Turnaround for New Jersey Schools

Introduction, Absolute Priorities, and Requirements

Across the United States, approximately 15% of the population lives in poverty. In Camden and Newark, New Jersey, that rate climbs to 40% and 30%, respectively. School systems in these high-need cities have struggled to educate their student populations for decades. Both have high school dropout rates more than double the national average. Only 8% of Camden residents and 13% of Newark residents earn Bachelor's degrees.

Yet schools in Camden and Newark are primed for change. Recent policy interventions, combined with infusions of educational talent and philanthropy, have created supportive environments for dramatic improvement. With i3 support, Uncommon Schools—a charter management organization with a strong track record of producing outstanding academic outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students—will implement a **regional level** innovation in these cities to **improve schools that are among the lowest-performing in the state** (i3 Absolute Priority 3) and that serve **high-need students** in **all grades K-12.** The project, Turnaround for New Jersey Schools ("TurnNJ"), will support six whole-school transformations that transform academic outcomes for up to 2,000 students per year through 2021.

TurnNJ will be a **partnership** between Uncommon, a novice i3 applicant (**competitive priority**) and two LEAs managed by the network, Camden Prep and North Star Academy of Newark (*Appendix B*). The project is supported by the **private sector** and by the local public school districts in Camden and Newark, as well as educational leaders across the state of New Jersey (*Appendix G*). TurnNJ **complements broader school turnaround efforts** such as the Camden Commitment, the Camden Promise Zone Plan, Newark Public Schools' Strategic Plan, and New Jersey's Urban Hope Act,[1] as demonstrated by the letters of support in *Appendix G*.

[1] Plans are available in CCSD (2014); HUD (2015); NPS (2015); and NJDOE (2012).

A. Significance

(1) Promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies

Building on success. In the 1990s, a number of district and charter schools proved that it was possible for even the highest need student populations to achieve academic success. In the following decade, a number of charter management organizations (CMOs)—which typically began as single schools, including North Star Academy Charter School in 1997—refined their instructional, financial, and operational models and demonstrated that they could replicate these results at scale. Uncommon is one such CMO. Since 2005, Uncommon has grown from 5 to 44 schools serving 14,000 students across 6 cities in 3 states. Uncommon is now larger than 97% of school districts in the country. Nearly all Uncommon students are Black or Hispanic (94%) and from low-income families (83%), 11% have IEPs, and an additional 15% of non-SPED classified students receive IEP-like services such as small-group "pull-outs" according to their individual needs. Across Uncommon, all student subgroups outperform district, state, and national averages on almost every measure of academic achievement, as shown in *Figure A.1*.

Figure A.1: Uncommon's Impact for Educationally Disadvantaged Students[2]

State	Through 2013-14, Uncommon students achieved proficiency rates above 80%, with some regions approaching universal proficiency. Even after the introduction of more rigorous Common Core-aligned assessments, Uncommon students still outperformed state averages by significant margins: In New Jersey, 85% and 82% of Uncommon 4th graders were proficient or above on the PARCC math and ELA exams last year, compared to state averages of 40% and 51%. In 8th grade, Uncommon proficiency rates were 65% in math and 75% in ELA, compared to state averages of 36% and 52%, respectively.
Advanced	Last year, 53% of Black and 57% of Hispanic Uncommon students enrolled in AP courses. Nationally, only 29% of Black and Latino students in schools that offer AP courses enroll in them. Among Uncommon students who took AP exams, 66% of Black students and 68% of Hispanic students received passing scores of 3 or higher. These rates far outperform those for Black (32%) and Hispanic students (50%) and close the achievement gap with white students (66%) nationally.

[2] Referenced comparison data are available in USDOE OCR (2016); College Board (2014); College Board (2016); USDOE (2016); and Pell Institute (2016).

SAT	All Uncommon students take the SAT, a critical step on the path to college. By comparison, even though they comprise more than half of all students, only one third of SAT takers nationally are underrepresented minorities. The average SAT scores earned by Uncommon's disadvantaged student population since 2012-13 ranged from 1570-1690, comfortably exceeding the College Board's 1550 college readiness benchmark. Across the country, only 16% of Black, 23% of Hispanic, and 53% of white SAT test takers met this benchmark in 2015.
High	Uncommon's 4-year high school graduation rates range from 89-95% over the past 3 years, far exceeding national averages for Black (73%), Hispanic (76%), low-income (75%), and special education (63%) students and closing the attainment gap with white students (87%).
College	For 13 years, 95-100% of Uncommon HS graduates entered 4-year colleges, compared to 45% of low-income students nationally. Uncommon alumni graduate college within 6 years at 6 times the rate of their low-income peers nationally (51% v. 9%).

The results in *Figure A.1* are validated by 3 rigorous quasi-experimental studies that meet WWC standards for evidence with reservations. In 2010, Mathematica found that "impact estimates after 3 years [in Uncommon…middle schools] are not only statistically significant, but also substantively meaningful…. [They] translate to an estimated additional 0.9 years of accumulated growth in math and 0.7 years of accumulated growth in reading." A 2012 WWC review of Mathematica's national CMO study found Uncommon's 2-year impacts on math and reading achievement to be statistically significant and higher than 21 of the 22 included CMOs in both subjects. In 2013, CREDO found that attending an Uncommon school had "large significant positive impacts on academic growth in both reading and math"—effects which would help close historic achievement gaps for all subgroups. For example, CREDO found that attending an Uncommon school "completely cancel[s] out the negative effect associated with being a student in poverty."[3] Uncommon was awarded the 2013 Broad Prize for posting the best overall student academic performance among large charter systems and closing "income and ethnic achievement gaps four times as often as other large charter management organizations across the country."[4]

[3] See Appendix D for details related to these studies.
[4] Broad Foundation (2013)

Promising new strategies. TurnNJ builds upon the strategy of scaling success for high-needs students through CMOs, and in Newark, it further develops the strategy of improving low-performing schools through charter restarts. Though it has existed for some time, the restart strategy is rarely used: Since 2009, only 5% of School Improvement Grant (SIG) recipients pursued the restart model. In Camden, Uncommon is developing an almost entirely new promising strategy of CMO-charter collaboration to improve persistently low-performing "Renaissance Schools" that remain part of the district. To Uncommon's knowledge, few if any districts other than Camden, Shelby County's iZone, and the UP Education Network's partners in Massachusetts have partnered with CMOs to operate non-charter schools that remain under district purview.

The TurnNJ charter restart and Renaissance approaches both show the potential for tremendous impact. Through 2014, SIG schools pursuing the restart model achieved higher proficiency gains than schools using the more popular transformation (74%) and turnaround (20%) models.[5] Schools operated by the highest performing CMOs, like Uncommon, are likely to improve student outcomes even more quickly, profoundly, and consistently. Moreover, district-CMO collaborations around school restarts may reduce the community resistance that charter schools often face, as they maintain the pre-existing school community and the sanctity of schools as neighborhood institutions.

Pursuing these strategies will not only improve low-performing schools in Camden; it will also create a national evidence base for the TurnNJ approach. The i3 evaluation will fill an important gap in the research about CMOs—demonstrating that they can operate sustainably on the public dollar and can produce the highest levels of student achievement even with student

[5] IES (2012a) and USDOE (2014)

populations inherited from the lowest-performing district schools—and the research about school turnarounds, from which CMOs are largely absent.

TurnNJ strategies in action. In 2014-15, Uncommon and Newark Public Schools launched a charter restart model at one of New Jersey's lowest performing schools, Alexander Street Elementary. In the same year, Uncommon and Camden City School District launched the turnaround of Camden Prep Elementary as a Renaissance School. They also committed to using the Renaissance authority of NJ's Urban Hope Act to scale this model by at least 1 more elementary, 2 middle, and 1 high school serving more than 2,000 students by 2021. Under i3, TurnNJ will scale up the 2 existing schools and scale the implementation of Uncommon's whole-school turnaround model in 4 more low-performing schools serving grades K-12 over the next 5 years.

