PSC 3.0 INFORMATIONAL SCHOOL PLAN SUMMARY

FOR: Augustus Hawkins High School/South Region High School #3
PROPOSED BY: Schools for Community Action (**SCA**)
FOR: Critical Design and Gaming School (**C:\DAGS**)

Mission & Vision of the School

The teachers, recent alumni, parents, and community members of the Schools for Community Action (**SCA**) team are dedicated to building the powerful and effective learning environment that the youth in our community have long deserved. Our **SCA** members have either been raised in the neighborhood or have worked nearly exclusively in the immediate area, including Manual Arts High School and Muir Middle School. Two teachers of the **SCA** team were born and/or raised in the neighborhood surrounding the school, attending all local LAUSD schools. All of the other main contributors of this proposal have served the community in several capacities. Our plans are specific to the community needs of our South Central community, to which we are deeply connected, know well, and value intensely.

Through our outreach into the community, we realized that we need to provide families with distinct choices in the education of their children. That is why we designed four separate plans for four distinct small schools on the Augustus Hawkins campus. These four choices resulted from our findings as we spoke to the people in our community and as we read through various studies on education:

1. Critical Design and Gaming School (**C:\DAGS**)
2. Community Health Advocates School (**CHAS**)
3. Responsible Indigenous Social Entrepreneurship (**RISE**) School
4. The School of Urban Sustainability and Environmental Science (**USES**)

Mission of the Critical Design and Gaming School:
Urgently educate and empower the teenagers of South Central Los Angeles to excel through college and become transformative leaders of our local and global communities.

Vision of the Critical Design and Gaming School:
Our children are growing up in a highly technological world that is globally complex. Our school is a 21st century learning environment, tailored to prepare our students for this digital society that rewards resourcefulness, creativity, and innovation. Teaching and learning will be responsive to our students' lived experiences, rather than simply a classroom examination of written texts. Their learning experiences will be enhanced by the resources in the South Central community, organizations throughout Los Angeles, and through global connectivity. Each and every one of our graduates will possess the character, skills, and knowledge to succeed in the fields of science, technology, engineering, art, and math.

Designing Data Driven & Student Centered Instructional Programs

The **Critical Design and Gaming School** is joining a growing movement of researchers, policy makers, and educators who are all turning to games and game play as ways of engaging students in meaningful curriculum and preparing students for life outcomes into and beyond college. At the 2006 Summit on Educational Games, researchers and education leaders credited video games as "able to teach higher-order thinking skills such as strategic thinking, interpretative analysis, problem solving, plan formulation and execution, and adaptation to rapid change."

In a study of learning during in-class activities, researchers found that the use of academic games in the classroom resulted in a 20 percentile point gain in student achievement. Similarly, the data from action research projects that engage students in Alternate Reality play show that game play helps the development of 21st century literacy skills. Government agencies, such as the National Science Foundation, and several private foundations are funding further research into the potential of games, digital media, and simulations as learning spaces.

Job Growth
The 2010 report, *Video Games in the 21st Century*, found:

- California is the largest employer of computer and video game personnel in the nation.
- The average salary for an entertainment software industry employee is $90,000, resulting in total national

- compensation of $2.2 billion.
- California's computer and video game industry grew by 11.4% from 2005 to 2009, while the state's overall economy was going down.

Data-driven Instructional Program

Education researchers, such as John Hattie and Helen Timperley, explain that high quality feedback to students is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement. Game expert, Jane McGonigal, explains the same about gaming: "Real-time data and quantitative benchmarks are the reason why gamers get consistently better at virtually any game they play; their performance is consistently measured and reflected back to them, with advancing progress bars, points, levels, and achievements. It's easy for players to see exactly how and when they're making progress. This kind of instantaneous, positive feedback drives players to try harder and to succeed at more difficult challenges".

