

## **INTRODUCTION**

The proposed *Reading Improvement Structured Environment (RISE)* project focuses on establishing reading improvement structures that will leverage student achievement in literacy. Using Response to Intervention (RtI), a framework for differentiated instruction, four high-need schools will respond to student learning needs using technology, involving parents, and promoting the love and appreciation of books (absolute priority). Book distributions and book shares will provide opportunities for both students and parents to select books to read together throughout the year, benefitting students' academic relationship with literacy and their emotional connections with parents.

*RISE* aims to improve student achievement at four Milwaukee Public Schools that are identified for improvement by the State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (competitive preference priority 1). Ralph H. Metcalfe School, Lancaster School, Forest Home Avenue School, and Carver Academy are all identified as low-achieving schools that serve economically disadvantaged children in grades PreK-8 or PreK-5. The proposed project will work within these schools to build structures to increase literacy achievement.

Supported by research conducted by MacArthur, Ferretti, Okolo, and Cavalier (2001) on the use of technology to teach literacy skills, the proposed project will focus on effective and sustained implementation of an online reading intervention program to build and develop the phonological awareness skills needed to start reading (competitive preference priority 2). The program is available in Spanish, which meets a district need, as 23% of the district's enrollment is Hispanic or Latino. The proposed *RISE* project will help parents use the program at home and understand their child's progress in becoming a fluent reader. In addition, parents will receive

training on Interactive Shared Reading to support literacy skills, which has been found to be effective in research conducted by Lamb (1986) and Mautte (1991).

Increasing early success for high-need students is a priority for this project. The proposed project will provide supports to improve school readiness and success for over 1,200 children in four-year-old kindergarten through third grade (competitive preference priority 3). By implementing the *RISE* program, students will have meaningful opportunities to develop phonological and phonemic awareness. Including parental involvement and book distributions, *RISE*'s components will promote reading for early learners.

### **SIGNIFICANCE**

Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) is the 39th largest school district in the nation with students from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. MPS' reported enrollment for the 2011-12 school year is 80,083 and the racial profile is 85.9% non-white. Data indicate the following enrollment percentages: American Indian (0.8%), African American (56.2%), Hispanic (23.6%), Asian (5.3%) and White (14.1%). A total of 19.8% of MPS students were identified with special education needs and 10.7% of students have limited English proficiency. About 83% of all students qualify for free/reduced-price lunch, which is an indicator of the number of children with parents who have low income levels.

### **Academic Achievement**

MPS continues to be challenged to improve student achievement, with particular focus on reading. The overall district reading proficiency rate has remained consistent over the last seven years between 57% and 59% according to the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination

(WKCE), the state’s reading assessment. MPS students performed below the state’s annual measurable objective (AMO) of 87% proficient/advanced in reading for 2011-12.

The proposed *Reading Improvement Structured Environments (RISE)* project will increase literacy achievement at the four identified schools through online interventions, Interactive Shared Reading, book distributions and a structured collaborative community focused on literacy achievement in grades PreK-3 (absolute priority). Three of the targeted schools - Carver, Metcalfe and Lancaster -- serve grades PreK-8. Forest Home Avenue, the largest K-5 elementary school in the district, is a bilingual school. The schools were targeted for the *RISE* project based on academic performance in reading and identification by the state Department of Public Instruction as “priority schools” due to consistently low achievement (competitive preference priority 1). Table 2 provides data regarding demographics and student achievement at the targeted schools.

**Table 2: *RISE* Targeted Schools (2011-2012 Data)**

<b>School Name</b>	Carver	Metcalfe	Lancaster	Forest Home Ave.
Total Student Population	463	338	399	860
Number of PreK-3 Students	195	182	165	661
Percent Free/Reduced-Price Lunch	96.7%	92.6%	91.2%	87.1%
Percent with Special Needs	27.9%	24.6%	28.3%	24.7%
Percent English Language Learners	.2%	0%	0.5%	32.2%
Percent Proficient/ Advanced in Reading (WKCE)	35.9%	39.2%	44.5%	41.5%

### Reading Supports

MPS has developed and implemented districtwide efforts to address the need for improved academic achievement and college readiness. These efforts include the MPS Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP) designed to align Common Core State Standards to instructional best practices, research-based instructional design, and Response to Intervention (RtI) for grades PreK-12. The CLP embraces all aspects of literacy development, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, using language, employing technology and researching. It includes the adoption of a districtwide instructional design; aligned, high-quality instructional materials; benchmark assessments; professional development for teachers, coaches, and school and district leaders; implementation tools (e.g., pacing guides, implementation “look-fors”); progress monitoring (including implementation fidelity); and accountability.

