

**Absolute Priority and Competitive Preference Priorities**

Our proposed literacy initiative, *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read*, meets the Absolute Priority and Competitive Preference Priorities 1, 2 and 3. *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read* addresses the Absolute Priority in that our project includes innovative approaches to literacy that include book distribution and childhood literacy that represent promising strategies that are supported by at least one study that is based on scientifically valid research. The project will also engage parents and guardians in innovative ways to assume responsibility for their children's education.

Additionally, our project qualifies for: **Competitive Preference Priority 1:** In April 2011, Illinois State Superintendent, Christopher Koch led the establishment of an intergovernmental agreement with the East St. Louis School District's Board of Education, stating that "the district's failure to meet standards for nine years under the federal No Child Left Behind Law (NCLB) triggered the state's intervention." **Competitive Preference Priority 2:** Technology (electronic linkages and computerized, evidence-based literacy supports and interventions) is an integral component of our project approach; and **Competitive Preference Priority 3:** Our project approach includes a strong focus on improving early learning outcomes (**15 total points**).

**(a) Significance**

*(i) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population*

Our proposed literacy initiative, *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read*, will serve students from age five to eleven years old in Kindergarten through Grade 5 attending the following schools in the East St. Louis School District 189: Miles Davis Kindergarten Center, serving all of the Kindergarten students in the district, and Avant Elementary School Dunbar Elementary School, Bush Elementary School, Officer Elementary School, and Katie Harper Wright Elementary

School, all of which serve students in Grades 1-5. East St. Louis School District 189 is among the most impoverished school districts in the State of Illinois, with a full 96% of our students qualifying for free and reduced lunch; 98.6 percent of our students are African-American.

According to current U.S. Census Bureau figures, more than one-half of East Saint Louis residents live below the poverty level, **which is more than three times the poverty level for the State of Illinois** (15.1%). Given the intergenerational abject poverty that our students must face every day of their lives, it is not surprising that they struggle academically.

In the unforgettable words of Jonathan Kozol in his historic book, *Savage Inequalities*, in 1991 Kozol wrote: "East St. Louis might suggest another world." The city, which is 98 percent black, has no obstetric services, no regular trash collection, and few jobs. Nearly a third of its families live on less than █████ a year (U.S. Census Bureau); 75 percent of East Saint Louis residents live on welfare of some form. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development describes it as "the most distressed small city in America."<sup>i</sup> Twenty-one years later, not much has changed. In 2012 children ride yellow school buses and twice daily pass shuttered buildings, fire-gutted structures, empty lots, trash burning in large cans, and scantily clad women walking the streets. Recently, city stop lights were turned off and replaced with Stop Signs because, as cars stopped for red lights, drivers were often attacked by unemployed, angry youth. Gang violence, single-parent homes, grandparents as guardians, high unemployment, and poor health caused in part by pollutants and toxins that fill the air, water, and ground soil further characterize the environment in which the young children of East St. Louis live and strive to learn.

Recognizing that intense poverty poses a barrier to learning, it is no surprise that academic performance in East St. Louis School District is persistently low. In April 2011, Illinois State Superintendent, Christopher Koch led the establishment of an intergovernmental agreement with

the East St. Louis School District's Board of Education, stating that "the district's failure to meet standards for nine years under the federal No Child Left Behind Law (NCLB) triggered the state's intervention." To illustrate how acute the status of academic achievement is in East St. Louis, 2011 state test results show that only 60 percent of students met or exceeded Reading standards; as students advance through school, the percentage of students failing to meet or exceed reading standards increases. For example, in 2011, only 66 percent of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students and only 27 percent of students with disabilities met standards in Reading. By Grade 11, in 2011 a mere 13 percent of all students and only 2 percent of students with disabilities met Reading standards. Studies show that when students are reading below grade level at the end of first grade and do not receive adequate intervention, the gap between them and academic achievers grow with each grade level. Without a solid foundation in reading, including a robust vocabulary, students struggle to learn in all subjects – English Language Arts, Science, Mathematics and Social Studies, resulting in disruptions, suspensions, dropouts, and extreme lack of preparation for post-secondary education and today's workforce. It will take a legion of inter-related interventions engaging all key players -- from the State Department of Education to the District to the classroom to the home and community—to reverse the pattern of persistent low performance that continues to characterize East St. Louis School District 189. Project *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read* is one critical weapon against the picture of failure painted above. By building a strong early literacy foundation, Project *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read* will build confident, successful readers and mobilize parents/guardians to assume key roles and greater responsibility in the education of their children. To fail to build a strong literacy foundation for these children is tantamount to denying these children their right to participate fully and meaningfully in today's economy. Moreover, Project *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read* illustrates fiscal responsibility

because, carried out with fidelity, it will reduce retentions and needless referrals to special education, saving the district, the state, and the nation millions of dollars.

