



Part I: Cover Page – Organization Information

Organization Information		
Organization Name:	University of Denver	<input type="checkbox"/> New or <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continuation Submission
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Organization Category (select all that apply)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Charter Network, Charter Management Organization or Charter School <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Turnaround Leader Development Provider <input type="checkbox"/> Management Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholder Engagement Specialist		
Preferred Geographical Region(s) in Colorado to Work In (select all that apply)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Metro Denver <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Front Range (Colorado Springs, Ft. Collins) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rural / Mountain / Western Slope		

Indicate the school district(s) or BOCES your organization is willing and able to engage with:

District name	City	County name
<b>ANY SCHOOL DISTRICT or BOCES</b>	<b>ALL</b>	<b>ALL</b>
Academy 20 School District	Colorado Springs	El Paso
Adams 12 Five Star Schools School District	Thornton	Adams
Adams County 14 School District	Commerce City	Adams
Adams-Arapahoe 28j School District	Aurora	Arapahoe
Agate 300 School District	Agate	Elbert
Aguilar Reorganized 6 School District	Aguilar	Las Animas
Akron R-1 School District	Akron	Washington
Alamosa Re-11j School District	Alamosa	Alamosa
Archuleta County 50 Jt School District	Pagosa Springs	Archuleta
Arickaree R-2 School District	Anton	Washington
Arriba-Flagler C-20 School District	Flagler	Kit Carson
Aspen 1 School District	Aspen	Pitkin
Ault-Highland Re-9 School District	Eaton	Weld
Bayfield 10 Jt-R School District	Bayfield	La Plata
Bennett 29j School District	Bennett	Adams
Bethune R-5 School District	Bethune	Kit Carson
Big Sandy 100j School District	Simla	El Paso
Boulder Valley Re 2 School District	Boulder	Boulder
Branson Reorganized 82 School District	Branson	Las Animas
Briggsdale Re-10 School District	Briggsdale	Weld
Brush Re-2(J) School District	Brush	Morgan

**University of Denver Response to CDE School Redesign RFI  
Continuation Submission**

**II. Narrative Responses a. Provide an update on your organization’s work and progress since the original RFI submission in 2018.**

**b. Describe any new work you have done or are doing in Colorado schools and districts since the original RFI submission in 2018.**

The Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (ELPS) department at the University of Denver has two approved programs for Turnaround Leadership Development: **CERT/Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (for aspiring leaders and teachers) and the Turnaround Success Program (a professional learning experience for leadership teams (principal, instructional leadership team, and instructional superintendent)).**

**CERT/M.A. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies**

Since 2015, twenty-one teachers and aspiring school leaders have participated in the Certificate and/or Master of Arts (MA) program in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies department at the University of Denver. The ELPS MA program includes the nationally recognized Ritchie ELSS model for principal licensure (30 credit hour CERT program) with 15 additional hours of coursework for the MA. Both the CERT and the MA include competency development in entrepreneurial and results-oriented turnaround leadership.

The following is a breakdown of our participants by year:

2015-2016 – Lake County (1), Colorado Charter High School (1), West End Public Schools (2) and DPS (3)

2016-2017 – Colorado Charter High School (1) and Jeffco (1)

2017-2018 – APS (2), Boulder Valley (1) and West End Public Schools (1)

2018-2019 – Jeffco (7) and Falcon 49 (1)

2019-2020 – Jeffco (12), Hope Online Academy (3) and Lake County (1)

Three districts (West End Public Schools, Lake County School District and Jeffco Public Schools) have utilized funding from the School Turnaround Leadership Development grant to devote resources to building a leadership pipeline. In West End Public Schools one program graduate is serving as the superintendent, one as the principal of the elementary school and one is the director of technology. The superintendent of Lake County School District nominates aspiring leaders as they emerge in the district. Jefferson County schools has also devoted resources to building a leadership/principal pipeline. In 2019, seven aspiring leaders in Jeffco completed the Certificate program and three are continuing for the Master of Arts. Twelve Jeffco aspiring leaders began the program in 2019. We have employed Jeffco educators to serve as cohort instructors, and we are actively working with the Executive Director of School Leadership and the Assistant Director of Turnaround to both recruit new students and customize the program to Jeffco’s context and needs. Additionally, Hope Online Academy recognized a need to develop

turnaround leadership competencies for their administration and has three students who started the program in 2019.

