

Project L.I.F.T.

Leadership and Investment for Transformation

Background: A Tale of Two Cities

Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) is a thriving educational entity with much to be celebrated as it relates to student achievement. The district was recently awarded the 2011 Broad Prize for its success at narrowing the achievement gap and its focus on effective teachers and leaders. With much to celebrate on the periphery, there is much to be done to address the extreme educational disparity of a concentrated group of students represented in the middle ring neighborhood schools just a few miles from the flourishing banking industry of center city. **More than half** of the elementary and middle school students who are **below grade level** are in **less than one-third of the schools**. West Charlotte High School has a graduation rate of 53% while a high school a few miles away graduates 93% of its students. Public education cannot, and must not, be divided in this way.

Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools provides a strong foundation for school reform. Much has been done to demonstrate the will to advance student achievement, but there is much more work to do in order to ensure all children, regardless of the zip code, receive the promise of a high quality education. Although Mecklenburg County and CMS have attempted to address this geographic area through various educational and social services, the work has lacked coordination, accountability and urgency. Consequently, progress has been stymied and chronic low performance in the schools has prevailed.

Project L.I.F.T. Provides a Resolution

Project L.I.F.T. is a groundbreaking initiative that aims to take **bold action** to lift up and accelerate the educational outcomes for children living in the West Charlotte Corridor. This philanthropic effort maintains that our successful students and our struggling students **belong to all of us**. It is the belief of these community leaders that leveraging philanthropy, a focus on a common agenda and coordination of reform strategies will have an impact powerful enough to break the cycle of school failure and ensure that every child is college and career ready. The strategic plan of Project L.I.F.T. will focus on the following areas:

Project L.I.F.T.

Leadership and Investment for Transformation

- A focus on the **West Charlotte Corridor student feeder zone** which consist of 8 schools and 7500 students--two traditional elementary schools, four K-8 schools, one traditional middle school and one high school. All students will matriculate to the high school.
- The identification of four key areas of intervention in which investments will be targeted: **Talent, Time, Technology and Community Support.**
- Efforts to **reform policy** that will advance educational outcomes for students.
- An unprecedented goal of **collectively raising \$55 million** for a five-year pilot called Project LIFT to help implement the initiative; currently \$46 million has been committed.

Five Year Expected Goals for Project L.I.F.T.

- 90% graduation cohort rate at West Charlotte High School
 - Requires a 10% increase each year of the initiative
- 90% of the students will achieve more than a year's worth of academic growth in a year's time
- 90% composite proficiency rates
 - Requires a 10% increase in proficiency each year of the initiative
- 90% of students will be on track to graduate through a 90% promotion rate in all grade levels
- 90% of teachers & leaders will meet standards for highly effective, motivated, and mission aligned staff

By 2016 Project LIFT Schools will achieve 90/90/90 school designation: 90% minority, 90% economically disadvantaged, and 90% on grade level in all specified metrics

Project L.I.F.T. & Conditions for School Reform

Project L.I.F.T. has adopted the following definition of school turnaround: a dramatic and comprehensive intervention in a low-performing school that a) produces significant gains in achievement within two years; and b) readies the school for the longer process of transformation into a high-performance organization.

Project L.I.F.T. will become the lead "Turnaround Agent" and function as a **hybrid charter** with the appropriate **authority and flexibility** to accelerate the identified turnaround strategies. As the lead turnaround agency, Project L.I.F.T. will maintain a partnership with CMS so that the work of this initiative will serve as a **national proof point for school reform.** Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools has committed to provide Project L.I.F.T. with the "runway" for school reform void of the bureaucratic

Project L.I.F.T.

Leadership and Investment for Transformation

underbrush that often prohibits change. The Project L.I.F.T. schools will function as a separate zone free of some of the current restraints, rules and regulations, especially as it relates to Human Resources processes and policy. Project L.I.F.T. leadership and CMS will continue to jointly pursue larger legislative reforms related to the school calendar, teacher tenure and licensure, and the inclusion of value-add measures of teacher effectiveness in teacher evaluations and performance pay.

With a **single-minded focus on improving student learning**, Project L.I.F.T. is positioned to effectively build parent and community support, contract with external partners, monitor fidelity of plan implementation and progress, build leadership capacity, problem solve, and maintain coordination and communication. These conditions will make the promise of a high quality education for students in the West Charlotte Corridor a reality.

Goals and Tactics at a Glance

Talent

Teachers and principals will decrease achievement gaps by increasing student growth/proficiency at a faster rate than the students' more affluent/non minority peers.

