



PAUL VALLAS

(Former) Senior Consultant

Bronner Group, LLC

PAUL G. VALLAS

Palos Heights, Illinois 60463

SUMMATION

A proven, nationally recognized leader in public financial management and large district management and transformation.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE – DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL CONSULTING

2016-2017

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE – WASHINGTON, D.C.
PROJECT DIRECTOR**

- Performed a comprehensive evaluation and to create an implementation plan for the Bureau of Prison's Education Program. Focus on the Program's current capabilities and opportunities for improvement in all areas including offender education assessments, special education, adult literacy, vocational and occupational training and post-secondary education.
- Assembled and led a team to visit prisons, and analyze data and methodologies in preparation for developing tools and protocols for the BOP's Central Office in Washington, D.C. and in all institutions for the rollout of the suggested improvements.
- Developed a comprehensive and sustainable budget and funding model utilizing available resources allocated by Congressional budget to ensure the full implementation and realistic attainment of the Program's goals within five years.

2014-2019

**BRONNER GROUP, LLC – CHICAGO, IL
SENIOR CONSULTANT**

- The Bronner Group is a nationally recognized consulting firm with expertise in areas including public housing, transportation, education and federal agency project management and strategic planning.
- Consulting has been provided on a number of Bronner projects with federal, state and local government agencies, including the US Department of Justice, the Department of the Interior, Detroit Public Schools via office of the Governor of Michigan, and Rochester City School District, well as both the Chicago and Philadelphia Housing Authorities.
- Consulting services included the areas of financial analysis, organization, strategic planning and program management.

2014

**NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS – WASHINGTON, D.C.
U.S. BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION – WASHINGTON, D.C.**

- Assisted the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), in partnership with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), with developing its plan, pursuant to Executive Order 13592, to restructure the BIE and transform it into a "School Improvement Organization," including:
 - Developing a new departmental organizational plan and educational support system;
 - Developing BIE and tribally-operated school improvement templates;
 - Developing training programs for BIE senior staff, regional staff and tribal school leaders;
 - Implementing two pilot projects for tribally operated, reservation-based school improvement (Mississippi Band of Choctaw and Hopi Indians); and
 - Establishing a financial template for the effective utilization of Indian educational resources.
- Submitted a plan to accelerate the Bureau of Indian Education's (BIE) capital improvement agenda that leverages existing resources with public finance credits to fund 80-percent of the assessed needs of BIE and tribally-operated schools.

2014-2015

DSI – CHICAGO, IL

- Advised Development Specialists Incorporated (DSI) on the design and feasibility of establishing an education consulting practice with the objective of providing state and local governments with the tools to simultaneously address school districts' financial, operational and service challenges.
- Developed a toolbox of financial, operational and educational best practices. These proprietary models are a resource for schools and school districts in need of both educational best practices and the financial and operational strategies to implement and sustain them.

2014-2016

**PASTOREK PARTNERS, LLC – BATON ROUGE, LA
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION – LANSING, MI**

- Conducted a comprehensive review of the Michigan Department of Education's financial and education reform efforts in the Detroit Public Schools.
- Assessed and provided recommendations to the DOE on the Detroit district's capacity to secure additional savings while improving the delivery of educational services.

2013-2014

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING –
SANTA MONICA, CA**

- Consulted to the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET). Provided strategies for NIET to build capacity to assist financially distressed school districts become able to afford critically needed professional development services.
- Developed a comprehensive human capital program, including an alternative teacher certification model, to expand both the diversity and the quantity of highly-qualified new teachers.
- Presented at Milken Global Institute Conference
- Presented at the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education ("NAFEO") annual conference on alternative certification and NIET's "The System for Teacher and Student Advancement" (TAP).