Impacts of TurnNJ strategies. The existing TurnNJ schools are already making progress in line with Uncommon's results for traditional charters. In Alexander Street's first restart year, 4th grade proficiency rates climbed from 18% to 60% in ELA and 28% to 70% in math. At the start of the 2015-16 school year—the first year in which Camden Prep served students in all grades K-4—fewer than 1 in 5 students were reading on grade level according to the criterion-referenced STEP assessment. At the end of the year, that rate had more than tripled. Preliminary results from the NJ PARCC exams suggest that 3rd and 4th grade proficiency rates at Camden Prep will be at least 3 times what they were prior to Uncommon management in ELA and over 5 times as high in math.

Alternative to existing strategies. The TurnNJ approach is unique among national models to improve low-performing schools for 3 reasons. First, TurnNJ represents an exceedingly rare partnership between a charter network and a traditional public school district, enabled by a

unique state policy innovation that allows for restarts through chartering as well as CMO management of existing district schools. Second, the TurnNJ model allows CMO management to improve low-performing schools without closing neighborhood schools and requiring families to travel long distances. TurnNJ's neighborhood focus matters because it stands in stark contrast to other cities with substantial charter presence. Chicago, New York, and Washington have far more extensive public transportation networks than most of the country; families in more representative cities like Cleveland, Detroit, or New Orleans often struggle with the practicalities of enrolling their students in schools far from home. Third and finally, the state policy innovation at the heart of TurnNJ's expansion in Camden allows highly effective school operators to serve more students with fewer of the challenges of traditional chartering, including state charter caps, facilities availability, and highly polarized public debates about school governance.

(2) Replicability of the proposed project in a variety of settings

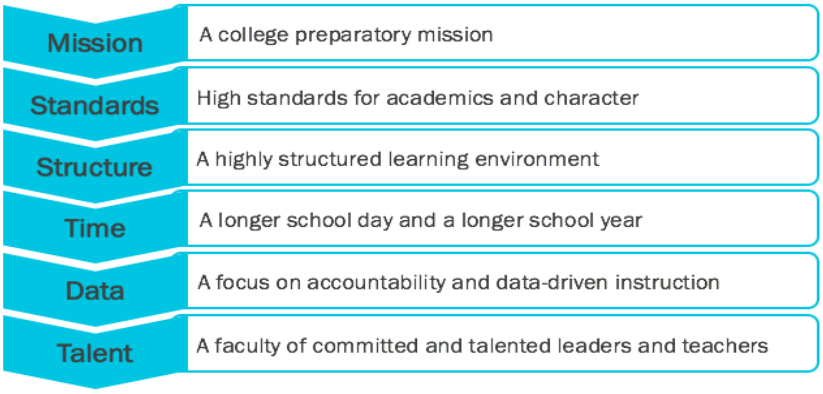
Record of replication. Though applied to a new context, the core instructional, financial, and operational models at the heart of the TurnNJ whole-school improvement model are replications of the models used in Uncommon in all its schools. Uncommon's network grew from 5 to 44 schools in 10 years. By 2021, it will include 66 schools serving 22,000 students in 6 regions. TurnNJ has a similar potential for replication. In NJ alone, cities like Paterson, Jersey City, and Trenton share similar demographics, state policy environments, and concentrations of low-performing schools (see *Figures B.1-2* on p. 9).

Policies to enable replication. Replicability is also supported by evolving local and state policy landscapes. In the decade since the first "portfolio schools" model launched in New Orleans, similar strategies have been pursued in settings as diverse as Baltimore, Cleveland, Detroit, Memphis, Oakland, Philadelphia, and Washington—all enabled by state policies similar

to the NJ Urban Hope Act, under which the Camden TurnNJ schools operate. This clear trend in preferences for portfolio models from policymakers, school and district leaders, and parents alike demonstrates the potential for national replication of TurnNJ beyond the grant period.

Replicable school models. Uncommon's ability to replicate is rooted in whole-school models that are designed for scale from the start. Each Uncommon school serves as a talent incubator: new TurnNJ schools are expected to continue the trend of importing their leadership from the ranks of highly effective educators at existing Uncommon schools. For example, Alexander Street is managed by a Founding Principal who spent 4 years as a Lead Teacher and 4 years as a Principal at another Uncommon North Star Academy school. A number of the school's founding teacher-leaders also taught at other North Star schools. **Financially**, after an initial 3-4 year start-up phase, each Uncommon school (whether charter or turnaround) operates on the same per-pupil "public dollar" available to all schools. **Operationally**, people, processes, and technology are both simple and efficient while nimble enough to meet ever changing school needs.[6] **Educationally**, Uncommon centers its schools around 6 key attributes (*Figure A.2*) in which Uncommon has developed substantial expertise and that Uncommon believes define a high-quality educational experience in any setting, urban or rural, district, charter, or other.

Figure A.2: The 6 Key Attributes of Uncommon Schools



[6] See Section C(3) on pp. 21-23 for more on Uncommon's financial and operating models.

(3) Project addresses a national challenge with a need for better solutions than those available

TurnNJ addresses the national challenge of low-performing schools—of which there are more than 14,000 according to SIG eligibility data—better than other currently available solutions in several ways. First, it has already demonstrated the potential for improving student achievement (see Section A(1)) more quickly and more profoundly than the turnaround and transformation models pursued by 95% of SIG grantee schools. While these schools have maintained or improved proficiency rates, their averages remain under 60%—a pace of progress that still leaves far too many students unprepared for success in college and a career.[7] Second, TurnNJ does not face the limitations of strategies to scale successful charter schools and CMOs, such as restrictive state policies like charter caps and the availability of facilities resources. TurnNJ avoids these challenges by leveraging district collaborations to turn around existing schools. Third, TurnNJ is more financially sustainable than other whole-school improvement models, including charter restarts from CMOs that are heavily dependent on private philanthropy. By contrast, TurnNJ only requires philanthropy for its schools' first 3-4 start-up years. Finally, TurnNJ serves communities as they exist today; it does not ask them to uproot their families or routines to the same extent that many school closure, charter restart, or portfolio models do today.

B. Strategy to Scale

(1) Unmet demand for the strategy to reach the proposed level of scale

Unmet local demand. More than 40% of Newark Public Schools and 75% of Camden City schools are among the lowest-performing in the state of New Jersey and are classified as state priority or focus schools. There is substantial unmet demand from families in these communities for better school options. For example, nearly 4,000 families applied for 662 open seats in

[7] SIG eligibility, model choice, and performance data are available in CGCS (2015); IES (2012a); and USDOE (2014).

Newark's North Star Academy schools last year. Across all regions, 9 in 10 Uncommon schools are located in neighborhoods where the local district school has been identified for intervention by the state due to persistent low performance (*Figure B.1*).

Figure B.1: Unmet Local Demand for School Improvement Models in Uncommon Cities

	Boston	Camden	Newark	NYC	Rochester	Troy	**Total**
Uncommon schools whose neighborhood district school is on state priority list	4	1	8	20	4	2	**39**
Total Uncommon schools	4	1	11	21	5	2	**44**
Uncommon priority school alternatives	100%	100%	73%	95%	80%	100%	**89%**

Local commitment. Recognizing these high levels of unmet demand, the TurnNJ partners already secured commitments from Newark Public Schools, Camden City School District, and the NJDOE to reach the levels of scale proposed in this application (*Appendices B.4* and *B.7*). By the end of the grant period, nearly 15% of Camden's K-12 students will be served by TurnNJ.

Unmet national demand. State and federal initiatives like R2T and SIG made a significant dent, but a vast unmet national demand for models to improve 14,000 low-performing schools remains.[8] *Figure B.2* shows the number and percentage of low-performing schools in potential post-i3 project replication sites, highlighting how rarely existing models have been implemented with success and demonstrating that there will be virtually no demand-side limit on the potential for national replication of the TurnNJ model beyond the grant period.

