



Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street • Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001
www.isbe.net

Jesse H. Ruiz
Chairman

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

December 18, 2009

Dear District Superintendent:

We have long recognized that the continuous improvement of our education system is necessary to prepare each and every child in Illinois to be successful in postsecondary education and careers. Our commitment is founded in the belief that each and every child should have the opportunity to reach their highest potential and the knowledge that—in today's economy—Illinois' future depends on a world-class education system for all students.

Yet, for too long we have allowed low achievement to persist in too many communities. While the aspiration of quality education is a reality for some Illinoisans, it still remains little more than an elusive ideal for many. Our failures come at a staggering cost to our students, our communities, and our state. The effects are not confined to urban or rural districts, nor are they limited to Chicago or Downstate. Instead, the consequences are felt by every citizen of Illinois—in lost wages, lost jobs, and lost revenue; and in higher crime, poorer health, and missed opportunities.

Earlier this year, President Obama launched an extraordinary opportunity for states to move forward on ground-breaking, transformative ideas in education that would be otherwise cost prohibitive. The federal Race to the Top (RTTT) grant is a competitive, \$4.35 billion education reform program enacted as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Illinois intends to apply for over \$500 million of these federal funds.

At least half of any RTTT grant award to Illinois will go to districts that sign the attached Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and commit to implement the initiatives in our proposal. The MOU must be signed by the Local Education Agency superintendent (or an equivalent authorized signatory) and, as the State application has a greater chance of success if MOUs are signed by all parties, will preferably also be signed by the president of your local governing board (or an equivalent authorized signatory) and the local teachers' union leader (or an equivalent authorized signatory if applicable).

RTTT is an opportunity we cannot afford to miss, especially because the federal priorities closely align with the core principles of our own strategic agenda. Illinois has taken important strides in recent years to build the infrastructure to address the RTTT priority areas. Because of these efforts, we do not seek in this contest a fresh start, but a chance to accelerate work that is already underway with much needed funding from the federal government.

Our RTTT proposal supports the Illinois education reform agenda by ensuring that we adopt world class standards and assessments for students, teachers and school leaders, invest resources and expertise to turnaround our most challenged schools and best ensure that every student, if provided with the knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes to succeed in postsecondary education and careers, becomes a productive citizen in our ever-changing world.

I ask that you review the MOU and consider joining other LEAs as we work together to move the education reform agenda and improve opportunities and outcomes for the students we serve. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this opportunity. If your decision is to take advantage of this opportunity, I ask that you return a scanned executed copy of the MOU to rt3mou@isbe.net no later than January 11, 2010.

As always, I appreciate your leadership, your support and the work you do on behalf of Illinois students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher Koch".

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.

State Superintendent of Education

**THE STATE OF ILLINOIS RACE TO THE TOP APPLICATION
PARTICIPATING LEA MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") is entered into by and between the State of Illinois ("State") and _____ ("Participating LEA"). The purpose of this agreement is to establish a framework of collaboration, as well as articulate specific roles and responsibilities in support of the State in its implementation of an approved Race to the Top grant project.

I. Scope of Work and Nature of LEA Requirements and Commitments

A. Mandatory Requirements. Exhibit I, Part A (the Preliminary Scope of Work – Participating LEA Mandatory Requirements), indicates which portions of the programs and initiatives outlined in the State's Race to the Top Application for Initial Funding, due to the U.S. Department of Education on or before January 19, 2010 (the "Final State Application"), the Participating LEA is agreeing to implement.

B. Optional Programs and Opportunities. Exhibit I, Part B (the Preliminary Scope of Work – Participating LEA Optional Requirements), contains optional programs and opportunities that are not expressly required by the Final State Application. The LEA may elect to pursue funding for the optional programs and opportunities listed in Exhibit I, Part B.

C. Illinois Priority School Reform Commitments. Exhibit II (Illinois Priority School Reform Commitments), identifies commitments the LEA Superintendent and Local Teacher Union's Leader must make in order to receive the benefits identified on Exhibit II. **The Illinois Priority School Reform Commitments are relevant only to Participating LEAs with one or more "Illinois Priority Schools", i.e. all schools meeting the U.S. Department of Education's definition of "persistently lowest-achieving schools," and also includes other significantly underperforming schools that fall within the bottom 5% of student achievement statewide.**

D. LEA Plan. If the State's application is funded, the Participating LEA will prepare a Final Scope of Work to be attached to this MOU as Exhibit IV in a timely fashion but no later than 90 days after a grant is awarded ("LEA Plan"). The LEA Plan must describe the LEA's specific goals, activities, timelines, budgets, key personnel, and annual targets for key performance measures in a manner that is consistent with the Preliminary Scope of Work (Exhibit I) and with the Final State Application.

E. Subject to All Applicable Laws. The State and LEA commitments set forth in this MOU (including exhibits and appendices), the Final State Application, and the LEA Plan are subject to all applicable requirements and regulations of federal and State law, including without limitation the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act, 115 ILCS 5/1 *et seq.*, laws and regulations applicable to the Race to the Top Program, and the applicable provisions of EDGAR (34 CFR Parts 75, 77, 79, 80, 82, 84, 85, 86, 97, 98 and 99).

II. Project Administration

A. Participating LEA Responsibilities. In assisting the State in implementing the tasks and activities described in the State's Race to the Top application, the Participating LEA subgrantee will:

1. Implement the LEA Plan;
2. Actively participate in all relevant convenings, communities of practice, or other practice-sharing events that are organized or sponsored by the State or by the U.S. Department of Education ("ED");
3. Post to any website specified by the State or ED, in a timely manner, all non-proprietary products and lessons learned developed using funds associated with the Race to the Top grant;
4. Participate, as requested, in any evaluations of this grant conducted by the State or ED;
5. Be responsive to State or ED requests for information including on the status of the project, project implementation, outcomes, and any problems anticipated or encountered;
6. Participate in meetings, webinars, and telephone conferences with the State to discuss (a) progress of the project, (b) potential dissemination of resulting non-proprietary products and lessons learned, (c) plans for subsequent years of the Race to the Top grant period, and (d) other matters related to the Race to the Top grant and associated plans.

B. State Responsibilities. In assisting Participating LEAs in implementing their tasks and activities described in the State's Race to the Top application, the State grantee will:

1. Provide the State supports identified in the Final State Application;
2. Work collaboratively with, and support the Participating LEA in carrying out the LEA Plan;
3. Timely distribute the LEA's portion of Race to the Top grant funds during the course of the project period and in accordance with the LEA Plan;
4. Provide feedback on the LEA's status updates, annual reports, any interim reports, and project plans and products; and
5. Identify sources of technical assistance for the LEA Plan.

C. Joint Responsibilities.

1. The State and the Participating LEA will each appoint a key contact person for the Race to the Top grant.
2. These key contacts from the State and the Participating LEA will maintain frequent communication to facilitate cooperation under this MOU.
3. State and Participating LEA grant personnel will work together to determine appropriate timelines for project updates and status reports throughout the whole grant period.
4. State and Participating LEA grant personnel will negotiate in good faith to continue to achieve the overall goals of the State's Race to the Top grant, even when the Final State Application requires modifications that affect the Participating LEA, or when the LEA Plan requires modifications.

D. State Recourse for LEA Non-Performance. If the State determines that the LEA is not meeting its goals, timelines, budget, or annual targets or is not fulfilling other applicable requirements, the State grantee will take appropriate enforcement action, which could include a collaborative process between the State and the LEA, or any of the enforcement measures that are detailed in 34 CFR section 80.43 including putting the LEA on reimbursement payment status, temporarily withholding funds, or disallowing costs. The State will terminate this MOU and the LEA's status as a Participating LEA, with no further remedy, if the LEA does not submit to the State an LEA Plan meeting the requirements of Section I.D by the date that is 90 days after a grant is awarded to the State.

III. Assurances

The Participating LEA hereby certifies and represents that:

1. It has all requisite power and authority to execute this MOU;
2. It is familiar with the initiatives and reforms described in this MOU and its appendices, and is supportive of and committed to working on the initiatives set forth in this MOU;
3. It agrees to be a Participating LEA and will implement those portions of the Final State Application indicated in Exhibit I attached to this MOU, if the State application is funded;
4. It will comply with all of the terms of the Race to the Top Program and the State's subgrant; and
5. The baseline information set forth on Exhibit III is accurate and complete.