2012-2013

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION – SPRINGFIELD, IL

- Submitted winning sealed bid to Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) RFP for state-sponsored turnaround work in North Chicago Community Unit School District 187, Waukegan Illinois.
- Over the course of six months, embedded a team of top financial, academic and operations experts from around the U.S. in District 187 to identify the most immediately pressing issues of the District's (then) crisis of academic and financial failures.
- Presented a sophisticated analysis of financial and academic weaknesses.
- Presented a comprehensive improvement plan with multiple strategies comprising a coordinated approach to improving many conditions in the District, including realistic funding suggestions and prioritizing next steps.
- In a separate phase of the consulting engagement, drafted policy papers for ISBE regarding "exit strategies" for criteria to remove districts from state supervision and return them to local control.
- Provided a critical analysis of the Regional Education Laboratory Great Lakes West (REL) proposed model for school takeover as submitted to the ISBE. Advised ISBE that REL's proposed model was inequitable, convoluted, and would result in school districts with no clear data identifiers justifying takeover as opposed to other similarly situated districts. Developed and provided ISBE with a much simpler tiered intervention strategy with state takeover as a distant last resort. Recommendations included implementing school improvement plans based on a best practices template and mandatory corrective actions plans that would be subject to a binding MOU between the state and the district.

2010-2013

**INTER AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK – WASHINGTON, D.C.
LEAD EDUCATION CONSULTANT, HAITI**

- Recruited by IADB to advise the Haitian Presidential Commission on Education, in post-earthquake Haiti.
- Lead consultant to the Government of Haiti (GOH) on the development of its plan to rebuild schools after the January 12, 2010 earthquake, and to create and implement the Country's first publicly subsidized education system, (*Plan Opérationnel de Refondation du Système Educatif*) and the National Pact for Education (*Un Pacte*

National pour l'Education), including a financial management system, a standardized curriculum and instructional system, human capital pipeline and a facilities authority, and a university partnership office, among other aspects of a system.

- Developed a viable financial plan for operationalizing the reform initiative.
- Achieved approval of the plan by then-President Renée Prével and the Interim Haiti Recovery Commission on October 6, 2010.

2010-2012

**INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK – WASHINGTON, D.C.
LEAD EDUCATION CONSULTANT, CHILE**

- Recruited by the government of Chile to advise on post-earthquake school rebuilding strategies, and on the general condition of its education system.
- Prepared a report assessing the strengths and weaknesses of Chile's educational system with reform recommendations for grades K-12.
- Invited by the Government of Chile to work within the Ministry of Education to develop a series of comprehensive curriculum and instructional reforms to improve student academic performance in more than 1,100 of the country's lowest-achieving schools.
- Recruited and managed a team of 15 education experts to assist the Ministry with developing and implementing the reforms.
- Developed an overarching reform plan entitled "*Apoyo de Compartido*" including: development of a standardized curriculum; establishment of a system of value-added benchmark assessments; selection and development of academic intervention and supports; development of a local school leadership team model for the 1,100 schools in the program; and development of an organizational structure and training program for the creation of more than 100 school improvement teams.
- Work product included: production of training manuals, creation of school, principal and teacher assessments, conducted training sessions and developed a comprehensive school improvement model.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE – SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

2011-2014

**BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS – BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT
SUPERINTENDENT**

- Recruited by the Connecticut Commissioner and Board of Education to lead the management of recovery from crisis in the state's largest school district. In 2011, two-thirds of the Bridgeport Public Schools were academically failing. The administration faced massive teacher layoffs, school closures, increased class sizes and programmatic cuts as a result of a serious budget deficit.
- Successfully developed and implemented a strategy, within the first five weeks, to close the 2010-2011 school-year structural budget deficit, which was in excess of five-percent of the annual budget. The strategy negated the need for teacher layoffs and school closures, maintained class size and avoided programmatic cuts.
- Developed and implemented a comprehensive five-year financial plan. Balanced two consecutive budgets with no borrowing. Secured capital funding to reconstruct three schools and expand two elementary schools to include 7th and 8th grades.
- Developed and implemented a comprehensive, long-term, district-wide academic reform and improvement plan. Replaced 10-year-old textbooks with new language arts, math and science books. Upgraded lacking technology with Smart Boards and desktops for all teachers, and laptops for all high school students.
- Opened five new high schools, three inter-district science academies and one inter-district military/first responder high school academy.
- Established tuition-free dual enrollment and early college programs with all local higher education institutions, open to eligible high school seniors.

