

**SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
FOUNDATION FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION GRANT APPLICATION**

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**Invitational Priority 1—Building Leadership Capacity.** The Foundation for Educational Administration (FEA)'s *3Rs for School Leadership: Recruit, Retain, Renew* (The 3Rs Project) meets Invitational Priority 1, *Building Leadership Capacity*. The 3Rs Project will be led by FEA, an eligible nonprofit entity registered in the State of New Jersey, partnering with three high-need New Jersey school districts: Trenton, Millville, and Bridgeton, which together represent a total of 40 schools. According to the NJ Department of Education's latest report (May 2013), 27 of the 40 schools have been identified as priority and focus schools. These schools are among the lowest-achieving schools in the State.

The 3Rs Project consists of a continuum of six interrelated research-based strategies to assist principals, assistant principals, candidates for school leadership, and teacher leaders in mastering school leadership skills, specifically skills needed for principals to become transformational instructional leaders. Program participants will take part in professional development and mentoring activities during the summer and throughout the school year that align with the New Jersey's Common Core Content Standards (NJCCCS), the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), and NJ's Turnaround Principles for Priority and Focus Schools.

These professional learning opportunities will begin with in-depth training in the FEA School Improvement Framework. This framework will enable leaders to define transformational leadership focused on student learning. It will support leaders in developing a coherent school improvement plan that connects the key components of effective schools: a culture of learning, shared leadership and accountability, a well-developed curriculum aligned to the NJCCCS and CCSS, job-embedded collaborative professional learning focused on the use of student data to drive instructional decisions, and the use of teacher and principal evaluation to improve teaching, leading, and learning. Successive professional learning opportunities will dig more deeply into

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each element of the framework. Topics will include: creating viable curricula; units of study; the development of formative and summative assessments; creating a positive school climate; the use of student data to drive appropriate differentiation and intervention; providing feedback to students and teachers; planning appropriate professional learning to meet individual, team, and school goals; and parent and community engagement.

In addition, educational leaders will receive on-going coaching to support instructional leadership. The project will implement the School Administration Manager (SAM) model in the lowest-achieving schools, so principals have the necessary time to focus on instructional leadership. Coaching will be provided by veteran principals well-versed in the use of the SAM, and who have an in-depth knowledge of the FEA School Improvement Framework and the teacher and principal evaluation systems used by each district.

Several of the professional learning opportunities will be provided to leadership teams that include both principals and teacher leaders. This approach will start the effort to build shared leadership, shared responsibility, and shared accountability for student learning. Principal participants will have an opportunity to continue to network in their own Leadership for Learning Community through an established on-line platform.

The project's coherent, rigorous, and sustained standards-based professional learning for current leaders will help them create schools that are collaborative learning communities focused on curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned to college- and career-ready standards. This comprehensive approach will ensure student learning and continuous school improvement.

The project will also provide aspiring school leaders with the opportunity to become certified as supervisors, assistant principals, and principals through FEA's NJEXCEL program, a highly regarded alternative certification program. This program is the only non-traditional educational

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leader certification program in the state approved by the NJ Department of Education.

**Invitational Priority 2—Supporting Practices for Which There Is Moderate Evidence of**

**Effectiveness.** One of the strengths of the 3Rs Project is its ability to provide customized professional development through its School Improvement Framework. During the first year of the project, FEA will undertake a thorough needs assessment and planning period in each LEA and will customize its program offerings, not only to the identified needs of the LEAs, but those of the individual schools within each LEA. The customized plans will include **practices and strategies for which there is moderate evidence of effectiveness** according to the US Department of Education’s What Works Clearing House. (See attached documentation) Depending on each school and LEA’s individual needs, these elements may include:

- Organizing instruction and study to improve student learning by providing space learning over time, working in examples with student problem-solving exercises, combining graphs and figures with verbal descriptions, integrating abstract and concrete representations of concepts, using quizzes to promote learning, helping students to allocate study time efficiently, and prompting for deeper explanations.
- Teaching elementary school students to be effective writers by use of the process of writing for several purposes, and by promoting fluency in spelling, sentence construction, typing, and word processing.
- Utilizing RTI with elementary and middle school students who are struggling with math. This includes screening all students for problems with mathematics, and providing explicit and systematic interventions, including models of proficient problem-solving, verbalization of thought processes, guided practice and corrective feedback. It will also include instruction on solving word problems and opportunities for students to work with visual representations of

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mathematical ideas. Interventions will devote at least 10 minutes per session on building fluent retrieval of basic arithmetic.

- Encouraging high school completion through targeted interventions such as assigning adult advocates to students at risk of dropout, along with academic support and enrichment.

Schoolwide interventions will center on personalizing the learning environment and the instructional process, and providing relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and give them the skills to graduate and succeed in life.

- Improving Adolescent Literacy by increasing motivation and engagement in literacy learning, and providing intensive and individualized interventions for struggling readers by trained instructors, as well as vocabulary instruction, direct comprehension strategy instruction, opportunities for extended discussion of the meaning and interpretation of texts.
- Helping students navigate the path to college, helping them complete the critical steps for college entry and increasing families' financial awareness.

This combination of evidence-based programming and school-level customization will ensure that techniques used by school leadership effectively address local needs, thereby speeding the process of school improvement and student growth.

## **A. QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN**

### **1. Goals, objectives, and outcomes**

**The goal of the 3Rs Project is to promote student growth by recruiting, preparing, and retaining principals and assistant principals who have the core knowledge, leadership skills, and support required to develop high-performing schools in some of the highest-need rural and urban LEAs in New Jersey.**

The 3Rs Project will expand upon the Foundation for Educational Administration's (FEA)

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School Improvement Framework, a systemic approach to improving school leadership. The 3Rs Project will offer a seamless continuum of six interrelated research-based strategies and programs designed to improve the recruitment, preparation, induction, retention, and continued professional development of school leaders for enhanced system capacity and increased student learning and growth. The project will offer coherent, rigorous, and sustained standards-based preparation and ongoing professional development to both new recruits and existing school leadership. It will create professional learning communities that integrate NJ Core Common Content Standards (NJCCCS), the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), effective instruction, formative and summative assessments, and student learning objectives and outcomes. Ultimately, the project will foster a continuous cycle of school improvement to support student growth.

**Project Objectives:** The objectives below are based on the needs of the target areas, the documented need to prepare instructional leaders, and the evaluation of FEA's previous School Leadership Program-funded project. Measurable outcomes are specified for each objective.

**Objective 1: Target exemplary teacher leaders for participation in an innovative, non-traditional principal certification program using research-based tools.** The 3Rs Project will work with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to adapt their Quality School Leadership Identification Process (QSL-ID) to identify and recruit exemplary teacher leaders and supervisors not currently on track for principal certification to participate in NJEXCEL, an intensive, non-traditional principal certification program designed by FEA and based on current best practices in educational leadership development.

**Outcomes:**

- AIR and FEA will develop, implement, and test a teacher recruitment structure based on a set of standards-aligned rubrics for weighting aspiring principal candidates' skills and abilities.

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- No fewer than 20 teachers and supervisors of diverse backgrounds will enroll in NJEXCEL each year.
- 80 teacher leaders and supervisors will achieve principal certification through the NJEXCEL program over the five-year grant period.
- No fewer than 20 teachers and supervisors who complete NJEXCEL through the 3Rs Project will be hired as principals or assistant principals within two years of certification. At least 15 of them will be hired within the three identified high-need LEAs. At least 15 of them will remain in a leadership position in a high-need LEA for at least two years.

**Objective 2: To groom promising teacher leaders to move into assistant principal or principal positions.** FEA will use the AIR protocols developed through this project to recruit teacher leaders and supervisors into its new Rising Stars program. This program will provide professional development for individuals certified as principals, but who have not yet taken positions of school leadership.

**Outcomes:**

- At least 10 teachers and supervisors will participate in Rising Stars each grant year.
- No fewer than 10 teachers and supervisors who complete the Rising Stars program will be hired as principals or assistant principals within two years of program completion. At least 8 (80%) of these will be hired within the three identified high-need LEAs.

**Objective 3: To provide current principals and assistant principals with research-based professional development in the skills needed to foster a continuous cycle of school improvement leading to improved student learning.** The 3Rs Project will train every principal and assistant principal in the partnering LEAs through FEA's School Improvement Framework. This includes thirteen days of training, plus monthly coaching in the following areas: an aligned

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and coherent process for school improvement through established Professional Learning Communities (PLCs); the development of a deep understanding of the CCSS; the connections between formative and summative assessments and Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC); the importance of building a positive school culture and climate; and strategies to narrow achievement gaps. Comparable training will be offered to teacher leaders who will serve as turn-key trainers within each school in the three high-need LEAs.

Outcomes:

- 100% of current principals and assistant principals in partnering LEAs will complete FEA’s School Improvement Framework each year, a total of 60 over the five-year grant period.
- At least 85% of principals completing FEA’s School Improvement Framework will be rated “effective” or “highly effective,” as measured by each district’s NJDOE-approved principal evaluation system.
- A least 90% of schools whose principals complete FEA’s School Improvement Framework will demonstrate positive changes in student achievement based on pre- and post-school site measures (to be developed during the needs assessment period with one of which will be student growth) by the end of the five-year grant program.

