

**Education Service Center, Region 2
Innovative Approaches to Literacy Grant Program Narrative**

CRITERION (a) Significance

CRITERION (a)(i): The proposed project, Portals to Literacy, represents a consortium that includes the Education Service Center, Region 2 (ESC-2) as the lead applicant and five eligible public school districts comprising nine school libraries in four South Texas counties. The participating school districts (members) were selected based on a combination of these criteria: a federal poverty level greater than 25%, strong leadership capacity, academic need, need for innovative technology, demonstrated support for school libraries, an existing PK program, rurality, high expectation of successful implementation at the district and campus levels, and strong community support and potential for parental involvement. The project will **serve approximately 3,478 children from age 2 to Grade 6** (total served includes 30 “toddler” children, ages 2-4 per district) within the boundaries of the following school districts: (1) **Aransas Pass ISD**: H.T. Faulk Early Childhood Center (Grades PK-1, 373 students), W.A. Kieberger Elementary (Gr. 2-3, 294), Charlie Marshall Elementary (Gr. 4-6, 412); **Benavides ISD**: Benavides Elementary (Gr. PK-6, 191); **Orange Grove ISD**: Orange Grove Primary (Gr. PK-1, 357), Orange Grove Elementary (Gr. 2-3, 258), Orange Grove Intermediate (Gr. 4-5, 257); **Premont ISD**: Premont Central Elementary (Gr. PK-6, 302); and **San Diego ISD**: Collins-Parr Elementary (Gr. PK-5, 626). In project year two, an additional estimated incoming 258 PK students will also be served by project activities. In addition, 147 teachers, 9 administrators, 11 school librarians or aides, and an estimated 3,750 parents will be served. The proposed project seeks to provide experiences that strengthen students’ reading and writing abilities. The project will create literacy-rich school and home environments through access to highly appealing reading materials on a wide variety of subjects and in multiple formats along with intentional

outreach and education of families. Participating educators will facilitate student technology use that extends beyond typical individual use to interactive and collaborative activities designed to increase student motivation and reading achievement. The project will include significant professional development and collaborative activities to build educator capacity to support student reading and writing achievement and increase parental involvement. The school library program will serve as the center of the literacy nexus and provide a model of contemporary digital literacies. **Local capacity** will be built by: (1) key project personnel attending professional development activities, which they will turn around for their campus staff, creating campus experts who will support implementation of new technologies and literacy events; and (2) advanced technology and literacy resources will be purchased and distributed, and successful use of the tools and materials will be supported by research-based professional development. The project meets the following **priorities**. **Absolute Priority:** This project as described in the narrative meets all requirements of the absolute priority for participating students from age 2 to Grade 6. An extensive literature review was conducted and relevant scientifically valid research supporting all activities is outlined beginning on p. 9. A list of literature cited is included in the attachments. **Competitive Priority 2: Technology** — This project addresses competitive priority 2 by providing digital tools and materials to improve reading readiness and student achievement. Considerable professional development for librarians and teachers is included to ensure adequate preparation to implement the use of the technology. Research supporting the use of the technology is cited. **Competitive Priority 3: Improving Early Learning Outcomes--** This project addresses competitive priority 3 by including extensive activities designed to improve school readiness and student achievement from age 2 to Grade 3. This includes activities for early childhood language and literacy development at ESC-2's Early Scholars

Academy, specifically designed to improve school readiness of PK-K children, as well as many campus-based early learning activities and strategies. The project includes seven campuses that serve PK- Grade 3 students. Research supporting early learning strategies is cited. **Competitive Priority 4: Serving Rural LEAs** — This project supports competitive priority 4 by including two districts that meet the definition of “rural” as defined in the instructions (Benavides and San Diego ISDs). The student population of these districts represents approximately 25% of the total project student population.

CRITERION (a)(ii): The project will include the activities (and professional development) described below, which will build on or are alternatives to existing strategies. **ACTIVITY 1:** *Grant Orientation.* Librarians, library paraprofessionals, Grades PK–6 teachers identified as literacy coaches, district project coordinators, and campus administrators will attend a one-day project orientation led by the project director. Participants will review project objectives, the research foundation, budget, and reporting procedures. Each district and campus will review their project action plan and timeline to ensure a clear understanding of goals and personnel roles and responsibilities. Districts will join an Internet-based *Project Share* group to facilitate communication and collaboration. *Project Share* is a Texas state initiative designed to support the development and delivery of high quality professional development in an interactive and engaging learning environment. **ACTIVITY 2:** *First steps* for opening the project in districts include administering a pre-project survey of all participating staff and students, ordering and installing technology and supplies, and designating a bi-monthly Action Plan and Reporting meeting time for the district project director, library staff, project literacy coaches, and project evaluator. **ACTIVITY 3:** *Early Scholars Academy.* The Early Scholars Academy (ESA) is ESC-2’s early childhood learning and discovery center serving all PK-Grade 3 students in the

