

Central Little Rock Promise Neighborhood Project

Preliminary Memorandum of Understanding

This document represents a preliminary memorandum of understanding signed by the following partnering organizations (partners) committed to a collaborative effort with the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) to plan and implement a Promise Neighborhood project in seven census tracts and five schools in the City of Little Rock, Arkansas: Arkansas Children's Hospital, the Central Arkansas Library System, the City of Little Rock, the Little Rock School District, New Futures for Youth.

The neighborhoods to be targeted initially are those located in census tracts 10, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, and 21.02.

Our theory of action for this project is that a well-coordinated collaboration of partners working with parents will aggressively intervene in the lives of children with well-designed programs and services that are being monitored closely. We believe that by collectively engaging in this sort of intense effort to promote academic achievement; foster physical, social, and emotional development; encourage parental engagement and effective parenting; build healthy habits and environments; nurture productive citizens; and any other means that proves necessary, we will be able to create and sustain a community in our targeted neighborhoods in which all children can thrive physically, educationally, socially, and emotionally in preparation for productive, enjoyable lives as adults. We recognize that this is an effort to create transformative change in the areas of Little Rock designated as our Promise Neighborhood and that in this effort there will be no room for excuses as good results will matter, not good intentions. We see this as a platform for exploring and learning more about not only the long-term effectiveness of specific academic, health and social service interventions and practices but

also the systemic and structural problems that will need to be addressed in order to create a true community of opportunity accessible to all children in a given area.

The partners and UALR are in agreement that the work of this project will be framed by the specific set of indicators that we have jointly identified in connection with each of the following desired outcomes:

- 1) Children enter kindergarten ready to learn;
- 2) Students are proficient in core academic subjects;
- 3) Students successfully transition from middle grades to high school;
- 4) Youth graduate from high school;
- 5) High school graduates obtain a postsecondary degree, certification, or credential;
- 6) Students are healthy;
- 7) Students feel safe at school and in their community;
- 8) Students live in stable communities;
- 9) Family and community members support learning in Promise Neighborhood schools;
- 10) Students have access to 21st century learning tools;
- 11) Students and neighbors feel connected;
- 12) Students and families have high academic aspirations;
- 13) Students attend effective schools; and
- 14) Children and youth experience and participate actively in the arts and humanities.

The partners and UALR further agree to create a continuum of solutions consisting of programs, policies, practices, services, systems, and/or supports that are aligned with the desired outcomes and will result in improvements in the indicators we have established for each one.

The partners and UALR agree to target initially the five traditional public schools that, on the basis of current attendance zones, should be serving the majority of children growing up in our defined Promise Neighborhood. The five schools are Bale Elementary, Franklin Elementary, Stephens Elementary, Forest Heights Middle School, and Hall High School. The Little Rock School District has agreed to plan for the implementation of ambitious, rigorous, and comprehensive interventions to improve these schools that may need to include one of the four school intervention models described in the Race to the Top notice (November 18, 2009). The Little Rock School District acknowledges that Hall High School has been classified as a persistently lowest-achieving school by the Arkansas Department of Education and, as such, would be required to be reformed using one of the four school intervention models described in the Race to the Top notice (November 18, 2009) if our Promise Neighborhood Project were to receive funding from the Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods Program.

The partners and UALR agree to work cooperatively in developing a data-sharing plan such that evidence suggesting the effectiveness of any solution will be readily available for the purpose of assessment and evaluation. This data-sharing plan will also be designed such that it will be possible to gauge the effectiveness of services provided to children and their families.

The partners and UALR agree that an advisory board will be created for the purpose of ensuring and sustaining the effectiveness of the collaborative effort. The advisory board will be comprised of up to 21 members—including one member from each of the seven census tracts, one parent from each of the targeted schools, and one member from each partnering organization. The advisory board will meet at least once a month during the planning year to receive reports from and provide guidance for the project coordinator, as well as the leaders of the three key operational teams (data team, solutions team, and sustainability team). The

advisory board will also have primary responsibility, along with the project coordinator, for planning a State of Our Kids Summit designed to cultivate an on-going conversation in the community about this effort.

