

Partner Background:

Organization Name: UChicago Impact

Mission and Connection to Louisiana's Plan: Research continues to show that while many districts and states have made considerable progress across a variety of student outcome metrics, this improvement does not always extend to all schools or all students. This is a paradigm present in all corners of the country, be it Chicago, our home town, or in Louisiana. Many view the underlying challenges in these schools as intractable. UChicago Impact does not. UChicago Impact, launched in 2011, is a not-for-profit organization wholly owned by and situated in the University of Chicago. UChicago Impact is uniquely positioned within University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute (UEI), a national leader in applied education research, teacher training, and effective schooling. UChicago Impact's mission is to empower educators, through rigorous research, innovative supports and strategic practice, to improve schools and accelerate student learning. UChicago Impact is committed to ensuring that all students receive opportunities for an excellent education that propels them on a path towards making it to and through college.

At UChicago Impact, we know that principals and school system leaders often need assistance in organizing scarce human, academic, and financial resources to capitalize on strengths and target areas of weakness necessary for whole school improvement. The state of Louisiana's plan for its lowest-performing schools recognizes the need to add expertise and capacity to support improvement in these schools. Leveraging the power of rigorous research, strategic professional supports, and a commitment to human and social capital are a critical aspect of UChicago Impact's work and the approach we would bring in partnering with schools in Louisiana.

Evidence of Track Record of Student and School Outcomes: The 5Essentials survey is based on over twenty years of research and analysis, documented in the book *Organizing Schools for Improvement*, that showed that schools strong on three or more of the Essentials were ten times more likely to improve student outcomes and thirty times less likely to stagnate than similar schools that were weak on the Essentials. The survey itself has been administered in over six hundred fifty schools in the Chicago Public Schools for more than twenty years. After years of distributing the data only to the school leaders, in 2011 the district decided to make the 5Essentials data public as a way to broaden the visibility and understanding of schools' learning conditions, shift the conversations from exclusively focusing on test scores, and expand the base of support for schools seeking to improve. Then, in 2014, the district officially began including the 5Essentials in its accountability system. This shift reinforced the importance of the 5Essentials as a way for schools to focus on what matters most for improvement, and the data show that the district's approach has paid off.

A study out of the University of Illinois – Chicago documented that Chicago Public Schools has been improving student outcomes at a rate that surpasses the rest of the state and, therefore, is closing the performance gap. This holds true for Chicago's performance on the NAEP, with the district's fourth and eighth graders showing significant improvement when the rest of the state of Illinois, and the country, largely stagnated. And the 5Essentials data in Chicago echoes this, with schools across the district increasingly demonstrating progress in organizing the school and learning environments for improvement.

Since the 5Essentials reports first went public in 2011, UChicago Impact has partnered with the Chicago Public Schools central office and network staff to help support schools in understanding and utilizing their results. While many of our touch points have been light in nature and with central support staff, we have been able to work directly and deeply with a portfolio of schools. These schools experienced

growth in their 5Essentials scores on prioritized areas that significantly outpaced the Chicago Public Schools average, a leading indicator for further growth for their students.

It is important to note that the growth and improvement seen in Chicago is the result of countless efforts from numerous individuals and organizations, on top of the tremendous efforts of the students, teachers, and leaders of the schools across the city. No single organization or initiative can take credit for the changes that have occurred, the 5Essentials included. That said, over 90% of all of our partners and school leaders we have supported report that the 5Essentials is useful for developing school improvement plans, establishing improvement priorities, becoming more effective leaders, and providing critical feedback to staff. Coupled with the improvements that they, and the rest of Chicago, have experienced, it is safe to say that the 5Essentials has helped promote improvement in Chicago.

In addition to the work and outcomes in Chicago, North Chicago School District 187 in North Chicago, Illinois also demonstrates the work of the 5Essentials. In 2012, District 187 was taken over by the State Board of Education due to years of poor performance, community concerns, and funding issues. Despite this the district has experienced tremendous growth in recent years in the following ways:

- A graduation rate increase from 50 percent (in 2012) to 68 percent (in 2015);
- A daily attendance increase of 75 percent to 89 percent;
- An 80 percent drop in office referrals;
- An increase from 13 (2013) to 17 percent (2014) of high school students and from 27 (2013) to 30 percent (2014) of elementary school students who meet or exceed state standards.