2007-2011

RECOVERY SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA – NEW ORLEANS, LA SUPERINTENDENT

- Responsible for developing, implementing and managing reform measures within the Recovery School District of Louisiana (RSD). The state-operated RSD is the turnaround district responsible for rebuilding, reopening and overseeing most public schools in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans.
- Opened 22 schools and hired 500 teachers in 90 days to serve waves of students returning to New Orleans after the storm.
- Created the district that has experienced the most dramatic improvement in test scores in the nation. The gains from the RSD schools were in consecutive years four-to-seven times the rate of growth of Louisiana schools statewide.
- Reduced the achievement gap between African-American students in New Orleans and the rest of Louisiana by 75 percent, as African-American students experienced a 17-point assessment growth between 2007 and 2011.
- Launched extended-school-day and extended-school-year programs to provide students with 34-percent more instructional time on task than required by the state.
- Implemented reforms that created the nation's first 100-percent parental choice district, with all schools public, non-selective and nonprofit. Gave families the ability to choose their child's school based on quality. Gave school leaders the authority to select and promote staff based on qualifications and ability.
- Led an unprecedented school construction program that will, for the first time ever, put every public school child in New Orleans in a state-of-the-art building.
- Secured more than \$1.8 billion in FEMA and CDBG funds and negotiated a final settlement that will cover the full cost of the RSD's School Facilities Master Plan to rebuild all New Orleans public schools post-Katrina.
- Launched comprehensive restructuring of the district's high schools, supported by a nearly \$6.4 million grant from the Walton Family Foundation.
- Implemented Response to Intervention (RtI) model, a three-tiered approach to ensuring the academic success of all students.
- Dramatically restructured school security spending, shifting ill-used funds to classroom instruction, while simultaneously improving school climate and safety.
- Developed network of transitional and alternative schools, including transitional schools for 8th-graders who are over-aged, underachieving and academically behind.
- Dramatically improved student data collection resulting in improved teacher instructional decisions and lesson planning.

2002-2007

**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA – PHILADELPHIA, PA
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

- Responsible for developing, implementing, and managing reform measures within the School District of Philadelphia.
- Managed an operating budget in excess of \$2.2 billion.
- Instituted long-term financial planning, resulting in \$200 million being shifted into classrooms and a structurally balanced budget for three consecutive years. In 2007, more than 70-percent of the District's budget now directly supported classrooms.
- Implemented a data-driven instructional management system in 2002, which resulted in nine consecutive years of improved student test scores across all income and racial groups in reading (more than doubled) and math (almost tripled).
- Expanded early childhood education programs by more than by 40 percent, while simultaneously overhauling the quality of the programs offered.
- Standardized the curriculum and instructional models in grades pre-K through 12, and distributed all new textbooks and curriculum materials in all core subjects to all students. Left the District with a curriculum and academic benchmarking system that was considered second to none, driving the then-largest test score increases among major urban districts nationally.

- Established a teacher recruitment and retention program that increased teacher applicants threefold and, in the 2005-2006 academic year, resulted in fewer than a dozen teacher vacancies in an 11,000 teacher system. Raised teacher retention rates to nearly 94 percent and the number of fully-certified teachers to more than 92 percent.
- Overhauled teacher professional development programs and instituted 100 hours of teacher training per year. In addition, left a district where all teachers have access to coaches and specialized staff to support instruction in the classroom.
- Created and implemented one of the largest extended-day and extended-year (summer school) programs in the nation to help struggling students, as well as offering opportunities for academic enrichment.
- Provided advanced placement (AP) and honors programs in every high school, resulting in a four-fold increase in the number of students in AP classes. Put the District on track to offer extended-day accelerated programs by 2006-2007 and, by 2008, to house accelerated-day academies in more than half of all elementary schools.
- Phased out middle schools and created a K-8 and a 9-12 system, including the opening of 27 new small high schools. As a result, the average high school population dropped from 1,700 students to less than 800, and half were on target to have fewer than 500 students by 2008.
- Created unprecedented school choice for parents through creation of 27 small high schools, which included more magnet and specialized schools. Gained approval for 60 new charter schools.
- Increased parental and community involvement in the schools by measurable outcomes.
- Implemented and enforced one of the nation's fairest and most balanced discipline policies, which included providing quality alternative school options for expelled students. In 2005-2006 serious incidents decreased by 14 percent from the previous year, including a 33-percent decline in "moral offenses."
- Instituted the most ambitious capital program in District history, with a \$1.7 billion capital plan designed to build new school and modernize existing schools.