**Objective 4: To improve retention of highly skilled principals and assistant principals, both new and veteran, by providing mentoring and coaching to principals in high-need LEAs.**

The 3Rs Project will provide mentoring for new principals and assistant principals, including but not limited to those hired through the NJEXCEL and Rising Stars program, for a period of two years through the NJ Leaders to Leaders (NJ-L2L) program, which pairs veteran principals with novice school leaders. In addition, veteran principals in the high-need LEAs will receive coaching from principals well-versed in the use of the School Administration Manager (SAM)

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model, and who have an in-depth knowledge of the FEA School Improvement Framework and the teacher and principal evaluation systems used by each district.

Outcomes:

- At least 75% of principals and assistant principals from partnering high-need LEAs who complete at least one year of The 3Rs professional development AND at least one year of mentoring and/or coaching will remain in their position (or, if an assistant principal who is promoted, remain employed within the same high-need LEA) for at least two years.
- At least 90% of schools whose principals receive two or more years of mentoring/ coaching will demonstrate positive change, based on pre- and post- school site measures (to be developed during the needs assessment period, but one of which will be student growth) by the end of the five-year grant program.

**Objective 5: To provide Customized Professional Development based upon each school's specific needs, as identified in school level plans.**

The 3Rs Project will undertake a thorough needs assessment and planning period in each LEA and customize its program offerings not only to the identified needs of the LEAs, but those of the individual schools within each LEA. This combination of effective programming and school-level customization will ensure that techniques used by school leadership address local needs, thereby speeding the process of school improvement and student growth. These customized plans will include elements that have been found to be effective in the USDOE's What Works Clearing House.

***PROJECT COMPONENTS***

The non-profit Foundation for Educational Administration, Inc. (FEA) has promoted sustained professional growth for educational administrators since 1985. It supports research-based practices, and enhances the spectrum of leadership for the purpose of continuous school im-

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provement. The 3Rs Project will consolidate six FEA programs, two new and four with demonstrated impact, in three identified high-need New Jersey LEAs.

**1) NJEXCEL (EXpedited Certification for Educational Leadership) Program.** First created by FEA and approved by the NJ Department of Education in 2003, NJEXCEL is an FEA-designed intensive, non-traditional principal certification program based on current best practices in school leadership development. It provides an alternative to the traditional master's degree in educational administration that had been the only route to state principal licensure since the 1980s. This program has two primary goals: 1) to increase the quality, quantity, and diversity of the school leader candidate pool; and 2) to improve school leader preparation through alternative non-traditional preparation programs.

NJEXCEL provides an alternative path to principal licensure with different tracks for practicing supervisors with a master's degree in an educational field and at least five years of supervisory experience; certified supervisors with 0-4 years of supervisory experience; and teachers and educational specialists with a master's degree in an educational field and five or more years of educational experience. Since its inception, NJEXCEL has increased the New Jersey leader candidate pool by 1,083 highly qualified individuals who would not have otherwise pursued principal licensure. Of these, 37% were from high-need districts, 22% were minorities, and 70% were female.

The NJEXCEL program effectively addresses common needs to improve school leadership and student achievement through the enhancement, implementation, systematic study, and dissemination of scientifically-based research models, programs and strategies. NJEXCEL offers a highly portable advanced professional certification and credentialing model based upon the ISLLC Standards – Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium. This high-quality profes-

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sional enhancement program offers, but is not limited to, certifications in the following advanced titles: Principal, Director of School Counseling Services, Supervisor, and School Administrator. During the first year of the project, FEA will review and revise the NJEXCEL curriculum to be responsive to NJ's School Turnaround Principles, to include a renewed focus on instructional leadership, and to connect all content to FEA's School Improvement Framework.

**2) Rising Stars.** This new effort will provide professional development for individuals already certified as principals, but who have not yet taken on positions of school leadership.

Across the three districts, there are some teachers and supervisors who are already certified and eligible to become school assistant principals or principals. Rising Stars will target qualified and interested candidates within this group. Founded on the principles embodied in NJEXCEL, Rising Stars will build upon these certified potential leaders' academic preparation, provide them with the most current information, and groom them for future success as school leaders.

**3) FEA School Improvement Framework.** This innovative framework will enable leaders to define transformational leadership focused on instructional excellence and student learning. The framework is guided by the belief that professional development must be strategic. To that end, FEA will: a) link its professional development strategy to each LEA's vision for teaching and learning; b) ensure that the framework is aligned with teacher and principal evaluation; c) establish a clear organizational structure for the management of professional development; d) incorporate a differentiated approach that focuses on teacher effectiveness, school capacity, and program implementation; and d) monitor and evaluate the quality of the professional development and the effects of professional development on teacher instruction and student growth.

**4) New Jersey Leaders to Leaders (NJ-L2L) Program** is a comprehensive research-based program for newly hired principals and assistant principals designed to improve leader induction,

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retention, and performance through intensive and sustained support by trained mentors and continuing professional development. Founded by FEA in 2004 as a two-year induction program, NJ-L2L is the sole provider of the NJ Department of Education's required mentoring/induction for those who have a certificate of eligibility for principal. Completion of NJ-L2L leads to standard principal licensure. NJ-L2L was highlighted nationally as one of 15 outstanding induction programs in *Supporting New Principals: Models of Induction and Mentoring*<sup>1</sup>. The 3Rs Project will pair veteran principals with new principals in each of the high-need LEAs.

**5) School Administration Manager (SAM).** The 3Rs Project will provide coaching for veteran principals in the high-need LEAs from experienced principals. In addition, FEA will implement in schools with highest need the National School Administration Manager (SAM) Innovation Project, which was created to help principals spend more time on instructional leadership and less time on purely administrative tasks. The SAM process involves collecting data on how a principal currently spends his or her time; training other individuals who can protect the principal's time; use of a cloud-based calendar system; and on-site training and coaching for principals in adapting their time schedules to provide more instructional leadership in the classroom. School administration managers (SAMs) are assigned to take over many of the purely administrative tasks required in running a school, thereby freeing the principals to provide greater instructional leadership to teachers and students. Coaches for the program, often drawn from the ranks of retired principals and other school leaders, will be well-versed in the use of the SAM model and will have an in-depth knowledge of the FEA School Improvement Framework and the teacher and principal evaluation systems used by each district.

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Villani, *Supporting New Principals: Models of Induction and Mentoring*. (Thousand Oaks, CA, Corwin Press, 2006)

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**6) Customized Professional Development.** FEA has identified several practices and strategies from the What Works Clearinghouse that have moderate or strong evidence of effectiveness, address a critical area of need in one or more of the schools in the three LEAs, and will be customized through professional development in collaboration with district leadership. In addition, FEA will partner with the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation (NJCCF) and Rutgers University to incorporate their professional development framework *MATHNext* – a joint research and professional development consortium that leads to improved student achievement in mathematics – in schools that have deficiencies in mathematics. *MATHNext* has been offered to New Jersey math teachers since 2009. Its premise is that students become more engaged when material is challenging and students must figure things out on their own rather than relying on help from the teacher. *MATHNext* helps teachers improve content knowledge and form a community of practice that examines mathematical content, curriculum, pedagogy, and affect. Participants come to understand how to guide student learning while placing the cognitive demand on the student. FEA and the NJCCF will adapt the *MATHNext* curriculum as part of the 3Rs Project professional development.

**Partnerships:** Several organizations will take part in the realization of the 3Rs Project.

The *Project Lead* will be FEA, founded in 1985 to advance school leadership through professional development, scholarships, and support for research and dissemination in the field of educational leadership.

A key partner in the project, the *New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA)*, is a professional organization representing more than 8,000 school administrators and supervisors across the state. It will support the FEA's efforts in disseminating information and in influencing state educational policy.

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The *participating LEAs* will be the Trenton, Millville, and Bridgeton school districts, which contain some of the lowest-performing schools in the State. They have expressed enthusiastic support for, and commitment to, the 3Rs project.

The *American Institutes for Research (AIR)* and the *New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation/Rutgers University* will also provide support to the project. AIR has agreed to work with FEA to develop, implement, and test a teacher recruitment structure based on *The Principal Selector Tool*, its set of standards-aligned rubrics for weighting principal candidates' skills and abilities. AIR is one of the world's largest behavioral and social science research organizations. Their overriding goal is to use the best science available to bring the most effective ideas and approaches to enhancing everyday life. AIR has conducted statewide evaluation of the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC programs, not specifically that of FEA. They have a long-standing relationship with FEA, most recently conducting a statewide evaluation of the federally-funded 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers programs. The NJ Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Rutgers University will partner with FEA in offering *MathNext*, a research-based program to assist schools that identify a math deficiency in their school-level plans.

The *National School Administration Manager (SAM) Innovation Project* has been working with the FEA for the last six months to determine ways to bring the SAM Project to New Jersey. SAM and FEA have signed an agreement to make this happen. Targeted schools in the three districts will be among the first to receive this service. SAM will continue its association with FEA throughout the 3Rs Project.