Figure B.2: Unmet National Demand for School Improvement Models in Select Cities

Region	State	City	Low-Performing Schools
Mid-Atlantic	New Jersey	Paterson	25
Mid-Atlantic	New Jersey	Trenton	15
Midwest	Wisconsin	Milwaukee	42
Northeast	Rhode Island	Providence	22
Southeast	Georgia	Atlanta	37
Southeast	Arkansas	Little Rock	26
Southwest	New Mexico	Albuquerque	33
West	Nevada	Clark County	20

[8] CGCS (2015)

Despite this unmet national demand, and despite the proliferation of portfolio school approaches and supporting state and local policies, the closest models to TurnNJ have been implemented in only 3 cities: Memphis, Nashville, and New Orleans. These implementations were all led by New Schools for New Orleans (NSNO) with the support of an i3 grant. They are limited in their generalizability, however, by their concentration in the Southern region of the US (where education governance, labor, and funding policies differ from other regions); their reliance on substantial amounts of private philanthropy; and results that, though positive, have not yet proven truly transformative for high-need students. Effect sizes in NSNO's 2-year impact analysis were 0.10 at $p \leq .05$ in math and 0.11 at $p \leq .01$ in reading, compared to Uncommon's effect sizes from a 2012 evaluation of 0.55 in math and 0.23 in reading, both at $p \leq .01$.[9] Therefore, significant national demand remains for a model like TurnNJ that is led by a high-quality CMO that produces life-changing results for students—for example, results like Uncommon's 13-year track record of sending 95-100% of high school graduates directly to 4-year colleges—in regions outside the South and financed after start-up on the public dollar. This demand will increase even further throughout the grant period as a growing number of TurnNJ schools demonstrate strong results.

(2) Grant funds address past barriers to reaching proposed level of scale

Start-up costs. The Uncommon financial model (Section C(3) on pp. 21-23) ensures that each Uncommon school is sustainable on the public dollar after an initial 3-4 year "start-up" phase. During start-up, additional philanthropy is required to cover higher per-student costs. In cities like Boston and New York, these funds are readily available from a broad base of private donors. Cities like Camden and Newark have both substantially higher concentrations of low-performing schools and substantially smaller concentrations of community wealth. Raising funds

[9] CREDO (2013) and IES (2012b)

to support start-up costs was the primary barrier to expanding the TurnNJ model in the past. An i3 grant would allow Uncommon to reach the level of scale proposed in the application. Also, by supporting a rigorous evaluation of the TurnNJ model, the i3 grant would create the evidence base necessary for Uncommon or other providers adopting the strategy to secure private and public funding for future replications in low-wealth communities beyond the grant period.

Students served and cost. TurnNJ will serve a significant and growing number of students. Uncommon's commitment to operating schools on the public dollar and only using i3 grant funds for start-up and evaluation expenses results in an exceptionally low cost per student that decreases over the grant period and ensures long-term post-grant sustainability (*Figure B.3*).

Figure B.3: TurnNJ Costs per Student Served throughout Grant Period[10]

	Spring '17	SY17-18	SY18-19	SY19-20	SY20-21	Fall '21
Students Served	789	1,079	1,321	1,548	1,786	2,020
i3 Grant Funds	$1,569,724	$1,745,944	$1,944,280	$1,712,932	$1,582,360	$788,998
i3 Cost Per Student	**$1,990**	**$1,618**	**$1,472**	**$1,107**	**$886**	**$391**

Uncommon ability to scale. Uncommon's growth from 5 to 44 schools and 3 to 6 regions over the past 10 years demonstrates its ability to overcome barriers to scaling TurnNJ. For example, Uncommon overcame the start-up cost barriers to scale with private philanthropy in cities where it is more readily available or with federal funding, including Charter School Program grants in 2010 and 2011. Uncommon also overcame state policy barriers to scale (i.e., "charter caps") through collaborative, focused community engagement that resulted in policy changes that allowed Uncommon to continue replicating (*Figure B.4* on p. 13). Uncommon has also overcome these barriers by taking advantage of policies like the Urban Hope Act that enables TurnNJ expansion in Camden. Finally, Uncommon overcame human capital barriers to

[10] The 60-month grant period extends from 1/1/17 – 12/31/21. Elsewhere in the application, grant years are referred to as calendar years. To simplify the presentation of student enrollment against grant expenditures, this chart shows school years instead. Please note: i3 grant funds includes all program and evaluation expenses and a 4% indirect cost rate.

scale by building its own internal pipelines through fellowship programs for operational leaders, instructional leaders, and aspiring teachers and by maintaining an unparalleled focus on teacher and leader development—exemplified by its publications *Teach Like a Champion (2010), Practice Perfect* (2012) and *Get Better Faster* (2016)—that, as the network grew, allowed its schools to serve as talent incubators for future expansion sites. All of these solutions to past barriers to scale will continue to be implemented in TurnNJ schools throughout the grant period, further diminishing barriers to scale and facilitating broader replication as the TurnNJ model is applied in more schools.

(3) Mechanisms to disseminate information on the project for further development/replication

i3 evaluation. Broadly disseminating findings from the TurnNJ evaluation (Section D) is a core objective of the project design (*Figures C.1-2* and *C.5 on pp. 14-20*). The evaluation will be published on the i3, Mathematica, and Uncommon websites and will be presented at conferences such as the National Charter Schools Conference and gatherings of the i3 community.

Disseminating practices. Driven by the belief that *all* young people should have access to educational opportunities that will prepare them to go to and through college, Uncommon developed a multi-faceted approach for sharing effective practices to improve educational opportunity for students in non-Uncommon schools. In NYC and Boston, Uncommon participates in district-charter compacts to facilitate the sharing of best practices between charter and low-performing district schools.[11] To date, Uncommon has received 3 NY State Education Department Charter School Dissemination grants to provide professional development to principals and teachers in NYC and Rochester district schools. The NYCDOE saw such profound impact from these efforts that it asked Uncommon to continue the partnership despite

[11] CRPE (2016)

the expiration of its grants, and after seeing the professional development model in action, Newark Public Schools also sought professional development for low-performing schools from Uncommon. That work began last year and is ongoing. Additionally, Uncommon publishes books about its effective practices for driving high levels of student academic achievement, advocates for supportive school policies, and serves as a proof point for student success in turnaround and charter schools funded by the public dollar (*Figure B.4*). These activities will continue throughout and beyond the i3 grant period, and they will be enriched by the scale and new settings Uncommon will reach with i3 funding for TurnNJ.

Figure B.4: Uncommon's Effective Practices Dissemination Strategy

Publish	Since 2010, Uncommon has published 8 books describing effective practices. Among them, *Teach Like a Champion* (2010) provided the field with a common language for effective teaching techniques and has quickly become a seminal text for teacher preparation programs. *Driven by Data* (2010) and *Leverage Leadership* (2012) have similarly reshaped school leadership training. Published in July 2016, *Get Better Faster* details a new approach for rapidly developing new teachers in their first 90 days.
Develop	Uncommon offers professional development workshops designed to give external teachers and school leaders the opportunity to practice and receive feedback on their implementation of the techniques used to drive achievement in Uncommon schools and published in Uncommon's books. Uncommon also offers online professional development modules that schools can implement independently.
Share	The Uncommon Impact Team engages in direct district-charter collaborations in Newark, New York City, and Rochester that are designed to improve teaching and learning, primarily in schools identified for intervention under section 1116 of ESEA. These collaborations include professional development for teachers, a year-long instructional leadership program for administrators, school visits, and resources that allow educators to turn-key the professional development in their own schools.
Advocate	Uncommon's External Relations Team develops strategic relationships with parents, the media, and community and government leaders to promote state and local policies that support access to high-quality educational experiences for disadvantaged students.
Prove it's Possible	Uncommon seeks to be a proof point for achieving outstanding academic results for high-need students. An i3 grant will support its efforts to sustain and scale high levels of academic achievement for up to 2,000 students per year through 2021. It will also provide funding for an independent evaluation of the impact of the TurnNJ model, which when published will prove conclusively that success for educationally disadvantaged students is possible, replicable, and sustainable on the public dollar—even in schools that had been persistently low-performing.