high poverty area of South Texas. The 16,000 square feet facility is staffed by highly qualified early childhood specialists (resumes attached). The ESA is a unique facility targeting an underserved population. It is highly interactive and houses nine thematic discovery centers (Polar, Ocean, Tropics, Amazing Me, Animals, Plants, My Community, Earth and its Elements, and Space). It integrates an innovative design with interactive learning activities, providing new learning experiences that otherwise may be out of reach for many low-income South Texas families. The state-of-the art discovery centers provide imaginative activities that are guided by ESA early childhood specialists and are closely aligned with state guidelines and curriculum. All activities and materials are aligned with the research-based *Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*, which address 10 skill domains in early childhood development. The Emergent Literacy-Reading Domain focuses on these skills: motivation to read, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, and comprehension of text read aloud. The Emergent Literacy-Writing Domain focuses on skills relating to: motivation to write, independently conveying meaning, forming letters, and concepts about print. Many of the activities cannot be conducted at schools due to the complex and unique design of the ESA. The objectives of the ESA are to (1) improve school readiness of participating prekindergarten and Kindergarten children, (2) increase the ability of PK and Kindergarten teachers and childcare providers to improve school readiness for all students, and (3) identify best practices concerning the effective use of early childhood education to improve school readiness. The expected impacts of the Early Scholars Academy on participating children are (1) improvement in cognitive skills, including reading, oral language development, math, science, technology, emergent literacy and writing; and (2) increased interest and engagement in core subjects. During 2011-2012 over 4,500 PK-Grade 3 children participated in educational visits to the ESA. The discovery centers can be viewed at: <http://esa.esc2.net/>.

Grades PK–K teachers will attend three trainings and Grade 1 teachers will attend two trainings to experience all nine ESA discovery centers. Teachers will become trained teacher-guides who will partner with the ESA staff when students take the actual field trips. Teachers will return to their classrooms with an instructional lessons kit for each discovery center that includes thematic activities and resources facilitating an intensive study, aligned to the state of Texas

Prekindergarten Guidelines and Grades K-1 standards, the *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills* (TEKS). Teachers will implement lessons in their classroom prior to field trips. Throughout the course of the project, Grades PK–1 students will complete three, half-day visits to the ESA, experiencing three different discovery centers each visit. “Cohort 1” will comprise students who are in PK or K during the first year of the project period; “Cohort 2” will comprise about 258 incoming PK students in project year two. ESA visits for Cohort 1 will be distributed over a two-year period, while the three ESA visits for Cohort 2 will all occur during project year two.

ACTIVITY 4: *Toddler Reading Time*. Librarians and/or library paraprofessionals, with the assistance of an expert teacher, from HT Faulk Early Childhood School, Benavides Elementary, Orange Grove Primary, Premont Elementary and Collins-Parr Elementary will attend a one-day professional development led by the ESA staff and project director who will model components of toddler reading time delivery, including recommended materials and activities for programming designed to increase school readiness for children ages 2-4. The Orange Grove district librarian and Orange Grove Primary certified teacher working as a library aide will showcase their successful *Toddler Time* and explain how to recruit participants, schedule events, and host successful programs. Participants will design a preliminary toddler reading time lesson during a collaborative portion of the training, and upload them to the *Project Share* group website for all participating districts to access. Following the *Toddler Reading Time* joint

training, the grant project director will visit participating campuses to provide facilitated assistance, as needed, for the development of a complete *Toddler Reading Time* lesson plan. Preliminary lesson plans will be updated in the *Project Share* group so all districts have access to five complete *Toddler Reading Time* plans. Participating campuses will each host five *Toddler Reading Time* events comprised of thematic materials and activities with an emphasis on children's early literacy development. Activities may include singing, chanting or repeating, total physical response, listening, visuals such as book illustrations, puppets or other representations of story characters or details. At every event, adults who bring their child/ren will be given a take-home extension pack of thematically related literacy activities including a free book.