IV. Modifications

This MOU may be amended only by written agreement signed by each of the parties involved, and in consultation with ED.

V. Duration/Termination

This Memorandum of Understanding shall be effective, beginning with the date of the last signature hereon and, if a grant is received, ending upon: (a) the State's termination of this MOU pursuant to Section II.D; (b) the expiration of the grant project period; or (c) upon mutual agreement of the parties (if occurs earlier than grant termination or expiration). If the State's application is not funded, this MOU shall be null and void.

VI. Signatures

The signatures of the LEA Superintendent and the President of the Local School Board set forth below indicate agreement to terms of this MOU; provided, however, the signatures of the LEA Superintendent must be set forth on Exhibit II to indicate agreement to the Illinois Priority School Reform Commitments and for Exhibit II to be incorporated into this MOU.

[signatures on following page]

LEA Superintendent (or equivalent authorized signatory) - required:

Signature/Date

Print Name/Title

President of Local School Board (or equivalent, if applicable):

Signature/Date

Print Name/Title

The signature of the Local Teachers' Union Leader set forth below indicates support for the LEA's decision to be a Participating LEA; provided that such signature and the Local Teachers' Union Leader's indication of support does not constitute an agreement by the Local Union to reopen or otherwise modify any existing collective bargaining agreement or waive its rights and protections under the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act; and provided further that the signature of the Local Teachers' Union Leader must also be set forth on Exhibit II for it to be incorporated into this MOU.

Local Teachers' Union Leader (if applicable):

Signature/Date

Print Name/Title

Authorized State Official - required:

By its signature below, the State indicates agreement to the terms of this MOU and hereby accepts the LEA as a Participating LEA.

Signature/Date

Christopher A. Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent

EXHIBIT I PRELIMINARY SCOPE OF WORK

PART A PARTICIPATING LEA MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

The LEA agrees to all of the mandatory requirements described in Part A of this Preliminary Scope of Work. Commitments applicable exclusively to grades K-8 or high schools are not deemed applicable to LEAs that do not include such grade levels. However, commitments that require integrated and aligned activities between middle and high schools are deemed applicable to all LEAs.

I. STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS [RTTT Application Section (B)(3)]

A. Supporting the Transition to Enhanced Standards and High-Quality Assessments

1. Standards-Aligned Instructional Systems.

Illinois will adopt revised Learning Standards in English Language Arts and Math as part of its participation in the Common Core State Standards Initiative. Illinois will also be joining a consortium of states participating in the Common Core State Standards Initiative to jointly develop and implement common, high-quality assessments aligned with the Common Core K-12 standards.

To develop Standards-aligned instructional systems, the LEA will undertake a process during the 2010-11 and 11-12 school years that includes all of the following:

- (a) Aligning curriculum to the revised Illinois Learning Standards.
- (b) Implementing Assessments for Learning in at least grades K – 10 aligned to the learning benchmarks in English/language arts and math. As revised Learning Standards are adopted by the State in science, Assessments for Learning should be implemented in science as well. "Assessments for Learning" may include:
 - Universal screening/benchmark assessment data collected periodically (e.g., fall, winter, and spring intervals) indicating whether most students are meeting benchmarks in a particular academic area, measuring student learning during the previous period of instruction that can help determine student progress toward year-end objectives and identifying areas requiring greater focus;

- Formative assessments that are more diagnostic in nature and provide teachers with information on how to teach specific curricular areas to address student learning needs;
- Native Language Assessment measuring student learning for English language learners; and
- Other assessments that yield descriptive data that can be used to improve instruction throughout the school year.

The State will collaborate with Participating LEAs to integrate Assessments for Learning into a statewide, comprehensive assessment system measuring student progress in a manner aligned to the revised Learning Standards.

- (c) Ensuring the district's Response to Intervention (RtI) plan provides for targeted interventions and differentiated supports, aligned to the revised Learning Standards, for students that are not on pace to meet college- and career-ready expectations.

2. Developing and Scaling Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM)-Related Programs of Study.

The Illinois Programs of Study model provides students with rigorous course sequences that integrate and apply academic and technical content, as well as valuable information and experiences to help them make better choices regarding their education and future career goals. Generally, Programs of Study begin in the 9th grade and continue through post-secondary education including community colleges and universities.

Through the STEM Learning Exchanges, as described in Appendix A, and other related supports, the State will assist LEAs with the development of curricular resources, assessment tools, professional development systems, and IT infrastructure necessary to implement Programs of Study in the following critical STEM application areas:

- Agriculture and Natural Resources: development, production, processing, distribution, of agricultural commodities and resources including food, fiber, wood products, natural resources, horticulture, and other plant and animal products/resources;
- Energy: developing, planning and managing the production of energy including renewable energy and clean coal technology and its distribution through smart grid technologies;
- Manufacturing: product and process development and managing and performing the processing of materials into intermediate or final products and related support activities;
- Information Technology: designing, developing managing, supporting and integrating hardware and software system;
- Architecture and Construction: designing, planning, managing, building, and maintaining the built environment including the use of green technologies;
- Transportation, Distribution and Logistics: planning, management and movement of people, materials and goods across all transportation modes as well as maintaining and improving transportation technologies;

- Research and Development: scientific research and professional and technical services including laboratory and testing services, and research and development services; and
- Health Sciences: planning, managing and providing therapeutic, diagnostic, health informatics, and support services as well as biomedical research and development.

For LEAs serving grades 9 through 12

The LEA will establish a broad range of Programs of Study as a structural approach to high school reform based on the Illinois design principles. Subject to and following the establishment of statewide STEM Learning Exchanges, as further explained in Appendix A, the LEA must establish two or more Programs of Study promoting critical STEM application areas supported by the STEM Learning Exchanges.

When establishing Programs of Study, the LEA will:

1. Develop Program of Study course sequences in a broad range of academic and career areas;
2. Strengthen academic integration within all Programs of Study to promote stronger linkages between academic disciplines as well as technical content;
3. Support professional development for academic and CTE instructors to implement these Programs of Study and provide opportunities for instructors to gain additional professional certifications;
4. Support real-world connections with adult mentors outside of the school building through strategies such as work-based learning opportunities, problem-based learning projects, and mentoring programs;
5. Implement education and career guidance systems, in coordination with feeder middle schools, to provide students with the opportunity to develop career and education plans; and
6. Form collaborative partnerships with postsecondary education to increase dual credit opportunities and develop structured programs to improve the transition to postsecondary education.

For LEAs serving grades 6 through 8

The LEA will:

1. Establish systems for educators to align curriculum with high schools into which the middle schools feed to support Programs of Study implementation; and
2. Implement education and career guidance systems to provide students with the opportunity to develop career and education plans starting in middle school that align to a Programs of Study model at the high school level.

II. DATA SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT INSTRUCTION

A. Fully Implementing a Statewide Longitudinal Data System [RTTT Application Section (C)(1)]

The LEA will fully cooperate with ISBE on data collections necessary for the State's longitudinal education data system, including efforts by ISBE to ensure data quality.

B. Accessing and Using State Data [RTTT Application Section (C)(2)]

Illinois Collaborative for Education Policy Research.

To further guide the use of longitudinal data to support State policymaking and continuous improvement, the State will support the establishment of the Illinois Collaborative for Education Policy Research (ICEPR) as an independent organization with a governance structure linking it closely to State agencies, participating universities, and other educational stakeholders in Illinois.

The ICEPR will:

- Help identify and define the key policy issues in the State;
- Communicate research priorities and recruit researchers to develop specific projects addressing these priorities;
- Facilitate the data-sharing agreements and administrative aspects of these research projects;
- Communicate research findings and develop recommendations for policy and practice;
- Assist practitioners in developing their own research capacity for more detailed data collection and analysis; and
- Seek and secure external funding for additional projects aligned with State priorities.

The LEA will cooperate with the Illinois Collaborative for Education Policy Research (ICEPR) to build local capacity to support policy research and development activities and share data in a manner consistent with all State and federal privacy protection laws.