C. Project Design and Management Plan

(1) Project goals, objectives, and outcomes are clearly specified and measurable

TurnNJ is a continuation of the successful model that has consistently delivered outstanding academic results for disadvantaged students in Uncommon charters and that has been replicated successfully in two turnaround schools (see Section A(1) on pp. 2-3).

Figure C.1: TurnNJ Logic Model

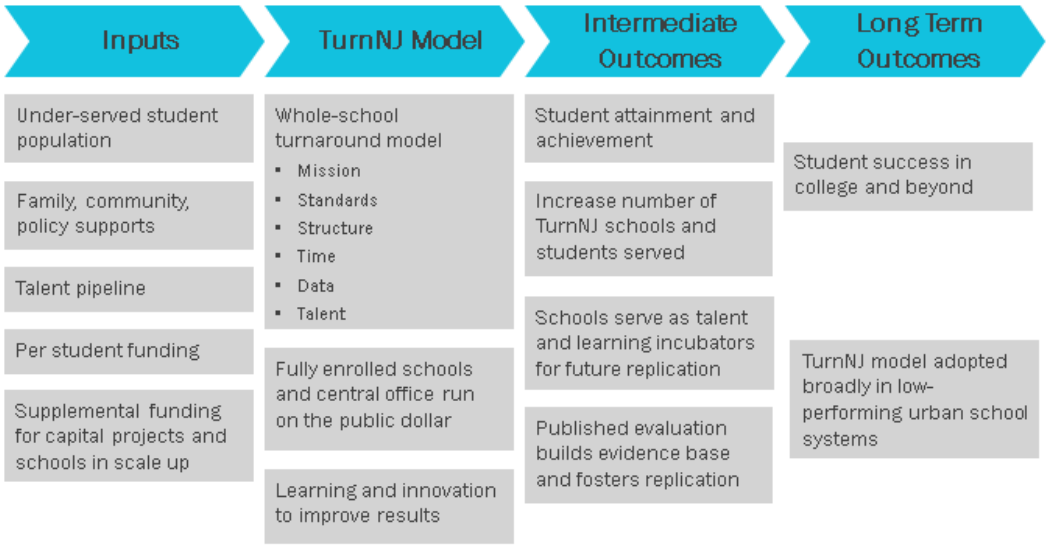


Figure C.2: TurnNJ Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

Project Objective	Outcomes/Metrics	Data for improvement and i3 reporting				
		'17	'18	'19	'20	'21
Goal 1—Scale: Apply the TurnNJ whole-school turnaround model in at least 6 of the lowest-performing schools in the state, serving at least 2,000 high-need students across two cities in all grades K-12 by the end of the grant period.						
A) Identify and obtain management rights to a subset of NJ's lowest-performing schools in two cities that serve all grades K-12.	The TurnNJ partners will run at least 6 schools serving grades K-12 (i3 AP3 lowest-performing requirement, Eligibility Requirement 2).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B) Recruit and enroll students in TurnNJ schools.	At least 2,000 students will be enrolled across grades in TurnNJ schools by the final grant year (i3 Performance Measure 1).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
C) Maintain a high-need population of students in TurnNJ schools.	At least 80% of students in TurnNJ schools will be economically disadvantaged and 90% will be students of color throughout the grant period (i3 Eligibility Requirement 1).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Project Objective	Outcomes/Metrics	Data for improvement and i3 reporting				
		'17	'18	'19	'20	'21
Goal 2—Impact: Implement the TurnNJ whole-school turnaround model with fidelity to substantially improve attainment and achievement for educationally disadvantaged students.						
D) Apply the TurnNJ whole-school turnaround model, including the six key elements of Uncommon Schools, to improve student performance.	Annual average daily student attendance, student attrition, and student PARCC achievement data by subgroup will show outperformance of demographically similar comparison schools and progress toward closing historic achievement gaps throughout the grant period (i3 AP3).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
E) Students in TurnNJ schools outperform demographically similar comparison schools on measures of student attainment and achievement.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
F) High-need students in TurnNJ schools make progress toward closing historic achievement and attainment gaps.		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Goal 3—Evaluate & Disseminate: Evaluate the TurnNJ through methods that meet WWC standards without reservations and share information broadly to facilitate future replication.						
G) Use an independent evaluator to conduct a randomized controlled trial evaluating TurnNJ's impact.	A study of TurnNJ meeting WWC standards without reservations will be published by the end of the grant period (i3 Performance Measure 2).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
H) Use ongoing performance feedback to refine the TurnNJ model and to ensure that targets for school growth, enrollment, and achievement outcomes are met.	The ambitious but achievable project metrics will be met by the end of the grant period. Sufficient performance data will be collected throughout to improve implementation and facilitate future replications when they are published in the TurnNJ independent evaluation and disseminated through Uncommon's effective practice sharing strategies outlined in the Management Plan (i3 Performance Measure 3).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
I) Share knowledge gained through TurnNJ broadly and support scaling of effective practices.	The effective practices used in TurnNJ schools will be presented by Uncommon in at least 1 published book, covered in at least 1 news article per year, presented to at least 3 professional conferences, and shared through PD sessions for at least 800 teachers or principals (i3 Performance Measure 3).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Project Objective	Outcomes/Metrics	Data for improvement and i3 reporting				
		'17	'18	'19	'20	'21
Goal 4—Cost Efficiency: Maintain a low cost per student and overall financial model that will ensure sustainability for TurnNJ schools during and beyond the grant period.						
J) Build private sector support for the TurnNJ project.	Uncommon will raise at least $1M in i3 private sector matching funds by the end of the grant period (i3 match requirement).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
K) Maintain a low cost per student that allows TurnNJ schools to operate on the public dollar at full enrollment and after their initial "start-up" phase.	The i3 cost per student served will remain under $2,000 throughout the grant period and will decline to no more than $700 by the final year (i3 Performance Measure 4).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

(2) Management plan to achieve objectives on time and within budget

i3 management team. TurnNJ will be managed by a team of highly qualified personnel with extensive experience managing projects of similar scope and scale. Their responsibilities are clearly defined (*Figures C.3-4*), and their experiences are detailed in *Figure C.5* and *Appendix F*. Brett Peiser, CEO of Uncommon, will serve as Project Director for TurnNJ. He will meet weekly throughout the grant period with Uncommon's executive team, who will also serve as the Management Team for the i3 grant (*Figures C.3-4*). Weekly meetings will be used to monitor key metrics for the grant, such as student enrollment and performance, and to actively manage the partnerships and infrastructure projects necessary to open and expand schools.