ACTIVITY 5: *Family Literacy Events*. Prior to planning a campus-specific event, the project director and ESA staff will deliver a professional development activity providing guidance for planning, hosting and evaluating *Family Literacy Events* for the library staff, Grades PK-6 lead teachers, and campus administrators. The project director will outline best practices for family literacy outreach events. For Grades PK-K teachers, the ESA staff will provide a specialized orientation for literacy zone stations which will be used to create an interactive literacy experience for PK-K students and their families. Upon return to districts, Grades PK- 6 grade level representatives and the library staff will lead one, two-hour after-school planning session to work out logistics of their literacy event. Member campuses will host two *Family Literacy Events*, with campus teachers and the library staff leading mini-sessions highlighting grade-specific best literacy practices. Grades PK-K families will rotate through a discovery learning zone with seven centers as they interact with manipulatives to support their student/s oral language and listening abilities. These centers, created and distributed by the ESA, will be comprised of kits, aligned with the state recommended *Prekindergarten Guidelines* and Grades

K – 1 *TEKS*. Grades 1 - 2 sessions will emphasize vocabulary building and using digital reading tools and resources. Grades 3 - 6 sessions will focus on motivating young readers, using digital reading tools, reading comprehension and writing activities, and STAAR test awareness (State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness, the new state assessment put in place in 2012). Information about how to create a child's home library will be accompanied by the distribution of three free books. Families will be provided a take-home bag filled with recommended literacy support activities and a list of reading materials their child can access, including online subscription resources and the associated log-in information. These take home bags will augment the reading resources encountered during the literacy event, building familiarity and confidence for parents who use the materials at home. **ACTIVITY 6: *iPad Use and Integration***. Grades 1-6 grade-level representatives, librarians, and library paraprofessionals will receive one day of professional development that will demonstrate how to capitalize on the multimodality of iPads. (Note: iPads are named as digital tablets in this proposal because the strongest research available in our literature review supporting the use of digital tablets to improve literacy relates specifically to iPads.) This technology integration training will meet recommended best practices including: technology tool orientation, instructional techniques modeling, collaborative support group creation, and classroom implementation support. At the end of the professional development, teachers will have developed three lesson plans to be fully implemented during the grant period. These lesson plans will be shared in the *Project Share* group website. Participants will turn this training around for their entire campus in one, two-hour after-school collaborative session. Throughout the course of the project, every teacher will integrate iPads into three lesson plans.

ACTIVITY 7: *E-readers as Reading Intervention Tools.* Grades 1-6 grade-level representatives, librarians, and library paraprofessionals will attend a one-day professional development where their staff will learn how digital e-readers can be used to support struggling readers. E-reader training will follow the research-based implementation design of the iPad training. During the training, teachers will identify struggling readers who would benefit from e-reader use and create a device sharing plan. Participants will turn this training around for their entire campus in one two hour after school collaboration session. Throughout the course of the project, teachers who have identified struggling readers will use e-readers as intervention tools on a weekly basis. The type of e-readers purchased will be the Kindle Fire or comparable devices based on district preferences. **ACTIVITY 8:** Subscriptions to a suite of **academic online databases**; including an encyclopedia, periodical resources, and digital books will be purchased for each campus. Librarians and literacy coaches will identify those online databases aligned to the curriculum that can be accessed using a wide variety of readers, including desktop computers and portable devices. Professional development and collaborative planning sessions will include the development of lessons that create opportunities for students to use academic online databases. **ACTIVITY 9:** *School-wide Reading Initiative.* Grades 4-6 teachers identified as literacy coaches, librarians, library paraprofessionals and campus administrators will attend one day of guided collaborative planning training to create a school-wide reading initiative tailored to their identified specific needs. The project director will outline best practices for intermediate reading programs, including motivational reading resources, regularly scheduled time, social interaction opportunities and student choice. Participants will turn this training around for their Grades 4 – 6 staff in one, two-hour after-school collaborative session where a plan will be created to schedule weekly reading time and implement the associated best practices for intermediate

reading programs. **FREE BOOK DISTRIBUTION TOTAL:** The total number of books to be purchased and distributed during all activities described above is 26,494. The total number of e-books to be purchased is 780.

ABSOLUTE PRIORITY - RESEARCH FOUNDATIONS OF PROJECT: The following section describes the scientifically valid research that supports the proposed project and addresses the research requirements of the **Absolute Priority: *Professional Development and Collaborative Activities***: A review of literacy research for children from birth to age 12 (Burns et al, 1999; Brozo & Flynt, 2008; McKool, 2007) and best practices in implementing new ideas and technologies informed project goals and design of associated professional development and collaborative activities (Hall, 2010; Hew & Brush, 2007; Martin, 2010; McMannis & Gunnewig, 2007; Murray & Olcese, 2011). ***Early Scholars Academy Visits***: Field trips to the Early Scholars Academy (ESA) provide Grades PK – 3 students with literacy rich experiences that strengthen their reading and writing abilities through increased learning experiences. Henderson and Atencio underscore the importance of experiential learning when they write “Children’s tendency to learn is a natural process that unfolds whenever children are afforded opportunities for engagement, interaction, and discovery” (2007). Partnerships between hands-on educational facilities [like the ESA] and schools can create rich learning opportunities for students when educational objectives are aligned (Rapp, 2005). Professional development provided for project participants and lessons developed by the ESA align with the research-based *Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines* (TEA, 2008) and Grades K - 3 standards, *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills* (TEKS). The *Prekindergarten Guidelines* are based on current knowledge of theory and scientific research about how children develop and learn. Participating teachers will introduce each ESA discovery center prior to their students’ visits and extend learning

