Partners to Lead (PTL) Project
Submitted by the DuPage Regional Office of Education (ROE)

Table of Contents

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Nonprofit Documentation

Appendix B: Evidence Standards

Appendix C: Resumes of Key Personnel

Appendix D: Letters of Support and Memoranda of Understanding

Appendix E: Private Sector Match

Appendix F: List of Proprietary Information

Appendix G: IL-PART Outcomes to Date

Appendix H: IL-PART and PTL Differentiation of Roles of Partners

Appendix I: Organizational Chart of the PTL Project & Theory of Action

Appendix J: Key Personnel Chart

Appendix K: AIR Evaluation Team CVs

Appendix L: SAM Process Details & Organizational Chart

Appendix M: Comparative Interrupted Time Series Design

Appendix N: Power Analysis

Appendix O: AIR Capacity

Appendix P: AIR Data Collection & Project Management Plan

Appendix Q: AIR Nonexempt Research

Appendix R: References/Bibliography

SECTION A: PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE

This proposal addresses **Absolute Priority #1** (Supporting High-Need Students) and **Absolute Priority #5** (Improving Effectiveness of Principals), and is submitted by a qualified **Rural Applicant** (see Appendix A & D). The Partners To Lead (PTL) project proposes to implement a promising strategy with national significance, that will build upon existing practices to improving principal effectiveness and lead to improved student outcomes, particularly for high-need students in rural schools. The project's key innovation is the combination of a proven effective principal time utilization strategy with an evidence-based leadership framework focused on instruction. PTL theorizes that principals will increase the amount of time devoted to instructional leadership by implementing the School Administration Manager (SAM) process. The increased time allows principals to implement a school-wide leadership framework aimed at engaging all teachers in instructional improvement efforts. The framework is anchored by concepts of integrated leadership[1] and includes an intense focus on addressing instructional problems of practice. The project represents an innovative strategy for recruiting, preparing, developing, and retaining highly effective principals who significantly increase student learning.

I.   National Significance of PTL

The growing complexity of the principalship brought on by increasing expectations for student performance is not unique to Illinois. "[principals] must be educational visionaries and change agents, instructional leaders, curriculum and assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, and community builders" (Darling-Hammond, et al 2007, p. 1). Growing responsibilities and conflicting priorities create frustrations for the principal and lead to increases in leadership turnover, especially in rural and high-need schools that serve a

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[1]Marks & Printy (2003) describe integrated leadership as the transformational influence of the principal and the shared leadership actions of the principal and teachers" (p. 377).

disproportional number of poor and minority students (Clotfelter, et al 2006).[2] To address barriers to principal recruitment and retention, a broader understanding of what constitutes *school leadership* is necessary. Effective leadership does not reside in a single person, but rather in an integrated leadership system that promotes teacher engagement. The research base used to develop the PTL project theorizes that for a leadership model to be effective in addressing high-need students' needs, principals must work in close collaboration with teachers in a continuous improvement process that ultimately involves the entire faculty (Saunders, et al 2009). PTL provides the necessary structure and supports that enable principals to shape strong professional communities with collective responsibility for student learning.

Findings from this project will be timely and will inform national initiatives by contributing to principal effectiveness research. This will be particularly useful to rural schools, given the need for more proven strategies for high-need and/or hard-to-staff schools in remote locations. PTL will demonstrate how the SAM process can be combined with a leadership framework to allow principals and teachers to have greater impact on student learning. PTL will contribution to national efforts to improve principal effectiveness, as the project is strategically positioned to capitalize on numerous existing national networks. For example, the SAM model is currently being implemented in 22 states, represented by 91 districts and 874 schools. Further, more than 25% of all schools implementing SAM are located in rural areas. PTL can use the SAM network and others to disseminate important findings.

Another indication of the national significance of PTL involves the footprint of the project's external evaluator. The American Institutes for Research (AIR), is a well-respected national organization that has lead the evaluation of 14 USDE-funded Invest In Innovation (i3) projects, and

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[2] Researchers have been documenting the nationwide shortage of qualified principals for over a decade (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Darling-Hammond, et al 2009). Principal turnover is particularly relevant to PTL as it will include the involvement of a large number of rural and high-need schools.

in the past 10 years well over 200 other research studies across the country. AIR is a national leader in educator effectiveness and is deeply engaged in efforts ranging from conducting high quality research, to applying research to policy and practice, all of which has informed state and district policies and practices. Findings from the PTL can have far reaching impact at the national level by leveraging the reach of these two major program partners.

Additionally, PTL will partner with the Center for the Study of Education Policy (CSEP) at Illinois State University (ISU). CSEP has gained national attention for its contributions to improving school leadership preparation and development. Nominated by the National Conference of State Legislators, CSEP, along with the Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Board of Higher Education, was selected by the Education Commission of the States for the 2014 award for State Policy Innovation. Since 2014, this work has generated additional national attention, due to its continued success.[3] CSEP will work with PTL partners to tap into existing relationships with national networks (e.g. National Rural Education Association; University College Professors of Educational Administration; The Wallace Foundation Leadership Network, American Educational Research Association, etc.) and forge new relationships to inform and elevate the national conversation regarding improving principal effectiveness.

II. Demonstration of Promising New Strategies

PTL demonstrates a promising strategy, addressing two ubiquitous barriers found in research that negatively impact principal effectiveness: 1) limited time principals spend on instructional leadership activities, and 2) traditional teacher supervision models that apply a top-down approach,

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[3] Two articles highlighting Illinois' work in school leadership reform were included in a recent edition of Education Week: http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/01/25/principal-preparation-programs-get-major-makeover-in-illinois.html and http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/01/25/pressure-mounts-on-higher-ed-to-improve.html Further, The Wallace Foundation recently completed a video series on principal preparation in Illinois: http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Pages/Series-Shows-How-Illinois-Successfully-Revamped-Requirements-for-Principal-Preparation.aspx

exacerbating teacher isolation. This sense of isolation is further compounded in districts that are also geographically isolated in rural areas. The traditional model also does little to scale effective instructional practices or engage teachers in schoolwide improvement efforts. Despite the impact principals can have on schools, most report spending less than one-third of their time on instructional improvement activities (Cooley & Shen, 2003; Eisner, 2002; Goodwin, et al 2003; Schiffe, 2002). That finding is supported by aggregate data indicating less than 36% of a principal's time was devoted to instruction (Turnbull, 2009).