It is vital for student advancement and success that we are constantly monitoring our students' progress and providing a quick concrete response to meet their immediate needs. As such, we will continually assess our students' oral presentation skills, written skills, habits of mind, and ability to transfer their knowledge and skills to a myriad of contexts and mediums, including standardized tests. We will then provide instant support through activities in class, during advisory, in the morning lab before school, during our after-school programs, and link them to extended school support. These processes will be implemented using a framework modeled after the recognition games offer players for completion and success.

Instructional Program

Meeting the needs of all students

We are committed to providing inclusive settings for all students, including those with special needs and English language learners. Collaborative **Project-Based Learning** experiences will help students see the connection between the classroom and the real world. Collaboration with University partners, Community-Based Organizations, and Local Businesses will support students in their pursuit of viable College and Career pathways in Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math. Utilizing a common framework of instruction school-wide, all students will be supported to think in an interdisciplinary way. Our school will utilize a **Universal Design for Learning**© approach to instruction that allows for:

- Information and content to be presented in many different ways
- Demonstration of student learning in many different ways
- Stimulation of interest and motivation of each student in many different ways

When students are able to learn and demonstrate their learning in a variety of different ways, school becomes more engaging and student motivation to succeed increases. This supports:

- **Students with disabilities –** to have access to supports they need while being involved in a highly engaging, inclusive and flexible curriculum
- **Students of Poverty –** to utilize resources on our campus to achieve academically regardless of socio-economic status
- **Gifted students –** to apply their capabilities in a way that promotes the highest level of depth and complexity while maintaining engagement
- **English Language Learners –** to have access to an engaging and rigorous core curriculum that supports and promotes proficiency in academic English, bilingualism, and inclusion
- **Standard English Learners –** to maximize their development of academic English in highly engaging and supportive learning environments

In meeting the needs of all students, the instructional program focuses on three strategies:

1. **Project-Based Learning –** constructed with students' cultural and community identities at the center in order to lead to academic achievement while addressing historical educational injustices.
2. **Participatory Action Research –** provides community-contexts for learning and meaningful student engagement.
3. **Linked Learning –** supports preparation for college and career by partnering with a network of academics and professionals.

Curriculum Design modeled after Game Design

Learning researchers are finding that the design of video games imbed effective learning principles in highly motivating contexts. The New London Group, consisting of international literacy scholars, advocates that "design thinking" should drive the creation of curriculum and methods of teaching that lead toward critical understanding. The dynamic interaction between words, symbols, images, artifacts, human behaviors, affinities, and networks happen within domains of knowledge to create particular meanings. Students will write across the curriculum, engaging in reading and writing daily in a range of forms and contexts— analytical, descriptive, expressive, or creative. Systemic-design thinking defines "critical" thinking.

Just as games challenge players to accomplish missions, our instructional program will challenge students to accomplish four real-world missions during the school-year. Each lesson will be part of a quest that strengthens their academic power. At the end of each quarter, students will overcome a boss level, in which they must link everything they have learned in all their classes and create a project that will accomplish the mission and help the community. The curriculum activates five conditions for student learning: a need to know, collaborate, and think; a space to explore; a place to reflect; a context for ongoing feedback and evaluation; and channels for sharing across internal and external communities.

School Culture

Safety and Security of our Students are of the Highest Priority:

We will provide a safe and nurturing experience from home to school and back again for every student by employing the following strategies:

- **Purposeful scheduling** – classes start later in the morning to support families with dropping off younger siblings at local elementary and middle schools
- **Cooperation with community programs such as Safe Passages** – ensure afternoon student safety for our students and the students at local elementary and middle schools
- **Campus policy** – administrators and staff will be actively present before, during, and after school
- **Communication with LAUSD and local Police Department** – support through presence

Student-Focused Culture

We will foster dialogue and nurture relationships that empower students in classrooms, effectively aiding student achievement towards academic and social success. Our classes will offer students both spaces in which to explore and places in which to reflect. Our advisories, morning lab, and after-school program will provide additional places of support for our students to maximize their learning success.

