

## UVA-PLE Core Partnership: Empowering Leaders to Ignite System and School Change

### Proposal to Advance Charleston County School District Learning Lab

#### Introduction

The University of Virginia Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education (PLE) is honored by the desire of Charleston County School District's leadership to explore collaborating with PLE to support a learning lab of high-priority schools. The PLE functions under the umbrella of the Darden School Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that operates Darden's world-renowned Executive Education program and draws its strength from the unique collaboration between the Darden School of Business and the Curry School of Education

Through three years of partnership, PLE proposes to collaborate with district and school leadership to build collective leadership capacity and shift the paradigm in under-performing schools, generating lasting gains in achievement and learning to spread success and improve conditions across the district. Recognizing that there is no one formula to transform a school, PLE partners with district and school leaders to identify their unique needs and develop relevant strategies based on school and district context, leveraging local understanding of contextual challenges and our body of knowledge of what matters most to transform schools. Our partnership will help ensure the prioritized schools will be the proof points in Charleston for what is possible and inform efforts to improve system conditions, school supports and leadership development across the district.

We are excited to consider partnership with a district advancing bold change efforts on behalf of students. The bold goal areas adopted by the Charleston Board of Trustees are a clear indication that outcomes for students are the focus of leaders across Charleston:

- *Performance Goal:* Student achievement expressed as the percentage of students at or above grade level in reading and math
- *Growth Goal:* Students exhibiting a minimum academic growth of one full year from the previous grade
- *Readiness Gap Goal:* Student reading, math, workplace skills at or above the college and career readiness expectation level on a K-12 pathway

These clear, student-focused vision goals excite our team! We also see incredibly strong alignment to our own value proposition and [organizational beliefs](#).

*Value Proposition: UVA PLE's transformative and tailored leadership development increases the capacity of district and school teams to shape their own future and achieve lasting improvements in student learning. Through multi-year executive education and on-site thought partnership, we drive organizational learning and collaboration that empowers teams to heighten focus, improve internal ways of working, and confront difficult problems.*

#### How PLE Partners

When PLE partners with districts pursuing bold change for students we ground our work in four key levers:

- *Leadership.* Leadership has the capacity and willingness to do what is necessary to drive school transformation work, advance equity, and heighten outcomes – and the bandwidth to do this work now.
- *Support and accountability.* District has the infrastructure to provide prioritized schools both necessary and differentiated support, accountability and flexibility to grow school leadership practice.
- *Talent management.* District is establishing conditions to increase the number and impact of highly effective teachers in high needs schools and is willing to implement rigorous and prioritized hiring of school leaders in high needs schools.
- *Instructional infrastructure.* District provides and continuously enhances an effective instructional foundation, including valid assessments, effective curricula, responsive data systems and strategy to monitor rigor.

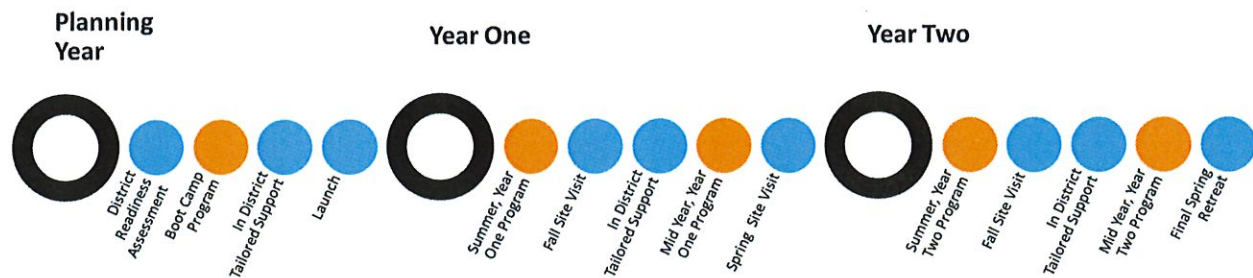
Over three years of partnership, we propose supporting district and school leaders to develop systems and structures that place students first as they confront their most pressing challenges within the areas articulated above. Specifically:

- **2019-20 Design and Launch Year.** We work with Charleston leadership during the design year to prepare for launch by garnering and advancing commitments for success aligned to strengths and opportunities identified during a District Readiness Assessment. We provide ongoing thought partnership to advance strategies to address district-specific challenges to enhance conditions for the learning lab schools. We will also provide competency-based support with development and, where interested, selection of school leaders during the fall/winter, which will set the stage for support from the district and our team for the remainder of the year to ensure progress in school leadership practice and greater preparation for true transformation by 2020-21. On a parallel track, district leaders attend executive education at UVA to advance their collective change leadership and advance process to both align around school greatest needs and solidify high-leverage opportunities for the district to enhance instructional resources and school support.
- **2020-21 and 2021-22 Activate, Execute and Adapt.** In summer executive education programs, district leaders and principals *work together* to accelerate organization change efforts, rethink their leadership approach, better drive decisions with data and learn from efforts in successful school systems across the country to establish focused execution plans with their school leadership teams. Winter executive education programs expand to include the school leadership team and focus on strengthening teamwork, creating vibrant cultures, deepening data cycles and teacher ownership of data, and making strategic mid-course corrections. Catalyzed by the learning at programs, each school and the district team articulates each semester with clarity and ambition their 90-day action plans to enhance performance. PLE couples this leadership development with in-district support via site visits to go deeper on problems of practice and help the district team strengthen its systems of support based on reality of school needs. PLE reinforces strategies to improve educational outcomes by providing tailored ongoing communication and on-site support to overcome hurdles.

After two years of successful execution, district leaders synthesize lessons learned and consider ways to scale solutions across the district and possibilities to expand partnership and impact with PLE. The



graphic below represents the typical PLE Program timeline graphically; however, our services and standard delivery model can be adapted to align with Charleston's vision.



*Note: In Figure 1, blue represents in-district support and orange depicts executive education programming that complement the ongoing thought partnership UVA-PLE team provides to leaders of the initiative*

Cohort 17 will be the second one participating in the newly rebranded “UVA-PLE Core Partnership” with a stated focus of “Empowering Leaders to Ignite System and School Change”, with even greater emphasis on executive education and on-site thought partnership that increases the capacity of district and school teams to shape their own future in achieving lasting improvements in student learning.

The UVA-PLE Core Partnership is the extension of an effort now in its 16<sup>th</sup> year. PLE’s work has impacted over 400 schools across 20 states and almost 100 districts, where most of our partner schools outgain state averages, almost 50% of our partner schools have experienced double-digit proficiency gains within three years and 20% of those schools achieve over 25-point gains within three years. We were recognized recently by RAND and Wallace Foundation as one of only two leadership development efforts in the country that qualify as “evidence-based” under ESSA, thanks to the results of our partners. The full RAND/Wallace study can be found at the following link:

<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/686467>. If of interest, examples of success by some of our recent partners in Gallup, NM and Fulton County, GA are available [here](#) and [here](#).

A proposed delivery model with fees is included on the next page. As we explore partnership with Charleston, we can consider additional adaptations to best meet the needs of district leaders and deepen learning. For example, this could include deeper work aligned to supporting Charleston (independently or in collaboration with other thought leaders) on developing your leadership pipeline from your existing teacher pool, enhancing your supervision strategy or aligning your cabinet. As Charleston considers potential partnership with PLE, we believe that a six school, feeder pattern based model would allow you to accelerate change the fastest, not just in a learning lab, but also in terms on lessons learned that would ultimately bring benefit to all schools. To provide options, the cost proposal below reflects full partnership for either a three or six school model.

Our program costs cover all services, including room and board costs at executive education programs and our team’s travel to the district. The timing of invoicing can be adjusted to meet Charleston’s needs. Districts pay the cost of travel to executive education programs.