We are eager to work with more districts to assist them to develop leadership/principal pipelines through the ELPS CERT/MA program. We have expertise and a proven track record to engage in this work. The Wallace Foundation funded and provided technical assistance to the six districts and university partners to develop leadership pipelines as part of its Principal Pipeline Initiative (PPI) from 2011 to 2016. The purpose was to examine whether a comprehensive principal pipeline would be more effective than business-as-usual approaches to the preparation and management of school leaders (Korach and Cosner, 2017). The ELPS program and DPS were a part of the PPI. This work gave ELPS the experience to develop expertise in both principal preparation and leadership pipeline development. Additionally, the ELPS CERT/MA program was one of a select group of programs in the nation to be granted “exemplar” status by the Wallace Foundation and engaged in their University Principal Preparation Initiative (UPPI) to mentor departments in institutions of higher education across the country who seek to improve their principal preparation programs.

We would like to provide districts more flexibility by offering a range of scholarship amounts. Currently, the STLD offering identifies the program cost as the full cost of tuition for the MA in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (\$40,000-45,000) for one student. Due to the evidence that principal pipelines are a “feasible, affordable, and effective way for districts to improve schools” (Wallace Foundation evidence below), we would like to provide incentives for districts to build cohorts like West End, DPS, Hope and Jeffco by offering partial scholarships. This would allow districts to provide their aspiring leaders with opportunities for advanced degrees and principal licensure and partner with us on customizing our CERT/MA program to their needs.

### **Turnaround Success Program**

The Turnaround Success professional learning integrates design thinking and improvement science to help leaders move from quick fixes to more generative responses that address the underlying systems, or move the organization towards systems thinking. The Turnaround Success Program has evolved through several iterations since it was approved by CDE in 2015. The first iterations were custom projects for districts (Aurora Public Schools and Jefferson County Public Schools) that included design thinking for district leaders. In 2015, the project was focused on working with Aurora Public Schools Learning Directors to develop systems and actions plans to support turnaround schools. In 2016-2017, the project was focused on helping district leaders develop a framework for a sustainable system of district response and support for priority improvement and chronically underperforming schools in Jefferson County Public Schools. In 2017, we received funding to partner with Hope Online Academy and Denver Public Schools (DPS). The Hope Online Academy project consisted of turnaround leadership training, coaching and mentoring program to support the learning center directors. The DPS project allowed us to develop a program for school teams. We worked with 12 school teams in the turnaround or the strategic tier and developed a cohort-based professional learning program to learn design thinking and improvement science to address a problem of practice at their schools.

The delivery of the Turnaround Success Program prototyped with Denver Public Schools fit the original vision of the program. ELPS faculty provide content and coaching support for school teams composed of principal, instructional superintendent and members of the instructional leadership teams. The goal is to help the school leadership teams establish new systems, structures and patterns of behavior that will help them shift from a pattern of low performance to a pattern of high performance. Our partnership with DPS led to acceptance into the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's iLEAD (Improvement Leadership in Higher Education). The purpose of iLEAD is to further the capacities of institutions of higher education and their local education agency partners to enact systematic improvement efforts within their organizations and in partnership with one another. This partnership is supporting both DPS and DU to enhance our use of improvement science. In 2018, we were able to expand our Turnaround Success Program cohort and school based professional learning model into two other districts: Westminster Public Schools and Kiowa School District. The following is the list of participating schools for the last three years:

2017-2018 - DPS schools: Abraham Lincoln High School, Castro Elementary School, Grant Ranch Elementary School, Hallett Science and Tech Academy, Joe Shoemaker Elementary School, Margaret M. Smith Elementary School, Marrama Elementary School, Newlon Elementary School, Noel Community Arts High School, Oakland Elementary School, Swansea Elementary School, West Early College and Hope Online Academy

2018-2019 - DPS schools: Bear Valley International School, Centennial Elementary School, College View Elementary School, Denver Discovery School, Hamilton Middle School, Joe Shoemaker Elementary School, West Leadership Academy; Westminster schools: Westminster High School, FM Day Elementary School and Skyline Vista Elementary School and Kiowa School District

2019-2020: DPS schools: Asbury Elementary School, Barnum Elementary School, Carson Elementary School, Eagleton Elementary School, Edison Elementary School, Fairview Elementary School, Pascal Ledoux ECE, Sabin Elementary School, and Trevista Elementary School and Hope Online Academy

Over the past two years, we have been leveraging our partnerships with DPS and the Carnegie Foundation to enhance and improve our professional learning program. Additionally, we are engaged in a continuous research and evaluation process. Our findings have led to some programming changes. We have learned that the program is most beneficial for schools in the strategic or priority improvement tiers and that a one-year program is not sufficient for the schools to sustain the process. Additionally, we have refined our integration of design thinking and improvement science and altered our program delivery to reduce the number of learning sessions and increased the coaching time at school sites. As a result, of this research and evaluation, we have changed the name to **Design Improvement** and will be offering a two-year instead of a one-year program. The second year of the program will consist of additional coaching and supporting the schools to spread and scale the work by teaching the process within their school and to other school teams. The evidence section provides more detail about this ongoing research and evaluation.

**III. Capacity:** Does your organization currently have the capacity to serve additional schools and districts in Colorado? If yes, indicate how many new schools or districts your current capacity would allow for. If no, explain what additional capacity you would need to put in place, and any other constraints such as timelines or minimum participating schools or districts.

**CERT/M.A. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies**

The ELPS department at DU has the capacity to expand participation in the CERT/MA program to 30+ students. This increase in participation can either be by the acceptance of individual students into the program or establishing districts of cohorts of students. If we are able to establish district cohorts, we will hire cohort instructors from the district to help us customize the program for the district context.

**Design Improvement (formerly Turnaround Success Program)**

The Design Improvement program has the capacity to continue to support up to 10 new school teams in 2020 with our current staffing and programming model. This program also has the features and design to serve as a Management Partner and/or Stakeholder Engagement Partner. We can also expand to up to 20 school/district teams with additional personnel. We have adjusted our pricing model to include the second year of programming.

**Integration of the CERT/M.A. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and Design Improvement**

Hope Online Academy and DPS have leveraged students in the ELPS CERT/MA program with the Design Improvement program. This integration of current ELPS CERT/MA students on Design Improvement school teams has the capacity to accelerate the success of both the aspiring leader and the work of the school team. We hope that districts will consider this as an option for their leadership development and pipeline to accelerate student achievement and support sustainable improvement efforts.

**IV. Evidence of Track Record of Improved Student and School Outcomes:** a. Provide concrete evidence from your three most recent engagements with schools and districts (Colorado schools and districts are preferred, if available). Include a description of the criteria and the data that you use to determine the impact of your work. Highlight the context and location of where this work has occurred.

**CERT/M.A. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies**

Since the first graduates of the MA in ELPS have only recently graduated from the program, we currently track the impact of our work through placement into administrative positions and attainment of principal licensure. All (100%) of the Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Program participants that have been funded by the School Turnaround Leadership Development Program grant have successfully achieved a principal license and are currently employed in administrative positions in schools or districts. All but one of these program participants are serving Colorado students. These administrative placements include superintendent, principal, assistant principal, dean and school and district based instructional

support providers. All but one of these graduates are currently supporting schools and districts in Colorado.