School principals have many competing demands for their time and attention (Goldring, et al 2008; Honig & Hatch, 2004; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Saunders, et al. (2009) explored the implementation of a leadership support framework focused on instructional improvements. In the first years of the project they found a significant lack of progress in implementation due to the limited time principals could devote to the project. "It became clear that a 'train the principal' approach yielded little implementation, ineffective teacher teams, or no gains in student achievement" (Saunders, et al., 2009). The researchers made a mid-course correction that provided support for the principals and promoted the engagement of teachers in the development of a strong professional community focused on student learning. After the mid-course correction, the project demonstrated significant positive impact on student performance, demonstrating the need for a system that increases a principal's time devoted to instruction and redirects that time toward engaging teachers in instructional improvements.

Collaboration between the principal and teachers is essential to creating working conditions leading to improved instruction. Studies have found that teachers working in isolation with few school-based opportunities for collaboration and professional learning are unlikely to improve instruction (e.g. Elmore, 1999–2000, 2002; Goldenberg, 2004; Little, 1982). Isolation has also been shown to impact principal effectiveness and retention, which has a negative impact on school

performance (Reames, et al 2014). Leadership turnover is a pressing problem, as the majority of principals leave their posts after less than five years (Loeb, et al 2010; Béteille, et al 2012; Burkhauser et al., 2012; Gates, et al 2006). That is particularly troubling for high need schools considering principals' influence on student growth was found to be nearly twice as large in high-poverty schools compared to low-poverty schools (Branch et al., 2013). Additionally, scholars have identified multiple factors that deter principal recruitment and retention, including time demands (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Gajda & Militello, 2008); accountability mandates (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003); increased paperwork (Hancock & Bird, 2008); bureaucracy (Hancock & Bird, 2008); and isolation (Reames et al., 2014).

To address these issues, many principals have attempted to build professional learning teams with the goal of developing distributed leadership and school-based collaboration practices. Despite the popularity of the practices, there remains substantial variation in definitions, implementation, and impact (Dufour, 2004; Vescio et al., 2008). PTL will address all three of those challenges.

III.   Exceptional Approach

Promising practices are generally identified through three approaches: 1) establishing a theoretical framework supported by research; 2) replicating an empirical study in new or different settings; or 3) conducting a root cause analysis and developing strategies based on need. PTL represents an exceptional approach to increasing principal effectiveness because it includes all three methods of identifying strategies to address known problems of practice. PTL will increase the positive impact of leadership on student outcomes by building upon theories and research, and improving strategies. By combining research on barriers to principal effectiveness with empirical research involving leadership practices and professional learning systems that demonstrate positive impacts, PTL provides a comprehensive leadership support system with an explicit focus on instructional improvements. Through the collaborative efforts of the principal and teachers in a

strong professional learning community, PTL will improve instruction and establish a culture of collective responsibility for student outcomes. Further, PTL involves the following inputs: 1) on-going professional development, 2) one-on-one support from a leadership coach, 3) access to TimeTrack® software, 4) assistance from school administrative managers[4], 5) effective protocols and tools for use by Instructional Leadership Teams[5], and 6) organizational structure and routines designed to increase teacher engagement. The PTL logic model can be found in Section B of this proposal, and.

Leadership Framework: The leadership framework includes the following school-based organizational practices: 1) monthly meetings between the principals and leadership coaches; 2) monthly Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meetings facilitated by the principal; 3) bi-weekly grade-level and/or content area meetings facilitated by an ILT representative; 4) on-going/job embedded professional development; 5) technical assistance; and, 6) multiple feedback loops to inform a structured continuous improvement process. By implementing the leadership framework, principals and teachers collaboratively establish organizational routines designed to institutionalize effective practices and policies (Spillane, et al, 2011).

The PTL Leadership Framework was founded on research by Saunders et al. (2009). While the study ultimately demonstrated positive impact on student achievement, the researchers highlighted an early barrier to principals' ability to implement the leadership framework with fidelity: time. "Competing demands for their (the principal's) time and attention were typically cited as reasons for the lack of progress" (p.1015). The PTL Leadership Framework design drew heavily from the significant mid-course correction Saunders and his colleagues made to engage teachers in the

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[4] The project will redefine an existing school based position to include the responsibility to remove many administrative tasks from the principal's agenda/schedule and distribute those tasks to appropriate staff members so that the principal can devote greater time to instructional improvement efforts.

[5] Members of an ILT include the principal, assistant principal, teachers, department chairs, and/or other staff

process. Those changes improved fidelity of implementation and led to significant increases in student achievement. In addition to incorporating those changes in the program design, PTL combines the Leadership Framework with a time utilization process that has been found to significantly increase principals' time spent on instruction (Turnbull et al., 2009).

Time Utilization Process: The National SAM Innovation Project (NSIP) developed a process to explicitly increase principals' time allocation in the domain of instructional leadership. SAM is an ongoing development process that applies a unique set of tools and routines designed to transform a principal from a school manager into an instructional leader—focusing the principal's time on activities directly connected to improving the learning environment. The SAM process is built on change theory that principals, by increasing the amount of time they spend on instruction, can increase student achievement by creating school conditions that improve teacher practice and student learning.
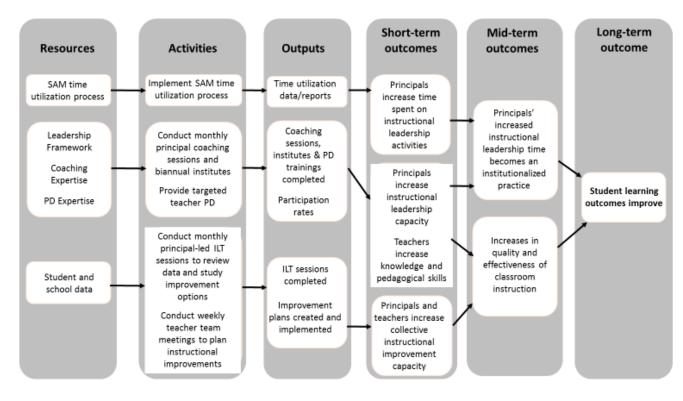
Research by Policy Studies Associates (2009) established that the SAM process has been successful in moving the needle on the amount of time principals devote to instructional issues. On average, principals increased the amount of time devoted to instructional practices by nearly six hours a week in the first year of implementation; eight and a half hours per week in year two; and nearly twelve and a half hours by the end of year three. After two years of implementation, that is the equivalent of spending an additional fifty-five days per year - solely devoted to instructional improvements (Turnbull et al., 2009). Researchers at Vanderbilt also found "evidence of the efficacy of the SAM process in changing behaviors or outcomes consistent with its theory of action" (Goldring, et al., 2015). See Appendix L for detailed on the SAM process.