These district-wide improvements have been publicly accredited to 5Essentials, which has enabled administrators to effectively gather perceptions from students and teachers and then build improvement plans from that data. The 5Essentials team, through consultation with district leadership and a foundation partner, supported district and school-level staff and community members throughout the data collection, reporting, and analysis processes. Across multiple meetings, 5Essentials team members interacted directly with teachers, principals, parents and community members to strengthen survey participation and use of results in improvement planning and implementation, which helped create the conditions for the growth and improvements noted above.

Our Model and Differentiation: The 5Essentials System is comprised of the 5Essentials survey of teachers and students in grades 4 through 12, a research-based analytical methodology for analyzing and scoring the surveys, individual, online reports for schools, and professional learning support for leadership teams. The data from the survey serve as an anchor for our work and enable us to then partner with states, districts, and schools in a number of different ways to provide the right level of support, ranging from a lighter touch learning series to school-based coaching relationships.

While we offer a number of levels of support to accompany the 5Essentials survey, we believe strongly in the power of providing tailored, consistent, job-embedded coaching because school improvement is a complex and intricate task that does not happen overnight and each school has unique strengths and areas for improvement. For example, some schools may require support with their instructional leadership, some with their family-teacher relationships, and others with student behavior and peer interactions. Each school has a distinct set of key levers and root causes and our coaches help school leaders problem solve around these daily school organization, climate, and culture challenges. In doing so, we aim to identify the right content to focus on and structure of support so that work to improve the organization, climate, and culture of a school becomes habitual, foundational, and, ultimately,

transformational. Our model, which we believe would greatly benefit the state, districts, and schools in Louisiana, works to identify the level and amount of support required by schools based on data from their 5Essentials, student outcomes data, and an understanding of the school's existing systems and structures, thus making each coaching partnership unique in nature.

Attributes of an Ideal Partner and How the State, Districts, and Schools Can Help: Over the last few years, UChicago Impact has identified several key beneficial attributes of school and district partners. School improvement is complex, arduous work and requires patience from all members of the school community. The 5Essentials highlights the sensitive, adaptive issues that are the foundation for school improvement, such as relational trust, safety, and commitment.

As a result, some of our most successful school leader partners model and embody the honesty and vulnerability needed to confront these issues. They embrace their areas of growth, they own their actions, and they engender a culture among the adults in the building in which it is safe to acknowledge and own mistakes and missteps and to use them as opportunities for learning and growth. Additionally, the leaders, both administrators and teachers, confine their discussions and efforts to those actions and initiatives within their control and avoid the pitfall of blaming students, other teachers, or families.

We believe that the state of Louisiana and district partners can augment these behaviors in schools. They can engage schools in honest conversations about areas of strength and improvement. They can take responsibility for their own mistakes and errors. They can support and coach school leaders to demonstrate vulnerability with their own staff and hold them accountable when this behavior is not present.

Third Party Relationships: Over the last two years, UChicago Impact has partnered with the Florida and the Islands Comprehensive Center (FLICC) to streamline and strengthen our work throughout Florida schools. FLICC and UChicago Impact have provided resources and support to the state department of education and district staff that has enabled schools throughout the state to effectively understand and utilize 5Essentials results and include insights from the data in the state's school improvement planning process, which mirrors the 5Essentials framework.

Additionally, UChicago Impact recently partnered with Fulcrum Education Solutions, an organization devoted to instructional leadership capacity. We identified instructional leadership as an area for growth across nearly forty schools in one of our partnerships. Fulcrum helped design a professional learning training session for these schools in response to this specific need.

We are also aware of a number of other organizations who, while not directly partnering with us, use 5Essentials data to advance their work in support of schools. For example, the Center for School Improvement in Illinois has shared with us that the 5Essentials data, framework, and research has helped them in their efforts to support school improvement across Illinois.