As stated in the narrative above, three districts (West End Public Schools, Lake County School District and Jeffco Public Schools) have utilized funding from the School Turnaround Leadership Development grant to devote resources to building a leadership pipeline. District administrators have stated that these graduates are well prepared to serve the needs of highly impacted schools, and their continued commitment to devoting time and resources to the program provide evidence of this. Research on the effectiveness of leadership/principal pipelines is promising, and as we continue to develop district partnerships we hope to be able to track impact to student outcomes

Currently the EBI Tier that best describes our evidence for the ELPS CERT/MA is Tier 4. The Tier 4 rating is supported by our well-defined program and theory of action and the research associated with our participation in the Wallace Foundation's Principal Pipeline Initiative (PPI) and University Principal Preparation Program Initiative (UPPI). The RAND corporation is conducting research and the following are some findings from the PPI.

The ELPS CERT/MA has the potential to provide Tier 2-3 evidence as we track our graduates into their positions as school leaders. Research was conducted by RAND Education and Labor, a division of the RAND Corporation, in collaboration with Policy Studies Associates, on the Wallace Principal Pipeline Initiative (PPI) revealed that principal pipelines had a positive effect on student outcomes. There were improved outcomes at each of two time points that were statistically significant and there were no overriding negative effects in the following domains:

- Mathematics achievement (two and three years after the initial implementation of the PPI)
- Reading achievement (two and three years after the initial implementation of the PPI)
- Principal retention (two and three years after new principals are placed after the initial implementation of the PPI).

The study of the effectiveness of the PPI was found to have a Tier 2 ESSA evidence rating for the following domains: Mathematics and Reading achievement and a Tier 3 ESSA evidence rating for the following domain: Principal retention

Gates, Susan M., Matthew D. Baird, Benjamin K. Master, and Emilio R. Chavez-Herrerias, *Principal Pipelines: A Feasible, Affordable, and Effective Way for Districts to Improve Schools*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2019.

[https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2666.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2666.html)

Korach, S., and S. Cosner, "Developing the Leadership Pipeline: Comprehensive Leadership Development," in M. D. Young and G. M. Crow, eds., *Handbook of Research on the Education of School Leaders*, New York: Routledge, 2017, pp. 262–282.

## **Turnaround Success Program**

As noted in the narrative above, the Turnaround Success Program has evolved through several iterations since it was approved by CDE in 2015. The first iterations were custom projects for districts (Aurora Public Schools and Jefferson County Public Schools) that included design thinking for district leaders. As we continued to work with districts we refined our process, incorporated improvement science and customized our professional learning for school-based teams. For the last three years, we have implemented our Turnaround Success Program with schools in three Colorado districts: Denver Public Schools, Westminster and Kiowa. The following is a description of our research and evidence from the school-based team model.

The impact of our work is determined through end of the year interviews with all University of Denver faculty serving as coaches; district leaders supporting schools, including member of the Tiered Supports team and instructional superintendents at Denver Public Schools, the Chief Education Officer and Director of Elementary Education at Westminster Public Schools; and the school-based design team members, including the principal and 2-4 additional school-based participants. In addition, field notes from professional learning sessions and documents such as (a) coaching notes, (b) documents and notes from DU/DPS planning meetings, and (c) the schools' root cause analysis templates, empathy interview notes, driver diagram (all versions), change idea prototypes, PDSA notes, and other planning/meeting documents, aim measurement data, and PDSA measurement data.

The research questions guiding the research and program evaluation are:

- 1) How does a university/ district partnership design and implement a Design Thinking (DT) and Improvement Science (IS) professional learning program for school improvement in one Western urban district?
- 2) In what ways, if any, do school leadership teams apply design thinking and improvement science to address urgent, complex problems of practice?
- 3) What are the benefits and challenges to integrating design thinking and improvement science into existing school improvement work?
- 4) In what ways, if any, do school leadership teams build capacity to identify high-leverage areas for improvement, implement change, and measure stated goals?