IV.   Logic Model

Through project inputs and activities, PTL principals will demonstrate a positive change in the amount of time spent on instruction, a positive impact on teacher engagement school-wide

improvement efforts, and an increase in student academic achievement. Thus, PTL demonstrates an

exceptional approach to increasing principal effectiveness, with key elements outlined in the logic

model below (See Appendix B for details on the logic model and a research-based theory of action,

along with details on SAMs and the Leadership Framework).

Figure 1: **PTL Logic Model**

SECTION B: PROJECT DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

I.   Goals, Objectives, Outcomes, Measures, and Activities

PTL is designed to support principals in developing and institutionalizing effective processes

and routines focused on improving teaching and learning. Table 1 below outlines the specific goals,

objectives/outcomes, measures, and activities included in the PTL project design.

Table 1: **PTL Project Design Overview**

GOAL 1: Develop highly effective principals in partnering rural and high-need schools that increase the amount of time devoted to instructional improvements
OBJECTIVE 1.1: Training and coaching support will be provided to 56 principals aimed at increasing time spent on instructional practice. (Cohort 1 schools will serve as a pilot)

TARGETS 1.1 90% of the Cohort 2 schools will implement the SAM with fidelity, and 90% of the Cohort 2 schools demonstrate an increase in time spent on instructional improvements	
Measure 1.1a: Baseline time utilization data collected prior to participants completing training	
Measure 1.1b: Number of principals that complete SAM training and begin implementation	
Measure 1.1c TimeTrack will indicate time utilization on an on-going basis	
Measure 1.1d Analysis completed annually to determine extent of change in time usage	
ACTIVITIES	*RESPONSIBLE*
Activity 1.1a: Collect baseline time utilization data through a standardized multi-day shadowing process and repeat annually	AIR Evaluators; National SAM Innovation Project Director and State Coordinator; SAM staff; PTL Co-Directors; ROE representatives, and participating principals
Activity 1.1b: Train leadership coaches, principals, and a school-based staff member on SAM process	
Activity 1.1c: Monitor and analyze time utilization data to inform coaching and determine extent of change; External evaluators from AIR, PTL directors, and NSIP will provide feedback on fidelity of implementation and make recommendations for improvement	
Activity 1.1d: Support SAM implementation through coaching	
GOAL 2: Develop highly effective principals in partnering rural and high-need schools that improve instructional quality by engaging teachers through the PTL Leadership Framework	
OBJECTIVE 2.1: Provide training, coaching, and other support to 57 principals (including Cohort 1) to ensure implementation of the PTL Leadership Framework with fidelity.	
TARGETS 2.1: 90% of Cohort 2 principals will implement the leadership framework with fidelity; 90% of Cohort 2 principals will participate in monthly leadership coaching sessions; 80% of Cohort 2 principals will participate in summer and winter institutes; 80% of Cohort 2 teachers participating in ILTs will report increased levels of engagement in school-based decision making; 80% of Cohort 2 teachers participating in ILTs will report increased levels of engagement in school-based decision making; 80% of Cohort 2 ILT members will report increased leadership responsibilities; and 80% of all Cohort 2 teachers will indicate a change in instructional practice	
Measures 2.1a: Number of principals that complete training and begin implementation	
Measure 2.1b: Number of principals that participate in monthly coaching sessions and institutes	
Measure 2.1c: School Climate and Culture survey, interviews & document review	
Measure 2.1d: Number of principals that meet monthly with the ILT, and ensure biweekly teacher team meetings are focused on instructional improvements (meeting agendas)	
ACTIVITIES	*RESPONSIBLE*
Activity 2.1a: Train principals teachers on the PTL Leadership Framework	AIR Evaluators; PTL Co-Directors; Leadership Coaches (from university partners); ROE representatives, and participating principals and other school staff
Activity 2.1b: Support implementation of the Leadership Framework by providing coaching, tools, and resources	
Activity 2.1c: Coaches, AIR evaluators, and principal monitor progress toward the Leadership Framework system becoming an established school routine; PTL directors and external evaluators from AIR provide feedback on fidelity of implementation and make recommendations for improvement	
Activity 2.1d: Principal meets monthly with Leadership Coach; Principal develops ILT agendas and meets monthly with the ILT; ILT members set	

agendas and meet biweekly with teacher teams; ITL members collect teacher team agendas and data and monitors progress; Principal and ILT implement continuous improvement process

