

Solicitation for Interest Application



Organization Name: Entrepreneurial Ventures in Education (dba/PLA)
Organization Location: 1001 Marina Drive, Suite #410, Quincy, MA 02171
Contact Name: Earl Martin Phalen
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We were:

- ✓ Founded in 2013

We are a:

- ✓ Non-profit organization
- ✓ Applied for minority-owned status

We are a:

- ✓ Turnaround operator

Organizational Overview

Phalen Leadership Academies (PLA) is a non-profit turnaround operator that currently serves 8,000 scholars at 20 schools in Indiana, Michigan, Texas, Florida and Nevada. In the seven short years since its inception, PLA has already successfully transformed five F-rated schools into A-rated schools.

PLA provides intensive academic support and enrichment to help children (whom we call “scholars”) excel in their academics; grow as well-rounded individuals; and prepare for success in life. PLA’s mission is to serve scholars who have historically not had access to a high-quality education. Ninety-three percent of our scholars are Black or Latino, and 89% of our scholars are eligible for free-or-reduced-priced lunch. We achieve our mission by working with existing struggling schools to transform them into the high-quality schools that our children deserve.

The core elements of our educational model include:

- Rigorous curriculum;
- Data-driven, small-group, and standards-aligned instruction;
- Standards-aligned interim assessments;
- High-quality training and professional development;
- Coaching cycles that develop teachers and school administrators;
- Hands-on enrichment experiences for scholars; and
- Authentic partnerships with parents.

Our data-driven model has been the engine for raising the academic achievement of our scholars. Our scholars consistently improve their state test scores each year, surpass their district peers, and achieve some of the highest academic growth in their regions.

PLA is also blessed to have a strong leadership team whose role is to support the success of our school leaders, schools and scholars. Our headquarters team includes 43 leaders, some of which include: Earl Martin Phalen (Founder & CEO); Andrea Robinson (CAO); Nicole Watts (Director of Professional Development); Eva Spilker (CFO); Amber Decker (Director of Recruitment); and Helen Dixon (Director of Human Resources). Bios of several of our key staff members can be found starting on pg. 5.

Mission and Demographics of Who We Serve

PLA’s mission is to serve children who have historically not had access to a high quality education. As

shared previously, 93% of our scholars are Black or Latino; 89% of our children are eligible for free-or-reduced-priced lunch; and our schools are in some of the toughest neighborhoods in each of our cities.

Academic Model

There are six key elements of our program model, which are called the *PLA Academic Priorities for Success*. Each priority, when implemented with fidelity, helps scholars excel: Effective Leadership; Strong Culture and Climate; Collaborative Staff; Effective Instruction; Curriculum, Assessments and Interventions; and Strong Support Systems. Below are some of the ways that we support our schools in successfully implementing each Priority:

Effective Leadership

PLA has developed several tools to support the success of our school leaders. Some of which include the PLA Coaching Cycle for Leaders, a process that systematically support the growth of our school leaders; our Leadership Evaluation Assessment, a rubric outlining the successful behaviors of turnaround school leaders; and the PLA Leadership Institute, a week-long intensive leadership training institute for school leaders. Weekly tactical meetings with peers, monthly webinars, and tailored professional development also support the success of our school leaders. PLA also supports the development of future leaders through our Pathways to Leadership, which is a uniquely designed fellowship program tailored to building capacity for aspiring school leaders.

Climate and Culture

Having a school that is safe, loving and nurturing is critical to the success of scholars. We provide several resources to our schools to support them in developing a strong school culture including Kickboard and PLA RESTORE, a systematic process for recognizing scholars who make good choices and treat others well. The PLA Coaching Cycle (which will be discussed in more detail below) and PLA University, our on-line training portal, also support teachers in ensuring effective classroom and behavior management.

PLA also believes that parents are a critical partner in supporting the success of their scholars and the school. PLA has developed a scientifically-validated method for partnering with parents, and will train our school leaders and teachers in how to more effectively engage partners.

