

**DETERMINATION AND FINDING
FOR A SOURCE PROCUREMENT**

AGENCY: District of Columbia Public Schools
Office of School Design and Continuous Improvement
CAPTION: Social-Emotional Training and Support Organization
PROPOSED CONTRACTOR: **Turnaround for Children**
CONTRACT NO. RQ110949

FINDINGS

1. AUTHORIZATION:

D.C. Code 2-354.04 and 27 DCMR, Section 1304 and 1702.

2. MINIMUM NEED:

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), Office of School Design and Continuous Improvement (SDCI) has an immediate need to procure the services of Turnaround for Children (TFC) to support schools and the District with modifying and implementing the Schoolwide Environmental Assessment Tool (SEAT) to schools with one-star ratings.

3. ESTIMATED COST:

The estimated cost is \$70,000 for the proposed period date of award through September 30, 2019.

4. FACTS WHICH JUSTIFY A SOLE SOURCE PROCUREMENT:

TFC is the sole owner and provider of the SEAT Tool. Only TFC staff may modify and train users on the SEAT Tool. TFC translates neuroscientific research into tools and strategies for schools that serve multiple fields to better understand how children learn, and works to infuse those learnings into all levels of an education system.

TFC is uniquely qualified to deliver these services in the District of Columbia for three primary reasons:

- Sole ownership to modify and implement the SEAT Tool
- Resources rooted in the science of learning and development
- Strong, mutually beneficial relationship with District of Columbia Partner Schools (DCPS)
- Proven success through improvements in school climate and teacher practice

More detail regarding TFC's unique qualifications can be found below.

Resources rooted in the science of learning and development

Research spanning multiple scientific disciplines paints a more dynamic and optimistic picture of human development than has ever existed before. Studies show that the expression of our genetic makeup is not fixed at birth; rather, our brain continuously develops from the moment

we are born, directly responding to the experiences, relationships and environments we encounter into adulthood. This neural ability to strengthen and grow creates a tremendous opportunity in the space of child development. By using these scientific insights, parents, educators and caretakers can ensure all children are equipped to reach their full potential.

But this neural malleability poses risks for children who regularly encounter adversity, such as youth of color, immigrants and those who live in poverty. Just as the body internalizes positive experiences, it also internalizes adverse ones through the biological mechanisms of stress. When confronted with stress, our bodies experience a surge of hormones that increase our heart rate, blood pressure, inflammatory response and blood sugar levels. While this “fight or flight” response makes us more vigilant and alert in the moment, it is dangerous when prolonged and unmitigated – overwhelming a child’s development and leaving our children at a higher risk for learning, behavior and health problems as they get older.

Youth spend a lot of their childhood and adolescence in school; therefore, school environments and experiences are incredibly important to their overall development. But many education systems are not designed with a fundamental understanding of this science and the opportunities and risks it presents for all students. For many children who regularly face adversity, these systems can have the opposite effect – perpetuating beliefs that race, culture, gender and/or economic status correlate with an innate inability to learn. These dangers are materialized in everything from discipline policies to an individual teacher’s language in the classroom. Such structures and policies add unneeded stress onto youth, and make it increasingly difficult to fully develop and succeed. Thus, an achievement gap that’s created before a child even begins school continues to widen as they matriculate through K-12.

As overwhelming as these challenges may seem, a solution lies in the science of learning and development. This science demonstrates that education systems can be designed to promote healthy development for all students while actively mitigating the negative impact of adversity on students who face it regularly. To fully capitalize on this opportunity, education models must integrate the science of learning and development into their systems, values and practices, with an intentional focus on promoting equity where it is not yet present. TFC specifically focuses on educators who serve high concentrations of students facing adversity, equipping them with the knowledge, resources and supports they need to mitigate this negative impact on learning and in doing so, promote equity for all young people as they grow.

TFC’s mission to implement change at all levels of an education system is ambitious, but truly unique in comparison to other education reform efforts. By using scientific research to influence the greater ecosystem in addition to individual schools, TFC’s approach is one of a kind, with promising potential for maximum impact.