Figure C.3: TurnNJ Management Team Org Chart

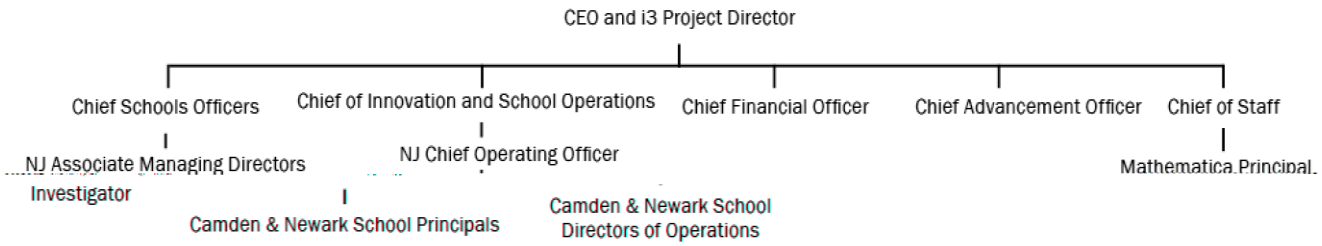


Figure C.4: TurnNJ Management Team Experience & Responsibilities

Name/Title	TurnNJ Responsibilities	Experience Highlights
Brett Peiser, Chief Executive Officer and i3 Project Director	• Oversee TurnNJ i3 implementation, ensuring that all goals are met • Manage Uncommon's Executive Team • Accountable for overall success of TurnNJ program and i3 grant	• Uncommon CEO since 2012: opened 14 new schools, managed fully enrolled schools on the public dollar, and oversaw CREDO evaluation • Formerly Uncommon Managing Director of Schools in NYC and Founder/Executive Director of Boston Collegiate Charter Schools, one of the highest performing public schools in MA • MPP, Harvard University Kennedy School
Julie Jackson, Chief Schools Officer, K-8	• Manage, with the assistance of the NJ Associate Managing Director, all TurnNJ K-8 school principals • Accountable for TurnNJ K-8 academic outcomes	• Uncommon CSO since 2015: oversees all K-8 instruction and development and implementation of common assessments, curricula, and lesson plans • Former North Star Academy Founding Elementary and High School Principal and former Managing Director of Elementary Schools in NJ • Taught math for 10 years • MEd, William Paterson University
Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, Chief Schools Officer, 9-12	• Manage, with the assistance of the NJ Associate Managing Director, all TurnNJ 9-12 school principals • Accountable for TurnNJ 9-12 academic outcomes	• Uncommon CSO since 2015: oversees all 9-12 schools instruction • Former Managing Director of North Star Academy for 12 years, oversaw achievement gains that were awarded USDOE's Blue Ribbon Award • Author of *Driven by Data* (2010); *Leverage Leadership* (2012); *Great Habits, Great Readers* (2013); and *Get Better Faster* (2016) • Trained more than 10,000 school instructional leaders worldwide • MEd via New Leaders from CUNY-Baruch
Josh Phillips, Chief of Innovation and School Operations	• Manage, with the assistance of the NJ Chief Operating Officer, all TurnNJ school Directors of Ops • Identify and secure turnaround school management contracts • Accountable for TurnNJ operations and school growth outcomes, including enrollment	• Former teacher and Co-Director of Operations at Uncommon's Roxbury Prep • Former COO and Managing Director of Uncommon Rochester/Troy, oversaw growth to 5 new schools serving more than 1,200 students • Ed.M., Harvard University

Name/Title	TurnNJ Responsibilities	Experience Highlights
Diane Flynn, Chief Financial Officer	• Ensure all i3 funds are used in allowable/appropriate ways and that reporting requirements are met • Oversee all real estate acquisition, construction, and renovation for TurnNJ schools • Accountable for all financial and facilities aspects of i3 project	• Since joining Uncommon as CFO last year, oversaw federal grants and approximately $16.5M in block and categorical funding • Former founder and President of a consulting firm focusing on real estate and nonprofit business strategy • Former real estate grant underwriter at the Robin Hood Foundation • Adjunct professor in the graduate tax program at Farleigh Dickinson University • LLM in Taxation, NYU School of Law
Laura Lee McGovern, Chief of Staff	• Manage Uncommon's Data Analytics team and liaise with the independent evaluator • Jointly accountable for the i3 evaluation plan, with Mathematica	• Joined Uncommon in 2006 as school Founding Co-Director of Operations • Served as COO of all Uncommon NYC Middle and High Schools • Former Director of Analytics at the NYC DOE • MBA, Harvard Business School
Moira McCullough, Researcher (Mathematica)	• Principal Investigator for the i3 evaluation • Accountable for the RCT study research and publication	• Leader on multiple charter impact evaluation teams, including QED and RCT design evaluations of The Equity Project school, KIPP, and the National Evaluation of CMO Effectiveness • Deputy project director of the Evaluation of District-Charter Collaboration Grants funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation • Through these studies, holds existing data sharing relationships with the agencies of interest to the i3 project evaluation • MPP in Education, Family, & Social Policy, Georgetown University
Samantha Tweedy, Chief Advancement Officer	• Oversee Uncommon's knowledge sharing and "Impact" teams • Oversee Uncommon's fundraising team • Accountable for i3 knowledge dissemination and securing private sector match funds	• Founding leader of Uncommon's Impact team • Former Head of Uncommon's Excellence Boys Charter School • Founded and Co-Directed Uncommon's Excellence Girls Elementary Academy • Previously litigation associate at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP • JD, Yale Law School

The TurnNJ management plan, summarized in *Figure C.5*, will achieve the project objectives on time and within budget. It includes clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Figure C.5: Responsibilities, Timelines, and Milestones for Accomplishing Project Tasks

Major Milestones & Project Tasks	Responsible[12]	Timing	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
TurnNJ Goal 1, Objectives A-C: *Annual School Site Planning and Hiring for Expanding and New TurnNJ Schools*							
Select and train principal and operational fellows to open new schools	US	Jul-Jun		✓	✓	✓	
Recruit and train apprentice teachers and Summer Teaching Fellows	US, S	Jul-Jun		✓	✓	✓	✓
Recruit and hire teachers and other school staff	US, SP, DO	Feb-Jun	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Onboard and develop new hires	SP, DO, US	Jun-Aug	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recruit students	US, RT, S	Feb-Jun	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Set school curricula and assessment plans	SP, US	May-Jun	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
First year of new Camden Prep Middle School	S, RT, US	8/16 – Jun	✓				
Planning season for SY17-18 turnarounds of Camden Prep ES2 and MS2	S, RT, US	Jan-Aug	✓				
Planning season for SY 20-21 turnarounds of Camden Prep High School	S, RT, US	Jan-Aug				✓	
TurnNJ Goal 2, Objectives D-F: *US Network Supporting Services to Ensure Quality, Impact, and Sustainability*							
Manage and coach school leaders	US, RT	Ongoing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Implement annual PD for all instructional staff	US	Aug	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Design and improve aligned curricula and assessments	US	Ongoing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sustain, improve, expand network infrastructure (Facilities, IT, etc.)	US	Ongoing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
TurnNJ Goal 3, Objectives G-H: *Program Evaluation and Procedures for Ensuring Feedback and Continuous Improvement*							
Establish data sharing agreements and collect historic data	MA, US	Oct-Jun	✓				
Administer student admission lotteries	SchoolMint, S	Jul-Sep	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Administer annual state tests	S	Feb-May	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

[12] Uncommon network staff (US); TurnNJ Schools (S); School Principal (SP); School Director of Operations (DO); US Regional Support Teams (RT); Mathematica (MA).

Major Milestones & Project Tasks	Responsible[12]	Timing	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Administer interim assessments	S	Oct-May	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monitor school data dashboards	US	Weekly	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Conduct school inspections and develop plans for ongoing improvement	US, RT, S	Annually	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collect lottery, attainment, and achievement data	MA, US	Jun-Oct	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collect, clean, and analyze data for independent evaluation	MA	Jul-Dec		✓	✓	✓	✓
Jointly monitor evaluation progress and troubleshoot issues	MA, US	Quarterly	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Report interim impact estimates from randomized controlled trial	MA, US	Winter		✓		✓	
TurnNJ Goal 3, Objective I: *Knowledge Dissemination*							
Publish/disseminate independent evaluation	MA, US	Jan-Oct					✓
Publish book on the practices driving results in US and TurnNJ schools	US	Once				✓	
Participate in charter collaboration compacts in NY and Boston	US	Ongoing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Share practices through NY State Charter Dissemination grant and professional development contracts in NYC and Newark	US	Tri-annually	✓	✓			
Present interim learnings from TurnNJ project at conferences such as Charter School Growth Fund, NSVF, i3 practice community, etc.	US	At least annually	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
TurnNJ Goal 4, Objectives J-K: *Project Oversight and Management of the CSP Grant*							
Project director & mgmt. team meet to monitor progress toward grant goals	US	Weekly	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Train network and school staff in grant and financial administration	US, RT, DO	Oct-Dec	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Set school financial plans and budgets for approval by Boards of Trustees	US, DO	May-Jun	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Monitor/adjust school financial plans under supervision of Board of Trustees	US, RT, DO	Quarterly	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Develop Boards of Trustees as community liaisons & fundraising advocates	US	Aug, Feb	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Annual independent audits of US finance and accounting	US	Nov-Dec	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Submit annual reports to ED	US	Feb	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