C. Using Data to Improve Instruction [RTTT Application Section (C)(3)]

A State-District Partnership for a Learning and Performance Management System.

With funding support through the Race to the Top program, Illinois will expand upon the State system vision set forth in the P-20 Longitudinal Education Data System Act to develop a centrally hosted education information exchange that provides powerful web-based interface tools to support a broad array of instructional and education support functions (referred to as the "Learning and Performance Management System", or "System"). The System will enable the State to host an integrated set of data elements necessary for use by the State and any district wishing to participate, integrate that data with other information held outside of the System, deliver web-based software

applications that can be accessed at no-cost or reduced cost to the end user, and allow customization at the user level. The System will provide longitudinal data to a broad range of stakeholders to inform instruction and improve student learning, and ensure these stakeholders have timely access to needed information while protecting student and educator privacy. With the development and implementation of the System, Illinois can move from the current landscape of fragmented data across a multitude of "siloed" district and State systems, to a common platform providing actionable data for every Illinois educator.

The State and participating districts will develop a governance structure for the System that clearly defines a partnership approach to data use and management. Professional development, training, and support will be provided to Participating LEAs as needed. Pilot implementation of the Learning and Performance Management System would occur during the 2012 – 2013 school year, with piloting focused on Participating LEAs. Full implementation of the System would commence during the 2013 – 2014 school year.

1. Subject to the State's timely development of a Learning and Performance Management System as described in this MOU and in the Final State Application, by no later than the start of the 2012-13 school year the LEA must either (a) directly rely on the Learning and Performance Management System as its primary platform for offering an instructional improvement system serving all teachers and principals, or (b) implement a locally developed instructional improvement system or systems serving all teachers and principals.

2. If the LEA is not directly relying on the Learning and Performance Management System as its primary platform for offering an instructional improvement system serving all teachers and principals, the LEA must integrate local systems with the Learning and Performance Management System to ensure teacher and principal access to key System features.

For a detailed description of the Learning and Performance Management System proposal, please see the proposed design requirements available at www.isbe.net/arra.

III. GREAT TEACHERS AND LEADERS

A. Improving Teacher and Principal Effectiveness Based on Performance [RTTT Application Section (D)(2)]

The State will work with Participating LEAs on the development of redesigned local performance evaluation systems for principals and teachers. These new evaluation systems must be implemented by the beginning of the 2012 – 2013 school year and will be based on the following core principles and assumptions:

- Summative and formative evaluations for teachers and principals should be based on measures of both professional practice and student growth.

- Effective evaluation includes clear expectations for both professional practice and student growth, clear feedback on performance, and a clear plan for building on strengths and addressing short-comings.
- Teacher practice can be measured by well-trained observers using observation-based frameworks that define and describe the elements of effective teaching practice; principal practice can also be measured by well-trained observers using observation-based frameworks that describe the elements of effective school leadership practice, school climate surveys and other tools.
- Individual student growth can be measured over time with multiple measures that include standardized formative and summative tests, curriculum- and course-based assessments and individual student work.

Key components of principal and teacher evaluation systems include the following:

1. **At least 50% of teacher and principal performance evaluations will be based on student growth.**
 - Measures of student growth for both teachers and principals will be developed locally, within parameters set by the State to ensure validity and reliability. The process to establish these parameters will include extensive collaboration with school district management, teachers unions, other stakeholders, other states, and technical experts.
 - Teacher practice will be measured based on Danielson's "Framework for Teaching" or another comparable framework approved in advance by the State. Principal practice will be measured using a framework(s) to be identified by the State.
 - At least until a new State student assessment system aligned with the revised Learning Standards has been implemented, State assessments cannot be used as the **only** measure of student growth in teacher performance evaluations.
 - All teacher and principal evaluations must include a minimum of at least two student growth measures.
2. **All district evaluation systems for both tenured teachers and principals will include the rating categories of Excellent, Proficient, Needs Improvement, and Unsatisfactory.**
 - Participating LEAs do not have to use these specific rating categories for the final summative rating for non-tenured teachers, but must undertake an evaluation of non-tenured teachers using the State framework with four performance levels and must report data to the State based on the four performance levels.
3. **All principals and non-tenured teachers must be evaluated annually. Each tenured teacher must receive a summative evaluation at least once in the course of every 2 school years.** However:
 - For any tenured teacher rated as either "needs improvement" or "unsatisfactory," the teacher must be evaluated at least once in the school year following the receipt of such rating.

- For all other tenured teachers in Participating LEAs, at minimum a non-summative assessment of student growth must be completed in any year during which a summative evaluation is not performed.
4. **The Participating LEA will use the results of local performance evaluation systems to inform decision-making in the areas of professional development, tenure, and possible dismissal of less effective teachers and principals.**

If the State receives a Race to the Top grant, the State will commit to developing all of these system components prior to September 30, 2011. The components of the State support system will include the following:

- Both a teacher and principal model evaluation template. The model template will incorporate the requirements established by the State, but allow customization by districts in a manner that does not conflict with such requirements.
- An evaluator pre-qualification program based on the model teacher evaluation template.
- An evaluator training program based on the model teacher evaluation template. The training program will provide multiple training options that account for the prior training and experience of the evaluator.
- A superintendent training program based on the model principal evaluation template.
- One or more instruments to provide feedback to principals on the instructional environment within a school, such as school climate surveys, "360 evaluations" providing a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of school leader behaviors, and parent surveys.
- A State Board-provided or approved technical assistance system that supports districts with the development and implementation of teacher and principal evaluation systems. This system will include assistance to ensure that measures of student growth are rigorous and comparable across classrooms and schools.
- Web-based systems and tools and video-based observation processes supporting implementation of the model templates and the evaluator pre-qualification and training programs. Many of these systems and tools can be hosted on the Learning and Performance Management System upon its development.
- A process for measuring and reporting correlations between local principal and teacher evaluations and (i) student growth in tested grades and subjects, and (ii) retention rates of teachers.

Subject to the development of State support systems, Participating LEAs will implement local evaluation systems meeting the requirements set forth herein by no later than the start of the 2012-13 school year. If the State does not develop all of these components by that date, the obligation of Participating LEAs to implement redesigned performance

evaluation systems will be postponed for as long as it takes the State to implement these systems.

**B. Ensuring Equitable Distribution of Effective Teachers and Principals
[RTTT Application Section (D)(3)]**

Addressing District Barriers and Providing Transparent Data on Within-District Disparities.

If the LEA has one or more high-poverty schools and/or high minority schools, as designated by ISBE consistent with federal requirements, the LEA must perform a comprehensive review of institutional policies and constraints that may prevent such schools from attracting top talent, and develop strategies to address these constraints over the course of the grant period. Commencing with the 2011-2012 school year, the review must consider human capital performance metrics reported by ISBE, which will include disparities in school-level average teacher salaries, teacher academic capital, and other useful performance metrics developed in consultation with stakeholders.

**C. Improving the Effectiveness of Teacher and Principal Preparation Programs
[RTTT Application Section (D)(4)]**

The Final State Application will include a high quality plan to:

- (i) Link student achievement and student growth data to students' teachers and principals, and link this information to the in-State programs where those teachers and principals were prepared for credentialing, and to publicly report the data for each credentialing program in the State.
- (ii) Expand preparation credentialing options and programs that are successful at producing effective teachers and principals.

The LEA will cooperate with ISBE and IBHE to establish placement sites for pre-service teachers and principals from programs that are successful at producing effective teachers and leaders.

D. Providing Effective Support to Teachers and Principals [RTTT Application Section (D)(5)]

1. Scaling Up Support for All Beginning Teachers and Principals.

Subject to the availability of funding for programs, the LEA will:

- Establish induction and mentoring programs for all new teachers for at least two years in duration, with the programs meeting standards set forth in the School Code and administrative rule; and

- Participate in the State's technical assistance and accountability infrastructure to improve the quality of all new teacher induction and mentoring programs.