GOAL 3: Develop highly effective principals in partnering rural and high-need schools that positively impact student learning, particularly for high need students	
OBJECTIVE 3.1: Provide training, technical assistance, coaching, tools and resources to 57 principals, to support participating schools in demonstrating positive student growth	
TARGETS 3.1: 80% of participating schools in Cohort 2 will demonstrate positive student growth; 70% of Cohort 2 schools will demonstrate positive student growth with subgroups of high-need students; 70% of Cohort 2 schools will demonstrate greater positive student growth than comparison/non-participating schools; 70% of Cohort 2 principals will remain in leadership positions in the district during the life of the grant; and 70% of Cohort 2 schools will demonstrate a positive rating on the state administered climate and culture survey, and better than state outcomes on other indicators (e.g. student & teacher attendance, teacher turnover, etc.)	
Measure 3.1a: Student growth on PARCC (Elem & Middle) or SAT (HS) at PTL participating schools vs. a group of comparison schools	
Measure 3.1b: Student growth on PARCC or SAT by high-need students at PTL participating schools vs. a group of comparison schools.	
Measure 3.1c: ROE human resource records will be used to determine employment status	
Measure 3.1d: Climate and culture survey data and other indicators included on the Illinois School Report Card, published annually by the Illinois State Board of Education	
ACTIVITIES	**RESPONSIBLE**
Activity 3.1a: PTL will provide on-going training to all participating principals on effective strategies for engaging teachers in instructional improvement efforts	AIR Evaluators; PTL Co-Directors; NSIP ED and IL Director; Leadership Coaches (from university partners); ROE & District representatives, and participating principals and other school staff
Activity 3.1b: Partnering university faculty will provide on-going, job-embedded, context specific leadership coaching support to participating PTL principals, and when appropriate ILT members	
Activity 3.1c: PTL directors and partners from ROEs and universities will provide technical assistance to districts and principals and engage them in the development of various tools and processes focused on increasing efficiency and effectiveness in instructional improvement efforts	
Activity 3.1d: External evaluators from AIR, will provide ongoing feedback to partners on fidelity of implementation, progress toward goals, and recommendations for improvements and scaling	
Activity 3.1e: PTL directors, AIR evaluators, and partnering ROEs and districts will develop data sharing agreements and develop an ongoing system of data collection, sharing, and reporting to provide feedback loops for progress monitoring	
GOAL 4: Through the implementation of the PTL Leadership Framework, high-potential teachers will be identified, recruited, and enrolled in a principal preparation program	
OBJECTIVE 4.1: University and district partner come to a shared understanding of what constitutes a high-potential candidate and work together to develop a pipeline of well-training school leaders for high need schools	

TARGETS 4.1 50 teachers participating in PTL activities will be identified as high-potential school leaders and at least 50% will enroll in a principal preparation programs during the life of the grant	
Measure 4.1a: Partnering ROEs, districts and universities will develop an understanding of emerging leader competencies and performance indicators (years 1-2). A list of high-potential candidates will be collected by each of the partnering ROEs, in collaboration with leaders familiar with the candidates' performance (years 2-5).	
*Measure 4.1b***:** Partnering universities will report annually the number of PTL teachers that have enrolled in principal preparation programs	
Measure 4.1c Partnering ROEs and/or districts will report the number of ITL members considered, interviewed, and/or hired as assistant principals or principals (years 3-5).	
ACTIVITIES	*RESPONSIBLE*
Activity 4.1a: ROE and District leaders will collaborate with university faculty to discuss develop an agreed upon set of indicators of high potential candidacy for teachers involved in PTL (as principal prep candidates, and separately to fill assistant principal or principal positions)	Leadership Coaches (from university partners); ROE & District representatives, and participating principals
Activity 4.1b: University faculty in collaboration with ROE and/or district personnel will recruit and enroll outstanding teachers involved in the PTL project	
Activity 4.1c: ROE and/or district personnel will hire outstanding teachers involved in the PTL project as assistant principals or principals	

II.   Scaling and Milestones

PTL has been purposefully designed to include a preliminary phase and scaling phase. The

preliminary phase will involve 19 schools, in three areas of the state, and will include elementary,

middle, and high schools located in rural and suburban settings. The preliminary phase will support

the development, iteration, implementation and formative assessment of the project in the 19 Cohort

1 schools. The preliminary phase will be used to determine whether and in what ways the SAM

time management model and the Leadership Framework can be combined to increase principal

effectiveness. During the preliminary phase, the external evaluation team will explore fidelity of

implementation, identify elements that facilitate or inhibit implementation, and participate in

feedback sessions that inform program revisions. Following the preliminary phase, lessons learned,

from data analysis and multiple feedback loops, will be applied to the model during the scaling

phase of the project. PTL will scale the project design, with improvements informed by the

preliminary phase, to 38 additional (Cohort 2) schools. The external evaluation team will continue to explore fidelity of implementation, but will also determine project impact on school improvement efforts and achievement for high-need students in Cohort 2 schools. The purpose of the scaling phase is not to simply implement an established practice in additional locations, but rather to a newly combined leadership system that will result in increased principal effectiveness, increased teacher engagement, and increased student achievement.

In order to ensure a smooth transition from preliminary to scaling phase, PTL has incorporated multiple best-practices for scaling effectively, including: 1) adapting practice based on evidence, 2) establishing buy-in, 3) developing support at multiple levels, and 4) providing on-going implementation support. As previously established, the PTL project combines two research-based components that have separately been implemented in a multitude of schools. The preliminary phase provides the project with new understandings of the challenges and opportunities provided by intentionally combining the two strategies. The preliminary phase will therefore provide evidence for necessary adaptation to increase the effectiveness of the model.

The other three strategies of effectively scaling are interconnected in the PTL design. In terms of establishing buy-in, PTL strategically recruited partners for participation, focusing on those that will both benefit from the intervention and have demonstrated they can garner support from multiple stakeholders. Further, as part of SAM implementation, participating schools will complete a readiness process using multiple methods to engage school leadership and faculty in planning. The readiness work is also essential to identifying potential barriers and addressing them prior to implementation. School-based interventions often fail when not supported by district leaders and/or policies. To address that, PTL engaged Regional Office of Education (ROE) Superintendents and District Superintendents in project design and recruitment efforts. Thus PTL ensures both buy-in and support from those at multiple levels that supervise principals and have a vested interest in

supporting school improvement efforts. By engaging university faculty in on-going leadership

coaching roles, PTL acts to coordinate a cohesive structure of on-going support at multiple levels.

Training university faculty as leadership coaches will also add an innovative and important element

that promotes cross institutional learning, resulting in more effective recruitment, enrollment, and

preparation of principals. Lastly, through the on-going involvement of our external evaluation team,

PTL will keep abreast of new research and gain valuable insight from formative assessments and

stakeholder feedback, all of which will be used to inform continuous improvement efforts.

