

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The executive summary should provide a concise statement/synopsis of the following:

- **The proposed plan for the school.**
- **The geographic and population considerations of the school environment.**
- **The challenges particular to those considerations.**
- **The applicant team’s capacity to successfully open and operate a high-quality school given the above considerations.**

The I3 Academy team is pleased to submit the following proposal in response to the Birmingham City Schools Public Charter School Request for Proposals. The proposal outlines the applicant team’s plans to address the following educational priorities outlined in the Birmingham City Schools RFP:

- Closing the achievement gap of special education and general education students, specifically in the areas of reading and math
- Increasing academic opportunities for all students, including but not limited to special needs, at-risk and English Language Learners, in the areas of science, technology, reading, engineering, arts and mathematics (STREAM).

I3 Academy is built on the belief that ALL children have the ability to succeed in school when they are engaged in learning. I3 Academy will prepare learners with a strong foundation in reading and math through a comprehensive Response to Intervention (RTI) model. Alongside these academic skills, a daily in-class social-emotional learning program will allow learners to develop behavioral skills and emotional intelligence. Addressing both academic and social-emotional needs within a multi-tiered system of supports provides the foundation that learners need to engage in rigorous academic opportunities.

These foundational academic and social-emotional skills prepare learners to succeed in a project-based learning environment that requires them to own their learning and apply their knowledge and skills in more real life experiences. The school is planned for the Woodlawn area as a component of the holistic revitalization of the neighborhood. In collaboration with existing organizations, I3 Academy will serve families in Woodlawn by educating the whole child. The following application outlines the educational, operational, and financial plans to create a high-quality school in the Woodlawn community.

1. Mission and Vision. State the mission and vision of the proposed school. The mission statement describes the fundamental purpose of the school, relating why it will exist. The vision statement outlines how the school will operate and what it aims to achieve in the long term. The mission and vision statements provide the foundation for the entire proposal.

The mission and vision statements, when combined, should:

- **Identify the students and community to be served.**
- **Illustrate what success will look like.**
- **Align with the purposes of the Alabama School Choice and Student Opportunity Act (Act 2015-3) and the authorizer’s stated priorities for schools.**

I3 Academy stands for *Imagine. Investigate. Innovate.* These three words represent the skills that teachers and leaders will foster and develop within learners who attend I3 Academy. These words will guide the teaching and learning at I3 and provide a framework to communicate the authentic learning that students can experience at I3.

Our **mission** is to empower learners to become agents of change who solve the problems they see in their world.

We **envision** a world in which all learners are equipped to excel in a global society.

We believe that all children should have access to enriching and appropriately challenging learning experiences that prepare them for their chosen path in college or career. I3 Academy seeks to serve the Woodlawn community where the school will be located, by providing another educational opportunity for parents as part of a holistic neighborhood revitalization effort. The educational model promotes a strong academic foundation, social-emotional learning, and project-based learning and STEAM integration as our approaches to the curricula. Through these foundational skills and experiences learners will be problem-solvers who are prepared for a complex and ever-changing global workforce.

2. Educational Need and Anticipated Student Population. Describe the anticipated student population, the students’ anticipated educational needs, and non-academic challenges the school is likely to encounter. Describe the rationale for selecting the location and student body. Identify any enrollment priorities on which the program is based, consistent with student enrollment eligibility and selection criteria.

Anticipated Student Population

The I3 Academy anticipated student population will consist of students in grades K-5 (Fall 2020) zoned for Birmingham City Schools within the Woodlawn community and its surrounding neighborhoods. Students enrolled will be reflective of the Woodlawn community in race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Within the four neighborhoods of Woodlawn there are a total of 5,935 residents. Of these residents, 18.6% have no high school degree or equivalency. In Woodlawn, 30.9% of households earn less than \$15,000 compared to 22.7% in the City of Birmingham. The unemployment rate in Woodlawn is 11%, compared to 7.4% in the City of Birmingham. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018).

Anticipated Academic Needs

Educational outcomes of students in poverty are impacted by a range of factors including presence of toxic stress, lack of enrichment opportunities, poor school attendance, limited access to professional role models, limited parental educational attainment, and poor early access to literacy. (Rothstein, 2008). Other academic factors that are more prevalent in students from poverty include developmental delays and learning disabilities. Students from poverty are more likely to repeat a grade, be expelled or suspended from school, and dropout of high school. (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997). Birmingham City Schools academic data from the ACT Aspire 2017 illustrates the projected academic need of students who will attend I3 Academy.