(3) Multi-year financial and operating model and plan to operate at a regional level

Multi-year financial model. The TurnNJ partners are committed to maintaining the project's status as an educational and financial proof point—an unambiguous example of educationally disadvantaged students achieving at the highest levels and funded by the public dollar. After an initial start-up phase, each TurnNJ school is sustained by the same state and federal per-pupil funding available to district schools. For most schools, full enrollment and financial sustainability are reached 3-4 years after launch. To facilitate this start-up phase for each of its schools, Uncommon secures public and private grants to fill the funding gap caused by higher per pupil costs. After the start-up phase, the TurnNJ schools will be sustainable on the public dollar, no longer requiring private philanthropy for core operations. Annual budgets for TurnNJ schools include all operational and programmatic expenses, staff salaries, an 8-10% management fee for services provided by the Uncommon central office, and a 1-3% contribution to the school's own surplus to fund unpredictable capital expenses. The Uncommon central office is also fully funded on the public dollar by the management fees paid by schools. A detailed view of Uncommon's central office financial model through SY21-22, projected budgets for TurnNJ schools, and Uncommon's most recent financial audit statement are available in *Appendices J.3-6*.

Multi-year operating model. Uncommon's operating model—its approaches to people, processes, and technology—evolved over a 10-year period of rapid growth. It will continue to evolve incrementally as Uncommon implements TurnNJ and seeks to deepen its impact for students.

- **People:** Through and beyond 2021, Uncommon will continue to prioritize building a faculty of committed and talented teachers and leaders in TurnNJ schools who pursue a college-

going mission and high standards for student performance. As they do today, schools will operate under the dual leadership of Principals and Directors of Operations, who will drive staff development and innovation efforts within their buildings. Principals, as today, will be managed and supported by experienced Chief Schools Officers, with the assistance of Associate Managing Directors who help superintend the schools. Likewise, Directors of Operations will continue to be managed by the Chief of Innovation and School Operations, with the assistance of regional Chief Operating Officers. Uncommon's central office teams will continue to provide core services that lighten the load for LEA and school staff as they currently do, such as financial oversight, lesson plan and assessment design, and IT and HR infrastructure. These teams will grow incrementally and seek economies of scale to maximize cost efficiency as the number of schools they serve increases.

- **Processes:** Uncommon believes in constantly evolving its business processes to reach higher levels of efficiency and effectiveness. The coming years will bring change to processes ranging from staff evaluation to financial management and IT procurement, depending on need, opportunity, risks, and resource availability. As Uncommon pursues changes to business processes in schools, LEAs, or the central office, it will remain steadfast in its commitments to maximizing teacher and principal focus on student success and to maximizing long-term operational, financial, and organizational health.

- **Technology:** Similarly, the technologies that support Uncommon schools will evolve rapidly throughout and beyond the grant period. In the past year alone, Uncommon successfully launched new video and teacher observation and feedback platforms. Uncommon is strongly positioned to adapt to evolving technological needs: its Product Solutions team uses a well-honed protocol for identifying opportunities and risks, assessing possible solutions, managing

vendor relationships, training school staff, supporting implementation and ongoing customizations, and codifying learnings to strengthen future deployments.

These approaches to refining the Uncommon operating model are oriented to constant learning and improvement—the core values that enabled Uncommon to achieve the results described in Section A(1) on pp. 2-3 and *Appendix D*. They will ensure that TurnNJ meets its i3 project goals (*Figure C.2* on pp. 14-16) and sustains its impact beyond the grant period.

Plan to operate at regional level. As of 2015-16, the TurnNJ project is already underway in 2 schools in 2 cities; Uncommon operates an additional 42 schools and 4 other regions. Uncommon has secured commitments from the NJDOE and CCSD to expand the existing TurnNJ project schools and open 4 new TurnNJ schools in Camden during the grant period (*Appendices B.4 & B.7*). Uncommon is renovating facilities, hiring and training staff, and otherwise planning for one new school launching in fall 2016 and has set strategic plans for the remaining TurnNJ Camden schools throughout the grant period. Moreover, Uncommon is in regular conversations with NJ and NY districts to identify additional opportunities for turnaround work during and beyond the i3 grant period. The TurnNJ schools and the i3 project evaluation will serve as proof that Uncommon's model can be implemented effectively in the turnaround context, making it more likely that agreements will be secured to further scale the model regionally or nationally. As TurnNJ continues to scale, its schools will serve as learning laboratories and human capital incubators, facilitating continued replication.

(4) Procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement

Driven by data. Continuous improvement of the TurnNJ project will be driven by regular feedback and the tracking of high-quality performance and implementation data. Four primary improvement strategies will be used. First, school leaders will constantly monitor **student and**

teacher performance data to design appropriately targeted interventions at the student, classroom, and school levels. These data are readily available through Uncommon's interim assessment system, attendance and behavior tracking systems, and teacher observation and development platform. As an example of the volume of performance feedback in Uncommon schools, principals documented 18,500 teacher observations with suggestions for improving classroom instruction, or an average of 13 per teacher in the 2015-16 school year.

Second, Uncommon will centrally monitor a wide range of student and school data and will intervene as needed to **improve TurnNJ school performance**. Weekly management dashboards will track leading indicators of student achievement as well as critical information related to enrollment and waitlists, attendance, attrition, school culture, and teacher satisfaction. Regional Chief Operating Officers, who manage school Directors of Operations, and Chief Schools Officers, whose teams manage school principals, will use these dashboards to monitor school performance and offer tailored supports. All TurnNJ schools will also participate in annual inspections, during which leaders from across Uncommon use a consistent protocol to conduct full-day school visits, document evidence, and provide feedback to help school leaders leverage best practices, expertise, and perspectives from across the network. Chief Schools Officers then lead each school through a reflection process that results in an actionable work plan with clear expectations for continued follow-up and feedback. A sample management dashboard and a school inspection protocol are available in *Appendices J.1-2*.

Third, Uncommon will collect **feedback data** from sources external to the TurnNJ schools (*Figure C.6*). The NJDOE will produce annual school report cards assessing progress toward turnaround goals each fall. In the spring, Uncommon administers surveys to parents to collect feedback about the quality of their children's schools, teachers, instruction, safety, discipline,

and other factors. The project's independent evaluator will provide interim impact estimates twice throughout the grant period as well as a final report. Uncommon's independent auditors will review the financial and accounting systems used to administer the TurnNJ project annually (*Appendix J.6*).

Figure C.6: TurnNJ Feedback and Performance Data Availability

Performance Data	Timing	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21
Uncommon-wide criterion-referenced interim assessments	Oct–May	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Annual criterion-referenced state exams	Feb–May	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Daily average attendance rates	Aug–Jun	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Suspension and expulsion discipline data	Aug–Jun	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student attrition/retention data	Weekly	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Interim recruitment data and application statistics	Mar–Sep	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lottery and waitlist data	Sep	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Teacher observation and feedback data	Continuous	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
School management dashboards	Weekly	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Annual school inspections	Feb–May	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Annual NJDOE school report cards	Fall	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Annual Uncommon surveys of school families	Spring	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Independent evaluation interim reports & impact estimates	Winter		✓		✓	
Final independent evaluation report & impact estimates	Dec					✓
Annual independent auditor reports	Nov–Dec	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Fourth and finally, Uncommon will dedicate central resources to **innovations that address barriers to improved performance** in TurnNJ schools. A team led by the Chief of Innovation and School Operations will identify, codify, scale, and support the implementation of these innovations. Some of these innovations will originate from TurnNJ schools and classrooms; historically, such innovations included creating sub-separate classrooms for students with cognitive delays or using Google Classroom to organize and share instructional materials. Other innovations, especially those related to technology, will be adopted from researchers, practitioners, and product developers external to Uncommon, such as the successful recent piloting of Kaltura as a platform for storing and sharing videos of classroom instruction to drive

teacher development. Additionally, "blue-sky" innovations will be designed to address fundamental challenges for TurnNJ schools and students. For example, Uncommon designed a Summer Teaching Fellows program to increase its pipeline of diverse teachers and, ultimately, leaders, and a "Camp Uncommon" to support students' social-emotional growth and combat summer learning loss. These programs are likely to achieve their greatest impact in Uncommon's highest-need TurnNJ schools.