In addition, FEA will continue its partnership with *Thomas Edison State College* and *Nova University*. Thomas Edison State College awards graduate credit to NJEXCEL students who desire a college transcript. The college has completed a thorough review of NJEXCEL course work

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and has designated graduate credit for each module. Rutgers University and Nova University provide credits to NJEXCEL graduates who are accepted into their doctoral programs.

Please see attached letters of support.

**2. Appropriateness of project design to the needs of the target LEAs.**

*Rationale for Selecting the three LEAs:* The three partner LEAs were selected based on their profiles as representative high-need districts in New Jersey, and their commitment to serve as prototypes for developing effective research-based strategies and program models with the potential to improve student achievement through effective school leadership. Common needs identified by partner LEAs are consistent with those previously identified at state and national levels, and form the basis for the project's goals, objectives and intended outcomes.

**Partner LEA Demographics**

According to the NJDOE ranking system for school districts by socioeconomic status, all partner LEAs are in the lowest socioeconomic group ranking "District Factor Group A (DFG-A)." The districts are also designated as three of the state's "special needs" districts based on their DFG-A ranking and inability to close the student achievement gaps in accordance with NCLBA. Under Title I law, the NJDOE has identified Category I schools in these districts based on their failure to meet state standards for two consecutive years and Category II schools that made some progress but still require close monitoring to assure that gains continue.

All three partner LEAs qualify as high need districts, as defined under section 2102(3) (a)(2) and (b)(2) and demonstrated in the High-Need Table included in "Other Attachment Forms" as FEADocumentationOfProgramRequirement.pdf. As this table describes, the LEAs meet the requirements that more than 20 percent of children served be from families with incomes below the poverty line, and that the percentages of teachers with emergency or provisional certifications

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be over the 1.1 percent benchmark.

**The Trenton School District**, representing the City of Trenton, ranks 628<sup>th</sup> of 703 New Jersey Census-Designated Places in per capita income. This LEA contains eight K-5 Priority Schools (Columbus, Grant, Gregory, Hedgepeth-Williams, Jefferson, Joyce Kilmer, Monument, and PJ Hill) and four Focus Schools (Franklin, Mott, and Robbins, and Washington). Two of the four middle schools are Priority Schools (Grace A. Dunn and Luis Munoz-River), while Robeson is a Focus School. Of the three high schools in Trenton, Daylight/Twilight HS is a Priority School, and Trenton Central High and Trenton Central High West are Focus Schools.

Trenton City has seen a significant increase in gang-related violent crime, including homicides. Since January 2013, there have been 19 homicides in the city, with more than half of the victims under age 30. School leaders are therefore increasingly challenged to create, support, and sustain school cultures that create a different set of realities about the future than students experience in their communities.

**The Bridgeton School District** and **The Millville School District** are located in rural Cumberland County in southern New Jersey. Cumberland County is the poorest county in New Jersey, with an unemployment rate of 13.9% for March 2013, over 50% higher than the state average of 9.0% for the same period. According to the United States Census, 31.4% of all county residents lack a high school diploma.

**The Bridgeton School District** ranks 700<sup>th</sup> out of 703 NJ Census-Designated Places in per capita income. The Bridgeton School District is one of 31 SDA districts in NJ. The district is classified by the NJ Department of Education as being in District Factor Group "A", the lowest of eight groupings. Bridgeton has four focus schools: Bridgeton High School, Broad Street Elementary School, Indian Avenue School (K-8), and Cherry Street School (K-8).

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The Millville School District ranks 74<sup>th</sup> out of 703 NJ Census-Designated Places in per capita income. This LEA serves over 6,700 students at six elementary schools, one large pre-school center, one large intermediate school, and two high schools. The District has one priority school, Wood Elementary, along with four focus schools; Bacon Elementary, Holly Heights Elementary, Silver Run Elementary, and Lakeside Middle School. The free/reduced lunch rate for Millville Schools as a whole is 66%, with Wood School at 95%.

In preparation for application for this grant, the FEA identified eight non-public schools within the three identified school districts and invited them to a meeting explaining the grant and requirements for participation. None of the private schools elected to participate in the project.

***NEEDS THAT THE PROJECT WILL ADDRESS:***

In keeping with its mandate to turnaround underperforming, high-need schools, FEA’s vision is to create a coherent and comprehensive training and professional development model based on its research-based School Improvement Framework. This framework will enable leaders to define transformational leadership that is focused on student learning. It will support leaders in developing and implementing a coherent school improvement plan that connects the NJ’s Turnaround Principles with key components of effective schools: a culture of learning, shared leadership and accountability, a well-developed curriculum that is aligned to the NJCCCS and the CCSS, and job-embedded collaborative professional learning focused on the use of student data to drive instructional decisions, and the use of teacher and principal evaluation to improve teaching, leading, and learning. This vision is also informed by New Jersey’s Race to the Top Phase 3 grant. Specifically, the project will address the following:

High leadership vacancy rate. The shortage of principals in certain districts is a serious and escalating problem. A 2009 study, “Tenure and Retention of Newly Hired Principals in Texas”

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reveals that about only half of newly hired high school principals stay for three years<sup>2</sup>, and a report from the University of Washington found many superintendents reporting a dearth of principals possessing the necessary strong leadership qualities<sup>3</sup>.

This shortage is evident in the state of New Jersey. According to data from the NJ Principals and Supervisors Association and the NJ Association of School Administrators, there is a high vacancy rate for all school and district leaders in many LEAs due to attrition through resignation, retirement, or dismissal, and the leadership positions' perceived lack of desirability. It is not unusual for LEAs to hire retired district and school leaders to fill "interim positions" for months at a time until a qualified candidate can be hired. A 2001 NJDOE survey of school superintendents identified serious problems in the size and diversity of principal applicant pools. Seventy percent of those superintendents reported difficulty in finding qualified candidates to fill positions, despite an abundance of individuals holding principal licenses.

The Obama administration has allocated \$3.5 billion for School Improvement Grants in hopes of turning around the nation's lowest-performing schools. Unfortunately, there simply are not enough qualified principals to replace those mandated to be fired under two of the four school improvement models that districts must follow to tap into that funding. The need for effective administrators is a pervasive problem, according to Gail Connelly, CEO of the National

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<sup>2</sup> Michelle Young and Ed Fuller, "Tenure and Retention of Newly Hired Principals in Texas." The University Council for Educational Administration, Austin, TX, 2009

<sup>3</sup> Marguerite Roza, et. al. "A Matter of Definition: Is There Truly a Shortage of School Principals?" Center on Reinventing Public Education, U. of Washington, 2004

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Association of Elementary School Principals. “But it's especially dire in the persistently low-performing schools where pressures and challenges are high and strong leadership is crucial.”<sup>4</sup>

Beyond the dearth of qualified applicants, high-need New Jersey LEAs are often hampered in addressing their need for new hires by a lack of coherent, aggressive, and innovative recruitment plans. Few conduct proactive public relations campaigns that focus on the benefits of leading high-need schools; formulate clear succession plans to identify, prepare, and hire highly qualified candidates; or offer incentives and opportunities such as scholarships, internships and residencies to encourage qualified candidates to assume leadership roles. Beyond this, the hiring of principals in many districts takes place without a proper assessment of an applicant’s training or motivation for the job. Often, individuals seek and receive certification as school leaders simply to increase pay or status. Many school districts lack the tools and processes to create a good match between a candidate’s qualifications and the needs of particular schools.<sup>5</sup>

**The 3Rs Project will increase the size, quality, and diversity of the aspiring principal candidate pool.** Through its NJEXCEL component, The 3Rs Project will provide its high-need LEAs alternative pathways to principal licensure for three separate groups of potential candidates: 1) practicing supervisors with a master’s degree in an educational field and at least five years of supervisory experience, 2) certified supervisors with 0-4 years supervisory experience, and 3) teachers and educational specialists with a master’s degree in an educational field and at least five years of educational experience. FEA will work with the LEAs to recruit minority and female candidates to leadership positions, and to keep qualified candidates employed within those LEAs. FEA has a strong track record in fostering candidate diversity: 22% of its more than

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<sup>4</sup> Susan McLester. “Turnaround Principals.” District Admin. Magazine, [www.districtadministration.com](http://www.districtadministration.com), 2011

<sup>5</sup> Lee Mitgang, “Districts Matter: Cultivating the Principals Urban Schools Need.” The Wallace Foundation, 2013.

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one thousand graduates are minorities, while 70% are female. Many have been employed in high-need LEAs.

**The 3Rs Project will provide LEAs with a research-based system for candidate recruitment and vetting.** Through collaboration with AIR, The 3Rs Project will work with the LEAs' Human Resources departments and leadership teams to develop a cohesive framework for targeting, recruiting, and selecting qualified principal candidates.