Background and Success in the District

TFC has a rich history of learning with DCPS, and the partnership has come incredibly far since its inception during the 2010-11 school year. Over the past seven years, TFC has partnered with 12 schools, serving more than 400 school staff and 3,500 students through its traditional capacity. More recently, this partnership has expanded to include professional learning series for district-level staff – training more than 250 DCPS social workers and psychologists on foundational concepts regarding the science of adversity.

This mutually beneficial partnership between TFC and DCPS has created a proven track record of success, particularly in the areas of school climate and teacher practices. During the 2016-17 school year, TFC worked with four schools – all of which made promising strides towards creating healthy learning environments.

In each of its school partners, TFC takes a diagnose and prescribe approach to its school reform model, where each school receives an individualized intervention specifically designed to meet its unique needs. To develop these action plans, TFC collects baseline data using its internally-developed Schoolwide Environment Assessment Tool (SEAT). This tool provides a comprehensive snapshot of a school's environment through quantitative and qualitative data collection, assessing both the existence and quality of the systems, practices and procedures in a school. Based upon the results of the collected baseline data, TFC co-creates school-specific goals for the year in collaboration with school leadership, and then tracks progress against these goals throughout the year.

Hendley Elementary School

At first-year partner Hendley Elementary (Hendley), TFC's work focused on the development of a proactive behavior plan (PBP) and bolstering the system for referrals and intervention planning for at-risk and high-needs students. These are fundamental first steps for a first-year school, as they lay the groundwork for an environment where students have clear behavioral expectations and receive the social and emotional supports they require. TFC is proud to report that Hendley made strong progress in these areas as evidenced by improvements between Hendley's fall SEAT evaluation and its spring evaluation. In the fall of 2016, Hendley received a score of "advanced" or "mastered" on just seven of 30 SEAT indicators; but when assessed again in the spring of 2017, Hendley was rated as "advanced" or "mastered" in 22 of 30 SEAT categories, including multiple categories relating directly to the existence of a PBP and effective intervention planning.

Malcolm X Elementary School

Similarly, first-year partner Malcolm X Elementary (Malcolm X) experienced increases in SEAT scores related to positive behavioral interventions and support (PBIS) and the development of critical student support structures. These student support structures include a "Kid Talk" system – consisting of grade-level teams of teachers that work together to identify and develop additional supports for at-risk students – as well as a formal student support team – a team which reviews referrals, establishes individualized supports and monitors progress for the highest-needs students in a school. Before partnering with TFC, none of these systems existed within the school; therefore, much of TFC's work this year focused on simply explaining the need for these systems and raising awareness about how they can effectively function together. Malcolm X received a score of "advanced" or "mastered" on only two of 30 SEAT indicators in the fall which, by the spring, increased to 18 of 30 SEAT indicators.

Not surprisingly, the school's growth in these areas correlated with an improvement in student engagement over the same period. One of the ways TFC measures student engagement is through the externally validated Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), which utilizes third party observations to assess classroom quality. Between fall 2016 and spring 2017, Malcolm X increased its CLASS student engagement score from 4.1 to 5.5. This increase is particularly significant when one considers that the national average for any aspect of CLASS is 5, and a score of 6 or higher is considered incredibly rare.

Houston Elementary School

Second-year partner Houston Elementary (Houston), much like Malcolm X, made strong progress in teaching and defining expectations for positive behavior systems during the 2016-17 school year. Additionally, Houston worked this year to increase emotional support in teacher-student relationships. During fall data collection, student surveys indicated 72% of students felt positively about the level of emotional support between teachers and students; by the end of the year, this increased to 81%. Emotional support and healthy relationships with adults are both fundamental means of buffering the impact of stress and adversity on brain development, so success in this regard represents a big step toward creating a healthy learning environment at Houston. Further, this healthier learning environment is also enabling the school's instructional and academic core efforts to take root; Houston had the highest growth percentile across DCPS on the district's iReady interim assessment program.

Walker Jones Education Campus

Finally, Walker-Jones Education Campus (Walker-Jones) – in its fourth year of partnership with TFC – similarly prioritized emotional support between teachers and students for the 2016-17 school year. During the school's fall CLASS observations, it scored a 4.6 on the emotional support domain; by spring, Walker-Jones had raised its emotional support score to 6.2, far exceeding the national average for the domain. Additionally, Walker-Jones, in its final year of partnership with TFC, made incredible improvements across the board on nearly all aspects of SEAT, demonstrating that the school has internalized TFC's principles and begun to build the corresponding systems to make this knowledge actionable. At the start of the year, Walker-Jones received a rating of "advanced" or "mastered" in only five of 30 SEAT indicators; by spring, however, this number had jumped to 27 of 30, indicating TFC's systems and structures for establishing a healthy culture and environment have begun to take root.