Record of continuous improvement. TurnNJ will build upon Uncommon's record of innovation in response to performance feedback. In addition to the examples of innovation described above, Uncommon also re-designed its college counseling program in 2013-14 based on external research on the importance of "college match"[13] and college persistence data from Uncommon alumni showing that 29% of 2013 graduates "under-matched" to schools where they were stronger academically than the average admitted student. Researchers suggest that under-matching may make students 58% less likely to graduate. After integrating an explicit focus on college match in its counseling program, only 8% of Uncommon students under-matched last year, and 92% matched or over-matched, making them substantially more likely to graduate from college within 6 years. This program will continue to be refined and implemented when, as part of TurnNJ, Uncommon expands its turnaround efforts to Camden Prep High School.

Currently, Uncommon is implementing a common curricula and assessment program designed in response to teacher and student performance data, and the adoption of Common Core standards. Over the course of the project period, all TurnNJ schools will implement fully aligned, common curricula and interim assessments for core academic subjects. This is one of Uncommon's most promising innovations for ensuring that of its educationally disadvantaged

[13] Roderick et al. (2008)

students—especially those in the turnaround schools served by TurnNJ—achieve at the highest levels. Centralizing the design of all lesson plans guarantees that every student has access to a learning experience conceived by a highly effective teacher with deep content expertise in every classroom, every day. This approach allows newer teachers to concentrate on planning for effective lesson delivery and responding to student needs (vs. creating the plans from scratch), focuses principal feedback on highest-leverage instructional techniques, facilitates collaboration among teachers, compensates for any individual teacher's gaps in content knowledge, and makes a teaching career in high-need TurnNJ schools more sustainable by lightening teacher workloads. To date, Uncommon has created and trained TurnNJ teachers to implement common lesson plans and interim assessments for math and reading in grades K-8. During the i3 grant period, Uncommon will scale this innovation to all new and expanded schools, to the high school grades, and to history and science classrooms, further improving the quality of teaching and learning for students served by the project.

D. Project Evaluation

(1) Evaluation methods meet WWC Evidence Standards without reservations

RCT. The primary TurnNJ evaluation will be a well-executed randomized controlled trial (RCT) designed and implemented by **independent evaluators** at Mathematica with significant expertise in lottery-design impact studies (*Figure C.4* on p. 18; *Appendix F.8*). The study will include all 5 TurnNJ schools with students who will be in tested grades during the grant period.[14] These schools will be located in **multiple sites** (Camden and Newark), and the population studied will comprise a **large sample** of at least 350 students. **Random assignment** will be made at the individual level using a school lottery-based intent-to-treat design in which the treatment and control groups are differentiated solely by whether or not students are offered entry to

[14] The sixth school, a high school, will launch in SY2020-21 and will not yet have achievement data available.

TurnNJ schools and in which participants have a nonzero probability of being assigned to each group. This lottery design is made possible by local policies promoting "systems of choice" with city-wide school applications in both Camden and Newark, even for turnaround schools—i.e., family applications are required and students gain entry via lottery, even though these schools are expected to and have historically retained the vast majority of their existing students. Given the nature of these local school lotteries, **baseline equivalence** between groups of students in the analytic sample is expected; any differences between the treatment and control groups on baseline characteristics can be assumed to be by chance, but to increase precision, the regression model estimating impacts will control for student baseline characteristics, including prior-year achievement. **Sample attrition** will be minimized by using state-wide student level achievement data that follows students across school districts and types. The study will document differential and overall attrition and examine the baseline characteristics of students who leave the sample relative to those who did not. The study will use an intent-to-treat approach in which any student receiving an offer of admission to TurnNJ schools will be permanently assigned to the treatment group. The primary **outcome measures** of student achievement on annual PARCC exams: 1) have face validity and reliability, 2) are not over-aligned, and 3) will be collected in the same manner (by the independent evaluator directly from the lottery vendor and State Department of Education with no data collected by Uncommon or schools in the control group) and at the same times annually for both the trial and control groups. No **confounding factors** are expected for this lottery-based RCT design because the intervention is a whole-school reform model, and there are multiple schools implementing the model that will be included in the treatment group.

(2) Clear and important key questions with appropriate evaluation methods

RQs. The TurnNJ evaluation will answer 8 key research questions (RQs) about the project's implementation, the students served by the project, and the impact of attending TurnNJ schools (*Figure D.1*). Combined, the answers to these RQs will help the policymakers and practitioners determine whether there is substantial promise in the TurnNJ model for using replicating high-performing CMO models in restarts of low-performing schools.

Figure D.1: TurnNJ Evaluation Research Questions

Research Question (RQ)		Project Objective	i3 Alignment
1	What are the characteristics of the student population served by the TurnNJ project?	C	Eligibility Requirement 2
2	What are the impacts of TurnNJ schools on student attrition rates?	n/a	n/a
3	What are the impacts of TurnNJ schools on student attainment and achievement?	E-F	Absolute Priority 3
4	How variable are the impacts on student achievement across TurnNJ schools and over time?	E-F	Absolute Priority 3
5	Do the schools serve similar students after TurnNJ implementation than they did prior to the turnaround intervention?	C	Eligibility Requirement 2
6	To what extent did student outcomes change after implementing TurnNJ, relative to other similar schools in the district that did not go through intervention?	E-F	Absolute Priority 3
7	Is TurnNJ meeting expectations for school and enrollment growth?	A-B	Eligibility Requirement 2; Performance Measure 1
8	Is TurnNJ creating financially sustainable schools?	J-K	Match requirement; Performance Measure 4

Methods. The TurnNJ independent evaluator, Mathematica, will collect student lottery records directly from SchoolMint, a vendor shared by Camden and Newark, and student demographic, attrition, and achievement data on criterion-referenced annual state exams from the NJDOE. Mathematica will obtain permission or provide programming code for the NJDOE to match lottery records to student-level administrative data. At no time will the RCT data be

collected, analyzed, or stored by Uncommon or any of the other school systems attended by students in the study. Mathematica will answer RQ1 and RQ5 (student characteristics) using descriptive statistics of administrative data. RQs 2-4 (attrition and achievement impacts) will be evaluated using the RCT lottery design described in Sections D(1) and D(3-5). RQ6 (pre- and post- intervention achievement) will be evaluated by Mathematica using the comparative interrupted time series approach described in Section D(4). Uncommon will report school and enrollment growth (RQ7) and financial performance (RQ8) directly to the i3 community using internal data corroborated by public sources, such as State DOE enrollment data and Uncommon's annual audit statements. By executing and sharing the results from this evaluation plan, Uncommon and Mathematica will meet Project Goal 3 (Evaluate & Disseminate), Objectives G-I, and i3 performance measures 2-3.

(3) Evaluation at proposed scale and information about potential differential effectiveness

Scale. All elements of the TurnNJ evaluation will include the six project schools across two regions, excepting for RQs 3-4 and RQ6 (impacts on student achievement), which due to the limited availability of student outcomes data will not include the high school. The RCT design ensures that there are no systematic differences between treatment and control group students in terms of key baseline characteristics like demographics and prior achievement; therefore, the results are internally valid. The findings will also be externally generalizable to other low-performing schools in the many mid-size cities with demographics similar to those of Camden and Newark across the country.