The proposed *RISE* project enhances the efforts of the CLP by providing additional opportunities for teachers and parents to develop strategies to effectively support reading at school and at home, provide students access to extended learning opportunities, and foster family reading time. The effective practices, outlined in the Quality of Project Services section, were developed for the *RISE* project to support literacy proficiency and also be used to expand the program across the district.

### **QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN**

The proposed MPS *RISE* project leverages a variety of resources to ensure meaningful, high quality literacy instruction that aligns to current research and best practices in literacy. The *RISE* project is designed to build on the MPS Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP) with a focus on literacy interventions and establishing a structured environment needed to improve reading achievement in grades K-3.

**Goals, Objectives, and Expected Outcomes** The *RISE* design responds to a careful assessment of school and district needs, is informed by research and best practices from across the country, and has the following goals, objectives and outcomes:

**Table 3: Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes**

<u>Goal 1: Successfully implement critical components of the <i>RISE</i> Project.</u>
Objective 1: <i>Building teacher capacity to provide high-quality literacy interventions.</i>
Outcome 1-A: By September 2014, 100% of <i>RISE</i> PreK-3 grade teachers will work as a Professional Learning Community as measured by pre and post surveys.
Objective 2: <i>Building parent capacity to support literacy skills in the home</i>
Outcome 2-A: By September 2014, 90% of students participating in the <i>RISE</i> project will have one parent/guardian/family member commit to reading with the child at home a minimum of 100 minutes per week, as measured by monthly reading logs.
Objective 3: <i>Student participation in online reading interventions</i>
Outcome 3-A: By September 2014, 90% of students participating in the <i>RISE</i> project will receive 80 minutes of additional literacy instruction online weekly as measured by usage reports.
<u>Goal 2: Increase student literacy skills and stakeholder perceptions of project effectiveness.</u>
Objective 1: <i>Increased literacy achievement</i>
Outcome 1-A: By June 2014, obtain a 50% reading proficiency rating per the new state scoring system to be implemented in 2012-13. (GPRA 2)

Under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, states must demonstrate how they will implement four key principles, including college and career expectations for all students, making sure every child is graduate ready. In literacy, it is imperative that in grades PreK-3 foundational skills are built for success with reading in the content areas. With measures of accountability including progress evidenced by growth, providing early intervention will lead to greater growth and achieve proficiency. By engaging in the *RISE* activities, students will develop literacy skills, developing the knowledge and skills needed to graduate high school and successfully enroll in a post-secondary institution.

### *Continuum of Support*

Resources supported through this project will be coordinated with existing resources to ensure a continuum of support in literacy across the early childhood education experience. The continuum of support demonstrates the current district strategies (shaded) and additional supports of the proposed *RISE* project.

**Table 5: Early Literacy Continuum of Support**

<b>Design Principles</b>	<b>Literacy Supports</b>
Response to Intervention	Universal Screening
	Comprehensive Literacy Plan
	Collaboration and Professional Development
Using Technology for Intervention Support	Online Learning Communities
	Use of Technology for Reading Interventions
Parental Involvement	Family Literacy Nights
	Interactive Shared Reading Trainings
	Book Distributions and Book Shares

*Response to Intervention*

The Response to Intervention (RtI) framework is designed to promote the success of all students by providing a systematic and integrated system of supports based on Common Core State Standards, quality instruction, and interventions matched to students' needs. *RISE* teachers will receive targeted support to develop the structures needed to ensure that students are provided with learning goals and plans that will help them acquire the early literacy skills essential for post-secondary success. Student progress and proficiency will be monitored on a continuous basis, providing guidance to program planning and implementation. *RISE* teachers will have monthly grade level planning time, supported by the use of substitute teachers to provide release time, to plan and collaborate on students' literacy achievement by monitoring progress, sharing best practices and examining student work.