Inadequate training for prospective school leaders. A solid body of evidence has established that leadership is second only to teaching among school-related influences on learning. As researchers from the University of Minnesota and University of Toronto put it: "To date, we have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership."<sup>6</sup>

Yet, all too frequently, educators and supervisors who do choose to assume a leadership position generally arrive poorly prepared for the role. Nationwide, the quality of pre-service principal training has risen in recent years as the role of principals in improving schools has been more widely recognized and understood. Despite this, critics say that the curricula and methods at the majority of the nation's 500-plus university-based principal preparation programs remain subpar and out of step with district needs.<sup>7</sup>

The role of school leader has shifted from that of "school manager" to "instructional leader." To directly have an impact teaching and learning, principals must move away from a preoccupa-

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<sup>6</sup> Karen Seashore Louis, Kenneth Leithwood, Kyla L. Wahlstrom, Stephen E. Anderson et al., *Learning from Leadership: Investigating the Links to Improved Student Learning*, University of Minnesota and University of Toronto, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Lee Mitgang, "The Making of a Principal: Five Lessons in Leadership Training." The Wallace Foundation, 2012

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tion with control, compliance, operations and daily crisis management toward instructional leadership. Over the last decade, much has been learned about effective school leadership. In the past, a principal might have been considered adequate solely by being a competent building manager and keeping his or her school “under the radar.” Today, there is growing consensus that principals must do much more, most notably ensuring the spread of effective instructional practices to every classroom. “Yes, principals need to master management practices,” says Daniel Domenech, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators. Still, he says, their “primary function is to be the educational leader of the building.”<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, leader preparation for high-need schools requires: (1) a solid foundation in research-based knowledge, skills and practices with a particular emphasis on instructional leadership for diverse student populations from high-poverty families; (2) specialized training in critical areas particularly relevant to high-need schools, including but not limited to: socio-political forces, building community and parent involvement, developing a safe and orderly school environment, managing limited resources, addressing diversity and equity, and maximizing opportunity to learn for all students.

**The 3Rs Project will provide pre-service leader preparation of the highest caliber through NJEXCEL.** NJEXCEL was one of six programs studied by the USDOE and included in its study *Innovative Pathways to School Leadership*<sup>9</sup>, based on five promising best practices: (1) vision of high-quality school leadership; (2) innovative strategies to identify and recruit potential school leaders; (3) instructional design and practical learning experiences; (4) evaluative

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<sup>8</sup> Op. cit., Mitgang. “Districts Matter ...”

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, *Innovations in Education: “Innovative Pathways to School Leadership,”* Washington, D.C., 2004

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strategies used to determine program effect; and (5) long-term sustainability.

**The 3Rs Project will groom promising leader candidates through RISING STARS.** It will provide additional professional development to individuals already certified as principals, but who have not yet taken on positions of school leadership. It will build upon their academic preparation and provide them with the most current information on best practices in leadership.

Inadequate induction, professional development, and support for school leaders. As important as it is for schools to have special strategies for recruiting and selecting candidates for leadership, so too is it important that there be opportunities for current educational leaders to acquire a deep understanding of knowledge related to instructional practice, teacher supervision and support, and student learning if they are to foster academic achievement for all students.

A distinguishing trait of the world’s best school systems – systems that regularly outperform school systems in the United States – is that they “invest in high-quality preparation, mentoring and professional development for teachers and leaders, completely at government expense,” according to an international analysis. Hallmarks of quality include mentoring for novice principals for at least one year, using information from principal assessments to shape the professional development offered, and providing regular expert help to principals individually or in networks to improve their performance as instructional leaders. Unfortunately, principal professional development is of low priority for many districts, especially during difficult economic times when school systems may face reductions in areas more immediately linked to classroom life.<sup>10</sup>

Once principals are on the job, districts have a responsibility to support them – not only when newly hired, but also throughout their careers. That can require a shift in central office practices, with a renewed focus on “strengthening principals’ instructional leadership as a key lever for

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<sup>10</sup> Op. cit.,Mittgang, “Districts Matter: Cultivating the Principals Urban Schools Need.”

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teaching and learning improvement in schools.”<sup>11</sup>

In addition, school leaders need ongoing support to fulfill their roles as school instructional leaders. A school leader’s typical day includes a series of crises and non-instructional routines: the lunch menu, the angry parent, the fight in the schoolyard. Indeed, research has found that a principal is apt to spend one-third or less of his or her daily or weekly time on instructional matters. Principals first need help in recognizing how they are actually spending their time each day and week. They then need coaching on how to delegate distracting non-instructional tasks that they still feel responsible for or attached to. Other employees need to learn how to work effectively as a team with the goal of protecting the principal’s time so the principal can focus on improving student achievement.<sup>12</sup>

**The 3Rs Project will provide a comprehensive research-based induction program for newly hired principals and assistant principals through NJ Leaders to Leaders.** NJ-L2L provides intensive and sustained mentoring support by trained principal mentors and continuing professional development, and was highlighted nationally as one of 15 outstanding induction programs in *Supporting New Principals: Models of Induction and Mentoring*<sup>13</sup>.

**The 3Rs Project will provide quality professional development to current educational leaders through the FEA School Improvement Framework.** The FEA School Improvement Framework of coaching and mentoring will provide principals with skills and tools they need to

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<sup>11</sup> Meredith I. Honig, Michael A. Copland, Lydia Rainey, Juli Anna Lorton, Morena Newton, *Central Office Transformation for District-Wide Teaching and Learning Improvement*, University of Washington, 2010

<sup>12</sup> Brenda J. Turnbull, M. Bruce Haslam, et. al. “Evaluation of the School Administration Manager Project, Policy Studies Associates, Inc., 2009

<sup>13</sup> Susan Villani, *Supporting New Principals: Models of Induction and Mentoring*. (Thousand Oaks, CA, Corwin Press, 2006)

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monitor student performance and help teachers become more effective in the classroom. It will help leaders develop a coherent school improvement plan that connects the key components of effective schools: a culture of learning, shared leadership and accountability, a well-developed curriculum aligned to NJCCCS and the CCSS, job-embedded collaborative professional learning, the use of student data to drive instructional decisions and the use of teacher and principal evaluation to improve teaching, leading, and learning. Successive professional learning opportunities will delve more deeply into each element of the framework, addressing topics such as creating viable curriculum units of study, developing formative and summative assessments, creating a positive school climate, using student data to drive appropriate differentiation and intervention, providing feedback to students and teachers, planning appropriate professional learning to meet individual, team, and school goals, and parent and community engagement.

**The 3Rs Project will provide support to principals to foster instructional leadership through implementation of the SAM Project in the three high-need LEAs.** The SAM Project has recorded impressive successes. An independent evaluation in 2009 and updated in 2011 found that 93 principals using the SAM process gained about an hour a day or the equivalent of 27 days a year to focus on instructional leadership (despite shortening their day by a half hour) in the first year. By the second year, principals had increased the percentage of time spent on instructional leadership from 32 to 52 percent – the equivalent of adding 55 days<sup>14</sup>. The follow-up implementation study in 2011 concluded that after two years, principals with SAMs spent an average of 8.5 hours more a week on instructional matters than they did before they had SAMs.

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<sup>14</sup> “Evaluation of the School Administration Manager Project,” Turnbull, Brenda J., Haslam M. Bruce, et al. Policy Studies Associates, Inc., Washington, D.C., 2009

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The 3Rs Project will work with high-need LEA and school leadership teams to **build institutional capacity for continuous improvement**. Through the 3Rs project, partner LEAs will develop the infrastructure and institutional capacity to implement the project, sustain strategies and programs that effectively address their range of needs, and turn around their lowest-performing schools. FEA professional staff will provide guidance to LEAs to help them redefine and communicate leadership roles and expectations; realign policies and procedures, job descriptions, and performance evaluations; and offer continuing professional development and support to help school leaders achieve success in a culture of high expectations. The project will help LEAs facilitate ongoing collaboration and coordination with other district divisions and schools to systematically address needs through long-range strategic plans which allocate and coordinate resources to support these efforts.

**Ultimately, both best practices research and the FEA’s own experience indicate that the end result of the 3Rs Project will be an increase in student achievement.** The 3Rs Project will help principals become effective instructional leaders, ensuring that teachers utilize research-based effective instruction and materials to meet the needs of all students. Through NJEXCEL and NJL2L, school leaders will develop the skills to better recruit, retain, and coach effective teachers. They will make use of school-wide data to improve teaching and learning and create a positive school climate and culture. By increasing their involvement in daily classroom activities, and by interacting with both students and teachers, principals will “raise the bar” for learning, resulting in better teaching and improved student performance. School Administration Managers (SAMs) will relieve principals of many daily administrative tasks, thereby allowing them to provide the quality instructional leadership their schools so desperately need.

**3. The 3Rs Project as part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and**

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**support rigorous academic standards for students.**

School leader professional development has typically consisted of attendance at conferences and workshops, which often have little impact on improving either school leadership practices or student achievement. Though some schools in the three partner LEAs have seen small student achievement gains in recent years, their students continue to lag behind others in the state, as evidenced by the high number of Priority and Focus schools. Of Trenton's 21 schools, nine are Priority and nine are focus; of Millville's five schools, one is a Priority School and four are Priority Schools; of Bridgeton's seven schools, four are Focus Schools.<sup>15</sup>

FEA's vision is to create in the 3Rs Project a comprehensive program to enhance student achievement, improve teacher/leader effectiveness, create a continuous cycle of school improvement, and foster a systemic approach to school improvement. All project professional development will have a solid research base that addresses adult learners, includes effective inclusive practices for students with disabilities and English language learners, and provides classroom support through coaching to build capacity at the school level.