2. Intensive Educator Support for Critical P-20 Transition Points.

(a) Early Learning to K-3 *(not applicable to high school districts)*

The State will provide targeted funding and assistance for implementation of a developmentally-appropriate kindergarten readiness assessment to identify students' skills and achievements at the beginning of kindergarten. Following the State's development and piloting of a statewide kindergarten readiness assessment program and subject to the availability of funding for the assessment and the professional development, the LEA will:

- Implement a kindergarten readiness assessment; and
- Integrate and align professional development across early learning and grades K-3.

(b) Middle to High School

Since the 2007 - 08 school year, the State has funded the cost for school districts to implement the EXPLORE test in 8th or 9th grade and the PLAN test in 10th grade. Collectively, EXPLORE, PLAN and ACT constitute the Educational Planning and Assessment System ("EPAS"). Commencing in the 2010-11 school year, the State will require that Participating LEAs administer EXPLORE during 8th grade to better address the transition from middle to high school. The State will also establish a consistent testing window for administration of the EXPLORE and PLAN by Participating LEAs so that the data can be used in a consistent way to measure student and subgroup growth during the middle to high school transition.

Subject to the continuation of State funding for EXPLORE and PLAN, the LEA will:

- Clearly communicate and create a common understanding among educators, parents, and students that a student's scores on 8th grade and high school assessments (including EPAS system assessments) are a predictor of the student's readiness for non-remedial coursework.
- Establish systems for educators to discuss patterns and instructional needs identified through the data, and establish a process for early identification of students who may need remedial assistance before transitioning to college. These systems must include communication and coordination between high schools and feeder elementary/middle schools regarding aligned school improvements activities and targeted interventions to address areas of deficiencies.
- Create intensive instructional programs, primarily in math and reading, and student support services during high school years that increase the numbers of students prepared for non-remedial coursework.

(c) **High School to Postsecondary** (*not applicable to elementary districts*)

In response to the high cost of remediation and its impact on students and families, the State of Illinois adopted the College and Career Readiness Act, Public Act 95-0694, which created a 3-year pilot project with the goal of increasing college readiness and decreasing the need for remedial classes through:

- 1) The alignment of high school and college curriculums;
- 2) Measuring college readiness through aligning ACT scores to specific community college courses;
- 3) Increasing the number of student enrolled in a college-prep curriculum;
- 4) Providing resources and academic support to students in their senior year of high school through remedial and advanced coursework and other interventions; and
- 5) Development of an evaluation process that measures the effectiveness of readiness intervention strategies.

Consistent with the objectives of the College and Career Readiness Act, the LEA will work with the primary community college(s) into which its high school or high schools feed to:

- Facilitate communication and collaboration between them, align curriculum goals and academic expectations;
- Establish a process for early identification of students who may need remedial assistance before transitioning to college using assessments administered to students in high schools, particularly in math; and
- Create programs that seek to address the needs of these students before high school graduation.

IV. TURNING AROUND THE LOWEST-ACHIEVING SCHOOLS

Note: This Section of the MOU is only applicable to Participating LEAs with one or more Illinois Priority Schools, defined as "schools meeting the U.S. Department of Education's definition of 'persistently lowest-achieving schools,' and also includes other significantly underperforming schools that fall within the bottom 5% of student achievement statewide."

A list of Illinois Priority Schools is available at www.isbe.net/sfsf.

A. Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools [RTTT Application Section (E)(2)]

Subject to the availability of funding through Race to the Top, the Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grant program, or targeted State funding, the LEA must participate in the Illinois Partnership Zone initiative **or** must separately undertake one of the four school intervention models identified by the U.S. Department of Education—turnaround model, restart model, school closure, or transformation model—in all Illinois Priority Schools within the LEA, as further described in Appendix B. The interventions must be implemented during the first three years of the Race to the Top grant period (i.e., the 10 – 11, 11 – 12, or 12 – 13 school years), with no less than a proportionate cohort of schools initiating interventions in each year. If the LEA can demonstrate that a prior intervention substantially aligned to one of the four school intervention models is demonstrating significant student achievement gains, as determined by ISBE, the LEA may receive funding to continue with that intervention. If the LEA chooses to participate in the Partnership Zone program outlined in Appendix C, it will be expected to undertake the District Activities and School Activities set forth in such Appendix.

B. School District Reorganization to Improve Student Outcomes [RTTT Application Section (E)(1)]

If an LEA is identified by ISBE as a candidate for reorganization using metrics that include, but are not limited to, low student achievement outcomes, the LEA will agree to undertake a reorganization study funded by the State.

PART B
PARTICIPATING LEA OPTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

This Part B of the Preliminary Scope of Work contains optional programs and opportunities for which Participating LEA participation is not expressly required.

The Participating LEA desires to pursue those programs and opportunities described below that are marked with an "X" in the box.

Locating Information WorkKeys Assessment/National Career Readiness Certificate Program

Currently, the ACT WorkKeys Applied Math and Reading for Information assessments are included within Illinois' 11th grade assessment, the PSAE. The use of WorkKeys assessments in Illinois high schools can be enhanced, however, through implementation of ACT's National Career Readiness Certificate and promotion of access to the National Career Readiness System. This requires the State to offer the WorkKeys Locating Information assessment, in addition to both the Applied Math and Reading for Information assessments included within the PSAE.

Through Race to the Top funding, Illinois will provide funding for high schools in Participating LEAs to implement the Locating Information assessment and participate in the National Career Readiness Certificate program. Participating LEAs will be required to implement the Locating Information prior to the PSAE (either in the spring of the sophomore year, or fall of the junior year). That way, the second day of the PSAE, which incorporates the WorkKeys assessments and a State-developed science assessment, can result in achievement of a Career Readiness Certificate.

End-of-Course Exams in Algebra I and Algebra II

End-of-course assessments present an opportunity for high schools to promote rigor and consistency in course instruction, and to address students' college- and work-readiness in critical subject areas. Through Race to the Top funding, the State of Illinois will support consortia of Participating LEAs that seek to develop and implement end-of-course assessments in Algebra I and Algebra II as a consistent measure of standards implementation in these core subject areas.

Increasing Teacher Expertise in Math and Science

Teachers' academic expertise plays a key role in promoting comprehensive high school reform focused on increased student achievement in math and expansion of STEM-related opportunities. Through Race to the Top funding, the State will provide financial support for new programs undertaken by Participating LEAs to increase existing teachers' expertise in math and science. All Participating LEAs that use such funding to create new programs to increase existing teacher expertise in math and science may be required to demonstrate to ISBE (i) that an

increased number of teachers have completed additional math and/or science coursework, or (ii) that an increased number of teachers have endorsement(s) in math and/or science.

Using the State's National Board Certification Resources to Improve Teacher and Principal Effectiveness Across Middle and High Schools

Through the support of Race to the Top funding, the State will draw together National Board Certified Teachers (NBCTs), classroom teachers (by grade level and content area), and school principals into collaborative teams to accelerate student achievement and create transformational change across middle and high schools. NBCTs, the National Board Certification process, the related program *Take One!*, and National Board Certification process for principals will be incorporated into a comprehensive approach to school improvement for participating high schools and feeder middle schools.

FOR THE PARTICIPATING LEA

Authorized LEA Signature/Date

Print Name/Title

EXHIBIT II ILLINOIS PRIORITY SCHOOL REFORM COMMITMENTS

Note: This Section of the MOU is only applicable to Participating LEAs with one or more Illinois Priority Schools, defined as "schools meeting the U.S. Department of Education's definition of 'persistently lowest-achieving schools,' and also includes other significantly underperforming schools that fall within the bottom 5% of student achievement statewide."

A list of Illinois Priority Schools is available at www.isbe.net/sfsf.

A. DIRECT SUPPORT AND PRIORITY FUNDING

The State is establishing additional funding and funding priority committed to accelerating reform in Participating LEAs with one or more Priority Schools. These are LEAs in which dramatic acceleration of reforms will have the greatest impact on helping the State close the achievement gap. If the LEA Superintendent and the Local Teachers' Union Leader agree to all of the commitments described in Subsection (B) below, the State will:

1. Provide or fund the provision of technical assistance and support to the LEA for implementation of the reforms and systems described in this Exhibit II;
2. Establish funding at a level of at least 10% out of the 50% State Race to the Top allocation that will be dedicated solely to LEAs that agree to make the commitments set forth in this Exhibit II;
3. Prioritize participation in the Illinois Partnership Zone Program for LEAs that make all of these commitments; and
4. Pursue significant foundation funding that will be directed to LEAs that make all of these commitments. The final Race to the Top application may also include new programs for LEAs that make all of the priority funding commitments.

