

5.1 PROJECT ABSTRACT

The Renaissance Charter School (RCS) at Chickasaw Trail 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program provides academic and personal enrichment to 140 students in Kindergarten through 8th grade attending RCS at Chickasaw Trail, a public charter school in Orange County. The overall goals are to: (1) improve academic achievement in reading, math, and science; (2) increase motivation to learn and dedication to the educational process; (3) improve knowledge and application of visual and performing arts; (4) improve physical fitness and healthy behaviors; (5) enhance desire to pursue college and career; and (6) improve parenting skills and literacy among adult family members. Activities are heavily focused on science, engineering, arts, and mathematics – with integrated reading and writing to support academic achievement. Students also engage in homework help, nutrition and physical education, performing arts, and several environmental projects.

5.2 NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Strategies and Data Used: RCS at Chickasaw Trail worked closely with charter Schools USA (CSUSA) to conduct a **comprehensive needs** assessment using the most recent data from reliable sources (e.g., U.A. Census, FLDOE, NCES); survey results; and meetings with students, parents, and school staff. Several meetings included the assistance of the principal, administrators, teachers, and grant development staff at CSUSA (management organization). While school personnel received an overview of the 21st CCLC program and operational requirements, they did not receive specific ideas during initial meetings. Instead, staff were asked to work with students and parents to identify gaps in the school day and develop high-interest and engaging ideas for projects to ‘fill the gaps.’ Meetings began in November 2015, with the post-RFP-release planning meeting held in January 22, 2016, and follow-up meetings held in the months following the aforementioned meeting.

Involvement of Community and Private Schools:

Orange County Public Schools emailed an announcement of a private school meeting on Wednesday, February 10, 2016, to all private schools and, if returned, the school was contacted by phone to obtain their fax number for transmittal. In addition, the announcement was placed in a legal advertisement in the *Orlando Sentinel* newspaper on Sunday, February 14, 2016. Orange County Public Schools held a public meeting on February 25, 2016 for private schools where one private school expressed potential interest. A formal letter on February 26, 2016 was sent to the school by the principal. The CSUSA grants team also conducted a follow up phone call. Although they were not sure of participation at the time of this application, the 21st CCLC program at RCS of Chickasaw Trail will ensure equitable services available for students that meet the target criteria. Additionally, the school identified 14 more private schools within five-mile radius of RCS at Chickasaw Trail. The school principal provided individualized letters to the surrounding private schools informing them of the grant application and interest in the planned program. Unfortunately, no other private schools responded to our invitation for partnership with our school program.

Consideration of Stakeholders Viewpoints: RCS at Chickasaw Trail worked closely with existing community partners to develop an initial plan, providing briefings about 21st CCLC, potential objectives, and activities. These items were shared with partners and stakeholders, including students, parents, and teachers. All those interested were provided opportunities to provide feedback and/or suggest different objectives and activities. **Teachers** reported an overwhelming need for academic enrichment in science, and wished for students to gain experiences in computers, technology, video production, and graphic organizing. **Parents** expressed a strong interest in afterschool programming with academic components, as well as GED courses, English assistance computer literacy, financial literacy (home buying), health and fitness, and methods for supporting academics at home. **Students** surveyed agreed they would

be interested in an afterschool program with project-based activities. The most popular student topics were technology, arts, robotics, performing arts, sports, and various kinds of dance. When possible, these ideas were included in this proposal. The viewpoints shaped the final design, such as expanding dance, including additional arts, and redesigning adult services. The principal was actively engaged and directly oversaw the development of the proposal.

