

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
(LAUSD)

SOUTH LA AREA NEW HS #3: Augustus Hawkins

Schools for Community Action #1  
(SCA #1)

**Critical Design and Gaming School**  
(C:\DAGS)

A STEAM School  
(Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Math)

*Where Freire meets fiero*

“Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.”

– Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

“...arguably the most prominent of the videogame emotions, *fiero* (the feeling of triumph over adversity)...”

– <http://onlyagame.typepad.com>

“Game design isn’t just a technological craft. It’s a twenty-first-century way of thinking and leading. And gameplay isn’t just a pastime. It’s a twenty-first-century way of working together to accomplish real change.”

– Jane McGonigal, *Reality is Broken*

**South LA HS #3 (Augustus Hawkins)  
School for Community Action #1  
Critical Design and Gaming School (C:\DAGS)**

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## A. SUMMARY ANALYSIS

### 1. Mission and Vision.

#### **Mission Critical:**

Urgently educate and empower the teenagers of South Central Los Angeles to excel through higher education and become transformative leaders of our local and global communities.

#### **Vision:**

The Critical Design and Gaming School (C:\DAGS) is a fully-inclusive twenty-first century learning environment tailored for students growing up in a globally complex, information-rich, digital society which rewards resourcefulness, creativity, and innovation. Our implementation of a critical pedagogy of space and place is more per-formative than simply in-formative, more a physical pedagogy planted firmly in our students' lived experiences than simply a classroom examination of written texts.

Utilizing principles of gaming, game design, and spatial analysis, students are challenged by objective-based missions to collaboratively engage in purpose-driven learning. Outcomes call for authentic performances which demonstrate our students' genuine ability to link their knowledge and skills across various formats in blended classrooms. As a result of mastering such skills as systems-based analysis, planning, collaborative learning, conflict resolution, and the ethics of inclusive fair play, each and every one of our graduates will possess the habits of mind, skills, and knowledge to incorporate their unique attributes into the fields of science, technology, engineering, art, and math. Together, they will work to transform any and all oppressive elements within our current reality into a more humane future society.

Our school serves as a mainframe, connecting all the spaces of our students' lives into one large learning network that provides timely support and powerful data to help students understand their achievements, their needs, and how to move forward. The learning experiences of our students are enhanced by the resources in the South Central community, organizations throughout Los Angeles, and through global connectivity. Thereby, we guide our students to realize the interconnectedness of academics with traditionally non-school spaces, and likewise, their cultural practices and values with academic spaces.

As students are immersed in complex problems, so too will teachers be immersed in action research around key challenges that arise from the analysis of student work and assessment results. A strong feedback loop to all stakeholders continually challenges growth in habits of mind and advancement toward high standards-based achievement. The students, staff, and surrounding community are intrinsically rewarded with satisfying work, hope of a better future, social connection, and meaningful action. Together, we experience the fiero of gaming while achieving Freire's ideals.

#### **Core Values:**

Our core values stem from our desire for our students to experience a curriculum that offers them opportunities to transform school spaces into places where they feel valued, understood, and loved. A classroom space intent on love is a space that is "lively, forceful, and inspiring, while at the same time, critical, challenging, and insistent" (Darder, 1998). It is designed to promote the idea "that the act of learning is an open-ended process and one that unfolds within its own context, both social and cultural" (Stinson in Nieto, 2008). We agree with bell hooks that "we also choose to live in community, and that means that we do not have to change by ourselves" (1994).

Therefore, the Los Angeles' South Central community deserves a powerful network of small public schools that has the following 5 core values:

***Student Centered*** - We believe that education should always begin with a strong respect and understanding of each student's potential and desire to learn. Utilizing the collective strengths of students, their communities and cultures, we will create multiple opportunities for all our students to develop academically and socially. Through a reflective learning process, students will be empowered to use their voices, become leaders in their schools, communities and beyond, as they engage in transformative action.

***Community Collaboration*** - We believe that authentic community collaboration leads to transformative school design. We take seriously our accountability to the public and the public's accountability to the school. We understand that the success of this school is integrally linked to the success of the South Central community. Thus, our family and community partners are committed to our larger mission and vision for the success of every child. By combining educational experience with critical community input and shared decision-making, we can best support student learning and empower the community to be partners in true educational reform.

***Innovation and Excellence*** - We believe that teachers should constantly improve their practice to ensure students achieve new levels of success. We are committed to continual professional growth that helps align new and creative teaching practices with our mission, to provide all students with a quality educational experience. Teachers will engage students in action research, Project-Based Learning, and critical reflection. We believe that true learning can only take place through collaboration and community oriented classrooms.

***Social Justice*** - We believe that our community deserves better educational opportunities than have been historically provided. We understand that this history has impacted far too many young people's education. We recognize the community's need to transform the experience of overcrowded schools and aim to offer a better alternative for students. Our partnerships will reflect this understanding by identifying and connecting community resources in order to change the legacy of inequity in our schools into one that is more socially just.

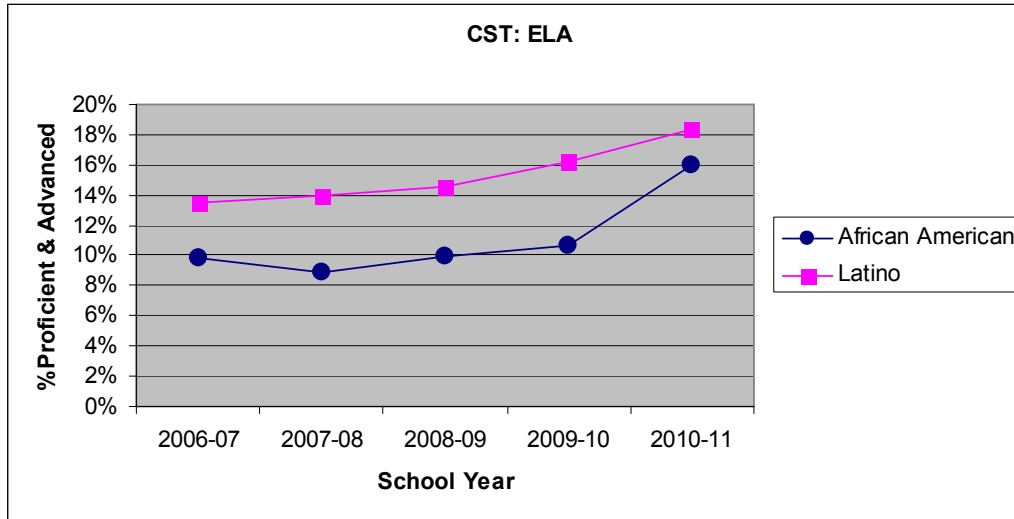
***Sustainability*** - We believe in creating interlinked strength between the four small schools of the Augustus Hawkins Schools for Community Action campus. We will create a culture of collaboration to strengthen the overall quality of learning experiences for ALL students. By working collectively across the four schools, we will share expertise and resources to offset foreseeable budget constraints, all while maintaining distinct, separate and small schools that offer the community: educational opportunity, diversity, and choice.

<b>2. School Data Analysis.</b>
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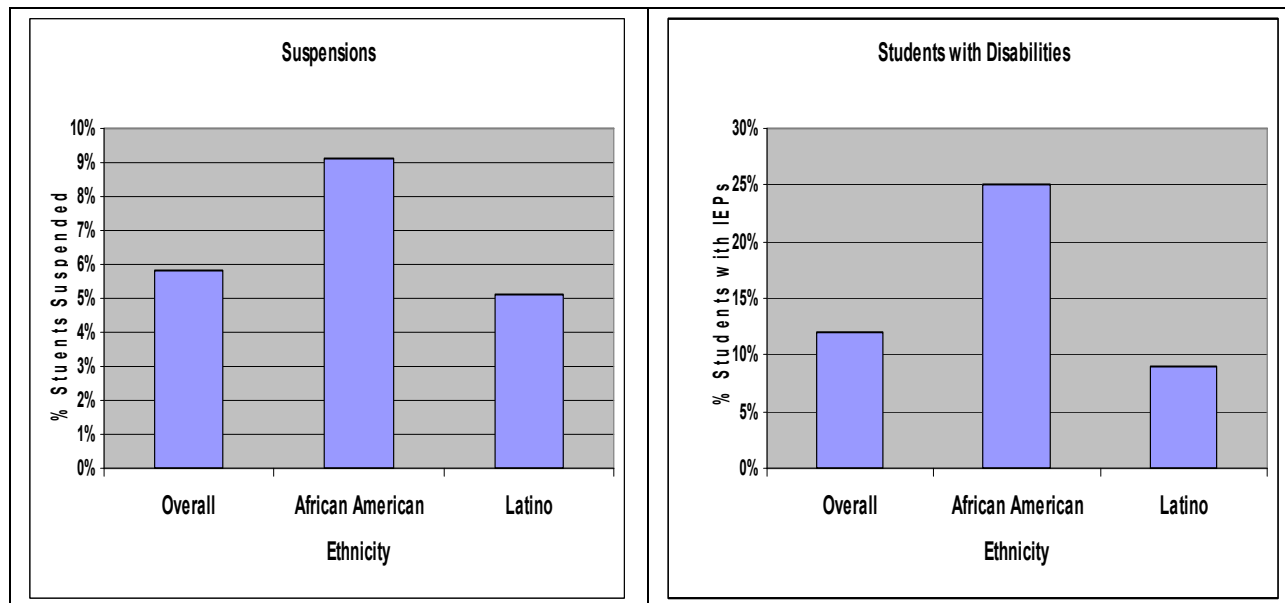
Analyzing data from the School Report Card, Data Summary Sheet, SIS, myData, and DataQuest, we see clear opportunities for a school in this community to be more effective in meeting the needs of our students – especially African Americans, English learners, and students with disabilities – leading to higher test scores, higher CAHSEE pass rates, higher reclassification rates, and ultimately higher graduation rates.

### Performance Gap between African American and Latino students

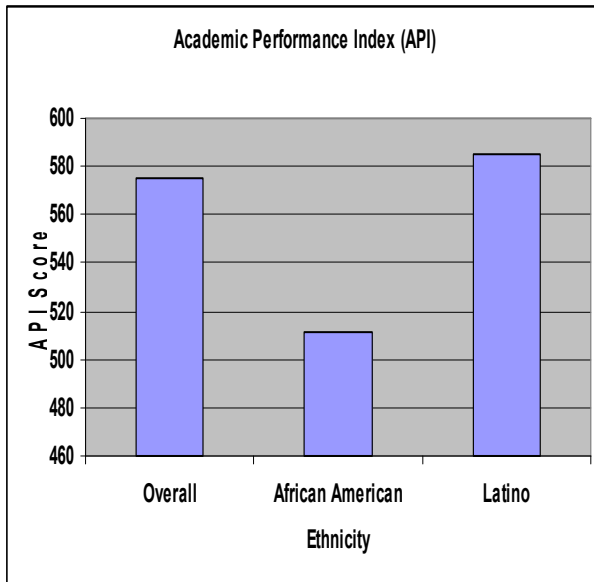
There is a significant disparity between African American and Latino achievement data that signals inequitable learning opportunities at Manual Arts High School. For example, looking at a five-year trend of the English Language Arts CST results, the gap in results is clear.



Not only are a smaller percentage of African American students scoring Proficient or Advanced, but also a larger percentage are scoring FBB or BB than the Latino students. The same trend also exists with the Math CSTs. Corresponding with this achievement data is data that show a disproportionate percentage of African American students getting suspended from school compared with their Latino counterparts, and a disproportionate amount of African American students identified as having disabilities and placed in Special Education classrooms. Twenty-five percent of our African American students have IEPs. In the 2010-11 school-year, 414 instructional days were lost to suspension.

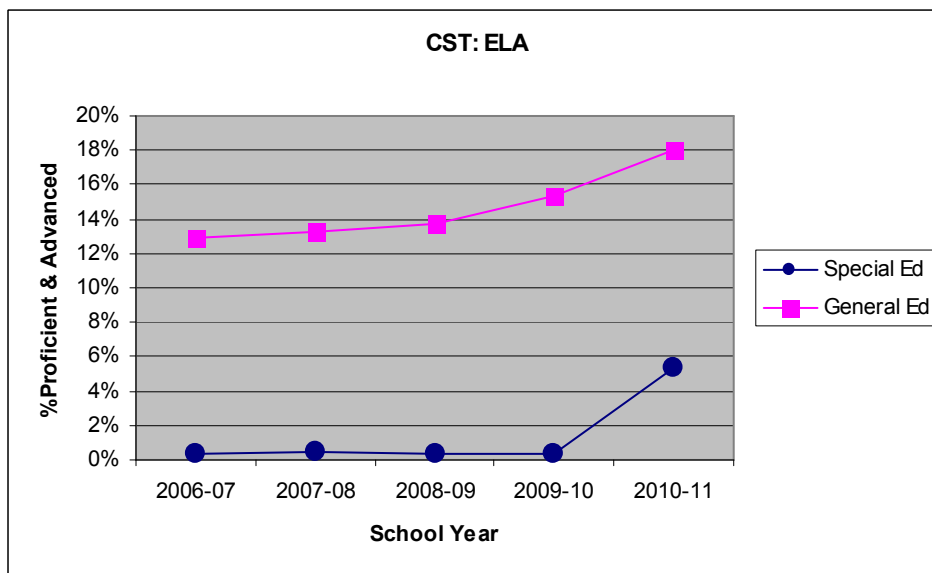


The data represented in the tables above are reflected in the API data below.



**Performance Gap between Special Education and General Education students**

Students with Disabilities are not receiving an equitable education. Again, the five-year trend of the English Language Arts CST results clearly illustrates the achievement gap resulting from disparate treatment.

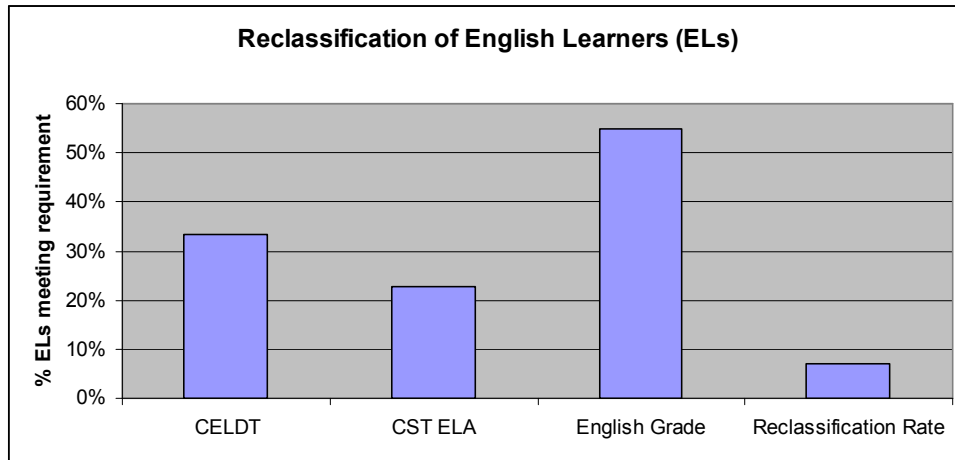


Seventy-nine percent of Special Education students are scoring FBB or BB on the ELA CST, compared with forty-eight percent school-wide. On the Math CST, 97% of the Special Education students are scoring FBB or BB.

### Performance Results of English Learners

The CST data of the English Learners is very similar to that of the Special Education students.

Additionally, the reclassification rate is just 7.1%. In order to reclassify, a student must score Proficient on the CELDT, Basic or above on the CST ELA, and pass English/Advanced ESL with a “C” or above. There is great opportunity to raise the reclassification rate since a significantly larger percentage of students are performing well on each of the separate factors considered for reclassification.



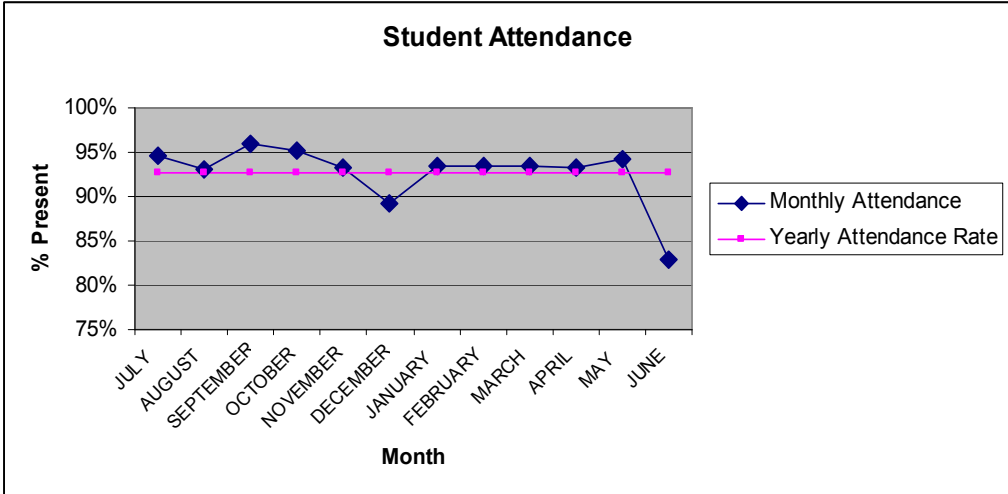
### CAHSEE Improvement

Last year, the CAHSEE pass rate for 10<sup>th</sup> graders at Manual Arts jumped up 11 percentage points from 37% to 48%. Yet, there is vast potential to greatly increase that pass rate further since 66% passed the ELA section and 67% passed the Math section. So there are 18% of students who passed ELA but not Math and 19% of students who passed Math but not ELA. If this is an indicator of future 10<sup>th</sup> grade classes, then there is a potential 37% of students who are prepared to pass one of the sections and could be provided extra support in the other section beforehand to help them pass both sections on their first attempt and overcome this hurdle toward graduation.

### Attendance Potential

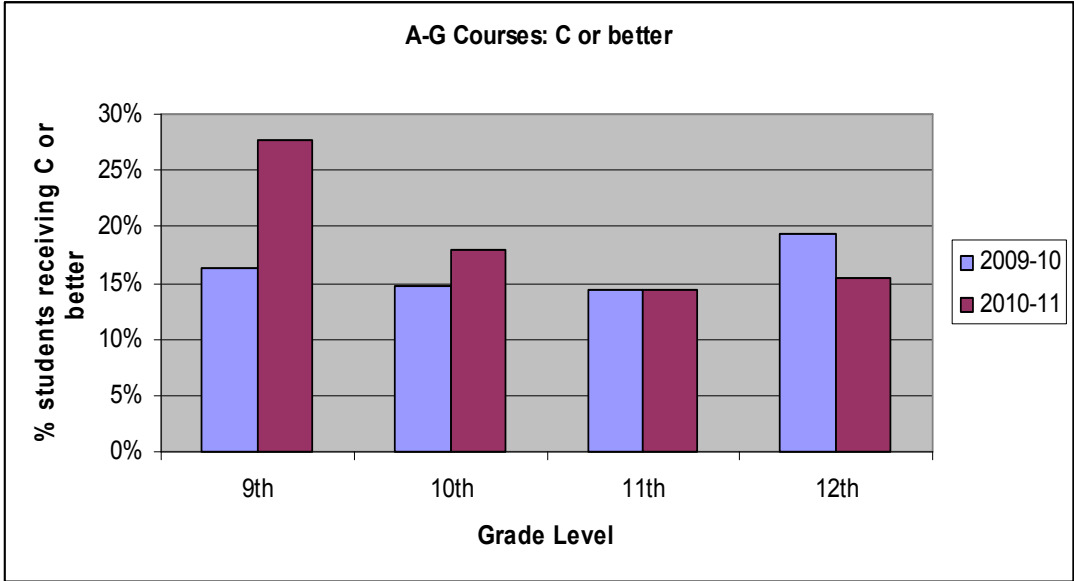
The overall attendance rate for the 2010-11 school-year was 92.7%. Interestingly, monthly attendance beat the overall yearly attendance rate for 10 out of the 12 months.





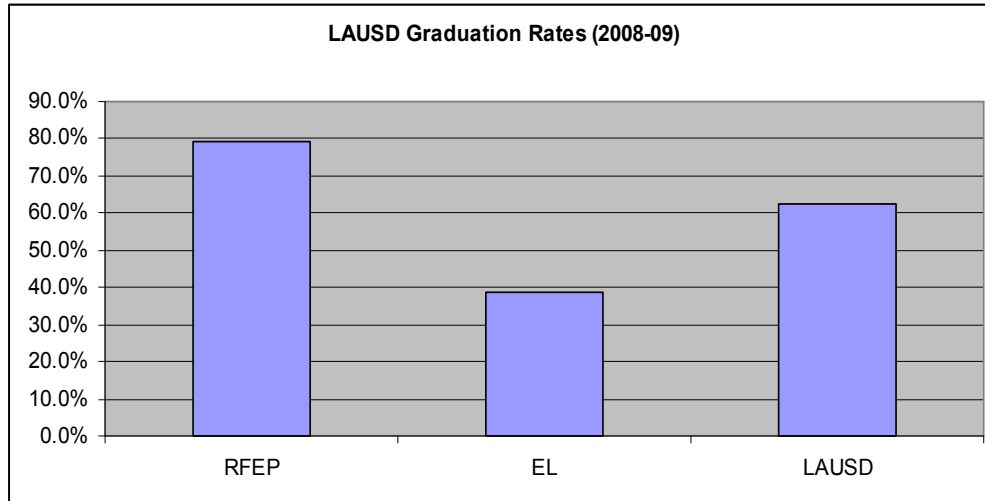
**Promising 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Data**

Last school-year (2010-11) was the inaugural year of the new 9<sup>th</sup> grade house, termed the Freshman Preparatory Academy (FPA). As a result, the percentage of retained 9<sup>th</sup> graders (first time 9<sup>th</sup> graders who did not meet all credit requirements to advance to 10<sup>th</sup> grade status by the end of the school year) dropped 11%, compared to the year before. Also, the percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> graders in A-G courses receiving a grade of “C” or higher rose significantly.



**Graduation Rate**

The Four Year Cohort Graduation Rate last year was 48%, down from 51% the year before. Addressing the aforementioned data points will have a positive effect on increasing this graduation rate. For example, RFEF students graduate at a much higher rate than English Learners.



### Qualitative Data

We studied current school practices and found the following to be some of the causes for low student achievement:

- A strong inclination to simply use the textbook as the syllabus, going chapter by chapter without building up toward anything meaningful
- Lack of pedagogical variety, mostly relying on direct instruction that promotes passivity and boredom amongst students
- Rigid pacing plans that do not allow for re-teaching and student revision
- Infrequent checking for understanding or misconceptions to then adjust to meet student needs
- External events such as RIFs and excessive educational budget cuts have made internal school development even more difficult.

The above causes for low student achievement can be addressed with teacher support and creative supplemental academic materials that will enable teachers to make the students' learning experiences more meaningful. We are of a community that has faced hardships before, but as a creative collective we will meet these systemic problems head on. By implementing cross-curricular planning, collaborative goal setting, and an agreed upon periodic assessment, teachers will feel empowered. Teacher empowerment will prevent teachers from feeling silenced and attacked; instead they will feel reflective. Thus, the reflection process will enable teachers to critique their practices and implement a more meaningful praxis. Presently this is done in pockets in our schools and these pockets give local schools, especially students, a glimmer of hope. It is our goal to create a professional learning community that is school-wide to expand this glimmer of hope.

This critique is not unique to Manual Arts High School and Muir Middle School. According to a recent study funded by the Gates Foundation, 47 percent of students who drop out of school said that "classes were not interesting," 69 percent were "not inspired to work hard," and 81 percent claimed that their chances of staying in school would have improved if there had been "opportunities for real world learning." Highlighting the importance of meaningful curriculum and instruction, only 35 percent said they dropped out because they were "failing in school" (Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Morison, 2006).

The high school dropouts in that study clearly experienced high levels of alienation from schooling. Teachers cannot design measures of change in classrooms without reading and comprehending their

students first. When a teacher recognizes the humanity in each student, then a dialogue, or, as Freire refers to it, “actors in intercommunication” (Freire, 1970) can be initiated. This relationship amongst students and teachers is vital. Darder explains that if “students are to become competent in the democratic process, they must be given the opportunities to experience it actively as it gradually becomes part of their personal history.” Students who are not engaged in a humanizing dialogue with their teachers are trapped in those classroom spaces and conditioned into a state of dependency on a system that they do not understand and are unable to influence. They lack the critical skills necessary to participate and the social and self-empowerment to make their needs, interests, and concerns heard (Darder, 1991).

Our school team believes in analyzing the myriad data available through both qualitative and quantitative sources to inform instructional practices and drive a plan that increases academic achievement, increases teacher effectiveness, and invites community collaboration into a functional and sustainable school that serves the community of South Central with equitable access to quality education that prepares children for college and careers.

In looking at these different points of data, we have found there are islands of excellence that can be expanded into whole-school sustainability. We will model our school design on the current successes by increasing equitable access to the same quality practices that show positive data trends. We have identified the following 5 immediate priorities focused around research-based innovation that is student centered and community inclusive.

## **Our Priorities**

**Priority #1: Safety** – *Ensuring that all of our students are able to learn in the safest, most nurturing environment.*

Our parents want to know that their children are being taken care of and taught in a school that is safe, free from violence, and supports students’ healthy physical, social, and emotional development. In order to achieve this priority, CHAS will examine current data to see where safety support systems can be improved. This includes examining practices within the classroom, addressing issues of campus culture and positive behavior support, as well as better understanding the community dynamics that bring up safety issues for our students when they are away from school. Our plan for increasing safety includes the following strategies:

- Creating a positive school wide culture where the climate is one of respect for all stakeholders involved in the process of educating our students
- Instituting school wide practices that support student positive behavior support systems, empowering students to take ownership of their behaviors in a way that promotes their academic success and resolves conflict effectively
- Partnering with local organizations such as the Safe Passages program, the Brotherhood Crusade, the G.R.Y.D. program, our elementary and middle school feeder campuses, local school police as well as our local LAPD precinct to ensure that students are safe coming to and returning from school
- Collaborating with South LA Building Healthy Communities (SLBHC) initiative, to provide a healthy and safer South Central, will allow the school to function as a part of the community, not just in spite of it.
- Providing student support services such as drug and gang prevention counseling, that empower students to be healthier and take responsible risks

- Reducing our suspension rate and addressing the behaviors that lead to suspension ahead of time

**Priority #2: Attendance** – *Creating an educational experience where students want to come to school as much as possible*

As evidenced by the above attendance data, we realize that there are a myriad of reasons why students miss out on so much school. We also realize that students will not be successful if they are not in school to receive the support and education they deserve. This plan addresses what we feel are some of the main causes of low attendance rates based on the data. Our plan for increasing the attendance rate includes the following strategies:

- Creating the most engaging and supportive learning environment for students, ensuring that every class has the highest quality instruction for all our students
- Developing multiple opportunities for our students to apply their education to real world contexts
- Coordinating with parents, teachers, and counselors to identify attendance challenges that may arise for our students and provide appropriate services to address them in a timely manner
- Collaboratively develop calendars and schedules that respond to school and community needs to better increase daily student attendance

**Priority #3: Graduation Rate** – *Ensuring that all of our students are supported throughout their entire high school experience and ready for graduation.*

Having 48% of our students graduate from high school is unacceptable. Our school will do everything to create an experience where students do not accept failure as an option. In supporting all of our students towards graduation, this plan will address the graduation rate with some of the following strategies:

- Intensive academic support for all students within the core content as well as Advisory
- Individualized Learning Plans for every student that help all stakeholders, including the students themselves, to track and monitor academic performance data
- Utilizing multiple data sets (grades, attendance, assessments, qualitative feedback from parents and teachers, etc.) to assist in early identification of students at risk of not meeting graduation requirements
- Communicating regularly with students and parents about student academic progress in a variety of ways, including student led conferences, traditional parent conferences, academic advising, online communication, and regular parent/community forums

**Priority #4: Academic Proficiency** – *Developing the academic skills and knowledge so that all of our students are proficient in all core content subject areas.*

We want all of our students to achieve academic success. This requires an unwavering commitment to student centered pedagogy and quality instruction. It requires cutting edge and innovative educational practices that prepare students for future career and college opportunities. The entirety of this plan addresses the proficiency of students in all core academic content areas with some of the following strategies:

- Culturally relevant and engaging core curriculum
- Project based curriculum and assessments

- Research based effective instructional and scaffolding practices
- Continual data collection and monitoring to inform our school wide and classroom practices
- Key partnerships that help support and celebrate the academic achievement of our students
- Personalized learning environment where every student is truly known and supported to their full potential

**Priority #5 – Collaborating with Parents & Community** – *Engaging parents and community members to better and more effectively support our students in school.*

This plan cannot be implemented without the support of our parents and community members. It is with this understanding that we move forward in presenting an alternative view of what education can be if all stakeholders are engaged in meaningful collaboration and dialogue around how best to support students. This plan, at every instance, requires our parents to be equal partners in achieving the mission and vision of CHAS. This will be achieved through the following strategies:

- Constant communication with parents and community members
- Authentic and multiple opportunities to participate in transparent and collaborative decision making at the school site
- Focus on cultivating positive relationships with parents and community members based on trust and dialogue
- Shared commitments to practices that ensure our students are at the heart of all dialogue and decision making
- Professional development with local community organizations which increase the capacity of teachers and staff to foster authentic relationships with parents and community to increase collaboration
- Parent/Community training opportunities that build capacity of our parents to effectively become involved in student academic life, school decision making, and educational and community advocacy

### 3. Applicant Team Analysis.

To be successful in a new school environment, we will foster democratic leadership and the development of a learning community that can implement this plan, which is focused on a shared mission having internal accountability. By empowering marginalized students, along with their parents, and leveraging dissatisfaction with the status quo into a laboratory of democracy, we can collaboratively overcome challenges, with continual learning and growing conscientiousness. We will replace isolation with support and motivation. Together, we will create a new school community that engages every student in the learning process and, with our growing strength, take control of outside factors, thereby providing every student with an equal opportunity to learn.

