Table of Contents

A. Significance

1. The National Significance of the Proposed Project

Research suggests that the principal is second only to the teacher as the individual who has the most impact on student success (Leithwood, et al., 2008; Wallace Foundation, 2013). Currently, this country is experiencing a serious shortage of principals in urban and rural schools with diverse student populations. Schools are becoming increasingly diverse, and the need for better prepared principals and teachers is more evident than ever (Theoharis & Brooks, 2012). Diverse schools that fail to meet state standards are on the rise. An effective strategy to address this need is the preparation of principals who are visionary leaders, student advocates, instructional leaders, collaborators, and risk-taking innovators.

The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA), in partnership with Edgewood ISD (EISD), Southwest ISD (SWISD), and the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA), submits this application for an **Early Phase EIR** grant to implement the **Reenergizing Leadership to Achieve Greater Student Success** (RLSS) project (addresses **Absolute Priority 5**: Improving the Effectiveness of Principals). IDRA and UTSA have combined their expertise in preparing principals in an unprecedented way to support high-poverty, low-performing schools to improve achievement of high need students (meets **Absolute Priority 1**). See Appendix G for IDRA information.

With the support of this grant, EISD and SWISD in the Westside of San Antonio will build and strengthen the leadership skills of current principals and leadership team to begin a new era of change marked by systemic, structural and instructional transformations. Exhibits 1 and 2 provide a demographic and student performance profile of both participating districts.

Exhibit 1: Project Schools Profile

Project Schools	Grade Span	Number of Students	Percent Hispanic	Percent EL	Percent Eco. Disd.	Percent At Risk	Administrators/ Leadership Team Ratio
Memorial HS	9-12	1,275	97%	13%	89%	77%	5/17
Brentwood MS	6-8	741	98%	16%	87%	76%	3/10
E.T. Wrenn MS	6-8	657	96%	18%	91%	74%	3/10
Gus García MS	6-8	752	98%	17%	89%	76%	3/12
Las Palmas EL	PK-5	561	97%	22%	97%	85%	2/11
Winston EL	K-5	547	98%	17%	93%	84%	2/10
H. B. Gonzalez EL	K-5	450	96%	21%	89%	87%	2/9
McAuliffe MS	6-8	879	92%	18%	94%	19%	5/9
Edgewood ISD		11,279	98%	19%	92%	78%	46/267
Southwest ISD		13,661	90%	16%	82%	67%	50/177

Exhibit 2: STAAR Performance of EISD and SWISD Project Schools

Campus Name	Percent of Students Meeting Standard by Subject Area																			
	All Subjects				Reading				Math				Writing				Science			
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2013	2014	2015	2016	2013	2014	2015	2016	2013	2014	2015	2016	2013	2014	2015	2016
Memorial HS	62	67	62	55	45	56	46	58	66	72	64	60	NA	NA	NA	NA	79	90	80	67
Brentwood MS	60	57	55	55	60	63	63	60	65	100	54	56	45	51	42	42	69	50	59	50
E.T. Wrenn MS	64	60	59	65	68	70	65	67	70	77	62	66	49	65	48	59	66	50	55	66
Gus Garcia MS	56	50	52	56	60	68	63	57	60	90	58	64	39	52	38	51	63	37	41	50
Las Palmas EL	58	61	59	57	58	64	63	58	58	NA	63	58	56	58	51	56	55	53	47	52
Winston EL	58	60	55	57	59	67	57	58	66	NA	53	57	43	52	49	54	52	46	51	55
H.B. Gonzalez EL	59	56	60	55	59	60	63	60	60	NA	61	56	54	52	42	44	63	46	62	49
McAuliffe MS	52	57	58	55	64	65	63	59	50	52	89	57	54	54	56	51	42	56	48	50
Edgewood ISD	62	62	60	59	57	64	60	63	67	70	62	63	51	57	52	41	69	62	63	63
Southwest ISD	63	65	69	68	69	65	69	65	62	65	N/A	71	72	60	64	60	69	71	73	71
State	75	77	77	77	73	77	76	80	76	81	78	79	69	72	72	63	79	78	79	82

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR), 2013 to 2016

Texas is a microcosm of what the emerging demographics in urban and rural centers in the United States will look like in the next 50 years. Underrepresentation of minorities and low-income students in high school graduation and in college enrollment and graduation, coupled with overrepresentation of minority students in special education classes and referrals to disciplinary alternative schools, are among the special challenges that this proposed project will face in working with principals and leadership teams. Data collected on how this project

successfully addressed these issues will be an important contribution to the literature and to understanding change processes in many low performing campuses. The project will make an important contribution to the knowledge and understanding of the educational problems, issues and effective strategies by creating culturally proficient, specific transformation interventions in low performing campuses for administrators, aspiring administrators and teachers.

2. Development and Demonstration of Promising New Strategies

Five promising new practices will drive the project's theory of change. First, participating school districts will select, prepare, and certify **master teachers as principals** of focus diverse campuses serving minority high-need students. Master teachers have a proven record of success across student groups. They are ideal candidates to move into administrative roles where they can strengthen and develop the leadership competency skills of an effective principal for struggling campuses (Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Second, **current principals and the leadership team (LT) will receive professional development plan (PD)** (see Appendix G) **as a group** who shares collective responsibility for systemic effectiveness and student learning. Providing professional development to current principals and the leadership team together is a powerful way of developing collective administrative efficacy. Their professional development will focus on the underlying pedagogical and institutional changes required to implement practices around equity and equality to counteract a history of systemic inequalities and oppressive behaviors (Richardson, 2010). Each adult challenges the status quo and is an agent for social change. The focus will be on how people interact and collaborate, what policies and practices are implemented, the curricula and support systems in place that will be institutionalized to liberate rather than oppress those who do not have a voice and have been marginalized by the status quo decision making.

