



UCP Charter Schools: PROJECT ELEVATE -Elevating Learning by Empowering and Valuing Advancement of Teacher and other Educators

U.S. Department of Education-Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program (CFDA Number: 84.374A)

PROJECT NARRATIVE

UCP Charter Schools, a Charter LEA with a network of eight schools in Central Florida, is responding to the need to provide highly effective teachers and leaders to close the achievement gap between high need low performing students through this proposal to the US Department of Education – Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (CFDA Number 84.374A). The proposed project, Project ELEVATE will address the challenges associated with recruitment and retention of effective teachers and leaders in high need schools and build capacity in teacher leadership through development and implementation of TeachMastery (a customized targeted and job embedded professional learning program), teacher mentor/coaching, master teachers and model classroom, development and implementation of the KEY Program (Key Engagement for Yay-Worthy – a gamification incentive program), Principal Academy and Principal Resident program and building Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT). The project will also improve the UCP performance-based compensation (PBCS) by providing multiple pathways for differentiated compensation and incentives and redefining career growth paths for classroom-based teachers and principals/assistant principals.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a particular significant impact on our younger generation of workers who are now our novice teachers. Their skill development was interrupted, they have experienced higher levels of stress and anxiety compared to previous generations, their emotional intelligence skills were hindered, and they value organizations that foster a diverse and inclusive environment. Project ELEVATE will support these teachers where they are and where they journey to be to ensure the best possible educators for our high need students.

Absolute Priority 1: Human Capital Management System (HCMS) or Performance Based Compensation System (PBCS) and Career Advancement Opportunities

For over twenty years, UCP Charter Schools has been unlocking the potential of thousands of the most marginalized and vulnerable students in Central Florida. UCP Charter Schools current set of Human Capital Management System (HCMS) and Performance Based Compensation System (PBCS) policies and practices work together to attract, develop, deploy, motivate, and retain people who have the competencies needed to achieve the ultimate goal of the schools which is to unlock the potential of all students. This project will allow UCP Charter Schools to further develop and enhance our HCMS/PBCS to continue to raise student academic achievement for both a unique and high-risk group of students (students with disabilities who are also low income) by closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing students to address Absolute Priority 1. UCP Charter Schools Project ELEVATE will expand their current PBCS, described in the proposal by providing additional opportunities for teachers and school leaders to receive incentive pay for increased student, teacher, and school performance. The launch of the UCP KEY (Key Engagement Yay-Worthy) will use a gamification strategy as a unique way to motivate team members to create an exceptional work culture and foster employee satisfaction and well-being while providing incentives for items that UCP has identified will move the mark

on student achievement. This project will provide a personalized and individualized investment in a career advancement program for teachers and leaders aligning with their unique needs and foster a culture of continuous learning to support individual growth aspirations while contributing to the overall success of our educational community with the primary focus being student learning outcomes.

Absolute Priority 2: High Need Schools

Project ELEVATE will serve the eight schools in the UCP Charter Schools network of public charter schools in Central Florida. UCP Charter Schools serve approximately 2,100 students from 18 months through 12th grade with a disproportionate number of students with disabilities (including students with significant disabilities) educated together with their peers. All schools in the UCP Charter Schools network meet the definition of “high need” based on the Absolute Priority Criteria of at least 50% of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch. The overall UCP Charter School LEA average of low-income students is 95% and has grown 10-20% for every school over the last year. UCP uses the Direct Certify method of determining eligibility and all schools also participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the NSLP. Additionally, all schools with the exception of one are located in a Qualified Opportunity Zone and two of the schools are located in what is considered a “Severe Distressed” Opportunity Zone. Below is a chart of the schools and corresponding status from the most recent Florida DOE data:

<https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/edu-info-accountability-services/pk-12-public-school-data-pubs-reports/students.stml>

	Free/Reduced %	High Need School?	% of SWD
UCP Seminole Charter School	89%	Yes	70%
UCP Bailes Community Charter School (BCA)	98%	Yes	50%
UCP Osceola Charter School	100%	Yes	78%
UCP Bailes Early Childhood Academy	97%	Yes	50%
UCP Downtown Charter School	100%	Yes	70%
UCP Pine Hills Charter School	100%	Yes	45%
UCP Transitional Learning Academy (TLA)	93%	Yes	100%
UCP West Orange Charter School	79%	Yes	61%

The schools are racially diverse as well with the LEA having an average of 80% of non-white students with students, families speaking 16 different languages and over 50% of families served being identified as Hispanic.

	White	Black	Hispanic	Other
UCP Seminole	18%	22%	51%	9%
UCP BCA	29%	9%	53%	9%
UCP Osceola	12%	10%	76%	3%
UCP East Orange	25%	11%	58%	6%
UCP Downtown	10%	18%	67%	4%
UCP Pine Hills	3%	73%	21%	3%
UCP TLA	18%	24%	52%	6%

UCP West Orange	28%	18%	46%	8%
All UCP Charter Schools	20%	20%	54%	6%

Although this was not specifically identified as a priority, the fact that UCP Charter Schools serve 50-75% students with disabilities (including students with very significant disabilities) as well as a low SES population gives the schools and its students a double challenge of high risk/high need.

Competitive Preference Priority 1 – Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities

As part of the project, UCP Charter Schools will continue its comprehensive system-wide assessment of the existing disparities in access to resources and opportunities among students and teachers/leaders with the project focused on taking action by both teachers and leaders to address these needs. The assessment will include analyzing data related to student outcomes, resource allocation, access to opportunities, discipline practices and representation among staff to prioritize and develop personalized, individualized, and empowering strategies to ensure that all students have equitable access to educational resources, opportunities and educators who produce effective outcomes for students. Although all UCP Charter Schools will be served in this project (including elementary, middle, and high schools), the project will target additional resources and strategies in this project to the lowest performing schools and highest needs schools (UCP Downtown, UCP Pine Hills and UCP Osceola).

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Supporting Diverse Educator Workforce and Professional Growth to Strengthen Student Learning

UCP Charter Schools is committed to inspire excellence in teaching and learning by creating and maintaining a workforce of increasing diversity where students are able to learn from adult role

models who look like them and share common experiences, as well as Highly Effective educators who may not look like them but bring the diversity of many backgrounds and experiences. UCP Charter Schools currently embraces diversity in all forms including over 65% of our teachers a person of color and 50% of our leadership team. The project will seek to increase the number recruited and retained of fully certified, in-field/dual certified experienced educators from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds through its' Pathway to Teacher Program, Future Teacher Academy and Summer Learning Institute projects with partners from local and national HBCU and HIS. All UCP Charter Schools teachers are considered "shortage" areas as they are required to be dual certified in grade/subject level and exceptional education (ESE) – every UCP Charter School teacher and leader serves high needs students. As part of Project ELEVATE, UCP Charter Schools will create an Equity Awareness Team responsible for periodic survey and assessment of educator perceptions related to professional equity in UCP Charter Schools and identification of professional learning, policies and strategies that address equity gaps.

Need for Project – Specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities and how the proposed project will address:

UCP Charter Schools LEA are a network of inclusive public charter schools focused on inclusion and serving a disproportionate number of low-income students with disabilities learning with their peers that has outperformed in increasing learning gains of students for similar populations. The priority for Project ELEVATE is to continue to increase student learning gains for this high need population by ensuring access to highly effective and diverse teachers and school leaders and addressing these gaps and opportunities:

- Shortage of teachers specifically with expertise in special education to serve the high percentage of SWD at UCP Charter Schools.