Only by collective action, through engaged participation of all stakeholders in imagining our future, can we make the shared decisions that will meet the needs of every student. It has been well documented that school officials often disrespect or disregard minority parents (Noguera, 1999). After creating an alienating climate and further marginalizing the parents they serve, they wonder why attendance at parent-night is so low and conclude that the parents do not care about the education of their children (Kailin, 1999). This can be remedied by not only consciously respecting parents but, more importantly, providing parents with real power in making meaningful decisions about the school (Noguera, 1999).

The creation of a social space for parents, students, community members, teachers, and administrators to gather as equals at regular intervals throughout the school year must be used for democratic experimentation in which true power-sharing exists. School leadership needs to encourage debate and engage in mutual discovery, rather than try to convince others of predetermined decisions. Parents and students have a valuable viewpoint as victims of systemic racism on what changes need to take place. These gatherings would help similarly-situated parents communally collect their thoughts to come up with effective solutions (Guinier & Torres, 2003). Results previously unimaginable would puncture the status quo. As parents and students take ownership of the school, their motivation and commitment grow. Parental links engrain the school into the community, and social networks form that will enhance the performance of our students. Democracy will open the door toward the elimination of marginalization.

Through our outreach into the community, we have come to realize that we need to provide families with distinct choices in the education of their children. That is why our Schools for Community Action (SCA) team has designed four separate plans for four distinct small schools on the Augustus Hawkins campus. These four choices resulted from our findings as we spoke to the people in our community and as we read through various studies on education:

1. Critical Design and Gaming School (**C:\DAGS**)
2. Community Health Advocates School (**CHAS**)
3. Responsible Indigenous Social Entrepreneurship (**RISE**) School
4. The School of Urban Sustainability and Environmental Science (**USES**)

The Critical Design and Gaming School (**C:\DAGS**) surfaced as an obvious choice after witnessing the clear interest in video games, social media, and mobile apps among a large segment of our community. Additionally, the Kaiser Family Foundation reported in 2005 that among both genders between the ages of 8 and 18, black youth play video games an average of 1 hour and 26 minutes every day, and Hispanic youth 1 hour and 10 minutes. The Pew Internet and American Life project reported that 57% of online teens create digital content, such as websites, blogs, photos, videos, stories, artwork, or remixed content, and that urban and low-income youth were the most likely to engage in these activities (Lenhardt and Madden, 2005). Several recent studies show positive academic, civic, and physical effects of gaming (Thai et al, 2009; Kahne, 2008; Institute for the Future, 2009).

The members of our **C:\DAGS** design team, in collaboration with the greater **SCA** team, are well-positioned to successfully create and implement a new school environment focused on critical design and gaming in this community.

**Peter Carlson:**

Peter recently received a Masters of Education in Urban Teaching from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). His masters' inquiry focused on the critical use of space in education. Since 1997, he has engaged with students in order to create respectful classroom communities that value practice and experience, high academic and social expectations, and offer spaces for student empowerment. Peter has authored and co-authored curriculum for courses in Speech and Debate, Broadcast Journalism, and Film: An Integrated Art. Peter is intent on implementing innovative curriculum that enhance student learning beyond traditional classroom spaces. He has received multiple grants for curriculum writing and student projects. Peter teaches English at Manual Arts High School.

***Samantha Diego:***

Samantha is an undergraduate student at the University of California Santa Barbara, where she is double majoring in English Literature and Japanese. Prior to UCSB, Samantha attended Manual Arts High School where she, along with Antero Garcia, co-taught a semester. During this semester, Samantha helped her fellow peers write a 50,000 word novel for National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo). In addition to co-teaching a course, Samantha was the guest speaker at an adult school night class, where she spoke about the difficulties urban youth face in terms of college education. Following UCSB, Samantha hopes to enter a graduate program and pursue a teaching career before devoting her time to creative writing.

***Antero Garcia:***

As a doctoral candidate in the Urban Schooling division of the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA, Antero's research focuses on developing critical literacies and civic identity through the use of mobile media and game play in formal learning environments. In 2008, he co-developed the Black Cloud Game. A Digital Media and Learning Competition award recipient, the Black Cloud provoked students to take real time assessment of air quality in their community. Using custom-developed sensors that measure and send data about air quality, students critically analyzed the role pollution played in their daily lives and presented recommendations to their community. Antero is a 2010-2011 U.S. Department of Education Teaching Ambassador Fellow, providing teacher input and feedback on national education policy initiatives. He is an English teacher at Manual Arts High School in South Central Los Angeles. Over the past six years that he has taught, his curricular goals have been constant: provide the inner-city students I serve with the necessary tools to engage civically and be able to critically read and write in their post-secondary careers.

***Andre Hargunani:***

Andre has a Computer Engineering degree and programmed computer games before becoming a math teacher in South Central Los Angeles. At Manual Arts, he has taught every course in the math sequence from Algebra 1 through A.P. Calculus. As the Data/Testing Coordinator, he promoted the integral value of data analysis in raising student achievement and organized unusually smooth administrations of the standardized tests. Now as the Math Instructional Coach, he supports math teachers in providing a meaningful math education to their students. Last year, Andre successfully promoted the implementation of the Algebra Project, an experience-based culturally-responsive curriculum and pedagogy, across all ninth-grade Algebra 1 classes. As a result, the percent of ninth-grade students achieving Proficient or Advanced on the Algebra 1 CST more than doubled, which was the largest gain in scores among all other ninth-grade courses and among all other math courses. Now Andre is helping the Geometry teachers to adopt this meaning-making pedagogy. Andre has a Masters in Education and Tier 1 Administrative Credential from the Principal Leadership Institute (PLI) at UCLA's Center X.

***Travis Miller:***

Travis has taught ninth grade English at Manual Arts High School for 11 years. In that time he has served multiple terms on the School Site Council and the Shared Decision Making Committee, chaired the English department, and participated in the hiring of numerous teachers and administrators. He is a founding design team member of the School for Global Awareness small learning community, the Freshman Preparatory Academy, and the award winning Manual Arts Human Rights Club. He is certified by the Echo Center as a Nonviolent Communication Parenting and Education educator and recently earned a Master's degree in Urban Education from UCLA. Travis and his wife have two children in elementary school.

Our **C:\DAGS** design team members, along with the teachers, recent alumni, parents, and community members of the greater Schools for Community Action team, are dedicated to building the powerful and effective learning environment that the youth in our community have long deserved. Our **SCA** members have either been raised in the neighborhood or have worked nearly exclusively in the immediate area, including Manual Arts High School (the school to be relieved) and Muir Middle School (our feeder school). Two teachers of the **SCA** team were born and/or raised in the neighborhood surrounding the school, attending all local LAUSD schools. All of the other main contributors of this proposal have served the community in several capacities. Our plans are specific to the community needs of our South Central community, to which we are deeply connected, know well, and value intensely.

Most of the teachers on the SCA team were working within the Freshman Preparatory Academy (FPA) last year, and some were part of the initial steering committee the year before, actively contributing to the FPA's design and implementation. Some of the promising data that resulted from that first year was mentioned in Section A-2. School Data Analysis.

We understand that the only way to achieve the kind of learning our students deserve – the only acceptable level of learning as far as we are concerned – is to deliberately organize and arrange the various parts and details of schooling with intention and purpose. As you will see in our plan, all of our research-based curriculum, instruction, assessment, policies, and even job descriptions will be planned to fulfill our mission and vision. There will be a constant focus on teaching that results in students making meaning of their schoolwork, thereby increasing their ability to transfer their learning to new situations inside and outside of school. Developing critical systems thinking and analysis, along with character development, will result in the habits of mind that will support our students to fulfill our mission of becoming college-educated transformational leaders. Our vision of being a twenty-first century learning environment that utilizes principles of gaming, game design, and spatial analysis will become increasingly clear and powerful as we constantly and continually assess the current reality with unflinching honesty and quickly respond with appropriate adjustments. Being immersed in clearly-defined demanding activities that allow us to see the direct impact of our efforts, feeling optimistic about our own chances of success, to aspire to something, to feel like we're getting better over time, sharing experiences and building bonds, and belonging and contributing to something that has lasting significance beyond our own individual lives will provide us and our students with intrinsic motivation and fill us all with energy to keep up the hard work (McGonigal, 2011).

Already we have partnered with the following crucial organizations which will provide additional support for this important mission: WestEd, OneLA, St. John's Child and Wellness Center, Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic, Indiana University's Learning Science Program's 21st Century Assessment Project, Annenberg School of Communication's Participatory Learning and You! (PLAY!), and Global Kids Inc (see Section B-5.c. Key Community Partnerships).

#### 4. Informational Summary.

See attachment in appendix.



## B. INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

### Category One: Unwavering Focus on Academic Achievement

#### B-1. Curriculum and Instruction

##### a. Instructional Program

The Instructional Program described herein is an essential component of the school-wide vision that goes beyond the traditional school structure, requiring extensive collaboration between departments and across disciplines. C:\DAGS will utilize the autonomy granted under LIS Waiver #2 to ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of these school-determined methods to improve pedagogy and student achievement.

For students to become empowered, they need spaces for exploration and action while also finding places for reflection, recognition, and affirmation. Paulo Freire explained that, “to exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it...Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection” (Freire, 1970). As a learning laboratory, the Critical Design and Gaming School in an active workshop, offering spaces for students to investigate, discover, and create. Spaces in and around the classroom will be tools used in the creation of humanized places at school. Students’ exploration of content knowledge will lead them through their classrooms, our local community, and the global communities and virtual worlds of social networking and gaming.

**C:\DAGS** is joining a growing movement of researchers, policy makers, and educators who are all turning to games and gameplay as ways of engaging students in meaningful curriculum and preparing students for life outcomes into and beyond college (Davidson, 2011; Salen & Zimmerman, 2008; McGonigal, 2010; Gee, 2011; Gee, 2006; Jenkins 2008). Canonical educational theorist, John Dewey (1916), also pointed to play as a useful tool to engage students in meaningful inquiry. Flannagan writes of “games designed for artistic, political, and social critique or intervention, in order to propose ways of understanding larger cultural issues as well as the games themselves” (2009). At the 2006 Summit on Educational Games, researchers and education leaders credited video games as “able to teach higher-order thinking skills such as strategic thinking, interpretative analysis, problem solving, plan formulation and execution, and adaptation to rapid change” (Federation of American Scientists, 2006). Video games are the medium of attention for youth (Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout 2005).

In a study of learning during in-class activities, Haystead and Marzano found that “using academic games in the classroom is associated with a 20 percentile point gain in student achievement;” games with low-stakes consequences targeted at specific academic content demonstrated the most learning effectiveness according to the study (2009). Similarly, action research projects that engage students in Alternate Reality play show initial data signaling positive affects of game play on eco-literacies and development of twenty-first century literacy skills (Niemeyer et al., 2009). Kurt Squire studied low-income African American high school students engaged in playing *Civilization III*. He found that, especially among those reported to be the lowest performing students, the participants “developed new vocabularies, better understandings of geography, and more robust concepts of world history” (2004). Games and learning research, along with studies that report on youths’ increasing use of digital media technologies (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, et al. 2006; Lenhardt and Madden 2005; Roberts, Foehr, and Rideout 2005), has led government agencies such as the National Science Foundation and private

foundations such as Spencer, Robert Wood Johnson, and MacArthur to fund further research into the potential of games, digital media, and simulations as learning spaces.

Presently, a key exemplar of one way to implement a pedagogy of transformative social play within public schools is Quest to Learn: a school based in New York that utilizes “game-like” learning to develop “an innovative pedagogy that immerses students in differentiated, challenge-based contexts, the school acknowledges design, collaboration, and systems thinking as key literacies of the 21st century” (Institute of Play, 2009).

Like Quest to Learn, **C:\DAGS** will engage public school students in game design and play to reinforce academic and critical literacies. In addition, **C:\DAGS** approaches education from a co-curricular and multi-grade level integration strategy. By integrating core English and math courses with each other as well as other A-G requirements and electives, **C:\DAGS** emphasizes literacy and numeracy growth and intervention in ways that capture student’s imaginations. As young people play video games, they perform complex tasks in interactive, highly immersive, multimedia-driven environments. These complex tasks include trying to find a diplomatic solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (*Peace-Maker*), building environmentally sensitive communities (*SimCity*), managing complex social relationships (*The Sims 2*), navigating virtual worlds they create (*Second Life*), or running political campaigns (*Political Machine*) or football franchises (*NCAA Football 08*). Don Menn (1993) claims that students can remember only 10 percent of what they read; 20 percent of what they hear; 30 percent of what they both see and hear if they see visuals related to what they are hearing; 50 percent if they watch someone model something while explaining it; but almost 90 percent if they engage in the job themselves, even if only as a simulation.

### **Underlying Theory**

Our Common Core standards-based curriculum will be delivered via an innovative instructional model that fosters high levels of student engagement and ownership in the learning process through interdisciplinary connectedness, collaborative student work, problem solving, and reflective practices. We will provide students with multiple learning contexts for engaging in game-like learning, contexts for receiving immediate feedback on progress, access to tools for planning and reflection, and opportunities for mastery of specialist language and practices. Our design is based on research in the learning sciences, situated learning, and systems thinking.

### ***Learning Sciences through Gaming and Design***

In recent years, a new field around video games and learning has emerged from the learning sciences. Building on the premise that learning is an immersive process mediated by social activity and technological tools, games and learning researchers have begun to show how the design of video games imbed effective learning principles in highly motivating contexts (Torres, 2009). This approach to learning and assessment is based on socio-cultural principles that view learning as a result of the interactions among people (novices and experts), technologies, knowledge, behaviors, beliefs, symbols, rules, culture, and space.

The most common teaching strategy in American high schools is initiation/response/evaluation, which asks students low-level inferential questions concerned with attaining the right answer (Christoph and Nystrand 2001). Current national-assessment trends also reflect an adoption of information processing, with the core of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) serving as an accountability system that assumes that knowledge and knowing can be stored in the mind and appropriately captured through standardized measures. The resulting prevailing instructional strategies mimic computer-like learning

constructs such as memory, storage, and retrieval (Anderson, Reder, and Simon 1996; Driscoll 2005). This current cognitive theoretical stance that learning and knowledge are computed and stored in the minds of individuals, just like information is stored in the hard drive of a computer, is starkly contrasted by the findings from the learning sciences.

Extensive research in the learning sciences conceives learning as context-based processes mediated by social experiences and technological tools (Lave 1990; Sawyer 2006). Developing an understanding of the ecology of learning, much of the work of the learning sciences has been driven by the explicit innovation of learning environments. Cognitive science, computer science, psychology, education, neuroscience, and social science are all major contributing disciplines to the learning sciences (Sawyer 2006). Learning sciences scholars have designed effective learning interventions based on extensive research into the practices of professionals, particularly within the disciplines of science and math (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking, 2000).

### ***Situated Learning***

A situated-learning view stipulates that learning is realized as a result of the interactivity of a dynamic system and cannot be computed solely in the head. Meaning is produced as a result of humans' social nature and their relationships with the material world of symbols, culture, and historical elements. This view of learning as situated emerges in part out of the notion of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Practices are learned over time and exercised in diverse localities that could include domains such as families, disciplines such as physics, and sports such as soccer. Participation in such communities leads to the learning of not only skills and acquired knowledge, but also the particular cultural and social practices of the communities (Klopfer, 2008). Taking this interactivity approach means that learning domains, their respective contexts, and the assessment tools that students and teachers use to decompose and make meaning are carefully designed to ensure that students engage in situated and authentic, real-world learning experiences.

Even our classroom spaces will empower student transformation into critical thinkers and actors. The relationships of students amongst each other, their teachers, and their curriculum can alter the design of a classroom. The traditional model of school classrooms subscribes to a "spatial science that searches for order, predictability and generalizations" (Morgan, 2000). This model is a design of control, for controlling the space controls the inhabitants of that space. Students recognize that some spaces are welcoming, some are confrontational, but they have not yet had the opportunity to critique places as "social constructions filled with ideologies" nor have they been enabled to recognize how experiences within spaces influence "cultural identities" (Gruenewald, 2003). However, empowered students can reverse the equation. Consider that being in a situation has a spatial, geographical, contextual dimension. Reflecting on our situation corresponds to reflecting on the spaces we inhabit; acting on our situation often corresponds to changing our relationship to a place. Freire asserts that acting on one's situation . . . makes one more human (Gruenewald, 2003). Students read classroom spaces and when students speak, they speak from the influences, observations, expectations, and experiences of their lives.

This learning laboratory, the active workshop that William Ayers (2001) describes, must offer students both spaces for action and places for reflection. Places are the environments where humans attach security and even identity. Spaces, on the other hand, are the environments where humans seek discovery and freedom. Humans navigate through spaces and places in attempts to define themselves and the world around them (Tuan, 1977). Spaces for play and experimentation are critical to the cultivation of creativity and innovation. Students will be given time, space, and purpose to tinker with

systems.

### ***Systems Thinking***

A system is an entity designed by humans or by nature that maintains its existence and functions as a whole through the dynamic interaction of its parts (Assaraf and Orion, 2005). Driven by a common purpose, the interrelationships among the variable parts are connected by a feedback loop (Torres 2009). There are social systems, technological systems, and natural systems. Systems-thinking has been identified as a skill necessary in the twenty-first century (Federation of American Scientists, 2006).

In our increasingly complex world, true civic participation and educated policy decisions rely on “design thinking” that focuses on intra- and intersystem relationships and patterns as well as on the intended and unintended consequences of local actions within a complex system. To be effective citizens, we must understand how the complex systems that we design interact with other designed and natural systems in complex ways.

### ***Interdisciplinary Literacy Interaction within Domains***

The New London Group, consisting of international literacy scholars, advocate that “design thinking”, or the “conscious awareness and control over the intra-systematic relations of a system,” should drive the creation and methods of curricula and pedagogy leading toward critical understanding (1996). They emphasized the importance of seeing language and literacy as systems that people design in practice moment by moment – not simply accept and passively use – through decisions and choices and based on deep understanding of the communicative resources (the “design grammar”) constituted by different styles of language.

From the linguistics standpoint of semiotics, James Gee contends that the dynamic interaction between words, symbols, images, artifacts, human behaviors, affinities, and networks happen within domains of knowledge to create particular meanings (2003, 2007). A knowledge domain, which is a system itself, serves as a locality that draws a type of confinement to a particular space or field. Each houses characteristics that situate a discourse and particular ways of being and seeing the world. The interaction within domains creates meaning. Students will write across the curriculum, engaging in reading and writing daily in a range of forms and contexts— analytical, descriptive, expressive, or creative.

### ***Critical Thinking & Academic Improvement through Critical Design***

Gee claims that “critical learning in any domain should lead to learners becoming, in a sense, *designers*.” Critical thinking “involves learning to think of semiotic domains as design spaces that manipulate us in certain ways . . . and that we can manipulate in certain ways” (2003). Systemic-design thinking defines “critical” thinking. Critical learners must see and appreciate a domain or system as a designed space— “*internally* as a system of interrelated elements making up the possible content of the domain and *externally* as ways of thinking, acting, interacting, and valuing that constitute identities of those people who are members of the affinity group associated with the domain” (Gee, 2003).

Benefiting from the structure of games in our instructional framework, students will actively learn and become adept at designing, understanding, critiquing, and manipulating the internal architecture of systems. Currently, research on video games focuses on the ability to develop the skill of critical thinking.

### ***Immediate Feedback***

High quality feedback to students is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). For learners to develop understanding, they must be challenged to make sense of their ideas through ongoing questioning and rethinking of their answers and processes, given continual feedback. Not only must we provide students with clear objectives and explicit standards of excellence for products that will meet those learning goals, we must also continually provide timely student-friendly feedback to support students in producing high-quality work that meets our high standards. Insight comes from refining earlier ideas. Therefore, by building our students capacity to think things anew, we build their capacity to deeply understand (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007).

We will assess our students from the beginning; provide continual feedback along with immediate opportunities to refine their work; make adjustments in our plans in response to results; provide “just-in-time” instruction; and deliberately promote self-assessment and self-adjustment through activities that demand such reflection and transfer so that students become increasingly confident that they can meet our high standards.

### ***Inclusion and Universal Design for Learning***

We are committed to providing inclusive settings for all students, including those with special needs and English language learners. All students will be taught alongside each other in the same regular education classrooms. Every effort will be made to provide students with the least restrictive environments in which to learn.

Moreover, students with special needs will not be segregated from other students. All faculty and staff will be responsible for working with and supporting these students. We will foster an atmosphere of acceptance and respect by encouraging all students, faculty, and staff to view students with special needs as equal members of the school community.

Over the past 15 years, the Center for Applied Special Technology has developed Universal Design for Learning (UDL) through an ongoing program of research and development. At the heart of UDL is recognition of the vast individual differences that exist among students and of the promise of curriculum flexibility for optimizing learning in the face of these differences. For UDL, “Universal” does not mean “one size fits all” but rather that learning designs accommodate the widest possible range of learner needs and preferences. To that end, three central principles serve as the foundation for UDL and for our curriculum and instruction:

- **Provide multiple means of *representation*** to give learners various ways of acquiring information and knowledge
- **Provide multiple means of *expression*** to give learners alternatives for demonstrating what they know
- **Provide multiple means of *engagement*** to tap into learners' interests, offer appropriate challenges, and increase motivation.

Incorporating UDL into our instructional framework will allow us to provide instruction that is accessible to a wide range of students. Until recently, it would not have been practical to develop the flexible and educative curricula and tools envisioned by UDL for under-resourced schools because of technological limitations. Similarly, it would not have been practical at these schools to develop highly interactive strategic instruction using the UDL approach. Fortunately, advances in digital technologies now make the development of interwoven UDL tools, texts, content curricula, and strategy-based interventions possible at **SCA** schools. Reliance on printed materials and scripted curricula, with their lack of flexibility

for access, raises many barriers to achievement for many students.

Urban educators face many well-documented challenges to providing their students with a quality education (Haberman, 1991). Many educators and researchers have begun to approach these challenges not from a deficit model, but rather by building upon the existing resources (physical, social, and cultural) that are available to urban schools. At the forefront of this movement are educators that leverage the urban environment as an educational resource. Field-based experiences are crucial because learning outside of school engages students in activities situated in real-world cultural contexts (Fusco, 2001). Bouillion and Gomez (2001) found that when urban schools partner with the surrounding community to solve local problems, students are more likely to take to ownership of their learning and tend to be engaged in the scientific process. The Urban Ecology Institute and the Lynch School have found that field-based learning in the urban context increases student self- efficacy, interest in science and sense of stewardship. (Barnett et al., under review, Barnett et al., in press). These studies also suggest that urban students might be motivated to learn science, as well as other core subjects and achieve at high levels when the curriculum is centered on their interests and involves them actively in the doing of learning within their own community (Rahm, 2002).

Full engagement in a supportive, inclusive school climate fosters healthy identity development and positive intergroup relationships through strategies such as curricular material across all courses that speak to the histories and contributions of our students' cultures and intentional outreach for extracurricular and club activities that seek participation from all subgroups. Well-designed activities that intentionally build relationships across groups can end the social and structural isolation of English Learners. Empowering pedagogy incorporates explicit leadership development components that help students develop as responsible cultural brokers and bridges for their community (Olsen, 2010).

Research-based best practices help all students to achieve. Crucially, our instructional approach takes into consideration that we must address the needs of our most at risk populations in order to have true successful reform efforts. Our commitment to these most marginalized students is at the heart of our inclusive plan to couple high expectations with high levels of support throughout every minute of the day.

### **Instructional Framework**

We are committed to creating rigorous and empowering learning experiences for the students of South Central Los Angeles. Through collaboration, we will meet the needs of the community surrounding Hoover and 60th and elevate the expectations of what a school can be.

Academic achievement for the urban student body that will populate our schools can be dramatically improved on many fronts. Black and Latino students are capable of great educational success when they are supported in an instructional framework that respects the students as capable learners, situates them within a relevant curricular experience, and combats the historical inequity their communities have experienced around issues of educational access. Project and Inquiry based learning environments that are constructed with students' cultural and community identities at the center have proved to garner achievement while addressing historical educational injustices. Transformative classroom experiences that are rooted in critical pedagogy and collaborative learning empower students to create counter narratives that challenge dominant ideologies of the potential of urban students of color (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). 21st century literacy skills that prepare students for the challenges of college and careers provide access to the innovation necessary to compete in today's institutions of higher learning and the global economy (Jenkins, 2008). Strategic Linked Learning will

support this preparation for college and career by partnering each small school with a network of academics and professionals.

Focused on critical design and gaming, **C:\DAGS** will frame our instructional program with Project-Based Learning, Participatory Action Research, and Linked Learning. These research-based pedagogical practices will help us ensure that the 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy and technology skills at the foundation of our academic program are accessible to every student.

### ***Project Based Learning (PBL)***

Amongst the many barriers that our students face, one of the most challenging is remaining engaged as a learner. Inquiry-based instruction as a pedagogical tool wields the potential to turn around achievement trends for students of color regardless of their past performance. Authentic project-based learning requires that students are constructing new understanding and knowledge around real world problems that are central to the core curriculum. It must utilize a natural student curiosity that supports inquiry development around core concepts and principals. PBL also requires students to negotiate their own learning collaboratively with their peers, creating a professional learning community where the teacher facilitates new learning but does not control it (Barron, Darling-Hammond).

In order to truly prepare our students to excel through higher education and become transformational leaders, as our mission states, we must do much more than simply help our students acquire knowledge. We must help our students develop true understanding which they can apply to genuine transfer performances. For our students to achieve this fluent and flexible transfer, they must be challenged to connect discrete facts and skills and apply them to important interdisciplinary projects. Dewey warned of the “danger that subject matter will be accepted as appropriate educational material simply because it has become customary to teach and learn it” (1916). Instead, we must identify key ideas in each subject area, and then teach the specific skills, concepts, and facts to help us explore the larger key ideas. That way, instead of simply making the content standards the goal, we are utilizing the content standards as a means toward achieving the overarching and complex performance goals (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007).

For students to become empowered they need spaces for exploration while also finding places of recognition and affirmation. It is the student-centered nature of project and inquiry based learning that makes it vital to the instructional program of **SCA**. Through a commitment to individual student needs and their academic achievement, our schools will create a culture that engages all students in authentic learning. Projects centered in the community that allow students to inquire into their daily realities, as well as utilize an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates all core content areas, allows kids to truly connect what they are learning in school beyond the classroom.

Our design team has extensive experience working with students in this manner. Working within the Freshman Preparatory Academy (FPA) at Manual Arts during the 2010-11 academic school year, there were many innovative project based curricula that showed gains in student achievement, particularly in math where the entire 9<sup>th</sup> grade math department adopted the use of the Algebra Project curriculum. The FPA also instituted a Social Studies elective entitled Community Action Research where students developed inquiry based and asset mapping projects centered around community issues. Students shared the knowledge gathered and posited solutions in a public forum where teachers, administrators, and fellow peers were able to dialogue further into these important issues. The entire 9<sup>th</sup> grade English department taught multiple units that had students examining the use of media and its role in shaping their thinking. All of these project-based experiences helped to engage these students in critical inquiry,

literacy development, and helped to raise student test scores. This plan will continue to build and refine these project-based practices at the Augustus Hawkins campus.