The preliminary phase/Cohort 1 will begin in year one and will include 19 schools, serving over

10,893 students. The scaling phase/Cohort 2, will begin in year two and will include 38 schools,

serving an additional 19,832 students. The scaling cost per student for the PTL project is roughly

$130/student. The pace and the rate of scaling in the PTL project, while aggressive, is appropriate,

given six key indicators:

1) The sample size and time frame are essential because impact of leadership interventions on student achievement take longer to demonstrate and in order to determine a significant effect size the evaluation requires a large sample;
2) The SAM process has already been implemented in over 800 schools nationwide (including in over 200 rural schools) and the PTL Leadership Framework is an evidence-based approach that relies on existing school structures;
3) PTL key personnel have a proven track record of delivering high-quality professional development, leadership coaching, and school improvement supports;
4) PTL relies on existing school support and oversight systems (e.g. ROEs and District) that maximize resources and reduce fragmentation and redundancy in implementation;
5) PTL provides adequate resources to ensure the project achieves its goals on time and within budget; and
6) PTL project directors have a proven track record of success in exceeding goals in leadership projects of this size (see Appendix G).

Table #2 below outlines the project milestones that guide the project. The activities included align to the school interventions, the project evaluation, and the management plan.

Table 2: **PTL Milestones**

Milestones	2017-18 Year 1		2018-19 Year 2		2019-20 Year 3		2020-21 Year 4		2021-22 Year 5	
	Fall	Spr	Fall	Spr	Fall	Spr	Fall	Spr	Fall	Spr
Implementation										

Readiness for treatment sites & identify comparison sites	X		X							
SAM & Leadership Framework training	X		X							
On-going coaching support	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Identify challenges & corrections		X		X		X		X		X
On-Going Activities										
Monthly Directors/Coaches Mtgs.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Monthly Coaching Sessions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Monthly ILT Meetings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Weekly Teacher Team Mtgs.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Weekly Time Track Review	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Summer /Winter Institute	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Advisory Committee Mtgs.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Data Collection & Analysis										
Climate & Culture Survey		X		X		X		X		X
Student Assessments			X		X		X		X	
Principal Retention			X		X		X		X	
Principal Prep Enrollment			X		X		X		X	
Annual Evaluation Reports		X		X		X		X		X

III. Oversight, Key Personnel, Responsibilities and Time Commitments

The PTL project will be housed at the DuPage ROE #19. In Illinois, ROEs are legislatively

created local education agencies (LEAs) that both directly operate alternative schools, and provide

supervision and support to all public schools in the region. ROE responsibilities are defined by the

Illinois School Code. ROE #19 is located in suburban DuPage County, roughly 40 miles west of

Chicago. It includes 42 districts, comprised of 278 schools, serving over 155,200 students (and the

population is growing). ROE #19 has a longstanding relationship with North Central College and

will continue that partnership through PTL.

The two other ROEs involved in PTL are ROE #1 and ROE #17. ROE #1 serves six rural

counties in southwest/central Illinois and its massive boundary area covers 3,236 square miles. ROE

#1 includes 20 districts (including the IL School for the Deaf and the IL School for the Visually

Impaired) with 71 schools, serving approximately 20,000 students. ROE #1 will partner with

Western Illinois University (WIU) in the PTL project. WIU is currently partnering with the Quincy

Public Schools in ROE #1 in the USDE-funded IL Partners Advancing Rigorous Training (IL-PART) project. WIU will expand that partnership to support other rural schools in the area through the PTL project. Similarly, ROE #17 is located in central Illinois and serves rural school communities and the twin cities of Bloomington/Normal. ROE #17 has a longstanding relationship with ISU, and is currently a partner in the IL-PART project and will expand beyond that partnership to support rural schools in the area through PTL. ROE #17 includes 30 districts and 102 schools, serving 37,487 students.

PTL represents a collaborative effort involving: three ROEs, 26 districts, and three institutions of higher education (IL State Univ., North Central College, and Western IL Univ.). Partnering ROEs include two located in rural areas (in central and southwest Illinois) and one in a suburban area (west of Chicago). If funded, PTL will impact 57 schools, serving over 30,000 students. Schools involved are primarily from rural areas (n=40) with high-need schools making up the balance (n=17). See Appendix D for formal MOUs between the ROEs and commitment letters from 26 participating districts and three universities.

PTL plans to build upon existing collaborative partnerships. The three ROEs and the consortium of LEAs were chosen to participate in PTL because of their ability to capitalize on existing processes and trusting relationships established through prior district/university partnership efforts. Together, the PTL project combined with the USDE-funded IL-PART project, will provide a cohesive continuum of support for school leaders, from the aspiring through the retiring phase. Appendix H provides details on the differentiated roles and responsibilities of the partners between the existing pre-service project (IL-PART) and the proposed in-service project (PTL).

The DuPage Regional Office of Education will act as fiscal agent for this project. Regional Superintendent Dr. Darlene Ruscitti will provide fiscal oversight of the grant and will collaborate with CSEP on project implementation. PTL Co-Directors will be responsible for: 1) day-to-day

management and administration of the grant; 2) coordinating project implementation with assistance from partnering ROEs, districts, and universities; 3) coordinating data sharing with the external evaluation team; 4) ensuring compliance with performance reporting; and 5) facilitating the continuous improvement process for the project. See Appendix I for an organizational chart.

Key project personnel have been selected based on their professional experience, areas of expertise and commitment to project implementation. See Appendix J for PTL key personnel responsibilities, and Appendix C for resumes. The **PTL Co-Directors**, Dr. Erika Hunt and Dr. Alicia Haller, have a successful track record of managing large federal- and state-funded grant projects. As educators and researchers, they are also familiar with the many challenges faced by rural and high-need schools and districts. The two currently serve as co-directors of the $4.6M USDE School Leadership Program-funded IL-PART project. Dr. Hunt and Dr. Haller will each commit .50 FTE of their position and will collaborate with **ROE Superintendents**, Darlene Ruscitti (ROE #19); Jill Reiss (ROE #1), and Mark Jontry (ROE #17) in the implementation of PTL. Each of the ROE Superintendents has agreed to provide project coordination and oversight through in-kind contributions of their time and participation on a PTL Advisory Committee.