*(ii) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies*

Research and practice have shown that intervening early to catch children before they fail and build for them a solid foundation in literacy delivers sustained outcomes, thereby reducing retentions, needless referrals to special education, truancy, drop outs, and low academic achievement, all of which damage lives and cost the district hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the community millions of dollars. *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read* aims to ensure that a cohort of Kindergarten, First and Second Grade students will participate in rich literacy activities designed to build a solid foundation for sustained success in reading. The project rests on two key pillars: (1) whole and small group instruction in *Read Well*, a mastery- and research-based language arts curriculum that differentiates instruction for every student, incorporating a unique sound sequence based on the most frequently used words and exposing children to rich texts that align with social studies and science standards, and (2) development of parent/guardian/caretaker and sibling skills in not only the importance of reading to and with children daily but also parent/family acquisition of the “how” – how to read aloud to their children. Parents, guardians, caretakers and siblings will learn how to extend learning beyond the school day through (a) encouraging student usage of *Ticket to Read (K-5)*, an engaging student-centered web-based practice component of the *Read Well* intervention and support curriculum, (b) effective use of *take-home books* for read alouds, partner reading, and read aloud think alouds, and (c) consistent use of the East St. Louis public library.

Parent Literacy Leaders book distributions related to the *Read Well* curriculum will enable

parents, siblings, guardians, and caretakers to support the development of literacy skills for their children. It is one thing to mention a book; it is quick another, more powerful, to put that book in the hands of parents and provide them with the know-how of reading aloud to their children.

With the support of [REDACTED] in Innovative Approaches to Literacy Program funds to support *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read*, which as indicated above, is based on a promising strategy backed by scientific research. East Saint Louis School District 189 is one of the most impoverished school districts in the country. With more than 98% of our students living in abject poverty and our district resources already stretched beyond their limits, outside financial support is essential to launching this desperately-needed intervention. *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read* will sustainably support the district’s efforts to improve the literacy rates of thousands of the most at-risk students in the State of Illinois, while engaging parents as meaningful partners in their children’s literacy education.

**(b) Quality of the project design**

*(i) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable*

Objective	Measurement tool
By the end of 24 months, the percentage of 5-year-old participating children who achieve significant gains in oral language skills will increase by 10%. <b>Benchmarks:</b> 5% increase in year 1; additional 5% increase in year 2	Analysis of pre- and post-testing using benchmark tests such as DIBELS; ongoing analysis of classroom benchmark tests, and grade reports
By the end of 24 months, the percentage of students (including 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade students) at the targeted schools who	Analysis of pre- and post-testing using benchmark tests such as

<p>meet or exceed proficiency on State reading or language arts assessments will increase by 10%. <b>Benchmarks:</b> 5% increase in year 1; additional 5% increase in year 2 <b>(addresses GPRA measure 2)</b></p>	<p>DIBELS; ongoing analysis of classroom benchmark tests, and grade reports</p>
<p>By the end of 24 months, the percentage of students at the targeted schools who demonstrate proficiency in writing will increase by 10%. <b>Benchmarks:</b> 5% increase in year 1; additional 5% increase in year 2</p>	<p>Ongoing analysis of classroom benchmark tests, grade reports</p>
<p>By the end of 24 months, 100% of classroom teachers at the targeted schools will integrate <i>Read Well</i> instruction into their classrooms in Kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2. <b>Benchmarks:</b> 50% of classrooms in year one; an additional 50% in year two</p>	<p>Pre- and post-participation surveys; lesson plan reviews; on-site coaches' notes</p>
<p>By the end of 24 months, 100% of teachers will indicate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills relating to improving students' literacy skills. <b>Benchmarks:</b> 80% in year one; 100% in year two</p>	<p>Pre- and post-participation surveys</p>
<p>By the end of 24-months, at least 10% of parents of participating children will have attended at least one workshop for the purpose of equipping them with the skills and knowledge to support their children's literacy. <b>Benchmarks:</b> 5% in year one; 10% in year two</p>	<p>Sign-in sheets; annual survey</p>

