To: **Crescent Porter Hale Foundation**
From: **Valerie Threlfall and Meredyth Sneed**
Re: **Landscape Findings**
Date: **March 30, 2017**

Introduction

Crescent Porter Hale Foundation (CPH) is undertaking a strategic review of its community services portfolio and is considering focusing part of its community services grantmaking, as well as its education grant making, on helping underserved and at-risk middle school aged youth. CPH asked Threlfall Consulting to investigate the merits of concentrating on middle school aged youth as a focus area and to help inform its strategy.

CPH's initial hypothesis and observation from its historical grantmaking is that "middle school is an age when children are rapidly developing, physically and emotionally, shifting from family driven values and behavior to increasingly being influenced by peer groups. This age is seen as a critical juncture where youth could follow a path toward becoming a productive member of society or towards more troubling outcomes (dropping out of school, joining gangs, using drugs, etc.)." CPH also hypothesizes that "this age group may not currently receive as much funding from private foundations as other age groups, such as children aged 0-5 and high schoolers."

As such, CPH enlisted Threlfall Consulting to help address the following questions:

1. What are the major risk factors for middle school aged youth in the Bay Area? How do these risk factors vary from county to county (or across cities and neighborhoods)?
2. What are key organizations working to address these risk factors? What are key programs creating "pathways to success" for these youth?
3. What financial resources are currently available to support this work (private philanthropy, government, etc.)? How do available resources compare with other age categories such as young children (0-5) and high school students? Who are the major funders that focus on children aged 9-14 in the Bay Area?
4. What additional programming, financial resources, and research are needed to advance this work?

How This Report Is Organized

To answer these questions, we have organized this report into four major sections:

Section I summarizes what we have learned through interviews and secondary research about the key needs and risk factors facing middle school youth in the Bay Area.

Section II looks at promising intervention strategies and key initiatives within areas of education, social-emotional learning (SEL), and youth engagement.

Section III looks at the financial resources dedicated to middle school youth, with an emphasis on after-school or out-of-school time.

Section IV briefly discusses some challenges that funders are likely to encounter if they pursue a middle school strategy.

Executive Summary

Without a doubt, middle school matters. In addition to being a time of extremely rapid brain development, research has found that early adolescence (ages 9-14) is a critical period for individual identity formation. Middle school is the period in which youth begin to make decisions about who they want to be and what they want their futures to look like. Providing youth with the resources they need to make *positive* decisions and access promising opportunities is a key task for educators and non-profit providers serving this group. This memo discusses some of the most promising pathways (both in-school and out-of-school) for supporting youth through this important phase.

Despite its importance, our analysis confirms that middle school youth as an age group are often overlooked by philanthropic funders. Interviewees repeatedly emphasized that very few funders in the Bay Area have an explicit middle school focus, which can sometimes make it difficult for middle school-focused providers to apply for funding. We found that there is also a potential gap in terms of research and agreed-upon best practices for how to most effectively engage with this age group. These are both areas in which a funder with a defined middle school focus could have an impact.

Given the obvious importance of the middle school years, combined with the clear gap in funding resources locally, we would recommend that CPH move forward with focusing on middle school youth as a priority. We think it could be differentiating and impactful for a local funder to put a stake in the ground and "shine a light" on this subset of youth and their unique needs. We believe that the out of school time (OST) space, in particular, could benefit from the presence of a dedicated middle school funder like CPH.

We would caution, however, that there are challenges to pursuing a middle school strategy in a way that truly adds value and "moves the needle" on key issues affecting middle school youth. These challenges arise both from the structure of the field and from CPH's current staffing model. However,. we do not believe that any of the challenges raised in this memo are insurmountable and look forward to strategizing with you about how to overcome them.

SECTION I: Middle School Risk Factors – Academic, Social Emotional, Engagement-Related

The middle school years (defined in this memo as ages 9-14) are a unique and critical time in a child's social, emotional and academic development. Child development research notes that the scope of developmental change during this period is extremely large, surpassed only by the period of development from ages 0-3. Middle school is also a critical time of identity formation, both

academically and socially. As one interviewee described to us, these are the years where youth "start to cement who they are as learners and as people." Indeed, research confirms that "the accelerated development of students' cognition during early adolescence sets the middle grades apart as a key window of opportunity and of risk"[1]. Middle school is truly a "make-or-break" time in a student's future life trajectory.

Moreover, the middle school years are a time when peer interactions and influences increase. This is due to youths' newfound independence in a practical sense (as many spend time home alone after school, etc), as well as to the dramatic physiological and hormonal changes with which they are contending. Youth are developing the cognitive skills necessary to have true agency in their lives, and are starting to ask: *Who do I want to become? What choices do I want to make now? What do I truly want to be when I grow up?* – making exposure to various career paths and positive youth development opportunities all the more important. For youth who live in high poverty areas or who lack effective supports at home, having positive, supportive youth development experiences is especially critical, as they can literally lead to life-changing opportunities and trajectories for disadvantaged youth.

