



OFFICE OF SCHOOL INNOVATION, School Turnaround Office, Room 481 EBA
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December 16, 2011

Superintendent Bolgen Vargas
Rochester City School District
131 West Broad St.
Rochester, New York 14614

RE: Award Notice School Innovation Fund – RFP #TA-05
Award Amount: \$2,498,733
Time Period: January 1, 2012 to June 30, 2014

Dear Superintendent Vargas:

The New York State Education Department, School Turnaround Office (NYSED STO) is pleased to inform you that the Rochester City School District has been awarded a grant for its plan for the dramatic redesign of Roberto Clemente #8 through the School Innovation Fund (SIF). The projected 2.5-year amount of this award is \$2,498,733. The partnership between Expeditionary Learning and Roberto Clemente #8 is one of five innovative projects that will be funded through this initial round of the SIF. As stated in the RFP, this award is contingent on the provision of targeted training on Education Law 3012-c during 2011-12, and agreement to fully implement the provisions of Education Law 3012-c during the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 grant periods.

The NYSED STO will serve as your lead program office for project oversight, assistance, monitoring, and reporting. Within the next several weeks you will be contacted by a representative from NYSED STO to set up an initial welcome and introduction telephone call. In the meantime, in order to ensure that the project begins with the necessary information, resources and supports for success, we ask for your attention to a few key items:

1. Identify your leadership team

Please complete the enclosed form identifying the names and contact information of the leadership team that will be responsible for project planning, implementation, and direct communications with NYSED. The leadership team should be composed, at a minimum, of the school-building leader, key external partner contacts, and a fiscal contact.

Please submit this form to sifgrant@mail.nysed.gov by January 5, 2012.

2. Make arrangements to attend the initial orientation meeting

The initial orientation meeting for the School Innovation Fund is scheduled for Monday January 30, 2012 at NYSED in Albany, NY. This orientation should be attended by the key members of the leadership team, as identified above. Please make the necessary travel arrangements for this team to attend in January.

3. Review reporting requirements and key submissions for project period one

Enclosed with this letter is a brief overview of the mandatory requirements for completion and reporting during project period one. This includes the completion and submission of a performance agreement and Memoranda of Understanding between your district and key partners by July 1, 2012. While more specific information and guidance will be given upon initial contact and orientation, it is not too early to begin discussion, planning, and implementation of these requirements with key partner organizations.

We look forward to working with you and your leadership team on this innovative opportunity to improve student achievement through bold and dramatic whole-school redesign.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Owen Donovan", written in a cursive style.

Owen Donovan, Coordinator
School Turnaround Office

enc.

c: Karen Jacobs
S. Bachofer
STO Team

**SCHOOL INNOVATION FUND
ROCHESTER CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
ROBERTO CLEMENTE SCHOOL #8**

PROPOSAL NARRATIVE

I. Executive Summary

Roberto Clemente School #8 is a Tier III elementary school in the Rochester City School District (RCS D) challenged with low attendance and declining student achievement. It is in need of innovative redesign to stimulate student motivation and promote rigorous learning for all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners. The mission of the Rochester City School District and Roberto Clemente School is to provide a quality education that ensures students graduate with the skills to be successful in the global economy. Roberto Clemente School's teachers and school leadership strive to develop and prepare future citizens of the world by having a strong focus on humanities instruction.

As part of the District's Strategic Plan, RCS D is creating an innovative portfolio of high quality schools. The District's School Portfolio Plan offers many program choices that reflect the diverse talents, needs, and interests of every RCS D student. Through a partnership with Expeditionary Learning, Roberto Clemente School will be redesigned into a school characterized by academic rigor where students are challenged to think critically and take active roles in their classrooms and communities. At the same time, the school will reconfigure from a school that serves students in prekindergarten through sixth grade to a school that serves students through eighth grade, providing its students more time to learn in a nurturing environment.

Expeditionary Learning (EL) is a national network of more than 150 schools across 30 states, serving more than 42,000 students. EL partners with school districts and charter boards to open new schools and transform existing schools at all levels, pre-K-12, and in all settings – urban, rural, and suburban. It invests in the growth of both new and veteran teachers, helping them transform their classrooms into rigorous and stimulating learning environments. This results in higher achievement and greater engagement in school. EL schools are characterized by:

- Active instructional practices that build academic skills and student motivation;
- Rigorous projects that meet State standards and are connected to real-world needs;
- School cultures of kindness, respect, and responsibility for learning;
- Shared leadership for school improvement; and
- School-wide commitment to improved teaching and leadership practice.

EL will partner with Roberto Clemente School to bring about whole school improvement. EL will offer a comprehensive suite of professional development, coaching, and on-line tools to improve curriculum design, instruction, school culture, leadership, and assessment practices. Its content-rich institutes and school-based coaching support schools will create an engaging environment where children love to learn and teachers love to teach.

The Expeditionary Learning approach to transforming school and classroom practice to improve students' academic outcomes is unique. Born from a collaboration between the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Outward Bound, USA, EL has forged a professional learning model based on inspiring and improving educators, both novice and veteran, through active, challenging experiences. The metaphorical mountain to summit is a challenge of scholarship rather than physical effort, but the ethic is the same as on an Outward Bound wilderness course: everyone, every teacher and every student regardless of beginning levels of fitness, must together get to the top of the mountain.

Expeditionary Learning will provide a different approach to teaching and learning at Roberto Clemente School:

- **Learning will be active.** Students will be scientists, urban planners, historians, and activists, investigating real community problems and collaborating with peers to develop creative, actionable solutions.
- **Learning will be public.** Through formal structures of presentation, exhibition, critique, and data analysis, students and teachers will build a shared vision of pathways to achievement.
- **Learning will be meaningful.** Students will apply their skills and knowledge to real-world issues and problems and make positive change in their communities. They will see the relevance of their learning and be motivated by understanding that learning has purpose.
- **Learning will be challenging.** Students at all levels will be pushed and supported to do more than they think they can. Excellence will be expected in the quality of their work and their thinking.
- **Learning will be collaborative.** School leaders, teachers, students, and families will share rigorous expectations for quality work, achievement, and behavior. Trust, respect, responsibility, and joy in learning will permeate the school culture.

As they are implemented robustly, the Expeditionary Learning core practices will create a school environment at Roberto Clemente School that promotes deep engagement in learning and allows students to achieve at high levels. Students will gain skills critical to college readiness and life-long success (literacy, problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, persistence towards excellence, and active citizenship) as well as mastery of subject area knowledge.

Over its 18-year history, EL has significant experience managing large grants for school start-up and transformation, and complex contract relationships with large districts. In 1992, EL was selected by New American Schools as one of 11 "break-the-mold" school transformation models and received more than \$9 million to scale up the model nationally. Based on a successful track record, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation awarded \$24 million to EL in 2002 to open 27 new secondary schools. Today, many of these schools are some of the highest achieving schools in the EL network.

EL's commitment to quality of implementation is supported by its Core Practices Manual and Implementation Review, an annual assessment of a school's progress towards targets of

change articulated by the Core Practices. Data provided by the Implementation Review is used to set measurable goals and objectives that can impact teacher practice and student performance. The recent development of new quality assurance tools help set the conditions for effective partnership with schools and districts. The strength of the EL instructional model coupled with quality assurance tools enables EL to scale its model with greater flexibility and cost effectiveness than charter management organizations.