Differential effectiveness. Mathematica will estimate effects at the school level and over time, which will allow for analyses of potential differential effectiveness in diverse settings.

Where *n* sizes are sufficiently large, Mathematica will estimate impacts for the following student population subgroups: Black, Hispanic, FRPL, IEP, and ELLs.

(4) Clear and credible analysis plan, sample size, MDE, and analytic approach to RQs

RQ1 analysis. Mathematica will match student-level lottery data from SchoolMint to student-level enrollment and demographic data from the NJDOE. Descriptive statistics will be used to compare the characteristics of students in TurnNJ schools to the control group.

RQ2-4 analysis. Mathematica will construct the randomly assigned treatment and control groups using the same lottery data collected for RQ1. For RQs 2-4, Mathematica will match these to student-level enrollment and PARCC achievement data from the NJDOE. The treatment group will include students accepted by lottery to TurnNJ schools, and the control group will comprise applicants to oversubscribed schools who were not offered admission in the lottery. Mathematica will collect PARCC data for all students in both groups in grades 3-8 from school year 2015-16 to 2020-21. Mathematica will estimate impacts separately for students 1, 2, and 3 years after their lotteries. The estimation model will be a regression that compares the mean outcomes of lottery winners to lottery losers, allowing impact estimates to vary for each school:

$$(1) \qquad y_{ij} = \alpha_j + X_{ij}\beta + \delta_j T_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \ ,$$

where y_{ij} is the outcome of interest for student i in school j; α_j is a school-specific intercept, X_{ij} is a vector of characteristics of student i in site j; T_{ij} is a binary variable for treatment status that indicates whether student i won the admission lottery in site j, and ε_{ij} is a random error term. The parameter of interest is $\delta_{j,}$ and the estimated coefficient on treatment status in site j. This coefficient represents the impact of admission to a TurnNJ school in site j. To obtain an overall estimate of the impact of TurnNJ schools, Mathematica will average the school-specific impact estimates, weighting by student enrollment at each school.

The RCT's proposed minimum **sample size** is 350 students based on expected enrollment. Up to 1,000 students may be included if control group populations are sufficiently large and data are available. The study's **minimum detectable effect size** is 0.21 of a standard deviation across all schools. This effect size is smaller than the average two-year and three-year effect sizes found in other studies of high-performing charter networks and in a previous study of Uncommon,[15] and it suggests that the study has sufficient power to detect impacts for TurnNJ schools.[16]

RQ5-6 analysis. To address RQ5, Mathematica will use administrative data to compare the characteristics of students in TurnNJ schools before and after the implementation of TurnNJ. The variables examined will include student demographic characteristics, ELL and SPED status, and achievement. To address RQ6, Mathematica will use a comparative interrupted time series (CITS) approach, which has previously been used to examine the impacts of whole-school reform models in Chicago.[17] To identify a pool of comparison schools, Mathematica will examine TurnNJ school trajectories in math and reading achievement prior to the implementation of the TurnNJ model and find comparison schools in the same districts with similar achievement trajectories. Mathematica will then use propensity score matching to more precisely match TurnNJ and comparison schools based on school characteristics in the year prior to the TurnNJ intervention. To estimate the impact of TurnNJ on student achievement in the TurnNJ schools, Mathematica will use a hierarchical model (students nested within years nested within schools) to compare the within-school changes in student achievement in TurnNJ schools before and after intervention to the within-school changes in student achievement during the same time period in comparison schools. This difference-in-differences approach using comparison schools helps

[15] Furgeson et al. (2012) and Tuttle et al. (2015)
[16] The MDE calculation is based on a minimum proposed sample of 175 lottery winners and 175 students in the control group. Sample sizes are based on projections about the availability of open slots in relevant grades, exemption rates, and the proportion of students with non-missing administrative data.
[17] de la Torre et al. (2013)

ensure that any patterns observed in the TurnNJ schools are attributable to the turnaround intervention and not to other neighborhood or district-wide changes and thus provides stronger internal validity relative to an interrupted time series approach without a comparison group. This analysis and the analysis for RQ3 are complementary and together provide a comprehensive evaluation of the success of TurnNJ. While RQ3 examines the impact of TurnNJ schools on students relative to local alternatives, RQ6 examines the impact of TurnNJ implementation on the performance of the schools.

RQ7-8 analysis. Uncommon will use existing systems for data collection from schools and its finance and accounting teams to analyze its school expansion, student enrollment, and financial data and to report progress to implementing the TurnNJ objectives in its i3 annual performance reports. These analyses will be validated by enrollment data from NJDOE and the organization's annual audits.

(5) Evaluation of key components and outcomes and acceptable implementation threshold

Evaluation components. Mathematica will collect, clean, and analyze data from the lottery vendor and State DOE annually and develop interim impact estimates twice during the grant period. A final report will be published in late 2021. Mathematica and Uncommon will meet at least quarterly to monitor evaluation implementation. Uncommon will include data on school expansion, enrollment growth, and financial sustainability in its i3 annual performance reports.

Outcomes and implementation threshold. Uncommon expects to enroll at least 750-2,000 students per year in 6 TurnNJ schools throughout the grant period and to sustain levels of academic achievement on annual PARCC exams that outperform demographically similar comparison schools and close historic achievement gaps. The minimum acceptable threshold for implementation would be a yearly enrollment average of at least 1,400 students across the 5

schools with PARCC scores, on which achievement outperformance of demographically similar comparison schools will be statistically significant. This would represent a meaningful improvement for schools that had previously been among the lowest performing in the state.

(6) Sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively

The primary investigator for the independent evaluation will be Moira McCullough, who held leadership roles on multiple evaluations of charter school impacts and practices conducted by Mathematica. Her qualifications are summarized in *Figure C.4* on p. 18, and her resume is available in *Appendix F.8*. The TurnNJ budget includes $521,510 for the Mathematica evaluation, an amount the evaluator deemed reasonable over the five-year period given the data systems and analytical methodologies Mathematica already developed for prior studies of charter networks and turnaround schools. Because Uncommon is committed to sustaining its central office staff on management fees paid by schools, the network neither needs nor intends to use any portion of TurnNJ funds to pay for the staff or systems used for the internal evaluation and knowledge dissemination. These functions, detailed in *Figure C.5* on pp. 19-20, will be overseen by the TurnNJ management team members Laura Lee McGovern and Samantha Tweedy—whose qualifications are available in *Figure C.4* on p. 18 and *Appendices F.6-7*—at approximately 5% and 25% annual levels of effort respectively, in accordance with their portfolios at Uncommon.

Conclusion

TurnNJ offers the Education Department a unique opportunity to fundamentally transform the education landscape in two of America's highest need cities, Camden and Newark, by supporting innovative, high-impact, and ultimately replicable approaches to improving low-performing schools. The project is already underway in 2 schools that are demonstrating very strong initial results. By the end of the 5-year i3 project period, these results will be scaled to 6

schools in 2 regions serving at least 2,000 students annually, including nearly 15% of all K-12 students in Camden's federally designated Promise Zone. The project will be rigorously evaluated on a continuing basis, ensuring that all goals are met, and its summative evaluation will be a randomized controlled trial meeting WWC standards for evidence without reservations—the gold standard for research. It will create an evidence base for restart and Renaissance models to improve low-performing schools, and it will demonstrate conclusively that CMOs can scale the highest levels of academic achievement even to the highest-need school settings, turnarounds. The TurnNJ project will achieve all of these outcomes while creating schools that can be sustained on the public dollar and maximizing the requested $9M of i3 grant funds with an exceptionally low cost per student. Ultimately, TurnNJ's promising strategies are designed for scale: they can and will be replicated nationally in the next decade.