following each visit creating highly interactive classrooms enhancing students' learning opportunities (Speaker, 2001). ***Toddler Reading Time: Toddler Reading Time*** will benefit children with a literacy rich experience while training adults to support home literacy with the goal of increased school readiness for children ages 2-4. Children make great language and reading skill gains when a parent and child participate in shared reading activities; the benefits are seen throughout their school careers. Experts in early childhood literacy repeatedly link parent involvement to student's success in school (Askov et al, 2005; Barone, 2011; Dail & Payne, 2010; Epstein & Salinas, 2004). Learning will be extended through a take-home extension pack of thematically related literacy activities including a free book (Dever & Burts, 2002; Richardson et al, 2008). ***Family Literacy Events***: These events create a forum for interactive sessions modeling how parents can create a literacy rich home (Barone, 2011; Caspe, 2003). Take-home bags filled with free books, recommended literacy support activities and reading resources (Richardson et al, 2008) will build upon the sessions attended during the evening event increasing familiarity and confidence for parents who use the materials at home (Dail & Payne, 2010). ***iPads Use and Integration and E-readers as Reading Intervention Tools***: Technology integration training and implementation will meet recommended best practices including: technology tool orientation, instructional techniques modeling, collaborative support group creation and classroom implementation support (Martin et al., 2010). Quality professional development and follow-up support will empower teachers to integrate new technology into instruction (Hall, 2010; Hew & Brush, 2007). Students have greater academic success when teachers have clear objectives of how technology will be used to facilitate learning (Hew & Brush, 2007; Martin et al, 2010; Murray & Olcese, 2011). Recent research notes e-readers, such as the Kindle or iPad, are interactive reading devices that facilitate collaboration

(Larson, 2010) and can display the type of animated stories that provide scaffolds for struggling readers (Ertem, 2010). In addition, electronic readers can be used to access books with audio features that enable students to hear words, passages or entire selections (McClanahan et al, 2012). Multiple studies also examine the multimodality afforded by iPads which can be used as not only a reader but also an exploration device, communication tool, camera (McClanahan et al, 2012; O'Brien and Voss, 2011) or avenue to virtual field trips (Zanetis, 2010). ***Academic Online Databases:*** American Association of School Librarians Standards for the 21st-Century Learner (2007) and the International Society for Technology in Education (2008) underscore that students must be critical and sophisticated users of information, particularly online resources. ***School-wide Reading Initiative:*** Research shows a decline in the amount of time youth spend reading and provides strategies for intervention (Brozo & Flynt, 2008; McKool, 2007). Educators can positively impact student interest in reading by ensuring students have regularly scheduled reading time, access to highly motivational and self-selected reading resources, and opportunities to interact in discussions with their peers and adults about their reading choices (McKool, 2007; Brozo and Flynt 2008). ***Free Book Distribution:*** Central to parent involvement in their child's reading success is providing families with resources (Dail & Payne, 2010). Children living in poverty lack books in their homes (Shin & Krashen, 2008; Reach out and Read, 2009). Children's early language and literacy experiences and inclination for reading is influenced by the adults in their homes (Barone, 2010; Caspe, 2003). For older students, motivation is clearly linked to the availability of an "abundance of interesting texts" (Brozo & Flynt, 2008) and particularly series type books, scary books, and magazines or comic books (McKool, 2007).

CRITERION (b) Quality of the project design

CRITERION (b)(i): The overall goal of this project is to improve and develop literacy skills in participating students through the integration of scientifically based, innovative tools and strategies to enhance school districts' library and literacy programs. The project objectives are measurable and achievable as follows: **OBJECTIVE 1:** Reading scores on the Texas state assessment for participating 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students, and writing scores for participating 4th grade students, will meet or exceed the comparable state reading scores by 2015.

OBJECTIVE 2: Gains will be observed in participating PK-Grade 2 students' early reading assessment results. Gains will be observed in participating 4-year old children's oral language skills. **OBJECTIVE 3:** Student access to high quality literacy resources and materials will be increased. **OBJECTIVE 4:** Students' motivation to read will be increased in Grades 4 and 5.

OBJECTIVE 5: Participating library staff members' and teachers' knowledge and use of research-based strategies to support student literacy and the quality and quantity of technology integration with the curriculum will be increased. **OBJECTIVE 6:** Collaboration will be increased between administrators, teachers, and library staff in integrating library literacy activities with the curriculum. **OBJECTIVE 7:** The quality of and attendance at parent/guardian-child literacy events will be increased.