1995-2001

**THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS – CHICAGO, IL
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

- Responsible for the development, implementation, oversight and management of education reform measures within the Chicago Public Schools.
- Managed an annual operating budget in excess of \$4 billion.
- Appointed CEO by then-Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley to successfully implement and execute city control over Chicago schools, while working with the state legislature, city council, teachers' union and business community to reform the schools and dramatically improve public education services.
- Initiated broad education and operation reforms to reverse persistent failure in the schools. Some key achievements include: (1) developed and implemented after-school and summer school programs that served more than 150,000 students; (2) eliminated, within the first two years, a projected four-year shortfall of \$1.3 billion and balanced the system's budget each year thereafter; (3) restored financial credibility and earned thirteen bond rating upgrades by three bond agencies within a six-year period; (4) left the school system in 2001 with a \$330 million budget reserve and a fully-funded teacher pension system; (5) implemented an unprecedented capital improvement program that erected 76 new buildings and rehabilitated more than 350 existing buildings, thereby creating classrooms more conducive to teaching and learning; (6) established the nation's first Service Leadership program by establishing 5 military high schools and 42 JROTC programs that today serve 11,000 students and have exceptional academic outcomes; and (7) established 5 math/science academies, a decade before the national conversation on the need for more STEM education.
- Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores increased nearly 14 percent; reading scores increased for six consecutive years, math scores increased 5 out of 6 years.
- Streamlined the system's administration by eliminating 1,700 duplicative non-teaching positions and replaced ineffective, overly-expensive operations with privately managed services in the areas of real estate and property management; construction and repair; and custodial and food services.
- Increased academic accountability by ending "social promotion" in the face of political pressure, while providing needed academic and social supports to over-aged students.

- Led teachers' union contract negotiation. Successfully negotiated two fiscally responsible, mutually agreeable three-year teacher contracts. Never had a strike, contract arbitration or other labor disruption, which was unprecedented for Chicago in that era.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE – MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

1993-1995 THE CITY OF CHICAGO – CHICAGO, IL BUDGET DIRECTOR

- Closed the City's projected \$125 million budget gap and received the first unanimous city council vote for passage of a city budget in more than 40 years. Developed budgets that allowed the City to: (1) finance the largest capital improvement program in Chicago history, which included repaving of 70% of city streets; (2) establish the City's first comprehensive affordable-housing program; and (3) within a three-year period, hire an additional 1,500 police officers and built new police and fire stations.
- Structurally balanced the City's budget for three consecutive years.
- Increased the City's bond rating.

1990-1993 THE CITY OF CHICAGO – CHICAGO, IL REVENUE DIRECTOR

- Increased the City's bond rating.
- City revenues progressively increased each year and programs were initiated that effectively reformed the City's license and tax codes. Specific accomplishments include implementation of: (1) parking enforcement program that practically doubled Chicago's parking ticket collections; (2) an impoundment program for vehicles used in crimes; and (3) an information-sharing program with the Illinois Department of Revenue that assisted state tax investigations.
- Rewrote the City's tax and fee ordinances, generating record revenue increases from many of the revamped ordinances.
- Reformed audit functions to generate record collectibles.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE – STATE GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION

1985-1990 THE STATE OF ILLINOIS – SPRINGFIELD, IL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ECONOMIC AND FISCAL COMMISSION

- Responsible for analyzing legislation, assessing legislative impact and making recommendations with regard to state finances, state and local taxes, and economic development.
- Named "Best State Agency" by the Illinois Times.

1983-1985 THE STATE OF ILLINOIS – SPRINGFIELD, IL SENIOR POLICY ADVISOR, ILLINOIS STATE SENATE

- Served as senior policy advisor to Senate President Phillip J. Rock.
- Served as principal advisor to the Senate Revenue Committee, the Senate Elementary and Secondary Education Committee, and the Appropriations Committee.
- Played a critical role in all major state education and financial initiatives during the period.