A. Academic Risk Factors

Middle school is a "make-or-break" time in a student's academic trajectory, and a critical period for identifying and intervening on behalf of students who are at risk of falling "off-track" academically. Compared to the relatively sheltered environment of elementary school, middle school is when students are expected to learn the skills that will enable them to succeed in high school and beyond, including greater initiative, independence in completing assignments, and higher-level thinking.

Ironically, one of middle school's most important functions from an academic perspective may be in preparing students for what comes next – specifically, 9th grade. Inadequate academic preparation has been identified as one of two leading reasons students fall off the "graduation track" in 9th grade[2], and getting "off-track" can have devastating consequences. In fact, poor academic performance in 9th grade has been found to be the single biggest predictor of whether a student will drop out of high school – much more so than a student's demographic profile or other background characteristics[3]. In other words, middle school has a key role to play in ensuring that students are equipped to get past the so-called "9th grade bubble" and remain on-track for graduation.

Conversely, middle school is also the time in which early "warning signs," indicating that a student is likely to drop out of high school, tend to surface. In fact, some researchers believe that over 75% of

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[1] Farrington, Camille A., et al. "Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance." The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, June 2012.

[2] Nelid, R. "Falling Off Track During the Transition to High School: What We Know and What Can Be Done." *The Future of Children*, vol 19, no 1, Spring 2009.

[3] Allensworth, Elaine and John Q. Easton. "What matters for staying on-track and graduating in Chicago Public High Schools: A close look at course grades, failures and attendance in the freshman year." The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, July 2007.

future dropouts in low-income school districts can be identified as early as the 6th grade[4]. One commonly-cited framework by Balfanz identifies three early warning indicators of dropout risk:

Indicator	Definition
Attendance	<85% school attendance
Behavior	"Unsatisfactory" behavior mark in at least one class
Course Performance	A final grade of "F" in Math and/or English
In one series of studies, 6th graders with one or more of these indicators had only a 15% - 25% chance of graduating high school on time or within one year of expected graduation[5].	

While falling behind in any core academic class during middle school is cause for concern, poor math achievement is especially worrisome. Middle school math courses are intended to lay the groundwork for Algebra I, which is typically taught in 9th grade. Algebra I is widely regarded as a "gateway course" for a variety of reasons. In California, proficiency in the concepts taught in Algebra I, as assessed by state standardized tests, is required to even be eligible for admission to a UC or CSU college. By some accounts, failing Algebra I can often be a direct impetus for dropping out of high school, as students become discouraged by their inability to master the subject matter and find themselves unable to enroll in local colleges[6,7]. Research largely supports these anecdotal accounts: in one school district, researchers found that only 13% of students who failed Algebra I in 9th grade went on to graduate in four years[8]. Thus, middle school academics are proved to be critical – as waiting until 9th grade to provide targeted support to struggling students may well be too late.

The actual transition to 9th grade can also be especially fraught, as many students disengage as the academic environment becomes even more competitive and challenging and the school and classroom environments differ significantly from middle to high school[9]. Recognizing this, many practitioners are focused on managing the transition between 8th and 9th grade – which can include providing summer "bridge" classes and facilitating "warm hand-offs" of students between middle and high school staff.

B. Social Emotional Risk Factors

Despite the importance of academically-focused interventions, the youth serving field generally is increasingly recognizing the importance of addressing the "whole child." In particular, more and more practitioners seek to help youth develop critical "social emotional skills" such as self-awareness, resilience, and healthy approaches to conflict resolution. While important for all children, these skill deficits are particularly acute for those children who may not be experiencing positive demonstration of these skills in their home setting.

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[4] Balfanz, Robert and Joanna Fox. "Early Warning Systems – Foundational Research and Lessons from the Field." Presentation to National Governors Association, October 2011.

[5] Balfanz, Robert and Joanna Fox. "Early Warning Systems – Foundational Research and Lessons from the Field." Presentation to National Governors Association, October 2011.

[6] Helfand, Duke, "A Formula for Failure in L.A. Schools." *Los Angeles Times*, 1/20/2006.

[7] Hacker, Andrew. "Is Algebra Necessary?" *The New York Times*, 7/28/2012.

[8] Heppen, Walters, et al, "The Struggle to Pass Algebra I in Urban High Schools: Online vs. Face-to-Face Credit Recovery for At-Risk Students." Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Annual Meeting, November 2013.

[9] Herlihy, C. "Toward Ensuring a Smooth Transition into High School." National High School Center, 2007.

Today, such self-regulation skills are most often discussed within the context of a "social emotional learning (SEL)" framework, that has been developed over the past 10-15 years. Although many SEL skills are not themselves "new" to youth development practice (for instance, "character building" initiatives have long promoted skills like self-regulation and positive citizenship), the field is increasingly coalescing around common terminology and vernacular of SEL or SEAL (social emotional and academic learning).[10]

As defined by CASEL, one of the preeminent thought leaders in the SEL space, SEL is "the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions"[11].