Collaborative Staff

For our partner schools to maximize their impact on children, staff must work together to promote strong professional growth. Our Peer Mentoring Program, Coaching Cycle, Summer Book Club, and Differentiated Professional Development are just some of the ways we build collaborative staff. In addition, hiring and retaining the right staff are also critical. PLA will implement our rubrics for hiring principals, teachers, and staff; our operating methods for high-impact PLCs and Instructional Learning Rounds; and our Staff Appreciation framework. To further support retention and teacher satisfaction, some of our partner schools also elect to implement our Raising the Bar Initiative, PLA's annual performance-based incentive program.

Effective Instruction

The most important component of effective instruction is hiring strong teachers (discussed above). PLA believes that school structure matters, and we have developed a targeted staffing model for our partner schools. A third key to effective instruction includes the implementation of evidence-based curriculum. All of our partners both implement evidence-based curriculum, and they have sufficient training to implement the curriculum with fidelity.

Curriculum, Assessments and Interventions

For scholars to succeed, educators need to have the instructional materials needed to teach, assess and inform instruction. As discussed above, our partner schools implement approved, research-based curriculum aligned to state standards. Another critical element of the PLA model is our weekly formative assessment. Using weekly assessments developed with Edulastic, our partner schools are able to gauge scholar progress in vocabulary, grammar, cold reads and math, and then use this data to inform instructional decisions. This data will help educators address both scholar needs and grouping for Tier 2 instruction, and the specific targeted interventions that will help scholars both catch up and move ahead.

Support Systems

PLA believes that it “takes a village to raise a child.” Schools, families and communities provide resources and support systems that ensure success for all scholars. We will help our schools leverage these key partnerships, some of which might include: All Pro Dads/Muffins with Mom; wrap-around programming (i.e., summer learning, STEM); and health service organizations.

Process for Recruiting and Developing Talent

PLA’s goal is to retain over 80% of the educators in the schools in which it partners. We believe that through the implementation the PLA Academic Priorities for Success (described above), high quality professional development, and the PLA Coaching Cycle, staff will receive the support they need to be effective; and scholars will receive the high-quality instruction that they deserve.

While PLA works to retain the administrators and teachers that are currently serving at its partner schools, it is not always possible. When we need to recruit and hire new team members, PLA focuses on selecting educators who are able to accept feedback and use data to continuously improve the quality of instruction for students. In Beaumont this year, for instance, our extensive outreach efforts enabled us to fully staff both of our partner schools with strong leadership and highly qualified staff. We hire staff who are able to meet our standard of excellence through a very rigorous, multi-stage screening process that consists of an online application; phone interview; in-person interviews; observation of the candidate’s classroom teaching; and modeling of data-driven teaching.

Once hired, PLA provides intensive professional development through: (1) in-person workshops, and (2) through PLA University, our on-line training platform. During the summer months, our educators participate in one or more – dependent on their role – of three, in-person training sessions:

- Leadership Institute, a specialized week-long training for school leaders;
- New Teacher Institute, a week-long training program for new teachers; and
- Teacher Institute, a training program that prepares new teachers and returning teachers for success. (New teachers participate in two weeks of pre-service training.)

In addition to the summer institutes, PLA provides in-person training during the school year. Each school receives 20 hours of professional development that is specifically tailored to the needs of the school. During the school year, our partners also have access to PLA University, which is a comprehensive online professional development resource and training platform. The platform’s 72 specialized modules are equipped with narrated presentations, videos, activities, best practices, and additional resources. PLA University modules are differentiated in order to serve professionals on a spectrum of career trajectories, offering customized growth pathways for teachers, leaders, and instructional support staff members.

Access to such a rich and diverse array of professional development has been one of the keys in supporting the success of our schools. Another strength of our model is the PLA Coaching Cycle, a proprietary tool used to support the development of our educators and school leaders.

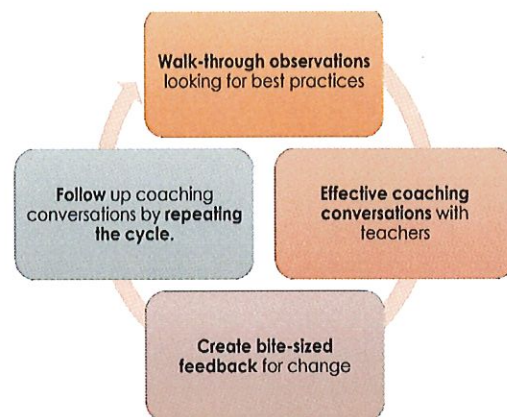
Developing Talent: The PLA Coaching Cycle

One of the keys to the academic growth experienced by our scholars is our process for developing our teachers. Previously, we outlined the three primary ways in which PLA delivers strong professional development: In-Person Training, the PLA Coaching Cycle, and PLA University, our on-line training portal. Below is a more detailed outline of the PLA Coaching Cycle.