Community Needs: According to the U.S. Census (2016), Orlando is among the largest 100 cities in the United States, with a **rapidly growing population** of 262,372 – an incredible increase of 9.6% since 2010. Orlando is often thought to be a world of theme parks and roller coasters, but the students attending RCS at Chickasaw Trail and residing in the eastside of Orlando receive little tangible benefit from these attractions. With the growing population, the devastating effects of **poverty** are only exacerbated with declining budgets and fewer resources per family. Low per capita income (\$22,654) is underscored with 17.8% of all families with children living in poverty, and 39.4% of female-headed households living in poverty (Census, 2015). Moreover, RCS at Chickasaw Trail targets those students and families with the greatest need for wraparound educational services with 81.8% of the student body qualifying for **free or reduced price lunch** (FLDOE, 2016). Directly across from RCS at Chickasaw Trail are low-income apartments, in which the majority of RCS students reside. In addition, the current Florida Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (Fl. Dpt. Health, 2016) shows the area has disturbingly high **obesity** rates, with 61.2% of the population overweight or obese and 57.3% **physically inactive** or ‘insufficiently active.’ Equally concerning, 26.2% of the area does not have health insurance, suggesting a low priority for health.

Needs of Working Families: Students and families served by RCS at Chickasaw Trail are primarily composed of young working families, with 30.7% of families being **single-parent households** (Census, 2016). Even when home, parents may lack the necessary tools to assist with homework and academics due to **low educational attainment** – with 12.1% of adults not completing high school and only 28.7% completing college in just the zip code surrounding the

school (City Data, 2016). The 21st CCLC program will support working families by providing academic support and a “safe place” when students might be home alone afterschool and in summer.

Target Population: A total of 140 students in kindergarten through 8th grades at RCS at Chickasaw Trail will be served in 21st CCLC. The school has an enrollment of 1,039 students, with 11.3% African American / Black; 72.4% Hispanic; and 10.5% White. In addition, 9.5% have a special need or disability, and 23.2% are English Language Learners (FLDOE, 2016).

Student Academic Needs: With a disproportionately low-income and “at-risk” population, it is not surprising that RCS at Chickasaw Trail has experience challenges in academic achievement. In fact, RCS at Chickasaw Trail dropped to a school grade rating of “D” in 2015. Furthermore, in 2015, performance on statewide assessments (i.e., FSA and FCAT) showed only 31% and 5th grade and 43% of 8th grade students were proficient in science, 42% proficient in reading, and 35% proficient in math. Additionally, the school administers assessments of the northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) for all students in grades K-8. The 2016 winter diagnostic shows a 33% proficiency rate in reading and 41% in math – both far lower than desired and demonstrative of a significant need for education enhancements, such as 21st CCLC.

Adult and Parent needs: it is widely recognized that students require the support of adult caregivers to maximize their potential in school. Research has supported Epstein’s typology (Kreider, 2000), showing the importance of parenting skills, communication, volunteering, teaching at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Research also shows parental involvement is negatively impacted by each of the identified needs (Sacker et al., 2002). Parents were asked to provide ideas and topics of workshops and activities they would attend with the most popular topics included in adult literacy section of this proposal. The most popular topics were English classes, GED, computer classes, methods for supporting academics at home, health/fitness and financial literacy.

Currently Available Out-Of-School Programming: As with many schools, RCS at Chickasaw Trail has worked to provide out-of-school programming with limited budget and resources. Currently, the school provides simple daycare for students needing a safe place before school and afterschool, with a cost of approximately \$2,700 per year. The needs assessment conducted by RCS at Chickasaw Trail and CSUSA determined a great number of unserved students that would greatly benefit from an academic-focused, structured, project-based program – most of whom are both underperforming academically and unable to afford even small fees for aftercare.

Closing the Gaps: The program is created to specifically address each identified need: (1) academic remediation/homework help to address student academic progress; (2) STEM to address science and math deficiencies; (3) career and college exploration to help promote matriculation; (4) health and physical education to address obesity rates and health outcomes; (5) visual and performing arts education to increase creative expression and academic enhancement; and (6) adult services to address educational levels and knowledge of parenting. There are few other out-of-school programs in the area, and none offering this level of support.

