Los Angeles Unified School District
PUBLIC SCHOOL CHOICE RESOLUTION

PSC 3.0 INFORMATIONAL SCHOOL PLAN SUMMARY
FOR: WALNUT PARK MIDDLE SCHOOL
PROPOSED BY: LOCAL DISTRICT 6- PREPARING FOR SUCCESS IN STEM ACADEMY

Mission & Vision of the School

If you imagined the perfect middle school for our children in Los Angeles, what would it look like? It would be a place where 21st century learners were challenged with critical thinking questions, where creativity and problem solving replaced rote learning, and where communication skills and teamwork would be taught in every classroom. That school would be a place where children felt safe, and had the chance to participate in a variety of activities in electives and after-school activities. It would be a place where the faculty and staff wanted to work with adolescents, where parents, families, and the community had a true voice and responsibility for the school's governance and where there was an intense focus is on learning. The STEM Academy will be such a school. The STEM Academy will be a 21st Century school that prepares students to compete globally and to develop as well-rounded people.

The students who culminate from STEM Academy will understand technology and develop the necessary skills to creatively use science and math concepts that will allow them to pursue rigorous high-level courses in high school that will serve as pathways to college and careers. Students having received a STEM Academy education will have been exposed to career opportunities in a variety of industry sectors—opportunities not normally afforded a middle school student. Awareness of the economic and industrial markets and training in the fundamentals necessary to succeed in each can only expand students' options when they reach high school.

Designing Data Driven & Student Centered Instructional Programs

- Upon reviewing the data, significant gaps in achievement existed between English Learners and All students in ELA and Math in the CST scores. The gaps are even wider in students with disabilities. The data said that all our students are falling behind in math and science. Data on the economic forecast for Los Angeles County clearly indicated that all future jobs in the Los Angeles area need a substantial amount of 21st century skills, math, science and technology.
- The data also showed the existence of huge gap in the talent of our young adults and the job qualifications needed for the future. If we have to close this gap and get our students ready for the future jobs, the work needs to start as early as in middle school. When the students get to high school, it is already too late if they are not prepared to take on challenging coursework. That also means that the instructional program that is offered at the middle school level should be a springboard for the students to take on rigorous courses in math and science at the high school.
- As a 21st century school, not only will the students learn to use data to make decisions, but data will inform decisions made by the faculty and principal as well. Looking at student work samples, which is always the most important indicator of student progress, will be at the center of teacher professional development. Our Response to Instruction and Intervention program (RTI ^{2}) offers differentiated first instruction and provides increased intervention to students before they fall behind their peers.
- All interventions will provide alternatives to first instruction; the interventions will never merely offer more of the same. Frequent monitoring of students progress will be done and data from those assessments will be used to plan future instructional approaches.
- STEM Academy at Walnut Park Middle School will be the first STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) school in Local District 6. STEM is an exciting concept to meet our country's job demands for the 21st century. Our math classes will feature project-based instruction to engage and challenge students. Math students will be problem solvers, and will compare their solutions with the peers at national math competitions. Technology will be integrated into the

curriculum, including using databases, Logger Pro software, interactive Smart boards, and graphing calculators.

- The science curriculum will apply the data analysis skills learned in mathematics to interpret scientific data. Students will also explore the biosphere in association with such partners as the Friends of the Los Angeles River and the Sierra Club. As a NASA Explorer school, we will take advantage of NASA resources to engage in an in-depth study to define life. All teachers will be trained on using the Engineering Design Process developed by Purdue University, and this protocol will come into focus for the 8th grade project, where students develop a rotary recovery system for NASA.
- We know that students literate in 21st century science and mathematics will also need a solid foundation in Humanities. Our English/Language Arts curriculum will focus, as all outstanding programs do, on writing and literature. Working in conjunction with the University of California at Irvine (UCI), students will learn to articulate their ideas in narrative and expository writing. Literature will not be simply read, it will be the foundation for analysis using Socratic Seminars and Literature circles. Especially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) will be the centerpiece in every classroom, helping English Language Learners bridge the gap to proficient language standards.
- History/Social Science classes at STEM Academy will be engaging and relevant. From the 6th grade study of the ancient world, to the 8th grade analysis of U.S. History and the struggle for freedom and equality in America, students will go beyond memorizing facts to analyzing events and making connections to our current lives. We will partner with the Getty Center, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the U.S. Federal District Court to help make history come alive for students. Students will make the connections to STEM by engaging in Service Learning projects—combining academic learning with a real world project.
- Our elective choices at Walnut Park Middle School will complement our instructional program. We will offer two main elective tracks. The Gateway to Technology is a three-year program that uses the science and math skills students learn to create robotics and automation projects. The art electives will help students move from art appreciation in the 6th grade, to hands-on projects in subsequent grades--culminating in public art exhibits.

Instructional Program

- The STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) emphasis at Walnut Park Middle School will impact all learners, and specific programs for individual subgroups will impact other subgroups and the total student population

Students with disabilities- In order to meet the needs of all students, every class (including classes outside the core curriculum) at STEM Academy will systemically be taught with the promise of providing access to *all* students. Creation or selection of activities that are participating, will be based on real life Listen to student concerns and beliefs about their experiences and their education.

Socio-economically disadvantaged students- Consider the challenges that students may face in school; Continuously and firmly encourage students to go to college; Discuss the necessary coursework, tests, and other preparations with students and parents

Special needs students- Provide students with a variety of learning options. Create or select activities that are engaging, active, and grounded in reality; Listen to students' concerns, fears, and beliefs about their experiences and their education.