Researchers have found a connection between strong SEL skills and better life outcomes– including reductions in the likelihood of being on public assistance, being involved with the justice system, or being incarcerated[12]. The World Economic Forum reports:

> "In 2011, a meta-analysis of 213 studies involving more than 270,000 students from kindergarten through high school found that SEL could promote a host of academic, social and emotional benefits for students[13]. Students who received SEL instruction had achievement scores that averaged 11 percentile points higher than those who did not. Acquisition of social and emotional skills contributed to better academic performance and improved attitudes and behaviors. It also reduced emotional distress."[14]

Moreover, strong SEL competencies are associated with an ability to master the "21st-century skills" prized by certain employers. These include critical thinking/problem solving, creativity, communication, collaboration, adaptability, and persistence/grit. This makes SEL especially important here in the Bay Area, where "21st-century employers," such as Google and other tech companies, have publicly commented on how much they value employees with strong SEL skills[15].

Early childhood is the most important time for SEL attainment, and many interventions in the SEL space are targeted at elementary school aged youth. However, researchers argue that continued SEL post-early childhood is both needed to sustain gains *and* can be effective at reaching people that did not build a strong SEL base in early childhood: "In other words, social and emotional skills are teachable at all ages."[16]

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[10] A comprehensive analysis by Edge Research commissioned by the Wallace Foundation looks at the evolution and challenges around unifying terminology in this field. http://bit.ly/2lK0xsC

[11] CASEL. "What is SEL." www.casel.org/what-is-sel/

[12] Jones, Damon E. et al. "Early Social-Emotional Functioning and Public Health: The Relationship Between Kindergarten Social Competence and Future Wellness." *American Journal of Public Health*. Vol. 105, No. 11, November 2015, pp. 2283-2290.

[13] Durlak, Joseph A. et al. "The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social-Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions," Child Development, January/February 2011, Volume 82.

[14] World Economic Forum. "New Vision for Education." March 2016.

[15] World Economic Forum. "New Vision for Education." March 2016.

[16] World Economic Forum. "New Vision for Education." March 2016.

Our interviews and research reinforce the need to focus on SEL in the middle school years. To state the obvious, middle school is a time of intense personal development. As described earlier, students have newfound comprehension and awareness of their independent agency and are making decisions about their future and what types of behaviors to engage in. Having strong SEL skills are key to help youth make positive forward-looking choices throughout this period.

C. Engagement-Related Risk Factors

The "internal" SEL skills discussed above (e.g. self-awareness, conflict resolution) are critically important in allowing disadvantaged youth to persevere through high school and college – but they are not enough. Many youth (and especially disadvantaged youth) begin to intellectually disengage from school during the middle school years, particularly as they begin to find schoolwork increasingly challenging and/or begin to believe that they are not "college material."

To combat this disengagement, youth must be supported to develop a set of skills and attitudes that are distinct from (though not unrelated to) the SEL skills discussed in Section B. These skills and attitudes include:

A) Developing "learning skills" such as time management, study habits, help seeking behaviors, and problem solving skills
B) Developing goal-orientation and an understanding of how current schoolwork connects to future career goals
C) Feeling connected to and a sense of belonging in school, which leads to greater persistence[17]

As Breakthrough Collaborative, a practitioner locally in the middle school space notes:

> "In order to be successful in high school, and later in college, students must have strong norms for their work effort and achievement in class and effective coping and help-seeking techniques that allow them to persevere when facing difficulty. Students need to become "learners" rather than "attendees," who can manage their own learning, assess their progress and status, and rely on a set of core strategies for success"[18].

This is particularly true for youth from marginalized backgrounds, who often must overcome negative stereotypes about their abilities in schools.

One of the most comprehensive literature reviews looking at these factors' impact on academic learning comes from the Chicago Consortium on School Research. In their 2012 study, Farrington et al. advance a comprehensive framework that looks at youths' development of five critical non-cognitive factors: Academic mindset, academic perseverance, learning strategies, social skills, and academic behaviors – all of which they argue are key to support academic performance. Distinguishing these factors from the SEL definition above, they note the need to "look beyond individual-level skills to consider the ways students interact with the educational context within which they are situated and

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[17] Farrington, Camille A., et al. "Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance." The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, June 2012.
[18] Breakthrough Collaborative, www.breakthroughcollaborative.org

the effects of these interactions on students' attitudes, motivation, and performance"[19]. As noted above, middle school is a critical time to teach and reinforce skills and attitudes focused on how youth engage in school and plan for their future. It is a time to "catch" youth and change their trajectories.

Unfortunately, however, many researchers believe there is structural mismatch between adolescent cognitive development and the typical middle school structure, which leads to decreased engagement, motivation and school performance in early adolescence[20]. While educators generally recognize this – and accept the importance of fostering skills and attitudes that promote continued engagement – such skills are rarely explicitly taught in schools. In part, this is because many educators may not feel confident or informed enough to promote this type of learning; however, the relative lack of studies identifying effective best practices is also an impediment.

In light of the need to engage youth, non-school programs have employed a variety of approaches – each of which have their merits, but which address different aspects of youth engagement. For example, many interventions in the middle school years focus on increasing students' connections to potential career paths, leveraging their newfound sense of agency and creating supportive roadmaps to help them access these careers. Others focus on providing exposure to opportunities and making sure middle school students know what they need to do to graduate and pursue career paths of interest. Finally, other programs focus more narrowly on teaching study and learning skills.
While distinct in their own ways, what's common about these programs in our mind is their desire to engage youth and help them connect who they are today to who they want to become in the future.