Third, **coaching services** aimed at improving systemic effectiveness and learning will be provided to **the leadership team members and master teachers individually and as a group**. Few effective leadership development models, if any, integrate the services of a leadership coach (Psencik, 2011) who must practice effective individualized and group coaching strategies. While the leadership team is receiving professional development, it will be designing and implementing effective practices in their campuses. A major responsibility of the coach is to enable and consolidate the integration of theory into practice by helping the leadership team with advice and provides alternative solutions for consideration.

Fourth, support current principals seeking to establish and **facilitate a schoolwide professional learning community** that will share a collective responsibility for curriculum and instructional effectiveness and student learning. Fifth, the project will **align and partner with parents and community stakeholders** to share the school's vision of success and collectively partner with school to improve the achievement of all students.

3. Exceptional Approach to the Priority or Priorities

The literature on the importance of highly qualified leadership competency and its connection to student academic performance is clear and powerful. Perrilla (2014) and others (Wallace Foundation, 2013; Pollock & Ford, 2009; Hall & Simeral, 2008) clearly and specifically describe two important issues: (1) 60 percent of the impact on student's academic performance results from the efforts of principals and teachers; and (2) 25 percent of the school's academic achievement depends solely on the principal's action. Heineke & Polnick (2013) note that the principal is key to helping the instructional coach establish a climate for professional growth and for classroom success. Jackson & McDermott (2012) assert that leadership must be "fearless" rather than "fearful" to transform schools to high performance. Jackson & McDermott (2012) are

unequivocal in their view that almost any teacher can become a master teacher under the right instructional leader, provided the leader can pass the real test, which is to get people to follow him or her as the leader, and works through other people to accomplish the vision and goals of the institution. Researchers note that good principals: (1) attract, support and retain a high-quality teaching staff; (2) manage their personal time and priorities to focus on the right "stuff"; (3) spend considerable time and energy becoming instructional leaders; and (4) provide a stable, predictable and supportive foundation for a high-performing school. It is a balance and confluence of factors.

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) recommends five practices for using achievement data for effective instruction that include: (1) multiple data sources should be ongoing and utilized throughout the instructional improvement process (Halverson, et al., 2007), (2) involve students in the examination and interpretation of data to set their own goals (Phillips, et al., 1993; May & Robinson, 2007); (3) data should inform a school's vision and school culture's improvement process (Datnow, et al., 2007); (4) invest on supports that nurture and adopt a data-based culture within the school (Datnow, et al., 2007; Lachat & Smith, 2005); and (5) support campus' efforts by maintaining a comprehensive districtwide data system (Choppin, 2002; Lachat & Smith, 2005; Mieles & Foley, 2005; Thorn, 2001; Thorn, et al., 2007). The four practices linked with turnaround low-performing campuses include: (1) communicate the urgency of the need for change (Tung & Ouimette, 2007); (2) never lose sight of the importance of focusing on the improvement of instruction (Whiteside, 2006); (3) celebrate improvements as early as possible (quick wins) to inspire and gain the collaboration of staff (Lachat & Smith, 2005; Kowal & Hassel, 2005); and (4) strengthen staff commitment to change (Kowal & Hassel, 2005). These practices are incorporated into the project design.

Project Design. The project's roadmap to success involves the collaboration of project staff and UTSA faculty in (1) preparing 25 new principals from a pool of highly qualified master teachers, (2) supporting 139 current principals and leadership team members in eight focused diverse schools with a combination of professional development activities that carry nine semester hours of university credit including individual and group coaching, and (3) implementing established practices to improve achievement of high -need students. This holistic approach has multiple benefits, including opportunities for (1) participants to obtain additional certificates and count professional development hours toward a graduate or post graduate degree, and (2) schools to implement a robust comprehensive change strategy to increase the school's effectiveness to improve the achievement of high-need students. Exhibit 3 shows the project's roadmap to success.

Exhibit 3: RLSS Theory of Action Framework

Preparing and certifying innovative principals from a pool of master teachers
+
Strengthen competency levels of current principals and leadership teams
+
Support implementation of effective practices
=
Outcomes

- University courses
- Project prof. development (9 semester hours)
- Clinical training at project schools
- Could lead to masters, doctoral degree, or certificate

- 150 hours of prof. development
- Individualized and group coaching
- University credit (9 semester hours)
- Could lead to masters, doctoral degree, or certificate

Coach teachers at project campuses; complete clinical training

- Aligning parents and key community stakeholders around shared vision/goals
- Building school culture around social justice & equity principles.
- Building a strong professional community with collective responsibility for learning
- Individualized and group coaching
- Providing incentive pay

Improved student achievement & college readiness
↑
Change in teacher practice
↑
Collective leadership efficacy

Project Components. Three project components have been designed to cluster the activities described above. **Project Component 1: Preparing and certifying innovative principals from a pool of master teachers**. Project proposes to select, prepare, and certify 25 new principals.

The new principal candidates will be recruited from participating project school, enroll at UTSA's principal preparation program leading to a M.Ed. or Ed.D., participate in project professional development as a leadership team member, coach teachers in the project schools and complete clinical internship requirements. These candidates will be selected from a (1) pool of applications from master teachers in the district who have a proven record of classroom success and student achievement (2) who meet Dr. Atencio's five dispositions for the provision of culturally responsive teaching requirements and (3) are highly recommended by the principal. The selection of new principals is consistent with the districts' plans for an enhanced leadership development pipeline.