B. COMMITMENTS

To receive these additional funds and funding priority, for each Participating LEA, the LEA Superintendent and the Local Teachers' Union Leader must commit to use their best efforts to develop implementation plans for all of the following and include such plans in the LEA Plan described in Section I.D of the MOU. The State Board of Education reserves the right to determine the sufficiency of the LEA Plan for purposes of additional funding or priority funding. In the event any of these commitments are not sufficiently included in such Plan, the Participating LEA will no longer be eligible for such additional funding and funding priority.

1. Acceleration of Performance Evaluation Re-Design in Priority Schools

- The Participating LEA will implement in Priority Schools new local performance evaluation systems that meet the requirement set forth in Exhibit I, Part A, Section III of

this MOU by no later than the start of the 2011-2012 school year, with full District-wide scale-out of such evaluation systems no later than the following year.

- In its LEA Plan, the Participating LEA must set out in detail the plan and timeline for implementation of new performance evaluation systems.
- If the Participating LEA and the Local Teachers' Union are unable to reach an agreement regarding new performance evaluation systems at the time the LEA submits its LEA Plan, then the LEA will not be eligible for additional funding or funding priority under this Exhibit II.

2. Autonomy for Site-based Leadership of Illinois Priority Schools

[This item does not apply to school districts governed by Article 34 of the School Code, 105 ILCS 5/1-1 *et seq.*, due to their existing statutory autonomies.]

- To provide autonomy for the principals of Illinois Priority Schools to select and assign teachers to the school in order to establish an effective teaching staff as quickly as possible. Options for establishing an effective teaching staff include intensive professional development, filling of existing vacancies at the discretion of site-based leadership, relocation of staff through voluntary transfers, and involuntary transfers. As part of interventions in Illinois Priority Schools, the LEA must use locally adopted competencies to measure the effectiveness of staff who can work within the turnaround environment to meet the needs of students, screen all existing staff, and provide the principal with autonomy to determine which applicants will be accepted. If the LEA and the Local Teachers' Union cannot reach agreement on the foregoing issues by the time the LEA submits its LEA Plan, then the Participating LEA will not be eligible for additional funding or funding priority under this Exhibit II.
- In its LEA Plan, the LEA will specifically describe how such autonomy will be provided and include an agreed-upon negotiated waiver or other agreement providing flexibility from any inconsistent provisions in its collective bargaining agreement.

3. Illinois Partnership Zone Participation

- Participate in the Illinois Partnership Zone for one or more of the LEA's Priority Schools.
- In its LEA Plan, the LEA will specifically identify the schools to be included in the Illinois Partnership Zone and include an agreed-upon negotiated waiver or other agreement providing flexibility from any provisions in its collective bargaining agreement restricting the implementation of District Activities and School Activities expected for participation in the Partnership Zone. If the LEA and the Local Teachers' Union cannot reach agreement on such a waiver or other agreement by the time the LEA submits its LEA Plan, the LEA will not be eligible for additional funding or funding priority under this Exhibit II.

[signatures on following page]

SIGNATURES

LEA Superintendent (or equivalent authorized signatory) - required:

Signature/Date

Print Name/Title

Local Teachers' Union Leader – required:

The signature of the Local Teachers' Union Leader set forth below indicates that the Local Teacher Union's Leader will use best efforts to develop a negotiated, mutually-agreed upon implementation plan in the areas identified in Subsection B above as part of the LEA Plan described in Section I.D of the MOU. The signature of the Local Teachers' Union Leader does not constitute an agreement by the Local Union to: (i) reopen or otherwise modify any existing collective bargaining agreement unless and until a subsequent negotiated waiver or other agreement has been mutually agreed upon by the LEA and Local Union; or (ii) limit or waive its rights and protections under the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act and other applicable law.

Signature/Date

Print Name/Title

EXHIBIT III BASELINE INFORMATION

1. Does the Participating LEA's teacher evaluation plan incorporate student growth as a component?

Yes

No

If yes, please describe:

2. Does the Participating LEA's principal evaluation plan incorporate student growth as a component?

Yes

No

If yes, please describe:

3. Please describe any efforts taken during the last 5 years to turn around Illinois Priority Schools (persistently lowest-achieving schools) that substantially conform to one of the four school intervention models identified by the U.S. Department of Education: turnaround model, restart model, school closure, or transformation model. Please provide information including (a) the approach used, and (b) results and lessons learned to date.

APPENDICES

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Appendix A | STEM Programs of Study and Learning Exchanges |
| Appendix B | School Intervention Models |
| Appendix C | Illinois Partnership Zone |

EXHIBIT A
STEM PROGRAMS OF STUDY AND LEARNING EXCHANGES

STEM-Related Programs of Study

Programs of Study provide recommended sequences of courses aligned to particular Career Pathways which include opportunities to earn dual credit, secondary or post-secondary credentials or certificates, and an associate or bachelor's degree. The Illinois Programs of Study model provides students with rigorous course sequences that integrate and apply academic and technical content, as well as valuable information and experiences to help them make more well-informed choices regarding their education and future career goals.

Participating LEAs are required to establish two or more Programs of Study promoting science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) application areas (Agriculture and Natural Resources; Energy; Manufacturing; Information Technology; Architecture and Construction; Transportation Distribution and Logistics; Research and Development; and Health Sciences). The STEM-related Programs of study will be supported by the STEM Learning Exchanges, as described below. Race to the Top funding sub-granted to Participating LEAs can be used to implement STEM-related Programs of Study. Additionally, the State will work with school districts throughout the state to better engage students by providing them with more options to select Programs of Study that make relevant and rigorous real-world connections with their academic and career interests.

Programs of Study Guiding Principles

In 2008, Illinois adopted a framework for implementation and evaluation of Programs of Study that provides six guiding principles geared to creating career pathways that extend from the high school to the postsecondary level and employment so all students have the opportunity to transition to college and careers. The six guiding principles adopted by the state to implement Programs of Study are:

1. Programs of Study are developed, supported and led with guidance from collaborative partners.
2. Each and every student has access to educational opportunities and services that enable their success.
3. Education and training providers, with input from business and industry, enhance alignment that facilitates student preparation and transition through the educational pipeline.
4. Curriculum and pedagogy involve rigorous and relevant instruction that enhances learning and enables students to attain academic and technical standards and credentials.
5. Comprehensive and continuous professional development that impacts teaching and learning is delivered to enhance the recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified instructional and administrative staff.
6. Data are collected, shared, and utilized to improve outcomes and demonstrate accountability.

Each of Illinois' guiding principles is accompanied by a set of six to eight design elements that help practitioners understand what they need to do to implement Programs of Study.

STEM Learning Exchanges

Illinois will use Race to the Top Fund funding to provide seed funding to statewide STEM Learning Exchanges to promote the implementation of Programs of Study in critical STEM application areas. STEM Learning Exchanges will provide the curricular resources, assessments tools, professional development systems, and IT infrastructure necessary to develop STEM-related Programs of Study in the STEM areas listed in the MOU.

A separate STEM Learning Exchange will be established for each of the eight STEM areas. Each Exchange will create an open collaborative learning platform that:

- Provides students access to e-learning resources including on-line courses, assessment and feedback systems, reference materials, software tools (e.g., engineering design software) and data bases hosted throughout the world as well as connections to other students, teachers, and mentors and tutors (e.g., performance support systems);
- Provides students with project management resources to work in open collaborative teams to address real-world interdisciplinary problems developed by teachers as well as outside partners and sponsors including businesses, government, and non-profit organizations, as piloted in the Illinois Innovation Talent project;
- Provides students, teachers, adult mentors, and career counselors with career information and guidance resources;
- Provides teachers and instructional support staff the capacity to develop and share learning resources and participate in professional learning communities to support students within specific disciplines (e.g., engineering, math) and application areas (e.g., Health Sciences); and
- Includes curriculum options structured to qualify for dual credit in the various STEM-application areas.