Key partner personnel, located in each of the three partnering Regional Offices of Education and three universities, will assist the PTL Directors with implementation and oversight. The key personnel represent a wide variety of roles at partnering institutions (e.g. superintendents, academic administrators, university faculty, etc.). Many were chosen based on their previous experience developing robust pre-service district/university partnerships. They will capitalize on that experience and those relationships to ensure that PTL meets its expected milestones. Key personnel will be called upon to facilitate sharing of data and identified best practices with other rural and high-need districts. Critical to this work will be the in-kind support of the three **IL-PART**

Coordinators who will provide cohesion between pre- and in-service supports for principals and will facilitate learning within and across regions.

For ROEs to maximize the impact of the robust university/district partnerships, leadership within partnering institutions must support and coordinate PTL work. To that end, partnering ROEs have outlined specific expectations in formal Memoranda of Understanding (Appendix D). Each university has identified a faculty representative and each ROE has identified district administrators to collaborate in PTL. Appendix D also includes letters of commitment from: Superintendents of the 26 districts, and administrators from the three university partners. Also included are letters of support from the IL Sec. of Ed. and the Executive Director of the IL Education Assoc. (IEA). Both are familiar with the quality of policy and program work conducted by the DuPage ROE and CSEP.

In order to engage leadership from partner organizations substantively to ensure sustainable support for the work, PTL will convene an **Advisory Committee** designed to provide input and insight as the project progresses and develops to inform other local initiatives. As part of an on-going oversight and continuous improvement process, partnering superintendents, district administrators, university faculty, project staff, and members of the AIR evaluation team will meet bi-annually, to review data, discuss progress toward goals, and explore mechanisms for sustainability and replication. Finally, an essential PTL partner is the **External Evaluation Team**, composed of highly trained and experienced researchers from the American Institutes for Research (AIR). Lead evaluator, Matt Clifford, is a nationally-recognized expert in educator effectiveness. He currently serves as a Senior Research Scientist at AIR and has completed numerous studies on educational leadership. See Appendix K for AIR evaluators' resumes.

IV.   Feedback and Continuous Improvement

PTL will apply a results-oriented cycles of inquiry approach, informed by regular data collection and feedback loops, as part of the continuous improvement process at both the project

and school levels. The cycles of inquiry process is a powerful tool for building the capacity of the partners to improve organizational learning. It involves five steps, designed to support individuals with sharpening their focus on results and ensure proper attention to a meaningful feedback loops, including:

1. Understand the gap between the vision and the current reality and collaboratively decide which goal(s) provide the greatest levers and indicators of progress
2. Establish a plan of action that breaks down year-long goals into achievable quarterly objectives, and determines allocation of time, resources, and actions to achieve those goals
3. Implement plan with fidelity
4. Establish a regular habit of using data to make sense of results; identify what is working, and dig deeply into the barriers to reaching goals
5. Reflect on progress made to date in order to create momentum to repeat this cycle

The purpose of a results-oriented cycle of inquiry is to create a routinized process that institutionalizes the use of data through goal setting, action planning, implementation, assessing progress, and making adjustments. The PTL advisory committee will apply the results-oriented cycle of inquiry process to model and monitor progress toward project goals and determine any mid-course corrections needed to improve outcomes. Coaches will work with principals and ILTs to apply a results-oriented cycle of inquiry process at the school and teacher team levels. From a school-level perspective, a data-informed continuous improvement process will involve an on-going feedback loop that includes information from coaching sessions, trainings, ILT and teacher team meetings, annual principal and teacher evaluations, student achievement data, etc. While the majority of schools involved in the PTL project are located in rural areas, the project will also be implemented in suburban areas, allowing a variety of best practices to be identified. Feedback loops established in PY 1 will continue in PY2-5. Additionally, schools that began implementation in the preliminary phase (Cohort 1) will act as demonstration sites for schools in Cohort 2, when the model is scaled.

V.   Dissemination Plan

Each state with schools implementing the SAM model has a statewide structure in place for support and networking at the local and national levels (see Appendix L for an organizational chart for NSIP). Through the SAM network, PTL can reach over 874 schools in 22 states, allowing for broad and rapid dissemination of the findings from this project. NSIP national reach and work in rural schools will also help create networks for dissemination and replication with those working in remote locations.

With increasing national attention on integrated leadership practices and teacher engagement models, along with a dearth of research on the efficacy of leadership strategies, many national organizations and funders will be interested in the results of PTL. Efforts to communicate PTL evaluation findings, articulate the evidenced-based practices, and share lessons learned will involve the dissemination of white papers and articles for national and state policymakers, practitioners and researchers. PTL will also leverage its strong relationships with the Illinois P-20 Council and the teachers' union to influence local state policy and practice. That expectation was shared in letters of support for PTL from the IL Sec. of Ed. and the Executive Director of the IL Education Assoc. Lastly, in order to reach both researchers and practitioners, project staff will present PTL at a variety of forums, including local conferences (e.g. IL Education Assoc., Large Unit District Assoc., IL Principals Assoc., IL Education Research Council, etc.), and national conferences (e.g. AERA, NASSP, NAESP, NARE, UCEA, etc.). Dissemination efforts will include both rural and urban focused outlets. Funding for travel is included in the PTL budget.

VI.   Informing Replication

For replication to be successful in a variety of settings, a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is not advised. However, it is essential to understand the invariable aspects of the project and other more flexible/variable aspects that can be tailored to specific contexts. One of the most common barriers

to successful replication is the inability to articulate the key elements required for success (RPS, 1994; Uvin & Miller, 1996). The proposed PTL external evaluation includes a process for monitoring fidelity of implementation across all PTL schools and will identify the invariable and variable elements of the model. Building on a recent study (Goldring, et al, 2015) that identified four specific non-negotiable aspects found to result in strong fidelity of implementation in the SAM model: 1) voluntary commitment to implementing SAM, 2) participation in baseline data collection, 3) regular use of the TimeTrack® software and SAM daily meeting process, and 4) ongoing coaching, AIR will explore those and other elements of PTL. Identifying the essential elements will improve implementation and ensure that those wishing to replicate PTL have ample information from which to work. Also, PTL intends to open source all protocols and tools developed for the project and to the extent possible, will disseminate specific descriptions of the key organizational elements involved in the design.