Project Component 2: Strengthen competency levels of current principals and leadership teams. To improve the performance of principals, we propose to provide: (1) 150 hours of joint training to principals and their leadership teams over two years; (2) opportunities for the group to build trust and understand their role as an leadership team; (3) coaching for leadership team; (4) experiences in design, implementation and evaluation of schoolwide projects; and (5) support efforts to implement campus changes that lead to improved student achievement. Research shows that administrative groups tend to collaborate when they share a philosophy, vision, goals, vision and plans. A major competency of an effective principal is the ability to select a compatible leadership team and provide the leadership necessary to make a difference in their campus. It is not uncommon to find schools where members of the administrative leadership team are not only a burden to the principal, but they also become barriers to school improvement. They do not share the commitment needed to reach a goal, do not share a vision of collaboration, are not prone to helping one another or share resources, or feel they have a responsibility to see one another be successful. Each operates independently.

The project will provide the resources for IDRA, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education leadership at UTSA to fully refine the project design and deliver and evaluate on-site or online training. Leadership competencies will be developed over a two-year period in three competency domains: (1) Building school culture around social justice and equity principles (50 hours); (2) Building a strong professional community with collective responsibility for learning (60 hours); and (3) Aligning parents and key community stakeholders around shared vision and goals (40 hours). The content of the training will be delivered through the following activities: (a) project website; (b) three- to five-day summer institutes; (c) one day onsite or online workshops and presentations; (d) webinars; (e) professional learning community of practice; and (f) online coaching. **Sub-Component 2.1**: **Individualized and group coaching services.** During the iteration and full implementation phase, the leadership team and master teachers will concurrently receive professional coaching services both individually (two hours weekly) or as a leadership team (two hours monthly) to support the implementation of the school's plan of action. The coach is a critical friend who is competent, trustworthy, non-judgmental, inspires confidence and risk taking, and shows professionalism. The coach's main task is to partner with the team and master teachers to collaboratively navigate through the design, implementation, and evaluation of effective strategies.

Project Component 3: Support implementation of effective practices. Functioning concurrently with the professional development is the implementation of effective research-based structural and teaching practices at participating campuses. Project staff, in collaboration with UTSA faculty, will coach the leadership team in the successful implementation of three sub-components. **Sub-Component 3.1: Building school culture around social justice and equity principles.** Changing a school's culture is not an easy task; many times it involves

uprooting values, myths, and ways of operating deeply embedded in long-held traditions. Changing a school's culture is not the end of a journey for social justice and equity; it is the means by which the leadership team, teachers and community will improve student achievement. Preparing a principal for the challenge of a low performing campus successfully will occur when he or she principal is supported throughout a journey of transforming a campus. In other words, the principal's campus becomes the laboratory to learn, take risks and innovate. Through professional development and coaching and mentoring, team members will develop a passion for advocacy of equity that influence all school activity. Leadership team members will articulate and model a deep commitment to social justice. With assistance from project staff and faculty, each school will develop a plan to shape a school culture around social justice and equity principles. Using Hackman's (2005) framework's five essential tools, each school will re-imagine and take steps to implement instructional strategies where: (1) implied factual knowledge (*content mastery*) includes a range of ideas and perspectives and not just the mainstream ideology; (2) content knowledge (*critical thinking*) is consistently open to debate and critique from multiple points of view; (3) although change processes can occur in the community as a result of this critical thinking, students also can use intergroup dialogue, literature and writing to propel action and social change; (4) personal reflection by teachers and leaders to inform future practice becomes common practice; and (5) for any of the first four tools to be implemented the teacher and leader need to take into account (*awareness of multicultural group dynamics*) not only on the content to be taught but the demographics of the school and of the school community. Among the critical competencies is the implementation of restorative discipline practices. Seeking multiple perspectives and interpretations, may be done differently among different groups. **Sub-Component 3.2: Building a strong professional community**

with collective responsibility for learning. Forming a school culture that is focused on improving student outcomes requires the full cooperation of many. A strong leadership team must be focused on empowering teachers with the knowledge and skills to make a difference. Principals support and guide the use of professional learning communities to shape a school culture that is deeply embedded and advocates for student success and an environment where collective responsibility to learning becomes routine. With guidance and assistance from project staff and faculty, each participating campus will focus on: (1) inspiring and creating an expectation of success among all school staff and community; (2) establish a consciousness of collective efficacy and responsibility to meet student goals; (3) develop a commitment for innovative ideas to replace old ways that have been a barrier to student success; (4) communicate the urgency of the need for change; (5) involve students in the examination and interpretation of data to set their own goals and establish a system for student input into schoolwide activities; (6) never lose sight of the importance of focusing on the improvement of instruction; and (7) celebrate improvements as early as possible (quick wins) to inspire and gain the collaboration of staff. Collective efficacy at all school levels is at the center of student success. **Sub-Component 3.3: Aligning parents and key community stakeholders around shared vision and goals.** The responsibility for students' educational development is a collective and innovative undertaking among school staff, parents and community members. Stakeholders can be highly motivated to influence improved outcomes and help sustain them over time. Principals must examine ways to engage parents in school decision making processes and community collaborative partnerships that will assist in improving and cultivating support efforts for improved outcomes in low performing schools. Effective principals foster and build relationships between schools, families and community. Henderson & Mapp (2002) state that parent and community organizing can take

charge in holding schools accountable for educational outcomes. To develop and implement family engagement, we will use IDRA's Education CAFE framework (model developed through an i3 federal grant) that emphasizes the importance of empowering families through a community-based organization to improve the educational process through leadership, capacity building and accountability to support student achievement and close achievement gaps. **Sub-Component 3.4: Providing incentive pay to principals and leadership team members.** Compensation based on the performance of different student groups (ELs, students with disabilities, and all students) increases access and retention of highly effective administrators and teachers to improve student outcomes in high need schools.

Logic Model. The RLSS logic model described in Exhibit 4 is rooted in sound theory research on successful strategies that have been strategically positioned to have the greatest impact in Improvement Required (IR) schools. The logic model is our planning tool that charts the links that exist between available resources, activities, outputs and outcomes.

B. Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

1. Goals, Objectives and Outcomes

Goals. The project has three major goals, six objectives, and a long-term outcome of student success. These goals include: (1) Increase the percentage of project students meeting state standards on the reading, writing, mathematics and science STAAR state-mandated achievement instrument by 20 percent; (2) Prepare, certify and place a total of 25 new principals to take over the helm of struggling campuses; and (3) Strengthen capacity of current principals and their leadership teams in seven EISD schools and one SWISD school to shape a culture of collective responsibility for learning that is asset-based and meets the needs of high poverty students, ELs, and students with disabilities.

Exhibit 4: Reenergizing Leadership to Achieve Greater Student Success Logic Model

Inputs	Mediators	Outcomes
Professional development for principals and leadership team: • 150 hours of job-embedded training • 9 semester hours of professional development • 2 hours weekly of individualized coaching, 2 hours monthly of group coaching with leadership team	**Principals & Leadership Team…** • Acquire enhanced skills in instructional leadership, management • Pursue higher degree	Principals surpass expectations in Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System
Preparation for master teachers to become principals • 150 hours of job-embedded training and university preparation • 9 semester hours of university credit • 2 hours weekly of individualized coaching that includes training on coaching other teachers in the school • 2 hours monthly of group coaching with leadership team • Participate in clinical training in a low-performing campus	**Master teachers…** • Acquire enhanced skills in instructional leadership, management • Use training to apply toward additional principal certification through partner university training program	Schools achieve "recognized" or "exemplary" status/Schools achieve National Blue Ribbon designation from DOE
Incentive pay for principals & master teachers	**Teachers…** • Acquire enhanced instructional skills via coaching from master teachers	Principal candidates (master teachers) obtain state principal certification
Activities to promote school climate aligned with social justice and equity principles (e.g., school staff personal reflection to inform future practice)	**School…** • Develop climate conducive to learning	
Formation of community partnerships at each of the participating campuses with parents and other stakeholders	**Parents…** • Increase engagement in the larger community responsible for improving student achievement.	
Formation of Professional Learning Community with collective responsibility for learning		

Outcomes (right column):
- Increased student academic achievement
- Increased rate of students meeting state standards in reading and math
- Increased graduate rate

Objectives and Outcomes. There are six objectives that embody the promising strategies and provide the roadmap for reaching the long-term outcome. These objectives and enabling outcomes include: (1) Strengthen and institutionalize a school district leadership development pipeline – *Outcome:* Leadership quality in the district has improved as evidenced by expected increases in student performance and closing of the achievement gap between the district and state average scores; (2) Support participating principals and their leadership teams in creating a school culture conducive to student success – *Outcome:* An acceptable accreditation rating or better has been maintained over three years; (3) Provide a comprehensive and job-embedded professional development program for principals and leadership team; (4) Provide coaching and mentoring services to principals and other school leaders *Outcomes for 3 & 4:* 90 percent of school principals meet and surpass district expectations in the state-mandated principal evaluation form; (5) Collect formative and summative evaluative data to gather evidence on project's effectiveness –*Outcome:* Evidence gathered on the impact of promising strategies will, at a minimum, meet the WWC evidence with reservations; and (6) Disseminate information about project components, learnings around implementation, and results through two major conferences and a peer-reviewed journal article during the fourth and fifth project years – *Outcome:* learnings will inform school initiatives addressing these goals and objectives.

2. Adequacy of the Management Plan

IDRA's management approach involves a systemic and formal planning process that is needs-based, task-focused, data-driven and inclusive of an accountability plan. IDRA proposes to convene a panel of experts to provide guidance to project activities, meeting annually to review progress and provide feedback to project plans. This panel will consist of researchers, practitioners, educational equity and school reform experts. Invitees will include Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, Dr. Angela Valenzuela, Dr. Bradley Scott, and two other researchers.

Quarterly benchmarks with goals and specific activities will be assigned and assessed periodically to ensure that the project pace is on target and continuously improving. The project will provide performance feedback to all relevant stakeholders and permit periodic assessment of progress and feedback from stakeholders for adjustments necessary to achieving all intended outcomes in a timely manner. This project will be implemented in two stages, the first will be the development and iterating phase; second will include the implementation of an efficacy study.

Exhibit 5: Management Plan			
Implementation Stage 1: Milestones and Activities (Oct. 2017-July 2019)			
Activities	**Begin Date**	**End Date**	**Responsible**
Milestone 1: Identify development team (IDRA staff, EISD and SWISD district administrators, and UTSA educational leadership faculty) that will elaborate a strategy and a plan for completion, delivery, pilot testing, and refinement of the seven training modules.			
• Finalize blueprint for the development, delivery and pilot testing of the seven modules.	Oct 2017	Nov 2017	PD
• Convene the panel of experts and external evaluator to review and provide feedback on the blueprint and the delivery of services to Cohort 1 schools (first test).	Nov 2017	Nov 2017	PI, CoPI, PD
• Finalize assignments to the development, delivery and pilot testing of the training sessions.	Dec 2017	Dec 2017	PD, PA
Milestone 2: Design and deliver services described in the four project components.			
• In collaboration with each campus, the LT develops an improvement plan around the four project components.	Nov 2017	Dec 2018	PDS, PA
• Support the implementation of these components through coaching and project resources.	Jan 2018	Sept 20	PDS, CS, PA
• Monitor implementation for fidelity, commitment & district support.	Quarterly	Quarterly	EV
Milestone 3: Completion and refinement of project design.			
• Identify consultant from the panel of experts to monitor the refinement process.	Nov 2017	Dec 2019	PDS
• Refine project design.	Ongoing	Ongoing	PDS
• Submit the revised project design to expert consultant (panel of experts) (second test).	Quarterly	Quarterly	PI, CoPI, PD
• Make the necessary refinements based on feedback from expert consultant.	Ongoing	Ongoing	PA, PD
Milestone 4: Complete refinement of training sessions and project design.			
• Conduct a needs assessment of project participants.	Oct 2017	Dec 2017	PDS
• Work with school district and participating campus LTs to review needs assessment results and plan the delivery of services.	Jan 2018	Feb 2018	PDS, CS, PA
• Continue refinement of the training sessions.	Ongoing	Ongoing	PDS, PA, CS
• Collect data on quality and effectiveness of training modules from participants (third test).	Ongoing	Ongoing	EV
• Analyze data and make the necessary adjustments to the training module.	Ongoing	Ongoing	PDS, PA
Milestone 5: Triangulate process and summative data gathered in the pilot testing of the modules and refinement of the seven modules.			
• Collaborate with school administrators to gather data collected by the	Oct 2017	June 2019	PD, EV

district that is relevant to project implementation.