D. Other Risk Factors

In its RFP, CPH identified a variety of other health and behavioral risks that may be impacting middle school youth, including trauma/stress related to poverty, inadequate nutrition, and health disparities related to environment. While the impacts of poor nutrition, limited access to health care, and toxic stress are certainly felt by Bay Area youth aged 9-14, we did not find much research that specifically identified these as isolated needs among this age group.

No doubt these are critical issues that should be supported by philanthropy. However, they are not necessarily aligned with a focus on middle school aged youth. The one possible exception to this would be mental health issues, such as issues related to bullying. A recent analysis by the US Department of Education found that, on average, one in four (25%) of middle school students (grades 6-8) report being bullied – compared to 19% of high school students, on average[21].

Given the reasons above, we did not focus significantly on health and behavioral risk factors in our preliminary landscape analysis.

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[19] Farrington, Camille A., et al. "Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance." The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, June 2012.
[20] Farrington, Camille A., et al. "Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance." The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, June 2012, p.57.
[21] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. "Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2015 (NCES 2016-079)", 2016, Indicator 11.

E. Needs Analysis: How Youth Are Doing in the Bay Area

The table below summarizes how youth are faring across a range of key indicators related to the risk factors noted above. Interestingly, with the exception of 8th grade math achievement, there are few commonly-cited indicators that track youth status during the middle school years – further suggesting that this is indeed a gap in the landscape.

Youth Indicators by County *Source: Children Now 2016 County Scorecard*						
	Alameda	**Contra Costa**	**Marin**	**San Francisco**	**San Mateo**	*Statewide*
Eating Free & Reduced-Price Breakfast[22]	24%	30%	29%	18%	36%	*38%*
Reading at Grade Level in Third Grade	49%	49%	62%	48%	55%	*42%*
Meeting State Math Standards in Eighth Grade	46%	43%	59%	48%	50%	*36%*
Access to State-Funded After-school Program[23]	21%	10%	11%	36%	13%	*12%*
Feeling of Connection to School[24]	46%	48%	61%	45%	55%	*47%*
Students who are Ready for College-Level Math[25]	43%	41%	46%	51%	44%	*32%*
High School Graduation Rate[26]	85%	89%	92%	72%	88%	*82%*

Youth Indicators by Race *Source: Children Now 2016 County Scorecard*						
	Alameda	**Contra Costa**	**Marin**	**San Francisco**	**San Mateo**	*Statewide*
Reading at Grade Level in Third Grade						
White	70%	66%	77%	73%	74%	*60%*

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[22] Among low-income students only

[23] Among low-income students only

[24] 9th and 11th graders only

[25] 11th graders only

[26] Measures 12th graders who graduate within 4 years

African American	20%	24%	10%	16%	30%	*27%*
Latino	28%	29%	31%	30%	29%	*31%*
Meeting State Math Standards in Eighth Grade						
White	59%	58%	72%	65%	68%	*51%*
African American	14%	13%	29%	15%	24%	*17%*
Latino	22%	22%	27%	23%	26%	*23%*
High School Graduation Rate						
White	91%	93%	95%	64%	92%	*88%*
African American	73%	78%	82%	48%	77%	*71%*
Latino	78%	85%	86%	56%	80%	*79%*

What we see based on this data is that, while Bay Area counties often out-perform the statewide average on many youth development indicators, the Bay Area is still a long way from ensuring equal opportunity for all children. Perhaps not surprisingly, wealthier counties like Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo tend to out-perform poorer counties like Alameda and Contra Costa overall.

Even in these wealthier counties, however, severe racial disparities persist – as in the case of San Francisco, where African American students' 8th grade math achievement is less than half that of their white counterparts, as noted in the table above. Stark racial disparities are also prevalent in other counties. We find this data truly alarming, as it indicates that students of color are entering the labor force and/or graduating at a distinct disadvantage relative to white students.

Finally, the data point to a broader opportunity gap that we know continues to influence individual trajectories long after high school. It is striking, for instance, that while 85% of students in the 5 Bay Area counties represented here graduate from high school, only 45% have the math skills they need to succeed in college. While just one example, this clearly highlights the need for *effective* interventions that truly give youths the skills they need to succeed over the long term.

SECTION II: Pathways to Success for Middle School Youth

The risk factors that affect middle school youth are multi-faceted in nature, touching on interrelated issues of race, class, and geography, and involving a variety of stakeholders – including schools, teachers, parents, and communities. Given this reality, it is important to recognize that there is more than one credible, research-supported path to impact.