At **C:\DAGS**, games can be used as authoring systems to create the products for project-based learning. Students can use commercial off-the-shelf games, Web-based games, software platforms, or virtual worlds to produce artifacts that demonstrate their understanding of the content in the assigned project. Students could produce a written text (*7Scenes*), a visual text (*Sims Family Album*), a video (machinima in *WOW*, *SimCity*, *Second Life*, etc.), an avatar (*Miis*), a mod (*Starcraft*), a body of code (*Alice*, *Scratch*), or a game (*Gamestar Mechanic*). When designing the project-based unit, we will create an explicit rubric to ensure students are clear as to how their artifact will be evaluated to ensure student understanding of the underlying content and development of habits of mind.

Additionally, games on mobile devices can be used to require our students to interact with real-world settings and people outside of school as part of the projects we assign. Examples range from testing pollutants in a water source to interviewing members of the United Nations to sending feedback or information to other players networked into the game.

The collaborative nature of project-based learning is a vital component to our instructional framework. Research suggests that “students who may struggle in traditional instructional settings have often been found to excel when they have the opportunity to work in a PBL context, which better matches their learning style or preference for collaboration and activity type” (Boaler, 1997). The complex tasks that we create backwards from the long-term transfer goals will include different types of roles for students. The tasks and roles must challenge students, yet also address students’ varying styles of learning, interests, and levels of readiness (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007).

Using Complex Instruction to guide collaborative learning in all classrooms, **SCA** will create a culture of learning where students and teachers see positive effects in “motivation, attitude toward learning, and skills, including work habits, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities” (see, e.g. Bartscher, Gould, & Nutter, 1995; Peck, Peck, Sentz, & Zasa, 1998; Tretten & Zachariou, 1995). We view a class of students as a complex system that is not merely the sum of the students, but is a product of the students and their interactions. These interactions among individuals within the system emerge as the result of carefully designed constraints – or rules – and in relation to the environment, resulting in potentially unpredictable approaches to problems and innovative solution paths previously unimagined (Staples, 2008).

This focus on student-centered collaboration has implications for both academic and social growth, “including improvement in student self- concept, social interaction, time on task, and positive feelings toward peers” (Cohen et al., 1982; Cook et al., 1985; Hartley, 1977; Ginsburg-Block, Rohrbeck, & Fantuzzo, 2006; Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Addressing potential “status” issues within classrooms helps establish a tone of respect for self and others that is necessary for safe and effective learning environments.

### ***Participatory Action Research (PAR)***

PAR allows for students to connect their home culture to the curriculum and classroom. It is an essential component of a student-centered pedagogy that aims to help students realize their own intellectual self-identities by recognizing and valuing their cultural and family identities. “When students witness the validation of their culture within the educational process, they concatenate their identities as family members, students, and emergent intellectuals. Moreover, the cultural substance of



their identities feeds and sustains an academic persona. Teachers acknowledge that the students' culture contains valid and sophisticated knowledge; the students see themselves as creators of knowledge (Cammarota & Romero 2010).

Aligned with Project Based Learning, students are in fact creating knowledge that not only allows for maximum engagement and greater mastery of the core content, PAR also allows for an empowered academic experience that translates simultaneously to greater academic achievement as well as positive social and community transformation. "The sites for research extend beyond the family to include neighborhoods, schools, peers, and workplaces. The students' entire social contexts become key milieus for study and analysis, with the intention of acquiring funds to change the conditions within them" (Cammarota & Romero 2010). Centering the students' lived experiences within the curriculum helps address social and cultural phenomena that impact their lives and often stand as barriers to academic achievement. The intellectualizing of student struggles and the "action" oriented aspect of the PAR pedagogy empowers the student and motivates them to continue academic pursuits with positive transformation of self and community as the overall goal. **C:\DAGS** will align projects within the core content areas and help train faculty to utilize and teach PAR instructional strategies in order to promote the most student-centered learning environment.

Our classroom spaces will help students become conscious of freedom, as their awareness grows of authoritarian dispositions and they connect how their growing knowledge leads to a growing ability and power to take constructive action (Giroux, 2010). A postulate of hybridity theory is that "people in any given community draw upon multiple resources of funds to make sense of the world and...to make sense of oral and written texts" (Moje et al., 2004). Building students' awareness through Participatory Action Research will allow them to see themselves reflected in the classroom. "Central to any theory that seeks to speak to the notion of democracy in the classroom is the necessary requirement that it address seriously the themes of student participation, solidarity, common interest, and the development of voice" (Darder, 1991).

By honoring students' strengths, interests, prior knowledge, contributions, and preferences, we can personalize and enhance learning. We can't simply give understandings to our students. We must help them feel a growing sense of efficacy and see the value in their work as we strive to engineer the understanding they will receive when they recognize for themselves, through engaged and sustained learning, the power of an idea (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007).

### **Academic Achievement through Games**

Games can be used to provide experiential context, within the PAR pedagogy, for students to develop understanding of a topic, issue, or principal. Discussion and reflection will also occur in places external to the game so that students can recognize the game as part of a larger body of knowledge. To this end, games can be viewed as systems of research, documentary, manipulation, ideology, point-of-view, and reflection.

#### **1) Games as Research Systems**

Students design games as a research activity. Since a designer must be knowledgeable about the system being designed, students must think through what they need to know about the subject of the game. Students will not only have to research material to be used, but also edit this material. They will be exposed to issues of credibility and point of view. This is an opportunity to introduce several different kinds of research methods.

## 2) Games as Documentary Systems

The play of a game is used as documentary evidence of student ideas and understanding. Students may be asked to re-create certain social scenarios by playing *SimCity*. Machinima or storyboarding with screenshots can be used to capture the details of the situation, which then can be used as the basis for additional discussion or reflection.

## 3) Games as Manipulating Systems

Students experience certain principles of dynamic systems and test theories about how these systems work. Students could work with elements of a capitalist economy by playing *Animal Crossing*. They could reenact situations or scenarios in theater games as a way to see how systems can be affected by manipulating certain elements. Students could learn about bridges as systems of engineering by playing *Bridge Builder*, or test out physics-based theories using *Soda Play*. Simulations often include their own internal assessment measures (data) that can be used to gauge student understanding of both micro and macro elements.

## 4) Games as Ideological Systems

Games are “read” as texts that express certain underlying ideologies, values, and beliefs. Just as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* can be read as an expression of the antebellum South, *Animal Crossing* can be played and analyzed as an expression of late-twentieth-century capitalism, *Chess* can be played and analyzed as a game about territorial conflict, and *Diplomacy* can serve as a model of the intricacies of international diplomacy.

## 5) Games as Point-of-View Systems

Students take on certain identities with associated points of view. Students might play a role-playing game where they have to choose to play both a “good” and “bad” character and compare differences in strategy, choice, and values held by those characters. Students could use a theater game to reenact a familiar scenario from several different points of view, with the goal of each character to shift the outcome of the scenario in his or her favor.

## 6) Games as Reflective Systems

Games can provide contexts for student reflection. Students could play a game and then discuss the choices they made: why did they choose that avatar skin over another one? Why did they choose to attack that country and not another one? What made them uncomfortable, and what were they surprised at having chosen to do?

### **Linked Learning**

“Linked Learning transforms students’ high school experience by bringing together strong academics, demanding career and technical education, and real-world experience to help students gain an advantage in high school, postsecondary education, and careers” (ConnectEd). We will provide the four core components of Linked Learning, as specified by Connect Ed:

#### 1) Challenging academic component

Prepare students for success—without remediation—in postsecondary programs. Pathways complement traditional learning with project-based instruction that links to real-world applications.

#### 2) Demanding technical component

Deliver concrete knowledge and skills through a cluster of three or more technical courses.

### 3) Work-based learning component

Offer opportunities to learn through real-world experiences that enhance classroom instruction.

### 4) Support services

Include counseling and transportation as well as additional instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics to help students succeed with a challenging program of study.

Possible Career Trajectories/Multiple Pathways/Linked Learning for **C:\DAGS** include:

- Game design and programming
- ROP Pathway for Media and Design Arts
- ROP Pathway for Engineering Design
- Engineering (computer, mechanical, chemical, civil)
- Architecture
- Archeology/anthropology
- Forensic science
- Bio-research

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacy and Technology Skills**

Teaching in the 21st century requires instructional practices that utilize and further illuminate the technology use students will see both in college and in the workforce (Bonk, 2010; Ito, et. al, 2009). In the spirit of project and inquiry based learning where students are in essence knowledge producers, a critical media literacy approach in the classroom is integral to the development of technological and media based skills (Share, 2008). Instruction is often delivered using technologies that prepare students for pursuit of advanced technical degrees as well as promote critical examination and use of technology and media, frequently in the form of a student generated product or project.

### **Instructional Strategies for Success**

Within our Instructional Framework, we will employ the following evidence-based educational practices and teaching methods.

**Understanding by Design (UBD)** – Also referred to as “backwards planning,” the UBD approach to planning instruction starts with the learning objectives for a particular unit and works “backwards” to the assessments that will measure whether or not students have met the learning objectives, to the assignments and activities that will meet students where they are and develop the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the learning objectives, and to the initial prompts and essential questions that begin the learning process for a particular unit (Wiggins, 2005). During our professional development before the start of the school year, **C:\DAGS** will use UBD in department and cohort teams to develop curriculum and in small groups or as individuals in the development of individual courses.

The UBD approach to instructional planning considers these elements:

W – Ensure that students understand WHERE the unit is headed, and WHY.

H – HOOK students in the beginning and HOLD their attention throughout.

E – EQUIP students with experiences, tools, knowledge, and know-how to meet performance goals.

R – Provide students with numerous opportunities to RETHINK big ideas, REFLECT on progress, and REVISE their work.

E – Build in opportunities for students to EVALUATE progress and self-assess.

T – Be TAILORED to reflect individual talents, interests, styles, and needs.

O – Be ORGANIZED to optimize deep understanding as opposed to superficial coverage.

***Culturally Relevant & Responsive Instruction*** – In addressing the needs of culturally diverse student populations, research has shown that Culturally Responsive teaching effectively increases achievement of students from different ethnicities and cultures. Culturally responsive teaching is defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly (Gay, 2000).

***SDAIE/SIOP*** – Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English creates a clear, researched based road map that allows teachers to reach our English Language Learning population. Although many teachers receive professional development in SDAIE strategies, they often require more support in effective classroom implementation. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol provides additional means to provide ongoing guidance for teachers, out of classroom personnel, and administration in implementing SDAIE strategies. Through collaborative planning, peer observation, and continual professional development in both of these instructional frameworks, we will ensure that our English Language Learners receive the quality education they need.

***Complex Instruction***— We view a class of students as a complex system that is not merely the sum of the students, but is a product of the students and their interactions. These interactions among individuals within the system emerge as the result of carefully designed constraints – or rules – and in relation to the environment, resulting in potentially unpredictable approaches to problems and innovative solution paths previously unimagined (Staples, 2008). This focus on student-centered collaboration has implications for both academic and social growth, “including improvement in student self- concept, social interaction, time on task, and positive feelings toward peers” (Cohen et al., 1982; Cook et al., 1985; Hartley, 1977; Ginsburg-Block, Rohrbeck, & Fantuzzo, 2006; Johnson & Johnson, 1989). Addressing potential “status” issues within classrooms helps establish a tone of respect for self and others that is necessary for safe and effective learning environments. Students and teachers see positive effects in “motivation, attitude toward learning, and skills, including work habits, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities” (see, e.g. Bartscher, Gould, & Nutter, 1995; Peck, Peck, Sentz, & Zasa, 1998; Tretten & Zachariou, 1995).

***Thinking Maps***—Thinking maps create a “common visual language within a learning community for transferring thinking processes, integrating learning, and for continually assessing progress” (Hyerle, 1995). Thinking maps can be used in every subject area to engage students with basic thinking processes such as defining, describing and sequencing and with more in-depth analytical processes such as cause and effect, analogies and comparing/contrasting. Furthermore, we know that a great number of teachers from John Muir Middle School (feeder school) utilize thinking maps to help students access content and organize ideas; therefore, students will be familiar with thinking maps and continue using them to explore new and more complex content. Incoming students will come with a foundation from their prior education experience in elementary followed by middle school that cannot be ignored and when built upon, further enhances learning capabilities for students.

***Content-area and academic vocabulary instruction*** – Research demonstrates that the “relation between reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge is strong and unequivocal” (Baker, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1997) and that direct vocabulary instruction improves reading comprehension

and is particularly important for struggling students and English language learners (Hill and Flynn, 2006). That said, not all vocabulary instruction is effective. The **C:\DAGS** design team has experience with the direct vocabulary instruction based on Kate Kinsella’s research and work and will share this experience and knowledge (as well as the associated materials) through professional development sessions and direct support throughout the school year. This instruction introduces new words through engaging students’ prior knowledge (through using examples, images and metaphors connected to their lived experience), and provides a student with multiple opportunities to use the words.

**Socratic Seminar**— Currently used by **C:\DAGS** design team members in English classes, with varying skill levels, Socratic Seminars support a structured discussion for students to engage in meaningful discussions about a text, issue or idea. Socratic Seminar often starts with very structured discussion norms to allow for students to feel comfortable with contributing to discussion. Through modeling and practice students are able to use Socratic Seminars for analytical and complex dialogue. Also, by using Socratic Seminar for whole-class discussion students are able to draw on their prior experience and their interactions with other readers and writers to continue to make meaning of complex texts, issues or ideas. Students are responsible for listening and speaking to each other to give and receive input and to elaborate or challenge ideas discussed by the whole group. Since Socratic Seminars are formal discussions, students practice adjusting their volume and tone for an academic discussion. This also provides students practice with using academic language to write analytical and evaluative questions to bring to the discussion. The use of Socratic Seminar also supports student-centered pedagogy because instead of a teacher-centered question to start the discussion, students bring their own questions to discuss.

**Rubrics**— Rubrics and academic expectations will be articulated and utilized in every classroom. In every classroom, student work will be posted with rubrics attached to demonstrate for students and parents, the academic expectations of various tasks and assignments. Rubrics will also facilitate the common scoring process for common assessments to guide teacher discussion in professional learning communities. Teachers will agree on common rubric formats to support common expectations across the curriculum.

**Online Student –Teacher Collaboration-** **C:\DAGS** teachers will be expected to utilize edmodo.com, a secure social learning network, or another agreed upon online collaboration site to augment existing social networking skills, to address lack in 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology skills, and to enhance communication of assignments and expectations between teachers, students, and parents. Through such online collaboration, teachers, students and parents will be able to communicate, view assignments, grades, and share additional resources.

**Additional Accommodations**-- At **C:\DAGS**, all students will receive supports for accessing grade-level materials including modified speech/repetition, explicit modeling, frontloading of vocabulary, multi-sensory experiences that address multiple learning modalities, cooperative learning activities, graphic organizers, frequent checking for student understanding, pre-writing activities, and design of formative assessments.

## **b. Core Academic Curriculum**

The core academic curriculum herein is adapted from the curriculum developed by Quest To Learn. While this curriculum addresses all state and district standards, it is organized in an interdisciplinary structure that differs from the LAUSD instructional Guides to individual disciplines. Under the district model, teachers focus on their students' successes in a single discipline. Teachers who recognize the power of interdisciplinary planning will look for points at which the emphasized standards within the instructional guides align and attempt to implement interdisciplinary moments along the instructional timeline. C:\DAGS is leveraging the scale of the small school structure to challenge teachers to view each student's education as a system. C:\DAGS curriculum begins as interdisciplinary, with teachers identifying where and when to introduce complimentary concepts and build strands around complimentary access standards. To successfully implement and continually refine this locally-determined curriculum, based upon student needs and stakeholder feedback, C:\DAGS will utilize the autonomy granted by LIS Waiver #3.

In today's complex global society, developing the skill within our students to break down problems into component parts for discrete examination is no longer sufficient if it is isolated outside of consideration of the whole. Through our critical game design pedagogy, students will examine the interrelationships of elements within whole systems, thereby becoming better equipped to recognize patterns that offer critical insights into the nature and complexity of the various systems (social, technological, natural, and imaginary) that shape our world. While immersing our students in the basic literacy practices of reading, writing, and calculating, we will focus on developing our students' abilities to think, interact, and read critically, to persuasively write and express themselves through language and media as authors, consumers, and agents, and to solve complex math and science problems with understanding and meaning. Organizing our classes into cross-discipline domains provides students opportunities to discover critical connections that lead to true meaning-making and understanding. Games, simulations, models, and game design are powerful contexts for systems-based thinking, collaborative planning and learning, conflict resolution, and ethics of fair play. Classroom activities will blend seamlessly with community service, service-learning opportunities, research projects, and internships.

### **Student Competencies**

The following student competencies, based on the core mechanics of systems and design, will be continually developed in all domains:

- Distinguishing what is important and salient.
- Identifying causal relationships among things and ideas.
- Sequencing causes and effects to act and think effectively over time.
- Establishing patterns and relationships over time and space.
- Clarifying disparate bits of information and reconciling them to a larger whole.
- Resolving tensions and discrepancies within existing structures.
- Explaining knowledge in terms relative to the individual whose discourse is the reference point.
- Providing relevant examples from other knowledge bases that help to demonstrate and exemplify the efficacy of primary knowledge.
- Applying knowledge to new circumstances and situations.
- Justifying a theory or idea by offering evidence in its defense or designing and conducting an experiment to test the idea.
- Comparing and contrasting current knowledge with other knowledge of a similar kind to establish constraints.

- Synthesizing information so that the sum of knowledge is greater than its parts.
- Iterating to solve problems.

### **Interdisciplinary Domains**

The Common Core standards-based curriculum will be organized into interdisciplinary domains that integrate the traditional domains of English, math, science, and history. These new practice spaces allow students to gain experiences manipulating the interrelated parts of the systems and recognize the interconnectedness of all content areas. Students learn how to view and comprehend the world through the lens of dynamic relationships between parts of a whole by developing a systems and game design perspective in these learning contexts.

Domains offer spaces for:

- Exploration of diverse modes for accumulating, creating, understanding, and using knowledge
- Fostering targeted synthesis and assimilation of data, theories, and hypotheses of traditional academic disciplines and develop habits of mind through which a student's thoughts and actions demonstrate progressive understanding and personal growth
- Innovative trajectories toward mastery
- Creating and validating knowledge
- Analyzing and designing structured, physical models of complex problems.

**The five interdisciplinary domains into which we organize our Common Core standards-based curriculum are:** 1) The Way Things Work, 2) Being, Space, and Place, 3) Coding and Communication, 4) Wellness, and 5) Career-Based Literacies.

#### **1) The Way Things Work**

Students practice taking different kinds of systems apart and modifying, remixing, and inventing systems of their own. Students learn about system structure and dynamics through hands-on work with concrete applications, such as breaking down small machines in science. Students design systems and make measurements that are relevant to improving the quality of their lives. Through the use of different systems such as games, models, digital simulations, and stories, students learn to engage with their world holistically in order to discover strategies for participating in the world and creating change.

##### *Domain Specifications*

- All systems can be taken apart.
- Students gain a particular perspective of the world when they are given opportunities to take apart, modify, and invent systems.
- Twenty-first-century inventions are necessary to a sustainable world.
- Emphasis is on helping students to recognize patterns, identify structure, and formulate general principles. Work in this domain should reflect current needs in innovation (e.g., green technologies).
- The Way Things Work supports connective thinking and creativity across physical, social, technological, and cultural systems.
- Connective thinking and creativity are key literacies of the twenty-first century.
- Creating models of systems is a concrete way to give physical description to complex phenomenon.

## 2) Being, Space, and Place

Students consider time, space, and human geographies as forces that shape the development of ideas, expression, and values. In Being, Space, and Place, students are challenged to see themselves in relation to the spatial and social world around them, focusing on the interaction between the individual and the web of systems they influence and inhabit. Students explore personal, socio-cultural, physical, living, and imaginary systems as contexts for learning—in the process seeking to understand the nature of the individual and how the identity of that individual shapes their world. Point of view and perspective taking are core tools in this domain; by responding to viewpoints, debating, and taking a stand, students become aware of systems of relationships embodied through empathy, cooperation, reciprocity, ethics, tolerance, and citizenry in a global world.

### *Domain Specifications*

- We travel within multiple cultural systems.
- Humans are agents who can influence the world around them.
- Students mindfully take apart, create, and analyze personal, socio-cultural, physical, living, and imaginary systems.
- A person's identity informs the way he or she interacts with the world.
- Understanding and taking on diverse perspectives leads to deeper levels of complex thinking.
- The design of the curriculum offers students opportunities to take a stand on issues they care about while exhibiting empathy, cooperation, reciprocity, ethical standards, and tolerance for diverse points of view. Agency is developed out of membership and influence-ability within and across communities.
- Learning is anchored within a framework and understanding of what it means to be an active global citizen.
- Students understand and appreciate multiple perspectives when using strategies such as dramatic role play, literature response, and debate.
- The continuous interplay of contextual factors—such as being, space, and place—influences how we experience and make meaning of the web of systems we study and inhabit in our daily lives.

## 3) Coding and Communication

Students practice decoding, authoring, manipulating, and unlocking meaning in coded worlds in order to meet shared needs or for their own purposes. Work in this learning context requires students to practice with the concept of language and literacy across disciplines, from math to ELA to computer programming. Coding draws on games as learning environments that produce meaning through the interpretation of symbolic codes ordering our world. As students reflect on how the underlying rules of a system shape expression and communication, they gain experience in comprehending the world as a meta-system made up of multiple systems, each containing a set of values, assumptions, and perspectives.

### *Domain Specs*

- All codes convey meaning.
- Literacy across systems is necessary: code is key to that literacy.
- Math is a language that describes the world.
- Students gain literacy in multiple languages.



- Code is a symbolic system that is predictable, repeatable, and interpretable.
- Code is a material for the representation of ideas.
- Code is a common way of making meaning between people (i.e., it is shared).
- Code is a foundation for innovation.
- Code is organized by rule sets.
- Code is a dynamic system.
- All language is constructed and can evolve and change.
- Ordering, sequencing, patterning are ways of organizing content.
- By manipulating language, one can create worlds.
- Meaning can be translated across code.
- Students re-imagine worlds through code.
- Code demonstrates the power of language.

**4) Wellness (For more details, see B-4.c. Social and Emotional Needs)**

At C:\DAGS, Wellness is a domain and school-wide practice where students appreciate and know what it means to be healthy. Wellness situates personal, social, emotional, and physical health within larger systems, including peer groups, family, community, and society.

**5) Career-Based Literacies (For more details, see B-4.d. College and Career Readiness)**

Career-Based Literacies is a primary space of practice attuned to new media literacies, which are multimodal and multicultural, operating as they do within specific contexts for specific purposes. Work in this domain introduces students to tools that are foundational to the curriculum: game design platforms, programming tools, tools for working with virtual worlds, and data-visualization and knowledge-management tools. The selection of tool sets is made in coordination with the rest of the curriculum.

**Missions, Quests, and Boss Levels**

Utilizing their natural proclivity for gaming, students will learn the Common Core standards-based curriculum and develop their skills and habits of mind by actively engaging in Quests and beating Boss Levels to accomplish Discovery Missions. This approach is inspired and adapted from Quest to Learn, which has used games-based pedagogy and curriculum to increase academic achievement in a public school in New York. The curriculum activates five conditions for student learning: a need to know, collaborate, and think; a space to explore; a place to reflect; a context for ongoing feedback and evaluation; and channels for sharing across internal and external communities.

Each quarter is shaped by a Discovery Mission. Each mission is a complex interdisciplinary problem for students to solve. Missions are divided into challenge-based lessons called Quests. At the end of each mission, students enter the Boss Level, a one-week intensive challenge requiring all the acquired knowledge, skills, and habits of mind in order to solve.

***Discovery Missions***

Students are immersed in complex, interdisciplinary problems that can only be solved by acquiring standard-based skills and fluencies. Students know the Mission’s clear goal right from the start.

All Missions are designed to get students to:

- Reflect on what they know how to do now and what they need to learn how to do in order to complete the Mission successfully.

- Gather data and manipulate resources.
- Create inferences.
- Theorize and generate solutions.
- Evaluate results.

### **Quests**

Each Discovery Mission is made up of a series of smaller Quests, or goal-oriented challenges, that equip students with necessary data, knowledge, resources, and practices to solve the larger Mission. There could be four to ten Quests, varying in length and complexity, as students advance through the mission. Students learn to do something as a means to solve a Quest.

All Quests are designed as active “data expeditions” to get students to:

- Collect information and resources of different types (scientific data, writing, statistical or economic data, physical samples, etc.).
- Manipulate, analyze, and shape these data in ways that allow them to gain expertise in the standards defining the knowledge core of each domain.

Our teachers will consider what students bring *to* any experience of learning, what they take *from* it, what they do to engage in and progress within their quest *during* the experience itself, and what happens *between* experiences. Curriculum development thus attends equally to the design of phases, passages, and transitions between concepts, framing all curricular development within systemic terms.

### **Boss Level [See B-3.a. Student Assessment Plan]**

The final challenge at the end of a mission, the Boss Level component of our curriculum operates as a primary space in which students earn qualification badges as they participate in a rigorous process of research, theory building, hypothesis testing, evaluation, and critique—all followed by a public defense of results.

All Boss Levels are designed to get students to:

- Work collaboratively with each other and with teachers on a capstone project that integrates the interdisciplinary knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that developed within the previous eight weeks.
- Draw on an inventory of acquired content, processes, resources, and relationships to overcome a final challenge.
- Participate in a rigorous process of research, theory building, hypothesis testing, evaluation, and critique.
- Publically defend their solutions for the final challenge and overall mission.
- Lead the parent-teacher conferences that will take place at the end of each mission, allowing teachers, parents/caregivers, and students to review their achievement and progress together.

### **Incorporating Commercial Games into Curricular Content**

There are several commercial off-the-shelf games that can be used to provide experiential context to develop understanding of a topic, issue, or principal. Discussion and reflection will occur in places external to the game so that students can recognize the game as part of a larger body of knowledge. To this end, games can be viewed as systems of content, technology, and code.

### 1) Games as Content Systems

Games can deliver understanding about a particular subject or content area. For example, students could play *SimCity* to learn about urban planning or *Civilization IV* to learn about history. Kahn Academy is a leading example of this work successfully implemented within the fields of math and science.

### 2) Games as Technology Systems

Games can give students experience with technology, whether it be in learning how to use a particular piece of software or platform (i.e., how to use a personal computer or a browser) or learning how to use a kind of technology (a mobile phone, wireless device). Assessment models are based on a student's effectiveness with and ability to use the system to do what he or she wants it to do.

### 3) Games as Code Systems

Students could play games that require writing as the primary mechanic of game play, whether they are playing text adventures or designing or playing text based mobile games. The emphasis here is in the use of writing as both a mode of action and a mode of expression. Because writing itself is produced as an artifact of the game play, this writing can be assessed to capture student understanding. There is an opportunity to connect this approach to games with the introduction of a programming curriculum that might use authoring platforms, such as *Scratch* or *Alice*, or virtual worlds that support object creation, such as *Second Life*.

Game expert Jane McGonigal identifies four major categories of intrinsic rewards in games:

- Satisfying work: Being immersed in clearly defined, demanding activities that allow us to see the direct impact of our efforts
- Hope of being successful: Feeling optimistic about our own chances of success, to aspire to something, to feel like we're getting better over time
- Social connection: Sharing experiences and building bonds
- Meaning: Belonging and contributing to something that has lasting significance beyond our own individual life

**C:\DAGS** utilizes these four categories as ways to develop and structure curriculum throughout the year and access disciplines. An example of these principles at work would be Fold-It, a protein-folding game that could be used in the **C:\DAGS** biology classes. We encourage learning habits and dispositions toward formal education through the natural tenets of game design including goals, restrictions, and feedback. Our bell schedule easily allows for cross-curricular pairing to implement our interdisciplinary domains (see Section B-4.e. School Calendar/Schedule).