• Collect data on the implementation of new practices learned through the training.	Oct 2017	June 2019	EV
• Collect data on the state principal evaluation standards for each participating principal.	June 2018	June 2019	EV
• Document impact of training on practice change (fourth test).	July 2019	Aug 2019	PDS, PA

Milestone 6: Triangulate process (implementation processes, fidelity of implementation) and summative data (change in practice and impact on student achievement) gathered during the implementation of the four project components.

• Collect process and summative data around the research and/or evaluation questions to use for modification of training and implementation of project components.	Oct 20 17	June 2019	PDS, PA, EV
• Convene the panel of experts, central administrators, and external evaluator to review findings and provide feedback on recommendations for improvement of the overall training plan and implementation of the four project components (fifth test).	July 2018	July 2019	PI, CoPI, PD
• Make the necessary modifications and prepare for Implementation Stage 2.	June 2018	Aug 2019	PDS, PA, CS

Implementation Stage 2: Conduct an Efficacy Study Milestones and Activities

Milestone 1: Convene the panel of experts to review blueprint for conducting an efficacy study in Cohort 2 schools. (June 2019-August 2021)

• Convene panel of experts in San Antonio.	July 2019	Aug 2019	PI, CoPI, PD

Milestone 2: Complete delivery of training services to Cohort 2 schools.

• Conduct a needs assessment of project participants.	June 2019	Aug 2019	PDS, CS, PA
• Work with school district and participating campus LTs to review needs assessment results and plan the delivery of services.	Aug 2019	Sep 2019	PDS, CS, PA
• Deliver professional development to Cohort 2 project participants.	Aug 2019	Dec. 2020	PDS, PA, CS
• Collect data on quality and effectiveness of professional development from participants.	Aug 2019-20	Dec 2020-21	PDS, EV
• Analyze data and make the necessary adjustments to professional development plan.	Dec 2019-20	Dec 2020-21	PDS, PA, CS

Milestone 3: Complete delivery of services described in the four project components.

• In collaboration with each campus LT, develop an improvement plan around the four project components.	June 2019, 2020	July 2019, 2020	PDS, PA
• Support the implementation of these components through coaching and project resources.	Aug 2019, 2020	June 2020, 2021	CS, PA
• Monitor the implementation for fidelity, commitment and district support.	Aug 2019, 2020	June 2020, 2021	EV, PDS, PD

Milestone 4: Collect process and summative data on changes in practice and impact on student achievement throughout the implementation of the four project components.

• Acquire relevant data collected by participating school districts and campuses.	June 2019, 2020	June 2020, 2021	EV, PDS
• Work with external evaluator to review data collected, data analyses processes, and proposed modifications/adjustments to project implementation.	June 2020, 2021	Aug 2021	PI, CoPI, PD, PDS, PA

Milestone 5: Triangulate process (implementation processes, fidelity of implementation) and summative data (change in practice and impact on student achievement) gathered during the implementation of the four project components.

• Collect process and summative data around the research and/or evaluation questions to use for modification of training and implementation of project components.	June 2019, 2020	June 2020, 2021	External EV
• Convene the panel of experts, central administrators, and external evaluator to review findings and provide feedback on recommendations for improvement of the overall training plan and implementation of the four project components.	June 2020	July 2020	PI, CoPI, PD
	Aug 2020,	July 2021	PDS, CS, PA

• Make necessary modifications.	2021		
Milestone 6: Document findings around the research and evaluation questions. (Sep 2021-Sep 2022)			
• Document a prototype of a model for increasing the effectiveness of principals in low performing campuses.	Aug 2021	Sept 2022	PDS, CS, PA
• Prepare PowerPoint presentations on the findings.	Dec 2021	Dec 2021	PD
Milestone 7: Disseminate findings and prepare to scale up project. (Sep 2021-Sep 2022)			
• Disseminate findings at two national and state conferences for principals, administrators, and board members.	Jan 2022	Sept 2022	PD
• Prepare documents, including a cost analysis and a proposed design for scaling up project.	Sept 2021	Sept 2022	PD

PD=Project Director; PA=Project Associate; PI=Principal Investigator; CoPI=Co-Principal Investigator; LT=Leadership Team; PDS=Professional Development Specialist; CS=Coaching Specialist; EV=Evaluator