**At its core, the 3Rs Project is designed to create instructional leaders with the skills and abilities to narrow achievement gaps, foster student achievement, and turn around failing schools.** Its professional development programs offer in-depth strategies for stabilizing student behavior and accelerating and improving student performance. The focus is on creating and maintaining classrooms in which all students are given cognitive frameworks for success, both behaviorally and academically, while mastering core content. Training components include:

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<sup>15</sup> New Jersey Department of Education, Final List of Priority and Focus Schools, May 2013.

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*Connections between language and cognitive development:* 3Rs Project training programs address how beliefs and values explain student deficiencies; and explore the role of story and metaphor in higher level thinking, planning, and memory.

*Mental models and their relationship to effective learning:* 3Rs Project participants will learn how to remediate learning gaps and apply visual learning strategies.

*Helping students struggling emotionally and academically:* Emphasis will be on questioning, syntax, controlling impulsivity, and skills development for success across the curriculum.

**The 3Rs Project connects NJ Turnaround Principles with key components of effective schools:** a culture of learning, shared leadership and accountability, a development curriculum aligned to the NJCCCS and the CCSS, job-embedded collaborative professional learning focused on the use of student data to drive instructional decisions, and the use of teacher and principal evaluation to improve teaching, leading, and learning. Key elements include:

*Student learning:* Participants will learn how to create a school- or district-wide focus on student learning through a set of guiding questions around student learning goals.

*The professional learning community:* Collaboration within professional learning communities drives improved student achievement. The project will include structured conversations that link directly to teacher practice and student learning and support the work of teacher teams.

*Curriculum and instruction:* Participants will engage in a highly effective process to create standards-based foundational documents that connect directly to classroom practice. Activities include unpacking grade level standards into clear student-friendly learning goals, organizing units of study, and identifying research-based instructional strategies and resources.

*Formative and Summative Assessments Aligned to CCSS and PARCC:* The 3Rs Project will provide participants with an overview of the theory and practice of using assessments to in-

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form instruction. It will include a review of the variety of assessment structures/formats, criteria, and analysis, and thoroughly ground participants in how to use data to improve student, teacher, and school performance. The project will address: Assessment—understanding formative, summative, common and benchmark; Learning expectations, including relevance and embedded assessment; Quality questioning to promote higher level thinking; Using feedback to promote student learning; Student self-and peer assessment; Grading practices that promote or inhibit student learning; Motivating all students to learn; and Analyzing assessment data and providing appropriate differentiation and intervention.

Participants will learn how to create formative and summative assessment tasks, rubrics, and exemplars to ensure that instruction is moving in the right direction. Training will align the specific knowledge required of students with the most effective assessment formats. Participants will also learn methods of analyzing assessment data and providing appropriate differentiation and intervention.

***Culture and Climate:*** Participants will learn how to build a culture that includes a positive school climate and shared leadership. They will learn how the communication of connections and high expectations promote improved student learning.

***Developing a deep understanding of Common Core State Standards (CCSS):*** The CCSS in English Language Arts and Mathematics presents a new vision for teaching and learning and specify what students are expected to learn to be competent, competitive and prepared for their future. Participants in The 3Rs Project will identify new skill sets necessary for staff and students, determine the focus of new learning at grade levels, and learn the components of curriculum design with a format/template based on the CCSS. Professional development provided through The 3Rs Project will address critical instructional shifts embedded in English Language

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Arts, Mathematics, and other content areas; assessments and expectations; accountability from grade to grade, and the creation of systems that support deep learning. It will provide:

A deeper understanding of CCSS English Language Arts and Mathematics standards. Training provided through The 3Rs Project will build understanding of the relationship between content area reading and writing tasks as applied to history, social studies, science, and the technical subjects; and will examine implications for instruction, ways to build instructional progression, and methods for creating grade level curricula in mathematics.

Instructional feedback: Training provided through the 3Rs Project will foster alignment between measures of teacher effectiveness and the CCSS; integration of accountability into the CCSS; promote learning-focused conversations; and encourage implementation of best practices.

**4. Potential for replication of project activities or strategies.**

FEA has a history of creating and disseminating innovative and successful programs that improve school leader preparation and student achievement. Working with project leadership and the external evaluator, FEA will develop benchmarks for implementing all program components. Progress toward these benchmarks will be monitored informally on a monthly basis and formally on a quarterly basis, as well as at the end of each program year. Information from these reports will be used to revise project activities and to guide potential replication efforts. End-of-year reports will document the program's success in meeting targeted objectives and short- and long-term outcomes and will identify successful strategies or program components.

With guidance from the project team, partner LEAs will include project strategies in district strategic plans and school improvement plans, which will in turn influence organizational structures, staff responsibilities, policies and procedures, budgets, and negotiated agreements. At the end of the five-year project period, FEA will assess the program's overall contribution to im-

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proving student achievement through the recruitment, adequate preparation, and retention of principals who have the core knowledge and skills to serve the populations of high-need LEAs. The assessment will contribute to the body of knowledge on developing high-performing schools in high-need LEAs and on models and strategies to improve student achievement.

**B. QUALITY OF THE PROJECT EVALUATION**

The 3Rs Project and its external evaluator will design and implement a multi-year evaluation plan which will include an evaluation protocol for the first year of the program and a plan for the following four grant years. All five years of the grant budget include sufficient resources to support implementation of the project's evaluation plan. The plan, which will distinguish between short-term and long-term outcomes, will employ a mixed methods approach that includes both process and outcomes evaluation in order to accurately assess the program's effectiveness in achieving its objectives.

The first year of the grant will be, in part, a planning year in which both the program and evaluation details will be fine-tuned in concert with the individual LEAs and project leaders. The evaluation team will be active participants in monthly team meetings at the three LEAs as the details of the program evolve. This is especially important as the programs will be tailored to the unique needs of each district. For program years 2-5, the evaluation plan will focus on the achievement of objectives and outcomes outlined in the program narrative.

Both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected, aggregated, and analyzed to assess program success in achieving both short-term outcomes (specifically, change in knowledge and skills of program participants) and longer-term outcomes (specifically, principal job attainment, retention, student achievement and school performance.)

To assess the effectiveness of the program, the evaluation will be both formative and summa-

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tive. Continuous data collection specific to each program component will provide valuable feedback to the program's leadership teams and will facilitate data-driven decision making. At the conclusion of each program year, the external evaluator will conduct a summative assessment of progress made in reaching the program's objectives and outcomes. Working with the leadership team and with stakeholders at each LEA, the evaluation team and project staff will consider the program's effectiveness in order to make necessary modifications for the following grant year. The evaluation will review evidence of success in reaching targeted outcomes during the program year; of the effectiveness of strategies employed in addressing the needs of the LEA population; and of the effectiveness of strategies that could be replicated in another LEA.

**1. Data Collection and Performance Measures as Related to Intended Outcomes:** Progress will be assessed towards the following five performance measures as outlined in the RFP:

(1) *Percentage of program graduates who are certified to become a principal or assistant principal:* To address this performance measure, the evaluation team will collect baseline data on all program participants, their professional history and prior education, including information on any certification programs in which they have previously participated. Data on program participation and performance on SSLA and SSA tests will also be analyzed. In addition, surveys will be designed by the external evaluator and administered to program participants at the beginning, middle and end of their participation in each project element according to each element's program cycle. The evaluation will track the percentage of program graduates who become certified over the course of the five grant years.

(2) *Percentage of program graduates who are certified and hired as a principal or assistant principal in a high-need LEA:* The work location of all program graduates will be mapped. Participant surveys will include qualitative questions concerning career goals and ideal work envi-

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ronments. This data will provide useful information on program participants' ideal career trajectory and will be used by the program team to consider corresponding recruitment and retention in high-need LEAs. The percentage of program graduates who are hired as an assistant principal or principal in a high-need LEA will be tracked over the course of the five year grant.

*(3) Percentage of program graduates certified through the program who are hired as a principal or assistant principal in a high-need LEA and who remain in that position for at least two years:* Analysis of longitudinal data will enable the evaluation team to track the career mobility of the program graduates. The evaluation team will track the percentage of program graduates who attain a school leadership position in a high-need LEA and how long they remain in that position over the course of the five grant years.

*(4) Percentage of principals and assistant principals who complete the SLP-funded professional development program and whose schools demonstrate positive change, no change, or negative change based on pre- and post- school site measures:* For each LEA, we will collect data on the school climate as well as overall improvement in school performance and student growth at least annually. The evaluation team and program staff will review the annual DOE Performance Report for each school, which includes academic achievement indicators, student growth measures, and school climate data, including expulsions and suspensions, and supplement the Performance Report data with other relevant quantitative and qualitative data identified during the needs assessment process and collected at the school level. The 3Rs Project will also collect data on teacher effectiveness and attendance as determined by the new state and district standards to be implemented beginning with the 2013-2014 school year.