The PLA Coaching Cycle is a process that systematically supports the development of teachers. The Coaching Cycle includes six domains of observations based on Charlotte Danielson’s framework. Each domain includes eight indicators for success, creating a very efficient walk-through form for each domain. The six domains are:

- Culture and Behavior Management.
- Classroom Management and Environment.
- Scholar Engagement.
- Effective Lesson Components.
- Level 1 Instructional Execution.
- Level 2 Instructional Execution.

School leaders observe instruction weekly, and teachers immediately receive feedback via email following the observation. A coaching conversation takes place within 24 hours, and teachers have access to a range of supports if they need to improve in a particular area. Some supports include modeling by school leadership; peer mentoring; access to short professional development videos or articles; and in-service professional development. This cycle is repeated until every teacher demonstrates mastery in every domain.



In a time when many districts are experiencing shortages, our proprietary process not only improves the effectiveness of our teachers, it also increases staff retention because teachers feel listened to and supported.

Quality Assurance Oversight

Inspect what you expect. Another reason for the growth of our scholars and schools is our structured process for supporting our partner schools. Below, you will find the support that, if selected, our partner schools would receive during the school year:

- Weekly visits to support the successful implementation of our Academic Priorities for Success.
- Weekly PLA Coaching Cycle inter-rater reliability walks with leaders to calibrate with rubrics and critical attributes.
- Side-by-side coaching and modeling with teachers and building leaders.
- Direct school leader support with coaching conversations and leading for change.
- Supporting instructional rounds with coaches and teachers.
- Guiding building leaders on how to use Coaching Cycle data to drive differentiated PD for teachers.
- Helping school leaders facilitate weekly PLC time that is focused on data-driven needs.
- Support schools with the implementation of Kickboard; character education, PBS, and behavior management pieces.
- Develop with school leaders the process for providing our scholars with weekly Common Formative Assessments (CFA) to drive small group instruction time.
- Bi-weekly Instructional Reviews to provide data analysis and reporting to measure growth.
- Bi-weekly reviews with leadership to report Turnaround Principles for Success status.
- Implement beginning of the year Leadership Coaching Reviews that includes benchmark rating of evidence against the *Academic Priorities for Success* (Effective Leadership; Climate and Culture; Effective Instruction; Support Systems; Curriculum, Assessments, and Interventions; and Collaborative Staff).
- Implement the Leadership team self-assessment with the *Academic Priorities for Success*.
- Implement Leadership pre-visit interview and updates.
- Implement Instructional observations of each classroom.
- Implement and analyze an –bi-annual Staff Climate and Culture Survey.
- Leadership team debrief and identification of next steps against goals and findings from the comprehensive beginning of the year review.
- ELA and math curriculum implementation professional development.
- Curriculum and resource implementation PD with new materials.
- Collaboratively develop targeted, evidence-based interventions to meet the learning needs of scholars with deficits (Catch Up) and those that need challenged beyond on-grade level (Move Up).
- Training and coaching on curriculum mapping to ensure all standards are being met with the appropriate level of cognitive complexity and scholar autonomy when using the curriculum.