(ii) *The extent to which the proposed project will be coordinated with similar or related efforts, and with other appropriate community, State, and Federal resources*

Utilizing available funds from other sources, the acquisition of foundational early literacy skills through the *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read* project will be augmented by the expansion of the *Read Well* intervention and support curriculum to all students in Grades 2 and 3 in 2013-2014, continuous on-site coaching to ensure that teachers and paraprofessionals sustain the research-based practices of the *Read Well* intervention and support curriculum, and ongoing parent training and coaching to ensure that learning extends beyond the school day and that parents/guardians continue to use take-home books and community resources such as the public library to solidify and extend their children's early literacy skills. Next, the district's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Community final year grant (FY 2013) activities, in addition to activities to develop science and math knowledge, will include reading practice using *Ticket to Read* (K-5) and teacher-led instruction in Writing using the *Read Well* Composition modules for K-2 students. Rather than a potpourri of unrelated activities, the FY 2013 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Communities grant will direct a portion of its funds to solidify and extend children's early literacy skills that are developed through this project.

Finally, to diminish the well-documented summer learning loss, Kindergarten, First and Second Grade students will benefit from summer research-based reading and writing activities using the *TimeWarp Plus* (K-9) program. *TimeWarp Plus* is a research-based, highly engaging summer literacy intervention that the district used in the summer of 2012. In a mere 20 days of summer school, students made gains in fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Communities program and Summer School activities combined will help sustain academic achievement that results from the early literacy learning activities. proposed

The district has already purchased the *TimeWarp Plus* Teacher Resource materials and invested in extensive Professional Development and On-Site Coaching, thus building local capacity to implement *TimeWarp Plus* again in the summers of 2013 and 2014, without a substantial additional provision of funds.

*(iii) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students. (5 points)*

Under new leadership and oversight by the Illinois State Board of Education and a new Superintendent, Arthur Culver, and his team, East St. Louis School District 189 is committed to putting children first and to ensuring that all students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in post-secondary education and the modern workforce. In order to put children first, the new superintendent, Arthur Culver, has led the district to align head-count with declined enrollment; recently in a bold move, Mr. Culver proposed eliminating over 50 positions.

Secondly, in order to free funding for academic improvement, Mr. Culver has taken another bold step in closing four older elementary schools that consumed extensive funds for maintenance and could not accommodate more students. Moreover, commencing with this academic year (2012-2013), principals will be held to rigorous accountability standards, the center-piece of which is student achievement in reading and mathematics, using new evaluation measures, including growth measures.

*(iv) The extent to which performance feedback and continuous improvement are integral to the design of the proposed project*

The *Read Well* curriculum's robust assessment system will be augmented with DIBELS Next to provide initial assessment and placement in the curriculum and ongoing performance feedback. *Read Well's* assessment system begins with the initial placement inventory, which

provides the exact prescription for placing a student into the appropriate small group. Once instruction begins, students are assessed at the end of each unit. The *Read Well* intervention and support curriculum includes VPORT, a robust data management, reporting, and support system; with VPORT teachers and administrators can track progress and identify individual student needs. Since *Read Well* addresses social studies and science standards and includes more than 70 percent nonfiction and expository texts, students are exposed to topics such as Earth and Space Science, Life Science, Social Perspectives, Science and Technology, Civics, Economics, Geography, and U.S History; along with these rich, motivating topics and texts comes exposure to and acquisition of many Tier II and Tier III vocabulary words. *Read Well* and DIBELS Next assessments will measure vocabulary acquisition, along with phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension.

**(c) Quality of the project services**

*(i) The quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability*

Since nearly all East St. Louis students enter school at-risk of academic failure due to extreme poverty, the project will engage all Kindergarten and First Grade students in year one. *Read Well's* initial placement inventory will place students appropriately for differentiated, small group instruction. In year two, this cohort of students will benefit from *Read Well* as they progress to First and Second grade. Continuous Professional Development and On-Site Coaching will support all Kindergarten, First and Second Grade teachers in implementing the *Read Well* curriculum with fidelity and embedding *Read Well* instructional and assessment practices into their daily teaching. Regarding parent/guardian access to the *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read*

project's resources, in year one the project will build and support a cadre of 18 Parent Early Literacy Leaders; these Early Literacy Leaders will be drawn from all sites. In year two, this initial cadre will be supported to expand to include more parents from all sites. Early Literacy Leaders will be supported by the project to: recruit additional parents/guardians; coach parent peers in how to read to their children; guide parent/guardian peers in consistent use of the East St. Louis Public Library; engage siblings in reading aloud to Kindergarten, First and Second grade students, partner reading, and read aloud think alouds; and promote continuous usage of *Ticket to Read*, web-based, engaging independent reading practice.