*Using Technology for Intervention Support*

Economically and educationally disadvantaged children who display weaknesses in oral language development and phonological skills necessary for skilled reading often have fewer opportunities for rich language development (McArdle & Chhabra, 2004). Critical reviews of reading research, such as the one conducted by MacArthur, Ferretti, Okolo, and Cavalier (2001), highlight how technology can potentially teach phonological awareness and decoding skills, especially now that many software programs teach letter-sound correspondences and allow for the manipulation of sounds in words. The *RISE* project will support students' access to online interventions to increase literacy skills. Providing additional access to online supports through the purchase of mobile computer labs for each of the targeted schools and training teachers and parents to support the use of the online interventions will be supported through the proposed project.

*Parental Involvement*

Effective parental involvement efforts must be more central in terms of what student supports are needed and how parents can support those needs. MPS supports families through training, networking opportunities, and exposure to and assistance in accessing resources. Developing partnerships with parents through *RISE* will create the infrastructure to support parents. MPS *RISE* proposes a variety of comprehensive strategies for meaningfully engaging parents in improving students' literacy performance, including celebrations, outreach and information services, workshops, as well as more strategic supports--as associated with knowledge to plan and prepare students for literacy proficiency. Much of this work will be focused on helping parents develop Interactive Shared Reading strategies, understanding and accessing available resources, and advocating for their children.

Interactive Shared Reading involves an adult reading a book aloud to a child using a variety of techniques to engage the child in the text with the goal of enhancing language and literacy skills. Two studies (Lamb, 1986; Mautte, 1991) met What Works Clearinghouse evidence standards and demonstrated that the intervention had potentially positive effects on general reading achievement. Interactive Shared Reading, reading aloud and interacting with text training will be offered monthly for parents and students in grades PreK-3. Trainings will be provided for parents on the use of research-based interventions and how they can support literacy at home.

Access to an abundance of books will result in increased motivation and increased reading achievement (Kelley, M. & Clausen-Grace, N. 2010; Worthy & Roser, 2010; Guthrie, 2008; Routman, 2003). Quarterly book shares and book distributions will make books available to students and parents to meet the objective of increasing the time that parents read with their

children and support the use of good reading behaviors. These supports will be used to foster reading together and creating the connection between home and school.

*Performance feedback and continuous support*

As outlined in the management and the evaluation plan sections, described later, a variety of data will be regularly collected and analyzed to support continuous program improvement. The leadership and advisory committees will provide guidance and support to ensure that the proposed strategies are effective and address gaps and challenges in implementation.

**QUALITY OF PROJECT SERVICES**

The proposed MPS *RISE* project focuses on ensuring equal access to literacy supports to students from diverse cultural and social backgrounds, especially minority and low income students, including those who have been traditionally under-represented based on race, color, national origin, gender and disability a promised path to post-secondary success. The project will ensure that research-based instructional practices benefit students who are African-American, Latino, English Language Learners (ELL) or students with disabilities, allowing them to develop foundational reading skills through interventions and strategies outlined in the CLP.

MPS *RISE* focuses on three design principles for grade pre-kindergarten through third grade: 1) Response to Intervention, 2) Using Technology for Intervention Support, and 3) Parent Involvement. Research and best practices support key *RISE* design principles.

