. These changes will be further integrated into the fabric of the district through the ProComp system, where teachers will be rewarded for improving their performance and meeting rigorous student achievement goals.

DPS has structured the project team to enhance internal capacity to continue this work going forward. At the conclusion of the grant, the HR team will assume ownership over the continued administration of the evaluation system through the utilization of the current School Support Partners (SSPs). These HR professionals support principals in the management of staff, including evaluations. The SSPs will be brought into the development of a new evaluation system, and will be responsible for rollout of the new tools. The SSPs will ensure integrity of the new process and identify areas where increased training is required.

The PD team will assume ownership over the continued use of the evaluation system to inform professional development. DPS has a team currently responsible for the management of SGOs and PDUs. Today, this team is largely focused on labor intensive processes to track SGO setting and PDU enrollment and completion. With new systems in place, these resources can be reallocated within the PD team to support the ongoing management of new goal setting and professional development structures.

DPS currently has resources located at the central office and at the school level that are dedicated to providing teacher professional development and support. DPS will put in place a design team to examine the support structures at the schools to determine how to redesign school based responsibilities and roles to support the newly defined Teacher Leader position. At the end of this grant, DPS will have redesigned its teacher professional development support structures to align to the teacher evaluation, and will continue to deliver teacher PD through the redesigned structure. DPS will reprioritize professional development resources as necessary to ensure the continued focus on professional development targeted toward teacher needs and improved student achievement.