Parent recruitment efforts, effective modeling of read loud strategies, and after hours *Ticket to Read* usage will be celebrated in monthly trainings, meetings and book distributions. Finally, the online, engaging independent reading practice program, *Ticket to Read*, a component of the *Read Well* curriculum, in Year Two will be provided for all students, K-5, through budget-friendly site licenses. Promotion of *Ticket to Read* will include Webinars, links on the district's web-site and monthly celebrations. *Ticket to Read* will expand literacy development to the entire K-5 population in Year 2. Some 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders will already be familiar with *Ticket to Read*, either through sibling coaching or through their participation in *Ticket to Read* within the district's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Community Program (2012-2013).

*(ii) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project are appropriate to the needs of the intended recipients or beneficiaries of those services*

*Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read*, targets the most fundamental, salient need of all children in East St. Louis, K – Grade 2 – learning to read fluently and with comprehension. Without this fundamental literacy foundation, children will be disabled for their entire academic careers, sliding farther and farther behind each year. The project proposed here combines a strong early

literacy curriculum, *Read Well*, with a unique brand of parent engagement that motivates and educates parents/guardians to understand their role in their children's literacy education, provides them with the know-how in how to read to their children, motivates them to engage siblings in reading to younger children, and empowers them to spread their knowledge to other parents.

Typically parents are involved in passive roles rather than active roles. *In Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read*, parents will receive take-home books that are related to and drawn from the *Read Well* curriculum. Parents will be taught through modeling how to read aloud to their children and will be supported through engaging demonstrations that show them how to read aloud to their children and supported in their year one roles as Parent Literacy Leaders. *Read Well* is an early literacy curriculum (K-2) that features: mastery-based and research-validated instructional strategies; multiply entry points for placement into appropriate small groups; a unique sound and letter Scope and Sequence; differentiated instruction with flexible pacing; ongoing assessment and progress monitoring; and an instructional framework that address the needs of a respond to intervention model. *Read Well* introduces high-frequency sounds before introducing low-frequency sounds. This allows students to decode more words earlier, which enables them to comprehend meaningful sentences and stories sooner.

*Read Well* is infused with themed topics that capture the imagination of children. Topics are meaningful and interesting and are presented through a variety of genres: (1) nonfiction—cultural diversity, biography, social studies, and science; and (2) fiction—poetry, folktales, legends, myths, detective stories, and science fiction. *Read Well* meets all the national standards for social studies and science. Many *Read Well* units include expository text selections (aligned to Common Core Standards) or narrative text with factual content. Units build content knowledge. Thematic units include topics such as snakes, dinosaurs, birds, metamorphosis,

marine life, Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, volcanoes, earthquakes, the rainforest and desert, and the history of flight.

*Read Well* also provides explicit, systematic daily instruction in the five areas identified by researchers as critical to reading with understanding: phonemic awareness; phonics; comprehension strategies; and vocabulary.

Endorsed by the Florida Center for Reading Research (receiving the highest marks in the above five areas), the University of Oregon's Reading First Center (giving *Read Well* K an overall rating of 96% and *Read Well* 1 an overall rating of 91%) and CASE (the Council of Administrators of Special Education), *Read Well's* efficacy has been demonstrated through numerous, carefully designed studies<sup>ii</sup> with diverse schools across the country (additional information empirically demonstrating the efficacy of the program is included in the appendices). *Read Well* is particularly appropriate for East St. Louis children because it exposes children to rich science and social studies topics, building critical Tier II and Tier III vocabulary and enhancing background knowledge, while educating parents (or guardians) about the essential roles they play in supporting their children's literacy growth. *Read Well* can be adjusted and modified to meet the needs of Tier I (universal, core/basal), Tier II (strategic intervention), and Tier III (intensive intervention). A full 70 percent of *Read Well* passages are nonfiction and expository. Moreover, in today's economic recession, funds to close achievement gaps are scarce. *Read Well* delivers sustained results because it builds strong readers and arms them with vocabulary that is considered equivalent to grade 5, thereby reducing the need for costly interventions in the intermediate years. *Read Well* includes a highly engaging, independent web-based practice component, *Ticket to Read*. The program provides dynamic skills practice resulting in improved reading performance. Through a motivating rewards system where