#### **Curriculum Development:**

Following the backward curriculum design model of Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), all curricula will be developed to meet the goals stated in our mission and vision. Our Common Core standards-based curriculum will lead our students to accomplish the long-term goals of our mission by including a variety of specific projects, performances, indicators, and assessments that concretize our vision and inform progress toward meeting our goals. Rather than writing curricula based on isolated drills, all curricula will be based on the demands of the Discovery Missions, Quests, and Boss Levels. Projects and assessments will require the development of habits of mind and ability to transfer skills and knowledge so that students' learning has long-term use.

As a guideline for crafting the activities within our curriculum, and utilizing content and instructional strategies as means toward achieving our desired ends, we will use modified versions of the Discovery

Mission Curriculum Template and Curriculum Directors' Planning Template developed by Quest to Learn. We will select the standards-based textbooks from the state-approved list that best align with our instructional program.

The Principal will ultimately be responsible for leading the curriculum development process, overseeing the work of our teachers and curriculum development partners. To develop curriculum, C:\DAGS is partnering with USC's Annenberg School of Communications to include the Participatory Learning and You! (PLAY!) Professional Development working group. Additionally, we have several community partners aiding in constructing games-based curriculum including 826LA, LA Game Space, and the DIYDAYS.

Our math curriculum will build upon the Algebra Project, an experiential-based culturally-responsive pedagogy and curriculum, The Algebra Project elicits students' preconceptions in order to correct misconceptions and construct truly meaningful knowledge. It is easily adaptable to game-based learning and cross-curricular units involving English, Science, and Social Studies standards.

The Curriculum Development Timeline is detailed in the Appendix.

### **c. WASC Accreditation**

During August of 2012, the School Leadership Council will review the Conditions of Eligibility to be considered for WASC Affiliation as part of its ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the PSC plan. By September 30, 2012 the principal will submit a Request for WASC Affiliation form with the \$150 application fee. The school will then be provided with an Initial Visit School Description form that requests information regarding the purposes and operation of the school and evidence of the school's status in relation to the conditions of eligibility. During professional development time as part of the end of the semester reflection process, the faculty will review WASC's Conditions of Eligibility Rubric, complete the Initial Visit School Description form and gather the appropriate documentation. Upon receipt of the forms, the Executive Director of WASC will schedule a two member, one-day school visit, after which they will make a recommendation regarding the school's readiness for initial affiliation which include the following possibilities and related responses by the school:

- *Not granted affiliation* means that one or more of the conditions was not met. In the extremely unlikely event that this is the recommendation, the principal will call an emergency meeting of the School Leadership Council and faculty to address the Conditions of Eligibility not met, and resubmit for a second visit as soon as possible.
- *Candidacy* means that the school qualifies for accreditation and will be directed to submit a first-year progress report indicating progress being made in meeting the recommendations of the initial visiting committee. After submitting this report, the school remains in candidacy status until the visiting committee, and the school must apply for full accreditation within 1 – 3 years (depending on the recommendation of the committee).
- *Initial Accreditation* means that all conditions of eligibility have been met to the satisfaction of the visiting committee, and the school must apply for full accreditation within 1 – 3 years (depending on the recommendation of the committee).

The past experience of C:\DAGS design team member, Andre Hargunani, in a successful WASC process will be instrumental in our WASC accreditation process.

#### **d. Addressing the Needs of All Students**

The data on the area high schools and feeder campuses shows that our student population will be entering our school with a wide variety of learning needs that will include English Language Learners and Standard English Learners, students with special education needs and/or very low skills and gifted students who need additional challenges to grow as learners. In order to meet the diverse needs of our students, we have developed a plan that provides for individualized, early and consistent supports for every student.

Through a strong feedback loop, C:\DAGS maintains constant awareness of student progress to identify student needs and develop concrete responses to them. In doing this, our school responds to the fact that struggling learners are often confined to an educational regimen of low-level activities, rote memorization of discrete facts, and mind-numbing skill-drill worksheets. They have minimal opportunities to actually use what they are learning in a meaningful fashion.

The curriculum, instruction, and assessment at C:\DAGS will focus on big ideas and essential questions for all students, which will signal to students and parents that the underlying goal of all school efforts is to improve students' understanding of important content so that they can engage it.

Based on our emphasis on inclusion through the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities will be more organically incorporated into "mainstream" (General Education) classes.

In aligning with the research on diverse student populations, our plan incorporates the latest research based instructional strategies and pedagogies to ensure that all of our students, regardless of academic level upon entrance, achieve proficiency on their way towards graduation and beyond.

**Personalization** – Key to understanding the needs of every student on our campus will be an environment of *personalization*. Our small size offers a context for the personalization of the learning experience but is not in and of itself the sole requirement to achieve personalization. "Educational research has suggested that, all else equal, small schools tend to produce significantly better results for students. These results are the most pronounced for students who are typically least well served by traditional schools. Yet it is important to recognize that "small" is not enough. While it is true that small schools are generally more successful than large schools, smaller size is only a part of the answer" (Darling-Hammond 2002).

Teachers and students will be encouraged to develop relationships that extend beyond the classroom and transcend the typical student adult relationship that too often creates situations that lead to disengagement from the high school experience for many of our students. Our school will work hard to ensure that there are multiple opportunities for these types of mentoring relationships to be created so that every child has some adult figure on campus that they can go to for both academic and social and emotional support. This *personalization* work will begin from the very first meeting of staff and faculty. Through their first expeditionary experience as high school students, freshmen will have multiple

opportunities throughout their off site high school orientation to get to know the faculty in a more intimate setting than the classroom is often viewed as. Learning will begin immediately through experiential activities designed to get students to connect learning to the real world. Yet these experiential activities will also focus on community building rituals and relationship building exercises that focus on effective communication and trust. This set of first experiences will create a collaborative context that will be developed and sustained throughout the remainder of the academic year.

**Individual Learning Plans (ILPs)** - Advisory will also serve as a means to personalize the educational experience of the students. Through advisory activities that build the capacity of students to take their education into their own hands, teachers will act as advisors and work with students to develop *Individual Learning Plans* (ILPs) for all of their advisory students. The *Individualized Learning Plan (ILP)* is an important tool that students, teachers and support staff will use in conjunction with the students' parent(s)/guardian(s) to guide instruction and support the learning of each student at our school. Different from traditional graduation plans, or special education IEPs, the **C:\DAGS** ILP is a portfolio notebook that will be created on the student's first day at the school and conclude with the student's final (senior) exhibition that reflects his or her experience at **C:\DAGS**. We expect that each ILP will change and grow with the student, and thus include different elements as the student develops. However, all ILPs will share the following core elements: a graduation plan that will be updated by the student (with the supervision of the advisor) each semester; a S.M.A.R.T. goal setting, completion and reflection log; all school-wide assessments; student analysis of his/her learning styles, strengths and challenges; and documentation of and reflections on participation within core academic area projects. The ILP will be maintained as part of our Advisory program and supervised by the student's advisor with the support of each grade-level team and the school counselor. The ILP will also be part of every parent meeting, and parents will be part of the student's goal setting and completion.

**Project-Based Culturally Relevant Curriculum** – Research shows that PBL often succeeds in engaging our most difficult learners. Several studies have documented positive changes for teachers and students in motivation, attitude toward learning, and skills, including work habits, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities (see, e.g. Bartscher, Gould, & Nutter, 1995; Peck, Peck, Sentz, & Zasa, 1998; Tretten & Zachariou, 1995). Interestingly, students who may struggle in traditional instructional settings have often been found to excel when they have the opportunity to work in a PBL context, which better matches their learning style or preference for collaboration and activity type (Boaler, 1997). Through working on collaborative projects with other peers in mixed ability groups, college students, and faculty members our students will learn from each other and experience multiple opportunities to demonstrate success within and beyond their classrooms.

We would like to stress that our instructional model, with its incorporation of student driven inquiry through Project-Based Learning, Participatory Action Research, and Linked Learning, is a curriculum inherently responsive to variations in student need. Each student at **C:\DAGS** will pursue an individual learning plan that supports his or her unique educational requirements.

Teachers will apply instructional strategies proven to work with students with diverse learning styles (see Section B-1.a. Instructional Program).

**Students of Poverty** – Although many of our students deal with issues of poverty, this does not indicate a change in instructional approach. Working class students do not learn any differently than those of middle and upper socio-economic backgrounds. Instead what is needed to address issues of poverty; i.e. high absence rate, health problems, lack of housing, lack of home work space, or any number of

unforeseen difficulties a student from this background may experience is to provide added support and services. The Augustus Hawkins Schools for Community Action campus will work with community-based health organizations like St. John's Clinic to provide services such as free health screenings, access to family planning services, as well as social and emotional well being programs.

In addition, we will depend upon the personalization offered through our Advisory program, and the support of our school counselor to facilitate the attention and flexibility needed to help students cope with issues related to poverty while meeting the expectations of quality work and participation.

Finally, the flexibility offered through our internships and community service will give students who must work to help support the family an opportunity to integrate their work experience with their academic experience and not have to choose one over the other.

***Students with Disabilities*** – All students included in the **C:\DAGS** community, particularly RSP students and SDC students, will benefit from the school's philosophy of teaching the whole child, with close monitoring from their team of teachers and access to the on-campus physical and mental health services and academic intervention programs. We will also take every measure to personalize the learning experience of each student with special needs, through a focus on art and technology, and through building on the strengths and responding to the needs of each student with the development of an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP). For all students, **C:\DAGS** will be a place where they are well known by a common set of adults who will track their progress and support their transitions within high school and beyond. We are committed to developing students who are ready and able to advocate on their own behalf and on behalf of their communities. We will provide all students with the chance to apply their standards-based learning to innovative solutions to community health and social work issues. Collaboration between general education, special education teachers, and career partners will insure student success (See Appendix E: Service Plan for Students with Disabilities).

***Gifted Students*** – High performing students often lack motivation when work becomes unchallenging. When instruction is slowed down to meet the needs of other students, high performing gifted students become disengaged. Project Based Learning offers high achieving students choice within the curriculum. Participatory Action Research experiences allow for high achieving students to take leadership roles as they work together with their small teams to accomplish challenging outcomes often set by the group themselves. Student inquiry offers more choice within a curriculum as well as opportunities for teachers to differentiate instruction. Heterogeneous collaborative grouping allows students to not only assist other lower performing students, but creates spaces for high achieving students to rethink certain assumptions they may have and engage others in problem solving, allowing them to learn from other students in the group.

Identification of these high achieving students will be the first step in addressing their specific needs as learners. This identification will take place through previous GATE program placement/identification, previous CST scores, marks in previous courses, and teacher/counselor recommendations. We will also identify students who need extra challenges through beginning of the year assessments. Once identified, students will be classified as "accelerated" in their Individualized Learning Plans, and will work with their advisor and parent/guardian to set appropriate goals for the school year.

Other specific classroom strategies that we will implore are an emphasis on teacher understanding and application of differentiated instructional techniques and providing depth and complexity within the core curriculum. Gifted students often need different instructional approaches that allow them to have

choice within the curriculum while simultaneously encouraging them to explore subject matter at a level of depth and complexity suited for their cognitive abilities. Teacher training in this approach will be crucial in serving these students.

Opportunity for enrichment as well as enrollment in AP courses will also be necessary to ensure equitable challenge for our high achieving students. This will require teachers to offer advanced placement sections of the courses, increasing the level of rigor appropriate to requirements.

**English Language Learners (EL) & Standard English Learners (SEL)** – EL students are one of our largest and fastest growing populations that remain underserved. Although there are many types of language learners that need differentiated support, some of the greatest numbers of EL students are “Long-Term English learners.” These students are defined by the remaining non-proficiency in English, “despite many years in our schools and despite being close to the age at which they should be able to graduate” (Olsen, 2010). Along with students who have recently immigrated to the U.S., our total population of EL students of varying levels will range somewhere in the number of 200 students, or close to half of our school population.

Understanding that language is both primarily a social tool used to accomplish tasks in the world as well as fundamentally a social process, our teachers will draw from socio-linguist and socio-cultural theory to promote learner agency for our EL and SEL students. We will develop multiple opportunities for students to interact and learn from each other. Mixed ability grouping will allow students to learn from experts (native speakers), as well as students of equal or less understanding. Classrooms will be interactive sites that produce the multiple dialogues we know help students decode, comprehend, and practice second languages (Walqui & Van Lier, 2010).

In addition to a focus on opportunities for highly participatory learning, we will provide a rigorous Common Core standards-based curriculum that both challenges and supports language acquisition and content understanding. Lessons will be specifically designed to incorporate high challenge with high support. In time the support will be lessened but never the academic rigor. Instruction for EL & SEL will always be amplified, not simplified. This approach to *scaffolding* recognizes that the ultimate goal in teaching students to become proficient in a language happens when the students’ autonomy is achieved through the gradual removal of support structures. In this sense, EL & SEL learners will be encouraged to find their own voice and take initiative in proposing, planning, constructing, and reflecting on subject area tasks. This autonomy signifies an emergence, a hand over of control of their own learning. Through continual challenge and appropriate support, our students will achieve regardless of incoming language proficiency (Walqui & Van Lier, 2010).

Respecting the cultural diversity with which our students come to us, as well as its impact on learning, **C:\DAGS** will build upon the prior knowledge of our students. This includes the knowledge and skills they have developed in their native language. Although development of academic English will be the primary goal of all classes, students will not be discouraged from using their native language to assist them in their development of academic English as there is no empirical research showing that banning students’ native language from the learning context is beneficial. Contrarily the evidence suggests that prohibiting it can be detrimental to students (Walqui & Van Lier, 2010). Furthermore, we believe that bilingualism is an asset, especially in the South Central community.

Our teachers will utilize this current educational, learning, and language theory to inform practices that allow EL & SEL to participate to the highest extent in a core academic program that ensures access and



eventual mastery in the content curriculum. Through the use of research based, common instructional strategies in all core classes, teachers will allow for:

- SDAIE/SIOP strategies
- Scaffolding
- Project and task based instruction
- Interactive Notebooks
- Thinking Maps
- Building on Prior Knowledge
- Multisensory Instruction, and the use of Realia

Beyond their general education classroom experience, English Language Learners will receive the following supports:

- Early and accurate identification and placement (CELDT Initial Assessment)
- Individualized Learning Plan will include redesignation goals (CELDT annual testing) set with the student, his/her advisor and the student's parent/guardian.
- English Learner (EL) Teacher position – will work similar to a special education resource specialist position for the 20-30 students who require English language development instruction. This teacher will work within the core content classrooms and support English Learners during Morning Lab. In addition, this teacher will facilitate CELDT testing, and monitor the progress of non-redesignated students identified for the *Response to Intervention* process.
- Regular collaboration between the EL teacher and general education teachers.

Research on English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and at-risk students confirms that authentic, relevant, project-based instruction is vital to engaging these marginalized populations (Olsen, 2010). This approach is essential to ensuring equity and access to a rigorous, A-G curriculum for all of our students. We anticipate that our design will be demanding for teachers, but the ultimate benefit is for the students. We will also plan professional development on the implementation of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model (Echevarria, Vogt and Short, 2008) to support ELL students.

#### **e. Vertical Articulation**

Through the interlinked collaboration within the Augustus Hawkins Schools for Community Action campus, we will be able to orchestrate an integrated vertical articulation plan that maximizes student choice and paves the otherwise rocky transition from middle school to high school. Other campuses that do not share coordinated initiatives for vertical articulation and family awareness have led to parent and student confusion and inequity. We recognize that adaptation to a new environment is important in developing a sense of security that fosters learning. We will build on a common language and foundation, host and plan community events, conduct student/parent community forums, and develop a summer bridge program.

#### **Building on a Common Education Language and Foundation:**

Our teachers are able to scaffold on students' prior knowledge by using learning tools that are familiar to the students. For example, we know that a great number of teachers from our feeder school, John Muir, utilize thinking maps to help students access content and organize ideas; therefore, our teachers will continue using thinking maps to explore new and more complex content since our students will

already be familiar with them. Our incoming students will come with a foundation from their prior education experience in elementary followed by middle school that cannot be ignored. We will establish relationships with other educators from the feeder schools to fully understand what our new students have experienced and how we can build on to that foundation. The **SCA** educators have had the experience of outreaching to the community and truly believe that the same outreach and relationship building needs to happen with other key players in our students' educational experiences, such as their teachers from earlier years. This helps ensure vertical articulation and multi-campus relationship building and collaboration.

#### **Hosting and Planning Community Events:**

Enacting our core value of Community Collaboration is essential to helping facilitate a smooth transition to our campus for both incoming students and their families. Our teachers and students will interact with our community partners to either host, plan, and/or develop community forums that bring knowledge and awareness to the wider community. As our students become peer educators for their peers and adults in the community, they will plan and host community events that will engage and invite future students and their parents to campus. Our academic programs will engage all students in Project Based Learning and Student Inquiry Research. Student projects will focus on relevant community issues. Knowledge and data collected through such projects will be shared with the community at large through presentations and service learning collaboration. Extra coordination will take place with neighboring middle and elementary schools in the area to ensure that younger students within the enrollment zone of campus will know of the work their older peers are engaged in. These events will help shape a safe and accessible campus that incoming students and the wider community have already experienced multiple times. Our students will not only reinforce and provide new knowledge, but also practice packaging information in multiple ways as they reach out to younger members of our community, thus exposing them to our campus before their high school years.

#### **Student/Parent Community Forums:**

In-depth interactive workshops will be hosted on the campus by all four community schools, co-led and co-organized by both educators and students. Both adults and youth will interact within single and mixed workshops facilitated by students and educators. Peer education and youth leadership will be developed as students apply their knowledge, planning, and facilitation skills. One such forum will be held to provide incoming students and their parents with an opportunity to explore the distinct visions of each of the four schools so that they clearly understand the vast choices and can make an informed decision of which school best meets the interests and needs of the student. Another forum will focus on the web-based student information system that we will use to help support student achievement and ensure that students and their families are comfortable utilizing this important tool.

#### **Summer Bridge Program:**

**SCA** will develop a summer bridge program in collaboration with our feeder school. Students will explore content that prepares them to be ready for their high school level courses and at the same time gives an opportunity to understand each of the distinct visions for the four **SCA** community schools. The summer bridge program will also provide an opportunity for students to begin establishing relationships with potential future teachers and administrators because it is necessary for them to know their adult support network. Students who participate in the summer bridge program will also begin building their student support network by meeting and interacting with new peers. Our students will gain a physical awareness of their campus as they explore through scavenger hunts.

**Student Placement:**

To ensure equity and choice when placing students at the Augustus Hawkins Schools for Community Action campus, the following criteria will be used to offer the community educational opportunity, diversity, and choice:

Student Placement for <i>Schools for Community Action</i>		
Timeline	Activity	Persons Responsible
May 2012	Create informational packet for the <i>Schools for Community Action</i> , along with <b>SCA</b> School Choice form	Design team members
May 2012	<p>Educate the community/students about each of the schools, stressing that the schools will all offer the same quality of education, but will offer a different theme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations will take place at Muir Middle School (feeder school), Manual Arts High School (relieving school) and at <i>Schools for Community Action</i> sponsored community meeting at Southern California Library.</li> <li>• At presentations, students and families will prioritize which schools they would like to attend by filling out the <b>SCA</b> School Choice form.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, academic counselors at feeder and relief schools will receive information to ensure parents and families have access to information.</p>	Design team members
May 2012	Create school website with relevant information using LAUSD's School Loop Web Service	Design team; Learning, Communications & Web Services Branch
May 2012	Outreach to those who cannot attend community meetings through community walks and mailings.	Design team members
June 2012	Collect all SCA School Choice forms	Design team members
July 2012	Design Student Placement Rubric to determine <b>SCA</b> school placement.	Design team members
July 2012	Using ID20s (to ensure distribution of high, medium, and low achievers), <b>SCA</b> School Choice form, gender distribution, and other needs, students for all small schools students will be assigned to one of the four schools.	Design team members, lead teachers and counselors
August 2012	Pre-opening orientation for students and families which will offer another opportunity to make sure students who are coming are properly placed and to outline expectations for the first day of school.	Design team members, lead teachers and counselors
September and throughout the school year	Continued use of the <b>SCA</b> Student Placement Rubric when new students are assigned to the <i>Schools for Community Action</i> campus	Design team members, lead teachers and counselors

## **f. Early Care and Education**

Understanding that many of our students are affected by the realities of being teen parents and the challenges they present for academic success, the **SCA** schools will explore and develop partnerships with key community organizations like St. John's. Although it will be unrealistic to provide comprehensive services for our teen parents in year one, **SCA** will develop a plan to bring such resources to the Augustus Hawkins campus throughout year one and more strategically in year two. These services will focus on providing comprehensive academic supports for teen parents, access to health screenings, family planning supports, and health education.

## **g. Service Plan for Special Education**

**C:\DAGS** should expect to serve approximately 40-60 students who require special education services (RSP or SDP), with the potential of also serving students (or classes of students) with mental retardation, autism, emotional/behavioral challenges or orthopedic impairments. Research shows that the most effective way to educate students with learning disabilities is integrating them into general education classrooms, along with focused pullout sessions, direct support from specialists, and training for all teachers in how students learn and how to differentiate instruction (Causton-Theoharis and Theoharis, 2008). We want to avoid the marginalization of students with special needs and give them equal educational opportunities. Based on this research, our students with special learning needs will spend the majority of their day in the least restrictive environment/general education classrooms, with the following supports in place:

- Bridge Coordinator will be shared by all four Augustus Hawkins Schools for Community Action (see Section B-7.b. Leadership Team).
- Special education clerk shared among the four schools (serving no more than 150 students).
- Early and appropriate identification of students already receiving services (through our enrollment/identification process) and for students with special needs who are not receiving services through our Response to Intervention (RTI) and student assessment process.
- All teachers will receive a copy of their students' IEPs.
- Early and frequent monitoring of each student's IEP with meetings held within the first 2 months of enrollment, mid-year and end-of-year. Additionally, each student's IEP will become part of their overall ILP that is used by all teachers at the school to direct the learning of the students, as well as used by the student him or herself to understand and engage with his/her own learning process.
- Partnerships with organizations that provide additional supports for students with special needs such as additional mental/physical health supports through St. John's Child and Wellness Center and independent living skills services through Partnership for Active Learning Services.
- For our RSP students, our resource/inclusion specialist(s) will monitor student IEPs, provide in-classroom assistance to students and teachers, conduct pullout sessions and learning center/lab time as indicated on the student's IEP. Since the students in the resource program spend the majority of their time in the general education setting, this teacher's caseload will average 28-32 students.
- For our SDP students, our special education teacher/inclusion specialist(s) will monitor IEPs, provide in-classroom assistance to students and teachers, and conduct pullout sessions and self-contained classroom time as indicated on the student's IEP. Since the students who qualify for

the SDP program usually require more time in self-contained classrooms, this teacher's caseload will average 10-15 students.

- We also recognize that as determined by the district's special education division, we may be receiving students with orthopedic impairments, mental retardation, autism, emotional/behavioral challenges and/or who require CBI. We recognize that some of these populations/students will need more self-contained classroom time to be successful (and that we will be receiving the positions to support this time). However, it is our goal to include *every* student at **C:\DAGS** in *at least* our Advisory program so that *all* of our students will receive the social benefits of participating in a diverse learning environment.
- Staffing – as with the hiring of the general education staff, it is crucial that **C:\DAGS** have complete autonomy in the hiring and evaluation of all special education staff (including special education aids). A key finding in research on special education inclusion is that collaboration between the special education staff and the general education staff is absolutely necessary (Causton-Theoharis and Malmgren, 2005). To address this, our hiring and evaluation processes will include a focus on collaboration, as well as participation of the collaborating teachers, the students who will be taught, and their parent(s)/guardian(s).
- Professional development for all teachers regarding how students in both special and general education learn, on the modifications/accommodations for special education students and reasoning behind them, and on teaching strategies that have been proven to facilitate the learning of students with learning disabilities

## **B-2. Professional Development (PD)**

### **a. Professional Culture**

At the foundation, the professional culture will be informed by the Schools for Community Action core values: Student Centered, Collaboration with the Community, Innovation & Excellence, Social Justice, and Sustainability. These core values will drive everything on campus, most of all the professional culture. Staff recruitment will begin with a commitment to these core values. A rigorous staff screening and selection will look to place only the most committed educators in front of students. All decisions and policies will be informed and guided by these core principles, as well as form the expectations for every member of our campus learning community.

**C:\DAGS'** experienced teachers must share the school's vision for game-based learning and academic rigor. Our teachers strive to work collaboratively, will have the experience in doing so, and are given the capacity to integrate game design and systems-based content, issues, and perspectives with state standards.

Our teachers will strengthen the instructional program by: 1) contributing to the curriculum through design, reviews, field testing, and troubleshooting, 2) analyzing results through assessments which anchor the curriculum, and 3) continuously learning through action research, reviewing the latest research on learning and teaching, and enhancing professional skills. Our principal, as an academic leader, will keep the school focused on our mission and vision, support curriculum reviews and troubleshooting, and lead the response to close the gap between results and our goals (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007).

In order to implement the long-term initiatives necessary for true reform, the school will be a learning community with a culture of trust and mutual dependency in which everyone at every level of the

school is working toward continuous improvement. Professional development will be embedded in practice and intertwined with the attainment of our goals (Fink & Resnick, 2001; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2007).

To develop internal accountability, we all need to agree on communal and individual responsibilities, along with well-defined measures of success (Elmore, 2005). Before school begins, all stakeholders will come together to democratically decide upon one-year initiatives that tie into the long-term goals of our mission and vision. Together, we will also decide on measures to assess our progress toward achieving these initiatives. Then, these initiatives and measures of success, along with needed resources and structures, will be written into our mission-focused Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) that is mutually agreed upon by all stakeholders. After coming together in a laboratory of democracy to collectively decide on initiatives that lead to explicit measures of success, everyone involved will be invested in collaboratively achieving our shared goals.

Although there is individual accountability for people in different roles, the accountability is also interlinked. We hold each other responsible for what we collaboratively agreed upon, and we are more motivated because our input gives us a sense of ownership. With this heightened accountability, we need to foster a culture of trust and support so that everyone will feel comfortable discussing their challenges without fear of blame (Fink & Resnick, 2001). Blaming others does not help our cause when something goes wrong. Instead, when one link falters, the others take responsibility to assist and strengthen. With a common mission of educating every child, we fail or succeed together. In the highly effective schools that Scheurich (1998) studied, even the students were taught to be responsible for the success of each other.

As everyone's leadership capacity grows, structures and processes will be put in place to also grow their capabilities (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Students and teachers will be grouped into smaller cohorts, and these teachers with shared students will have a common planning period to create cross-curricular units, lessons, and project-based assessments, as well as, discuss and reflect upon instructional strategies. Teachers will be empowered to direct their growth, so if there is a shared area of concern, they can embark on an action research project to explore and assess the effects of a possible solution (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2007). We need to look at the gap between what we want to achieve and what we are achieving, the difference between our values and our actions (Reitzug, West, & Angel, 2008).

Peer observations are a powerful tool of support that will allow teachers to engage each other in reflective dialogues about their teaching so that together we can better understand each teacher's strengths and needs (Terehoff, 2002; Zepeda, 2005). We will work together to foster a supportive and trusting environment in which everyone is comfortable sharing problems, assured that doing so will not reflect poorly on their performance, but rather will lead to collaboration on overcoming challenges. The principal will model this behavior by not only allowing everyone avenues of input on school problems, but also by working collaboratively with the other three **SCA** principals to solve challenges they are all facing (Fink & Resnick, 2001).

Together, we can all continually improve on our abilities to adapt and change effectively to roadblocks that come up in the implementation of our plans. For example, the current economic crisis has exacerbated the marginalization of our students by causing more stress, a lack of resources, and greater accountability, leading to increased violence, larger class sizes, and a need to prioritize spending. By

bringing the community together through our laboratory of democracy, we can share the funds of knowledge that exist within our families to better meet our communal needs.

Every Monday, the C:\DAGS faculty and staff will meet after school for a focused 30-minute forum open to students, parents, and community members. This helps make the work of running a school more transparent, de-privatizing one another’s practice and allowing colleagues to support each other in their work. The “30-minute meeting,” developed by Los Angeles Education Partnership, is an agenda and protocol to keep meetings brief and to-the-point, capturing concerns, administrative needs, and questions from the group without lengthy discussion (see Table 3a.1). This weekly meeting serves as a valuable opportunity to showcase our successes and challenges, and bring in parents, students, and community members to share in the work. A volunteer could easily sit in on a Monday meeting, and then spend the rest of the week collaborating with teachers and staff on working through the challenges and programs necessary to fulfill our school’s mission and vision.