CRITERION (b)(ii): The project activities will supplement and coordinate with existing library resources and programs. All member libraries (except Premont ISD) have previously received an Improving Literacy Through School Library grant, allowing improvements in book collections and teaching stations. Project activities will be coordinated with these previous improvements. Specific funds or activities at member districts that will be coordinated with this project also include: local funds, web-based library automation systems already in place, annual school book

fairs, the E-Rate discount for Internet connections at all campuses, Accelerated Reading and Math Instruction allocations, Title I funds, Title II Part D funds, Carl D. Perkins Community and Technical Colleges Administration funds, Texas Early Childhood School Readiness, ESEA Title I Part A (for reading intervention), ESEA Title I Part C (migrant services), Texas School Readiness I Integration Specialists, Texas *Project Share* Initiative, Special Education IDEA-B, and 21st Century Community Learning Centers (Premont).

CRITERION (b)(iii): All member districts and campuses will provide strong administrative support for the proposed project, and all activities will be aligned with state standards (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, and Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines). The project will be integrated with member districts' comprehensive efforts to improve teaching and learning and supporting rigorous academic standards for students. All member districts have demonstrated such efforts by participating in the ESC-2 CSCOPE curriculum collaborative, a comprehensive online curriculum management system that helps school districts meet the expectations of ever-changing state-mandated standards, a more rigorous state testing and accountability system, and improving student performance. CSCOPE provides a scope and sequence that guarantees all state standards will be taught. Member districts also participate variously in the following ESC-2 program cooperatives that impact teaching and learning: Early Childhood Education, Career and Technology Education, Data Management for Assessment and Curriculum, Leadership Services, Math/Science Services, Educational Media, Library Services, Educational Technology, and Title III Limited English Proficient Services. Districts also report the following efforts relating to this criterion: technology training for professional staff, attendance at professional development conferences and workshops by library staff, and computer-based programs to support teaching and learning.

CRITERION (b)(iv): The project will be continuously monitored and improved through the following mechanisms: (1) The project director will conduct at least 6 visits to each participating district and 12 visits to the Early Scholars Academy during the project period to monitor project implementation and coordinate with district and campus staff. (2) A designated district project coordinator for each district will assist with project implementation. (3) Literacy coaches at each campus will be integrally involved with project implementation and provide feedback to the project director and campus staff. (4) Project milestones have been identified and are shown in Criterion (e)(i). (5) The project evaluator will conduct independent process evaluations on project implementation and results during the project period. Each six weeks an interim progress report will be provided to the project director.

CRITERION (c) Quality of the project services

CRITERION (c)(i): The ESC-2 (applicant) does not discriminate against any applicant on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. The ESC-2 seeks to hire and retain the most qualified applicants from all segments of the population. Information concerning age, race, disabilities, and gender are collected from applicants to measure the effectiveness of ESC-2 recruitment efforts in reaching all segments of the population. The following strategies will be used to ensure equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of groups that have been traditionally underrepresented. The strategies will be used to overcome potential barriers to such equitable access and participation. (1) **Gender-specific bias:** Ensure strategies and materials used with participants do not promote gender bias; Ensure compliance with the requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender; Ensure all relevant audiences are fully informed of their rights and responsibilities with regard to participation in the program. (2) **Cultural, linguistic, or**

economic diversity: Ensure compliance with the requirements of the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, and color; Ensure all relevant audiences are fully informed of their rights and responsibilities with regard to participation in the program; Increase awareness and appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity through grant activities. (3) **Visual impairments:** Provide program materials/information in large type when necessary; Provide program materials/information in audio format when necessary. (4) **Hearing impairments:** Provide interpreters at program activities when necessary. (5) **Other physical disabilities:** Develop a plan to achieve full participation by teachers with other physical disabilities/constraints when necessary. (6) **Inaccessible physical structures:** Conduct activities in disabled-accessible facilities. (7) **Lack of knowledge regarding program benefits:** Develop and implement a plan to inform program beneficiaries of program activities and benefits through local school district project partners; Inform program beneficiaries of activities and benefits with printed materials and through *Project Share* Resources. (8) **Lack of transportation or distance:** Conduct activities at local sites where feasible; Provide training on use of online resources; Conduct project activities using online project sharing as available; Provide funding for bus transport for student field trips. In addition, this project will serve school districts with relatively high minority populations. The percent Hispanic students of each member district is: Aransas Pass, 56%; Benavides, 87.9%; Orange Grove, 58.8%; Premont, 92%; and San Diego, 98%.