*(5) Percentage of program graduates who are rated "effective" or "highly effective":* The evaluation team will review the NJDOE-approved principal evaluation system implemented in

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each partnering LEA (currently the Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning [McREL] Balanced Leadership: Principal Evaluation System in both Bridgeton and Millville, and the Kim Marshall Principal Evaluation System in Trenton) and will identify in each district those graduates who are rated “effective” or “highly-effective” after completion of the various 3Rs Project elements. The evaluation will distinguish between principals who are already certified and those who were certified through this program, and will identify any differences in the evaluation systems that are being used in the three partnering LEAs.

***Data Instruments:*** The evaluation plan calls for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data. Evaluation instruments will include surveys, focus groups, observations, program component assessments, program completion data, SSLA and SSA scores, position attainment and retention, school climate and academic achievement data, and teacher and principal effectiveness data. Demographic data on all program participants will be collected, race/ethnicity, age, and gender. In addition, the evaluation team will collect data on influencing factors such as participants’ professional experience and educational background.

The evaluation will also include participant assessment data already built in to the various program components. It will use pre and post assessments of participants’ knowledge, emotional intelligence, and leadership style within the NJ EXCEL, Rising Stars, NJ- L2Ls, and School Improvement Framework program components. Professional growth plans will be reviewed as well as level of performance on various program requirements.

Additionally, participant data will be collected on program components, including satisfaction with the curriculum, instruction, and program administration; the program impact on participants’ careers; and recommendations for program improvement. Career information will be collected on graduates including attained positions, retention, and performance evaluations.

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**2. Evaluation methods to determine project effectiveness:**

*Establishing Baseline Data.* Baseline data that corresponds to each program objective will be collected at the beginning of the initial program year. (Baseline data for NJEXCEL, Rising Stars, School Improvement Framework, SAMs, and Customized Professional Development will be collected when these program components begin in January 2014.) This data will be compared to data collected quarterly, annually or every 15-18 months, depending upon the cycle of the corresponding program element. Participant enrollment and retention in the different professional development program components will be collected on a quarterly basis. School performance and teacher and principal effectiveness data will be collected on an annual basis. Certification and employment data will be collected at the conclusion of each relevant program period, approximately every 15-18 months for NJEXCEL participants and annually for Rising Stars, School Improvement Framework, SAM, and Customized Professional Development.

*Developing Program Benchmarks.* Working with the leadership team in each LEA, the evaluation team will develop benchmarks for the implementation of each of the different program components. Progress towards these benchmarks will be informally monitored on a monthly basis and formally monitored quarterly and at the end of each program year.

*Reporting Progress.* Members of the leadership team and stakeholders at each LEA will meet monthly with evaluators during the first year to review program administration and adherence to project benchmarks; ensure access to and collection of all necessary data; make program modifications; and provide quarterly implementation and progress reports at each LEA. During program years 2-5, regular meetings will be held with the leadership team to verify progress towards benchmarks and verify that objectives are being met with their intended outcomes.

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*Assessing Program Implementation.* Responsive program modification will be achieved through ongoing review of program data and regular communication with leadership teams. Annual reports will identify the 3R Project’s success in meeting the targeted objectives and short- and long-term outcomes. The reports will also identify successful strategies or program components that could be replicated in other LEAs. At the end of the grant, the external evaluator will prepare a report which will assess the program’s overall contribution to improving student achievement through the recruitment, preparation and retention of principals who have the core knowledge and skills to serve the populations in high-need LEAs. This assessment will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on how to develop high-performing schools in high-need LEAs and provide specific models and strategies on improving student achievement.

**3. Continuous performance feedback regarding progress toward intended outcomes.**

The 3Rs Project will utilize an action research model to ensure feedback and continuous improvement in project operations.<sup>16</sup> It is a “rolling” rather than a “lock step” model for changing the workplace. In equipping educational leaders at the school and district level with the knowledge and skills necessary to conduct action research, the 3Rs Project will help structure routines for continuous data examination on the health of each school community. These routines will be organized through five phases of inquiry: educational leaders and teacher leaders will select an area or problem of collective interest; they will collect, organize, and interpret on-site data related to this area of interest; and they will take action based on this information (Calhoun 1991, Glickman 1990). These phases inherently overlap, and action researchers constantly re-

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<sup>16</sup> Calhoun, E.F. (1994). How to use action research in the self-renewing school. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

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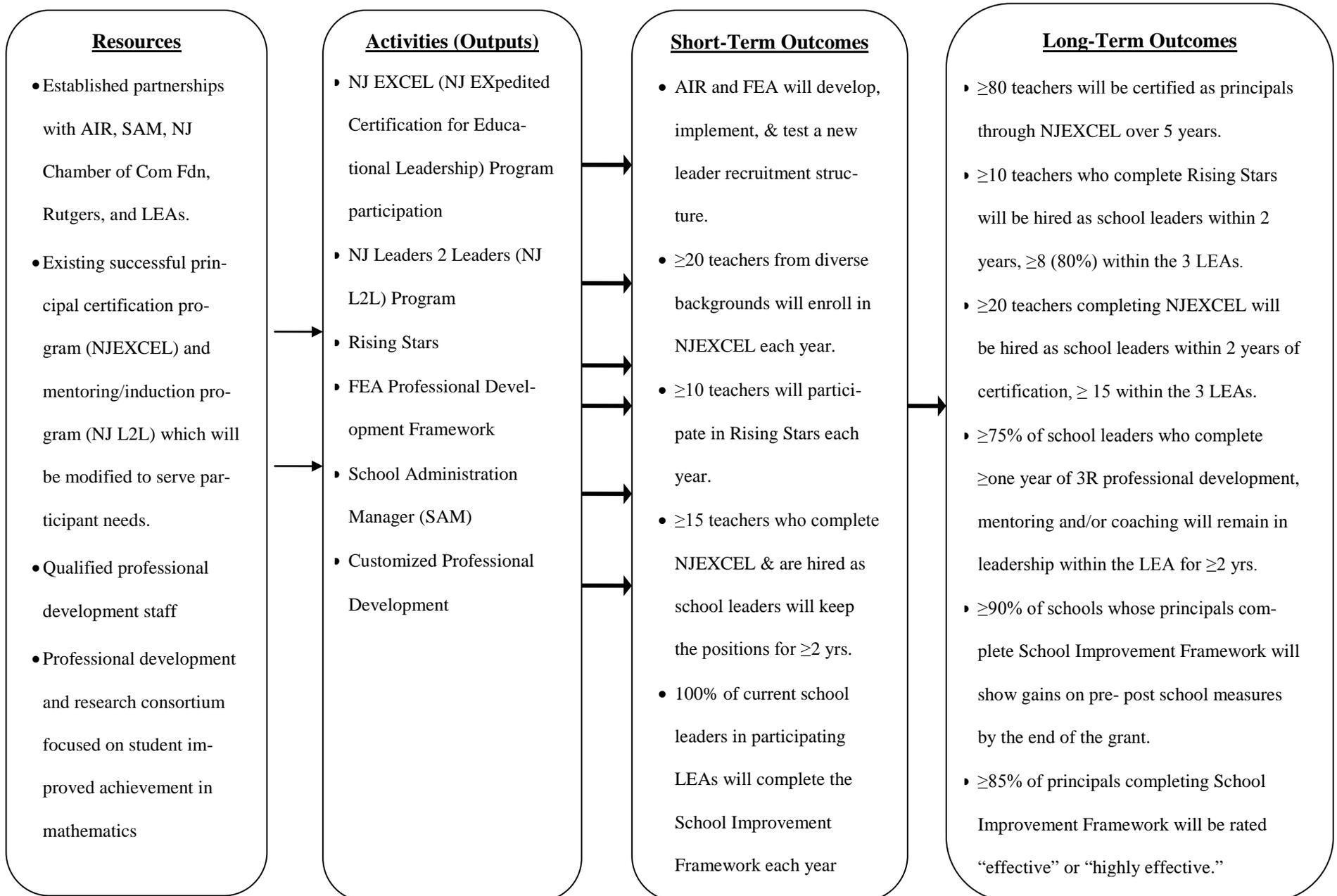
trace their steps and revise earlier phases before (or while) moving forward. This collective inquiry and its effects on student learning and development is a cyclic process and may serve as formative evaluation of initiatives undertaken as a school community.

Accordingly, the 3Rs Project will both continually assess its success in meeting the targeted objectives and outcomes as outlined in the project narrative through its own external evaluation, and will provide school leaders with the tools and systems they need to use data to continually improve their own schools and districts through its professional development for leaders. The evaluation protocol developed with the school leadership teams will ensure access to and the timely collection of all data necessary for assessing each program component. In addition, these protocols will include a feedback loop with all stakeholders to ensure the prompt identification of any issues so that necessary program modifications can be made.

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***Logic Model – The 3Rs Project***



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## **C. SIGNIFICANCE**

### **1. Potential contribution of the project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.**

The 3Rs Project brings together six complementary research-based strategies (NJEXCEL, Rising Stars, NJ Leaders to Leaders, the School Improvement Framework, Coaching/SAMS, and Customized Professional Development) for addressing the issues of improving student performance as well as creating and nurturing effective school leadership. It does so by focusing on the question of how best to prepare and support principals for their pivotal role as instructional leaders and by offering solutions for the challenges of recruiting, training, and supporting outstanding school administrators.