Each partner's description of specific commitment to this project is as follows:

Arkansas Children's Hospital (ACH)

Arkansas Children's Hospital [ACH] is prepared to participate in the organizing and planning efforts described in this Memorandum of Understanding. Using its' existing relationships with the partner groups and other associations which provide services to the children of the identified Neighborhood, ACH will engage, encourage and promote the Promise Neighborhood values and goals. Our Community Outreach efforts for residents in the neighborhoods around our campus will reinforce the values and goals of this effort. Our clinical program services to the children and youth of the target neighborhood will underpin the outcomes identified in this MOU.

ACH provides primary medical care and over 70 Specialty Clinic services to the children residing in the targeted census tracks. Additionally, ACH provides the bulk of inpatient care needed by the children living in these census tracks. We will continue to afford this care, regardless of the child's/family's inability to pay. Our Community Outreach efforts will continue to provide a Health Fair in the major shopping mall in the area as well as work with various schools, including the five identified Promise Neighborhood schools, for Wellness, Safety, and Health Promotion programming and other health-related community outreach educational offerings. Our Injury Prevention Center will make programming available to the targeted schools. We will also make the HealthTeacher.com program available to all these schools.

ACH will be an active partner during the planning process, assigning a staff member as our lead representative and supporting that involvement with appropriate management and programmatic leadership as needed. Financially, ACH will identify the costs associated with our existing program activities in the targeted neighborhood and will make that information available to the planning team.

Central Arkansas Library System (CALs)

CALS, headquartered in Little Rock, serves a local population of 317,457 and is the largest public library system in Arkansas. It is now the sixth fastest growing library system in the United States and has been deliberate in providing supportive educational services to Little Rock and beyond. Central to the collaboration and contribution to the Promise Neighborhood work on the part of CALS is the Children's Initiative. The Children's Initiative, including a \$12 million capital investment, plus a core program budget of over \$250,000 for a new Children and Youth Library and Learning Center, is intended to provide learning enrichment opportunities for the children, youth, and families of Little Rock through partnerships, innovative collaborations, programs, and new, relevant ideas for learning. The effort will assist children and young people: graduate from high school, prepare for meaningful jobs and ongoing education, and become the next generation of democratic citizens working to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood, in the city, in the state, in the nation, and across the globe.

The new Center is being built in the heart of the area of Little Rock this Promise Neighborhood effort will target. It will be accessible to any and every child in Little Rock; however, the neighborhoods connected to it will have ready access to new forms of enrichment learning. Our vision is that all children should be able to find spaces and opportunities to "touch

the future” and, along with an array of wonderful partners, we intend on creating new forms of public learning (mostly for out-of-school time) for the children most marginalized in Little Rock.

CALS and the Children’s Initiative will prioritize open access to the new facility and new programming for the Promise Neighborhood effort. For the initial planning effort, CALS commits to participating actively in the planning process and contributing staff time, meeting space, and programmatic expertise as needed. CALS anticipates the value of these donated resources to represent a contribution of at least \$10,000 to this effort.

City of Little Rock

In 1994, a citizen-based goal-setting process called FUTURE-Little Rock recommended - and the citizens passed - a ½ cent sales tax to permanently designate City funds to sustain and administer prevention, intervention and treatment programs, in addition to other major city initiatives. This commitment has continued and the City of Little Rock has invested three million dollars annually to increase opportunities and improve outcomes for children, youth and their families. The City’s Community Programs Department was established in 1996 with a mission to address quality of life issues and to provide a greater array of social and human services needed and desired by citizens. The Community Programs Department has served as the administrative arm for programs in education, health and safety, youth development and training, prevention, intervention, treatment, and supportive services. These efforts were recognized nationally in 2001 when the National League of Cities presented Little Rock with an Innovation Award for the creative strategies it uses to finance the Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment programs that benefit the community overall and youth specifically. They again received national attention in 2006, 2007 and 2008 when the City was recognized as one of the 100 Best Communities for Young People by America’s Promise Alliance.

The City has been engaged in formal and informal planning efforts designed to redevelop blighted areas in our community. The aforementioned PIT initiative is the anchor of a formal community wide planning process aimed at revitalizing a depressed area of Midtown Little Rock, which includes the boundaries for our Promise Neighborhood application. The 12th Street Corridor Revitalization project began in August of 2008 with support from the City of Little Rock, Central Arkansas Library System and UAMS. This exciting and innovative planning process has a central theme based on infrastructure redevelopment and human capital redevelopment. There are several institutional anchors in the works and human capital grants to support this redevelopment. Transition to adulthood programming, YouthBuild programming, Brownfield certification and assessment programming, urban gardening programming and the development of a green job corps for disconnected youth are all existing or planned initiatives focused on the Promise Neighborhood and supported by the City.

