



Date: February 19, 2019

To: Board Members

From: Kevin Sved

Re: CEO Update

Dear Board Members,

Our December 11, 2018 featured valuable discussions in which board members offered key insights and feedback regarding continuation and expansion of Navigator dissemination work. After reflecting upon the last few board meetings, I realize how important it is to provide the Board with opportunities to engage in deeper dialogue around core issues and long-term strategies related to dissemination work, as opposed to asking the Board to react to specific dissemination requests. The NS leadership team is expanding its efforts to provide appropriate context and space for the Board to engage in deeper dialogue around continuing dissemination efforts. We acknowledge that continuing dissemination efforts also involves reviewing the status and plans of our growth strategy, as well sustaining our our work to continuously improve our existing schools. To date, the Board's concerns seem to fall within four five categories:

- **Mission fit and Impact:** How does dissemination fit into the Navigator mission and what is the desired impact?
- **Capacity:** Does Navigator have the capacity to effectively engage in dissemination and maintain the necessary focus to execute on the higher priority work of continuously improving existing schools and effectively launching Watsonville Prep?
- **Timing:** With so many competing priorities, is now the right time to engage in dissemination work?
- **Scope and Scale:** What aspects of Navigator's model would be disseminated, to what level of scale, and by what means?
- **Process:** What is the right process to discuss and make an informed decision as to whether Navigator should continue to engage in dissemination work?

This document will address the process with the objective of helping to frame a Board discussion regarding the strategic direction of Navigator Schools that is agendized for the February 26 meeting. The goal of the Board discussion on February 26 will be to identify key questions that need to be answered and information the Board will require in order to make an informed decision regarding Navigator's future growth and dissemination efforts. Based on the Board's discussion, staff plans to prepare a set of recommendations to be discussed and potentially considered during a special board meeting or retreat scheduled for early April.

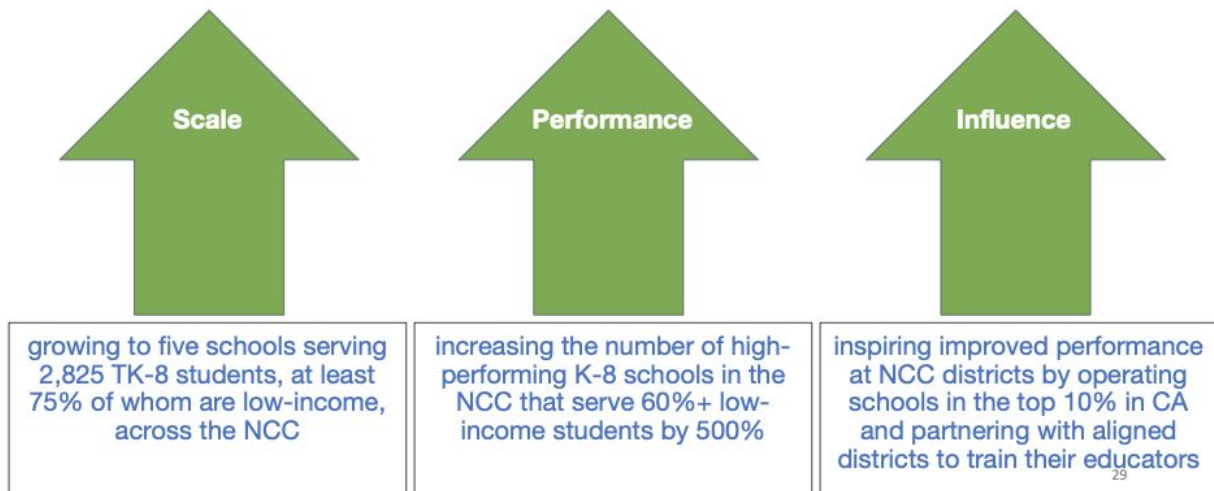
To help frame the discussion, it is important to briefly review our strategic plan and the progress we have made toward achieving it.

Navigator Schools, by adopting a Strategic Plan in December 2017, made a bold commitment to impact:

Our Future Impact



By 2022, Navigator will become a beacon for outstanding TK-8 education for underserved students throughout the NCC by:



While we can celebrate that we're on track to open Watsonville Prep School (WPS) in 2019, we missed the timeline to open School 4 in 2020, which also pushes back our timeline to open School 5 by at least one year. The main reason for the delayed timeline for School 4 was the lengthy chartering process for WPS. Going into 2018-19, WPS had already been denied at the district level, making it evident that we would not meet the 24-month greenlighting criteria for School 4. I erred by not acknowledging this earlier and proposing the 2018-19 priorities accordingly.