Gifted students- The main goal of the STEM Academy is to identify, encourage and grow the STEM talent in our community. All gifted students may experience isolation and pressure to hide their abilities, but minority students tend to feel the weight of these forces to an even greater degree. Gifted minority students report feelings of inferiority, as well as the need to constantly choose between using their talents and fitting in with their peers. Providing minority students with extra support is especially

important in mathematics and science. In these fields, cultural stereotypes have contributed to the under-representation of minorities. Although there is not yet a substantial body of published research, there are many suggestions and strategies developed by educators for meeting the needs of gifted minority students: Communicate high expectations; Be sensitive to the experiences and beliefs of people from different cultural groups. Get to know all students and their cultures.;

English Language Learners- STEM Academy teachers will use **Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE)** strategies *beyond* what language acquisition classes. SDAIE is a pedagogical approach to provide students with scaffolded, differentiated lessons to assure students access and to master rigorous core content through modified speech and explicit modeling by instructors. Moreover, SDAIE involves teaching essential academic vocabulary prior to a lesson; it involves students in multi-sensory experiences to address multiple learning modalities, cooperative learning activities, comprehensive input including the use of graphic organizers and other non-linguistic representations to categorize and organize learning, frequent checking for student understanding, pre-writing activities, and design of formative assessments.

Standard English Learners- Academic special instruction in English (SDAIE) will be the centerpiece in each classroom, helping English language learners to acquire academic English. Create a multicultural learning environment and ensure that the curriculum reflects a diversity of cultures, help connect students with models and mentors. Support groups for students with similar interests and abilities; reach parents and family members. Create a multicultural learning environment and make sure the curriculum reflects a variety of cultures; Help students connect with role models and mentors. Organize peer support groups for students with similar interests and abilities; Reach out to parents and family members. Enlist their support in providing encouragement and high expectations

School Culture

Walnut Park Middle School will be to deliver a successful whole child upon culmination—an emotionally, physically and intellectually complete and well-rounded person. While a major goal is to engender an appreciation of and aptitude for math, science, engineering and technology, an equally important and complementary goal is to assure that all STEM students receive a rigorous liberal education that will allow them to be adaptable, well-rounded people. Young people who, with some specialized training, are equipped to do anything.

A member of the Walnut Park Middle School class of 2015 will have a very different, and we believe, *better* experience than the middle school experience of the class of 2015's older siblings. Our students will feel secure in the knowledge that adult staff members, faculty, parents and community members are visible and that the campus is clean and safe. They will be involved in hands-on, project-based learning in all their academic classes, with writing and literacy evident in each classroom. Lessons will support language learners; a staffed learning center will support special education students, and gifted learners will be challenged to perform at even higher levels. Electives will be fun, and intellectually challenging for the class of 2012, and reminders of our goal of STEM Academy culmination serving as a pathway to being college and career ready will be everywhere.

- *Extracurricular Activities*
  - *Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)*
  - *Peer Tutoring*
  - *College Club*
  - *Science Olympiad*
  - *Academic Pentathlon*
  - *Cyber Chase*
  - *California Junior Scholarship Federation*

Parent Engagement & Involvement

- Walnut Park Middle School sees our entire school community as partners to educate our children. As a Pilot school within the Los Angeles Unified School District, Walnut Park Middle School will have the freedom to make decisions that affect our school community. The first step will be to create a culture where parents become full partners into the school community and part of their child's educational journey from middle school to college and beyond.
- School staff will be available daily. Parents will be encouraged to commit at least three (3) hours per school year, per family, to volunteer in the school. Volunteers will be trained to engage students in ways that support learning throughout the campus environment. At the beginning of each academic year, a parent orientation meeting will inform parents of the high expectations for the students, parents, and school. By creating a "family neighborhood school," school staff will initiate community activities.
- **Students' Academic Progress**: When students have received "needs improvement" grades, parents will be informed by the teacher on specific strategies they can be used at home to help support their child. In addition, all parents will be expected to participate in Back-to-School night, parent conferences, and Open House.
- **Students' STEM-Readiness and Pathways for College and Career Preparedness:** Parents will be provided workshops on the A-G requirements and information as to how student success in their current grade level prepares them for future academic progress in college preparedness at the middle and high school levels.
- **Students' Character Progress:** All parents will be included in both celebrating their child's academic and character progress. Teachers and parents will construct effective ways in which to communicate regarding the behavior of students.
- **High Quality Parent Communication:** Effective communication fosters effective teaching and learning among students, teachers and parents. Each parent will receive family packets with information about the school, its policies, contact information, and ways to become more involved in school life. The school will communicate with parents in a timely fashion their student's progress toward meeting academic, attendance and attitude goals and benchmarks. Our Governing Council will consist of the Principal, and representatives of the faculty, classified personnel, parents, and community members. This council will make decisions regarding staffing, budgets, safety and discipline, among other areas. Parents and community members will have a genuine voice not only on the Governing Council, but on a variety of committees as well, including the English Learners Committee, Wellness Committee, Literacy Committee, and others.
- **High Quality Parent Training:** Parents will have opportunities to participate in parent trainings and welcomed to the parent center in a family environment

Staffing

Members of the design team came together around the mission and vision of a middle school serving the adolescents and families of Walnut Park and its surrounding communities. The faculty and staff will share that common vision, and we will work toward meeting those common goals. The design team is a collation of educators who have been successful at a variety of schools within LAUSD, but who now seek to work together at STEM Academy to collaborate with the Walnut Park community to assure its young people an even brighter future. In the words of Susan B. Anthony, with people, a school, and a community such as this, "Failure is impossible."

Applicant Team Contact Information

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Public School Choice Resolution