3. Time Commitment and Qualifications of the Project Director and Key Personnel

Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, president & CEO of IDRA will be principal investigator, and Dr. Enrique Alemán, Education Leadership Department Chair at UTSA will be co-principal investigator. Dr. Robledo Montecel holds a bachelor of social work degree from Our Lady of the Lake University and a Ph.D. degree in educational evaluation from University of Wisconsin. Dr. Alemán earned his Ph.D. in educational administration, with a concentration in educational policy and planning, from the University of Texas at Austin. The PI (0.10 FTE) and Co-PI (0.10 FTE) will meet quarterly with project staff and school districts to review progress and provide guidance and advice. Their time will be provided as project in kind contribution. The management team from IDRA for RLSS project consists of a **full-time project director (1.0 FTE), a professional development specialist (1.0 FTE), an executive coaching specialist (1.0 FTE), five project associates from UTSA (1.5 FTE equivalency), a project evaluator (0.5 FTE) and an administrative assistant (0.5 FTE)** for a staff total of **5.5 FTEs.** This highly-committed team has extensive experience working collaboratively in the Texas region with high-need schools reflecting similar demographics and challenges. In addition, project staff will be supported by five project associates from UTSA who will provide leadership to in the preparation of principals and leadership team. **Project Director – Overall management of the grant** is the responsibility of the project director who will manage grant activities, coordinating

the work of partners to ensure a comprehensive, integrated set of project activities support each schools' transformation efforts, and 50 percent of time will be devoted to professional development and coaching. **Nilka Avilés, Ed.D. (1.0 FTE),** brings strength and expertise to areas such as college access and readiness for underserved and underrepresented students in higher education with experience as a former director of the Early College High School program with the UTSA P-20 Initiatives Office. She worked as a principal in a Title I middle school where, in nine months under her leadership, the campus was moved from "low performing" to "recognized" status missing exemplary by just 0.04 percent. Dr. Avilés is an adjunct professor at UTSA's College of Education and Human Development Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department. Since 2015, she has been providing leadership to a U.S Department of Education School Turnaround Grant. **Professional Development Specialist – Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D. (1.0 FTE),** will provide leadership to the professional development team. He brings unparalleled expertise in program management, effective technical assistance delivery, curriculum development and creation and implementation of innovative models for school change. His dissertation (1979) received national recognition by the National Council for Bilingual Education for its pioneer work on school change in districts with diverse student populations. He is visiting associate professor at UTSA, combining scholarly research, writing and experience in the field. Dr. Villarreal will be responsible for collecting and documenting processes, conducting professional development activities, and the eventual completion of the manual to implement transformational changes. **Executive Coaching Specialist – Sulema Sánchez-Carreón, Ph.D. (1.0 FTE),** will provide leadership to the coaching team and will coordinate coaching activities at all project schools. She is an IDRA senior education associate focusing on teacher professional development, particularly in serving EL students. She is

certified in elementary and middle school bilingual education, ESL and kindergarten. Additional certifications include mid-management and supervisory certificates (PK-12). She has served in education in many positions including assistant superintendent for Special Programs, Bilingual/ESL Director, Migrant Education, Early Childhood, and Bilingual/ESL Specialist for the Texas Education Agency. **UTSA Project Associates –** Project associates, in collaboration with project staff, constitute the professional development teams and coaching personnel who will deliver professional development and coaching services to project schools. Dr. Encarnación Garza, Dr. Evangelina Aguilera, Dr. Richard Brewer, Dr. Mariela Rodríguez, and Dr. Juan Niño have been selected to collaborate with staff. **Evaluator Liaison – Mr. Roy Johnson, M.A.,** director of research and development at IDRA will be the project liaison with the external evaluation team led by Dr. Melissa Velez, Associate at Abt Associates, Inc. Dr. Velez has 15 years of experience researching educational outcomes and interventions using rigorous research designs, including comparative interrupted time series, fixed effects models, and difference-in-difference models. She is a certified WWC reviewer and has expertise in every aspect of education program evaluation, including design, survey development, data collection, and rigorous analysis and reporting. At Abt Associates, She has served as the director of analysis for three quasi-experimental studies, including two that used the approach proposed for RLSS. Her other work at Abt has included project quality advisor for the AVID project, and an expert reviewer for the WWC, the Mathematics and Science Partnership project, and the Discovery Research K-12 Resource Network, which entails assessing projects on their content and methodological rigor.
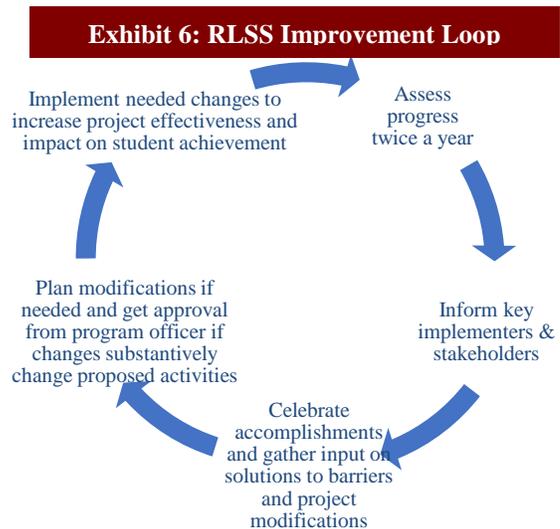
4. Performance Feedback and Continuous Improvement

A continuous feedback look will be implemented to ensure continuous improvement is grounded on an ongoing process that includes assessing project progress periodically, getting feedback

from implementers and stakeholders, analyzing and integrating feedback into a plan of action, and making periodic modifications, if necessary. Exhibit 6 depicts the various actors involved in this feedback and continuous improvement loop. This bi-annual process has two major objectives: (1) to maintain and strengthen buy in, unify mission, vision, and goals through continuous communication and involvement of supporters, implementers, and stakeholders; and (2) to inform and gather input from implementers and stakeholders to interpret data-

Exhibit 6: RLSS Improvement Loop

Assess progress twice a year

Inform key implementers & stakeholders

Celebrate accomplishments and gather input on solutions to barriers and project modifications

Plan modifications if needed and get approval from program officer if changes substantively change proposed activities

Implement needed changes to increase project effectiveness and impact on student achievement

driven project decision-making and share in finding solutions to project implementation barriers. It consists of five steps: bi-annual formal progress assessments conducted by project staff and external evaluator; presenting a progress report to key implementers and stakeholders, including the school board, parent councils, and faculty meetings at all the district campuses; celebrating accomplishments, gathering feedback and collaboratively finding solutions to implementation barriers and challenges; getting approval from program officer if the recommended changes are substantial (changes must directly impact and contribute to increasing the achievement of students); and implementing changes.