District-level Support

As stated earlier, TFC expanded its relationship with DCPS beyond its traditional partnerships with individual schools to include broader, district-wide initiatives. This includes TFC's membership in the DCPS School Climate Advisory Committee, as well as multiple trainings targeted at all levels of staff ranging from instructional superintendents to social workers and psychologists. Through one such training, TFC trained more than 250 DCPS social workers and psychologists on foundational concepts, such as how to incorporate a trauma lens in the classroom and how to use reminding and reinforcing language in instruction. 94% of participants reported that they would recommend the services to a colleague, with more than 25 schools requesting additional support from TFC through the end-of-year survey. Additionally, during the 2016-17 school year, TFC provided support to two instructional superintendents and their respective principal clusters. This work was well received and will be expanded to three clusters during the 2017-18 school year.

Market Analysis

TFC's primary competitors fall into two categories: "full cocktail" consultants and single element organizations.

Full Cocktail Consultants

These organizations are the most aligned with TFC's full scope of services. They are guided by a strong awareness of the impact of trauma and work on a school-level to address issues related to environment, mindsets and skills. Most of these providers work in 10 to 15 schools through multi-year engagements in specific regions, focusing on a range of school practices and systems with a specialization in integration and implementation.

- University of California, San Francisco, Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS) project
- Washington State University, Collaborative Learning for Educational Achievement and Resilience (CLEAR) project
- Project ACHIEVE

These organizations have work areas that overlap with some components of TFC's services, but do not provide the full, integrated set of services provided by TFC.

Single Element Organizations

Integrated Student Supports

These organizations focus on building multi-tiered systems of support, identifying students in need of tier II and III support and aligning them with interventions that meet their needs. These organizations often select and train additional staff members for the school to manage these systems and coordinate intervention programs. These organizations share a strong focus on high-poverty schools, but often focus on grades 6 through 12; some elementary models are known.

- Communities in Schools
- City Connects
- City Year

Trauma-informed Practice

These organizations focus on adversity and trauma, providing awareness and consultation to school systems and schools. These organizations typically staff licensed psychologists and counselors to ensure expertise in mental health care provision, but tend not to have specified practices for teachers and school leaders.

- Child Trauma Academy
- Sanctuary Institute

Social-Emotional Learning

These organizations center on student-focused programs that are dedicated to developing social-emotional skills and mindsets. Delivery models often include mandatory staff training and implementation support. Integration support regarding issues of schoolwide discipline, learning climate and academic topics are still in the early stages of development.

- Compassionate Schools
- Second Step
- PATHS

Teacher Practice

These organizations focus on teachers and their classroom practices, including discipline and classroom management. Their practices often speak directly to educators and include integration with core pedagogical strategies and/or rigorous academic content. While some focus on high-poverty schools, organizations in this area are typically more general.

- Responsive Classroom
- CT3 Education
- EL Education

The Office of School Design and Continuous Improvement believes that TFC history working with DCPS, experience in school turnaround, and the suite of school climate services described above makes them uniquely qualified as a partner for our District and schools. Over the past five years, we have seen significant improvements in almost all core areas of school operations and have built a powerful, positive relationship with DC Public Schools.

In light of the above findings it appears a sole source award to TFC is in the best interest of the DCPS and would be the most efficient and cost-effective procurement method.

CERTIFICATION BY THE OFFICE OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PROGRAMS:

I hereby certify that the above findings are correct and the anticipated cost to DCPS is fair and reasonable.

Date

Eugene Pinkard
Chief, School Design and Continuous
Improvement

CERTIFICATION AND DETERMINATION

Based on the above certified findings in accordance cited authority, I hereby determine that it is not feasible or practical to invoke the competitive bidding process under Section 402 or 403 of the District of Columbia Procurement Practices Reform Act of 2010 (D.C. Law 18-371; DC Code 2-354.04 and 27 DCMR 1304 and 1702).

Date

Deputy Chief Procurement Officer