students earn points to decorate their own online clubhouse, *Ticket to Read* addresses word attack, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension skills while keeping students on task. In addition, the program also: includes hundreds of high-interest reading passages and games; features interactive activities supported by audio and animation; offers reading levels from pre-primer to 7.0; uses multiple entry points to address individual needs; offers automated quizzes and self-correction; and includes integrated on-line data management to track usage and progress. *Ticket to Read* has been recognized as the 2009 and 2010 //CODie// Finalist. Within the project, *Ticket to Read* will provide important independent reading practice for Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2 students in years one and two; in addition, in year two it will support reading achievement for all students, K-5, at the project's core sites, through site licenses.

East St. Louis School District's elementary schools are equipped with computer labs that will provide access to *Ticket to Read* for children without home Internet access. In addition, the district is applying for a 21st Century Learning Community continuation grant (already operating for five years) and will require that sites offer computer lab access during the after-school learning program. Parents and guardians will be supported in discovering and using the resources of the East Saint Louis Public Library through fieldtrips and library card registration campaigns.

Additionally, our project supports early learning outcomes (**competitive preference priority 3**): *Project Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read* aligns with recent research on early learning outcomes and aligns with the Common Core Standards (K-2). Based on the 2010 revised Headstart Child Development and Early Learning Framework<sup>iii</sup>, by age 5 children should exhibit capability in the following domains: physical development & health; social & emotional development; approaches to learning; language development; literacy knowledge & skills; mathematics knowledge & skills; science knowledge & skills; creative arts expression; logic & reasoning; and

social studies knowledge & skills. *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read*, supports each of these domains. Our approach also supports language development and literacy knowledge and skills, in that through *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read*, young learners will be aware that language can be broken into words, syllables, and smaller pieces of sound and know the names and sounds associated with letters, further supporting early learning outcomes. Similarly, *Read Well* aligns with the Common Core Standards (K-2) by ensuring that students are able to: ask and answer questions about key details in a text; ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text; identify characters, settings, and major events in a story; retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson; describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details; describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges; describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action; explain major differences between books that tell stories and books that give information, drawing on a wide reading of a range of text types; Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe; describe how reasons support specific points the author makes in a text; use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas; read informational texts appropriately complex for grade 1 and 2; and read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 2–3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

*(iii) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services*

The *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read* project will provide strong, continuous professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals designed to develop their knowledge and skills to teach *Read Well* with fidelity. The project will also provide training sessions for Parent Early Literacy Leaders. Two full days of professional development will be provided in advance to prepare teachers and paraprofessionals to teach the *Read Well* curriculum. The professional development curriculum will introduce the curriculum in a format that focuses on the research (why we do it), specific instructional strategies (how we do it), assessments (how we measure it), and reinforcement (what do we do if students need additional support). Through content presentations, group interactions, and modeling, teachers are given the resources to begin teaching the program. Web-based resources are also provided to enable teachers to review content and models of strategies as needed.

In addition, 30 days of On-Site Classroom Coaching (approximately 4 full per month), will support teachers and paraprofessionals in the classroom, ensuring that the *Read Well* curriculum is taught with fidelity and produces results. The consultative support includes campus visits to ensure that the program is implemented with fidelity. Field Implementation Specialists visit classrooms; observe instruction; model the strategies, as needed; and provide feedback to teachers. Site coaches and administrators participate in articulation meetings to review the data, discuss the success and challenges of the implementation, and develop plans to accelerate student performance at each school. Ongoing implementation support includes, but not limited to: lesson modeling; curriculum review; side-by-side coaching; data analysis; student grouping; grade level meetings; small group instruction; curriculum review; principal/coach meetings and more. Professional development is not limited to teachers and paraprofessionals. The project will develop a cadre of parent/guardian Early Literacy Leaders (minimally three at each site) who

will learn alongside teachers and paraprofessionals. In addition, professional development and coaching targeted to parents/guardians will develop their capacity to support literacy skill development after hours – through reading to their children; promoting sibling reading to younger children; effectively using take-home books to extend reading skill development and engender a love for reading; and productive, consistent use of the East St. Louis Public Library.