- Full staff training and immersion of the PLA Coaching Cycle:
 - Rubric provided that shares the performance level descriptors for each domain and critical attributes for each indicator based on Charlotte Danielson's Framework, including Culture and Behavior Management; SEL Teacher Practices; Classroom Management and Environment; Scholar Engagement; Effective Lesson Components; Level 1 Instructional Execution; and Level 2 Instructional Execution.
 - Access to the PLA Coaching Cycle platform that allows for quick bite-size feedback, conversation journaling between the teacher and leader, ability to upload videos and resources to share with teachers, and SMART goal setting and check-in points.
 - Access to the Teacher Evaluation side of the platform for mid-year and final evaluations.
- Full training and immersion of PLA University for every leader and teacher:
 - Access to our online platform that houses several educator courses: Assessments, Curriculum, Instruction & Pedagogy, Exceptional Learners and much more.
 - Assess to the PLA Coaching Cycle toolbox that provides several resources for every domain and indicator.
- Utilize PLA-designed Common Formative Assessments to monitor student attainment of essential learning targets throughout the instructional process.
- Support educators in using assessments as learning activities to help scholars develop logic, reasoning and complex thinking through practice.
- Facilitate the timely introduction of evidence-based interventions to support academic excellence for scholars.
- Work collaboratively with each school to systematically recognize student progress on a regular basis to deepen student engagement and ownership of learning.
- On-going support with the implementation of the PLA parental engagement framework.
- Oversight of operational services provided by the district in areas such as transportation, food services, human resources, compliance and reporting, and facilities.

Fiscal Management

PLA has a proven track record of generating annual budgets and financial projections, successfully managing federal, state, and local funding while meeting all audit requirements in every year of existence. All of our partner school budgets are sustainable solely on state and federal funding. Philanthropy and competitive grants are only used to support special projects, supplemental support staff, supplemental curriculum, and capital improvements. In FY18, we met or exceeded all financial goals. Our net income goal was positive at 3% of revenue; our actual net income was just under 12% of revenue. Our goal for operating margins was 3% of current operations; our actual operating margin was 11.9%. We had 62 days of cash on hand, exceeding our goal of 60 days. Our ratio goal was to be able to pay liabilities at a ratio greater than 1.1 to 1; the actual ratio was 3.2 to 1. Our debt to asset ratio goal was less than 0.9, and our actual debt to asset ratio was 0.6. PLA has strong systems and processes in place for fiscal management. We implement a comprehensive internal financial control framework, as well as strong financial controls over expenditures and records retention procedures. These internal controls include authorization and approval controls for expenditures; segregation of duties controls for expenditures; payroll and benefits controls for expenditures; expense reports controls for expenditures; general operating expenses controls for expenditures; and review and reconciliation controls for expenditures.

Bios of Key Staff Members

The bios of some of the key staff members who would lead our work in Charleston include:

Earl Martin Phalen, Founder and Chief Executive Officer: Earl has been recognized TIME and Fast Company as one of the nation's top social entrepreneurs. As a law school student at Harvard, Earl founded BELL, which grew from a local mentoring project to a national non-profit educating 15,000 children annually, and from an annual budget of \$12K to \$27M. Earl then founded the George and Veronica Phalen Leadership Academies, named in honor of his parents, with the goal of turning around some of the nation's worst schools. Since it founding, PLA has already transformed multiple failing schools into A-rated schools. Earl has been recognized by MSNBC, New York Times, Education Week, Black Entertainment Television (BET), and Presidents Clinton and Obama for his organizations impact on the lives of children and families. He holds a B.A. from Yale

University and a J.D. from Harvard Law School.

Andrea Robinson, Chief Academic Officer: Andrea's key strengths include professional development, classroom management, and differentiated instruction. She has worked as the lead trainer for the Indiana Department of Education and several school districts throughout Indiana. She works to ensure that our education model is implemented with fidelity by leading PLA's Coaching Cycles process, a key component to PLA's professional development system for educators and oversight process to ensure the key elements of the model are implemented with fidelity.

Amber Deckard, Director of Recruitment: Amber is an accomplished Executive in the nonprofit industry. She has over 20 years' experience in nonprofit leadership including human resources and talent management. Amber first joined the team in 2010 as a Regional Director for Summer Advantage where she was instrumental in helping the program reach thousands of scholars across the country. In 2014 Amber was called to serve as a Regional Vice President for a national nonprofit charged with improving birth outcomes and health equity for moms and babies in the US. During her tenure, Amber was successful in building teams across 26 Markets in the Midwest, supporting a reduction in both premature birth and health equity disparities – both critical focuses for the Foundation.