**Table 3a.1:** 30-minute Meeting Agenda

Segment	Purpose	Time
Updates	> Check in; find out what’s going on	5 min
Questions & Needs	> Share challenges, needs, & questions that require collaboration > Chart Q’s & N’s	10 min
Assign Tasks	> Attach names to tasks based on needs	10 min
Reflection	> Share final thoughts before beginning the week	5 min

This weekly meeting serves as a reflection point: When we step outside of our own immediate needs for a few minutes, listen and understand our colleagues’ challenges, and offer assistance when possible, we begin to see how daily activities contribute to developing our school community’s beliefs, norms, and practices. The chart with tasks and persons responsible remains in a prominent location throughout the week as staff members cross off completed tasks, helping make school operations transparent and shared. Students will experience a similar process in their Advisory on Mondays, which will also allow them to reflect on their progress and needs. What we expect of our students is what we expect of ourselves. If we expect genuine collaboration amongst students, we must genuinely collaborate as faculty, staff, parents, and community partners.

## **b. Professional Development**

The professional development plan described herein goes beyond the scope of legal/compliance mandates. C:\DAGS will use the professional development autonomy granted by LIS Waiver #7 to provide supplemental support to teachers as they engage in the interdisciplinary curricular development and refinement processes described in the instructional plan and core academic curriculum.

Additionally, C:\DAGS will use professional development autonomy to provide targeted professional developments in response to locally-determined needs. For example, design team members requested targeted professional development concerning the new trends in teen drug use for the Freshman Preparatory Academy, during the 2010-11 school year, when a significant increase in drug and alcohol use by ninth graders was observed. Unable to receive such professional development in a timely manner, design team members invited individuals with specific expertise to lunch and after school meetings, which benefitted those in attendance but were not mandatory to all faculty and staff.

Effective PD at our school will be embedded in teachers' daily work – continuous, collaborative, and focused on student learning (Elmore, 2004; Sagor, 2000). Being job-embedded, PD becomes a habit. Our school, as a learning system, will reward group inquiry and self-assessment. We will nurture new and expansive thinking so that collective aspirations can take flight. Together, we will continually learn how the myriad parts interrelate to create the whole, how individual and collaborative initiatives and interactions lead toward the realization of our shared vision, so that everyone's capacity expands to create the results we truly desire (Wiggins & McTighe, 2007).

### **Standards for Professional Learning**

Learning Forward, an international membership association of learning educators focused on increasing student achievement through more effective professional learning, has developed the Standards for Professional Learning (2011) with the contribution of 40 professional associations and education organizations. Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students:

- a) occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment
- b) requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning
- c) requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning
- d) uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning
- e) integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes
- f) applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change
- g) aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards

### **Partnership with WestEd**

The Schools for Community Action will collaborate with West Ed to develop processes to quickly recognize our specific needs and develop timely PD in response. West Ed will work with **SCA** to:

- Create a professional development model that provides access to research-driven best instructional practices across all four schools. WestEd's *Authentic Task Approach* incorporates all the principles found in effective Professional Development initiatives (Sparks and Loucks-Horsley, 1994). This PD model will center both staff and students in a participatory action research role, where the knowledge and expertise of both teachers and students help drive professional development on transformative and powerful pedagogies, including school-wide literacy strategies to help our students improve their skills in reading fiction and non-fiction across disciplines, writing essays and responses to open writing prompts, and speaking during oral presentation.
- Build an authentic teacher and student assessment system that is driven by the needs of the students and teachers. Using innovative and effective assessments of student teacher practices



will help support a PD model that is student focused and transformative of a school culture that is academic, professional, and communal.

- Develop a school calendar and bell schedule that reflects the needs of the students and their families as well as the most current research supporting the use of non-traditional calendars and schedules.
- Construct an accountability and measurement system for our school plan that allows for constant reflection and analysis of benchmarks, employs the continual development of S.M.A.R.T. goals aimed at effective implementation of our proposal upon approval and opening of the school. This accountability system will be transparent and all stakeholders will be encouraged and trained to participate in implementation evaluation.

### ***USC's New Media Literacies and Participatory Learning And You! (NML and PLAY!)***

Through our collaboration with USC's New Media Literacies, PD will involve designing curriculum with clear learning goals and more-opened opportunities for participants to access tools and practices that support their unique, agentic, and successful attainment and expansion of those goals. NML's guiding principal for a participant-centric approach to learning maintains providing ample opportunities for gaining expertise in the new media literacy skills and competencies. The new media literacy *play* (the capacity to experiment with one's surroundings as a form of problem-solving) has become central to their current work in the field of digital media and learning. We will also guide curriculum development through collaboration with USC's Interactive Media Division and Game Innovation Lab.

Working against the grain of the traditional conception of the teacher/students relationship, where students are the passive recipient of the teacher's knowledge (what Freire calls a banking concept of education), NML moves from the assumption that: "the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach" (Freire, 1970). NML's approach to curriculum design is to offer clear learning goals and objectives upfront to have participants come together and dialogue on what they'd like to accomplish together. From this view, the classroom is envisioned as a site where new knowledge, grounded in the experiences of students and teachers alike, is produced through meaningful dialogue (Freire's dialogical method).

Each lesson is grounded in an exemplar that highlights the concept and puts the concept in context relative to the group's interests. Often this part of the lesson is physical and creative and encourages participants to make meaning from participating in the direct experience. This exemplar spins out opportunities for students to have a voice and choice in further exploring the learning goals and objectives through meaning-making and NML offers varied tools to create and reflect upon projects that stem from this approach.

### ***Linked Learning Development***

Teachers will be trained on the Connect Ed California curriculum planning guides with ongoing support to ensure successful implementation. We will work with Erica Hamilton, an expert on leadership in Linked Learning schools. Her research and theoretical foundation, as well as her background as an English/filmmaking teacher and CTE Coordinator at Fremont High School, gives her a unique perspective on Linked Learning that is based in practice and rooted in theory. Currently, Erica is working as a Linked Learning coach at Santee Education Complex, helping teachers to develop and implement cross-curricular, thematic project-based learning units. Erica has committed to provide mentorship and curriculum support at **C:\DAGS** for Linked Learning.

### ***Support for Students with Disabilities***

As part of professional development all teachers will:

- Deeply understand the Special Education Process as outlined in the LAUSD Special Education Policies and Procedures Manual (pg. 14).
- Understand and apply the Response to Intervention Process
- Be introduced to the special education programs offered at our school
- Review student IEPs
- Utilize strategies for integrating students with special needs into the classroom
- Collaborate with the RSP and SDP teachers to implement successful differentiation and classroom modifications

Information regarding the Special Education Assessment Process, Response to Intervention Process and all relevant forms will be located in the Faculty Manual made available to all faculty members, with a copy located in the school office as well as on the **C:\DAGS** website.

It is important to note that students with learning disabilities will not be singled out or identified within the general education classroom. As part of the professional development on UDL that all teachers will receive, we will address strategies for co-teaching, in classroom support and teacher collaboration for supporting students with special learning needs.

### ***Continued Collaboration with UCLA's Teacher Education Program (TEP)***

To support professional development and mentorship, **C:\DAGS** teachers will be encouraged to continue existing relationship with UCLA's Teacher Education Program. Members of our design team are graduates of the TEP program and/or have served as Mentor Teachers. By working closely with the Student Teachers and the university, Mentor Teachers revisit pedagogy, teaching strategies, and instruction. By engaging in this professional development with colleagues outside of the school community, it provides the opportunity to continue learning and/or apply a new lens to teaching. Mentor Teachers and teaching teams are also able to learn strategies which can often be immediately incorporated into the classroom. By providing mentorship, the Mentor teacher also grows as a leader by sharing best practices and providing guidance and support for teachers interested in working with students in the inner city.

### ***Embedding PD in Daily Practice***

As a new small school, **C:\DAGS** will utilize the PD autonomy afforded through LIS Waiver #7 to create a personalized and differentiated PD plan that aligns with the school's mission and vision as well as the needs of the staff. We will collaborate with partners to develop this annual plan, create an implementation strategy, continually monitor the plan, and make adjustments accordingly. WestEd will serve as an implementation partner, ensuring we adhere to the seven known drivers of sustainable and innovating implementation of social science innovations (Fixsen, Blase, Naoom, & Wallace, 2009).

In 2005, Valerie Chrisman investigated why only 83 of 430 identified low-performing schools in California (under No Child Left Behind) managed to sustain growth in test scores over two years. She discovered that one consistent factor contributing to success in those schools was the regular use of collaboration time that administrators gave to teachers (Chrisman, 2005).

In our daily schedule, classes are paired to facilitate cross-curricular units and co-teaching (see section B-4.e. School Calendar/Schedule). The two partner teachers teaching a set of paired classes will share common conference periods so that time is built into the school day for daily collaboration. In addition

to creating cross-curricular units, lessons, and project-based assessments, partner teachers discuss and reflect upon instructional strategies. They will be empowered to direct their growth, so based on a shared area of concern, they will embark on an action research project to explore and assess the effects of a possible solution.

Partner teachers will also be grouped with other partner teachers who share the same cohort of students. Teachers will be trained and supported to conduct peer-observations of the other teachers sharing their cohort of students.

The LIS waivers and written Commitment to the Instructional Plan will provide **C:\DAGS** with the flexibility needed to engage all teachers in after-school professional development/collaborative planning meetings, as well as professional development retreats during the semester break and end of the year, and a summer-time pre-opening Teacher Orientation.

The after-school professional development/collaborative planning meetings will allow for more flexible groupings to include participation across the entire school, or even entire **SCA** campus, or to facilitate collaboration amongst teachers in a particular cohort, department, or domain, or even promote targeted PD to specific teachers.

After completing Discovery Missions and their culminating Boss Levels each quarter, a seminar will be held with teachers, students, parents, and partners to look at the outcomes. These seminars serve as a tool for professional development and as a way to maintain the school's vision across a range of stakeholders. We consider everyone involved in our school community to be a teacher, learner, and designer.

### **c. Teacher Orientation.**

The planning for a successful school year begins well before the students arrive. A cohesive and well-informed faculty and staff need to be in place prior to the first day of school. As positions are filled, information regarding summer PD opportunities will immediately be shared. In addition to these summer professional developments, **C:\DAGS** will host a three-week orientation. True to our core value to collaborate with the community, all interested students, parents, and community members will be welcome to participate in the orientation.

Everyone will actively explore the foundations of Project-Based Learning, Participatory Action Research, and Linked Learning. There will also be the first of ongoing trainings on creating effective fully-inclusive learning environments through UDL and on the web-based interactive data tool that we will use to provide students with timely feedback on their ongoing progress. Complex Instruction will be incorporated throughout the orientation and also explicitly taught as an instructional strategy. Community-building exercises will help foster staff unity, communication, school identity, and build leadership capacity.

After focusing on increasing understanding of our mission, vision, and this plan for our school, especially the theory underlying our instructional framework, we will collaboratively decide on first-year initiatives and write them into our SPSA. Cross-curricular Discovery Missions and Boss Levels will be outlined. The first Quests will be developed.

Realizing that we will have teachers who are not familiar with all of the instructional strategies introduced at this retreat, and that it takes time for teachers to become comfortable using these strategies in the classroom, preliminary assessments of our teachers during the orientation will help drive the remainder of the year's PD calendar and will also serve to inform individual professional growth plans and potential action research projects.

As a new school, during the weeks of orientation, teachers and staff will assess possible clubs and activities to sponsor, with an emphasis on the inclusion of all students. This will lead into Opening Week Activities, including recruitment for clubs and sports. Also, school clubs and sports will have an opportunity to showcase work through ongoing lunch and small-scale Advisory assemblies.

#### **d. PD Program Evaluation**

There are multiple factors that determine the effectiveness of PD for staff. As such, it is important to illicit feedback from every professional development that is given throughout the year and analyze the feedback as another data stream to help evaluate progress towards achieving the goals of our school. Staff generated feedback forms will be created during the first PDs of the school year. These will continue to be used throughout the year to collect qualitative data around staff perceptions of professional development.

In conjunction with staff feedback, we will utilize peer observation protocols, cognitive coaching models, and examination of student data (including work, formative and summative assessments, and student feedback tools) to assess the impact of teacher professional development on the learning outcomes for students as well as the facilitation of the school mission and vision. The peer observation and cognitive coaching will help us assess the commitment of our peers to continually question their practice and their openness to incorporate new strategies from the PDs to close the gap between student results and goals.

Instructional leaders will use the LAUSD Teaching and Learning Framework to define the levels of excellent teaching expected and to unite all teachers at **C:\DAGS**. In PD, the rubrics will be aligned with topics developed, and through supportive formative feedback given when instructional leaders and peers visit classrooms, not only will teacher get instant valuable feedback on how they are doing, but data collected will be used to inform the direction of professional development for departments, grade levels and the school broadly. Therefore, what is actually going on in the classrooms when teachers are implementing the **C:\DAGS** program and practices will directly influence PD.

### **B-3. Assessments and School-wide Data**

#### **a. Student Assessment Plan**

Interim benchmark assessments are a critical part of the feedback loop that will enable teachers and students to track individual student learning. Teachers who use district-provided interim benchmark assessments face numerous logistical obstacles including timely access to data, receiving incomplete materials, and planning around testing windows that tend to change. Teachers are not able to modify Interim Benchmark Assessments to improve the accuracy and utility of data. For example, ELA teachers

have observed for years that students, who demonstrate knowledge of denotation and connotation through a variety of in-class assessments, often fail to demonstrate this knowledge on the district provided interim benchmark assessment. Analysis of the assessment has revealed that students must understand a high level vocabulary word in order to demonstrate their knowledge of denotation and connotation in this particular assessment. The simple addition of a question that tests for knowledge of denotation and connotation using low level vocabulary to the assessment, could enable teachers to differentiate between which students need to revisit denotation and connotation and which understand the concept but are failing to demonstrate understanding because they are struggling with reading comprehension and vocabulary. Without this level of accuracy, a teacher may erroneously conclude that otherwise successful lessons on denotation and connotation are failing to teach the concept, when the students actually need support in another area.

Many of our students, both struggling and successful, display negative attitudes towards standardized tests, especially tests that are visibly purchased from an outside vendor. Teacher developed interim benchmark assessments will bear the authenticity and immediacy of the locally-developed curriculum.

C:\DAGS will utilize the autonomy to develop and administer local interim benchmark assessments, granted by LIS waiver #4, to create assessments that are aligned with and equivalent to District requirements and comply with State and Federal requirements, but bear the authenticity and immediacy of locally-developed curriculum. Teachers will continually modify these assessments to increase the accuracy of the data collected, taking the tests themselves and analyzing student feedback in professional developments. C:\DAGS' locally-developed instructional plan and core academic curriculum will define the development of pacing plans anchored with interim benchmark assessments.

It is crucial for student advancement and success that we are constantly monitoring our students' progress and providing a quick concrete response to meet their immediate needs. As such, we will continually assess our students' oral presentation skills, written skills, habits of mind, and ability to transfer their knowledge and skills to a myriad of contexts and mediums, including standardized tests. We will then provide instant support through activities in class, during advisory, in the morning lab before school, during our after-school programs, and link them to extended school support. These processes will be implemented using a framework modeled after the recognition games offer players for completion and success.

Based on Mozilla's framework for open badges, the Critical Design and Gaming School will utilize badges to tie student intrinsic motivation to formal assessments. As students complete classes, culminating activities, and participate in school activities, they receive badges for their achievements. These digital icons represent the skill set that students attain throughout their matriculation through **C:\DAGS**. Students clearly document which skills they have developed and how they are able to demonstrate them on standardized tests, college applications, and advanced placement courses.

Our approach to assessment is also enforced by a strong feedback loop for students. As McGonigal (2010) notes:

“When playing a well-designed game, failure doesn't disappoint us. It makes us happy. A well-designed game helps players develop exceptional mental toughness. Players don't fail passively. They fail spectacularly and entertainingly. Positive failure feedback reinforces our sense of control over the game's outcome. It makes us more engaged and more optimistic about our odds of success.”

Furthermore, students at **C:\DAGS** will utilize the accumulated skills and knowledge from coursework to complete required State and National assessments such as the CELDT, Fitness Gram, CAHSEE and CAHSEE diagnostic, PSAT and SAT, AP exams, and CST/CMA/CAPA. Additional school-based assessments, as part of the curriculum at **C:\DAGS**, will include Boss Levels (quarterly assessments) as well as Quest and mid-Quest assessments (weekly assessments).

Discovery Missions are the overarching student objectives for any given quarter. Boss Levels occur at the end of every quarter, acting as the culmination of each Discovery Mission. Boss Levels will consist of three major components. One component of the midterm/semester final culminating projects will include Boss Level Exhibitions/Presentations that will take place before an audience of family and community members. A second component will be digital products from the Boss Level that will also be included in students' digital portfolios. The final component of each Boss Level will be a multiple-choice test. The Boss Level Exhibitions/Presentations will assess students' oral presentation skills. The digital products will assess students' writing and new media literacy skills just as the multiple-choice test will assess students' ability to transfer knowledge and skills to standardized testing formats.

Additionally, we use the research from game design and play to further develop “an optimistic state of mind” for our students (McGonigal, 2011). McGonigal states:

“When we go through an experience that makes us feel endangered or powerless, our immune system suffers and we experience higher levels of anxiety, depression, and pessimism in the hours and days that follow. Meanwhile, progressing toward goals and getting better at a game instills a sense of power and mastery.”

The assessments co-designed by our teachers act as sites for worthy authentic student performances that embody our school mission and program goals.

Some assessments will be considered **Cornerstone performances**. These are merit badge-like achievements and reflective of the key challenges and accomplishments in a given course or interdisciplinary subject. Cornerstone performance demands are meant to embody key learning goals by requiring meaning making and transfer of prior learning.

Appropriate diagnostic assessments will also be developed and used in all courses (pre-tests and ongoing feedback against desired results). Interdisciplinary teams will produce valid and peer-reviewed lists of “cornerstone assessment tasks” that will guide the writing of curriculum and shape the teaching of content. We will design and implement recurring tasks and rubrics related to key performance tasks that are, in turn, related to mission and long-term program goals. These steps are vital to engaging and empowering students.

Teacher teams will meet to analyze student performance and achievement deficits in light of cornerstone assessment tasks, and collaboratively plan activities to improve results. Additionally, we must ensure that curriculum is designed backward from key assessment tasks reflective of key performance goals. The evidence that we collect signals to students what is most important for them to learn and how to learn. These tasks are substantive in nature and require students to apply factual knowledge, concepts, and skills along with higher-order thinking and habits of mind in order to achieve successful results. They provide meaningful and concrete learning targets for students when presented at the beginning of a course or a unit.

Our school will also utilize portfolios for ongoing feedback and assessment. A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's effort, progress, and achievement in one or more

areas over a significant period of time. Many schools and teachers are using a student's portfolio as the centerpiece of parent conferences. Students are being involved as active conference participants, describing and explaining the work in their portfolio as barometers of their growth toward desired accomplishments. Coupled with developmental rubrics, portfolios offer concrete evidence of learning and growth. Research points to the fact that some of the greatest gains in achievement require opportunities to get feedback and use it. Our ongoing formative assessments and authentic performance tasks provide a worthy goal and help students see a reason for learning the basics.

**Project Based Assessments** will be a direct outcome of Project Based Learning (see Section B-1.a. Instructional Program). For all classes, including electives, students will develop presentations/exhibitions to demonstrate mastery. Project-based is more engaging and stimulating than traditional assessments. Students will create tangible products based on real life scenarios and decisions that they can exhibit and have pride in. Further, project based assessment is student-centered. It also allows special populations (ELL, SPED, and Gifted students) to reach their highest potential. When students use rubrics instead of raw scores, students are able to self-assess areas of strength and areas of need. Finally project-based learning allows for more problem solving and creativity, which supports rigorous curriculum with high expectations for all students; it can be used in conjunction with end of unit exams/papers.

### **Games as Assessment**

At C:\DAGS, games are used as environments for assessing student learning of curricular content or state standards. For example, students might play *Quest Atlantis* to show their understanding of certain science concepts, or they might play a *7Scenes* game that centers on answering questions around certain content. Assessment is situated in learning—located in the discourse, actions, and transactions of individuals, peers, and groups. Our assessment program is designed to allow learners to assess themselves eventually. Through gaming, students are accountable to themselves, to their peer community, and to the school. Success is mediated by continual reflection and evaluation of the school's goals and mission. Finally, assessment is dynamic: equitable and inclusive, it meets student needs before, during, after, and in between learning experiences (Delandshere 2002). Planning and student advisory structures exist to design, monitor, counsel, or adjust learning Quests to meet students' learning trajectory needs. The major challenges are finding out what all students know and creating a learning environment with no floor and no ceiling so that they all can work toward their maximum potential, achievement, and sense of self-worth.

Participatory assessment demands that the expectations, the co-constructed and delivered criteria, and the documentation be "open source" for all participants. Students need to know what is expected, specifically how they can successfully complete Missions and their correlated Quests. Supporting this goal will be students' co-participation in choosing learning activities and eventually in designing Quests, constant reflection, and advisory structures. Processes such as purposeful collection of data, theorizing, reasoning, and critical reflection skills are pivotal for knowledge seeking, and performance is assessed using holistic, qualitative techniques. Thus, students need to be involved in setting criteria for assessment and using these criteria as a means to their own ends or aim. This assessment program is designed to allow learners to eventually assess themselves. Success is mediated by continual reflection and evaluation of the school's goals and mission.

In our assessment framework, there are three targeted dimensions for curriculum and assessment: (1) Content, (2) Design, and (3) Civic and Social-Emotional Learning. For each of the learning dimensions, rubrics assess specific competencies (see below).

### Three Competency Dimensions

DIMENSION ONE Content	DIMENSION TWO Design	DIMENSION THREE Civic and Social-Emotional Learning
<p>Interdisciplinary Domain content aligns with California state standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Way Things Work</li> <li>○ Being, Space, and Place</li> <li>○ Coding and Communication</li> <li>○ Career-Based Literacies</li> <li>○ Wellness</li> </ul>	<p>Apply across All Domains.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Systemic thinking</li> <li>○ Digital media tool use</li> <li>○ Iteration</li> <li>○ Representation</li> <li>○ Communication</li> <li>○ Intelligent resourcing for new ideas</li> <li>○ Designing play</li> <li>○ Designing for innovation</li> <li>○ Participating in interest-driven communities</li> </ul>	<p>Apply across All Domains.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teaming, learning from peers, self, and others</li> <li>○ Planning, organizing, adapting, and managing goals and priorities</li> <li>○ Reflecting and self-assessing in action and on action</li> <li>○ Persisting to overcome complex challenges</li> <li>○ Attending to diverse and global perspectives; using the world as a learning space</li> <li>○ Behaving ethically and responsibly</li> <li>○ Caring about others, developing positive relationships</li> <li>○ Recognizing and managing emotions</li> </ul>

#### Rigorous Preparation and Assessments:

The power of an interdisciplinary unit (and culminating project) is that the unit makes clear the expectations for student learning and quality teaching. Assessments—diagnostic, periodic, formative, and summative—become benchmarks on the path towards the project, answering the simple question, “are we on track?” for both students and teachers. The culminating tasks for each unit provide a clear, purposeful method for students to synthesize and exhibit their understanding.

The table lists the national, state, district, and classroom assessments to be scheduled each year. The exact dates and testing windows will be determined by the guidelines of the national, state, and district testing program in June.

<i>Assessments for Critical Design and Gaming School</i>		
Examination	Timeline	Rationale
Pre-Assessments for English and Math	First week of school	Used to identify strengths and needs in English and Math in order to provide adequate support.
California English Language Development Test (CELDT)	September to October	Required state test that identifies achievement level for English Learners



California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) Diagnostic	October	Used to identify student strengths and areas of improvement to generate data that informs teachers and further prepares students to pass CAHSEE
PSAT	October	Used to identify student strengths and areas of improvement to generate data that informs teachers and further prepares students to score higher on the SAT
Quest and mid-Quest Assessments	At least weekly	Formative assessments (small projects, presentations, debates, computer simulations, essays, quizzes, tests, etc.) that provide ongoing feedback on each student's understandings so that teachers can adjust to best support students as we progress through a Discovery Mission.
Discovery Mission/Boss Level Summative Interdisciplinary Projects	Quarterly	Students synthesize their learning from multiple subjects in order to answer a societal question or provide a novel solution to a problem in their community.
Boss Level Exhibitions/Presentations	Quarterly	Authentic, student-centered assessments and celebrations used to synthesize, publically display, and highlight learning and multiple abilities. Parents and community members will be invited to these exhibitions.
Boss Level Digital Product	Quarterly	Assess students' ability to preserve the essence of their projects and presentations as digital products. These products will be included in students' digital portfolios.
Boss Level Multiple-choice Test	Quarterly	Monitor and prepare students for annual spring standardized testing.
CA Physical Fitness Test	February to April	Required state test for the 9th grade students to measure health and fitness
California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)	March	Required for all 10 <sup>th</sup> graders, as well as 11 <sup>th</sup> & 12 <sup>th</sup> graders who have yet to pass
SATs	March to June	Required by many colleges and universities
Advanced Placement (AP) Exams	May	Students enrolled in AP courses who pass these exams can receive college credits
California Standards Testing (CST)	March to May	Required for all students
California Modified Assessment (CMA)	March to May	Required for specific students based on IEP recommendation
Rite of Passage Ceremonies	June	The Rites of Passage are annual rituals that mark each student's progress yearlong journey from one grade level to another. Ceremonies are student designed and performed, highlighting the values and beliefs important to school culture while reflecting upon important accomplishments and milestones from the year.

**Assessment Development:**

Once the school is approved, the design team will continue to meet weekly to develop assessments, curriculum, and partnerships. The Principal will ultimately be responsible for leading the assessment development process, overseeing the work of our teachers and partners. We will work with USC's PLAY! to develop our thematic, interdisciplinary units.

Assessment development will be inherently linked with curriculum development, as we utilize the backwards design process of Understanding by Design. First, we will identify the objectives for students to reach – based on our mission and vision, habits of mind, transfer skills, and state standards – and then we will create assessments to demonstrate those objectives. Once we identify the objectives for the year-end Discovery Missions, then we can identify the objectives for the other quarterly Discovery Missions. After the Boss Level assessments are created, then we will identify the objectives for the Quests that constitute each Discovery Mission and develop assessments for each Quest. We will also work closely with community partners to incorporate their expertise and resources.

Assessments will require students to use their developing habits of mind, rather than simply test recall skills. Cornerstone assessment will be created based on transfer goals to promote a performance-based, mission-focused curriculum. The Thought Rubric developed by Strong, Silver, and Perini (2001) will be used to assess our students' development as critical thinkers.

The Assessment Development Timeline is in the Appendix.

**b. Graduation Requirements**

We believe in equal access to educational opportunities within LAUSD and will welcome students to transfer into our school at all grade levels from other schools in the district. Therefore, though we will offer courses specific to college/career pathways in the fields of gaming, design, and technology in addition to the A-G and District requirements, we will adhere to the minimum graduation requirements. We do not want to limit students' opportunities to graduate on time.

During the first academic year, **C:\DAGS** staff will develop curriculum and test it with current students, making alterations based upon student achievement and feedback. Then we will apply to the UCOP for course approval and to the College Board for the College Board number. As we continue to modify and enhance curriculum in subsequent years, courses will be updated and submitted for UC approval.

Also, because of our project-based curriculum along with the continual data-collection of individual student achievements in their service records and portfolios, our students will graduate with resumes of accomplishments in addition to their transcripts.

**c. Data Collection and Monitoring**

“Real-time data and quantitative benchmarks are the reason why gamers get consistently better at virtually any game they play; their performance is consistently measured and reflected back to them, with advancing progress bars, points, levels, and achievements. It's easy for players to see exactly how

and when they're making progress. This kind of instantaneous, positive feedback drives players to try harder and to succeed at more difficult challenges" (McGonigal, 2011).

#### **Four systems for Data Collection and Monitoring**

We will use four main systems for data collection and monitoring to ensure that the performances of all students and educators at **C:\DAGS** are "consistently measured and reflected back to them." These four systems are: WestEd's Planning and Monitoring Tracker (PMT), PowerSchool, **C:\DAGS** Service Record, and Digital Student Portfolios.

**WestEd's Planning and Monitoring Tracker** is an online support system that offers educational entities a streamlined process to track the implementation and progress of district and school improvement efforts. The system's web-based delivery supports the content by making it accessible to users at all levels of technical expertise.