**The 3Rs Project has chosen to bring together these six components to explore, document, and disseminate the synergies among their practices and approaches.** The evaluation will carefully examine and document each element's individual and combined contributions to the development of school leaders with the capacity to turn around high-need schools and ultimately to improve student achievement. The 3R Project will include:

**Testing and dissemination of successful practices:** The evaluation includes a thorough examination of every program element, including both a process and outcome evaluation. Conducted by an expert researcher affiliated with Rutgers University, the evaluation design utilizes evaluation practices such as comparisons against baseline; use of validated and/or NJDOE-approved instruments; and correction for influencing factors. FEA will disseminate findings through means such as reports to USDOE; postings on the FEA website; communications to members of the NJ Principals' Association, presentations and white papers, and dissemination through partners such as AIR, SAM, the NJ Chamber of Commerce Foundation and Rutgers University.

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**Effective use of data:** Ensuring school-wide use of data focused on improving teaching and learning, climate, and culture is critical to change efforts. The 3Rs Project will give participants a thorough grounding in the theory and practice of using assessments to inform instruction. It will model effective practice by gathering, analyzing, and utilizing data to improve the project and monitor the success of participating principals, schools, teacher leaders, and LEAs.

**Use of technology:** NJEXCEL was the first program of its kind to view technology as central to professional growth by aligning curriculum closely with national Technology Standards for School Administrators (TSSA). NJEXCEL incorporates an online assessment system for all projects, reflections, and assignments. Funding from this grant will allow the 3Rs Project to build upon this technology platform by developing for participants an online Community of Learning, which will provide access to online courses and other training components, as well as social media venues that will connect all participants in the Community's activities.

**Focus on instructional leadership:** Quality instructional leadership is at the crux of everything the 3Rs Project is designed to accomplish. The theory and practice of instructional leadership is woven into its every element, whether recruitment, training, mentoring, coaching, or supporting school leaders. The School Improvement Framework gives leaders the tools they need to build shared leadership, responsibility, and accountability for student learning and achievement in the target schools. NJEXCEL, Rising Stars, and the coaching and mentoring elements of the program teach current and prospective leaders how to connect with teachers and students in the classroom and actively participate in and raise the level of the educational experience. The SAM program gives principals both the skills and concrete supports to devote more time and attention to the instructional experience.

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**Focus on high-need LEAs:** The 3Rs Project will have a direct and lasting impact on the three participating high-need LEAs. Across the board, expectations for traditional principals have evolved over the years. Today's principals need skills in analyzing data to drive successful instruction, developing public relations systems to ensure the community is informed of school goals and achievements, researching education trends and best practices, and facilitating continuous improvement by enabling staff to participate in communities of learning. Principals in high-need, “turnaround schools” must not only possess these skills, but deal with the challenges of a high-poverty, high-minority, often transient district environment , adapt quickly, and make headway with a student population and community most likely mired in academic failure.<sup>17</sup>

The six components of the program are designed to transform school leaders and their schools in a way that enhances student growth. The project will create school leaders eager to help transform high-need, underperforming schools into schools which offer students a dynamic, structured environment of excellence in which to learn, to graduate from high school, and to be prepared for success in higher education and/or employment.

**Institutional/policy change:** To stay current with societal changes and to prepare students to be 21<sup>st</sup> century learners, schools and school systems need reinventing as learning organizations, flexible and responsive to rapidly evolving needs. Partner LEAs acknowledge their need to realign and refocus their policies and organizational structures, and to redefine leadership roles, responsibilities and relationships across the district in order to improve conditions for effective school leadership practice.

There is a further need for evidence-based evaluation and scientifically-based educational research to inform policies and programs around school leadership and student achievement. Edu-

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<sup>17</sup> Op. cit. Lester, “Turnaround Principals.”

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cational reform efforts, especially in high-need districts, cannot have significant impact without the implementation of research-based knowledge and evidence-based practices that lead to educational improvement. Project partners recognize the need to come together regarding application of scientifically-based research principles to education, and to shape scientific understanding within the unique context and features of the educational system.

**2. Likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement.**

As noted in previous sections, the 3Rs Project is grounded in supporting research and a systemic approach to addressing the range of complex issues in high-need districts that affect school leadership and, ultimately, student achievement. The 3Rs Project is unique in that it combines separate research-based and promising practices into a comprehensive, unified whole that addresses every aspect of leadership development and is customized to the needs of each high-need LEA. **While each element on its own could be expected to have some impact on school performance, this combination of practices -- implemented intensively at all levels of school leadership, throughout entire LEAs, and over a five year period -- is expected to have an impact far greater than the sum of its parts.** The project will result in changing and improving the educational system in the following ways:

**Systems thinking and strategic planning:** The project strategically “connects the dots” along a continuum of innovative strategies and programs designed to improve school leader recruitment and preparation, induction and retention, and professional development and support. It involves needs assessments and leadership team development at both district and school levels, and provides supports to both levels as they make strategic changes in the way they do business.

**Supporting high-need LEAs:** The project strategically and systematically fills gaps and strengthens LEAs efforts to address a range of complex organizational and community needs.

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This will be accomplished by collaboratively developing and implementing programs and services that not only include accepted best practices in educational leadership development, but also are customized to meet the diverse needs of the partnering urban and rural high-need LEAs.

**Policy implications:** The project has significant implications to inform policy. Through NJEXCEL, the FEA has already helped bring about state policy changes that have allowed alternative non-traditional preparation programs for principal licensure, which have had a demonstrated, positive impact on the quality, quantity and diversity of New Jersey’s principal candidate pool. Similarly, the 3Rs Project is expected to help incubate and produce policy changes through its efforts with project partners such as NJPSA, AIR, SAM, and MathNEXT; its intensive work with LEAs at every leadership level, and its evaluation findings.

**School leader preparation and induction:** Notably, the project is building on successful innovative strategies and program models that can inform the field and be replicated, specifically alternative non-traditional programs that are improving school leader recruitment and preparation, and new school leader induction and mentoring programs.

**Equity and diversity:** The project’s strategies are planned to ensure equal opportunity and access to women and minorities to increase the diversity of the school leader candidate pool.

**Building institutional capacity:** Given its systemic approach, the project will provide a blueprint that can guide LEAs in development and implementation of strategies for building the infrastructure and institutional capacity needed to effectively develop, implement, sustain, and continuously improve and expand programs and services that systematically address their needs during and beyond the project period.

**Access and affordability:** Programs and services developed and implemented within the project will be designed for cost effectiveness and affordability to optimize access and program

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resources. Tuitions are substantially below state college rates, ensuring that programs will remain affordable even when the scholarships afforded by this grant are no longer available.

**Sustainability:** Programs developed and implemented by the project will be designed as tuition- and fee-driven self-funded programs that will not be reliant on future external funding.

**Evidence-based evaluation and research:** The implications for study and dissemination of effective strategies, program models, and procedural knowledge to inform the field are highly significant. The project's evidence-based evaluation and research component and web-based evaluation systems give it the capacity to systematically provide evidence of the project's effectiveness, and support scientifically-based research related to addressing the indicated needs.

**Scaling up and portability:** Given the FEA and NJPSA statewide infrastructures, key collaborators on the project, and evidence of the success of strategies and programs developed during the previous SLP-funded project, the project's potential for scaling up to other high-need districts in New Jersey and portability to other states are highly significant.

**3. Importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the project, especially improvements in teaching and student achievement.**

As a result of this project, partner LEAs will develop the institutional capacity to successfully implement the project, sustain strategies and programs that effectively address their range of needs, and turn around the lowest- performing schools by focusing on improving:

- **School Leadership:** Ensuring that the principal has the ability to lead the turnaround effort;
- **School Climate and Culture:** Establishing school environments with a climate conducive to learning and a culture of high expectations;
- **Effective Instruction:** Ensuring teachers utilize research-based effective instruction to meet the needs of all students;

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- **Curriculum, Assessment, and Intervention System:** Ensuring teachers have the foundational documents and instructional materials needed to teach to the rigorous college and career ready standards that have been adopted;
- **Effective Staffing Practices:** Developing the skills to better recruit, retain and develop effective teachers;
- **Enabling the Effective Use of Data:** Ensuring school-wide use of data focused on improving teaching and learning, as well as climate and culture;
- **Effective Use of Time:** Redesigning time to better meet student needs and increase teacher collaboration focused on improving teaching and learning; and
- **Effective Family and Community Engagement:** Increasing academically focused family and community engagement.

According to Michael Fullan of the University of Toronto, an internationally known expert in educational change, it takes a minimum of three to five years for educational transformation efforts to bear fruit.<sup>18</sup> However, if the final program shows that the 3Rs Project has been implemented according to the design outlined in this proposal, by the end of the grant we expect to see significant reductions in achievement gaps in the participating focus schools, and significant gains in student achievement in the participating priority schools.

## **D. MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **1. How the Project Management Plan will achieve objectives on time and within budget:**

The *Project Management Plan* is designed to ensure: (1) effective development, implementation, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of activities and progress toward achievement of

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<sup>18</sup> Among Mr. Fullan's books that lay out his theories on educational transformation is *The Meaning of Educational Change*. Teachers College Press, Columbia University, New York, 2007.