Table1. ACT Aspire 2017, Birmingham City Schools

PROFICIENCY	EXCEEDING	READY	CLOSE	IN NEED OF SUPPORT
3rd Grade Reading	6%	12%	20%	62%
5th Grade Reading	6%	11%	25%	58%
3rd Grade Math	8%	27%	32%	33%
5th Grade Math	3%	12%	59%	23%

I3 Academy seeks to address anticipated academic needs of Birmingham City Schools. The 2018-2023 Birmingham City Schools Strategic Plan sets goals for increasing student achievement by the year 2023. The first pillar, Student Excellence, provides priorities for the academic needs of students in Birmingham City Schools.

BIRMINGHAM CITY SCHOOLS STRATEGIC PLAN

Student Excellence

Long Term Goals (p. 8)

- All children are prepared for productive citizenship, college, career, and life. Our graduation rate increases as students in all schools meet or exceed proficiency in grade level reading, math, and other subjects required for graduation.

Our Success Metrics by 2023 (p. 9)

- Establish baseline for early literacy and numeracy (K-2) and improve over time.
- Increase percentage of students meeting annual growth targets in Math (State assessment)
 - Grade 3 from 42% to 60% (preliminary baseline data)
 - Grade 8 from 48% to 70% (preliminary baseline data)
- Increase percentage of students meeting annual growth targets in Reading (State assessment)
 - Grade 3 from 42% to 60% (preliminary baseline data)
 - Grade 8 from 52% to 70% (preliminary baseline data)

By creating a robust academic program that centers on math and literacy foundations with individualized and targeted support, I3 Academy will share in the effort to increase the percentage of annual growth targets.

Anticipated Non-Academic Needs

Poverty has both academic and non-academic impacts on children. The following outcomes have been identified as an effect of poverty (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997)

In the area of physical health, children in poverty are more likely to:

- Be born with a low birth weight.
- Have lead poisoning.
- Spend more days sick in bed.
- Have more short-stay hospital episodes.
- Experience hunger.

In emotional or behavioral outcomes, children in poverty are more likely to:

- Have emotional or behavioral problem that lasted 3 months or more.
- Experience violent crime.

These health and wellness indicators can have significant impact on students' social-emotional well-being, school attendance, and attention and focus in the classroom. At I3 Academy a dedicated counselor, social worker, and community partner liaison will provide resources and support to learners in need of additional resources to meet their non-academic needs.

Rationale for Selecting the Location and Student Body

The identified academic and non-academic needs illustrate the necessity for an educational opportunity prepared to address all the needs in Woodlawn in a new and exciting way. The Woodlawn community is part of a national network called Purpose Built Communities, an organization that helps communities across the country implement proven and effective revitalization strategies, including a cradle-to-college and career-education pipeline, high-quality mixed income housing, and community wellness programs. I3 Academy will be one of several educational opportunities available to meet the need for high-quality K-5 education within the cradle-to-college and career pipeline.

Enrollment Priorities

As a result of the identified need in the neighborhood, students in the Woodlawn community are the population preference for student recruitment. A 2016 analysis by Purpose Built Communities of the students who are living in Woodlawn but who do not attend neighborhood schools provides a rationale for an additional education option in the community. The number of students living in the Woodlawn feeder pattern compared to the students who are enrolled in school illustrates that there are families in the neighborhood whose children do not currently attend a Birmingham City School. In 2016 there were 3,124 students who were enrolled in the following schools: Avondale Elementary, Oliver Elementary, Hayes K8, Putnam Middle School, and Woodlawn High School. (ALSDE Enrollment Report, 2016) Attendance zone data was generated using ESRI geographic information system reporting

tools. Data was extracted from ESRI using census projections and compared with Birmingham City Schools attendance boundaries. While 3,124 students were enrolled in the Woodlawn feeder pattern in 2015-16, there were 5,872 children, ages 4-17, living in the area that were zoned for these schools. This analysis revealed a gap of 2,748 school-age youth who were not attending the zoned schools in 2015-16.

Increasing student enrollment is a strategic goal of Birmingham City Schools. The following strategic plan goals indicate an identified area of need for Birmingham City Schools.

BIRMINGHAM CITY SCHOOLS STRATEGIC PLAN

Effective Systems and Planning:Metrics

Long Term Goals (p. 20)

- We maintain or increase student enrollment.

Our Success Metrics by 2023 (p. 21)

- Increase our average daily membership (# of students) from 24,290 to 25,000.

I3 Academy will aid Birmingham City Schools in reaching that goal.

Through a targeted and comprehensive plan for Woodlawn students' anticipated academic and non-academic challenges, I3 Academy is poised to meet these needs for all learners.

References

Rothstein, Richard. "Whose Problem Is Poverty? ." *Educational Leadership*, vol. 67, no. 7, Apr. 2008, pp. 8–13.

