



## Project Narrative: Nashville Newcomer Academy at STEM Prep

### Synopsis

The project is designed to address the **unique needs of English Language Learners**, specifically our city's newcomer students, through **direct service delivery** and bolster capacity to advance achievement of this population through a **demonstration school model** and **professional development** for schools serving high concentrations of our New American children and young people. In partnership with Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools (MNPS), STEM Preparatory Academy aims to launch the **Nashville Newcomer Academy** in 2016-2017 and will serve approximately *100 newcomer students* in grades five through nine by 2018. While our city's current EL interventions and newcomer services are robust and demonstrate effectiveness, the newcomer population continues to grow exponentially year over year and additional capacity is required to ensure EL students achieve *significant gains* and advance in the college and career trajectory.

### Current Status

Capital funding (\$730,000) for the Nashville Newcomer Academy is part of the city's budget, directly proposed by Mayor Karl Dean and approved by the Metro Council in June 2015.

### Overarching Goals and Objectives

The Nashville Newcomer Academy (NNA) goals and objectives are derived from and aligned to the Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools strategic vision and plan, *Education 2018*. Specifically, our aim is to "create the conditions that result in **personalized learning** experiences for all students." The NNA will leverage the district's existing high-yield strategies of *Quality Teaching* and *Equity and Excellence* in ensuring all newcomer students achieve ambitious academic outcomes, social integration and advancement.

To achieve this aim, the Nashville Newcomer Academy will meet the following objectives born from and aligned to *Education 2018*:

#### **Goal #1: Advance Academic Achievement and Social Integration of New Arrival Students**

- 1) Raise student achievement by addressing linguistic barriers to learning and development;
- 2) Accelerate social integration;
- 3) Strengthen newcomer family engagement and stability through holistic student and family services and social networks;
- 4) Measure student performance outcomes – both academic and social-emotional - identifying the program features most impacting student achievement and integration.

#### **Goal #2: Bolster Instructional Capacity in Schools Serving English Language Learners**

Employing the demonstration school model,

- 1) Train and support teachers of newcomers and English Language Learners to enact evidence-based practices in language acquisition across content areas;

- 2) Provide professional development to both leaders and teachers in the enactment of effective instruction for English Language Learners;
- 3) Collaborate with school leaders serving high concentration of EL students in the design and execution of school-level systems to support newcomer students; and
- 4) Measure instructional effectiveness outcomes, identifying the professional development experiences yielding these greatest gains to teacher and student performance outcomes.

In sum, the NNA project aims to significantly advance the academic achievement and accelerate the social integration of our city’s newcomer population. Further, through the demonstration school, the NNA serves to bolster district-wide capacity at the classroom- and school-levels in serving this vulnerable student population. Moreover, through STEM Prep’s partnership with Conexion Americas, parents will receive training and leadership development through the family-focused program within the demonstration school site.

To date, this is the first-of-its-kind partnership model between a school district and charter school organization in serving newcomer students and schools more broadly. We believe this partnership holds the potential to be a national spotlight moment and breakthrough innovation in public education.

Target Population

In 2014, the district served 2,396 English Language Learners in grades five through nine. In the same year on the ELDA, 57 percent of this population (**N = 1,362**) achieved a composite score of 1 (pre-functional) or 2 (beginner). We believe the middle grades and 9<sup>th</sup> grade year are pivotal in the long-term success of these students, as well as to the vitality and growth of the city’s workforce at-large. *To ensure these students are adequately prepared for high school coursework and, thus graduate on time and access meaningful post-secondary education and career opportunities, we must accelerate language acquisition, academic achievement across content areas, and social integration.*

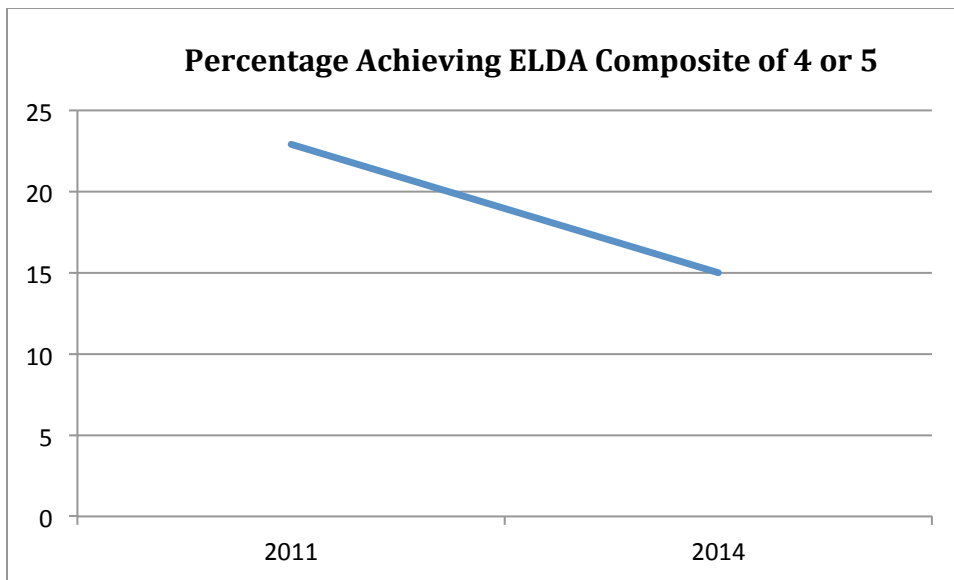
Table 1. Performance Outcomes on the 2014 ELDA – Grades 5 through 9.