5.3 – Program Evaluation

5.3a. – Evaluation Plan

External Program Evaluator: The evaluator was selected on the following criteria: 1) well-qualified with demonstrated evaluation experience in K-12 education programs; 2) knowledge of 21st CCLC programs; and 3) ability to provide high quality, independent evaluation that will assist in driving program improvements. Affinity Consulting Group NEFL, LLC (ACG-NEFL) has been initially selected as the external program evaluator for this project. ACF-NEFL will oversee all aspects of the project evaluation, including planning, implementation, reporting, and dissemination. ACF-NEFL is an emerging multidiscipline consulting firm specializing in research and external program evaluation. ACF-NEFL's lead associate for this project is doctorate

trainee with more than 11 years of experience in conducting external program evaluation for academia, education, non-profit and government agencies with foundation, local, state and federal funding sources. Furthermore, ACG-NEFL associates have experience working with 21st CCLC programs and are aware of the needs, factors, and service goals for recipients of these services.

Evaluation Plan: Mark Friedman's Results-based Accountability (RBA) model serves as the evaluation framework for this project. RBA uses qualitative and quantitative data gathered through formative and summative evaluation approaches to determine whether participants are better off as a result of project services. Data are further used to make improvement modifications during the program period. RBA addresses three project components: 1) process, 2) quality, and 3) outcomes. **Process: How much did you do?** This informs how participants (e.g., parents, students) received services and the number (and type) of services provided during the project (e.g., enrichment activities, workshops, service referrals, etc.). **Quality: How well did you do it?** This describes the perceived quality of services provided, specifically including stakeholder input from students, parents, and staff – all gathered through qualitative focus groups, town hall meetings, interviews) or qualitative methods (e.g., surveys). **Outcomes: is anyone better off?** This illustrates the effects of service offerings against baseline benchmarks on all participants.

Data collection and Timeline: The evaluation plan uses the following four-phase process. **Phase 1: Planning** – This phase includes finalization of objectives and performance measures, development of data capture tools and materials, and training and technical assistance for program staff (e.g., data collection protocols, use of data tools, etc.). ACF-NEFL will meet with staff prior to 21st CCLC implementation to outline the evaluation plan and outline expectations regarding monthly reporting. ACF-NEFL will also develop evaluation manuals and provide technical assistance, as needed. **Phase II: Implementation** – Project activities and data collection will simultaneously commence in early fall. ACF-NEFL will gather qualitative and

quantitative data by: (1) conducting focus groups, town hall meetings, interview with students, parents and staff (annually); (2) administering stakeholder surveys (annually); and (3) conducting data analysis of quantitative program data to establish baselines and ensure data accuracy (monthly). Monthly quality queries will be generated and compared against project documents for accuracy during site visits. ACF-NEFL will maintain open and regular communication with program staff via email, meetings (in-person, teleconference, or video conference), and site visits. Monthly meetings and site visits will serve as the forum to discuss data discrepancies and provide recommendations to improve program outcomes. **Phase III: Reporting** – ACG-NEFL will utilize project data to generate and submit the following reports annually: (1) baseline data and data update; (2) mid-year data and mid-year report; (3) formative evaluation summary; (4) evidence of program modification; (5) stakeholder survey data; (6) end-of-year data submission, and (7) summative evaluation report. **Phase IV: Dissemination** – ACG-NEFL will disseminate evaluation findings to all stakeholders (e.g., administrators, parents, and partners) and encourage feedback for program improvement. Multiple platforms will be used to disseminate evaluation results, including, summary reports, newsletter, town hall meetings, social media blast, and websites (21st CCLC and school).