### Proposed Pricing Overview for UVA-PLE Core Partnership in Charleston County School District

<u>Year</u>	<u>Support</u>	<u>3 Schools Model</u>	<u>6 Schools Model</u>
2019-20	<i>Design and Launch Year</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District Readiness Assessment</li> <li>Behavior Event Interviews</li> <li>District Boot Camp (\$5,000/person)</li> <li>Spring Launch Visit</li> <li>Optional Thought Partnership on Leadership Pipeline</li> </ul>	\$94,000	\$120,000  Included in the 6 school model is an additional tailored support (on site in Charleston) during the Design Year. This is not included in the 3 school model.
2020-21	<i>Cohort 17 Year One Implementation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer week-long executive education for 3 or 6 school leaders plus 4 or 6 person district team pending model decision</li> <li>Winter program for four-person school teams and district leaders</li> <li>Multiple site visits</li> <li>Embedded, tailored support (multiple if six schools), ongoing consultation, spring retreat</li> </ul>	\$45,000/school  4 person district team in addition to school leaders.	\$42,000/school  6 person district team in addition to school leaders.  If a 6 school model is pursued, we could offer 1 additional teacher leader to attend Summer program to support Charleston's leadership development focus area. The cost would be an additional \$2,500.
2021-22	<i>Cohort 17 Year Two Implementation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer executive education for four school leaders plus district team</li> <li>Winter program for four-person school teams and district leaders</li> <li>Fall site visit</li> <li>Strategic, embedded, tailored support (multiple if six schools), ongoing consultation, spring retreat</li> </ul>	\$34,000/school	\$31,000/school  If a 6 school model is pursued we could offer 1 additional teacher leader to attend Summer program to support Charleston's leadership development focus area. The cost would be an additional \$2,000.
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$331,000</b>	<b>\$558,000</b>

The intensity of district support or participation for each service increases based on the number of schools participating. For example, more district leaders attend programs and the district receives additional on-site support with six schools in the learning lab versus three schools. The three-school model proposed above is slightly more intensive with increased district invitations and embedded services than we'd provide to a rural district with only three schools.

After detail on the District Readiness Assessment and Design Year approach (pages 5-6), we've included an appendix with our standard delivery model for the core and sustainability partnerships to provide



more detail on foundational services from which we'll customize support. We look forward to working together to ensure the final scope of work meets Charleston County School District needs.

### **Recommendation for Cohort 17 Design and Launch Year Approach**

The proposed design year services below are tailored in a variety of manners and will be further adapted based on your feedback, including options to reduce service intensity and fees. Items 2-3 below are priced to reflect a 6 school learning lab. Adaptations can be made to reflect 3 schools.

- 1. District Readiness Assessment \$25,000**  
In fall 2019 we would collaborate with Charleston's leadership to launch the new partnership. The District Readiness Assessment would engage system leaders across the district to reflect upon your conditions for schools aligned to leadership, differentiated support and accountability, talent management and instructional infrastructure; through this process we also complete at least two focus groups – one for principals and one for teachers. PLE identifies recommendations for how the district can address gaps in readiness, heighten focus on key priorities and enhance engagement and alignment of stakeholders in the work. In completing the readiness assessment, PLE will better assist Charleston's team in articulating the purpose and goals of the partnership and articulate early commitment areas as we prepare to support a learning of schools and begin our collaboration during the design year.
- 2. Fall/Winter Clearview Support with Principal Selection and Development \$32,000**  
Clearview Consulting provides training to expose Charleston leaders to a data-driven, competency-based behavioral event interview process, conducts these interviews with the learning lab school principals and a sample of candidates in the pipeline to inform leadership selection and leadership development plans and debriefs implications from lessons learned with system leadership. This support includes time for nine on-site consultation days (six on-site days and lower costs if only three schools) in addition to planning supports, in order to ensure a clear developmental path forward for each current school leader, interviews of potential future principals for high-priority schools, and initial considerations for building stronger school leadership teams and informing pipeline efforts. For leaders where there is a developmental concern, Clearview will help the district leverage other points of data to help determine what supports and accountability need to be in place the remainder of the year to determine fit for true transformation.
- 3. Tailored Support including Optional Thought Partnership on Leadership Pipeline \$21,000**  
Building off results of the District Readiness Assessment and Clearview support, PLE would provide tailored thought partnership including at least one robust, embedded support. Focus area for the tailored support would be an area identified during the readiness assessment crucial to advancing conditions for the learning lab schools. In addition to this support, for a six-school partnership the PLE has built in enough capacity in this proposal to include thought partnership support with the design of and scale of a teacher -> leader development pipeline. For instance, PLE could help Charleston County leaders (independently or in collaboration with other thought leadership organizations) to consider how pipeline development efforts for learning lab schools could inform broader district goals related to developing a school leader pipeline. Whatever the design, the support would be adaptable to Charleston's needs and recognize the pipeline of leaders is shallow