CRITERION (c)(ii): A comprehensive **needs-assessment** was conducted for each library, including analysis of relevant state, district and campus data; surveys of librarians, administrators, the libraries, and campus literacy programs; district staff planning meetings; and correspondence with librarians, administrators, and technologists. The needs-assessment was

used in the design of the project to improve literacy programs at member campuses. The survey examined 50 specific areas of district library support for literacy instruction, campus collaboration, professional development, and other indicators of need. Selected results of the analysis follow. **Obj. 1:** The most recent available Grades 3-6 reading assessment scores indicated an average range of between four to six points below the state average and Grade 4 writing assessment scores were on average seven points below the state average. Texas transitioned to the more rigorous State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) test in 2012, and campuses must ensure that all instruction and literacy activities are aligned to the curriculum. The needs assessment indicated a need for research-based and curriculum-aligned professional development and collaborative planning to build library and teaching staff capacity to support students' reading and writing acquisition and achievement. Measures should be taken to build partnerships with parents to support student achievement. Student access to high quality reading material should be addressed by adding digital resources and distributing free books for students to take home. **Obj. 2:** An average of 26 percent of all Grade K students at five member campuses and an average of 60 percent of all Grades 1 - 2 students at two reporting member campuses are considered "at-risk for reading difficulties" based on standard early reading assessments, a key indicator of school readiness. Survey respondents indicated that many children from participating districts have limited life experiences due to rurality or economics and need increased opportunities to engage in literacy rich activities afforded by project activities and resources. Campuses clearly need professional development in early literacy and e-readers as intervention tools to build library and teaching staff capacity to support children's reading and oral language skills. **Obj 3:** While participating members have added e-books, Internet based book databases and academic databases at varying degrees, districts seek to increase the quality,

quantity and access to these digital resources. Turn-over in the relevancy of non-fiction print content is best addressed through academic databases. The project intends to distribute reading material to meet the educational and recreational needs and wants of toddlers from the communities and students in Grades PK – 6. The goal is for patrons to be able to access “information anytime, anywhere.” This project proposes to build toddler and Grades PK – 6 home libraries by purchasing books for free distribution and “go digital” by purchasing e-books and access to Internet based book databases as opposed to adding print books to the collection. Four out of five districts participating in this project have been recipients of an ILTSL grant for their elementary schools. The fifth participating district has an acceptable print fiction collection and this project will address limitations of the nonfiction print collection through subscriptions to online academic databases. Districts need to expand the ways that digital resources are publicized and will do so through Family Literacy Nights and district websites. **Obj. 4:** Member district responses indicated a need for a specific initiative to address Grades 4 -6 reading achievement and motivation. While districts described multiple methods used to motivate students in these grade levels outside of the content classroom, this project seeks to create a literacy rich school culture through a school-wide reading initiative, a technique only one member district has implemented. **Obj. 5:** Professional development is needed to ensure that participating educators fully realize the multimodality of e-readers and iPads and plan successful classroom integration including intentional lesson planning and reading intervention. Member districts will create integration plans that move beyond independent use of e-readers and iPads to collaborative student use of these digital tools. An Internet based circulation system, technology teaching station, and wi-fi hot spot will be purchased for one district currently severely lacking up to date technology. Participating campuses will need well trained personnel to support

integration through a campus collaborative planning session and personalized follow-up support in the classroom. **Obj 6:** The project includes multiple opportunities for the library and teaching staff and campus administrators to collaborate vertically to achieve project goals. Seventy percent respondents characterized the collaborative relationship between library staff and teachers as *fair or poor*. While two districts reported their library and teaching staff collaborate several times a year, others stated that they almost never collaborate. Sixty percent of respondents to the needs assessment survey described collaboration as working together to find print, digital or multimedia resources for classroom needs, which is considered early collaboration. However, only 14% of respondents stated that collaboration included preparation of TEKS-aligned lessons or research units, which is considered advanced collaboration. This indicates a need to make gains in advanced collaboration activities. **Obj. 7:** Based on the current quality and quantity of literacy outreach programs to benefit toddler and their parents, the project will seek to increase parental involvement and school readiness through *Toddler Reading Time*. The needs assessment findings indicated a need for Family Literacy Nights that included research based literacy training for parents along with support materials for the home including free books.

CRITERION (c)(iii): A total of 74 hours of professional development and collaborative planning activities for library staff, teachers, and administrators will be provided over the two-year project period (various totals for each group, as described beginning on p. 3). The professional development provided has been carefully planned to support the proposed activities with research-based strategies. Professional development will be delivered by highly qualified and experienced trainers (resumes attached). The project director, Early Scholars Academy staff,

district project coordinators and campus literacy coaches will provide technical support and expert project knowledge to participating campuses throughout the project.

CRITERION (d) Adequacy of resources

CRITERION (d)(i): This project proposes to significantly enhance participating school library programs and services to support improvement in literacy skills and student achievement.