Below is a two by two matrix that aims to "categorize" and provide just some examples of different ways to support middle school youth across these dimensions. Philanthropic efforts to improve the lives of middle school youth could take one (or more) of the following approaches in our mind:

Locus: Ex School **Unit of Change: Individual**	**Locus: In School** **Unit of Change: Individual**
Support for: • OST and youth development providers/ agencies	Support for: • Academic remediation/tutoring programs • Programs managing the transition from middle school to high school

• Development of new, specific offerings by OST providers • Access to mental health services • Family engagement efforts	• Scholarships
Locus: Ex School **Unit of Change: Environment**	**Locus: In School** **Unit of Change: Environment**

Support for:
• Capacity-building/training/professional development for OST practitioners
• Quality improvement initiatives
• Research on best practices
• *Systems level:*
    o Seeding new quality standards in select communities
    o Publication of best practices research
	Support for:
	• Teacher focused training (e.g. SEL)
	• Curriculum development efforts, e.g. improved math offerings or literacy intervention
	• *Systems level:*
	    o Advancing next generation science standards
	    o Advocating for more 21st century skill opportunities
	    o Modifying teacher recruitment and retention policies

To ground the discussion of near-term opportunities, we have provided below a brief "landscape" of intervention strategies and trends for the two top boxes of our 2x2 matrix (Individual Change Ex School, and Individual Change In School) as we believe these are likely the most appropriate areas of focus for CPH near-term. While these brief sketches are not intended to be comprehensive, they give a sense of the need and opportunities in each space, and raise questions for future analysis.

A. Individual Change Ex School

Why it Matters:

The dominant approach for supporting middle school aged youth outside of school is to focus on the out of school (OST) or expanded learning time landscape. Participation in high-quality OST programs has been proven to increase students' academic, social, and behavioral skills. OST can include both "after-school" programs during the school year and learning/enrichment programs during the summer months. At their best, these programs give young people the opportunity to explore and express what they care about, while honing the types of skills (i.e. project-based learning) that will be expected of them later in life. However, program quality is critical to achieving desired outcomes and is quite uneven, based on our preliminary scan and experience. Purely recreational/ "play"-based programs (with a few notable exceptions), for example, have not been proven to have measurable impacts on participants' academic, social, or behavioral skills.

Key trends:

Integrating academics into expanded learning time. Many programs are shifting from simply providing students with a "safe space" in which to spend their summer or after-school hours, to utilizing these hours as a time for additional academic instruction. This can range from simple tutoring and homework help to more rigorous programs that address remediation needs and expose students to STEM concepts– with the latter gaining in popularity, especially here in the Bay Area.

Intentionally incorporating SEL frameworks. The OST space is particularly well-suited to address SEL needs. Unlike schools, OST programs do not need to "teach to the test" and therefore have more freedom to incorporate SEL curricula.

However, program quality is key to attaining impact. A meta-analysis of 72 after-school program evaluations found that students in high-quality programs following specified best practices[27] experience statistically significant increases in social and behavioral skills – however, students in after-school programs that did not follow these best practices experience no statistically significant change in these skills[28].

Paying attention to quality and effectiveness. As the above indicates, program quality is vitally important for making out of school time effective. In California, the drive to quality is being supported in part by the State Department of Education, which in 2014 released new quality standards that apply to all OST programs receiving State funding. While a step in the right direction, these standards are very general, serving as more of a "floor" than as a framework for building an effective program. This means that there is still room for deeper conversations around program effectiveness, including articulating best practices that align with positive youth development principles and are tailored to middle school youths' unique needs.

Fostering youth voice and leadership. Locally, OST programs that focus on building youth leadership and advocacy skills are viewed to be at the cutting edge. These programs give youth a great deal of power in designing and crafting programs that are of interest to them, and often have a civic engagement/ community organizing element. Currently, these programs are more concentrated in San Francisco, with interviewees indicating that there is a relative lack of such programming in Alameda and other counties.

Challenges:

Recruiting and retaining qualified staff. It is not possible to implement a high-quality OST program without high-quality staff. Unfortunately, staffing is a major problem for OST programs, especially here in the Bay Area, given the high cost of living. Many interviewees described "constant churn" among front-line staff due to the relative low pay and high cost of living locally. Within organizations participating in the Silicon Valley Out of School Time Collaborative (a funder-led initiative discussed on pp.16-17), a staggering 80% of staff had been with their organization for under two years, underscoring that retention is a problem for even some of the most forward-looking OST providers.

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[27] The best practices identified include: 1) Sequenced learning (i.e. use of a curriculum); 2) Active learning; 3) Program component focused on developing personal or social skills (vs. a pure academic focus); 4) Explicit targeting of specific personal or social skills

[28] Durlack, Joseph A. and Robert P. Weissberg. "The Impact of After-School Programs That Promote Personal and Social Skills." Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), 2007.

Lack of training and professional development opportunities. Programs receiving state funding have not seen an increase in their per-student monetary allotment in over a decade – even as the state-mandated minimum wage, and the cost of doing business generally, have gone up. Similarly, for independent programs, they are often cash strapped and limited in their discretionary general operating funds. This leaves many programs without the resources needed to provide adequate training and professional development opportunities to staff, resulting in many staff that may be unqualified to implement rigorous academic programs (e.g. STEM), or to teach SEL concepts that are unfamiliar to them.

B. Individual Change In School

Why it Matters:

Youth aged 9-14 spend the bulk of their time in school – making schools a natural setting in which to pursue positive impact for middle schoolers. The Bay Area is also currently in the midst of a shift in educational focus, with growing acknowledgement of schools' role in addressing the needs of the "whole child." Part of this evolution is being driven by state-level policy changes, such as the establishment of CORE districts (which include San Francisco and Oakland Unified), and which seek to pursue a more holistic accountability structure than just test scores. Other forces include the adoption of community schools in places such as Oakland, West Contra Costa, and in San Francisco (through the Beacon Initiative). Community schools make campuses into "hubs of support for students, families and community members" and often involve co-location of key services such as health care centers and family resource centers on site at schools in disadvantaged communities.[29]

A number of trends have accompanied these contextual changes, and are highlighted below.

