

MEZZANINE-STAGE FINALISTS



Princeton Center for Leadership Training | www.princetonleadership.org

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Scaling Initiative: Since 1988, the Princeton Center for Leadership Training (PCLT) has developed and implemented solutions proven successful at changing the life trajectories of students that would otherwise drop out of high school back into the intergenerational cycle of poverty. PCLT's seminal peer leadership solution, Peer Group Connection (PGC), is a highly effective, evidence-based and school-based program that supports and eases students' transition from middle to high school by tapping into the power of older students to create a nurturing environment for incoming freshmen, while contributing to the positive transformation of school culture. Over the next 3 years, PCLT plans to widen and deepen its national impact through the strategic expansion of its network of PGC schools both within currently supported regions and into targeted new regions throughout the United States.

Problem: In the United States today, a student drops out of high school every 26 seconds. That amounts to over 7,000 students each day and 1.2 million each year. Often the root causes of student drop out are disengagement and disconnection. By the time they are in high school, as many as 40 to 60 percent of all students — urban, suburban and rural — are “chronically disengaged” from school. Ninth grade is a critical year for intervention, and yet there is profound weakness in the supports provided to students during this transition year into high school.

Solution: PGC combats student disengagement and helps create a safe, caring, well-managed, and participatory school environment for youth during their transition into high school. Rooted in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) theories, PGC 1) cultivates in students the belief that people in their schools value them and want them to succeed; and 2) develops in students the skills proven to enhance achievement such as goal setting, coping, decision making, grit, achievement orientation, and others.

Evidence of Results: Rigorous research studies demonstrate that PGC increases graduation rates; instills academic, social, and emotional skills; improves academic achievement; reduces discipline referrals; and leads to avoidance of high-risk behaviors for participants. A federally funded, four-year longitudinal, randomized-control study found, among other major results, that PGC improves the graduation rates of 9th grade participants by 10 percentage points and reduces the number of male students who would otherwise drop out by 50%.

Scaling Strategy: Currently operating in 140 schools nationally, serving 21,000 students per year (including 9th grade students and upperclassmen peer leaders), PCLT will look to expand its PGC program over the next 3 years to 106 additional high schools across 7 geographic locations, reaching a total of 246 schools and 36,900 students each year by FY 2016.

Capital Required: PCLT seeks \$3.9M in Growth Capital over the next 3 years to expand PGC and to build its capacity and infrastructure by: building a data management system; creating a technology infrastructure to enhance our solutions; developing a nationally-recognized PGC certification system; and hiring additional staff. *These key infrastructure and capacity building activities will not only support the expansion of PGC over the next 3 years, but will position PGC for more explosive growth in subsequent years.*

Capacity: PCLT is led by a senior management team that includes the president and two vice presidents and governed by a ten-member Board of Trustees. Its board and 24 full-time staff include leaders in education, psychology, public health, law, research, and evaluation.