(Note: The impact statement refers to TK. We have not yet begun TK because charter renewal negotiations with Gilroy Unified and Hollister School District would have been more difficult with TK. For reasons related to facilities challenges, TK was also not prioritized for Watsonville Prep.)

Given the current status, we need to reevaluate the timeline for school growth, as well as the potential effects on our future Support Office (SO) staffing plans and related multi-year projections. The plan to grow to five schools by 2021-22 featured support office expansion to support growth and continuous improvement, in anticipation of achieving an economy of scale by 2022-23, at which point private financial support would no longer be needed to fund the expanded SO. The milestones for annual disbursement for the \$2.1m multi-year grant from the Charter School Growth Fund are connected to the growth plan. By opening WPS in 2019, we

are on target to meet the milestones for the 2019-20 disbursement. However, we are not on target to meet the 2020-21 milestone.

An additional challenge to our growth plan is the changing political environment regarding charters. The new governor and state superintendent are not as charter-friendly as previous office holders. The changing composition of the State Board of Education (SBE) will at best result in a smaller appetite for SBE approved charters. Changes at the state level have contributed to an emboldened charter opposition, resulting in calls for a moratorium on new charters and an increase in legislative actions that would threaten charter growth and sustainability.

This changing environment will make Navigator's plan for operating five schools increasingly difficult. It will be more important for Navigator to win approval at the district or county level. Given these challenges, NS Board engagement around our growth strategy is crucial. Staff has analyzed the current landscape and seeks Board input on the following preliminary findings:

- 1) While the environment will be more challenging for growth, we cannot accurately predict approval or denial at the district and county level without engaging communities, cultivating relationships with key influencers, and meeting with district and county board members.
- 2) The SBE will likely be less tolerant of considering charter appeals, but it is too early to assess how the SBE will treat high-performing charters like Navigator if a strong charter petition is denied by a very low-performing district.
- 3) Developing local support will require deeper community engagement work than Navigator has done in the past.

The expansion priority report in this packet provides additional detail. Given these dynamics and related uncertainty regarding growth, expanding Navigator's impact through dissemination is worthy of Board time and consideration.

Dissemination

Amid the celebration of our victory at the State Board of Education, Navigator staff realized that supporters from host districts and partner schools were highly effective at promoting the Navi cause. In addition, a theme emerged as evidenced in the statements of state board members that Navigator's most-appreciated and unique strength is its proven track record of collaboration with external organizations.

Given Navigator's work in this area and the spirit of the charter law, we are uniquely positioned to be a force for good in an environment that is increasingly "us vs. them." California's Charter School Act highlights the essential obligation of charter schools to encourage the use of "different and innovative" teaching methods. In addition, legislators expect charter schools to create new professional opportunities for teachers. The mission of Navigator Schools perfectly aligns to these expectations. We develop top-tier teams of educators who deliver phenomenal outcomes for all students. Coaching and innovation are at the heart of what we do.

We are changing the face of education in California by demonstrating, documenting, and spreading what works across classrooms, schools, and districts. Our partners appreciate us, and the State Board of Education appreciate our partnerships. Navigator has a powerful engine for growth – collaboration – and the State Board expressed its faith in the promise of this transformative force. With the approval of Watsonville Prep, the emergence and importance of collaboration is a key theme in the story of Navigator’s growth.

The attached dissemination report will provide context to our pilot dissemination work, including a detailed analysis of the pilot with Wonderful Prep.

Framing Board Dialogue

Based on the narrative above and further context provided by the staff Growth and Dissemination Updates, we ask the board to discuss the following questions:

- 1. Staff currently is eager to pursue doing both growth and a pilot dissemination effort concurrently. What questions does Board need answered to be able to consider supporting this direction?*
- 2. What information do board members need to make an informed decision regarding Navigator’s future strategic direction regarding growth and dissemination?*

To help prepare the Board for a good discussion, staff worked diligently to provide thorough updates in this packet so that Board members have more context of current staff activities, analysis, and planned next steps related to key priority areas. Please feel free to reach out to me or staff prior to the meeting if we can be of assistance in explaining any of the materials.