Key Trends:

Integration of SEL in schools – but less so in middle schools. Multiple SEL programs are in Bay Area elementary schools, and SEL-related restorative justice initiatives are relatively common at local high schools. As noted earlier, however, our interviewees repeatedly indicated that middle school feels somewhat "sandwiched" between elementary and high school in this regard, with less intentional middle-school specific SEL programming. While there are some individual efforts to support SEL development in middle schools (including efforts that focus on training the adults in the building), middle school SEL efforts feel relatively patchwork and individuated overall. As a result, OST programming has become especially an important site for advancing SEL skill development among youth aged 9-14.

Earlier outreach and "on ramps" for high school programs. Many programs, such as college access initiatives which have historically targeted high schoolers, are beginning to recognize that high school is too late to "catch" the most vulnerable youth. This is causing high school-focused programs, such as Build and College Track, to adjust their programming to begin serving youth as early as middle school. One consequent challenge raised by this evolution, as described to us in interviews, is that these

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[29] Oakland Unified School District. "About Community Schools." http://www.ousd.org/Domain/97

programs are designed for high schoolers, and not for middle school youth and their individuated needs which could diminish their effectiveness.

Transition support between 8th and 9th grade. In light of continued research about the importance of youth having positive 9th grade experiences, there is widespread recognition of the need for more seamless transitions between middle school and high school. Interviewees emphasized that many children slip through the cracks, especially as most public middle and high schools are not set up to ensure a smooth transition. Interviewees further describe that the 9th grade assignment process is often arbitrary, with only select students getting put on a track to complete the "A-G requirements" needed for California college admission.

Challenges:

Sustaining youth and family engagement. While we know from national data that youth engagement decreases during middle school, interviewees also expressed that many disadvantaged parents/families tend to disengage from the system around this time. Creating effective parent engagement programming is thus a significant opportunity – but it is not easy to do.

Partnering with unstable school systems. Supporting nonprofit organizations that are significantly embedded within schools can be challenging – although potentially highly impactful. Many school districts struggle with excessive turnover even at the very senior leadership levels, are continually under-resourced, and are over-committed to reform initiatives. Taken together, this makes effecting sustainable change very difficult.

SECTION III: Financial Resources Supporting Middle School Youth Pathways

A. Public Funding

The State of California supports middle school youth in a variety of ways, including funding public schools, public health initiatives, and select extended learning/OST programs. Rather than attempting to document these disparate funding streams, we have chosen to focus on government funding for extended learning/OST programs in this interim memo – but we are happy to revisit broader funding issues at CPH's request.

The California Department of Education's After School Division provides $550 million ($MM) annually through its ASES initiative to after-school programs for grades K-9 that are located at public school sites. The Department of Education also provides sites with limited free technical assistance[30]. From our preliminary research, it appears that non-profit entities that operate after school programs at off-site locations (e.g., many Boys & Girls Clubs) are generally not eligible for funding from the After School Division, though they may receive grant funding from other state government divisions and/or leverage state funds indirectly through fee-based contracts with schools.

ASES funded programs appear to have a relatively wide reach, with 45% of California elementary and middle school sites hosting a state-funded after-school program. These programs are concentrated to

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[30] California Department of Education After School Division. http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/di/or/asd.asp

a certain degree in low income elementary and middle schools. However, access to these sites is very uneven throughout the Bay Area. Only 36% of low-income students in San Francisco (and 21% in Alameda) had access to a state-funded after-school program in 2016 – yet even this seems high compared to a statewide average of 12%[31].

Youth Indicators by County *Source: Children Now 2016 County Scorecard*						
	Alameda	**Contra Costa**	**Marin**	**San Francisco**	**San Mateo**	*Statewide*
Low-Income Students with Access to State-Funded OST Program[32]	21%	10%	11%	36%	13%	*12%*

In addition to state funding, California schools and districts receive federal funding through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program to support their after-school efforts. In 2016, California schools received $1.2 billion ($B) in 21st Century funding.

Despite these public resources, the OST field's infrastructure remains relatively under-developed as it lacks reliable access to capacity building resources. As a comparison, the early childhood development field receives $2.4 B in state funding each year. Of this, $50 MM is earmarked for program quality initiatives, and $25 MM goes to professional learning opportunities. In the OST space, there is no comparable funding stream for program quality and professional development, and the field's infrastructure is less developed as a result[33].

Many nonprofit OST providers also rely heavily on municipal government funds as part of their sustainability. For example, in San Francisco and Oakland, the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and the Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY) give approximately $15 MM and $10 MM, respectively, to OST programs on an annual basis.