and not seek comprehensive solutions at first, but rather attempt to identify and advance meaningful wins to build momentum.

**4. District Boot Camp**

**\$5,000/person**

We would propose that Charleston bring 4-6 district team members to Boot Camp, based on the number of schools in partnership. This executive education program at the UVA Darden School of Business brings together leaders from across the country preparing to launch bold school transformation or acceleration initiatives. We have updated boot camp content tremendously over the past three years to include lessons learned from our leading research and successful change initiatives across the country.

**5. Cohort 17 Launch Visit**

**\$12,000**

The launch visit in April or May 2020 will be a tailored visit to assist Charleston leadership with advancing the commitments it makes at Boot Camp and ensure school leaders are ready for the summer. We also spend time with the learning lab principals to support their readiness.

## **TAILORING VISION AND SERVICES TO PARTNER NEEDS**

---

We partner with leaders to find solutions tailored to the individual needs of their districts and schools, leveraging their understanding of their contextual challenges and our body of knowledge of what matters most to transform schools. Thus, all of our services are designed to build collective capacity of local leaders to design a path forward that meets their stakeholder needs and our services listed on the pages that follow can be adapted to align with the district's vision.

Our standard delivery model is described below. All of the supports in our delivery model are designed to adapt to each district's specific context and drive towards transformational change. We can consider further adaptations or additions to this delivery model to meet the needs of our partners.

## **DESIGN YEAR: RETHINKING SYSTEM TO SET THE STAGE: 2019-20**

---

During the design year, our team partners with district leadership to assess current capacity and practice and to rethink how to design the system to enable transformation. We believe transformative and sustainable change is most effective when led from the district level and allows both top-down and bottom-up innovation. The UVA-PLE focuses on building systemic capacity across four "system levers": leadership, instructional infrastructure, support and accountability, and talent management. Tailored services for design year to Portland were described earlier in the proposal on pages 1-5.

## **IMPLEMENTATION YEAR SERVICES: 2020-21 AND 2021-22**

---

### **1. Core Partnership Executive Education**

Timeline: Summer 2020 (full week) and Summer 2021 (three days)

Participants: System leadership team and turnaround principals

Over two consecutive summers, residential executive development programs for the principals and district turnaround team are held at the Darden School of Business. These immersive experiences focus on igniting change in organizations and leadership practice. The size of the system leadership team varies with the number of schools involved (three invited for three schools, four invited for four or five schools, five invited for six or seven schools as baseline in this pricing).

*Year 1* – Over six days, leadership teams work together to understand root cause needs, launch organization change efforts, learn how to drive decisions with data, establish focused execution plans and create a learning organization that continuously adapts. It also serves to create honest conversations and build trusting relationships between the district turnaround leadership team and principals in order to co-create and sustain change in the partner schools.

*Year 2* – Over three days, district leadership teams and principals focus on further leveraging strengths to build on success, addressing gaps in implementation, innovating to promote change and reinvigorating change efforts to overcome resistance.

### **2. Year 1 and Year 2 Mid-Year Winter Retreats**

Timeline: January-February 2020 and January-February 2021

Participants: In addition to system turnaround leadership team and principals, each school sends three school leadership team members.