Parent Early Literacy Leaders will be trained alongside of teachers and paraprofessionals, with specialized break-out activities for parents. Parent Early Literacy Leaders will learn the importance of reading to their children at home, how to read aloud to children, and how to do read aloud, think alouds to support comprehension. In year one Parent Early Literacy Leaders will receive a set of take-home or take-along books, drawn from the *Read Well* curriculum. Parent Early Literacy Leaders will be taught with these books and provided their own set to use as they mobilize and recruit other parents/guardians. In year two, the same books will be distributed in large quantities to parents that the year one Parent Literacy Leaders recruit. In addition, sets of these books will be provided to each school library and the East St. Louis Public Library.

**(d) Adequacy of resources**

*(i) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project and (ii) extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and to the anticipated results and benefits.*

East Saint Louis School District 189 is requesting [REDACTED] in Department of Education funding over 24 months. The project will serve 1,751 students, at a cost of [REDACTED] per student, which is reasonable give the scope of the services provided and the potential significance of the project's impact. Similar efforts have been implemented in similar districts, serving

approximately the same number of students at a per-student cost of more than [REDACTED]. All costs and compensation presented in the budget are either based on district approved compensation or quotes from vendors.

**(e) Quality of the management plan**

*(i) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones*

To ensure effective project management, the district intends to hire one half-time (.5 FTE) Project Director to oversee and manage project implementation across all six targeted schools. A Literacy Advisory Council comprised of the principals from each school and teachers from each school and the evaluator will assist the Project Director in carrying out the project activities. The LAC will serve in an advisory capacity, reviewing formative and summative assessment data and using that information to provide suggestions for refining, strengthening and improving the project approach as appropriate. Project management will also be supported by Cambium Learning Voyager, which is nationally known for its unparalleled on-site Coaching to ensure implementation fidelity and results of its research- evidence-based interventions, will deploy a project team to train teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents for the project. Upon award of the grant, Cambium Learning Voyager will meet with district and site leadership to address start-up requirements. Next Cambium Learning Voyager, in partnership with district staff, will provide a project timeline, including key dates for professional development, on-site coaching, and benchmark assessments and standards for data collection. An overview of the project management structure is below.

Position	Project role	Effort
Project Director	Ensuring comprehensive and effective delivery of services	50% (.50)

	provided by the grant at all sites; coordinate professional development activities; attend all mandatory training sessions; ensure compliance with all grant program requirements; work with evaluator collecting, recording, analyzing and reporting all required assessment data to teachers, parents and administrators; and monitor budget allocation and disbursement, among other duties as required	FTE)
Teachers	Participate in professional development and training; implement promising practice and computerized literacy supports and interventions; collaborate with library	30% (.30 FTE)
Principals	Champion initiative at each school; oversee implementation and collaboration at each school site	15% (.15 FTE)
Parents	Early Literacy Leaders will serve as peer coaches and facilitate literacy activities with their children; participate in Early Literacy Leader training sessions and activities	Varies
Evaluator	Work with project leadership to implement ongoing, accurate, objective evaluation framework	Varies

A proposed project timeline is shown below

Activities	Timeline	Party
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Staff orientation to the project and grant guidelines; finalize Literacy Advisory Council schedules, roles and responsibilities; finalize evaluation plan; initiate processes to secure required resources in accordance with local and federal purchasing guidelines; place Project Director; finalize professional development schedules	Within 30 days of award	PD; support personnel
Gather student baseline assessment data	45 days	PD; Teachers
Acquire necessary resources; begin training (professional development, Parent Literacy Leaders training, etc.)	60 days	PD; LAC
Milestone: Start Up Activities Complete	Month 3	PD
Quarterly programmatic and financial report prepared	Month 4, 7, 10 and 13	PD; Evaluator
Summer activities begin	Month 9	PD; LAC
Literacy Advisory Council meets	Monthly	All
Provide ongoing assessment and feedback on the project implementation and integration into student learning.	Monthly	PD; LAC; Evaluator
Conduct ongoing assessment and in-depth evaluation of the project activities and outcomes	Ongoing/ At Conclusion	PD; LAC; Evaluator
Milestone: Annual performance report results	Month 12	PD; Evaluator

Year one results are reviewed—adjustments made as needed; <i>Ticket to Read</i> is expanded to all grades in targeted schools	Month 12	PD; LAC
Project activities continue (as carried out in year one)	Month 12-24	PD; LAC
Milestone: Final report submitted	Month 25	PD; Evaluator

*(ii) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project*

The time commitments of the Project Director and other personnel identified in the project management table are sufficient to achieve our desired objectives. Responsibility has been assigned to all key tasks and all activities necessary to achieve the project objectives have been identified and outlined. The Literacy Advisory Council will provide the ongoing support necessary to support project leadership throughout the project period and beyond.