C. Evaluation Plan

Phases and What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) group design standards

Abt Associates, a highly qualified and independent evaluator will lead the evaluation over two phases. *Phase 1* (Years 1-2), will focus on piloting the RLSS model in a subset of schools and collecting implementation data to inform the continued development of the model prior to scaling-up. In *Phase 2* (Years 3-4), Abt will conduct an effectiveness study to test the impact of the RLSS model on school-level student outcomes. The effectiveness study will be a quasi-

experimental design (QED) designed to meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) group design standards with reservations. This study is designed to provide *moderate evidence* of effects – the study can meet WWC standards, the sample will overlap with the settings that will receive the intervention, the impact study will include at least 50 units, and the study will assess relevant student outcomes using valid and reliable measurement approaches. Across the course of the grant, the project builds in a strategy for scaling up from the initial set of schools in the first-year pilot, adding more schools and districts receiving the intervention over the next two years of the grant. The evaluation will produce data to evaluate EIR performance measures and will culminate with a publicly available final evaluation report to facilitate replication elsewhere.

Phase 1: Development Phase. IDRA will pilot RLSS in four schools over two years, and Abt will conduct evaluation activities that focus on providing information to make improvements to the model. Research questions for the development phase will focus on (1) stakeholder principal/leadership team and master teacher perceptions of the usefulness of the professional development and training, coaching, incentive pay, the PLC, and community partnerships; (2) stakeholder principal/leadership team, master teacher, and student perspectives on the utility and effectiveness of activities to promote school climate aligned with social justice and equity principles; and (3) suggestions for improving implementation and staff buy-in. Abt will help the grantee obtain stakeholder feedback through surveys and focus groups. Abt will finalize the measure of fidelity of intervention of the model, including associated thresholds, and will pilot test the measure, providing another source of feedback to the grantee about the model and challenges to full implementation. Abt will also finalize the impact study design, including the selection and assignment of schools, the final set of outcomes, and plans for data collection, analysis and reporting.

Phase 2: Effectiveness Phase (Impact Study). The evaluation will use a school-level QED that compares outcomes for the treatment schools to outcomes for a matched group of comparison schools that do not implement RLSS. The sample will include two cohorts of treatment schools: four schools piloting and helping to refine the intervention in the 2017-18 and 2018-19 school years, and then fully implementing by 2019, and four schools starting the intervention with full implementation in fall 2019. The impact study will begin in Year 3, after both cohorts have begun full implementation of the intervention. Up to five matched comparison schools will be selected for each treatment school, selecting from the universe of all schools in the state. The impact study will look at effects on average school-level performance of students at the end of one and two years. For each outcome, students in grades 3-12 will be included (students in kindergarten through grade 2 are not tested by the state). Further, for each outcome at each measurement point, the baseline equivalence of the analytic sample of treatment and comparison schools will be established for the year immediately prior to the intervention year. This design, if well implemented, has the potential to meet WWC standards with reservations.

Research Questions

The evaluation is designed to address research questions about impacts on schools.

Exhibit 8: Research Questions (RQ) for the Impact Study of RLSS	
RQ1	Do schools who participate in RLSS have higher average reading achievement at the end of one year of intervention compared to schools not experiencing the intervention?
RQ2	Do schools who participate in RLSS have higher average math achievement at the end of one year of intervention compared to schools not experiencing the intervention?
RQ3	Do schools who participate in RLSS have higher proportions of students meeting Texas state standards (i.e., achievement Level II or higher) in reading achievement at the end of one year of intervention compared to schools not experiencing the intervention?
RQ4	Do schools who participate in RLSS have higher proportions of students meeting Texas state standards (i.e., achievement Level II or higher) in math achievement at the end of one year of intervention compared to schools not experiencing the intervention?
RQ5	Do schools who participate in RLSS have higher graduation rates at the end of one year of intervention compared to schools not experiencing the intervention?

Additionally, we will examine these same impacts after two years of implementation and may estimate impacts on test scores separately for elementary, middle and high schools.

Outcome Measures – The evaluation will examine effects of RLSS on five main outcomes.

Domain	Outcome (school level)	Outcome Construction	Reliability/ Validity	Baseline Measure(s) (school level)
Reading/ English Achievement	STAAR Reading/ English	STAAR Reading/English for grades 3-12 in standard deviation units (z-scores)	Standardized test	3rd-12th grade reading/English test score (continuous)
Math/Algebra Achievement	STAAR Math/ Algebra	STAAR Math/Algebra for grades 3-12 in standard deviation units (z-scores)	Standardized test	3rd-12th grade math/algebra test score (continuous)
Reading/ English Achievement	STAAR Reading/ English	Percentage of students meeting Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance or above in STAAR Reading/English for grades 3-12	Standardized test	Percentage of 3rd-12th grade reading/English students in Level II performance category or above (binary)
Math/Algebra Achievement	STAAR Math/ Algebra	Percentage of students meeting Level II: Satisfactory Academic Performance or above in STAAR math/Algebra for grades 3-12	Standardized test	Percentage of 3rd-12th grade math/Algebra students in Level II performance category or above (binary)
Graduation	Graduation	Percentage of 12th grade students graduating in each evaluation year	Standard educational measure	Percentage of 12th grade students graduating (binary)

Exhibit 9: Outcome Measures

Intervention Condition – The RLSS program will be implemented in a sample of eight elementary, middle, and high schools in two partner districts in Texas. Half of these schools (Cohort 1) will pilot test and help to refine the model in Years 1 and 2 (2017-18 and 2018-19), fully implement starting in Year 3 (Fall 2019), and will complete two years of full implementation by the end of the study. The other four schools (Cohort 2) will begin implementation in Year 3 (Fall 2019) and also complete two years of implementation by the end of the study. All intervention schools with non-missing outcome and baseline data are eligible for inclusion in the analysis sample's treatment group.