**PowerSchool** is a web-based grading system and collaborative tool that allows data to be collected and analyzed from multiple access points, meaning that students, parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators can continually monitor the progress of learning.

**C:\DAGS Service Record** is inspired from the game Halo, which has a "service record" that lists all the campaign levels you've completed, the medals you've earned, and the achievements you've unlocked. There are data visualizations of every possible kind – interactive charts, graphs, heat maps – that help you learn about your own strengths and weaknesses. It's a multiyear history of your own personal contributions to a larger organization.

**Digital Student Portfolios** contain digital products from each Boss Level with the dual purpose of embedding reflection and pride in work.

**C:\DAGS** will immerse students into inquiry-based, complex problem spaces that are scaffolded to deliver just-in-time learning through the use of data to help students understand how they are doing, what they need to work on, and where to go next. John Dewey explains that both students and teachers are active beings in the classrooms and therefore classroom experiences are not "objective and impersonal." He writes, "for an active being, a being who partakes of the consequences instead of standing aloof from them, there is at the same time a personal response" (Dewey, 1916). As a result, students learn to reflect on and act within feedback loops connecting the school and life systems found in the social, technological, and natural worlds they inhabit (Schön 1987).

Data analysis will be an integral part of professional development, which is embedded in the daily routine of our teachers (See Section B-2.b. PD). Additionally, advisors will use this tool to regularly monitor data pertinent to their advisees (See Section B-4.b. Student Support and Success). The use of data is essential to creating a student-focused school culture (See Section B-4.a. Description of School Culture).

Before the school-year begins, all stakeholders will come together to democratically decide upon one-year initiatives that tie into the long-term goals of our mission and vision. Together, we will also decide on measures to assess our progress toward achieving these initiatives. Then, these initiatives and measures of success, along with needed resources and structures, will be written into our mission-focused SPSA that is mutually agreed upon by all stakeholders.

In addition to the traditional data on student achievement such as grades, CST scores, and attendance rates, we will also collect information on school processes to will help us assess our progress. Johnson (2002) suggests looking at school documents, such as the master schedule, professional development, budgets, and agendas of meetings to gauge how well they are linked to our goals and needs. Reitzug, West, and Angel (2008) mention peer walk-throughs, team-based issue study, action research, grade-level curriculum discussions, team lesson planning, and posing questions. Noguera (2007) and Weinstein (2002) recommend surveying and interviewing students. We will solicit input from every student school-wide by administering surveys or interviewing small groups at a time during advisory, encourage input in the classroom to inform instruction, and continue to empower students who actively participate in our laboratory of democracy with decision-making capacity. In similar fashion, we will continually gather information from parents.

Collecting first baseline data and then formative data throughout will be an effective way to measure our progress and inform our response for what to do next. As an example, if baseline data from surveys and walk-throughs show that not many teachers are using culturally-responsive pedagogy, a response will be to provide professional development. Then data would need to continue to be collected to determine if the number of teachers using culturally-responsive pedagogy has increased, and again an appropriate response would need to be decided.

Student achievement must be frequently assessed throughout the year, so that adjustments can be made to better support students' needs. Our assessments will be evaluated to determine if they contribute to the fulfillment of our mission and vision or simply mimic the state tests. We must also remember to avoid "stereotype threat" by informing students that we are using high standards and then assuring them that we believe they can achieve those standards (Steele, 1999).

At the end of the school year, we will assess our success in implementing the SPSA. We will then revisit our mission and develop our SPSA for the following year. Our success is ultimately based on our progress towards reducing the marginalization at our school. If students are still marginalized, then we have not yet fixed the systemic problems. However, if their plight has improved, then we have done something right and perhaps enhanced the learning experiences for all our students.

## **Category Two: School Culture, Climate, and Infrastructure**

### **B-4. School Culture and Climate**

#### **a. Description of School Culture**

##### **Epic Challenges for Meaningful Student Outcomes**

"The single best way to add meaning to our lives is to connect our daily actions to something bigger than ourselves" (McGonigal, 2011). With this in mind, we engage our students in interacting within the community through three different ways:

- Epic contexts for action: collective stories that help us connect our individual actions to a much bigger mission
- Epic environments: vast, interactive spaces that provoke feelings of curiosity and wonder
- Epic projects: cooperative efforts carried out by participants on massive scales, over months or even years

We will include secret missions within the school: non-mandatory assignments that are hidden in secret locations. For instance, a book could contain a secret code, every room a clue, every handout a puzzle. A learning environment where students get to share secret knowledge, turn their intellectual strengths into superpowers, tackle epic challenges, and fail without fear is the goal of this aspect of **C:\DAGS**.

All members of the **C:\DAGS** community hold high expectations for all students. When students play games, they will reflect on their learning within them. Games are not only models for helping students think about how the world works, but also a dynamic medium through which to engage socially and to develop a deeper understanding of their place in the world. All members of the **C:\DAGS** community are encouraged to take risks, make meaning, and act creatively and resourcefully. School is a practice space where the life systems that students inhabit and share with others are modeled, designed, taken apart, and reengineered as a strategy for learning.

### **Habits of Mind**

We will use the following *Habits of Mind* from Costa and Kallick (2000) to guide the way students, and our school staff, approach thinking and learning:

- Persisting
- Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision
- Managing impulsivity
- Gathering data through all senses
- Listening with understanding and empathy
- Creating, imagining, innovating
- Thinking flexibly
- Responding with wonderment and awe
- Thinking about thinking (metacognition)
- Taking responsible risks
- Striving for accuracy
- Finding humor
- Questioning and posing problems
- Thinking interdependently
- Applying past knowledge to new situations
- Remaining open to continuous learning

The use of the *Habits of Mind* across the content areas will demonstrate our commitment to fulfilling our school's mission. As students and teachers take ownership of and understand the *Habits of Mind*, they will be expected to use the *Habits of Mind* as a natural lens for study and life.

### **Student-Led Conferences**

Student led conferences beginning in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade and continuing through 12<sup>th</sup> grade will serve several purposes.

Students will:

- Become aware of A-G requirements
- Become aware of credits necessary for moving from one grade level to the next with an outlook on credits necessary for graduation
- Become familiar with calculating GPA
- Become familiar with courses taken and grades received
- Reflect on their strengths, needs, and resources

- Create SMART goals
- Practice presentation and communication skills
- Share information and progress with adult support provider (parent, caregiver, and/or advocate)

Parents (caregiver or adult support) will:

- Receive presentation from student about his/her own progress, grades and requirements
- Have an opportunity to discuss progress with student and teachers
- Receive information about how to support the student

Advisors and counselors will:

- Support students in preparing and leading the student-led conferences
- Facilitate discussion and answer questions during conferences

Using the resources created in the Freshman Prep Academy at Manual Arts High School, **C:\DAGS** will revise and tailor resources and tools, such as PowerPoint templates, “Grade by Grade A-G Requirements” handouts, “A-G summary” handouts, credit checklists, graduation checklists, “Making SMART Goals” handouts, and corresponding data accessible through SIS or MyData.

### **Student-Focused Culture**

Our school culture will be inextricably connected to our Mission and Vision, as we seek to focus on Inclusion, Recognition and Exhibition. We will:

- Refine *skills* students have acquired and teach new skills
- Enrich the *knowledge* they have amassed
- Further develop *Habits of Mind*
- Foster a strong moral *character* to be exemplary citizens

A student-focused culture of continual improvement depends on the gathering and analysis of data on student achievement, instructional practice, and goal implementation. Our Implementation and Monitoring Committee (IMC) will help make this data accessible so that responsive decisions can be made regarding planning, resources, curriculum, and instruction (Datnow, Park, & Wohlstetter, 2007). The IMC will work toward making data empowering for everyone at **C:\DAGS**, so that we all start to view ourselves as data generators and analyzers. Embedded as part of our culture, we will monitor effectiveness of policies, test perceptions, examine issues of equity and access, and learn together as a team working to improve the achievement of all our students. With this heightened accountability, we need to foster a culture of trust and support so that everyone will feel comfortable discussing their challenges without fear of blame (Fink & Resnick, 2001).

The critical pedagogy of **C:\DAGS** is intent on fostering dialogue and nurturing relationships that empower students in classrooms, effectively aiding student achievement towards academic and social success. While modern office spaces, theme parks, and city planning have searched for progressive designs to nurture creativity, individuality, and have even aimed for empowerment through experience - all within functional usage - classroom spaces and school designs and plans have been, at best, superficial. A large portion of our identities is constructed through our interpretations of the spaces we inhabit. Some spaces are welcoming while other spaces are confrontational; however, all “places are social constructions filled with ideologies, and the experience of places . . . shapes cultural identities” (Gruenewald, 2003). Unfortunately, most educators have not analyzed this connection, especially regarding urban schools and students of color. Classroom spaces have the power to influence the

personal narratives of students and teachers. The spaces in and around the classroom directly influence student self-awareness and self-worth.

The spaces we inhabit, the classrooms we build our relationships in, have the power to dominate or to emancipate. Like other aspects of teaching, space is not neutral. Many teachers would agree that they want to “make the classroom environment a learning laboratory, an active workshop for discovery” (Ayers, 2001). Classrooms spaces need structure and consistency for students to rely upon; however, these spaces must continually adapt to revelations of personality, creativity, and academic needs. Ayers pulls these ideas together when he writes, “There is no fixed, one-to-one correspondence between a large idea or value and a specific classroom practice. . .The environment – like the students – is a living thing” (Ayers, 2001).

Our classes will offer students both spaces in which to explore and places in which to reflect. Our advisories, morning lab, and after-school program will provide additional places of support for our students to maximize their learning success.

## **b. Student Support and Success**

Graduates of **C:\DAGS** will possess the habits of mind, twenty-first century skills, and knowledge to excel through higher education and become transformative leaders of our local and global communities. They will have a sense of personal responsibility to play an active role in their school, work, community, and family lives.

### **Response to Data**

We strongly believe in providing a high level of support to match our high standards. We will use a web-based student information system, such as PowerSchool, to have the most up to date information on attendance, assessments (school and state), grades, and other student performance indicators. By using this tool, all stakeholders can access and support student academic achievement. Teachers will also use this tool to assess non-academic issues and make referrals to community organizations to support students’ emotional and social needs.

Advisors will use this tool to regularly monitor data pertinent to their advisees. They will share relevant data with their students to help them develop their goals and support them in fulfilling these goals. Advisors will be expected to regularly visit their advisees in class, observing their work and following their progress with their teachers. These observations will keep advisors informed of their students’ needs and challenges, as well as demonstrate to students their advisor’s interest and concern. We will develop a uniform class observation form for this work. The informally-collected data will serve as a powerful tool for collaboration, allowing teachers the opportunity to share their practice and to modify instruction based on individual students’ needs. Advisors will play a crucial role in supporting fellow teachers and improving instruction, and, since all teachers will be assigned an advisory, this relationship will be reciprocal.

Every Monday morning in advisories, the same 30-minute meeting protocol that the faculty and staff use during our Monday after-school meeting (see Section B-2.a. Professional Culture) will be used by Advisors and their students to identify student questions and student needs. Students will be asked and encouraged to share their individual challenges, such as completing an essay, math problems, a science

lab report, or other Discovery Mission tasks. Mixed-age advisories facilitate this, since heterogeneous groups of students might have the skills necessary to support one another in their work. Peer tutoring is a highly effective tool for improving students' academic competencies, and time throughout the weekly advisory will be devoted to allowing students opportunities to collaborate in groups to support one another. Just as the staff meetings are designed to support all teachers and staff, the advisory is intended to support all students in achieving academic excellence.

Becoming willing and able to rethink requires a safe and supportive environment for questioning assumptions and habits. With an increased emphasis on complex performance in the curriculum and assessments, students and teachers will need to understand the importance of increasing student control of a repertoire of learning strategies. Learning strategies will be explicitly taught and reinforced:

1. Introduce and explain the purpose of the strategy
2. Demonstrate and model its use
3. Provide guided practice for students to apply the strategy with feedback
4. Allow students to apply the strategy independently and in teams
5. Regularly reflect on the appropriate uses of the strategy and its effectiveness
6. Assess the student's ability to transfer the repertoire of strategies, with less and less teacher prompting over time

The curriculum at **C:\DAGS** creates feedback loops that connect intentionally redundant and overlapping learning opportunities. Students learn to reflect on and act within feedback loops connecting the school and life systems found in the social, technological, and natural worlds they inhabit (Schön 1987).

Additional support for student success is available through Morning Lab (see Section B-4.e. School Calendar/Schedule).

### **c. Social and Emotional Needs**

Student social and emotional and support services will be available at different levels, providing multiple ways to support students, including: an Advisor, a counselor, PSW (shared by 4 campuses), and referrals for continuing services and programs to outside agencies. Additionally, the cohort teams will collaborate to brainstorm and discuss strategies to support all students. To be truly reflective, these cohort teams will also conduct a semester review and annual review of the social and emotional supports in place for students, and make appropriate adjustments within the cohort teams, as well as make recommendations to the School Leadership Council regarding the need for additional and/or different support personnel for students.

#### **Wellness**

At **C:\DAGS**, Wellness is a school wide practice where students appreciate and know what it means to be healthy. Wellness situates personal, social, emotional, and physical health within larger systems, including peer groups, family, community, and society. For example, students learn to see the body as a complex, dynamic system affected and changed by systems that are both internal and external to it. Through practice in the Wellness domain, students develop strategies for keeping their bodies running at optimal physical, social, and emotional levels while learning to make healthy choices. Wellness expertise is distributed across disciplines such as exercise science, human sexuality, personal health,



nutrition, youth development, expressive arts, mindfulness, interpersonal and group dynamics, life coaching, conflict mediation, and movement. **C:\DAGS** students cultivate ownership of wellness practices that have an impact on all interactions in their daily lives and the communities of which they are part.

### **Headquarters (Social and Emotional Support through Advisories)**

Every school day begins with Headquarters, the advisory class that serves as a home base for each student. In Headquarters, students will have an adult advocate who will support their emotional and social needs through personalization. The research of Linda Darling-Hammond affirms that deep, meaningful relationships between students, teachers, and parents or caregivers have a positive impact on all students, but particularly those at risk of dropping out (Darling-Hammond et al., 2006/2007). Each student will be assigned an Advisor and will meet with that Advisor for 30 minutes at the beginning of each day. Headquarters has been strategically set at the beginning of each and every day to provide Advisors an opportunity to check-in with their Advisees, first thing in the morning. If students are late or absent, Advisors can make immediate phone calls to parents/caregivers. If the attendance is a recurring problem, the Advisor will take the appropriate action to ensure the counselor follows-up. Headquarters will also be a place for peers to hold each other accountable and support each other towards graduation and through higher education. Furthermore, Headquarters will also serve as the place for students to have breakfast and start the day ready to learn. Advisors will use the Habits of Mind as a framework for teaching students about how to approach learning and life. As each Headquarters community is developed, the Advisor will facilitate discussions and activities specific to community issues, **C:\DAGS** activities and curriculum, and individual goal-setting. Through this process, the inherent personalization in Headquarters will be the centerpiece of our support for students.

**Family Support** - Through the advisor, families will have a point person who is a partner in their child's academic success and emotional well-being and who will track their child's progress throughout his or her high school career. It will be the responsibility of the advisors to meet several times a year with the parents of all their students for progress conferences, most of which will be student-led. These conferences will allow the advisor to build a personal relationship with parents, to keep parents informed about their child's academic progress toward achieving goals for post-secondary plans. As part of the conference, the advisor will arrange for parents to visit their child's classes. Much more powerful than the traditional few minutes long "parent conference," these class visits allow parents to actually see their child's day – see the interactions in his or her classes. When necessary, advisors will advocate on students' behalf, work with parents to resolve problems, and help students connect with outside resources.

**Peer Support** - To best support students, advisories will be diverse, heterogeneous, multiage, and include students with special needs. This practice removes the traditional segregation of students from the experiences of their older, successful peers. Younger students will be constantly aware of the demands and benchmarks that they will experience as they move through their high school careers. They will see more clearly the importance of hard work as freshmen and sophomores. Older students will gain the positive practice of being role models for their younger peers. They will feel the importance of being good models, which will help them strive for success (Kolstad, 1998). We will assure that advisory groups are representative of our diverse student population, in terms of skill level, language level, and learning demands as well as ethnicity. This helps us build a common sense of purpose and ensures that students benefit from all the resources other students bring to the community.

Advisors will implement a variety of curricular and co-curricular strategies to support students, such as additional academic support, discussions of students' needs and interests, test preparation, trainings on use of technology and academic study skills. Advisors will take advantage of the mixed-age cohorts to engage students in peer tutoring that benefits both the tutor and the tutee in examining work and internalizing the qualities of high-level student work (Song, 2009). Advisors will help students maintain records throughout their high school years that seniors will use when they fill out their college applications: community service, school activities, representative student work, grades, progress charts toward meeting graduation requirements.

### **Counselor**

In addition to our Advisory class, we will have a dedicated counselor who will provide one-on-one and group counseling and act as triage for student emotional and social support referrals. This counselor will also provide the role often assigned to a Pupil Services and Attendance (PSA) counselor to support attendance.

### **Programs, Services, and Resources**

**SCA** will work with existing programs in LAUSD, as well as new programs to support the social and emotional needs of students. While we will have referrals to outside agencies and onsite services through Psychiatric Social Workers (PSWs), it will be critical for us to begin screening as soon as the school year begins, in order to provide the support throughout the school year and during the summer break. One way we will do so is by working with our Local District 7 Mental Health Services office to use Cognitive Behavior Intervention and Treatment in Schools (CBITS) to screen students for exposure to trauma. Developed by UCLA and LAUSD, CBITS is a skills-based, group intervention that is aimed at relieving symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), depression, and general anxiety among children exposed to trauma. Children learn skills in relaxation, challenging upsetting thoughts, and social problem solving, and children work on processing traumatic memories and grief.<sup>1</sup> As part of the registration packet when enrolling at our campus, all 9th grade students and parents/caregivers will be given the CBITS consent form. This will allow our PSW along with the social workers provided by Mental Health Services to use CBITS at the beginning of the year in order to prioritize the need for groups, as well as individual services needed by students. The CBITS program requires parents/caregivers and children to complete a Life Events Scale, a Child PTSD Symptom Scale and the Children's Depression Inventory, and a Pediatric Symptom Checklist completed by parents/caregivers. These measures are completed prior to beginning the program, at program completion, and three months after program completion, so **C:\DAGS** will be able to monitor success of the program. Through our web-based student information system, we will also monitor services provided for students to support their needs throughout their high school career (See Section B-3. c. Data Collection and Monitoring).

**SCA** will also work closely with Manual Arts High School (relieving school) and John Muir Middle School (feeder school) to identify students already receiving services.

In addition to initial screening and continuing services, specific programs and groups will be established depending on student need. We will continue to work with organizations that have existing programs and groups for students to feel empowered and take the initiative to change their lives and the lives of those around them. These can include, but are not limited to, mentorship programs, violence prevention, tutoring, character building, and leadership development.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.nctsn.org/nctsn\\_assets/pdfs/CBITSfactsheet.pdf](http://www.nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/CBITSfactsheet.pdf)

A group which was already established at Manual Arts and which we would like to continue is Female Voices. It is a student-led organization where young women can express themselves, socialize, learn, teach, and make change. This group was formed because, when surveyed in 2008, the majority of young high school female students felt they did not have a deep connection with their community and more importantly members of their own gender. They did not feel empowered by being female, nor did they have knowledge of women's history through the decades, worldwide or locally. At the forefront, several young women noted that they have never felt like they belonged to an organization that specifically focused on matters that concerned them. The young leaders in the organization learn about the issues that are most important to them and impact their lives and the lives of those in their community. They then develop events and workshops to engage and educate their community on these issues. They also participate in already established community events as a way of educating themselves and being an active member in their community.

As designated by their IEP, students will also receive services through Designated Instructional Services (DIS), which includes counseling by a School Psychologist.

By collaborating with agencies, such as 97th Street Clinic, Hyde Park Clinic, St. John's Clinic and Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic, we will ensure that students are given more opportunities to receive services beyond the school day, including evenings, weekends, and summer.

To coordinate the onsite and offsite services, our PSW will play a major role in navigating the different services provided for students on campus and by outside providers. This will ensure services are not duplicated, to match students with support needed, and to monitor progress. The PSW will also work with the Organization Facilitator for LD7 to write Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) or make addendums to existing district MOUs. SCA's established partnership with USC Masters in Social Work program will also allow for interns, under the supervision of the PSW to support in this work.

Because we anticipate a high number of students in foster care attending our campus, we will advocate for DCFS to provide an onsite social worker to work with students, including working with students who will need a transition plan once they are 18 years old and are no longer part of the foster care system.

#### **d. College and Career Readiness**

##### **The Need for Game and Design Career Readiness**

Recent statistics related to the economic impact of gaming, game-related careers, and critical design suggest the need for games-based career readiness. The 2010 report, *Video Games in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, quantifies in detail the specific contributions of the U.S. entertainment software industry to the nation's economy. It is the second such study conducted by Economists Incorporated and was released by the ESA in August, 2010.

The study found:

- The total U.S. employment, both direct and indirect that depends on game software now exceeds 120,000.
- California is the largest employer of computer and video game personnel in the nation, accounting for approximately 40 percent of total industry employment nationwide.

- The average salary for an entertainment software industry employee is \$90,000, resulting in total national compensation of \$2.2 billion.
- California's computer and video game industry grew by a real annual rate of 11.4 percent from 2005 to 2009, compared to a period of negative growth for the state's overall economy.

Additionally, in the October 2011 issue of *Nature Structural and Molecular Biology* an article detailed:

Gamers have solved the structure of a retrovirus enzyme whose configuration had stumped scientists for more than a decade. The gamers achieved their discovery by playing Fold-it, an online game that allows players to collaborate and compete in predicting the structure of protein molecules.

After scientists repeatedly failed to piece together the structure of a protein-cutting enzyme from an AIDS-like virus, they called in the Fold-it players. The scientists challenged the gamers to produce an accurate model of the enzyme. They did it in only three weeks.

Fold-it was created by computer scientists at the University of Washington Center for Game Science in collaboration with the Baker lab.

This type of real-world problem solving based on game play exemplifies the need for additional approaches to game play, game design, and research as college and career readiness.

### **Career-Based Literacies**

The fluent use of new media across networks has become an essential prerequisite for a productive career, prosperous life, and civic engagement in the twenty-first century. Career-Based Literacies is a primary space of practice attuned to new media literacies, which are multimodal and multicultural, operating as they do within specific contexts for specific purposes. Work in this domain introduces students to tools that are foundational to the curriculum: game design platforms, programming tools, tools for working with virtual worlds, and data-visualization and knowledge-management tools. The selection of tool sets is made in coordination with the rest of the curriculum.

#### *Domain Specifications*

- Productive and prosperous citizens in the twenty-first century need to possess a fundamental understanding of the various modes of new media communication.
- Students learn and exhibit new media literacies most powerfully when they take on multiple tasks in the creation of new media artifacts.
- Tool sets organize and support specific forms of literacy.
- Game design, media arts, computer programming, and urban design are applied contexts for the acquisition of new media literacies.

### **College Portfolio**

Starting in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, in the Advisory class, students develop a college portfolio consisting of an A-G checklist, current transcripts, personal statement drafts, recommendation letters, awards, community service records, scholarships applications, and information for colleges of interest. Through the work of the advisors, counselors and staff, our students will be exposed to universities through annual college trips, which consist of college tours and panel discussions with students at each university.

At C:\DAGS, we view College- and Career-readiness as more than a period of transition for 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Rather, we will begin in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and start preparing students for graduation at the beginning of their high school career. Through their advisories, students will begin researching college and career options early, allowing several years and multiple perspectives to make their decisions and prepare. The college portfolio will be aligned with each student's ILP and will be the rite of passage during senior graduation.

Once students choose from community college to four-year universities, cohorts are created to continue to support students beyond the high school experience. Within these cohorts, students can support each other with study groups, carpooling, course selection, and academic and social support resources.

**College** - The transition from high school to college is often a difficult one for our students. Students often feel underprepared, unaware of their options, and overwhelmed by the changes. Researchers identify three primary barriers to college for low-income, minority students: poor academic preparation, navigating college enrollment, and access to financial aid (Nagaoka, et al., 2009; Oakes, et al. 2006). We intend to address all of these challenges. We will work closely with local area 2- and 4-year colleges to connect students and inform them of their options. Multiple, core-content area electives ensure that all students have access to A-G curriculum in a variety of pathways. Students will be encouraged to dual-enroll in community college courses (held at the school complex, if possible). This will aid in blurring the transition from high school to college, and ease students into accepting the responsibilities of college and adult life.

**Career** - We anticipate that our work with community partners and organizations as we develop our CTE strand will help us build our career-readiness path and opportunities. We will create ample opportunities for students to observe adults in their work setting, from working alongside researchers to job shadows and mock interviews. Students will have multiple chances to imagine themselves in a future career, exploring these options both through curricular activities, practical experiences, and the participation of our community partners. We often find that when students see the broader context and need for their work, they are more engaged and motivated to succeed academically.

#### **e. School Calendar/Schedule**

With an understanding that master schedules drive the instructional opportunities available to students, the Schools for Community Action will utilize the autonomy to propose local schedules, granted under LIS Waiver #5, to purposefully enact a master schedule that will meet the curricular and personal needs of students, the professional needs of staff, and the overall sustainability and flexibility for the four schools on the campus. By expanding, rather than limiting, opportunities for students to be successful, the school schedule allows for a variety of classes, as well as internships for 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.

The Schools for Community Action schedule was created based on five major priorities:

- 1) Longer class periods (85 minutes) to allow for more concentrated time to master subject material and allow for deeper exploration of class topics and project work;
- 2) Cohort teacher grouping that allows the four core teachers (English, math, science and social studies) to share the same students – this facilitates personalization, cross-curricular instructional strategies, and cross-curricular projects;

- 3) Headquarters (Advisory) time every day – since Headquarters plays such a major role in our school, it is key to have this class every day, for 30 minutes;
- 4) Common planning time for cohort core-subject partnerships; and
- 5) Daily professional development time to give teachers an opportunity to check-in regarding student needs, participate in professional learning, and collaboratively plan.

An abundance of research has shown that teenage sleep cycles naturally shift later during adolescence. This change has “biologically programmed reasons, and sleep plays a crucial role in a teen's ability to learn”, according to Children's Hospital Boston neuroscientist Frances Jensen, MD, and neurologist David Urion, MD. They went on to explain that, “differences in sleep cycles may have big implications for the timing of optimal learning periods, as researchers have discovered that the ideal time for learning starts two hours after a person's biologically set wake-up time” (Graham, 2008).

Over ten years ago, a congressional resolution encouraged schools to reconsider early morning start times to be more in sync with teens' biological makeup. The "ZZZ's to A's" Act was intent on moving school start times to no earlier than 8:30 a.m. (National Sleep Foundation, 2011).

With this research in mind, each school of the Augustus Hawkins Schools for Community Action campus will operate on a campus-wide school start time at 8:05 AM every day. Extracurricular activities such as sport teams limit delaying school start times much further; however, **C:\DAGS** and every school at **SCA** will begin each school day with Advisory. This measure delays the start of content courses until 8:40 every morning while offering a Headquarters, a home base, a small and consistent classroom community wherein each students will find familiarity, accountability, and support at the start of the day.

The later start times and consistent opening period scheduling will yield an improvement in attendance from the feeder schools and increased student alertness to optimize learning. Such results were documented by Dr. Kyla Wahlstrom at the University of Minnesota who investigated the impact of later start times on student performance when the Minneapolis Public School District changed the starting times of seven high schools from 7:15 a.m. to 8:40 a.m. (National Sleep Foundation, 2011).

In order to effectively implement our interdisciplinary curriculum, **C:\DAGS** will incorporate a calendar and bell schedule that maximizes student instructional time, as well as provide faculty ample opportunity for curricular development and cross-curricular collaboration.

The schedule that best fits these requirements is an 8 period A/B schedule in which students attend eight classes in an A/B structure every two weeks. It is important to note that all four schools at the Augustus Hawkins Schools for Community Action campus will be using this schedule. The common scheduling allows us to use the shared bell system to share electives and other passport classes (on a case by case or pre-determined basis), and to reduce confusion for shared personnel, parents/caregivers, and visitors on campus. This supports our core value of *Sustainability*.