The statewide partnerships for the STEM Learning Exchanges will include representatives from school districts, postsecondary institutions, businesses, industry experts, museums, research centers, and other community partners. Each partnership will be required to form a nonprofit corporate entity with representation from all of the partner entities responsible for overseeing and implementing the grant. In addition to establishing the STEM Learning Exchanges, the partnerships will be required to develop professional development and on-site technical assistance programs (similar to the Agricultural Education model). Each STEM Learning Exchange will be housed on the Learning and Performance Management System.

APPENDIX B
SCHOOL INTERVENTION MODELS

**Intervention Model Definitions from the
School Improvement Grants Application
Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act**

- (a) **Turnaround model:** (1) A turnaround model is one in which an LEA must—
- (i) Replace the principal and grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility (including in staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach in order to substantially improve student achievement outcomes and increase high school graduation rates;
 - (ii) Using locally adopted competencies to measure the effectiveness of staff who can work within the turnaround environment to meet the needs of students,
 - (A) Screen all existing staff and rehire no more than 50 percent; and
 - (B) Select new staff;
 - (iii) Implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in the turnaround school;
 - (iv) Provide staff ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development that is aligned with the school’s comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure that they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies;
 - (v) Adopt a new governance structure, which may include, but is not limited to, requiring the school to report to a new “turnaround office” in the LEA or SEA, hire a “turnaround leader” who reports directly to the Superintendent or Chief Academic Officer, or enter into a multi-year contract with the LEA or SEA to obtain added flexibility in exchange for greater accountability;
 - (vi) Use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with State academic standards;
 - (vii) Promote the continuous use of student data (such as from formative, interim, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction in order to meet the academic needs of individual students;
 - (viii) Establish schedules and implement strategies that provide increased learning time (as defined in this notice); and
 - (ix) Provide appropriate social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports for students.
- (2) A turnaround model may also implement other strategies such as—
- (i) Any of the required and permissible activities under the transformation model; or

(ii) A new school model (e.g., themed, dual language academy).

(b) **Restart model:** A restart model is one in which an LEA converts a school or closes and reopens a school under a charter school operator, a charter management organization (CMO), or an education management organization (EMO) that has been selected through a rigorous review process. (A CMO is a non-profit organization that operates or manages charter schools by centralizing or sharing certain functions and resources among schools. An EMO is a for-profit or non-profit organization that provides “whole-school operation” services to an LEA.) A restart model must enroll, within the grades it serves, any former student who wishes to attend the school.

(c) **School closure:** School closure occurs when an LEA closes a school and enrolls the students who attended that school in other schools in the LEA that are higher achieving. These other schools should be within reasonable proximity to the closed school and may include, but are not limited to, charter schools or new schools for which achievement data are not yet available.

(d) **Transformation model:** A transformation model is one in which an LEA implements each of the following strategies:

(1) **Developing and increasing teacher and school leader effectiveness.**

(i) **Required activities.** The LEA must—

(A) Replace the principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformation model;

(B) Use rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals that—

(1) Take into account data on student growth (as defined in this notice) as a significant factor as well as other factors such as multiple observation-based assessments of performance and ongoing collections of professional practice reflective of student achievement and increased high school graduations rates; and

(2) Are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement;

(C) Identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing this model, have increased student achievement and high school graduation rates and identify and remove those who, after ample opportunities have been provided for them to improve their professional practice, have not done so;

(D) Provide staff ongoing, high-quality, job-embedded professional development (e.g., regarding subject-specific pedagogy, instruction that reflects a deeper understanding of the community served by the school, or differentiated instruction) that is aligned with the school’s comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies; and

(E) Implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation school.

(ii) **Permissible activities.** An LEA may also implement other strategies to develop teachers’ and school leaders’ effectiveness, such as--

(A) Providing additional compensation to attract and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the students in a transformation school;

(B) Instituting a system for measuring changes in instructional practices resulting from professional development; or

(C) Ensuring that the school is not required to accept a teacher without the mutual consent of the teacher and principal, regardless of the teacher's seniority.

(2) Comprehensive instructional reform strategies.

(i) Required activities. The LEA must--

(A) Use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with State academic standards; and

(B) Promote the continuous use of student data (such as from formative, interim, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction in order to meet the academic needs of individual students.

(ii) Permissible activities. An LEA may also implement comprehensive instructional reform strategies, such as—

(A) Conducting periodic reviews to ensure that the curriculum is being implemented with fidelity, is having the intended impact on student achievement, and is modified if ineffective;

(B) Implementing a schoolwide “response-to-intervention” model;

(C) Providing additional supports and professional development to teachers and principals in order to implement effective strategies to support students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment and to ensure that limited English proficient students acquire language skills to master academic content;

(D) Using and integrating technology-based supports and interventions as part of the instructional program; and

(E) In secondary schools—

(1) Increasing rigor by offering opportunities for students to enroll in advanced coursework (such as Advanced Placement; International Baccalaureate; or science, technology, engineering, and mathematics courses, especially those that incorporate rigorous and relevant project-, inquiry-, or design-based contextual learning opportunities), early-college high schools, dual enrollment programs, or thematic learning academies that prepare students for college and careers, including by providing appropriate supports designed to ensure that low-achieving students can take advantage of these programs and coursework;

(2) Improving student transition from middle to high school through summer transition programs or freshman academies;

(3) Increasing graduation rates through, for example, credit-recovery programs, re-engagement strategies, smaller learning communities, competency-based instruction and performance-based assessments, and acceleration of basic reading and mathematics skills; or

(4) Establishing early-warning systems to identify students who may be at risk of failing to achieve to high standards or graduate.

(3) Increasing learning time and creating community-oriented schools.

(i) Required activities. The LEA must—

(A) Establish schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time (as defined in this notice); and

(B) Provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.

(ii) Permissible activities. An LEA may also implement other strategies that extend learning time and create community-oriented schools, such as—

(A) Partnering with parents and parent organizations, faith- and community-based organizations, health clinics, other State or local agencies, and others to create safe school environments that meet students' social, emotional, and health needs;

(B) Extending or restructuring the school day so as to add time for such strategies as advisory periods that build relationships between students, faculty, and other school staff;

(C) Implementing approaches to improve school climate and discipline, such as implementing a system of positive behavioral supports or taking steps to eliminate bullying and student harassment; or

(D) Expanding the school program to offer full-day kindergarten or pre-kindergarten.

(4) Providing operational flexibility and sustained support.

(i) Required activities. The LEA must--

(A) Give the school sufficient operational flexibility (such as staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student achievement outcomes and increase high school graduation rates; and

(B) Ensure that the school receives ongoing, intensive technical assistance and related support from the LEA, the SEA, or a designated external lead partner organization (such as a school turnaround organization or an EMO).

(ii) Permissible activities. The LEA may also implement other strategies for providing operational flexibility and intensive support, such as--

(A) Allowing the school to be run under a new governance arrangement, such as a turnaround division within the LEA or SEA; or

(B) Implementing a per-pupil school-based budget formula that is weighted based on student needs.

APPENDIX C
ILLINOIS PARTNERSHIP ZONE

In order for intervention efforts in Illinois Priority Schools to be successful and sustainable, high-quality and appropriately trained teachers and administrators need to be attracted and comprehensive support to educators must be provided. To this end, Illinois is part of a six-state collaboration to launch a "Partnership Zone" initiative to target failing schools and promote dramatic school turnaround. The Partnership Zone program is designed to turn around Illinois Priority Schools by combining school interventions with a robust human capital strategy, supported by a network of strong outside organizations. Partnership Zones incorporate the flexibility of charter schools and the benefits of the school district infrastructure and support.

The Illinois Partnership Zone will include school districts selected for participation based upon their:

- Need for intensive interventions in one or more schools within the district;
- Willingness to commit to the human capital and school intervention components of the statewide model; and
- Commitment of staff and funding resources to support the initiative, above and beyond the funding and resources provided by the State.