In the winter of year 1 and year 2, principals and district leaders reconvene, this time joined by members of each school's leadership team. In these midyear executive development programs, learners revisit the themes from the previous summer, analyze progress from the fall, make midcourse corrections, and set the stage for a powerful second semester. By including more team members at each school, these midyear programs also serve to distribute learning and leadership throughout the organization.

*Year 1* – Having launched a change initiative the previous fall, school and district teams spend three days deepening their learning with a focus on data driven instruction and collaborative decision making. Skill building around effective data use is coupled with leadership development focused on motivation, prioritization, and leading change through midcourse corrections. School and district teams leave the program ready to take their change initiative to the next level for the spring and for year two.

*Year 2* – The final executive education program of the core partnership focuses on distributing leadership throughout the organization and creating organizational energy for sustainable success. In addition to rich dialogue designed to sharpen school and district focus for the second semester, learners reflect on their own approach to change and leadership and work to embrace a mission-focus for the journey ahead.

### ***3. Regular development opportunities for district shepherd***

Timeline:        Shepherd Day Summer 2020  
                      Shepherd Summit 2020 & 2021  
                      Regular Shepherd contact with PLE point  
                      Support with 90-day planning feedback

In return for creating an environment where turnaround schools can thrive (support), district leadership should establish concrete achievement goals and a robust performance monitoring system to hold school leaders accountable for achieving strong gains (accountability). The district appoints a high-level district official (the “district shepherd”) charged with overseeing the turnaround initiative, supervising core partnership principals and creating the conditions necessary for change and ensuring that the systems and implementation follow suit. To support this work, PLE each year:

- Assigns a district point to provide regular consultation with district shepherd & their team.
- Provides sessions prior to the first summer program and winter programs tailored to shepherds. In large districts, the shepherd brings at least one team member to this event.
- Invite shepherds and often a partner to a day-long Shepherd Summit to help develop strategies needed for turnaround success. Topics include promoting principal effectiveness, offering feedback & coaching, facilitating differentiated support to teachers and establishing effective school visit practices.

### ***4. District and School Site Visits***

Timeline:        First three semesters of turnaround initiative, starting Fall 2020  
Participants:    System and school leadership teams

With people and structures in place, we help system and school leaders execute a shared vision of success. We continuously expose leaders to data-driven and system redesign approaches to ignite a mind-shift in what is possible. All four semesters, each partner system and its schools develop context-based 90 Day Plans to create a road-map for success. To help leaders stay on course, our team makes



embedded visits and provides customized support throughout both years. As implementation deepens, the cluster of transformation schools becomes a learning lab for what's possible as successful approaches are identified that can transform system-wide practice and inform further system redesign.

The UVA-PLE team owes it to our partners to help them shape their own future and assist them in identifying and confronting their most difficult challenges. We serve as thought partners to help leaders brainstorm how to improve execution and create new possibilities. A team will visit each school after each summer session and the first winter session to help each school assess progress on their turnaround plans and determine next steps. We then collaborate with school system leadership to share observations and discuss opportunities to reinvigorate or adapt efforts.

#### ***5. Tailored Follow-Up Support and Retreats***

Timeline: New support each year driven by needs identified in site visit

Participants: System and school leadership teams

Following site visits, we determine with district leadership how our team or consultants can best support the effort. Following all executive education programs, each partner system and school develops context-based 90 Day Plans. To help leaders stay urgently on course, the UVA-PLE team regularly connects with system leaders to provide feedback on action plans and brainstorm how to strengthen the initiative and overcome hurdles. At least once per year (more often in large districts), the UVA-PLE will provide customized, hands-on support tailored to the district's needs. Additionally, based on identified needs, our team will connect leaders to a nation-wide network of successful turnaround practitioners.

The UVA-PLE team also typically provides an onsite spring retreat each spring to help school leadership teams advance their instructional and change leadership skills while capturing and applying lessons learned for the year. The final year retreat typically focuses on sustainability to identify forward-looking practices to drive transformation. We will work with leaders in Portland to determine whether to provide these retreats or to instead provide other extra tailored follow-up support depending on what will best meet their needs and drive change.