1980-1983 THE STATE OF ILLINOIS – SPRINGFIELD, IL POLICY ADVISOR, ILLINOIS STATE LEGISLATURE

- Architect of the most successful tax amnesty program in the nation's history at the time.

MILITARY

1980-1993

**ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD –SPRINGFIELD, IL
RETIRED INFANTRY CAPTAIN – THIRTEEN YEARS' SERVICE**

- Service included three years as an instructor at Camp Lincoln Military Academy, Springfield, Illinois.

EDUCATION

Graduate Course Education Leadership (2013), University of Connecticut
M.S. Political Science (1980) Western Illinois University, High Honors
B.S. Political Science (1976) Western Illinois University

MEMBERSHIPS – AWARDS

Teach for Tomorrow, Board Member
J/P HRO (Haiti), Board Member & Finance Committee Chairman
Ed Snider Youth Hockey Foundation, Board Member
Member of the Board, National Hellenic Museum
Hellenic Bar Association, "Community Service Award" (2015)
Woodrow Wilson Center for Scholars, Distinguished Scholar (2013)
Sacred Heart University, Associate Professor (2013)
University of Connecticut, Guest Lecturer (2012-2013)
U.S. Presidential Scholars Commission (2001 – 2008)
U.S. News and World Report & Harvard University's Center for Public Leadership "One of America's Best Leaders" (2006)
Manhattan Institute "Urban Innovator Award" (2006)
Constitutional Rights Foundation "Bill of Rights Action Award" (2000)
Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation "Distinguished Educator of the Year Award" (1999)
Motorola Foundation "Excellence in Public Service Award" (1998)
Crain's Chicago Business "Executive of the Year Award" (1998)
Illinois Fatherhood Federation, "Honorary Father of the Year" (1998)

POLITICAL

Candidate for Mayor (Chicago), 2018-2019
Nominee for Lt. Governor (D-IL), 2013-2014
Candidate for Governor (D-IL), 2001-2002

February 28, 2020

Dear Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Superintendent Work Group Chair Orange-Jones, and Members Garvey, Morris, and Voitier,

I appreciate the opportunity to present my credentials to the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education for the position of State Superintendent of Education. My family counts six veterans, four police officers, three teachers and two firefighters amongst its members. The honor of serving the children and families of Louisiana would be a continuation of my family's tradition of service.

My commitment to public service brought me to the Recovery School District of Louisiana (RSD) in 2007, at the request of then-Governor Kathleen Blanco and the BESE Board. I was honored to be able to contribute to rebuilding New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, after initial efforts to reopen schools and build a better school system had stalled in the immediate aftermath of the storm.

The invitation to Louisiana came after my successful financial and educational turn-around efforts in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and The School District of Philadelphia (SDP). For both CPS and SDP, I was recruited to take responsibility for systems that were in severe financial distress, were academically failing and were continuously losing enrollment. In each case, I quickly resolved the financial issues and significantly improved the building stock. I implemented best practices that improved operations, and launched programs that significantly improved neighborhood schools, while also dramatically expanding quality school choices. That record is what brought me to Louisiana. Like so many who relocate here, I quickly fell in love with the state and its people. It would be a privilege to be invited back to my adopted home.

It was that same call to duty that led me to later respond to international requests for help in Haiti and Chile after the 2010 earthquakes, the former which killed an estimated 250 thousand people and flattened the capital city. That same call to duty also led me to work with the US Department of Education to develop a plan to transform public schools operated by the Federal Bureau of Indian Education, and to revamp education and occupational training in the Bureau of Prisons for the U.S. Justice Department.

I come to the job very familiar with the state of Louisiana and the challenges its schools and school districts are facing. The past two decades have seen significant progress achieved throughout the state, as BESE has endeavored to raise standards and expectations, and to expand school supports. However significant the gains, by BESE's own admission, challenges remain. While the state must and will continue its upward trajectory, more must be done to support local school efforts to close the persistent achievement gaps and to ensure that all children have equal access to quality education opportunities.