Leticia Sampson, Director of Special Education: Leticia came to PLA with 19 years of experience in special education. At her previous position with Total Education Solutions, she assisted schools in maintaining compliance in their special education departments. She had also been an integral team member of PLA's Michigan schools as a contracted employee. Leticia grew up in Detroit and has worked in many counties across Michigan. She also served as Program Director of a special education day school in Washington, D.C. Leticia obtained her Ed.S. from Wayne State University and is current working on her Ed.D. in Education Leadership and Policy Studies.

Nicole Watts, Director of Training: Nicole Watts brings over 12 years of education experience to PLA. She started as an Elementary teacher with Franklin Township (IN) Community Schools and took on roles with increasing leadership responsibilities during her tenure. As an Instructional Coach, Nicole created common formative assessments and utilized data from these assessments to create and lead curriculum and instruction training for teachers and Instructional Assistants. Nicole was Chairperson of the Literacy and Leadership committees and also led a student support team in the creation of behavioral and academic intervention plans. Nicole has a Masters of Education from Indiana Wesleyan University and received her Principal certification from Lamar University.

Eva Spilker, Chief Financial Officer: Eva's key strengths include financial management and leadership for both public and private-sector organizations. Serving as the Controller and Finance Director at a leading global provider of marketing services, she managed all finance and accounting functions. Eva will develop the school budget; review and approve financial expenditures; oversee payroll for staff; manage fiscal reporting activities and audit requirements.

Tahirah Thompson, Regional Operations Manager: Tahirah graduated with honors from Howard University with a bachelor's degree in Business with an emphasis on Marketing. Prior to joining the PLA team, her major work experience included artist retail marketing with SonyBMG in New York, and analyst and project management work with Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) in San Francisco. During her time at PG&E, Tahirah realized that she was passionate about children and education. Taking a leap of faith towards her passion, she transitioned from the corporate world to the education sector. Since changing her career path to education, she has served as a 6th, 7th, and 8th grade math interventionist, an 8th grade special education math teacher, and a 6th grade social studies teacher. In her most recent position, prior to joining Phalen, she has served as the Director of Operations at a turnaround charter school in Chicago. As an experienced Director of Operations, she has successfully implemented numerous school-wide systems and procedures, managed faculty and data, and worked side by side with the principal to improve the overall functionality of the school.

These team members, and others, would support the success of our schools in Charleston.

Demonstration of Results

PLA is a non-profit that was founded in 2013. In our seven-year history, we have been able to have a strong impact on the success of children including:

- Transformed five F-rated schools into A-rated schools, all within three years of becoming a partner.
- Increased scholars' passing rates on Indiana state ELA and Math tests by 11% in just one year – the highest standardized test growth for all schools in Central Indiana in 2015-16.
- Earned school rankings of #4 and #5 in the district for strongest growth – with 8.2% and 8.1% increases in state test score proficiency growth, respectively.
- Accelerated progress towards grade-level proficiency with 72% of scholars showing standard to high annual growth on the state test.
- Achieved an average of 92% passing on IREAD (Indiana state reading exam) at founding school since opening year.
- Empowered PLA scholars in grades K-6 to gain an average of 1.3 years of annual growth toward grade-level proficiency on the 2017-18 math STAR end-of-year assessment.

After three years of partnering with PLA, we expect our schools to outperform their host district peers. After five years of partnering with PLA, we expect our scholars to outperform the state average on the state test. Currently, nine out of our 10 partners (results are not yet available for our new SY18-19 partners) are outperforming their host district. Our oldest school is five years old, and scholars at that school outperformed the state average on both the ELA and math portions of the state test.

Below is a list of our partner schools:

Phalen Leadership Academies School Demographic Summary												
School Name	Location	Grades	Overall Enrollment	% F/R Lunch	Black (4)	Hispanic /Latino (1)	Asian (3)	Two or More Races (7)	White (6)	American Indian (2)	Native Hawaiian (5)	Unclassified
Dr. Mae E Jones-Clark Elementary	Beaumont, TX	K-5	622	96%	72%	26%	-	1%	1%	-	-	-
Smith Middle	Beaumont, TX	6th-8th	574	96%	78%	21%	-	1%	-	-	-	-
Trix Academy	Detroit, MI	K-8	263	99%	99%	-	1%	-	-	-	-	-
James and Rosemary Phalen Middle-High School	Indianapolis, IN	7th-10th	509	79%	77%	17%	-	1%	5%	-	-	-
George and Veronica Phalen Academy	Indianapolis, IN	K-8	415	77%	93%	2%	0%	3%	2%	0%	-	-
PLA @ Francis Scott Key School - 103	Indianapolis, IN	K-6	479	78%	72%	23%	-	3%	2%	0%	-	-
PLA @ George Fisher - 93	Indianapolis, IN	K-6	434	71%	73%	15%	-	3%	9%	-	-	-
Timothy L Johnson Academy	Fort Wayne, IN	K-8	537	99%	43%	7%	45%	4%	1%	-	-	-
Thea Bowman Leadership Academy	Gary, IN	K-6	532	99%	94%	4%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	-
Thea Bowman Middle/High School	Gary, IN	7th-12th	604	99%	94%	4%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	-
Higher Institute of Arts and Technology	Merrillville, IN	K-8	241	78%	79%	2%	-	7%	2%	-	-	10%
Sheehy Elementary	Tampa, FL	K-5	341	99%	84%	12%	-	2%	2%	-	-	-
Oak Park Elementary	Tampa, FL	K-5	576	99%	76%	12%	-	6%	6%	-	-	-
Foster Elementary	Tampa, FL	K-5	489	97%	70%	18%	2%	2%	9%	-	-	-
Mcdonald Elementary School	Seffner, FL	K-5	556	95%	15%	30%	1%	6%	48%	-	-	-
Rainbow Dreams Academy	Las Vegas, NV	K-8	363	81%	76%	14%	0%	8%	1%	0%	0%	-
Overall Network	-	-	-	89%	73%	12%	7%	4%	7%	0%	0%	10%

PLA is also unique both in its track record and that it is led by people of color. The founder and most of its board, leadership team and headquarters staff are representative of the community of children and families that we serve. PLA has also been successful in recruiting high percentages of teachers of color, both male and female. Our diverse staff and our deep knowledge of our communities has enhanced our ability to partner with families, and help our scholars excel:

- In 2017-2018, Black scholars at PLA exceed the district average by 29% on the ELA state assessment, and by 11% on math.
- PLA scholars who come from low-income families surpass the district by 10% in math and by 24% in ELA on the state test.
- In 2017-2018, Latino scholars at PLA schools exceed the district average by 28% on the Math state assessments, and by 33% in ELA.
- Scholars who are English Language Learners at PLA schools perform 21% higher than the district average, and 8% higher than the state average.

In sum, we have extensive qualifications, experience and a track record of success with managing school improvement and turnaround efforts aligned with student achievement outcomes.

Expected Outcomes

As shared previously, PLA has been blessed to transform multiple failing schools into a loving, and academically rigorous one that children deserve. Below are some additional academic results:

- Only 20% of Indiana schools maintained an A grade from 16-17 to 2017-18. Two PLA schools, George H Fisher 93 and Francis Scott Key 103, maintained their A grade for the last two years.
- In its first year of state accountability grading, James and Rosemary Phalen Leadership Academy (JRPLA) became one of the only 29% percent of schools to get an A grade in 2017-2018.
- In its first year of state accountability grading, JRPLA outperformed 95% of Indiana schools in state measured growth for 2017-2018.
- In 2017-18, Fisher/PLA@93 outperformed 89% of Indiana schools in state measured growth.
- In 2017-18, PLA grew more than 93% of Indiana schools as measured by the state.
- Only 23% of Indiana schools increased their state grade from 2016-2017, only 7% of all schools went from a B to an A grade. George and Veronica Phalen Leadership Academy went from good to great – moving from a B in 2016-2017 to an A in 2017-2018.

Some of our expected outcomes for our Charleston schools would be:

- Students will outperform their peers in Charleston after three years and will outperform the state average on SCReady after five years.
- Increase by 5% students, grades K-2, reading on grade level and mastering early numeracy skills.
- Demonstrate a 5% increase in proficiency on SCReady scores.
- Experience high or expected annual growth movement on SCReady.
- We will retain over 85% of the high performing teachers (highly effective or effective).
- Receive over 85% parent and scholar satisfaction rates on annual satisfaction surveys.

Thank You

Thank you for your consideration, and hope to have the opportunity to work with you on behalf of children.