Participating districts will be required to have at least one Illinois Priority School, as further described in Section E(2)(i). Elementary and middle schools that feed into Illinois Priority Schools can also participate in the Illinois Partnership Zone.

For the Illinois Partnership Zone to have the desired intensity and scalability, ISBE will need to engage with external partners to provide on-the-ground support to participating districts and schools. The external partners will consist of "Lead Partners" who will lead and oversee the implementation of the intervention model in selected schools, and "Supporting Partners" who will help to implement the district-wide strategies and support the work of Lead Partners.

School districts that participate in the Illinois Partnership Zone will be eligible to receive:

- Support from Lead and Supporting Partners for school- and district-level activities;
- Significant funding through the State's allocation of School Improvement funds for the district's Illinois Partnership Zone schools; and
- Possible priority for additional resources through State grant programs and other federal programs.

Table B.1 below sets forth a proposed timeline for implementation of the Illinois Partnership Zone initiative.

Table B.1: Proposed Timeline for Partnership Zone Implementation*

October -December 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene various stakeholders to discuss initiative; raise interest and concerns. • Examine requirements for Section 1003(g) School Improvement funds. • ISBE issues RFSP for and prequalifies Lead and Supporting Partners.
January - March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illinois Partnership Zone districts selected by ISBE. • Illinois Partnership Zone districts form team consisting of Lead and Supporting Partners; develop detailed plan for Illinois Partnership Zone implementation.
March - April 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISBE reviews and approves or requires revisions to Illinois Partnership Zone proposals received in response to the Section 1003(g) School Improvement RFP. Upon approval, full Section 1003(g) School Improvement grant funds provided to implement Illinois Partnership Zone activities.
April - August 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervention planning, capacity building, evaluation of existing staff, professional development.
September 2010 - August 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First school year of implementation of the intervention model.
September 2011 - August 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second school year of implementation of the intervention model.
September 2012 - August 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third school year of implementation of the intervention model: • Phase-out of Lead Partner services commences.
September 2013 - August 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fourth year of implementation of the intervention model (contingent upon available funding): • Phase-out of Lead Partner services accelerates.

* Evaluation will be ongoing throughout the Illinois Partnership Zone project.

If ISBE receives Race to the Top or other State or federal funding, then the scope of the initiative could be expanded to include additional schools and districts. Additionally, funding could be used to expand and scale up services offered through the statewide system of support.

The following is a more detailed description of key components of the Partnership Zone program: Lead and Supporting Partners; Data Collection and Outcomes-based Measurements; the Illinois Partnership Zone Council; and District and School Illinois Partnership Zone Responsibilities and Activities.

A. Lead and Supporting Partners

The State Superintendent will pre-qualify Lead and Supporting Partners to work with participating districts and schools in specific regions. Pre-qualified partners will also be eligible to contract directly with ISBE. The State has already undertaken the Lead and Supporting Partner selection process. On October 15, 2009, ISBE issued a Request for Sealed Proposals for Lead and Supporting Partners to work in every region of the State. Pre-qualification determinations will be made in early January 2010.

B. Selection and Role of Lead Partners

Lead Partners must have a demonstrated record of successful and effective work with underperforming schools. Only one Lead Partner will be assigned to each participating school within a school district. In general, the Lead Partner's duties will include:

- Working with ISBE, the district and school, to perform a needs assessment of the district and school;
- Coordinating with all involved stakeholders on the development of an intervention plan and its implementation; and
- Implementing a coherent, whole school intervention model in partnership with the district.

The Lead Partner must carefully analyze a school's current programs to ensure coherence and a match between improvement priorities and budgeting. Based on the results of the needs assessment, the Lead Partner will implement the coherent, whole school plan that integrates the academic and other services of the school district and other entities working with the school. The Lead Partner must develop meaningful partnerships with parents, the business community, community organizations, State and local officials, and other stakeholders in formulating and implementing the plan. Operational support for the proposed school will be provided by the school district (e.g., special education and bilingual education services, transportation, food service, accounting, payroll, procurement, office services).

Districts will have flexibility in selecting a specific intervention model, as identified in the proposed federal regulations, to be implemented in coordination with a Lead Partner. However, the intervention model must be comprehensive and address all of the "Transformation Criteria" that address:

1. School culture and climate;
2. Developing teacher and school leader effectiveness;
3. Comprehensive instructional reform strategies;
4. Extended learning time; and
5. Providing operating flexibility.

Districts will be required to coordinate with Lead Partners to ensure appropriate and adequate autonomy over staff and leadership hiring, curriculum and instruction, scheduling, and budget in order to address each of the "Transformation Criteria" (see below). In many instances, these autonomies will require the negotiation and creation of waivers or memoranda of understanding providing flexibility from a collective bargaining agreement. The specific autonomies provided to each Lead Partner must be agreed to by the district and described in the detailed plan for Illinois Partnership Zone implementation developed by the Lead Partners and the district prior to receiving full funding from ISBE for implementation of the intervention model.

Each district's plan for Illinois Partnership Zone implementation, as well as contracts between the district and partners, must ensure shared accountability for the success of the intervention model between the district and the partners. District contracts with partners must permit termination if specified outcomes are not being achieved.

C. Selection and Role of Supporting Partners

Supporting Partners will help implement the district-wide Illinois Partnership Zone strategies and support Lead Partners' work in selected schools. Supporting Partners will assist participating districts to develop district-wide human capital strategies to increase the effectiveness of their teacher and principal workforce. In addition to the human capital strategies, some districts also may need to engage in a broader range of capacity-building activities, such as improving district data use, board member training, or assistance and training on effective budgeting and fiscal management. The work of Supporting Partners will be focused only on the following areas:

- Human Capital
Implement one or more of the possible Illinois Partnership Zone human capital strategies (see below), including negotiations of necessary flexibility from a collective bargaining agreement.
- District Capacity Building
 - Build school board capacity to oversee and implement Illinois Partnership Zone activities; and/or
 - Build the capacity of district superintendents, assistant superintendents, human resource directors, and/or fiscal officers to oversee and implement Illinois Partnership Zone activities.

Supporting Partners also will be expected to participate in the school and district needs assessment process administered by ISBE and Lead Partners, paying particular attention to the school's and district's needs regarding human capital and/or district capacity.

D. Data Collection and Outcomes-based Measurements

Lead and Supporting Partners will be required to participate in data collection, evaluation, and reporting activities specified by ISBE. In addition, ISBE will establish an outcomes-based measurement model and metrics for evaluating success by schools, districts, and partners. This model will ensure that every intervention plan defines realistic outcomes that will be achieved as the result of an intervention incorporating the "Transformation Criteria."

E. Illinois Partnership Zone Council

All Lead and Supporting Partners will be expected to designate a high-level individual from the organization to participate in a statewide Illinois Partnership Zone Council. The council will also include representatives from participating districts and schools and other stakeholders identified by ISBE.

The council will provide information and input to the State Superintendent and/or the Superintendent's designees in the areas of:

- Progress of the statewide Partnership Zone initiative;

- Proposed State legislative and regulatory changes that can help support the Illinois Partnership Zone's human capital and school intervention efforts; and
- Establishment of a statewide information and collaboration system for all the Illinois Partnership Zone participants to share challenges and strategies for success, establish learning communities with participants from various districts, and broadcast the lessons learned from the Illinois Partnership Zone schools to a much broader audience. This system should provide for frequent updates and feedback from all of the Illinois Partnership Zone sites and partners to assist ISBE's work in implementing the Illinois Partnership Zone.

F. District and School Illinois Partnership Zone Responsibilities and Activities

In order to participate in the Illinois Partnership Zone, each district must demonstrate a commitment from its respective school board and district superintendent. The district must also demonstrate either a commitment from union leadership or evidence of efforts to meaningfully and in good faith engage union leadership and teachers in the development of its plan for collaborating with the union in implementation of the Partnership Zone program.

Once identified for participation in the Illinois Partnership Zone, school districts will have flexibility to select one or more Lead Partners that have agreed to both work in the geographic area of the district and provide an intervention approach determined to be necessary by the district and/or ISBE. School districts may have flexibility in selecting from Supporting Partners that have agreed to work in the geographic area of the district, or ISBE may condition participation in the Illinois Partnership Zone on a district's agreement to work with certain Supporting Partners that address identified district needs.