Lastly, the project design builds upon and improves common school structures and processes of knowledge transmission (e.g. ILTs, teacher-teams, etc.), and combines them with an innovative time management process that is proven to increase the principal's attention to instructional improvements. The project improves upon common elements by implementing research-based strategies to develop and utilize effective leadership teams, differentiate principal coaching and support specific to each site, and standardize routines and protocols aimed specifically at addressing instructional problems of practice. PTL artifacts, including explicit project goals, objectives, measures, activities, targets, and logic model, along with external evaluation feedback and reports, demonstrate an exceptional approach to improving principal effectiveness and will allow for project replication in a wide variety of schools.

SECTION C: PROJECT EVALUATION

I.   Alignment of Research Questions to Project Goals

The evaluation design has two purposes: (1) to supply PTL partners with timely feedback and data to improve the program for the populations served and (2) to assess program impacts during its preliminary phase in Year 1 and as it scales up to full PTL implementation in Years 2 - 5. The evaluation addresses three key research questions, which take into consideration EIR competition requirements and the PTL logic model (see Figure 1 above). Table 3 below displays the alignment of the key research questions, relevant sub-questions, project goals, and data sources.

Table 3. **PTL Program Objectives and External Evaluation Research Questions**

Research Question (RQ)	Applicable Sub-questions	Goals	Data Sources
RQ1. To what extent has school leadership quality and school culture improved in schools that have participated in Partners to Lead (PTL)?	RQ1.1 Do teachers and staff in schools that participate in PTL report access to improved instructional leadership and school culture, in comparison to teachers and staff in similar, non-PTL schools?	PTL Goal 1	• Illinois 5*Essentials* Survey
	RQ1.2. Have principals increased the amount of time spent on instructional leadership activities as a result of their participation in the PTL program?		• SAM TimeTrack data
RQ2. To what degree has PTL been implemented with fidelity across participating school sites and districts?	RQ2.1 To what degree has the PTL process been implemented with fidelity?	PTL Goal 2	• PTL principal and ILT interviews • PTL partner interview • Program document review
	RQ2.2 What contextual features support or inhibit the fidelity of implementation of the program?		
	RQ2.3 To what extent do PTL principals and instructional leadership team (ILT) members report applying learning to school leadership practices?		
	RQ2.4 To what extent has PTL participating principals remained in their schools?		• Principal retention data
RQ3. What are the effects of PTL participation on schoolwide student learning in comparison to similar schools that did not participate in PTL?	No associated sub-questions	PTL Goal 3	• Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) • Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)

A detailed data collection and evaluation management plan can be found in Appendix P.

II.   Preliminary Phase Evaluation Activities & Data Sources [Year 1]

PTL aims to provide high-quality, actionable professional learning to all participants over the course of the grant. AIR will collect qualitative and quantitative data that describe (a) the degree to which PTL principals and ILT members implement program components and (b) the degree to which they apply the SAM process within their schools.

Table 4. **Preliminary Phase Evaluation Data Collection Activities**

Data	Description	Number	Timeline	RQ
PTL Partner Interviews	Interviews will explore the extent of support provided to PTL schools, efforts to tailor support to meet the needs of each PTL principal and their school, and identify overall successes and challenges related to supporting and implementing PTL. Interviews will be recorded, with consent, and transcribed.	Interviews with up to six PTL partners (e.g., LEAs, NSIP, universities, etc.).	Year 1: Fall 2018	RQ 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3
Participant Pilot Principal, ILT Member, and District Leader Interviews	Interviews will explore the experience of individual school principals and their ILT teams as they implement PTL. They will capture each school's unique context. The interviews will document challenges faced and progress made by the principal and ILT members and examine the extent to which an integrated leadership system has been established. Year 1 schools will not be considered part of the larger PTL study sample, but data from Year 1 pilot interviews will provide partners an opportunity to improve the PTL model before scaling begins in Year 2.	24 total school- and district-level administrators and ILT members across 6 schools[6] that are implementing the PTL model.	Year 1: Spring 2018	RQ 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3
Program Document Review	PTL program documents will be reviewed to further describe implementation in pilot schools. Specifically, analyzing meeting agendas, participant lists, presentations, and other program documents will provide a deeper understanding of the key components of PTL training and efforts to enact a culture of shared accountability that is focused on instruction.	N/A	Year 1: Fall 2017 and Spring 2018	RQ 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3

III.   Scaling Phase Evaluation Activities & Data Sources [Years 2 to 5]

Using implementing lessons learned from Year 1, AIR will begin to collect fidelity of implementation and impact data for PTL schools as they begin receiving the PTL intervention in

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[6] Schools will be purposely selected from across the three participating PTL ROEs using the following criteria: percent Free/Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL), total student enrollment, locale (e.g., rural versus nonrural), years of current SAM implementation, and years of principal experience. The purpose of this sampling approach is to select a sample of schools that reflect the characteristics of our treatment sample.

Years 2 through 5. Table 5 outlines the data sources that will be analyzed for formative and

summative evaluation purposes. The evaluation will identify the variable and invariable aspects of

the PTL model to inform replication efforts, as described in Section B. Following Table A,

description of the sample and the approach to selecting comparison schools is included in Table 6.