Data and Reporting: The principal was directly involved in writing this application and agreed to provide all data to complete all state and federal evaluation reporting requirements. Data related to process, quality, and outcomes will be collected. **Process** data includes: students enrollment and daily attendance (monthly); attendance counts at parent events (monthly). **Quality data includes:** stakeholder input (student, parent and staff) (annually); stakeholder quality survey (student, parent, and staff) (annually); pre and post knowledge assessments (student and parent) and professional development surveys (staff) (annually). **Outcome data includes:** school grades in ELA, mathematics and science (quarterly); end-of-course examinations (annually); NWEA Benchmarks in ELA, math and science (quarterly); state standardized assessments in ELA, math, and science (annually); student school attendance (absences) (quarterly); and behavior and

discipline data (quarterly). The formative and summative reports to be submitted are listed in the prior paragraph. Additionally, during years one, three, and four, a brief summative evaluation report will be provided. While a more comprehensive summative report will be submitted during years two and five. **Coordinating Evaluation Activities:** Staff and regular school day staff will be informed of data collection efforts through media platforms and staff meetings. Students and adult family members will be involved through surveys throughout the year. The school has committed to providing all necessary data on 21st CCLC students, including attendance, behavior, grades, and other performance data.

Examining Impact: focus groups, town hall meetings, interview, and surveys conducted annually will be utilized to guide program improvement modifications. Furthermore, formative reports will be prepared and submitted annually each year. The formative evaluation summary report will be submitted by February each year and will outline all stakeholder input and provide recommendations for program improvement modifications. Additionally, the evidence of program modification (an additional formative report) will be submitted March of each year and will provide evidence of program improvement modifications implemented. Summative evaluations will be completed by the end of each year (submitted by June 30) and will provide detailed information on program outcomes, student performance, details on enrichment activities, and operations success stories. The purpose of the evaluation is to gauge the progress of the students, making modifications as needed in an effort to improve student outcomes. The Objectives Table is included as an attachment to this proposal which outlines specific outcomes for this project.

Use and Dissemination of Evaluation Results: Evaluation results will be used for program refinement throughout the project period. ACF-NEFL will offer monthly and annual reports (formative and summative) to school administration and program staff for review and discussion during monthly meetings. At that time, ACF-NEFL will offer recommendations for program refinements and strategies to address deficiencies, including professional development, training, and expansion/elimination of services. Evaluations findings will be disseminated

internally and externally. Internal dissemination will occur monthly during monthly meetings and site visits with ACG-NEFL, the school principal, and program staff. External dissemination will involve sharing the results with community stakeholders, which included students, parents, and community members. Multiple media platforms will be used for external dissemination, including but not limited to, summary reports, newsletter, town hall meetings, social media blasts, and websites (the 21st CCLC program and school).

5.3b – Measureable Objectives and Assessments

Measureable objectives and assessments were created using the web-based system required by the FLDOE. A letter from the school principal is submitted reiterating that the program will have full access to all data necessary to evaluate progress towards program objectives. All objectives were designed to align with the needs and gaps identified in the needs assessment.

5.4 – Applicant Experience and Capacity

Program Administration and Fiscal Management: This application is submitted by the School Board of Orange County on behalf of RCS at Chickasaw Trail, a school managed by CSUSA. Both OCPS and CSUSA have tremendous experience operating both small and large programs, with a plethora of strong financial management policies and practices. Serving as the fiscal agent, the Orange county Public Schools (OCPS) will oversee reimbursements and budgets with FDOE. Additionally, a dedicated School Operations Administrator at the school will monitor financial expenditures and adherence to the approved budget. The school's board reviews monthly financial statements and academic reports to ensure expenditures and academic results are consistent with Charter goals. CSUSA is responsible for financial management of the school. All accounting procedures, including accounting for expenditures under this grant, are performed using the General Accounting Standards Board (GASB) guidelines and are maintained utilizing the "Financial and Program Cost Accounting and Reporting for Florida Schools, " as recommended in F.S. 1002.33(9)(g). The school follows financial management processes defined by CSUSA, including a strict conflict of interest policy, purchase orders for any item over \$500,

multiple signatures for checks, annual audits and monthly reports, inventory management, and use accounting software. In addition to fiscal policies, CSUSA provides a dedicated finance department, grants management and compliance department, centralized data management and secure storage, payroll department, and human resources department. Specific to financial management, CSUSA provides a financial management team including: (1) Accounts Payable Coordinator; (2) Staff Accountant; (3) Accounting Manager; (4) Controller; (5) Budget Analyst; (6) Director of Financial Planning and Analysis); and (7) Chief Financial Officer. RCS at Chickasaw Trail has been audited every year and has had no fiscal or operational findings in the last two audits. Overall, at no cost to grant, the 21st CCLC program will be fully supported to ensure continued compliance with all federal, state, local, and internal rules and regulations.