The **SCA** core value of *Sustainability* also guides the scheduling decision that places Headquarters at the start of each and every day. The consistency of this scheduling decision offers students a familial setting wherein they begin their academic day. Reflecting upon recent research on teenage brain development and teenage sleep patterns, Headquarters is designed to guide the *whole* student into the academic arena. Students do not begin their core academic courses until 8:40 am, allowing their brains and bodies time to wake and prepare for their daily missions.

The 2 x 8 master schedule most readily implements promising programs, especially those that use technology and project based learning in order to more precisely match content to students’ needs and that accelerate remediation or that do away with its need entirely. The schedule emphasizes the importance of aligning state and higher education standards to ensure that students leave high school ready to do professional and college-level work.

**Bell Schedule: 2x8**

	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
8:05-8:35	<i>Headquarters</i>	<i>Headquarters</i>	<i>Headquarters</i>	<i>Headquarters</i>	<i>Headquarters</i>
8:40-10:05	Period 1	Period 2	Period 1	Period 2	Period 1
10:10-11:35	Period 3	Period 4	Period 3	Period 4	Period 3
11:40-12:15	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
12:20-1:45	Period 5	Period 6	Period 5	Period 6	Period 5
1:50-3:15	Period 7	Period 8	Period 7	Period 8	Period 7

	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
8:05-8:35	<i>Headquarters</i>	<i>Headquarters</i>	<i>Headquarters</i>	<i>Headquarters</i>	<i>Headquarters</i>
8:40-10:05	Period 2	Period 1	Period 2	Period 1	Period 2
10:10-11:35	Period 4	Period 3	Period 4	Period 3	Period 4
11:40-12:15	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
12:20-1:45	Period 6	Period 5	Period 6	Period 5	Period 6
1:50-3:15	Period 8	Period 7	Period 8	Period 7	Period 8

Classes are paired for cross-curricular units / co-teaching. For example, one class of 9<sup>th</sup> graders will take English 9 during Period 1 and Algebra 1 during Period 2. Another class of 9<sup>th</sup> graders will take Algebra during Period 1 and English during Period 2. If the English teacher and Algebra teacher are together in one of the double labs, then they will co-teach these two classes. If they are in separate classrooms, then they will be alternating which group of students they are with from day to day, but they will still be working together toward a shared project involving both content areas.

**Morning Lab** (before-school programs) (M-F 7-8am):

The Critical Design and Gaming School will offer open doors to students willing to begin their day’s academic journey before the first bell rings. The Morning Lab programs are designed to entice students to attend and engage them in small groups with multiple opportunities for one-on-one instruction and direction, be it with teachers, community volunteers, partnerships, or peers. The Morning Lab programs offer students the opportunity to receive direct tutoring, including activities and instruction designed specifically for ELL support and special education support. Students will also be able to complete coursework as part of a credit recovery plan using programs such as APEX or E2020. Students will also be allowed to participate in open workshops that enable them time and resources for tinkering, the natural type of adventurous learning that relies on free thinking and imagination to produce the happy accidents, discovery, and invention that drives progress and innovation.

**Exploration Lab** (after-school programs) (M-F 3:15-5:30):

In order to service the students and community of the Critical Design and Gaming School, Exploration Lab programs will be offered after school. These programs will include traditional after school programs including sport teams and clubs, marching band, drama, and other student designed clubs.

The Exploration Lab programs will also include the same opportunities for specified academic intervention and advancement as offered in the Morning Lab programs.

**Teacher collaboration (M-F 3:25-4pm):**

After the final period of each school day, teachers and administrators will participate in structured collaborative meetings. These regular meetings offer consistent times for structured lesson design, action research implementation and evaluation, data analysis, and meetings for School Leadership Council and subcommittees. The regularity of these meetings is essential in order to sufficiently implement the school plan in congruence with the students’ academic and social needs.

**Remediation through Linked Learning Pathways**

Neuroscientist Frances Jensen, MD asserts that the “adolescent brain is still developing, it retains much of its plasticity, which allows it to be molded by the environment. This malleability boosts teenagers' abilities to learn, make memories and retain information” (Graham, 2008). Recent brain studies support the C:\DAGS plan for intervention and remediation through strategically scheduling game and project-based instruction. For instance, ninth grade students at C:\DAGS will enroll in Algebra 1, Geometry, and Physics. Each of those courses offers time for engaging students in mathematics content. Each course will be matched with a cross-curricular content class in order to offer practical application of the mathematic skills into project-based learning experiences. This method of scheduling is supported by Linked Learning, which “transforms students’ high school experience by bringing together strong academics, demanding career and technical education, and real-world experience to help students gain an advantage in high school, postsecondary education, and careers” (ConnectEd).

Neuroscience supports a decision to introduce young teens to high-level concepts and skills. In fact, Jensen declares that "Schools may be missing a window” of time for the highest levels of brain plasticity. "Things like high-level physics are being taught to teens when they're 16” but students two or three years younger than this are able to grasp the concepts and skills (Graham, 2008). Our classrooms will engage students in mathematics and sciences through game-based instruction and activities. At the same time, students will gain multi-literacy practice and proficiency through the necessary reading and writing involved in the quarterly Discovery Missions. C:\DAGS asserts that game-based instructional plans embedded in strategic scheduling offered by the 2x8 (see chart below) will, as Linked Learning promotes, prepare students for success—without remediation—in postsecondary programs.

Grade 9 Schedule

Per. 1,3,5,7	Per. 2,4,6,8
English 9	Algebra 1
Geometry	Art & Music 1
Game Design 1	Social Studies
Physical Education	Physics

Grade 10 Schedule

Per. 1,3,5,7	Per. 2,4,6,8
English 10	Spanish 1
World History	Art & Music 2
Game Design 2	Physical Education
Algebra 2	Chemistry

**A student’s first year at C:\DAGS introduces students to game-based learning as they acquire skills and experiences operating in a project-based system of Linked Learning.**

**English 9 & Algebra 1 Block:** Using the Algebra Project Curriculum, students will engage in examination of the community and how the

**The second year at C:\DAGS focuses on the natural essence, historical implications, and cultural significance of gaming.**

**English 10 & Spanish 1 Block:** Students continue to develop proficiency with ELA content standards while comparing and contrasting English with the Spanish language. Students will also recognize



language of math is present throughout the community. They will develop this linguistic approach to mathematical expression, as well as narrative development in their English classes.

**Geometry & Art/Music Block:** Geometry influences artistry, either in its replications of or in its deviations from the real world. Students will use geometric principles in order to replicate real world spaces and sounds into digital environments. The measures of distance and curves along with the measures of rhythm, melody, and beats become essential tools for student creation and exploration as they understand and define the surrounding physical spaces and places.

**Game Design 1 & Social Studies Block:** Students practice critical media literacy while analyzing the role technological tools have in spreading messages. Students use action research inquiries concerning issues in their community, utilizing GIS mapping technologies to help present data findings on the research they have gathered. Students subsequently design games informed by their inquiry action research.

**Physical Education & Physics Block:** Physics integrates the mathematics of motion into the Physical Education curriculum. Students will practice predicting and reflecting upon the actions that they themselves enact.

how gaming has influenced languages while the use of regional languages reciprocally affects the development of gaming in different cultures.

**World History & Art/Music 2 Block:** Students explore the role that technologic advancements have in world history, including the development of regional art, instruments, and cultural representation.

**Game Design2 & Physical Education:** Students continue to develop games although now partnering game development with physical activity and fitness. Students' progress connects real-world game enactments to digital environments as they are formally introduced to algorithmic code writing involved in computer programming.

**Algebra 2 & Chemistry Block:** Our Content Domains of The Way Things Work and Being, Space, and Place are the focus for students as they practice calculation skills through experimentation. The sequences of the scientific method are highlighted by the continuation of the Algebra Project Curriculum.

#### Grade 11 Schedule

Per. 1,3,5,7	Per. 2,4,6,8
AP Composition & American Literature	AP U.S. History
Spanish 2	Art & Music 3
Game Design 3	AP Biology
Trigonometry & Math Analysis	ROP Career Pathway

The third year at C:\DAGS is the formative year for students to focus their skill sets towards designing a pathway beyond our school

**AP English Language and Composition & AP U.S. History Block:** Students will investigate history and language with critical media and cultural analysis, highlighting the roles that technological

#### Grade 12 Schedule

Per. 1,3,5,7	Per. 2,4,6,8
AP Literature & World Literature	AP Government/Economics
Game Design 4	Art & Music 4
AP Calculus	ROP Career Pathway
Internship	Internship

The final year at C:\DAGS begins a student's final rite of passage, highlighted with an epic, student created gaming event.

**AP English Literature and Composition & AP Government/Economics Block:** Students continue to utilize critical media literacy as they examine the political power of media, including recent world events that showcased mobile technologies

advancements and cultural gaming have played in the development of the United States.

**Spanish 2 & Art/Music 3 Block:** Students will be encouraged to explore different cultures practices and understandings of community and sustainability. This cultural exploration, with specific foci on the Latin and African-American influences, will be primarily through language, music, and art as these are often the transmitters of deep cultural knowledge.

**Game Design 3 & AP Biology Block:** The study of life is compared and contrasted with the building blocks of game design. Game design includes the invention of physically active games, strategic games such as board games, and digital games. Students will also engage in measuring their own life systems while participating in games, such as comparing heart rates during competitive gaming against heart rates at rest. Students will also participate in established games such as Fold-It. Students as game designers progress to programming that includes scientific simulations.

**Trigonometry/Math Analysis & ROP Career Pathway Block:** As students continue to define their pathway beyond C:\DAGS they may elect enrollment in Media and Design Arts Pathway or Engineering Design Pathway through ROP course offerings.

and social media networks as political tools.

**Game Design 4 & Art/Music 4 Block:** Students utilize the game design skills they have accrued in order to fully create large-scale game events. The planning, production, and implementation of these events incorporate the performance artistry of set design, musical composition and recording, and filmmaking.

**AP Calculus & ROP Career Pathway Block:** As students continue to define their pathway beyond C:\DAGS they may continue to elect enrollment in Media and Design Arts Pathway or Engineering Design Pathway through ROP course offerings.

**Internship Block:** After three years of training and experimentation and with the guidance of community partnerships, students begin gaining experience in the world beyond C:\DAGS as they participate in internships.

## f. Policies

C:\DAGS will employ the following policies to continually improve retention, graduation rates, and student behavior. Our work in developing a positive plan for student behavior that folds into retention and graduation rates is informed by “Redefining Dignity in Our Schools: A Shadow Report on School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS) Implementation in South Los Angeles, 2007 – 2010” a report published by CADRE in June 2010.

### Retention

Data collected from our sending school (Manual Arts) indicates that (not including drop-outs), the transient rate is approximately 49.4%, meaning that 49.4% of the students checked-out of Manual Arts to attend schools elsewhere. C:\DAGS will clearly document (through leaver-codes and ISIS notes) the departure of students. We will also use exit surveys to identify why students are leaving the school and determine what our sphere of influence is regarding student retention.

## **Graduation**

In order to increase the percentage of students graduating and moving on to college and career paths, while simultaneously addressing the needs of students transferring from other high schools, **C:\DAGS** will adhere to the LAUSD graduation requirements. This will help to ensure that any student who enters **C:\DAGS** will receive credit for previous academic work at other school sites.

## **Student Behavior**

**C:\DAGS** will expect excellence from our students and give them all the necessary supports to achieve this. We know that school discipline is best accomplished by preventing misbehavior before it occurs. School safety and academic success is strengthened when school staff and personnel build positive relationships with students and are actively engaged in their lives and learning. (Advancement Project, *Key Components of a Model Discipline Policy* 2009).

Through our small size, our interdependence and our school-wide advisory program, we will build a positive school culture that focuses more on behaviors to be encouraged than on behaviors to be avoided. We will systematically acknowledge positive student behavior as a school-wide community. The School Leadership Council will collaborate with the Student Council to develop positive behavior rewards for individuals and classes who meet and exceed behavior expectations. For example, **C:\DAGS** will celebrate positive behavior both individually through calling home for students who have done something well, through student awards ceremony at the end of the semester and year, as well as through healthy competition between advisory classes regarding fewest tardies and highest attendance.

All too often our schools' responses to negative behavior have been rooted in stereotypical notions about the criminality of young people of color. Our schools have relied on suspension, expulsion, and zero tolerance and other punitive policies that lead to racially disproportionate outcomes and student "push-out" of schools. These policies have also created a direct track to the juvenile and criminal justice system—"the school to prison pipeline" (Russell Skiba, et al, *Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in Schools?* A Report by the American Psychological Association Task Force, 2006). This is unacceptable and we can do better.

When students' behavior falls short of school-wide expectations, **C:\DAGS** will seek to understand the *root cause* of this negative behavior in order to provide an effective remedy. We will clearly articulate, teach, and reinforce our behavioral expectations. We will offer intensive interventions to students who exhibit chronic or severe misbehavior—understanding that this is often a symptom of a much larger problem. We will focus on inclusion and seek to avoid consequences that remove students from the classroom. Finally, we will actively involve parents/caregivers in all of these processes and have a school team dedicated to monitoring our compliance through the use of hard data and student focus groups.

### ***School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBS)***

**C:\DAGS** will provide in-depth training for all stakeholders in LAUSD's School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (Policy Bulletin 3638.0). Born out of Local District 7, SWPBS offers tremendous possibility but has often been hampered by a lack of implementation at the school site. Ensuring that all stakeholders understand this policy will empower the school community to hold ourselves accountable to all student needs.

Our commitment to the School-Wide Positive Behavior Support policy will be augmented by our use of "Restorative Circles." A Restorative Circle is a community process for supporting those in conflict. It

brings together the three parties to a conflict – those who have acted, those directly impacted and the wider community – within an intentional systemic context, to dialogue as equals. The dialogue process used is shared openly with all participants, and guided by a community member. The process ends when actions have been found that bring mutual benefit. Although the process may include restitution, it is primarily designed to heal relationships among people and within the community rather than to impose punishment. With the use of the **C:\DAGS** peer mediation/conflict resolution lessons within Advisory, students will be able to support their peers to find non-violent solution to difficult problems, often resulting from lack of communication or miscommunication.

Students who have participated in restorative justice circles — where schools work to solve disputes as opposed to removing children from their schools — are able to best address student needs. This also includes research-based discipline practices and positive behavior interventions and supports. School-Wide Positive Behavior Support and Restorative Circles work in tandem, the former as a way to support students as a need arises and being proactive, while the latter as a way to support students by addressing the root problem when an incident has taken place.

The key features of a successful SWPBS system include:

- Team-based implementation and administrative support.
- Parent and community collaboration and involvement.
- Clear behavioral expectations that are taught and reinforced.
- Use of alternatives to suspension or class removal.
- A consistent discipline policy & intensive interventions for high-risk students.
- Data-based decision-making.

Positive Behavior Support requires a clear discipline policy so that misbehavior is dealt with in a predictable, consistent and non-exclusionary manner. For students exhibiting chronic or severe misbehavior, **C:\DAGS** will put in place a system of intensive and non-exclusionary interventions, which can include intensive academic support, intensive social skills training, parent-teacher collaboration, mentoring programs, meetings with disciplinary review teams, mental health counseling, individualized behavioral plans, and referrals to outside agencies.

### ***SWPBS in School Culture***

Through a standardized curriculum and continuous training, **C:\DAGS** will repeatedly educate and engage parents/caregivers, teachers, support staff, and administrators about the three-tiered approach and data-based decision-making in SWPBS and its proven benefits, including better academic performance, decreased classroom disruptions, and a healthier and safer school environment. **C:\DAGS** will develop a set of teaching plans or curriculum that makes it easier for teachers to incorporate SWPBS and behavioral expectations into classroom instruction.

By making expectations of data collection clear to all stakeholders, we will collect, analyze, and publicly report on a monthly basis including:

- Number of office referrals, in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, opportunity transfers, and expulsions
- Disaggregated by students' demographic information, including age, grade, gender, race/ethnicity, eligibility for reduced meals, disability status, and English language learners; and
- Including the reasons for each disciplinary measure, length of each measure, previous steps taken before resorting to exclusionary punishment, type, if any, of alternative instruction

received by students while out of school, and due process protections given to students and parents/caregivers

**C:\DAGS** will partner with Youth Justice Coalition to provide training and tools to faculty and staff on how to recognize potential conflict and better diffuse it within the classroom setting. We will also partner with the Asian Pacific American Dispute Resolution Center and the Western Justice Center to train a cadre of Peer Mediators and faculty sponsors to empower youth with the knowledge and skills to manage conflicts in a restorative and cooperative manner. Studies have shown that restorative justice policies and peer mediation decrease disciplinary cases, and suspensions/expulsions leading to higher attendance rates. They alleviate the workload of school administrators by offering alternative processes to handle student issues and they decrease youth violence through implementation of a system that encourages positive problem solving rather than exclusion (APADRC/ Varnham, J. *Seeing Things Differently: Restorative Justice and School Discipline*, 2005).

## **B-5. Parent and Community Engagement**

### **a. Background**

The Augustus Hawkins Schools for Community Action campus is located near West Slauson Avenue and South Hoover Street in the area of Los Angeles currently referred to as South Los Angeles, though it is more commonly referred to as South Central Los Angeles. An area of Los Angeles that can boast of its rich cultural diversity from Mexican Americans, African Americans, Belizean American, Salvadorian Americans, Guatemalan Americans, and other Central American cultures.

The demographics of the area in the past 30 years have markedly changed. According to the 1980 census much of the South Central area was over 50% African-American, with most neighborhoods anywhere from less than 10% Latino to between 10% and 25% Latino. By the 2000 census, this same area's demographics had changed to a majority Latino population of over 50%, while the African American population had declined to 10% - 25%. According to a Los Angeles Times mapping of the Vermont/ Slauson area, the community is comprised of 60% Latinos and nearly 37% African Americans. There are 18,577 people per square mile, among the highest densities for the city of Los Angeles and among the highest densities for the county.<sup>2</sup> Forty-five percent of households in the area earn \$20,000 or less, compared to West Los Angeles, for example, of which 15% of households earn \$20,000 or less. Single parents head almost 25% of the households in the area. As for education, only 3.7% of residents 25 and older have a four-year degree, whereas 60% have less than a high school degree. One interesting piece coming from the statistics is the fact that almost 25% of residents are middle and high school age (11-18 years old).

Statistics alone, fortunately, do not convey the entire picture of the community. The area is rich with multi-generational households. And partially this means that many of our students are models for younger family members, which underscores the important work of providing a quality education that prepares these students to excel in higher education. This is also a community that wants to be directly involved in their children's education, but often feels disempowered to get involved based on previous experiences in schools in the area. For instance, several of the churches we outreached to, expressed hope for the new school and a desire to be involved in the school's mission in ways they have not been

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<sup>2</sup> <http://projects.latimes.com/mapping-la/neighborhoods/neighborhood/vermont-slauson/>

able to before. Such dialogues have begun to set the groundwork towards meaningful relationships that, given the adage that it takes a village to raise a child, will prepare our students for success.

## **b. Strategies**

### **History and Experience**

The **SCA** design team members are educators that have collectively taught, lived, and grown up in south central Los Angeles. Design team members are driven by a core value that authentic community collaboration leads to transformative school design. We take seriously our accountability to the public and the public's accountability to the school. This core value comes from each team member's history and experience serving and growing in the community.

The collective experiences of the design team members include designing and implementing engaging and socially relevant curriculum in the classrooms while creating authentic relationships with students and families. The team members are passionate about creating and implementing engaging and challenging curriculum for students. This passion drives our commitment to enable all students to achieve academic and social success. This commitment demands efforts to effectively and regularly communicate academic goals, expectations, and progress with students and their families. Each team member has consistently worked with other teachers, administrators, and counselors to create alternative academic intervention plans based on formative assessments for students' struggling to understand essential concepts.

Furthermore, we understand that the success of any school is integrally linked to the success of the community around the school. In February 2011, the **SCA** design team began to plan strategies for engaging community members in this process of designing the best public school options for parents and guardians and their children. These strategies included monthly community meetings held at the Southern California Library over the summer, community walks to inform community members about the public school choice process and to invite them to the community meetings, attending community events planned by other parties, and sharing our progress and planning through online networking like Twitter and our webpage. These efforts and the recent experiences they offered strengthened our belief, put forth by bell hooks, that "we also choose to live in community, and that means that we do not have to change by ourselves" (1994).

During the summer break, the **SCA** design team members held a series of monthly community meetings between June and August. In order to inform and invite community members to these meetings, design team members would participate in community walks a week before each meeting was to be held. On these community walks, design team members went door to door through the neighborhoods that will feed into the Augustus Hawkins Schools for Community Action campus. These home visits not only informed community members about the PSC process and the community meetings we were holding but they were also sincere moments where we were able to listen to the many perspectives and experiences that community members have in regards to public education. The community walks initiated dialogues that would continue during the community meetings.

These community meetings were initiated to provide a space to have genuine dialogue with members of the community. The meetings were designed to model the classroom practices utilized by design team members. At these meetings, design team members worked with community members in small groups analyzing recent qualitative and quantitative data gathered from Manual Arts High School. Each small

group would culminate their discussion with a presentation in front of the large group. The small group discussions allowed all members to directly participate and have a voice in what they need from schools in their community. Design team members took notes and collected the group posters that were created from these meetings and analyzed the data to directly inform our writing process.

During the June community meetings, participants examined the questions “What are our schools like now?” and “What do we want schools to be?” For the July community meeting, participants examined the question, “What will an ideal day look like at our school?” As we gathered and analyzed the data from these two meetings there were a number of key things we learned. For instance, there is a great disparity between parents’ objective experiences vs. teachers’ impression of parents’ experiences. This was highlighted in small group discussions analyzing data collected by a science teacher at Markham Middle School. This teacher spent two years investigating parent engagement at her school. Interviews were conducted with teachers and parents in order to document how teachers viewed parent involvement in the school community and to gain insight and information on parent perspectives of school policies, communication, and involvement. The data was recorded into two graphs, one showing parents’ perception of parent involvement and the other reflecting teachers perceptions of parent involvement. The parents, students, and community members present at the meeting felt confident declaring the following:

- Parents feel unwelcome at schools, whether it is due to language barriers, unfriendly staff, or not knowing how to navigate their way around campus
- Parents want help in supporting their kids through high school in the form of parent support groups, consistent and open meetings, and continual communication regarding the progress of their children

In order to continue the critical dialogue from the community meetings, design team members used the contact information offered by meeting participants in order to share monthly newsletters and Twitter feeds. The design team members also used the data to inform the continuing writing process. This most recent history of working as a design team within the community was also additionally evidenced through further community outreach efforts. These efforts were focused in July and August on Summer Night Lights.

Summer Night Lights is an anti-gang initiative that keeps parks open after dark--during the peak hours for gang activity--with free food and expanded programming. Over the summer, team members of the Critical Design and Gaming School visited local parks like Harvard Park and Mt. Carmel Park to invite the community to our events while engaging community members in conversations about their neighborhoods and their hopes for the new school. Most importantly, design team members were tremendously inspired by the positive and creative space reclaimed by the community. This inspiration was embodied in the park directors who are truly committed to creating a park filled with activities and events for all ages. The youth leading the activities are from the community; it was a pleasure to see many former students giving back their time and leadership efforts to help make Summer Night Lights work. The parents and family members were always very candid about the need for these activities to extend beyond the summer and beyond the parks.

### **Vision for Engagement**

As reflected in our core values and evidences in our history, community collaboration is at the heart of our vision for the Critical Design and Gaming School. We understand that, in order for our children to be as successful as possible, it is necessary for us to recognize and then meet the needs and expectations that community members have for their schools. The design team recognizes that all peoples learn from

the covert and overt things we see. As educators this includes familiarity with not only the academic data of our community but also the qualitative data of the community's experience. These experiences of the community, shared in detail through our community outreach programs, reflect the belief that "the various knowledges, Discourses, and literacies that youth bring and experience in school" (Moje et al., 2004) can combine with a critical pedagogy of space and place to acknowledge that "experience has a geographical context" and "the way to admitting critical social and ecological concerns into one's understanding of place, and the role of places in education" (Gruenewald, 2003) is to include the assets our students' and our community into the design and implementation of a new school.

Design team members believe that social justice is not solely lesson planning and it is not only a collection of teaching strategies, just as life is not simply breathing and moving. Social justice education is committed to naming spaces of inequality with clarity. Social justice educators and their students then use analyses and personalized production, just as praxis combines action and reflection, in order to transform spaces into humanizing and democratic places. For this reason, design team members consider not only what teachers and schools plan to do but, more importantly, how we educators interact with the people with whom we come into contact. For students to gain academic and social empowerment and success, classroom spaces need to be tools used by students and educators for humanizing interactions. These tools need to be modeled by every educator on campus committed to understanding, celebrating, and joining the local community. It is essential for any transformational education to occur.

### **Strategies to Engage Parents and Guardians**

A large portion of our identities is constructed through our interpretations of the spaces we inhabit. Some spaces are welcoming while other spaces are confrontational; however, all "places are social constructions filled with ideologies, and the experience of places shapes cultural identities" (Gruenewald, 2003). Therefore, a truly welcoming environment is required for the Critical Design and Gaming School. Too often, "parental involvement" simply means keeping the school open for a few extra hours a handful of times each year.

At the **Critical Design and Gaming School** there are unique opportunities, based on dialogue with community members over the summer, to engage parents/caregivers more meaningfully in their children's education.

**Parent Tours:** The Welcome Center (see below) for the school grounds will be located in the centralized administration area. This center also serves as the headquarters for parents, family, and community members to actively participate in our collective efforts to integrate our schools within the community. Parents/caregivers will be able to take guided tours of the school while classes are in session. Community volunteers that include other parents/caregivers, students, administrators, and volunteers will lead these tours from our network of partners. Parents/caregivers are encouraged and expected to visit campus to tour their child's classes. The visits can be scheduled for any time of the day.

**Volunteering:** Our Monday afternoon 30-minute meetings are an ideal place for parent, community, and college student volunteers to get involved. At the 30-minute meeting, collaborations and projects are planned for the week, allowing volunteers access to the school's inner workings and opportunities to work side-by-side with teachers and staff in school operations.

**Student-led Conferences:** Every grading period, parents/caregivers will be invited to an evening for parent conferences. We will continue to develop our previously used student-led conferencing model,



and advisors will work with students to prepare for their conferences each semester. Culminating projects make ideal content for exhibitions with parents, displaying the range and depth of students' work.

**Rites of Passage Ceremonies and Celebrations:** To mark each student's progress and yearlong journey from one grade level to another, parents/caregivers will be invited to celebrate. Ceremonies will be student designed and performed, highlighting **C:\DAGS'** mission and vision, while reflecting upon important accomplishments and milestones from the year.

**Parents as Experts:** We often neglect parents' expertise— and we hope to reverse this by finding parent volunteers to help with language translation, leading workshops and various other operations of the school. As we get to know our students' parents and their various skills, we will find ways to meaningfully engage them in the collaborative work of running the school.

### **Programs and Resources for Parents and Guardians**

Furthermore, if we are to have an effective school that augments the assets our students' possess so they will excel through higher education in order to become our community, city and national leaders, we need to tap into and connect with the various community organizations in the area. Thus, the community partners we choose to work with are committed to our larger mission and vision for the success of every child.

**College Workshops:** Our university partners will support our *Schools for Community Action* campus-wide support for 11<sup>th</sup> graders researching colleges, meeting application deadlines, identifying financial aid sources and completing applications. An annual *Schools for Community Action* College Workshop, offered in English and Spanish, will support students and their parents/caregivers with the range of university and college systems and with financial aid resources. **C:\DAGS** will specifically invite colleges and universities with programs related to our pathways.

**Welcome Center:** Our four schools will share a Welcome Center in the centralized administration area that will also serve as the headquarters for parents/caregivers, family, and community members to actively participate in our collective efforts to integrate our schools within the community in order to provide the most effective educational experiences for our students. All four **SCA** schools will collectively fund and share a Parent Liaison (see Section B-7.b. Leadership Team).

**Resources to Health Services:** With the help of our Psychiatric Social Worker (PSW), we will also make referrals for continuing services and programs to outside agencies. **SCA** will work with community based health organizations, such as Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic, to provide family services such as family counseling and access to other health services.

**Adult Education:** Through our summer **SCA** Community Workshops and community walks, a prevalent request was for adult education classes, such as parenting classes. Thus, we will work with LAUSD's Division of Adult and Career Education to connect parents with the following existing courses:

- Citizenship Preparation
- English as a Second Language
- Family Literacy
- Parenting and Family Education

To facilitate access to calendars, school news, and other school and district resources, **C:\DAGS** will work with the Learning, Communications & Web Services Branch of LAUSD to use the free School Loop to create our school website. This will allow us to be “googled” and provide students, families, and our community with the most up to date information starting in the spring of 2012, months before the school opens.