Brooks-Gunn, Jeanne, and Greg J. Duncan. "The Effects of Poverty on Children." *Children and Poverty*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1997, pp. 55–71.

3. Education Plan/School Design. Provide an overview of the academic program of the proposed school, including major instructional methods, assessment strategies, and non-negotiables of the school model. Describe evidence that demonstrates the school model will be successful in improving academic achievement for the targeted student population, and at-risk students in particular. Summarize what the proposed school is projected to do more effectively than the schools that are now serving the targeted population, and how the school plans to achieve its goals.

Overview of the Academic Model

The I3 academic model informs the educational plan and school design that addresses the academic, physical, social and emotional needs of each child. This holistic approach supports both in and out-of-school factors that contribute to student learning. I3 Academy leverages these resources all at once to provide resources directly to individual student needs. The academic framework is modeled

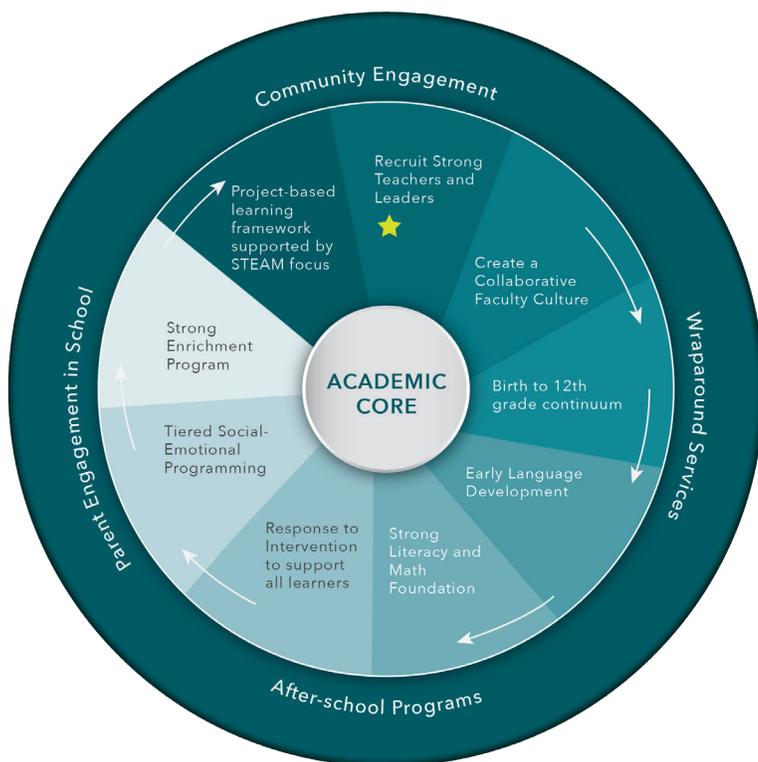
after Charles R. Drew Charter School in Atlanta, GA. Drew Charter School is a high-performing pre-K through 12th grade school located within the East Lake area, a community that has undergone a successful revitalization over the past two decades. The diagram illustrates the core elements of the Drew Charter academic model.

The model relies on creating a **collaborative culture** within the school, which recognizes that when teachers collaborate they can impact how students learn in powerful ways (Killion, Learning Forward, 2015). The organizational structure of the school provides teachers with the time and resources to collaborate and create. This culture is fueled by the ability to **recruit and develop strong teachers and leaders**. Teachers matter more to student achievement than any other aspect of schooling (Teachers Matter, RAND Corporation). Finding, recruiting, and fostering top education talent to teach at I3 will be supported by an intentional and comprehensive process.

I3 educators are tasked with providing a strong foundation in **early language development** building from the **early learning opportunities within the birth to 12th grade continuum**. Through local and regional partnerships and intensive professional development, I3 Academy ensures an aligned vertical approach to language development that is developmentally appropriate and enriching. Through solid Tier 1 instruction, a **strong literacy and math foundation** is laid which is strengthened through intentional literacy and math intervention programs.

Early language development is the foundation of the **Response to Intervention model in literacy and math**, a key component of the **multi-tiered systems of support** offered at I3 Academy. While many Alabama schools have RTI programs, this model leverages the extended academic schedule and additional resources to ensure that each part of the RTI model is implemented with fidelity. Use of additional trained paraprofessionals, interns, and volunteers in the classroom help teachers deliver targeted Tier 2 instruction within the classroom environment. Tier 3 instruction occurs in

engaging and inviting Math and Literacy Labs where learners work in small groups with well-resourced educators. The activities presented in Tier 3 are hands-on and engaging. This approach to multi-tiered instruction provides additional support and small group instruction that is facilitated by the organizational structure of I3 Academy. A meta-analysis of RTI research found large effects for both systemic (e.g., reductions in special education referrals) and student outcomes (e.g., increased increase reading scores) (Burns, Appleton, & Stehouwer, 2005).