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goals, objectives and intended outcomes within specified timelines; and (2) feedback and continuous improvement of program management and activities.

The nonprofit Foundation for Educational Administration will serve as Lead Agency for the proposed project. FEA is the 501(c)(3) sister organization to the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA), a professional organization representing more than 8,000 school administrators and supervisors across the state. Recognizing that strong leadership is essential to educational excellence, NJPSA is dedicated to helping school leaders promote effective teaching and student learning. To this end, NJPSA asserts itself on local, county, state, and national levels to inform and influence policies that address school quality and the professional leadership needs of its members. The FEA and NJPSA are key collaborators with the NJ Department of Education in developing policies that support the CCSS, teacher and principal evaluation, and revisions to educator preparation, licensing, and professional development.

**KEY PROJECT PERSONNEL**

Time commitments and responsibilities of key project personnel are appropriate for meeting project goals and objectives within specified timelines, as described below. Project personnel will function as a *Project Team*, and will collaborate with project partners to effectively develop, implement, and evaluate all components of the project.

**Mary Reece, Project Director (100% Project Commitment):** The Project Director (PD), Mary Reece, has been employed by FEA in a variety of capacities. She has directed professional development, school leadership programs, communications, and special projects for the organization. She served as FEA's project director for a USDOE 21st Century Community Learning Center five-year, \$2.7M grant, and she received more than \$750,000 from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation for leadership and creativity initiatives for the organization. She was an integral part

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of FEA's previous SLP grants. Prior to joining FEA, Dr. Reece was a principal in a large suburban district and a teacher in an urban school system. She is a former member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, as well as that of NJPSA. Dr. Reece holds a doctorate in education from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

As Project Director, Dr. Reece will be responsible for: (1) providing leadership, direction, coordination, oversight, and technical assistance for all components of the project; (2) supervising the Project Team, who in turn will be directly responsible for implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of project activities as assigned; (3) serving as liaison to the funding agency and project partners; (4) supervising development of programs, research and evaluation designs, and evaluation instruments; and (6) providing administrative and fiscal oversight for the project, including preparation, review, and transmission of documents and reports as required.

**Frank Palatucci, SLP Coordinator (50% Project Commitment):** The School Leadership Coordinator, Frank Palatucci, is an employee of FEA and reports to the Program Director. Mr.

Palatucci is currently FEA's director of school leadership programs and oversees the NJEXCEL and NJ-L2L programs. Prior to joining FEA, he spent many years as a principal in a large school district. He holds an MA in School Administration & Supervision from Temple University. As SLP Coordinator, Mr. Palatucci will manage the various components of the leadership program (NJEXCEL, Rising Stars, coaching, the School Improvement Framework, and NJ Leaders to Leaders). He will be responsible for participant recruitment and assigning mentors and coaches.

**Adele Macula, Curriculum Developer (65% - 20% Project Commitment):** The Curriculum Developer, Adele Macula, is an FEA consultant who develops training materials and serves as a trainer in all aspects of the FEA School Improvement Framework. Prior to joining FEA, she was a principal and central office administrator in a large urban district. She holds a Masters of Arts

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in Teaching and a doctorate in Educational Administration and Supervision from Seton Hall University. As Curriculum Developer, Ms. Macula will create and revise courses and develop training materials based upon the FEA School Improvement Framework.

**Deborah Ward, Evaluator (Contractual Position):** Deborah Ward, External Evaluator, is an FEA consultant. She is an Associate Research Professor and Director of the Economic Development Research Group at the School of Public Affairs and Administration at Rutgers University. She is also founder of Ward Consulting which specializes in K-12 urban education research and evaluation. Dr. Ward received her Ph.D. in Political Science, M. Phil, and MPA in Urban Policy from Columbia University. As Project Evaluator, she will be responsible for all assessment activities, including establishing baseline assessment benchmarks, developing evaluation protocols and instruments, and assessments of progress toward meeting project goals and objectives.

**Technology Coordinator- To be Hired (50% Project Commitment):** The Technology Coordinator will be a full-time employee of FEA and be responsible for providing technology support for the project. The Technology Coordinator will develop and support: (1) web-based evaluation and data management systems; (2) automated and online reporting formats for project evaluation and program information analysis; (3) management of the project website to facilitate recruitment and dissemination of information; and (4) web applications for project participants to complete online pre/post self-assessments and program evaluations. The Technology Coordinator will also organize and implement online courses and social media venues for program participants.

**Administrative Assistant – To be hired (60% Project Commitment):** This person will be responsible for providing administrative assistance and support for the project's evaluation, research, and dissemination components; as well as overall administrative support for the project and Project Team, such as collecting and analyzing data and compiling and transmitting reports.

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**PROJECT MILESTONES**

Project milestones are consistent with the following School Leadership Program goals: 1) To award advanced certification and/or credentialing through rigorous recruitment, preparation and support of highly effective principals and educators through field-based professional enhancement programs; 2) Improve student achievement in target schools; 3) Conduct evaluation and research for widespread information dissemination. The first months of Year 1 are weighted toward needs assessment, planning and consultation with partners and partner LEAs to establish baselines, operating procedures, and evaluation targets for the various program elements. Some program components will begin during this period; others will begin during the first months of the calendar year and continue throughout the duration of the five-year grant.

The following table assumes a start date of September 3, 2013. Should the actual award notice be received later than that date, milestones will be adjusted accordingly.

<b>Project Timeline/Milestones: September 2013 through August 2018</b>		
PD=Project Director; SLPC=SLP Coordinator; EV=Evaluator; AIR=American Institutes for Research; CD=Curriculum Developer; TC=Technology Coordinator		
<b>Activity/Milestone</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
<b><i>First Year: Planning Period</i></b>		
Kick-Off Meeting with Collaborators	September 2013	PD, SLP, EV
Initial Meetings with Leadership in Three Partner LEAs	September 2013	PD, SLPC, LEAs
Collect Baseline Data and Establish Project Benchmarks	Sept. – Nov. 2013	PD, SLPC, EV
Develop Project Evaluation Protocols and Instruments	Sept. – Dec. 2013	PD, SLPC, EV
ire Technology Coordinator and Admin. Assistant	Sept. – Oct. 2013	PD, SLPC
Develop and Refine Prof. Development Curricula	Sept. – Jan. 2014	SLPC, EV, CD
Identify Project Managers for Each LEA	September 2013	PD,SLPC, LEAs
Identify new hires for NJ Leaders to Leaders Program	September 2013	SLPC, LEAs
Confirm mentors and begin principal mentoring programs in districts	September 2013	SLPC

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Update website for 3Rs Project; develop online training courses and social media outlets (i.e. Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)	Oct. – Nov. 2013	TC, SLPC
Kick-off and begin implementation of NJ Leaders to Leaders Program	October 2013	PD, SLPC
Kick-off of Aspiring Principal Selector Task Force and review of AIR protocols for hiring procedures	October 2013	3Rs Program Staff and AIR, LEAs
Meet with Principals of all LEAs to explain School Improvement Framework	October 2013	PD, SLPC
Recruit Candidates for Rising Stars and NJEXCEL	Nov and Dec 2013	SLPC
Meet with principals to review project implementation progress and progress toward goals and objectives	October 2013 and monthly thereafter	SLPC
Initial Draft of Principal Candidate Selector and Design of AIR QSL-ID Process	December 2013	AIR
Principal Selector Task Force Meeting	December 2013	PD, SLPC, AIR, LEAs
Review of Hiring Process and First Draft Complete	December 2013	AIR
<b><i>First Year: Project Implementation</i></b>		
Principal Selector and Design of QSL-ID Hiring Process finalized	January 2014	AIR
NJEXCEL Program implementation begins	January 2014	PD, SLPC
Begin training all participants in online resources	February 2014	TC
Initial Summer Institute (5 days) Training for Principals and Teacher Leaders/ Turnkey Trainers at FEA Training Center in Monroe Township, NJ.	July -- August 2014	PD, SLPC
Collect and analyze pre- and post-service program data	Ongoing according to program cycles	EV
<b><i>Years 2 through 5 Project Activities</i></b>		
Continue implementation of training, coaching, NJ Leaders-to-Leaders, NJEXCEL, Rising Stars	Ongoing	FEA Project Staff and LEA leadership
NJEXCEL Summer Institutes Training Sessions for LEA school leaders at FEA Training Center.	July -- August	PD, SLPC, Trainers

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Annual Summative Assessment of Progress Toward Meeting Goals and Objectives	August/September	PD, SLPC, EV
Training new cohorts of participants in website and online resources	Ongoing	TC
Meetings with Principals in districts to review progress	Monthly	SLPC, LEAs
<b><i>End of Five-Year Grant Period</i></b>		
Review/Report on Overall Success in Improving LEA Leadership Practices and Raising Student Achievement	End of Grant Period	PD, SLPC, EV

**2. Procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in project operations.**

The 3Rs Project will build action research protocols into regular meetings with project team leaders. In addition, the 3R Project evaluation findings will be shared with the members of the project team at each LEA with the expectation that the team will use this feedback to modify the project operations as deemed necessary. The findings will be shared in a timely manner to enable the project teams to respond effectively.