For the planning year, the City has committed \$50,000 as cash match to support the Promise Neighborhood planning efforts. In addition, the City is committed to marshaling other resources in the target area and will commit staff from the City Manager's Office, Little Rock Police Department, Parks and Recreation, Department of Community Programs, Neighborhood and Housing, Workforce Investment Board and Public Relations to assist with various Promise Neighborhood planning work items as needed.

Little Rock School District

The Little Rock School District recognizes the need for interagency communication, collaboration, and cooperation in the effort to assist children who are from low-income families and growing up in high-poverty neighborhoods. The District's mission is to "equip all students with the skills and knowledge to realize their aspirations, think critically and independently,

learn continuously, and face the future as productive contributing citizens. This mission is accomplished through open access to a diverse, innovative and challenging curriculum in a secure environment with a staff dedicated to excellence and empowered with the trust and support of our community.” As the District’s mission states, support from the community is critical to the ultimate success of our students.

The District’s recently developed five-year Strategic Plan includes ambitious goals including the use of data and accountability system that links students, teachers, and schools. The District and its community partners have well-established cooperative working relationships; however, they tend to remain separate in practice. Because Promise Neighborhoods offers a comprehensive approach to improving outcomes for children in our most distressed communities based on interagency cooperative planning and implementation, we believe that the Promise Neighborhoods Program is a valuable approach to improving children’s outcomes and will strengthen the District’s effort to achieve its mission and Strategic Plan.

The Little Rock School District will actively participate in the planning process and commit a lead administrative team (5% time commitment) to coordinate and delegate the necessary human resources throughout the planning process. The expertise of the Informational Technology staff (5% time commitment) will contribute to the data collection system. The District will share school facilities for program activities. The in-kind match associated with personnel and facilities are estimated at \$37,062.

New Futures for Youth

New Futures for Youth, Inc., a non-profit community intermediary, was created in 1988 by a broad based community collaborative seeking to improve outcomes for youth in the City of Little Rock. New Futures, along with its collaborative partners, has managed the implementation

of a wide variety of strategies designed to improve academic success, reduce youth violence, reduce teen pregnancies, improve employability skills, and increase opportunities for youth to participate in well structured and enriching programs and activities in their schools and neighborhoods. Participation in Little Rock's Promise Neighborhood project is a natural next step for New Futures. Not only is the project's focus on improving outcomes and increasing opportunities for young people in line with New Futures mission, but also the Promise Neighborhood is located in the geographic center of the area in which New Futures has predominantly worked for more than two decades.

New Futures has a long history of work with and for the youth of Little Rock. The organization is trusted and respected by neighborhood residents, small organizations and large institutions in the City. New Futures will assist with the convening of planning participants inclusive of community constituencies. Also, New Futures will provide expert assistance, evaluation and implementation information regarding the Youth Initiative Project, Youth Intervention Specialists, and the Youth Program Quality Assessment, three potential elements of Little Rock's continuum of solutions. Finally, New Futures will commit 10% of the executive director's time and 10% of the director of program services' time to Little Rock's Promise Neighborhood project for the extent of the planning process. The in-kind match totals \$20,175.

University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR)

UALR commits to being the lead partner in this collaborative effort and, as such, agrees to coordinate and contribute to all aspects of this project during the planning year as described in the application narrative submitted to the Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods Program. The project will be based on the UALR campus and UALR will serve as the fiscal agent. UALR will commit to an in-kind match of \$77,112.

The partners understand that the term of this preliminary memorandum of understanding is for a one-year planning process and, by signing, commit to participating in the Central Little Rock Promise Neighborhood Project as described in this document.

University of Arkansas at Little Rock:

Joel Anderson, Chancellor

Date

Arkansas Children’s Hospital:

Scott Gordon, Executive Vice President

Date

Central Arkansas Library System:

Bobby Roberts, Director

Date

City of Little Rock:

Bruce Moore, City Manager

Date

Little Rock School District:

Linda Watson, Superintendent

Date

New Futures for Youth:

Mark Perry, Executive Director

Date