Classroom curricula and enrichment programs are designed for **inquiry-based learning**. This is delivered through a **project-based learning** instructional framework, **STEAM** (Science Technology Engineering Arts Mathematics) provides a lens through which integrated curricular projects are designed and implemented. In addition, collaborations between classroom teachers and enrichment teachers provide unique opportunities for relevant and exciting projects. Projects are both school and community-based allowing learners to solve the problems they see in their world. A professional development and collaboration structure will facilitate the design of these exciting projects and cross-disciplinary collaborations. Beyond the walls of the school, partnerships with out-of-school education providers will deliver opportunities to extend the learning experience into the community. Through this community-centered approach learners will see that learning takes place all the time, everywhere.

I3 Academy is one education provider within many throughout the Woodlawn community. A **birth-to-12 continuum** for learning begins well before Kindergarten and beyond grade 12. Partnerships with early learning providers in the area assist in aligning learning in the critical early years to the Kindergarten program at I3 Academy. A comprehensive selection of **wraparound services** that address **early learning, afterschool & extracurriculars, and college & career readiness** ensure that both in and out-of-school programs provide learners with opportunities for the course of their academic career.

Effectiveness of Model

I3 Academy has structures and schedules that help to lower the ratio of staff to students. By providing a paraprofessional in each classroom, I3 Academy assures that learning environments can be more responsive to students' academic and social-emotional needs with two trained adults in each classroom. This model affords the opportunity to more effectively design and implement differentiated learning experiences for Tiers 1 and 2 at each grade level. The enriching literacy and math labs provide a method to provide more students with small group Tier 3 instruction. The school's schedule plays an important role in facilitating learning. Most importantly, an extended school day allows for more planning and job-embedded professional development time for teachers. In addition, this calendar and schedule facilitate a robust offering of enrichment courses for students and time for intensive interventions around math and literacy. This model has been highly effective at Drew Charter School in Atlanta as evidenced by their outstanding academic performance. Drew Charter School, with a large population of free-and-reduced lunch students, outperforms their non-free and reduced lunch peer schools in Atlanta Public Schools and across the state of Georgia. Purpose Built Schools has utilized the Drew instructional model to improve educational outcomes for students. The applicant team will work closely with Purpose Built Schools to build an effective school model for I3 Academy.

There are currently seven schools in the Purpose Built Communities network that have selected the Drew instructional model as their educational strategy. To support education in these communities Purpose Built Schools currently has schools replicating the model in the Atlanta Public Schools (4), Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (1), Kansas City Public Schools (1) and Omaha Public Schools (1). While at different levels of model implementation due to varied opening dates, all schools have demonstrated student achievement growth and overall improvement from their baseline launch year. After one year of model implementation schools such as Howard Kennedy Elementary School earned the Omaha Public Schools gold award for excellence in improvement for their five percent or greater growth in three Nebraska statewide assessments. Purpose Built Schools is currently in the planning

process with replication school sites with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (2) and Dallas Independent School District (1). (www.purposebuiltschools.org)

References

Killion, Joellen. "High Quality Collaboration Benefits Teachers and Students." *Learning Forward*, vol. 36, no. 5, Oct. 2015, pp. 62–64., www.learningforward.org.

"Understanding Teachers' Impact on Student Achievement." *RAND Corporation*, www.rand.org/education/projects/measuring-teacher-effectiveness/teachers-matter.html.

Burns, M. K., Appleton, J. J., & Stehouwer, J. D. (2005). Meta-analysis of response-to-intervention research: Examining field-based and research-implemented models. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, 23, 381–394.

4. Community Engagement. Describe the relationships that have been established to generate community engagement in, and support for, the proposed school and how needs and/or solicited support for the school have been assessed. Briefly describe these activities and summarize the results.

In the fall of 2018, I3 Academy launched a comprehensive community engagement plan. This application reflects work that has been conducted up to the point of application submission and plans for continued efforts through the opening of school. The following activities have been conducted to generate community support for the school.

Parent and Educator Surveys and Focus Groups

In order to determine the current perspectives of education in the community, surveys and focus groups were conducted among parents, teachers, community members, partners, business owners, and other constituents whose voice is valuable for the development of a community school.