Substantial professional development is provided to ensure proper implementation. Students will benefit from an important infusion of books and digital literacy resources. School readiness will be impacted through innovative early childhood project components. Detailed budgets for the proposed project were developed for each campus based on an extensive needs assessment and budget constraints. Librarians will contribute time to the project, thus leveraging grant funds.

The budget supports adequate project management, based on ESC-2's previous experience of successful management of numerous large federal grant projects; however this represents only about 22% of the total project costs. The majority of total project funds are allocated for school district benefit including reading material in all formats, advanced technology, other literacy resources and activities, and professional development. Travel has been minimized due to the use of the trainer of trainer model. The approximate average cost per project participant (librarians, other educator staff, students, and parents) is [REDACTED]). Considering the scope and significance of the project objectives, this amount is very reasonable and cost effective.

CRITERION (d)(ii): The combined total estimated numbers of participants at all districts to be served by the proposed project is 7,395 (students = 3,328; teachers = 147; administrators = 9; librarians/library aides = 11; toddlers ages 2-4 = 150; parents at each Toddler Reading Time = 150; and parents at each Family Literacy Event = 3,600). The project cost per participant is

approximately [REDACTED]). Considering the scope, quantity, and quality of the proposed project activities and materials, as well as the expected result, this is a very reasonable cost.

CRITERION (e) Quality of the management plan

CRITERION (e)(i): The ESC-2 is qualified to manage this project, as it assists 49 school districts and charter schools in an 11-county region of South Texas with improving student achievement, and annually provides over 3,180 professional development events, workshops, conferences, and courses in over 30 program areas relating to PK-12 education; it routinely and successfully manages numerous large federal, state, and local grants and projects. In 2011-2012 over 26,500 educators participated in ESC-2 sponsored professional development programming. The project management plan includes a highly qualified project director who will coordinate and facilitate all activities and ensure the achievement of the project objectives (proposed project director is Melbas Salas, a certified librarian, resume attached). ESC-2 will provide staff with educational technology and early childhood. All member campuses have qualified library staff. A district project coordinator and campus literacy coaches will provide additional levels of project management support and quality control. The independent evaluator will provide ongoing process evaluation and provide periodic progress reports to the project director. A project benchmark timeline has been developed (shown below).

Selected Project Benchmarks		
Activity	Date/Duration	Staff/Beneficiaries
<i>Grant Orientation</i>	Fall 2012 1 day	Library staff, 1 grant literacy coach and campus principals, district project directors
Pre/Mid/Post project survey/s	2012-2014	Participating campus staff and students
Order/install technology	Fall 2012	library staff, district project directors
Action Plan meetings and	2012-2014	Library staff/literacy coaches/district project

project reporting	bi-monthly	directors
<i>Early Scholars Academy (ESA) Orientation Camps</i>	Spring 2013- Summer 2013	Grades PK – K teachers, library staff (3 days); Grade 1 teachers (2 days)
Pre/Post ESA fieldtrip surveys	2013-2014	Grades PK – 1 teachers and students
Early Scholars Academy field trips with book distribution	2013-2014 3 visits per grade	Grades PK – 1 teachers and students
<i>Toddler Reading Time Professional Development</i>	Spring 2013	Librarians, library aide partnered with one literacy coach
Toddler Reading Time with book distribution	2013-2014 5 events	Librarians, library aide partnered with one literacy coach for parents/toddlers
<i>Family Literacy Event Collaborative Planning Training of Trainers (TOT)</i>	Spring 2013 1 day	Library staff, one representative for each grade Grades PK – 6, and campus principal
<i>Family Literacy Event After School Collaborative Planning</i>	Spring 2013 1 day, 2 hrs.	Entire school staff
Family Literacy Events with book distribution	2013-2014 2 events	Entire school staff for Grades PK – 6 parents/students
<i>iPad Use and Integration TOT</i>	Spring 2013 1 day	Library staff, one representative from each grade for Grades 1 – 6
<i>iPad Use and Integration After School Collaborative Training</i>	Spring 2013, 1 day, 2 hrs.	Entire school staff

iPads integration activities	2013-14; 3 lessons per class	Library staff, Grades 1-6 teaching staff and students with support of literacy coaches
<i>E-readers as Reading Intervention Tools TOT</i>	Spring 2013 1 day	Library staff, one representative from each grade for Grades 1 – 6
<i>E-readers as Reading Intervention Tools After School Collaborative Training</i>	Spring 2013 1 day, 2 hrs.	Entire school staff
E-reader intervention activities	2013-14 weekly	Library/teaching staff and identified students in Grades 1-6
<i>School-wide Reading Initiative TOT</i>	Spring 2013	Library staff, one representative from each grade for Grades 4 – 6
<i>School-wide Reading Initiative Collaborative Planning</i>	Spring 2013 1 day, 2 hrs.	Library staff, Grades 4 – 6 teachers, principal
School-wide Reading Initiative	2013-14 weekly	Grades 4 – 6 teachers/students