Our athletic program will seek to build athletic skills as well as character development, collaborative skills, and problem solving. The athletic program will support the social and emotional needs of students while uniting the community behind successful youth teams.

Games for the Betterment of the Community and the World

In the October 2011 issue of *Nature Structural and Molecular Biology*, an article detailed:

> For more than a decade, scientists repeatedly failed to piece together the structure of a protein-cutting enzyme from an AIDS-like virus. The scientists challenged gamers to produce an accurate model of the enzyme by playing Fold-it, an online game that allows players to collaborate and compete in predicting the structure of protein molecules. The gamers did it in only three weeks.

This type of real-world problem solving based on game play exemplifies the power of game design. The culture of fun associated with video games will be molded into a meaningful culture of college and career readiness.

Epic Challenges for Meaningful Student Outcomes

Our students will interact with each other and the community in several meaningful ways:

- **Epic contexts for action:** collective stories that help us connect our individual actions to a much bigger mission
- **Epic environments**: vast, interactive spaces that provoke feelings of curiosity and wonder
- **Epic projects:** cooperative efforts carried out by students on massive scales, over months or even years

We will include secret missions within the school: non-mandatory assignments that are hidden in secret locations. For instance, a book could contain a secret code, every room a clue, every handout a puzzle. In our learning environment, students get to share secret knowledge, turn their intellectual strengths into superpowers, tackle epic challenges, and fail without fear. All members of our school community are encouraged to take risks, make meaning, and act creatively and resourcefully. School is a practice space where the life systems that students inhabit and share with others are modeled, designed, taken apart, and reengineered as a strategy for learning.

Parent Engagement & Involvement

Between June and August, we went door to door through the neighborhoods around the Augustus Hawkins campus to inform and invite community members to our monthly community meetings held at the Southern California Library. We were able to listen to the many perspectives and experiences that community members have in regards to public education. The community walks initiated dialogues that would continue during the community meetings. We took notes, collected the group posters that were created from these meetings, and analyzed the data to directly inform our writing process.

We visited Harvard Park and Mt. Carmel Park during Summer Night Lights and engaged community members in conversations about their neighborhoods and their hopes for the new school. It was a pleasure to see many former students giving back their time and leadership efforts to help make Summer Night Lights succeed. The parents and family members were always very candid about the need for these activities to extend beyond the summer and beyond the parks.

Parents and community members will always be welcome at our campus. The **Critical Design and Gaming School** will continue to cultivate relationships with families in the community in order to ensure that our campus is always welcoming, respectful, open, and focused on what is best for our children.

We have identified five key components to engage parents and community:
1. **Parent Tours:** Parents will be encouraged to visit campus at least once each semester to tour their child's classes.
2. **Volunteering**: Parents work side-by-side with teachers and staff in school operations.
3. **End-of-Unit Projects**: Parent and community will be recruited to work closely with student teams as they prepare their final projects, present, and defend them.
4. **Parent Conferences**: We will develop a student-led conferencing model, and advisors will work with students to prepare for their conferences each semester.
5. **Parents as Experts**: As we get to know our students' parents and their various skills, we will find ways to meaningfully engage them in the collaborative work of running the school.

Staffing

The **Critical Design and Gaming School** seeks enthusiastic teachers who are youth focused, actively prepared, civically engaged, and fluent in game-like approaches to learning.

All staff members will be guided by the school mission, vision, and the following core values:
- **Student Centered:** Education should always begin with a strong respect and understanding of each student's potential and desire to learn.
- **Community Collaboration:** Authentic community collaboration leads to transformative school design.
- **Innovation and Excellence:** Teachers should constantly improve their practice to ensure students achieve new levels of success.
- **Social Justice:** Our community deserves better educational opportunities than have been historically provided.
- **Sustainability:** We will create interlinked strength between the four small schools of the Augustus Hawkins campus.

Applicant Team Contact Information

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