Design Principle: *Response to Intervention*

In the United States approximately 2.8 million students have been identified as having a learning disability. Of those, 90 percent have trouble reading. If a child receives help in kindergarten or first grade, that child has a 90 to 95 percent chance of becoming a fluent reader

(Collins, 2000). The immediacy of providing effective supports and early intervention is imperative in providing the early success needed for literacy development. Research suggests that schools involved in data use often evolve toward a more professional, collaborative culture. Effective use of data helps determine when interventions should occur and what those interventions should be. (Chen, Heritage, & Lee, 2005; Feldman & Tung, 2001; Nichols & Singer, 2000; Symonds, 2003). Promoting school data use is essential in the leadership efforts. To do this, collaborative efforts must take place often and regularly. Researchers say that collaboration is an effective general educational practice and effective structure in promoting school data use (Schmoker, 2004). Sharing leadership across various channels designs the collaboration necessary to hold all stakeholders accountable for improvement efforts. Murphy (2002) notes the importance of stretching leadership across roles to involve various players.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are structures that exist as a result of collaborative inquiry and shared leadership. Shared decision-making and goal-setting needs to be a common practice. Substantial investments need to be made to ensure that school goals are connected to regular collaborative meetings of teachers (Reeves, 2004).

The proposed *RISE* project will focus on establishing PLCs in grades PreK-3 through monthly grade level meetings to use student data to inform instruction, develop and modify learning plans for students. The site coordinators, with support of the project director, will plan and implement PLCs on a monthly basis. In addition, five project staff will attend the State Literacy Conference and disseminate information at school sites to develop a deeper understanding of how best practices in literacy and PLCs can support student learning in literacy.

Design Principle: Using Technology for Intervention Support

Common Core State Standards address four key foundational anchor standards -- print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency for grades K-5. Students must have adequate development of oral language, concepts and phonological awareness skills to advance on the literacy continuum. Phonological awareness training, when combined with instruction in letter knowledge, leads to long-term improvements in phonemic awareness, reading and spelling (Anthony and Francis, 2005).

National Technology Standards identify key skills needed for an advancing digital age (NETS, 2007). By engaging in technology-based instructional programs students develop the digital age skills needed for success in future schooling. With online interventions students work to build skills and acquire the autonomy to develop self-regulated habits key to independent thinking and learning.

Web-based programs are now designed to build letter knowledge and phonological awareness to prepare children for success in literacy while building on technology skills. This type of choice in reading allows students an opportunity for a different learning environment. Web-based solutions are fun for students and allow skill practice opportunities to continue at home or in after-school programs. Research shows that when children are given choices in reading instruction, they spend more time reading (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; McLoyd, 1979; Sweet, Guthrie, & Ng, 1998).

Explicit instruction is essential for students with reading difficulties (Foorman et al, 1998; Juel & Minden-Cupp, 2000; Shaywitz, 2003). The online reading program *Smarty Ants Reading World* is responsive to the individual needs of each child. This program creates a virtual library for each student that fills with books and music videos the student has created

while maximizing instruction where the needs are greatest. The program is designed to create a virtual learning path to reading that is fun and that helps develop foundational reading skills.

Within the proposed *RISE* project teachers will participate in professional development opportunities to build capacity to effectively implement early interventions using technology, including *Smarty Ants Reading World*; differentiate instruction; and expand parental involvement. Students will be able to access these technology resources through the support of the mobile computer labs proposed in this project. In addition, parents will receive training on the use of online interventions at home and progress monitoring to support literacy development.

Design Principle: *Parental involvement*

School achievement and parent involvement is an important factor relative to reading (High, et al., 2000). Opportunities for parents to have shared reading experiences with their child can improve and enhance language development. Oral language is developed through shared book reading as well as oral discussions. During the most critical periods of early literacy development, such experiences are necessary in order to prevent reading failure.

As part of the instructional shifts to Common Core State Standards (CCSS), students must be able to deconstruct text. As stated by Bradley & Jones (2007), children benefit more if there is talk about the text. Programs like *Little Books* were designed with the sharing of text in mind. A study conducted on *Little Books* showed it to have potentially positive effects on overall reading achievement. Parents will receive *Little Books* at monthly parent involvement activities as well as strategies on how to use this resource to support literacy development.

Parent involvement is important in leveraging student achievement. The proposed project will support quarterly book distributions and Interactive Shared Reading experiences with parents at participating schools for students in grades PreK-3 to create time for parents and

children to read together and develop a love for reading. In addition, book shares will be implemented at each school to help parents support the development of literacy skills.