CRITERION (e)(ii): Through considerable experience with managing similar projects in the past (four Improving Literacy Through School Libraries grants), the ESC-2 is able to accurately assess the time commitments necessary to ensure successful implementation. The project director will commit 40% of a full time equivalent to the project (90 days per year). Each district's project coordinator will commit 20 hour per year to assist with project implementation. Literacy coaches (specialists) at each campus will commit 20 hours per year to assist with project implementation. Project planning also included obtaining appropriate time commitments from other key personnel, including Early Scholars Academy early childhood specialists, ESC-2

educational technology staff, participating teachers and librarians at each campus, and the project evaluator.

CRITERION (e)(iii): Technology and materials will be selected by expert library and teaching staff members with the assistance of the project director. All purchasing decisions will be cost effective and research based using evaluation tools such as a *Technology Evaluation Toolkit* checklist (McManis & Gunnewig, 2012) that determine maximum educational benefits of hardware and software. District project directors and campus literacy coaches will meet bi-monthly to evaluate progress of project goals and activities and provide the ESC-2 project director with an informal status report in addition to formal reports every six weeks. Regular evaluation of implementation success in the form of surveys, lesson plans, and personal interviews of participating staff by the independent evaluator will be made to remove barriers and increase teacher success with implementation and student access to project activities and resources (Hall, 2011). Activity and attitude surveys of parents and students will inform decisions for continuing project activities.

CRITERION (f) Quality of the project evaluation

CRITERION (f)(i): Project evaluation will be independently conducted by Dr. Shirley Bleidt, currently Professor, Teacher Education Graduate Division, Midway College, Midway, KY; and Visiting Professor: College of Education, Texas A&M University-Kingsville (vita attached). Her qualifications include Texas Reading Specialist PK-12 Certification, being a former reading teacher, and extensive experience with conducting similar literacy grant project evaluations. The project will be evaluated for both *process* (formative, see below f ii) and *product* (summative). Results of the evaluation will be used in required reports concerning the success of the project and to make recommendations on how the project activities might be replicated at other

locations. The **Product Evaluation** will determine the degree to which project objectives will be met. Methodology to be used: **Obj. 1 and Obj. 2:** For Grades K-2, early reading assessment results data will be compiled to track campus progress in the fall and spring of each project year (2012-2014). For Grades 3-5, state reading assessment data will be compiled in 2013 and 2014 and evaluated for gains. For Grade 4 state writing assessment data will be compiled in 2013 and 2014 and evaluated for gains. **Obj. 3:** (a) Pre- and post-project campus circulation statistics for each library will be compiled to determine use of literacy resource materials added; (b) Data will be collected on the types and quantities of books, digital reading resources, and educational applications purchased and distributed at campuses and the Early Scholars Academy. **Obj. 4:** Pre- and post-project surveys will be conducted of participants in Grades 4 and 5, and interviews with librarians and teachers to determine the degree to which motivation to read increased. **Obj. 5:** (a) Data will be collected on the types and quantities of advanced technology added; (b) Pre- and post-project surveys and interviews will be conducted of library staff, teachers, and principals relating to the degree and quality of technology integration; (c) Pre- and post-activity knowledge tests of library staff and teachers will be compared for knowledge gains relating to literacy strategies; (d) Pre- and post-project surveys will be used to determine the frequency and quality of library literacy instruction. **Obj. 6:** Interviews and surveys of participants will be used to draw conclusions concerning the amount and type of collaboration pre- and post-project. **Obj. 7:** (a) The number of participants at family literacy events will be compared to pre-project participation. (b) Parents/guardians will be surveyed at the family literacy events, and through surveys with take home book bags, to determine any gains made. (c) The number of participants at *Toddler Reading Time* will be compiled and surveys of participants conducted to determine the effectiveness of the activities and gains made in oral language skills.

CRITERION (f)(ii): The **Process Evaluation** will seek to answer the following questions to conduct continual assessment of the project's progress: **(A)** Are the activities and budget of the project being implemented as planned? **(B)** What interim adjustments in the activities are necessary during the project period to achieve objectives? **(C)** What are project participants' opinions regarding the quality of the activities? The following data will be collected: (i) each six weeks an interim progress report will be provided to the project director, including recommendations on improvements as necessary; (ii) end-of- activity questionnaires of participants concerning the quality of the activities; (iii) data concerning the number and types of literacy resources and technology being purchased and distributed; (iv) the degree to which all activities conform to the proposal; (v) periodic interviews with the project director and key district staff; and (vi) budget conformity assessments.