Table 5. **Scaling Phase Evaluation Data Collection Activities**

Data Source	Description	Number	Timeline	RQ
Formative				
The Illinois 5*Essentials* Survey:	The Illinois 5*Essentials* Survey is a validated PK–12 teachers and staff measures of school culture and leadership effectiveness. The survey, administered annually statewide by the Univ. of Chicago, includes the following five constructs: *Effective Leaders, Collaborative Teachers, Involved Families, Supportive Environments, and Ambitious Instruction* (Univ. of Chicago UEI, 2016). To analyze survey data, AIR will create scale scores for each of the five constructs using the Rasch model for ordered categories. Scale scores will provide a quantitative measure of frequency and intensity of an individual's responses. Scores will be averaged within each school-by-year combination to create aggregate measures of school culture.	Illinois 5*Essentials* survey data spanning from the 2014-15 through 2019-20 school years will be used to analyze the impact of PTL on instructional leadership and school culture in both treatment and comparison schools.	Annually each fall in Year 2-5	RQ 1.1
SAM TimeTrack Data	PTL principals will be given access to an online SAM TimeTrack software to record activities on a daily basis and specify the category as "instructional," "managerial," or "personal." Leadership coaches will promote and monitor TimeTrack use. AIR will descriptively analyze the data with the purpose of summarizing, describing, and comparing across schools.	AIR will collect SAM TimeTrack data from all 37 participating PTL schools.	Semi-annually (fall and spring) in Years 2-5	RQ 1.2
PTL Participating Principal Interviews	Interviews will focus on the utility and effectiveness of the PTL structures and tools, and the challenges and successes in implementing and adhering to PTL program requirements. Interviews will be conducted by phone, transcribed, and analyzed using NVivo.	12 total randomly selected PTL principals will be interviewed annually.	Annually during the spring in Years 2-5	RQs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3
PTL Partner Interviews	Interviews explore the extent of support provided to PTL schools, efforts to tailor support to meet the needs of each principal and their school, and the overall successes and challenges related to supporting and implementing the PTL model.	Interviews with up to 6 PTL partners (e.g., LEAs, NSIP, universities, etc.) annually each fall.	Annually each fall in Years 2-5	RQs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3
Program Document Review	Reviews of PTL program documents will help further differentiate program implementation in non-PTL schools. Analysis of Summer and Winter Institute meeting agendas, participant	N/A	Semi-annually (in fall and	RQs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3

	sign-in forms, presentations, and other program documents will provide a deeper understanding of the key components of PTL training and efforts to enact a culture of shared accountability that is focused on instructional improvements.		spring) in Years 2-5	
Principal Retention Data	PTL principal retention data will be gathered from 3 regional offices of education (ROEs) to report the number of PTL participants who remain in their positions during the course of the study. AIR will descriptively analyze data and identify attrition causes (e.g., retirement, etc.)	AIR will collect principal retention data for all 37 participating PTL school principals.	Annually in spring in Years 2-5	RQ 2.4
Summative				
Student Achievement using a CITS in Year 4.	Student performance data will be measured by scale scores in English and math on the state standardized test, PARCC, and SAT scores. To make PARCC scale scores and SAT scores comparable across grades, subjects, and years, they will be standardized within each grade, subject, and year. To standardize the scores, we first subtract from the score the mean score in that grade, subject, and year, and then divide the score by the standard deviation of scores in that grade, subject, and year. The standardized score represents the extent to which the student scores higher or lower than the average student in that grade, subject, and year, relative to the overall distribution of student achievement in that grade, subject and year. Time series data allow AIR to evaluate student outcomes	PARCC scores for elementary and middle schools for the 2014–15 through 2020–21 school years and high school grades for the 2014–15 through 2016–17 school years; SAT scores for the 2017–18 through 2020–21 school years. .	PARCC and SAT scores collected annually in Years 2-5 from the State. Impact analysis completed in Year 5 (2021-22) only	RQ 3

IV.   Evaluation Sample and Minimum Detectable Effect Size

Table 6. **Description of PTL Sample, Comparison Schools and Matching Approach**

Matching Approach	**Minimum Detectable Effect Size (MDES)**
AIR will use matching techniques to identify a set of 87 schools that are statistically equivalent at baseline with the 37 treatment schools, on measures of outcomes of interest or factors correlated with the outcomes of interest. The baseline outcomes of interest will include: school district, school grade configuration, school size, urbanicity of school, and student demographics, among others. The set of comparison schools will be selected so that differences in mean baseline characteristics of the treatment and comparison groups are less than 0.25 standard deviations of the pooled sample, in order to meet WWC evidence standards with reservations (What Works Clearinghouse, 2014).	MDESs were estimated using power analyses, the details for which are described in Appendix N. If no schools exit from the study, the MDES for school-level outcomes is 0.40, while at a 15% attrition rate the MDES for school-level outcomes is 0.44. The MDES for student-level outcomes is 0.09 at attrition rates between 0% and 15%. It is reasonable to believe that PTL will have a larger impact on leadership practice than on student achievement, because the program is designed to directly influence school leaders, while many of the factors affecting student achievement, such as students' families, neighborhoods, and innate abilities, cannot be directly influenced by PTL. The estimated MDESs for student- and school-level outcomes reflect this difference in expected effect sizes at the student and school levels.

V.   Impact Methodology

Well-designed and implemented randomized controlled trials (RCTs) are considered the "gold standard" for evaluating an intervention's effectiveness. However, we do not anticipate being able to recruit a sufficient number of schools, we will not be able to implement an RCT to evaluate PTL. Instead, we will evaluate the impact of PTL using a CITS, which is among the strongest quasi-experimental designs for causal inference (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002; St. Clair, Cook, & Hallberg, 2014). Recent methodological studies by AIR and other researchers (e.g., Hallberg, Williams, & Swanlund, 2015; Jacob, Somers, Zhu, & Bloom, 2016) have demonstrated that CITS designs can produce valid inferences about the effectiveness of a school-level intervention. **If implemented correctly, a CITS design can meet What Works Clearinghouse standards with reservations.**

In a CITS design, levels ("Are test scores high or low?") and trends ("Are test scores increasing or decreasing?") in outcomes (e.g., student achievement, school culture) are tracked over time. The analysis examines whether there is a break in trends in PTL schools after the implementation of the intervention, controlling for other observable changes in the school, such as changes in student demographics. To guard against the possibility that this break in trend is unrelated to the intervention but is instead the result of changes in district policies, economic conditions, or other unobserved factors that are not controlled for in the statistical model, the evaluation team will examine whether there is a break in trends in non-PTL schools over the same time period. Any difference between the break in trends in PTL schools (if any) and the break in trends in non-PTL schools (if any) provides an estimate of the effect of the intervention. We will also estimate the extent to which the effect of PTL differs between rural and non-rural schools. More information about CITS design and analysis, is provided in Appendix M.