Program Implementation: Both OCPS and CSUSA have substantial experience operating 21st CCLC programs. During 2015-16, CSUSA has enrolled over 65,000 students in 77 schools located primarily in Florida. Based on the most recent FLDOE data, 90.2% of CSUSA schools surpassed statewide averages of students meeting high standards in at least one academic subject, with 43.9% surpassing state averages in at least three subjects. However, not all schools achieve these levels with lower performing schools receiving substantial support from CSUSA to ensure higher performance. This support includes 21st CCLC programming for the most at-risk students, such as those at RCS at Chickasaw Trail. CSUSA currently operates six 21st CCLC programs – three in Indiana and three in Florida. These programs have benefited from CSUSA supports, including administrative services mentioned above, curriculum development, recruitment support, and parent resources. In addition to 21st CCLC, CSUSA has nearly 20 years of experience providing afterschool, before school, and summer enrichment programs. In addition to direct services, CSUSA also provides substantial training and professional development for the staff and faculty, including trainings that benefit the afterschool program. All six 21st CCLC programs have been evaluated and monitored by independent agencies, and they have receive do compliance or evaluation findings regarding the operation of the programs.

Program Evaluations: RCS at Chickasaw Trail is a public charter school managed by CSUSA and reporting to OCPS, such that collecting, maintaining, analyzing, and reporting accurate evaluation data is almost second nature – required for every activity in which the school partakes. Data is often reported to multiple entities, such that is well organized and easily accessible when needed. For instance, NWEA MAP diagnostic data is provided to CSUSA in a format that will enhance reporting the same data to the 21st CCLC evaluator and to the FLDOE to support the program. The principal has expressly agreed to provide all necessary data to the 21st CCLC program, and CSUSA maintains databases of all performance measures for the school (Which will also be made available for evaluation purposes). For nearly 20 years, CSUSA has employed evaluators across the network to provide independent and objective data and analysis to help guide the schools. As such, CSUSA not only has experience with evaluation, but values the outcomes of the often long and difficulty processes associated with detailed evaluations.

5.5 – Partnerships, Collaboration and Sustainability

5.5.a – Community Notice

RCS at Chickasaw Trial was proactive in informing the community about the intent to submit an application for a 21st CCLC program. An announcement was placed prominently on the school website - a professional site the community (e.g., students, parents, and teachers) encounters when logging into the school information system (SIS), PowerSchool, and Edmodo. Community members also frequent the site, particularly families interested in enrolling their children into the school. The notice was posted on February 2, 2016, and included a dedicated email address for the grants department at CSUSA. In addition to posting the notice of intent and inviting feedback and questions, the final application will be uploaded as a protected PDF after submission, thus providing the community unfettered access to the application. The application will be uploaded no later than 48 hours after final submission. A copy of the application will also be printed and placed in a hard folder at the front office (where parents sign out children from school).

5.5.a – Program Website

RCS at Chickasaw Trail enjoys access to outstanding website and graphics designers at CSUSA. The website will be interactive and designed consistent with the school's website, thus providing a harmonious experience. By using CSUSA's internal design services, the website will be online within one month of the approval of the grant application. The current design proposes to include; (1) contact information, (2) the approved application, (3) program operational information, and (4) monthly schedules and activities. By the second month, the website will add two new pages: (1) project demonstrations (e.g., project photos); and (2) program impacts and progress towards objectives (e.g., samples of projects, teacher and student statements, evaluation reports, etc.). The website will be updated at least once every month, or when new items are available (e.g., after the conclusion of a major project). The site will include all evaluation reports and proposed modifications. The program director and school principal will be responsible for designating content for the site.