### **ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES**

The proposed *RISE* project leverages internal resources to ensure adequacy of resources for high-quality, and sustainable implementation. MPS is committed to improving literacy by using its understanding of the school/district context, processes, and people to build more strategic and coordinated support. The district has committed to rethinking and expanding existing activities and initiating new ones to better align to project goals. MPS has developed programs and/or services that provide support to students and their families (e.g., academic support, workshops), as well as district and school staff (e.g., teacher professional development), and has committed to working collaboratively to ensure supports are relevant, targeted, meaningful, non-duplicative, and high-impact.

*Adequacy of Support:* Each of the participating MPS schools brings access to high-quality, well-maintained facilities (e.g., meeting/assembly space, computer labs and libraries) and equipment (e.g., telephones, computers, Internet access, audio-visual equipment). MPS intranet resources, including on-line collaborative learning community space (known as The Learning Community, TLC), will be organized to support communication and resource sharing across project schools.

Several district staff will also be leveraged, including teachers, and school and district leaders, including technology support, staff from research and evaluation, communications, pupil services (e.g., parent coordinators), and curriculum and instruction, among others. Table 6 describes additional MPS resources that will be leveraged to support the proposed *RISE* project.

**Table 6: *RISE* Resources**

<u><b>RISE Resources</b></u>	
<b>Milwaukee Public Schools</b>	<b>Services and Supports</b>
MPS Data Warehouse	Data and reports track student, school, and district trends (e.g., demographics, attendance, behavior, academics) to target at-risk students for early intervention
MPS portal/website	<i>RISE</i> on-line links to literacy supports for students and families.
The Learning Community (TLC)	<i>TLC</i> is a common place on the internet that facilitates proactive and collaborative partnerships; allows educators and students to come together to learn, organize and collaborate; and extends learning by providing a virtual space for course work, group projects, and community involvement.
MPS Communications and Public Affairs	Communications expertise and support, materials development, and translation services

*Reasonableness of Costs:* Grant activities will include book distributions, parent involvement activities, professional development opportunities, and access to books and technology. The per student request of approximately [REDACTED] per year will provide direct support to approximately 1,200 high-need, Milwaukee Public School students in grades Pre-kindergarten through third grade and approximately 60 teachers. Residual benefits of the project will include more actively engaged parents; better-trained teachers (with new models and strategies); improved academic rigor and academically-focused school cultures—all of which promise significant and long-lasting impact on student learning and post-secondary success.

Sustainability: The project promises to usher in a new era of MPS and parent relationships in which activities are more strategic and coordinated across stakeholders, better targeted to specific district, school, and student needs, and of higher impact. In addition, much of the grant activities align to and/or leverage or develop new models in support of larger district reform initiatives. These, taken with increased staff, school, and district capacity developed through the *RISE* project promise both scalability and sustainability across the district. All four schools will serve as model sites for implementation of literacy interventions and will work with the site coordinators to develop videos for observation by other schools in the district. The comprehensive project evaluation will provide invaluable formative and summative information to ensure continuous program improvement, including the development of tools and models that will support implementation fidelity and sustainability beyond the grant period.

### **QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The proposed *RISE* project will ensure sufficient staff assignment, roles, and responsibilities to meet project goals on time and ensure effective program design, implementation, continuous improvement, and accountability for results. The table that follows identifies staff in completing key roles and functions.

**Table 7: Roles, Functions, and Time Allocations of Key Personnel**

Key Personnel	Roles and Functions	Allocation	
		Grant Funded	Other Sources
Project Director	Provides project leadership and oversight, including communication, planning, implementation, progress monitoring, budget management, staff supervision, reporting and evaluation		.1 FTE

Site Coordinators	Coaches teachers, provides project planning and management, including coordination and professional development implementation	.5 FTE	
Parent Coordinator	Works with site coordinators to organize book distributions, parent-student literacy sessions, trainings, and online intervention	.5 FTE	
Project Evaluator	Coordinates data collection, analysis, and reporting		.1 FTE
Director, Research and Evaluation	Works with project staff in design and implementation of project evaluation and on-going progress monitoring and data use		X
Executive Director, Curriculum & Instruction	Provides leadership and oversight to ensure alignment to district goals and priorities, implementation fidelity.		X

### Key Leadership Staff

**Deborah Bruno, Literacy Intervention Supervisor for literacy interventions**, will serve as *RISE* Project Director, providing project leadership. Deborah Bruno has provided leadership in the planning and implementation of the Comprehensive Literacy Plan, with a focus on interventions and Early Intervening Services.