### **c. Key Community Partnerships**

At **C:\DAGS**, there will be various partners that will provide multiple levels of support. The Augustus Hawkins Schools for Community Action campus will foster and implement cross-campus partnerships and **C:\DAGS** has specific partnerships aligned with our mission and vision.

Key curriculum partners will support on an ongoing basis for the first five years as we develop, adapt, and transform curriculum to best support **C:\DAGS** students. In addition, our university partners will provide mentorship support and supplement our curriculum and add rigor to our courses. Other community partners will serve as possible sites for internships, professional mentoring and job shadowing.

In our first year, a **C:\DAGS** design team member will be the Community Partnership Lead, responsible for being the liaison between our community partners and our staff. After the first year, a new (or the same) Community Partnership Lead, will be democratically elected by the **C:\DAGS** staff. In addition, our staff will maintain healthy relationships, evaluate yearly, and identify new potential partners that can augment the **C:\DAGS** student experience. In order to track and evaluate partnerships, we will utilize the **SCA** Partnership Evaluation Tool (see attachment: **SCA** Partnership Evaluation Tool) that delineates type of partnership and how it furthers the **SCA** values in which all **SCA** sister schools were founded.

#### **Partnerships across the Augustus Hawkins Schools for Community Action campus**

**WestEd** – We will partner with West Ed to facilitate school-specific Professional Development, develop systems of data collection and analysis, and build staff capacity to implement the mission and vision of the school plan. (See above section B-2 & B-3)

**OneLA** – We will partner with OneLA, a local affiliate of IAF organization, to help build relational trust with community members, coordinate systems to incorporate community voice in the school’s operations, and build community capacity and leadership. Through a series of workshops and forums, OneLA will assist in providing venues to build awareness of pertinent community issues and organizing strategies to empower community members to take collective actions. The **C:\DAGS** community will coordinate with all the schools on the Augustus Hawkins Schools for Community Action campus to host these community workshops at the school site to serve as a center for community information.

**St. John’s Child and Wellness Center** – We will partner with St. John’s to help provide vital services to students and their families. These services include but are not limited to family planning, health screenings, and health education workshops.

**Los Angeles Child Guidance Clinic** – The LA Child Guidance Clinic has committed to provide onsite mental health services on the Augustus Hawkins Schools for Community Action campus, as well as facilitate ongoing services as our neighborhood clinic.

### **Partnerships with C:\DAGS**

**Indiana University’s Learning Science Program’s 21s Century Assessment Project** - This collaboration with a team of researchers will guide assessment models at the school that are both game-based and academically aligned. This partnership seeks funding beyond the first year of C:\DAGS’ opening from the MacArthur Foundation and the National Science Foundation. This work extends Mozilla’s Open Source Badges work and explores how badges may act as formal assessments within our school.

**Annenberg School of Communication’s Participatory Learning and You! (PLAY!)** - We will be conducting curriculum development and professional training in collaboration with the PLAY! working group. This work brings together scholars from various fields and our teachers to guide instruction that includes updated modes of digital engagement.

**Global Kids Inc** - We will be utilizing gaming and community inquiry models developed in collaboration with Global Kids Inc through the New Youth City Learning Network (NYCLN). Activities such as civic geocaching allow student learning to expand beyond the walls of the classroom and beyond the time that classes are usually held. This partnership will be supported by teachers within their curriculum.

### **Future Partnerships**

Upon approval, we will foster cohesive relationships with the variety of community based organizations in our community. Our goal is to meet the needs of our students by creating a central location for community groups. We will also assess whether some of these relationships should blossom into future partnerships, because they are organizations in our community striving to support the various needs of South Central. These organizations include: Youth Coalition, National Association of Black Social Workers, Community Coalition (CoCo), Peace Over Violence, CADRE, and Brotherhood Crusade.

To further support our students with disabilities, we will work with South Central Los Angeles Regional Center for Persons with Developmental Disabilities, Inc. (SCLARC). Additionally, we will work with Professor John Davis from Cal State Dominguez Hills to support a more inclusive environment for all students.

We also intend to connect with local universities and video game companies to offer internships at spaces such as: EA Sports, G4, Blizzard, Google, Activision, and the Game Innovation Lab at USC’s Interactive Media Division. The partnerships will be supported and fostered through collaboration during PD, grade-level teacher teams, and parent volunteers.

## **Category Three: Leadership that Supports High Achievement for Students and Staff**

### **B-6. School Governance and Oversight**

<b>a. School Type</b>
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Not Applicable.

## **b. School Level Committees**

To foster a community of leadership and shared accountability, each faculty member will be required to be an active participant of one of the following subcommittees. We will also actively recruit parents, students, and community members to contribute in shared decision making through participation in these committees..

**English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC):** The ELAC will advise and make recommendations to the School Leadership Council on four legally required topics: a) the Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA), b) Needs Assessment, c) Language Census, and d) efforts to make parents aware of the importance of regular school attendance. Teacher participants will work with parent participants to actively reach out to more parents and community members to continually increase participation. One elected parent member from School Site Council (SSC) will also participate as a member of ELAC.

**Compensatory Education Advisory Committee (CEAC):** The CEAC will advise and make recommendations in writing to the School Leadership Council on development of an effective educational program and plan that raises the achievement of disadvantaged students. The CEAC will participate in the assessment of educational needs, establish priorities, plan the educational program, budget resources, and evaluate the school and its academic effectiveness. Teacher participants will work with parent participants to actively outreach to more parents and community members to continually increase participation. Two elected parent members from School Site Council (SSC) will also participate as members of CEAC.

**Committee for Student Action (CSA):** The CSA will advise and make recommendations to the School Leadership Council from the student perspective. Through a reflective process, students will be empowered to use their voices to become leaders in their school and community, as they engage in transformative action. Three elected student members from SSC will also participate as members of CSA.

**Inclusion and Equity Committee (IEC):** The IEC will advise the School Leadership Council on providing an equitable education to all students with particular emphasis on supporting the inclusion of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners in general education classes. One elected member of SSC will also participate as a member of IEC.

**Professional Support Committee (PSC):** The PSC will advise the School Leadership Council on teacher assessment and professional development. The PSC establishes the selection criteria and job description for peer observers/mentors, reviews applications from teachers, makes final selections, and evaluates the performance of observers/mentors. The PSC coordinates needs-based professional development (such as action research, guided inquiry, workshops, and conferences) and infuses the professional development into the teacher assessment. One elected member of SSC will also participate as a member of PSC.

**Implementation Monitoring Committee (IMC):** The IMC will review data to monitor the implementation of the Instructional Plan, including school-wide policy, and advise the School Leadership Council on possible responses to their findings. One elected member of SSC will also participate as a member of IMC.

**Campus Committee (CC):** The CC will be comprised of members from each of the four autonomous small schools on this shared campus to foster a culture of interdependence and resource sharing, resulting in interlinked strength that maximizes our available resources to improve the overall quality of the learning experiences for all of our students. The CC will advise the School Leadership Council on opportunities for cross-school professional development, campus-wide community partnerships, and strategic resource sharing to offset foreseeable budget constraints. One elected member of SSC will also participate as a member of CC.

### c. Governing Council

Not Applicable to new campuses under the LAUSD-UTLA Local School Stabilization and Empowerment Initiative.

## B-7. School Leadership

### a. Principal Selection

In addition to meeting the LAUSD guidelines to be a Small Schools Principal, the ideal candidate will be a caring, collaborative, and innovative instructional leader who wholeheartedly believes in distributed leadership amongst the entire school community and is committed to our vision for game-based learning and systems thinking along with our mission to create transformative leaders. The principal shares our five core values and, when confronted with business as usual, finds creative solutions instead of convenient excuses.

The principal understands how to hire, supervise, and train faculty and staff to support our mission and vision, foster a curriculum and assessment system derived from our mission and vision, create structures and policies that best promote the implementation of our vision, cultivate a culture that reinforces our vision, and engage in gap-analysis to align our results with our vision.

Our selection criteria also include the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELs):

- Standard 1: Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- Standard 2: Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
- Standard 3: Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- Standard 4: Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- Standard 5: Modeling a personal code of ethics and developing professional leadership capacity.
- Standard 6: Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

To maximize the effectiveness of the principal selection process as outlined in the LAUSD-UTLA Local School Stabilization and Empowerment Initiative, we will proactively ensure that everyone who is eligible to be a member of the Personnel Team fully understands our unique plan so that they can best determine who should represent their subgroup. Simultaneously, we will work with all stakeholders to

develop a set of interview questions that address the critical qualities of a principal who will be able to successfully implement our plan and realize our mission and vision.

## **b. Leadership Team**

All faculty and staff members will take on the responsibilities of leadership and share in the administration of the school as active participants in the School Leadership Council subcommittees. These subcommittees (described in B-6.b.) will work together, each with their specific focus, to continually improve student achievement. The requirement in our written Commitment to the Instructional Plan that all faculty and staff participate in a subcommittee will ensure that everyone shares accountability for meeting our communal goals.

Four additional leadership positions include a Guidance Counselor, Bridge Coordinator, Campus Safety Coordinator/Athletics Director, and Parent/Resource Liaison.

**Guidance Counselor:** will guide and support students on their educational, personal, physical, social, and career needs. The counselor will also have the following responsibilities:

- 1) Help develop and implement student support services, strategies, and systems, including the advisory curriculum and Positive Behavior Intervention Plan.
- 2) Develop the master schedule.
- 3) Ensure students meet A-G requirements.
- 4) Foster college-going culture among students, parents, and teachers.
- 5) Disseminate information on college entrance requirements, high school graduation requirements, and mandated testing schedule.

The Guidance Counselor will also participate in one of the School Leadership Council subcommittees.

**Bridge Coordinator:** will support the effective implementation of our inclusive academic programs within the four autonomous, yet interdependent, schools housed on this campus. The Bridge Coordinator will have the following responsibilities:

- 1) Provide professional development for special and general education teachers on effective strategies, accommodations and/or modifications.
- 2) Provide support and direction related to the integration of special and general education at the school site.
- 3) Support parent trainings on strategies that foster learning at home.
- 4) Collaborate with staff, students, and families to implement effective behavior strategies and alternatives to suspension.
- 5) Institute a coaching model to support students with disabilities in general education classes.
- 6) Support the interventions resulting from Student Success Teams or Coordination of Services Teams.
- 7) Provide support and monitor supplemental special education activities.

As a shared position amongst the four **SCA** schools on campus, the Bridge Coordinator will be a member of the Campus Committee, as well as lend expertise to our school's Inclusion and Equity Committee.

**Campus Safety Coordinator/Athletics Director:** will exercise safety oversight across the shared facilities and functions of the four autonomous, yet interdependent, schools housed on this campus. The Campus Safety Coordinator/Athletics Director is responsible for:

- 1) Campus safety, including: a) organizing emergency and safety plans and training, b) supervising security/campus aides, and c) informing principals, staffs, and parents on school safety matters, emergency preparedness and response, student discipline, and child abuse reporting.
- 2) Managing athletics program.

The Campus Safety Coordinator/Athletics Director will be a member of the Campus Committee.

**Parent/Resource Liaison:** will help foster parent and community collaboration with the faculty and staff of all four schools. The Parent/Resource Liaison will have the following responsibilities:

- 1) Coordinate and conduct workshops for parents to be more effective decision makers and collaborators with the school and facilitators in their children’s education.
- 2) Manage resources and information between parents, students, community, school faculty, and staff.
- 3) Recruit, process, train, and manage parent and community volunteers.
- 4) Manage Welcome Center.

The Parent/Resource Liaison will be a member of CEAC and ELAC.

## **B-8. Staff Recruitment and Evaluation<sup>3</sup>**

<b>a. Staffing Model.</b>
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### **First Year Staffing Needs**

Projected staffing needs for **C:\DAGS** are described below, and based on a projected population of 360-400 students in grades 9-11:

#### ***Small School Principal (Temporary Advisor)***

See B-7.a. Principal Selection.

#### ***Guidance Counselor***

See B-7.b. Leadership Team.

#### ***Senior Administrative Assistant***

Manage small school office, student records, and payroll. Assist the Principal, Guidance Counselor, and Teachers as needed.

#### ***General Education Teachers (15)***

Use standards-based instruction and appropriate strategies to provide students with a quality education and supports to be successful in college, career, and life. Must be willing to develop **C:\DAGS** curriculum and foster our vision within instruction.

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<sup>3</sup> Note that staffing plans must be aligned with District and union agreements regarding staffing, recruitment, and performance reviews. Applicants requesting staffing autonomies must submit waivers for approval (see Part C: Internal Management of the application below).

***EL Teacher***

Work within the core content classrooms to support English Learners. Collaborate with all teachers in incorporating instructional strategies to support English Learners. Support English Learners during Morning Lab.

***Resource Specialist Prog Teacher/Case Carrier***

Collaborate with general education teachers to support students, as indicated on each student's IEP, within general education classes. Monitor student IEPs.

***Special Day Program Teacher/Case Carrier***

Provide in-classroom assistance to students and teachers, and conduct self-contained classroom time as indicated on the student's IEP. Monitor IEPs.

***Itinerant Special Education Teachers***

Depending on student population, visiting special education teachers may offer specialized services to students.

***ROP/CTE Teacher***

Use standards-based instruction and appropriate strategies to provide students with a quality education along a career pathway. Must be willing to develop **C:\DAGS** curriculum and foster our vision within instruction.

**Shared Positions across SCA Campus**

Because of the strong planned interdependence and collaboration between the four small schools on campus, we will share the following positions effectively and together budget for these positions that each small school would not be able to afford on their own (each small school will fund 25% of each position):

***Parent/Resource Liaison***

See Section B-7.b. Leadership Team.

***Bridge Coordinator (out of classroom teacher)***

See Section B-7.b. Leadership Team.

***Safety Coordinator/Athletic Director (out of classroom teacher)***

See Section B-7.b. Leadership Team.

***School Nurse***

Manage school health office/clinic. Facilitate emergency care. Manage student health records.

***Psychiatric Social Worker (3 days/week)***

Support the social and emotional needs of all students (See Section B-4.c. Social and Emotional Needs). We will also make referrals for continuing services and programs to outside agencies.

***School Psychologist (2 days/week)***

Participate on Student Study Teams at each small school. Conduct psycho-social assessments to determine eligibility for special education.



***Librarian/Media Literacy Specialist***

Collaborate with teacher teams to support the learning of the students within each school. Conduct PD for teachers on media literacy. After the first year, the Librarian will also collaborate with the Parent/Resource Liaison to expand library services to families and the community.

***Plant Manager***

Supervises, plans, coordinates, and participates in the cleaning, gardening and operation of the school.

***School Police***

Since our campus of 2000 students is in an area with high levels of gang activity, it is critical to have on-campus police support. The School Police will work closely with the Safety Coordinator to create and implement a campus-wide safety plan and facilitate a safe community policing environment.

***Campus Aides***

Support the Safety Coordinator and School Police.

***Building & Grounds Facilities Attendants Gardeners***

Keep the school buildings and grounds clean.

***Food Services Manager and Workers***

Manages/work in the cafeteria

**Second Year (and beyond) Staffing Needs**

Starting the 2013-2014 school year, there will be a full cohort of 500 students in grades 9-12 and an addition of about 4 teachers. Depending on a needs assessment, available funding, and personnel, positions may be shared between schools. In addition to these foreseen staffing needs, the School Leadership Council will conduct a personnel review at the end of each school year, and determine if there are any additional needs or excess positions for the next school year.

**b. Recruitment and Selection of Teachers.**

Success at the Critical Design and Gaming School hinges on the teachers we hire. They have the desire to work collaboratively, the experience in doing so, and the capacity to integrate game design and systems-based content, issues, and perspectives with state standards. C:\DAGS will require "mutual consent" between our school and all applying employees, as granted under LIS Waiver #9.

Our teachers believe in our core values and are expected to sustain our school’s vision by contributing to the curriculum, analyzing the results, and continuously learning. Like the Quest to Learn school in New York, the four attributes we will seek and foster in our teachers are:

**1. Fluent in Game-like Approaches to Learning**

- Understands and engages in complex problems; collects, analyzes, and synthesizes information from a range of sources; tolerates ambiguity and uncertainty and supports students in pursuit of the same.
- Effectively models the essential skills of reading, writing, comprehending, analyzing, listening, speaking, and designing necessary for student learning.

- Sees himself or herself as a learner, writer, designer, reader, producer, student, and gamer.
- Creates contexts with and for students to connect to relevant resources in ways that strengthen the school's systems-based focus.
- Is committed to creating situated-learning experiences for the students.
- Is an innovative, systems-oriented thinker who models thinking and reasoning practices for students within evidence-based contexts.
- Is an integrative and effective user of games, models, and simulations.
- Is enthusiastic about working in a collaborative-learning community where teachers are empowered to take on multiple roles, including leadership and administrative roles.

## **2. Youth Focused**

- Committed to student development and the success of all students.
- Responsive to feedback and able to modify methods to ensure the effectiveness of the learning environment for students on an ongoing basis.
- An excellent communicator, listener, and mentor.
- Sensitive to diverse students' varied needs.
- Meta-reflective and able to recognize and act on the needs of individual students, colleagues, and the school community.
- An advisor and advocate for students.
- Able to evaluate, select, and use various forms of games, media, and technology in lesson design and implementation to maximize student learning.

## **3. Academically Prepared**

- Has a deep understanding of his or her own content expertise and can connect this expertise to that of others within applied learning contexts.
- Is intellectually curious and possesses a commitment to lifelong learning.
- Is fluent in use of technologies to communicate and work across time, space, and place to extend contexts for student learning.
- Continually models and creates opportunities for students to co-engage in reflection on their own learning.
- Uses game design and systems-based learning to provide contexts for inquiry and discovery, leading students to engage actively in their own learning. Through this method, students actively analyze, manipulate, and evaluate information and media, construct knowledge, and solve complex problems in individual and collaborative settings.

## **4. Responsible, Civically Engaged, Ethical**

- Committed to behaving ethically toward all members of the learning community.
- Responsible in the decisions he or she makes that affect the learning community and has an understanding of the potential outcomes of these decisions on local, national, and global levels.
- Able to model forms of civic engagement for students that demonstrate an understanding of the role that individual voices and communities can play in shaping the quality and value of life.
- Responsible and committed to helping each student achieve excellence.
- Receptive to others' perspectives; welcoming of differences in interpretation and judgment; and able to revise and expand his or her own views.
- A dedicated member of the **C:\DAGS** professional community and participates in ongoing professional development, including lesson study, peer review and mentoring, study pods, and networking with teachers locally, nationally, and internationally.

Due to the highly collaborative nature of our work, it is crucial that we are permitted to use our autonomy to hire faculty and staff who are interested in participating in this collaborative work environment. To ensure stakeholders have a voice in staffing, Shared Decision Making will interview all applicants and vote to fill all positions. In the event that the vacancy to be filled is in a department that is not represented by an elected member of Shared Decision Making, a representative of that department will be included for purposes of interviewing and voting to fill the position.

### **c. Performance Reviews.**

The Schools for Community Action are committed to providing high quality support to its teachers to maximize the effectiveness of classroom instruction. To this end, we have adopted a formative (i.e., “no-stakes”) teacher assessment plan that is tied closely to each school’s professional development plan.

These plans are fully compatible with the 10 principles that were adopted recently by UTLA to guide the evaluation of the district’s teachers.

The purpose is to improve student learning by strengthening the quality of classroom instruction. Rubrics based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) will be used by teacher-selected peer observers to provide teachers with useful and reliable feedback on their instruction, to track improvement over time, to guide the delivery and content of professional development, and to provide useful support to teachers who need assistance.

The data from the observation forms will also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development activities and to identify assistance that is needed by individual teachers. This data will not be used by administrators as part of the formal Stull evaluation process. Teachers may, if they elect to do so, share their observation data and their professional development activities with the administrators who conduct their Stull evaluations.

#### **Key elements of the Assessment and Support Plan**

##### ***Professional Support Committee:***

- Teachers nominate and select members who agree to volunteer for this committee chaired by the principal.
- Establishes selection criteria and job description for peer observers/mentors; review applications from teachers; make final selections, and evaluate the performance of the observers/mentors.
- Advises the principal on teacher assessment, professional development, requests to attend conferences and other off-site events

##### ***Compensation of peer observers/mentors:***

- Possibilities include release time, stipends

##### ***Training of Observers:***

- Peer observers/mentors will receive training on the use of the instructional rubrics. Observations will be calibrated to ensure reliability and consistency.

- Peer observers/mentors will receive training and ongoing support with mentoring strategies.

***Reciprocal Accountability in Action:***

- All teachers will be expected to participate in observations, to take advantage of support options, and to demonstrate improvements in instruction after support has been received.
- Teachers will have regular opportunities to provide feedback about the evaluation process to the Professional Support Committee.

***Data Management:***

- Observation forms (with open-ended comments and scored rubrics) will be completed after each observation. Copies will be given to the observed teacher and the data entered into a confidential Teacher Assessment database. The database can produce numerous on-demand summary reports (e.g., by observer, by department, by SLC, by individual teacher, by timeframe, etc.) to track progress and to guide professional development and individual support for teachers.

## **B-9. Sharing a Campus**

As with many other aspects of the **C:\DAGS** school program, serving our students will be easier through the collaboration between all four Schools for Community Action. Throughout the school year, shared facilities such as the field, library, cafeteria, textbook room, student store, multi-purpose room, gyms, and performing arts rooms will be shared by all schools and coordinated by our shared Campus Committee.

### **Welcome Center/Family Headquarters**

Our four schools will share a Welcome Center in the centralized administration area that will also serve as the headquarters for parents, family, and community members to actively participate in our collective efforts to integrate our schools within the community in order to provide the most effective educational experiences for our students. All four **SCA** schools will collectively fund and share a Parent Liaison (see Section B-7.b. Leadership Team).

### **Library/Media Center**

Our school library will be open in the morning and into the evening to serve the needs of students lacking a space for studying and tutoring. The population we serve does not have a nearby Barnes and Noble or trendy cafes to serve as a resource-rich meeting place for access to large quantities of texts or for group study. This space will also provide access to high interest texts and other resources. By working with our community partners, including alumni from our relief school, the school library could also host a variety of services during the evening and on weekends to provide a type of support and incentive currently unavailable in this area. We will work closely with the Los Angeles Public Library—Vermont Square Branch to support library activities and incentives. All four **SCA** schools will collectively fund and share a Librarian/Media Literacy Specialist.

### **Morning Lab**

The Augustus Hawkins campus has seven computer labs (each the size of two classrooms). By sharing funds and resources, all four schools can ensure that some of these labs will be open in the morning before school so that students can have access to computers for homework projects or receive

additional supports, such as tutoring, credit recovery, support for English Learners and students with disabilities, or simply time to explore on the computers.

### **Campus Safety**

Based on the feedback we received at our **SCA** Community Forums in the summer of 2011, we know safety is of utmost concern to families and the community, which is why all **SCA** schools will use the same bell schedule. Since we know John Muir Middle School (feeder school) starts school, at 7:50am, we are pushing our start time to 8:05am to allow siblings and parents to escort younger students to school before heading to our campus. Through meetings with Captain Kato from the 77th Street Police Station, The Brotherhood Crusade, and GRYD, **SCA** understands the convergence of several local gangs which could take place at the Augustus Hawkins campus. In addition, the neighborhood served by the 77th Street Police has a large concentration of crime compared to other parts of the city. For example, in the week of August 1st-August 7th of 2011, there were 111 crimes reported to the 77th Street station, whereas on the same week, 38 crimes were reported to the West Los Angeles Station. Thus we will collaborate with programs such as Safe Passage to support safety to and from school. Because the safety of all students who set foot on the campus is of great importance, the four **SCA** schools will collectively fund and share a Campus Safety Coordinator.

### **Shared Athletics**

Each small school will have their own Physical Education classes, and within those class periods we can have intra-campus scrimmages and competitions between the four schools to instill good sportsmanship and a sense of pride and identity within each small school. However, each student will also recognize that they are part of a campus collective, and all four schools will work together to build a campus-wide athletic program with as many competitive sports teams as possible. The vision of the athletics program will be based on our core values of being student-centered, community collaborators, innovative and excellent, socially just, and sustainable. Our program will seek to build athletic skills as well as character development, collaborative skills, and problem solving. The athletic program will support the social and emotional needs of students while uniting the community behind successful youth teams. Through community partnerships, coaches that are mentors and educators, organized parent involvement, and committed athletes, our program seeks to revitalize our community. We will also work with Los Angeles Parks and Recreation to coordinate additional sports and activities, especially at our closest parks – Mt. Carmel Park and Harvard Recreation Center. This will provide a link to continuous activities throughout the summer with programs at these parks through Summer Night Lights, sponsored by the City of Los Angeles. **SCA**'s athletic program will provide another stage where our children's talent may be showcased.

### **Health Services**

We will provide social and emotional support at different levels, giving students multiple ways to receive support. **SCA** will share a Psychiatric Social Worker (PSW) to support the social and emotional needs of all students (see Section B-4.c. Social and Emotional Needs). We will also make referrals for continuing services and programs to outside agencies. **SCA** will work with community based health organizations like St. John's Clinic to provide services such as free health screenings, access to family planning services, as well as social and emotional well being programs (see Section B-1.d. Addressing the Needs of All Students).

### **Special Education**

All four **SCA** schools will collectively fund and share a Bridge Coordinator to help implement our inclusive academic programs. Our shared Bridge Coordinator may determine that some of our students

with special needs require intensive, specialized support that is best provided in standalone classes. Depending on the sizes of these populations, the four **SCA** schools will work together to provide one or more ED, MR, CBI, and/or autistic classrooms to best serve these special needs students.

### **Supporting English Language Learners**

All English Language Learners of all levels will have the choice of entering any of the four **SCA** schools to ensure that these students have the same choices for their education as all other students. Each small school will hire an English Learner teacher to assist with the inclusive academic programs at each school. Collectively, all four schools may need to offer shared ESL classes for students with ESL levels 0, 1, or 2 who need additional support.

## C. INTERNAL MANAGEMENT

### C-1. Waivers.

The **Critical Design and Gaming School** is a new school wherein all below referenced waivers are being requested in conjunction with the Local School Stabilization and Empowerment Initiative. Rationale has been outlined in the above corresponding sections of the plan. However, for the sake of clarity, the areas of this proposal that require waivers are outlined below and requested specifically in the Appendix.

#### Pre-approved Waivers

- Methods of improving pedagogy
- Curriculum
- Assessments
- Scheduling
- Professional Development
- Budgeting Control
- Mutual Consent for employees

#### Additional Waivers requested

Work Hours and Schedule (Article IX.)

- Additional on-site time requirement (1 hour)
- Participation in at least one School Leadership Council Subcommittee
- Required (compensated) PD time (up to 25 days/year)

### C-2. Budget Development.

As a small school in a school district constrained by continuing state budget cuts to education, C:\DAGS will utilize Budgeting for Student Achievement. Our plan requires faculty to be committed to supporting and participating in school governance. We are not a traditional school. The utilizations of our autonomies will require the maximum budget flexibility and responsible oversight, afforded under Budgeting for Student Achievement. We will follow LAUSD governing guidelines when planning and implementing our annual school budget. Parents will have an opportunity to address budgetary issues through CEAC and ELAC. Students will provide input through the Committee for Student Action. Teachers will discuss the budget within the other subcommittees. Recommendations will then be taken to the School Leadership Council, comprised of all community stakeholders. The focus of our budget will be to promote the success of all our students. To ensure all stakeholders are included, we will adhere to the following timeline:

- August/September: Begin reviewing school budget
- October/November: Review budgets and make adjustments
- December/ January: Discuss and prioritize budget needs
- February/March: Principal presents draft budget from District's preliminary budget
- April/May: School ratifies budget for submission to District

Our focus in Year One of implementation is curriculum and instruction. Professional development time will ensure that teachers are trained in school-wide instructional strategies. Benchmark and common

assessments will be developed to measure student progress, and identify areas of weakness. We will begin the process of developing Linked Learning interdisciplinary curriculum and projects. Additionally, we will set up teacher teams to begin collaboration. We will spend Year One establishing our school identity and culture as well as cultivating our new community partners.

By Year Two we hope to have more advanced PD on several of our teaching strategies and continue to refine our curriculum and assessment. We hope that in the first three years we will complete CTE-certified career pathways and develop ample community and business partners to engage our students in relevant work-based learning.

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