1. *District Activities*

- a. Districts must implement data and performance management systems that support school- and district-level Illinois Partnership Zone activities and permit necessary reporting to the State.
- b. Districts must focus on student transitions throughout the P-20 spectrum. The elementary school effort must include a focus on establishing early learning programs for underserved areas and populations. Separate elementary and high school districts must align initiatives to support the Illinois Partnership Zone effort. Partnerships also must be formed with community college districts and colleges and universities to address barriers to postsecondary access. *A separate high school district and its feeder elementary districts will not be eligible to participate unless the districts align their school improvement and intervention activities.*
- c. The district's board of education, superintendent, and, where appropriate, union leadership will be expected to commit to implementing certain Illinois Partnership Zone human capital strategies, in close collaboration with Lead Partners and Supporting Partners. While these strategies will initially be targeted to the Illinois Partnership Zone schools, the objective will be to eventually implement these strategies on a broader scale throughout the district.

- d. Participating districts must make the following commitments to support the Illinois Partnership Zone:
- Establish district-wide leadership reporting directly to the local superintendent.
 - Provide maximum freedom from district-wide mandates for Illinois Partnership Zone schools, particularly those that affect curriculum/professional development; the daily schedule; and calendar, budgeting, and improvement planning processes.
 - Negotiate and create waivers or MOUs providing flexibility from the collective bargaining agreement necessary to implement the Illinois Partnership Zone.
 - Provide funding necessary to support the Illinois Partnership Zone above and beyond the funding levels committed by the State.
 - At least twice a year, convene the leadership of Illinois Partnership Zone schools to reflect on the lessons, discuss various blockages and achievements, and share lessons learned with the entire district and community.
 - Support statewide efforts through participation in the Illinois Partnership Zone Council, provide data to evaluate the initiative, and share best practices and provide support for other districts in the statewide Illinois Partnership Zone.
- e. Certain districts seeking to participate in the Illinois Partnership Zone may have a record of noncompliance or a lack of capacity at the board and/or administrative leadership levels that will necessitate greater ISBE oversight for implementation. For such a district, ISBE may require, as a condition of participation, that the district grant ISBE the right to oversee certain district functions and/or pre-approve certain district actions critical to the success of the Illinois Partnership Zone. The district may earn greater autonomy based upon demonstrated capacity and results.

2. School Activities

- a. For each participating school, the district will be required to enter into a partnership with Lead Partner(s) and, if appropriate, Supporting Partner(s) to (i) perform a needs assessment of the school; (ii) coordinate with the Partners and all involved stakeholders on the development of an intervention plan and its implementation; and (iii) support the work of the Partners in implementing a coherent, whole school intervention model.
- b. The district must commit to working with its Lead Partner(s) and, if appropriate, Supporting Partner(s) to establish an effective leadership team at Illinois Partnership Zone schools. The Lead Partner must have the ability to either select or pre-approve the proposed leadership team. Whenever possible, the leadership team should be in place in the second semester of the school year preceding full implementation of the intervention model so that the team has the opportunity to fully evaluate existing staff.

- c. Either the Lead Partner or the principal designated by the district must have authority to select and assign teachers to the school in order to establish an effective teaching staff as quickly as possible. Intervention models do not have to meet any specified levels of staff replacement; rather, operating flexibility must be provided to the Lead Partner or principal to determine how best to achieve the desired outcome of an effective teaching staff. Establishment of an effective teaching staff may be achieved through intensive professional development, filling of existing vacancies, relocation of staff through voluntary transfers, or through involuntary transfers. After commencement of the intervention model, the Lead Partner or principal designated by the district must approve all new hires made for teachers and administrators.

Illinois Partnership Zone: Transformation Criteria

1. School culture and climate.

- A. Establish a safe, orderly environment that is free from threat of physical harm and conducive to teaching, learning, and schoolwide programs and policies to help maintain this environment.
- B. Create a climate of high expectations for success.
- C. Clearly articulate the school's mission so that staff share an understanding of and commitment to the instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability.
- D. Provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement. Ensure that parents understand and support the school's basic mission and are given the opportunity to play an important role in helping the school to achieve this mission.
- E. Provide wrap-around services for low-income students so educators can focus on teaching and learning while ensuring students' social, emotional, and physical needs are met.

2. Developing teacher and school leader effectiveness.

- A. Designate a principal or other school-level leader who will act as an instructional leader. Depending on the intervention model, the "school-level leader" may be a principal designated by the district, a leader working under the direction of a Lead Partner, or a person hired by the Lead Partner.
The model must either:
 - Replace the principal who led the school prior to commencement of the transformation model; or
 - Use a fair and consistent method to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing principal and determine whether the principal can serve as the instructional leader for the intervention.
- B. Over the course of the intervention, the school must make a transition to a distributed leadership model with a highly capable leadership team working to build a cohesive, professional teaching culture. The plan for a distributed leadership team must include the school-level leader and teachers with augmented school roles.

- C. In coordination with the Lead Partner, the district and school-level leader must use evaluations that are based in significant measure on student growth:
 - to improve teachers' and school leaders' performance;
 - identify and reward effective performance; and
 - identify and address ineffective performance.
- D. Provide relevant, ongoing, high-quality job-embedded professional development.
- E. Implement strategies designed to recruit, place, and retain high-quality staff, including intensive induction and mentoring support for teachers.

3. Comprehensive instructional reform strategies.

- A. Use data to identify and implement comprehensive, research-based, instructional programs that are vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with the Illinois Learning Standards. The instructional programs must include:
 - development and use of frequent formative assessments permitting rapid-time analysis, feedback, and targeted instruction;
 - other data-driven instructional systems and strategies.
- B. Differentiate instruction to meet students' needs, including personalized academic and non-academic support services.
- C. Integrate all programs that have an impact on instruction:
 - Identify all State, district, and school-level instructional and professional development programs;
 - Determine whether each program will be eliminated or integrated with the intervention model; and
 - Ensure all remaining and new programs directly align with the objectives and structure of the intervention model.

4. Extending learning time.

- A. Provide more time for students to learn core academic content by:
 - expanding the school day, the school week, or the school year;
 - increasing instructional time for core academic subjects during the school day; and
 - allocating a significant amount of classroom time to instruction in the essential skills.
- B. Provide more time for teachers to collaborate.
- C. Provide more time for enrichment activities for students.

5. Providing operating flexibility.

Give the school sufficient operating flexibility to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student achievement outcomes. In particular, the school-level leader must have:

- Authority to select and assign staff to the school;
- Authority to control school calendar and scheduling; and
- Control over financial resources necessary to implement the intervention model.

Illinois Partnership Zone: Human Capital Strategies

1. Reform district recruitment and hiring policies to support the work of the Illinois Partnership Zone.
2. Establish placement policies that support Illinois Partnership Zone schools:
 - Prioritize interview and hiring decisions for Illinois Partnership Zone schools,
 - Prohibit forced placements into Illinois Partnership Zone schools.
3. Establish incentives for administrators and teachers to work in Illinois Partnership Zone schools, and work with Lead and Supporting Partners to bring top talent to these schools.
4. Establish compensation systems in Illinois Partnership Zone schools that provide performance-based incentives (either individual or collective), particularly if State or federal resources are available to support such programs.
5. Establish an intensive induction and mentoring program for Illinois Partnership Zone teachers and administrators.
6. Establish meaningful performance evaluation and development systems that fairly and accurately differentiate teachers based in part on student achievement, and train administrators and other evaluators in its use.
7. Establish meaningful principal and other school administrator evaluation systems that incorporate considerations of school climate and are based, in part, on student achievement.
8. Establish one or more residency sites within the district where teachers and administrators can participate in an intensive residency program preparing them to serve in Illinois Partnership Zone schools.
 - ISBE may work with the districts and Lead and Supporting Partners to establish a statewide program to attract the "best of the best" from traditional undergraduate, alternative programs, and the existing educator workforce to work in low-performing schools.
 - Eventually, these residency sites will help provide a pipeline of educators to support both existing and new Illinois Partnership Zone schools.

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