***RISE* Site Coordinators** will be identified based on the centrally assigned academic coach-literacy assigned in September 2012. The coach will be placed based on experience in program coordination, professional development, facilitation, and leadership abilities.

**RISE Parent Coordinators** will be identified based on school-level assignment. The parent coordinator will be placed based on experience in program coordination, professional development, facilitation, and leadership abilities.

**Bradley Carl, UW-Madison Researcher**, will serve as the project evaluator. Dr. Carl has worked closely with the district over the past five years to design and conduct evaluations of key district initiatives.

**Deb Lindsey, MPS director of Research and Evaluation**, will work with the project and department staff to conduct program evaluation. She is responsible for administering district-wide, large-scale assessments, completion of school and district performance reports, and direction and oversight for the MPS data warehouse.

**Christina Flood, Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction**, will work with the project director to ensure alignment to district goals and priorities, implementation fidelity, quality grants management, supervision of project director, and key activities and results are shared with the superintendent and senior staff leadership across divisions and departments.

#### *Aligned Activities, Timelines and Milestones*

The *RISE* project director, leadership team, and advisory committee will monitor project achievements and ensure meeting the objectives of the program on time and within budget. The project director will facilitate communication and oversee the work plan. Table 8 outlines the aligned activities to the goals, timelines and milestones.

**Table 8: Project Tasks**

<u>Goal 1: Successfully implement critical components of the RISE Project.</u>			
<b>Objective 1: Build teacher capacity to provide high-quality literacy interventions.</b>			
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Person(s) Responsible</b>	<b>Milestones</b>
Initial Teacher Training	Oct. 2012 – Nov. 2012	Project Director	70% of participating PreK-3 grade teachers will attend initial <i>RISE</i> training as evidenced by attendance records
Monthly Grade Level Meetings to Build PLCs	Monthly- Oct. 2012- June 2014	Site Coordinators	90% of participating PreK-3 grade teachers will attend monthly meetings as evidenced by meeting minutes
Wisconsin State Reading Association Conference attendance to learn best practices in literacy	Feb. 2013 and Feb. 2014	Program Director	20% of participating PreK-3 teachers will attend and have increased knowledge of literacy best practices and Common Core State Standards as evidenced by exit survey
<b>Objective 2: Building parent capacity to support literacy skills in the home</b>			
Parent-Student Sessions for Interactive Shared Reading	Monthly- Oct. 2012- June 2014	Site and Parent Coordinators	80% of parents with children in grades PreK-3 at participating schools will attend at least one session per year
Parent Trainings on Intervention Strategies and Resources	Quarterly – Nov. 2012 – June 2014	Site and Parent Coordinators	80% of participating PreK-3 parents will participate in at least one parent training

Activities	Timeline	Person(s) Responsible	Milestones
Book Distribution to Build Home Libraries	Quarterly – Nov. 2012 – June 2014	Site and Parent Coordinators	100% of students in grades PreK-3 at participating schools will receive eight books per year
<b>Objective 3: Student participation in online reading interventions</b>			
Online intervention support provided to struggling readers	Four days weekly- Oct. 2012 – June 2014	Site Coordinator	100% of students identified to receive support will participate in online intervention program as evidenced by usage reports
<b>Goal 2: Increase student literacy skills and stakeholder perceptions of project effectiveness.</b>			
<b>Objective 1: Increased literacy skills.</b>			
Teacher engagement in Plan-Do-Study-Act decision-making process	Monthly- Oct. 2012 – June 2014	Site Teachers	80% of teachers will identify progress in literacy as a result of planned strategies and interventions for grade level subgroups
<b>Objective 2: Increased stakeholders' perceptions</b>			
Parent training on progress monitoring	Oct. 2012, June 2013, Oct. 2013, June 2014	Project Coordinator	70% of parents will rate that their child's literacy skills have improved as evidenced by pre and post survey

### Feedback and Continuous Improvement

The proposed *RISE* project includes multiple opportunities for stakeholder input in project design and implementation. In addition to regular check-ins with school staff at monthly

professional development sessions, the site coordinators will survey staff to collect and respond to their feedback.