	N = Total Students	% Composite Score			N = Composite of 1/2
		1	2	Sum %	
<b>5</b>	604	19.2	22.7	41.9	253
<b>6</b>	411	20.2	44.0	64.2	264
<b>7</b>	428	18.9	32.9	51.8	222
<b>8</b>	401	32.9	29.7	62.6	251
<b>9</b>	552	46.9	20.5	67.4	372
<b>Total</b>	<b>2396</b>				<b>1362</b>

Analyses of ELDA data from 2011 through 2014 suggest this population would benefit most from services provided through the NNA. As a case example, we examined aggregate ELDA data on the cohort of students entering 5<sup>th</sup> grade in 2011. We estimate approximately 18.3 percent of this cohort achieved a composite ELDA score of 4 (advanced) or 5 (full language proficiency) during their four-year middle grades enrollment.

Using available data on this population, we examined cohort performance longitudinally, seeking to understand the language acquisition growth patterns. At a high-level, these data suggest over time EL students experience stagnation, or perhaps regression, in language proficiency during middle grades. We hypothesize that the growing complexity of content and language students encounter in middle grades may explain these trends.

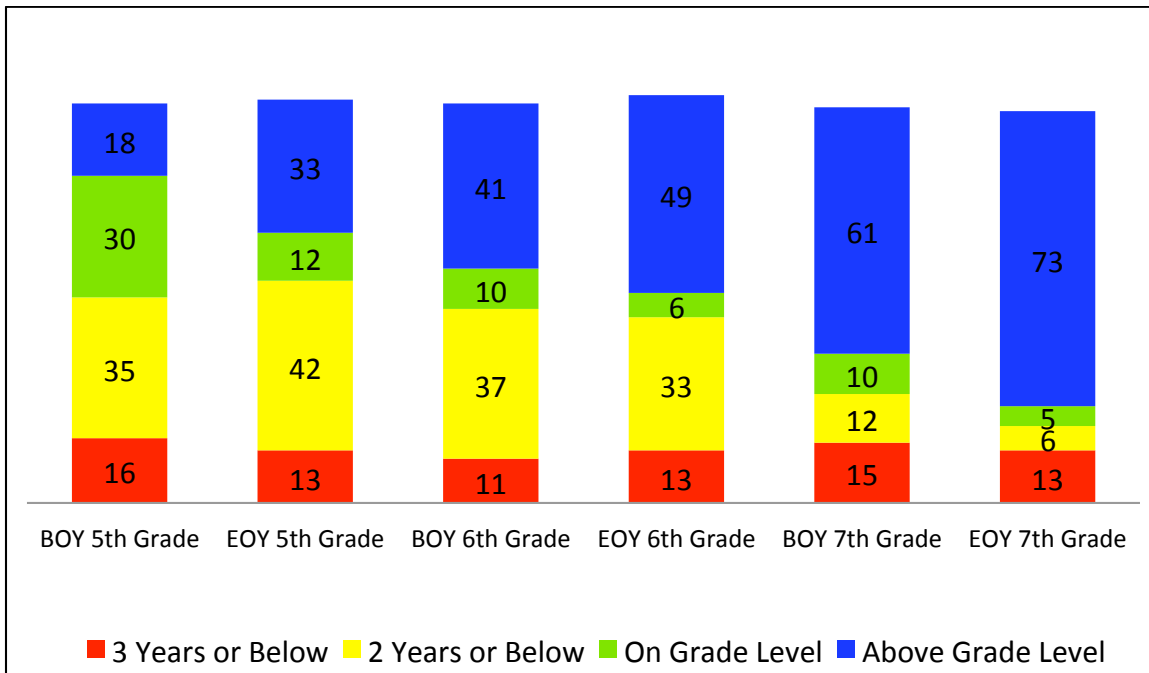
Graph 1. Cohort Language Proficiency Growth from 2011 to 2014.



Fundamental to STEM Prep’s mission is service to English Language Learners. Approximately 73 percent of students are identified as English Language Learners and receive supports aligned to areas of need. Since STEM Prep’s inception in 2011, the organization has refined a model of service delivery to this population. The model includes robust language instruction personalized to the needs of individual EL students, intensive interventions and language supports in each content area, guided reading supports for all students, and comprehensive training for faculty and staff.

As a case example of STEM Prep’s impact on English Language Learners, we examined the 5<sup>th</sup> grade cohort data for the 2013-2014 school year. In this year, **forty-six percent** of EL students who began at a pre-functional or beginner level at scored a composite 4 or 5, **exiting the program in one academic year**. In addition, in analyzing growth over time using the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), a national norm-referenced exam administered by STEM Prep, **78 percent of students** who completed 7<sup>th</sup> grade in 2013-2014 and who have been continuously enrolled at STEM Prep since 5<sup>th</sup> grade **scored on or above grade level** on the Reading MAP. In short, while approximately 65 percent of this cohort has been enrolled in the EL program during their academic careers, they have achieved full language proficiency and **73 percent** of these students are **now reading above the eighth grade level** on this national exam.

Graph 2. Students Enrolled 2011-2014: Reading Proficiency Over Time.



**Inquiries**

Questions and information on development needs relative to the Nashville Newcomer Academy and demonstration site offering may be directed to Kristin McGraner, Ed.D., Founder and Executive Director, at [kmcgraner@stempreacademy.org](mailto:kmcgraner@stempreacademy.org) or 615.921.2200.