Focus groups measured ideas such as:

- Beliefs about the purpose of school
- Perception of charter schools
- Feelings about school operations
- Priorities concerning academic rigor and pedagogical application

Surveys measured ideas such as:

- What should the purpose of this charter be?
- What surname for the school will the community take pride in?
- What school values should be emphasized, and applied to its name?

Findings

The following findings of these engagement activities with over 250 participants informs future community engagement opportunities and assists the applicant team in multiple levels of building I3

Academy with the community it serves.

- 1) More information is needed about charter schools.** Forty-one percent of respondents answered that they did not know what a charter school was. Qualitatively parents repeatedly said that they needed more information to gain a better understanding of charter schools. This valuable information shows a need in Birmingham to educate families about charter schools so that they can make informed decisions for their children. This will be incorporated into future engagement plans.
- 2) Parents want options for their children's education.** Eighty-seven percent of respondents answered yes to the question "Do you want a choice of where your student(s) gets an education?" A clear theme of educational opportunity reflects a readiness for educational options both within and out of school.
- 3) Parents want their children to be prepared for a global society.** When provided a list of options that they are seeking in a school, three elements stood out. Over one hundred respondents marked diversity in school and foreign languages as a priority. Ninety-nine respondents would like more opportunities for exposure to technology and robotics.

Partner Focus Groups/Surveys & School Leader Introductions

In November 2018 a series of focus groups were conducted to gather insights from potential community partners and local businesses. This was also an opportunity to meet Dr. Martin Nalls, school leader and other members of the I3 Academy team.

School Leader Networking

In fall 2018 Dr. Nalls has met with members of the community and begun developing relationships with key stakeholders. Dr. Nalls is utilizing community events and organizations to introduce himself to residents and share plans for the school. He and his staff will continue to identify opportunities for community engagement and build upon this network.

Through the ongoing commitment to authentic community engagement Dr. Nalls and his leadership team will develop relationships in order to gain understanding of the community I3 Academy will serve. The listed activities have been conducted up to the point of the application. Community engagement will be a lifetime and ever-changing activity of I3 Academy. A community liaison will be hired to assist in managing community engagement activities and to identify external partners that will support the strategies of the school. Parents of the school will also be engaged to assist in this effort once the school has opened.

I3 Academy greatly values Woodlawn community input and will continue to value its voice. These surveys provide a small snapshot of community engagement in fall of 2018. The applicant team acknowledges that these surveys do not provide a complete picture and that further research and engagement must be done leading up to the opening of school.

- 5. Leadership and Governance. In the table below, list the current members of the school's proposed leadership team and governing board, including their roles with the school and their current professional affiliation.**

Add lines to this table as needed. Do not list members of the applicant team who will not have an official leadership role with the school going forward, such as consultants.

FULL NAME	CURRENT JOB TITLE AND EMPLOYER	POSITION WITH PROPOSED SCHOOL
Dr. Martin Nalls	Head of School, I3 Academy	Head of School
Dr. Dylan Ferniany	Director of Student & Adult Learning, I3 Academy	Director of Student & Adult Learning
Dr. Tommy Bice	Education Director, Mike and Gillian Goodrich Foundation	Board President
LaShunta Boler	Attorney, Private Practice	Board Member
Bobby Humphrey	Vice President of Business Development, Bryant Bank	Board Member
Deidre Clark	Founder, Kuumba Community Arts	Board Member

ENROLLMENT SUMMARY

1. Complete the table below, illustrating the growth plan for the school. Indicate the school year for each column. Remove any rows for grades the school will not serve.

GRADE LEVEL	NUMBER OF STUDENTS					
	YEAR 1 2020	YEAR 2 2021	YEAR 3 2022	YEAR 4 2023	YEAR 5 2024	AT CAPACITY 2025
Pre-K	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	60	60	60	60	60	60
2	60	60	60	60	60	60
3	75	75	75	75	75	75
4	75	75	75	75	75	75
5	75	75	75	75	75	75
Total	420	420	420	420	420	420

2. Describe the rationale for the number of students and grade levels served in year one and the basis for the growth plan illustrated above.

We have chosen a K-5 school model in order to provide foundational skills in reading and math beginning in Kindergarten. As a component of the cradle-to-college pipeline a strong Kindergarten program will provide a solid foundation for learning. The K-2 early learning program at I3 Academy continues the work of the early learning pipeline established through strategic partnerships with neighboring early learning facilities. The James Rushton Early Learning Center provides a natural pipeline for students attending I3 Academy. I3 will collaborate with the Rushton Center and other neighborhood early childhood providers. At I3, research-based curricula and strong instruction serves to eliminate the student achievement gaps seen across America (i.e., the 30 million word gap) by focusing on building a strong foundation for I3's youngest students.