B. Philanthropic Funding

Private philanthropy is another vital source of support for nonprofit organizations serving middle school youth. In terms of overall trends, we know that youth funding from foundations increased markedly in the Bay Area over the past 15 years. Philanthropic funding has also been highly concentrated in select geographies, with upwards of 79 percent of grant dollars going to organizations in San Francisco and Alameda counties as of 2011[34]. Within education funding, we hear consistently that early childhood and college-access continue to be major priority areas for investment.

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[31] Children Now. "2016 County Scorecard." http://pub.childrennow.org/2016/

[32] Among low-income students only

[33] All budget figures from California Department of Education After School Division. http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/di/or/asd.asp

[34] Threlfall Consulting, Landscape Analysis of Youth-Serving Funding and Nonprofit Communities in the San Francisco Bay Area http://www.hewlett.org/library/landscape-analysis-of-youth-serving-funding-and-nonprofit-communities-in-the-san-francisco-bay-area/

To try and get at funding specifically for middle school youth, we explored Foundation Center as a resource. Our analysis of grants to adolescent[35] serving programs confirms the extreme disparity in funding for programs, even for adolescents, based on geography noted above. As one stark example, see the below funding snapshot comparing San Francisco and Alameda, two of the most well-funded counties, to Contra Costa.

Funding for Adolescent-Serving Programs by County, 2014 *Source: Foundation Center*			
County	Total Grant Dollars	Grant Dollars Per Recipient	Total Funders[36]
San Francisco	$44 MM	$250 K	401
Alameda	$40 MM	$300 K	234
Contra Costa	$6 MM	$180 K	59

These data points are especially troubling when viewed in the context of ever-growing gentrification in select counties. Per prior analysis completed by Threlfall Consulting, youth and their families are increasingly moving to counties like Contra Costa as they are priced out of their homes in places like San Francisco and parts of Alameda County. In the process, they are moving away from the places where philanthropic funding (and many of the services such funding supports) is currently concentrated.

This adolescent funding data, however, does not tell us the extent to which philanthropic dollars are going to middle school youth-serving programs specifically. Foundation Center data indicates that many local funders, such as the James Irvine Foundation, the California Endowment, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and the San Francisco Foundation support adolescents. We know from interviews, however, that very few funders in the Bay Area have an explicit focus on middle school youth issues. Rather, programs serving middle school youth are typically included in funders' broader "Education" or "Youth Development" portfolios. We have heard from several programs that this can make applying for funding more difficult – both because there is often no "box to check" on funding applications that appropriately describes their programming, and because funder awareness of the value of middle school-specific programming is not particularly high.

C. Sample Funder-Led Initiatives

Despite the macro trends above, there are a few recent philanthropic efforts supporting middle school youth locally of note:

David and Lucile Packard Foundation

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[35] "Adolescent" is defined by Foundation Center as youth aged 13-18. However, from a close review of the data, we believe that the majority of grants to organizations that serve youth aged 9-14 are actually included in this category. Given these data uncertainties in tagging, we would urge that this data be taken as "directional" only.
[36] Refers to total number of funders making grants in the county, not to total number of funders headquartered in the county.

The Silicon Valley Out of School Time Collaborative (SVOSTC) was a six-year capacity building project that was supported by four funders: Sand Hill Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, SV2, and the Sobrato Family Foundation. These funders provided $2.6 million in funding from 2010-2016 to nine agencies in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties that served secondary-aged students outside the formal school day providing tutoring, academic advising, and summer enrichment programs.[37]

From 2014-16, the focus of SVOSTC was on building capacity among participating agencies to address three skill areas: Academic Mindsets, Learning Strategies, and Social Skills. Participating nonprofits accessed trainings, coaching supports, and accessed Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) related to these issues. Grantees also instituted new curriculums to help support youth in developing these skills. At the end of the three years, youth showed moderate to large gains in all three skill areas.

The SVOSTC reveals some of the challenges of conducting capacity building work in the area of youth development. First, the timeline of two years was perceived by some to be too short to successfully implement new curricula. Secondly, there was a facilitation skill gap and gap in awareness about the need for these skills in some nonprofit staff members – gaps which were exacerbated by significant staff turnover. The lessons learned from this initiative are documented in a publicly available evaluation.

The Packard Foundation, a long time OST funder, is now in the process of determining how it will continue to support adolescent youth following its investment in the SVOSTC.

Salesforce Foundation

In 2016, Salesforce provided $2.5 million to Oakland Unified School District and $6 million to San Francisco Unified – bringing its total contribution to Bay Area education to $22.5 million. The focus of Salesforce's funding is to enhance STEM curriculum, create funds for principals to promote innovation at their schools, and to improve higher education awareness.[38] San Francisco Unified (SFUSD) has received funds from Salesforce since 2013. To date, Salesforce funding has enabled SFUSD to hire 19 full-time tutors and teachers for math and science instruction, reduce math class sizes for San Francisco eighth graders from 33 to 24 students, and increase student GPAs. Salesforce is now expanding its pilot program to Oakland, targeting 6 middle schools in particular. This funding will also support "Future Centers," which are designed to increase students' college and career awareness.