The project advisory committee will include parents, students, the project director, site coordinators, parent coordinators and the project evaluator. The project director will facilitate the advisory committee meetings which will occur three times a year to provide project oversight. The committee will develop an implementation plan that maximizes resources. The advisory committee, with the guidance of the evaluator, will formulate a specific evaluation plan. The advisory committee will review data bi-annually and make adjustments in programming.

The project evaluator will design a specific evaluation plan during the first month after the award. Specific yearly benchmarks will be set and plans will be made for collecting project data. The site coordinators will be responsible for the collection of the data. The evaluator will provide analysis and reporting on the data.

The *RISE* leadership team will be in charge of implementation. The group will meet bi-monthly and the project director will report project progress to the advisory committee. The report will include successes and gaps or challenges in program implementation and suggestions for improvement. The advisory committee will discuss and make data-driven decisions regarding program improvements. The leadership team will ensure that changes occur. The process will repeat, resulting in a continuous feedback loop that includes decisions based on data and a diversity of perspectives.

### **QUALITY OF PROJECT EVALUATION**

The project evaluation for the proposed *Reading Improvement Structured Environment (RISE)* project will be led by Dr. Bradley Carl, who serves as the University of Wisconsin-

Madison's embedded researcher in MPS. In this role, he has worked closely with the district over the past five years to design and conduct evaluations of key district initiatives that include the district's teacher evaluation process and high school redesign initiative, the development of an "early warning" system, and the status of postsecondary readiness and college enrollment/completion among MPS graduates.

Dr. Carl will work with colleagues from both UW-Madison and MPS to implement a mixed-methods evaluation design for the *RISE* project that includes both qualitative and quantitative components. This research design will address the following key research questions:

- To what extent is the initiative being implemented with a level of fidelity that is necessary to achieve program goals related to increased student achievement, and how is fidelity of implementation (FOI) data being gathered and monitored by MPS staff on an ongoing basis in support of program goals?
- What factors appear to be most responsible for successful implementation of the program? Conversely, what are the biggest barriers to successful implementation, and how are schools participating in the program addressing them?
- To what extent is the program meeting success in terms of the specific student achievement outcomes listed in the Goals and Objectives section (page 6), and how do any observed changes in student achievement occurring in "treatment" schools compare to those experienced by a control group of similar students?

The qualitative component of the proposed evaluation plan will focus on gathering and summarizing the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the program's FOI levels (both overall and by school), as well as its perceived successes and shortcomings according to key

stakeholders. Specific elements of the qualitative research component will include the following:

- *Parent Surveys*: after students in the four schools have been identified for participation in the project, a brief baseline survey of their parents/guardians will be administered to measure their hopes for their child as well as key aspects of support for literacy that exist in the home (e.g., amount of time spent reading with their children, number of books in the home, etc.). Specific questions for the baseline survey will be coordinated with *RISE* project staff to ensure that appropriate and necessary information is obtained. Follow-up parent surveys will be conducted at appropriate intervals after consultation with program staff to gauge parents' perceptions of their child's progress in the program and any concerns they have.
- *Staff Surveys*: all MPS teaching staff participating in the *RISE* project will be surveyed at the beginning of the initiative and at regular intervals (perhaps twice annually) to establish baseline measures and monitor progress in terms of key indicators of program success and barriers. Of particular interest for the teacher surveys will be the extent to which teachers view the initiative as being aligned with the existing MPS literacy curriculum and the adequacy of the professional development and planning time they receive.
- *Teacher and staff focus groups*: in order to gather more in-depth information from these two key constituencies (teachers and parents), focus groups with each will be conducted at each of the four participating schools at the end of the first and second years of the program. A semi-structured format will be followed, in which the conversation is

initiated and framed by several key areas of interest (perceptions of program success and challenges encountered, etc.), with more free-flowing conversation to follow.