Evidence from these qualitative data has found the influence of DU TSP to be:

***Time/space to deepen understanding of a problem.*** Most of the schools mentioned that this process supported them in current improvement work and was aligned with their UIP. There was a recognition that they wanted to solve these problems and wanted time to develop solutions but that the competing priorities made that difficult. This process provided that time and space. Finally and most importantly, every school mentioned that they had deepened their understanding of their problem and that the emphasis on the discovery phase, especially the use of empathy interviews, was very valuable.

***Increased collaboration and diffusion of leadership tasks.*** Both principals and members of their leadership team mentioned that this program allowed them the opportunity to collaborate and to share leadership throughout the building. They mentioned that this

program offered them tools for empowerment, and through the design thinking and improvement science, they were able to capture more stakeholder voices and work together. In 10 out of 10 schools in year two, the principal reported that when a problem needed to be solved, they typically came up with a solution and implemented it school-wide; whereas through the DI/IS process, decision-making about solutions became more collaborative.

***Learning a process to apply to other problems.*** The school design teams felt like they learned a process that could be applied to other problems and expressed an interest in continued support in the implementation of design thinking and improvement science. This approach is different than problem-specific professional development that may not be applicable to other problems.

***Improved Practice.*** Each team had a different problem or practice and a different set of measures to determine progress towards the aim, or goal of the improvement program. In all schools, they self-reported growth or improvement according to survey measures, mid-term assessments, and teacher/student interviews.

***Self-assess the evidence base for the interventions your organization provides using the following Evidence-Based Intervention (EBI) tiers. Which EBI tier best describes your work, and why?***

The EBI Tier that best describes our evidence base is Tier 4 (Demonstrates a rationale). Due to the fact that these are school-based interventions, we do not have a large enough sample size or the ability to isolate the impact of the intervention from other exogenous variables influencing school success and improvement. Qualitative research on the program is being conducted by a member of the University of Denver faculty. All coding is done by two trained graduate assistants, who began with emergent open coding, which then led to initial codes. Interrater reliability was calculated using a Cohen's kappa coefficient of .70 or above.

The research-based theory of action for the project is: If we build capacity within a school or district to use a design process to collectively and deeply examine problems of practice, ideate potential solutions and implement actions that are monitored through an improvement science framework (PDSA) then schools/districts will develop patterns of behavior, systems, strategies and tools that will be sustainable over time and adaptable to new problems *with an ongoing emphasis on equity*.



The logic model for the Design Improvement program follows:

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
People - Project Manager(s) - School Design Team Coaches - Researcher - Graduate Assistants to assist with logistics and research Materials - Program Handbook (protocols and related materials) - Google Wiki Page for sharing resources and tracking work	- Full day and half day training sessions with time for networked learning - On site coaching sessions for the improvement team (3 hours a month)	- Year One - 12 schools (DPS) - Year Two - 7 schools (DPS), 3 schools (WPS), Kiowa (district)	- Understand and implement the DI process to collectively and deeply examine and solve a problem of practice - Ideate potential solutions - Enact quick cycles of improvement to build new patterns of behavior, increase momentum and alter trajectory of student outcomes - Identify clear indicators of success and show measurable progress towards improvement Aim	- Determine a bundle of change ideas that impact progress towards a stated Aim - Scale those change ideas up throughout the school - Utilize data to question, pivot and make strategic decisions - Simplify and align systems to design and monitor improved practice	- Improved student learning and engagement - Growth on state assessments - Elimination of the opportunity gap and increased equity of opportunity for all students - Develop patterns of behavior, systems, strategies and tools that will be sustainable over time and adaptable to new problems <i>with an ongoing emphasis on equity</i>

At this stage, our research and evaluation agenda has focused on improving our processes and the fidelity of implementation. Our fidelity of implementation is at the level that we hope to move to Tier 2 evidence at the completion of the 2019-2020 cohorts. Our partnership with the Carnegie Foundation and iLEAD also provides the opportunity for evaluation by an external entity.