Comparison Condition – Comparison schools will be those that do not participate in the RLSS program and instead offer business-as-usual instruction, systems and leadership. Up to five matched comparison schools per treatment school from multiple non-partner districts across the state will be included in the analyses. The evaluation will use school-level administrative data from the state of Texas to match comparison schools to treatment schools on baseline test

scores, race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage and selected school characteristics (e.g., urbanicity, Title I eligibility).[1] In Year 1 (2017-18), the evaluator will obtain state administrative data and use these data to fully develop the matching algorithm. In a written design plan, the evaluator will identify the specific variables to be included, the measure of distance (e.g. Coarsened Exact Matching [CEM], Mahalanobis or propensity score), the approach to balancing the groups (e.g., nearest neighbor matching, full-matching or weighting adjustments) and the analytic model. The algorithm will be refined until there is balance on baseline characteristics and pre-treatment outcome measures. In the summer of 2021, the evaluator will obtain final administrative data and run, test and refine the algorithm to identify the final analytic sample.

Baseline Equivalence – For each outcome, there will be a natural baseline measure, i.e., the same outcome at baseline and at post-test (see Exhibit 8). The outcome will be measured at the school-level, and the baseline measure will represent the average performance of an earlier cohort of students in the same schools in the year prior to the start of the intervention. To meet WWC standards for a QED, Abt will ensure that all analyses for each outcome meet WWC standards for baseline equivalence (differences less than or equal to 0.25 standard deviations). Abt understands that if baseline differences are between .05 and .25 standard deviations, the baseline measure will need to be included in the analytic model, and that if baseline differences are less than or equal to 0.05 standard deviations, the inclusion of the baseline measure is not necessary in the analytic model (but will likely still be included to increase precision).

Analysis Model – The evaluator will use an analytic approach that compares changes in the outcome for RLSS schools to changes in the outcome for comparison schools using the model specification below. Note that this model will be used to assess impacts (a) at the end of

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[1] *We follow Stuart (2010) and use matching to refer to a range of methods that aim "to equate (or "balance") the distribution of covariates in the treated and control groups. This may involve 1:1 matching, weighting, or sub- classification."*

one year of the intervention, using the average school-level scores from spring 2020; and (b) at the end of *two years* of the intervention, using the average school-level scores from spring 2021. School-level baseline demographics will be accounted for in the model using a term for the matching blocks.[2] Each model will also include the baseline school-level mean on the same outcome as the pre-test.

$$y_{js} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_s + \beta_2 PRE_{js} + \sum_p \beta_p Block_{ps} + \varepsilon_{js}$$

The model for evaluating school outcomes relates the *j*th outcome (y_{js}) for school s to treatment status (T_s, defined at the school-level), a measure of the pre-intervention outcome (PRE_{js}), matching block indicator ($Block_{ps}$), and error term (ε_{js}). The coefficient β_1 captures the impact of schools participating in RLSS. Although baseline equivalence will be assessed using data from cohorts in the year immediately prior to the intervention implementation, depending on data availability, the model may include average baseline data for multiple years prior to the intervention, to increase precision.[3]

   Minimum Detectable Effect Sizes – The MDE estimates were calculated assuming an alpha level of 0.05, two tailed test, 80 percent power, 8 treatment schools and 45 control schools, five years of pre-intervention data available for each school, one year of data available post-intervention for each school, and 85 percent of the total variance is between schools, the estimated MDEs is 0.465 for continuous measures.

Implementation Study. As presented in the logic model (see Exhibit 2), the intervention has six key components: professional development for principals and the leadership team, preparation

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[2] *If the WWC adopts version 4.0, because this study is using a prior cohort of students to establish baseline equivalence, this study will be also establishing the representativeness of the clusters at baseline and at posttest, consistent with proposed new WWC standards.*

[3] *Prior to inclusion, the evaluation team will first assess whether there are any baseline trends, and any differences in trends between the treatment and comparison schools. Note also that the written design plan will describe any analytic weights used by the matching algorithm to balance the treatment and comparison groups, and how the standard errors will account for serial correlation across years at the school level (e.g., cluster-robust standard errors).*

for master teachers to become principals, incentive pay, activities to promote a school climate aligned with social justice and equity principles, the formation of a PLC, and the formation of community partnerships. These inputs are hypothesized to lead to the implementation of enhanced skills in instructional leadership among the principal, leadership team, and teachers, additional teaching credentials among principals/leadership team and master teachers, a school climate that is conducive to learning, and increased engagement among parents. These, in turn, are expected to produce the desired short-term and longer-term outcomes for principals, master teachers, and the school. This evaluation will assess the degree to which these key components were implemented with fidelity and gather other implementation data, all of which will yield information for program improvement and for replication or testing in other settings. A draft of a fidelity measure is provided in Appendix G. In Year 1 of the study, the evaluator will work closely with IDRA to finalize a fidelity measure with specified thresholds to assess whether the intervention was implemented with acceptable fidelity. The fidelity measure will rely on several data sources to assess the acceptability of implementation, including: trainer logs, coach logs, and grantee reports. These data will be collected from Cohort 1 schools in Years 1-4 and Cohort 2 schools in Years 3-4.

Replication or testing in other settings

This study will provide information about the key components and approach of the project to facilitate testing, development, and replication in other settings. The evaluator, school staff, UTSA, and IDRA will meet regularly to create an ongoing feedback loop so that implementation findings can be communicated to IDRA and improvements to the model can be made, as needed, on a continuous basis. By project-end, the study team will generate at least one peer-reviewed report so that an outside audience can fully understand the key components of the intervention.