All of the survey instruments themselves will be submitted for approval prior to use by the UW-Madison School of Education's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

For the quantitative component, the *RISE* evaluation will include reporting descriptive statistics regarding FOI measures as well as both descriptive and inferential statistics that speak to the impact of the program upon student performance. Specific metrics proposed for use include the following:

- *FOI Measures*: existing classroom observation tools currently in use in MPS, including the district's classroom walk-through instrument (known as the Learning at a Glance, or L@G) and a supplemental observation tool used as part of the district's Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP), will be reviewed with *RISE* project staff to determine which measures and "look-fors" on these instruments are most appropriate for measuring *RISE* FOI levels. Augmentation of these instruments with supplemental questions/look-fors specific to *RISE* will be investigated and proposed as needed, perhaps as part of a small section of questions unique to the four *RISE* school sites.
- *Training and professional development*: online and written records of relevant training and professional development provided to school staff who work on the *RISE* project will be collected from MPS Professional Development Assistant (PDA), the district's online portal for professional development registration and tracking.
- *MAP Performance Targets*: using a value-added methodology developed by researchers from UW-Madison, MPS has used performance targets based on the Measures of Academic Progress (an online adaptive benchmark assessment administered three times

each year to all MPS students in grades K-12) to establish goals for school and grade-level performance at the midway point (January) and end of the year (May) based on where students are in September. The performance targets will represent an important outcome metric (see Goal 2, Objective 1-A) for determining the academic growth of students participating in the *RISE* project. It should also be noted that no performance targets exist for kindergarten students, so the evaluator will work with MPS curriculum and instruction staff to identify appropriate progress monitoring tools for *RISE* students in grades PreK and K.

- *Staff collaboration and common planning time*: will be measured on a bi-annual basis (at the halfway point and end of each year) through staff time logs and the collection of meeting agendas; the goal here is to determine the extent to which specific time set-aside for *RISE* staff collaboration and common planning time (described as critical features of the program) are in fact occurring.
- *MPS Climate Survey and Instructional Practices Survey*: relevant school-level constructs, such as teachers' perceptions of the overall learning environment existing in their school, will be reviewed and studied as appropriate in reporting on *RISE* project effectiveness.

For purposes of examining the impact of the *RISE* project at the student level, students participating in the program will be identified and flagged using the "program assignment" feature in ESIS, the district's student information system. Fall-winter and fall-spring growth on the MAP reading assessment will be the primary outcome by which *RISE* project impact on student performance will be measured, as it is administered to all students in the district three times each year using a robust growth scale. A quasi-experimental control group of similar students in non-*RISE* sites will be generated using propensity score matching, and both

difference of means tests and regression analysis (with school effects, as appropriate depending on the number of students served by the program in the four participating schools) will be used to identify the effects of program participation upon MAP growth. Student attendance at *RISE* activities, as noted above, will constitute a key aspect of the program effects analysis, as attendance is likely to be highly varied (both across and within sites); accordingly, program effects will be categorized by different levels of “dosage” corresponding to the amount of the intervention that was received.

Reports on FOI levels will be produced and shared with *RISE* staff as soon as possible following the launch of the program; ideally this would occur beginning no later than the second month of the program and would be repeated on a monthly basis thereafter. The primary purpose of the FOI data would be to alert MPS staff to low FOI levels and allow them to address these deficiencies. A full evaluative report at the end of the first year of the program, to be delivered to district staff and the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) project officer, will describe both FOI levels as well as results from the qualitative data collection (surveys and focus groups, as described above). At the conclusion of the program’s second and final year, a comprehensive evaluation report describing the program’s complete results, successes, and challenges will be prepared and delivered to the district and IAL project officer.