S.D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation

In 2013, the S.D. Bechtel Foundation launched a National Character Initiative which was aimed at improving the state of practice in child and youth character development nationally. The Initiative specifically seeks to identify what works with respect to adult practices that build youth character. Bechtel seeks to help national organizations translate this knowledge into practice through trainings

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[37] "Nurturing Social Emotional Learning in Out-of-School-Time: Lessons Learned from the Silicon Valley Out-of-School-Time Collaborative." Silicon Valley Out-of-School Time Collaborative, November 2016. http://bit.ly/2l8hpFb

[38] Conger, Kate. "Salesforce Expands $22.5M Education Investments to Oakland." *TechCrunch*, 9/1/2016, https://techcrunch.com/2016/09/01/salesforce-funds-oakland-education/

and professional development for staff and volunteers. A percentage of S.D. Bechtel's character funding is being used locally.

Stuart Foundation

The Stuart Foundation has a long-standing, systems-focused education portfolio focused on California and Washington states. They have recently transitioned their strategy to explicitly focus on addressing the needs of the whole child. This is translating into three strategies: supporting grantees that advance student-centered learning, building teachers' and systems' capacity to address whole child teaching and learning practices, and collaborating with state and school system leaders to support research and policy that advances a vision of whole child development.

D. A Gap Exists in Middle School Funding

Despite some recent philanthropic and state investment, there is no doubt that a gap remains between the needs of middle school youth in the Bay Area and resources meant to address them. While state funding for OST programs is substantial, our analysis suggest that it is merely a drop in the bucket compared to the level of need. Furthermore, current public funding levels do not leave much room for quality improvement or professional development activities – which is where philanthropy can make a significant difference.

At the same time, private foundation funding, while generous, is uneven, and in some cases, may not be reaching middle schoolers in the most under-served communities across the Bay Area. In short, there is certainly an opportunity for a dedicated funder to make an impact on this space.

SECTION IV: Review of Challenges

In our interviews, we asked both funders and practitioners about the merits of CPH focusing on middle school aged youth. There was resounding agreement across the board that middle school youth could benefit from a more explicit philanthropic focus, with interviewees noting "most certainly, it's a gap in philanthropy," and seeing significant benefit to "shining a light on this age group and its unique needs."

However, our research also identified some key challenges, ranging from practical to philosophical. We present them here as considerations for discussion.

Challenge #1: Few nonprofits are explicitly focused on middle school youth. Multiple interviewees talked to us about the practical challenges of focusing on middle school youth as a funder, noting that it would be difficult to identify and target nonprofits that solely serve middle school youth. There are indeed a few organizations that only focus on this age group, such as Breakthrough Collaborative and Spark, but most practitioners that serve middle school aged youth also serve either high school or elementary school youth. As one interviewee noted, it's important to preserve the flexibility to reach

"back" to younger ages or "up" to older ages as the needs of youth cohorts evolve. From a practical perspective, it is thus difficult to keep a middle school focus area "pure."

Challenge #2: "Field-building" support is needed – but difficult to provide. We heard repeatedly that solely providing direct service grants to the OST space (which, as indicated, is one of the most promising venues for reaching middle school youth) would not be as differentiating.

However, multiple thought leaders noted that there could be an interesting opportunity to impact this space by supporting various capacity-building and field-building efforts. For instance, many noted that there is a need to strengthen understanding of what it means to deliver high quality OST programming targeted specifically to middle school youth. On this point, we heard suggestions ranging from providing resources to help OST leaders build their policy/advocacy capacity, to addressing issues of capacity such as staffing, to supporting research identifying best practices in serving middle school youth.

Challenge #3: Identifying effective programs. Relatedly, there is a significant variation in the effectiveness and impact of OST programs. Foundations entering this space must be equipped to discern between high and low quality programs and to develop a point of view about positive youth development.

While the challenges above are real, the benefit to the field in having a middle-school focused funder would be substantial. As such, we believe this is a path well worth pursuing.

APPENDIX: Interview List

- Aim High – Alec Lee, Executive Director
- Breakthrough Collaborative – Lauren Weston, Chief Development Officer
- Bright Research Group – Brightstar Ohlson, Principal and CEO
- David and Lucile Packard Foundation – Irene Wong, Director of Local Grantmaking
- Edna McConnell Clark Foundation – Jehan Velji, Portfolio Manager and Director of Portfolio Strategy
- First Graduate – Anthony Mickens, Director of Programs
- Girls Inc. – Julayne Virgil, CEO
- Greenlight Fund – Casey Johnson, Bay Area Executive Director
- Oakland Public Education Fund – Brian Stanley, Executive Director
- Partnership for Children and Youth – Jennifer Peck, President and CEO
- Raikes Foundation – Erin Kahn, Executive Director
- Rogers Family Foundation – Rhonnel Sotelo, Executive Director
- S. D. Bechtel Foundation – Arron Jiron, Senior Program Officer
- S. H. Cowell Foundation – Jamie Allison, VP Programs
- San Francisco Education Fund – Hanna Doerr, Director of Evaluation and Operations
- Sand Hill Foundation – Ash McNeely, Executive Director
- Sobrato Family Foundation – Kenji Treanor, Director of Strategic Grantmaking
- Stuart Foundation – Sophie Fanelli, Chief of Programs
- Spark – Yoon Choi, Chief Strategy Officer and VP California Regions
- The Village Method – Mahea Gaskins, Executive Director