The next State Superintendent must strengthen the implementation of Louisiana's academic plan and build upon the bold commitments in the state's ESSA plan to raise student, educator

and administrator expectations. This is necessary to ensure that every student is on track for college or career, and to support the state's school systems in this process.

However, the state will be challenged to accomplish this. Too many districts remain mired in financial crisis, with teacher shortages and leadership challenges. Others lack effective curriculum and instructional strategies and supports. Many districts need plans that can bring long-term financial stability and predictability, while also providing resources for school improvement strategies and programs to accelerate student achievement with the goal of closing the achievement gap. Closing the achievement gap will require all schools to have access to best practice curriculum and instructional models; superior academic and behavioral intervention and support programs; the most effective instructional time management and maximization models; state of the art classrooms with instructional technology support; and quality teachers and local school leadership teams to drive instruction.

It will also require continued expansion of early childhood education, including a commitment to universal pre-natal to the classroom. Years ago, Louisiana recognized the importance of early childhood education and the importance of pre-natal to age-three education. The fact remains that we will never close the achievement gap without an early childhood program that includes pre-natal to age three.

Closing the achievement gap and ensuring every student graduates college or career ready also means continued commitment to ensuring every high school offers Advanced Placement, Dual Enrollment, Early College and Work-Study opportunities. More schools should be provided the supports needed to establish "magnate type" programs like International Baccalaureate, Advanced STEM and World Language Academies, etc. These programs are too often found exclusively in schools in more affluent communities. I would work to change that.

These are certainly not areas that have been ignored or neglected by BESE. Far from it. The Jump Start program, for example, is one of the most innovative and promising career and technical education programs in the country. The state's goal that by 2025 all students will be required to graduate with college credit or a vocational credential is the natural next step in the state's commitment to dual enrollment. This commitment resulted in 54-percent of all 2018 Louisiana high school graduates earning college credit or vocational credentials or both.

The challenge, then, for BESE and its next superintendent is to increase the Louisiana Department of Education's (LDE) capacity to provide school districts with the models, the expertise and the supports to help schools implement these accelerators. This requires that LDE evolve as a school improvement agency. This means more than the work that the LDE already does so well in setting standards, imposing education mandates, assessing performance and ensuring accountability. The next level would be to more vigorously provide the models and supports needed to ensure that schools have financial stability, modern buildings, quality staff and the educational programs and strategies that accelerate achievement.

I have always found BESE to be visionary and willing to take risks and defy political

conventions. It is critical to strengthen the LDE's capacity to deliver the type of supports schools need to accelerate improvement. The tendency is to allow budget constraints to limit our ambition, when ambition should accept no limitations. The resources and talent exist at LDE and within the state's education community to strengthen its capacity to aggressively support its school systems.

The job description for the state superintendent position identified several bullets describing the position's general areas of responsibility. Four were selected and applicants were asked to rank order these activities in the order that the candidate believes best fits his/her skill set. Given my decades of experience, and deep knowledge of school district, local and state government administration, I have proven and well-documented capabilities in each area. I felt it would add more value to simply discuss them in the order presented.

a. Serving as chief executive officer of the Louisiana Department of Education.

I served as the CEO of four financially troubled and academically challenged districts, including the third and fourth (at the time) largest school districts in the nation. In each, I successfully stabilized finances and implemented operational best practices. I also developed and implemented long-term financial plans that financed massive capital improvements and sustained educational strategies, and programs that significantly improved student achievement.

b. Building statewide consensus with diverse stakeholders and communities on strategies to realize the goal of dramatically improving student achievement.

All of my superintendent assignments have been in school districts that were in crisis upon my arrival, and were in some phase of state takeover that was not universally supported, to say the least. Thus, each successive assignment dramatically expanded my communication and consensus building skill sets. I thrive on developing extensive interaction with stakeholders and communities to build a consensus around strategies to improve a school district. I'm a calmer, better listener and I have more patience than I did 25 years ago. I'm now highly seasoned at building strategic partnerships to significantly expand quality educational choices and access to resources and supports, especially human resources. My track record in this area includes working effectively with state legislatures and congressional delegations. My many years working in the Illinois State Legislature also well-prepared me to navigate that element of this position.

c. Advancing statewide strategy to increase access to Early Childhood learning opportunities.