100% of Project L.I.F.T. Principals and Teachers will meet standards for highly effective, highly motivated, and mission aligned. (rubrics and tools to be developed)

Recruit, retain and develop highly effective teachers so that every student has access to an excellent teacher in the Project L.I.F.T. zone.

- Employ a **Human Capital Specialist** that will work with endorsed national educational talent partner to **retain, and develop a talent pipeline of teachers and principals.**
- Integrate **Job Redesign and Technology to extend reach of top quartile teachers.**
- Offer specialized professional development focused on school turnaround to principals and teachers (Summer L.I.F.T. Institute).
- Employ effective recruitment and selection approaches using charter school practices.
- Utilize a compensation strategy based on effectiveness.
- Employ an **aggressive strategy to remove low performers** in order in order to bring in a mission aligned cohort of teachers in year 1.
- Continue to pursue **career status** and compensation **policy reform** at the state level.

Project L.I.F.T.

Leadership and Investment for Transformation

90% of all students who are off track to graduate will be enrolled in credit recovery opportunities beginning in 2012-13.

90% of 4 year olds in the West Charlotte Corridor will attend a quality pre-school program.

75% (5500 students) of all students in the L.I.F.T. zone will participate in quality summer experiences to significantly reduce summer learning loss.

All Project L.I.F.T. schools will implement a year round school schedule and increase the number of school days in the year

- Implement **L.I.F.T. Academy for Acceleration for Credit Recovery and College Access** for West Charlotte High School Students.
- **Explore a LIFT Career and Technical Preparatory Boarding School** for middle school boys in need of intensive academic and social interventions to stay on track for high school graduation and beyond.
- Increase vocational, STEM, and cultural arts opportunities within and beyond the school day.
- Utilize **Rigorous Program Evaluation Process** for endorsing all out of school and after school partners
- Ensure **alignment** of out-of- school opportunities to **rigorous school curriculum**.
- Establish an **Out of School Time Collaborative** with endorsed partners; set common goals and measures of success.
- Implement a **customized data dashboard** that will house data of all partners to increase. communication, coordination, and decision making
- Inform and change calendar state **calendar policy**.

Provide immediate and sustained case management for students and families that are dealing with adversity caused by poverty that inhibit learning:

- Emotional and Social Challenges.
- Acute and Chronic Stressors.
- Cognitive Lags.
- Health and Safety Issues.

- **Services:** Build the school's capacity to address mental health and behavioral challenges and establish linkages to community social services by bringing a team of social service support to each school site. Families and students will have access to social service support within the "community school" concept making resources and assistance readily available and follow up/through more efficient.
- Operationalize a **mobile Medical Clinic** that will provide on-site medical service for parents and students at each school weekly.
- Continue endorsement of partnership with **Communities in Schools**.

Project L.I.F.T.

Leadership and Investment for Transformation

<p>80% of parents will attend at least 3 school related events that focus on parent education.</p> <p>90% of parents will attend at least 2 conferences to discuss their child's progress.</p> <p>90% of parents will respond positively (highly agree or agree) to items on a parent survey related to motivation, perception of school, and partnership with the school.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize a variety of incentives for parent participation. • Increase and enhance Parent Education opportunities. • Establish a community collaborative for Project LIFT that will engage all grant-endorsed partners and other interested partners in mutual planning, risk-management, evaluation, implementation, merging of integrated service plans to effectively respond to the parent, school, and family needs.
<p>75% of parents will participate in the Microsoft Digital Inclusion program that will put a computer and internet access in the homes of families in the West Charlotte Corridor to reduce the technology gap and increase access to web-based services and resources that will be beneficial to families and students</p>	<p>Increase access to technology by partnering with Microsoft to launch a digital inclusion project for students/families in the West Corridor. Microsoft will work with Project L.I.F.T to engage public and private partnerships that will bring technology access to needy youth and their families. This partnership will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal computers to the families of students at a significantly reduced cost • Broadband internet access • Education software • Job skills training
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ a comprehensive data tracking system that will include leading and lagging indicators in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Demographic data: Describing the population of students served. ○ School environment data: Reflecting the school climate and culture. ○ Student achievement data: Measuring students' academic achievement. ○ Perception data: Representing student, staff, and community opinions about the school. ○ Instructional data: Describing the teaching staff and instruction. ○ Facilities and resources data: Capturing school resources and operations. • Hire a Student Outcomes/ Evaluation Specialist to support process evaluation, program evaluation and student outcomes. • Leverage a third party evaluator to provide data that informs a continuous improvement process 	