I have consistently advanced a strategy for dramatically expanding investment in early childhood education in each of my superintendent positions. In Chicago, the expansion was considered the largest in the nation at the time. My strategy has always to begin at the prenatal phase, which includes intensive parent training, early literacy and numeracy, and a child/parent health care component. My experience in building strategic partnerships with public and private organizations including community and faith-based institutions helped provide the

resources critical to such a broader undertaking.

d. Developing and delivering on a plan to address the achievement of low-income students.

Each district I have led served well over 80-percent minority and low-income students, while also being underfunded. This required me to develop comprehensive education improvement and support plans to level the playing field address low-income student needs. My plans always included early, effective use of RtI, and dramatic expansion of early childhood education and after-school and summer programs. Despite the funding challenges, much was achieved through effective budget prioritization and re-engineering; careful resource management; and strategic partnerships with sister government agencies, public and private organizations, community and faith based organizations and private foundations.

My experience with the BESE Board and the LDE, my familiarity with school districts across the state from managing the RSD's school intervention and support services, my past work and interaction with current and past state legislators as well as the Louisiana Congressional Delegation, and past associations with local political, community and business leaders will ensure that I'll hit the ground running. I also believe my history with prominent private foundations that support education, my association with distinguished education leaders across the country, and my relationships with prominent political figures in Washington D.C. will help me advocate and secure support for Louisiana's education agenda.

I believe that I have demonstrated my ability to work collaboratively with my governing boards, as well as with my administrators and staff. As a successful veteran administrator, I have always fully recognized and respected that the role of my governing board is to set policy, approve strategies and ensure accountability. I also take a collaborative approach with administrators, teachers and staff, and labor representatives, with the outcome that an infrastructure for collaboration and effective communication is established. I have never had a strike or work slowdown while negotiating more than two dozen long-term collective bargaining agreements, including four affordable and student-friendly teacher contracts. This reflects the success I have had in creating a professional work environment where cooperation and respect are the norm, and the interests of students always come first.

Success in transforming troubled school districts also requires real local community engagement and empowerment. This is not only critical to ensuring that strategies and programs reflect the community's real needs, but is also essential to mobilizing and sustaining community support for district initiatives. My tenure as a school leader has been characterized by working closely with community leaders, parent organizations, faith-based organizations, the business community, city departments and their respective mayors and the city councils. In each of my districts, me, my administrative team and local school leaders have always understood that we must be readily available to the community.

In all of my executive assignments, I have always built strong leadership teams by identifying, promoting and supporting the talent from within. My tenure as RSD Superintendent is no exception. This allowed me to quickly secure the enthusiastic support of my colleagues upon

arrival in 2007, and to positively impact New Orleans' incredible challenges at that time. My staff "alumni list" includes more than 30 current and former superintendents, including one state superintendent and one former US Education Secretary. I hope this reflects my ability to identify and develop talent.

As State Superintendent I would continue to be a friend and supporter of charter schools and school choice, having expanded charter schools in both Chicago and Philadelphia and having been one of the architects of the nation's first 100-percent school choice district in Orleans Parish. I look forward to working with charter school organizations like New Schools New Orleans and New Schools Baton Rouge, having worked with their present leadership during my tenure at the RSD, and having maintained strong relationships with them.

That said, I firmly believe that, even in the most challenged communities, if leadership creates long-term financial stability; develops a superior human capital strategy, and with the right education policies and programs in place, all traditional public schools can become schools of the highest quality. Ultimate success will be achieved when all communities are being served by high-quality traditional public schools.

I am confident that I offer the type of leadership that Louisiana needs. I have long hoped for an opportunity to return to Louisiana to continue my public service. As someone who has always responded when called upon, no matter the challenge, this is one of the few times I have sought a specific public service opportunity. It would be an honor, and I look forward to your kind consideration of my application to serve. Thank you very much!

Sincerely,

Paul G. Vallas