*(iii) The adequacy of mechanisms for ensuring high-quality products and services from the proposed project*

This initiative is a collaboratively-designed effort that has undergone sufficient planning and includes an effective framework for ensuring high-quality products and services. First, all key project activities and related milestones have been outlined. Skilled project personnel with appropriate expertise and backgrounds have been assigned responsibility for accomplishing these tasks. Additionally, as outlined in the evaluation section, our project approach includes formative and summative evaluation measures that provide multiple feedback loops that will be utilized to ensure that the project is being implemented with fidelity to the original design and that feedback

gathered is used to refine, strengthen and improve the project approach as appropriate.

**(f) Quality of the project evaluation**

*(i) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible*

The evaluation plan for this early literacy initiative will be based on on-going assessment of the project's effectiveness in meeting the program design and its objectives. The evaluation team will be led by a highly qualified external evaluator and will include the Project Director and members of the Literacy Advisory Council. Evaluation will be led by Capacity Builders, Inc. (CBI), under the guidance and direction of Dr. Greg Muller. CBI has been directly involved in 77 Improving Literacy Through School Libraries projects over the years and specifically in the last two funding cycles has successfully supported evaluated 5 of these grants nationwide. Upon notification of funding the team will review and finalize evaluation plans that include both qualitative and quantitative data-gathering processes for monitoring, assessing, evaluating, planning and modifying the project as appropriate. Formative evaluation data will include qualitative descriptions of the program's impact on children's literacy. Parent, student and staff surveys will be used to refine and modify services as appropriate. To determine the impact of this initiative, summative quantitative data will be collected as outlined in the table below. The data collection effort will include different respondent groups including library staff, teachers, students, and parents. Each source will offer a unique perspective regarding the activities of the grant. The evaluator will prepare quarterly reports that will be reviewed by project leadership and the LAC during regular monthly meetings for the purpose of identifying key trends. This information will be shared with program staff so that any modifications to program activities can

be implemented as needed. The evaluation team will analyze data and prepare quarterly updates as well as a final report that meets program requirements, including the use of funds. This final project evaluation report will describe the quality, impact, and effectiveness of the project.

Objective	Measurement tool	Frequency
By the end of 24 months, the percentage of 5-year-old participating children who achieve significant gains in oral language skills will increase by 10%. <b>Benchmarks:</b> 5% increase in year 1; additional 5% increase in year 2	Analysis of pre- and post-testing using benchmark tests such as DIBELS; ongoing analysis of classroom benchmark tests, and grade reports	Start of school year baseline; interim assessments according to pre-determined
By the end of 24 months, the percentage of students (including 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade students) at the targeted schools who meet or exceed proficiency on State reading or language arts assessments will increase by 10%. <b>Benchmarks:</b> 5% increase in year 1; additional 5% increase in year 2 <b>(addresses GPRA measure 2)</b>	Analysis of pre- and post-testing using benchmark tests such as DIBELS; ongoing analysis of classroom benchmark tests, and grade reports	schedules; end of school year follow-up
By the end of 24 months, the percentage of students at the targeted schools who demonstrate proficiency in writing will increase by 10%.	Ongoing analysis of classroom benchmark tests, grade reports	

<p><b>Benchmarks:</b> 5% increase in year 1; additional 5% increase in year 2</p>		
<p>By the end of 24 months, 100% of classroom teachers at the targeted schools will integrate <i>Read Well</i> instruction into their classrooms in Kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2.</p> <p><b>Benchmarks:</b> 50% of classrooms in year one; an additional 50% in year two</p>	<p>Pre- and post-participation surveys; lesson plan reviews</p>	<p>Annual survey; annual lesson plan review</p>
<p>By the end of 24 months, 100% of teachers will indicate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills relating to improving students' literacy skills.</p> <p><b>Benchmarks:</b> 80% in year one; 100% in year two</p>	<p>Pre- and post-participation surveys</p>	<p>Post-participation survey; annual survey</p>
<p>By the end of 24-months, at least 10% of parents of participating children will have attended at least one workshop for the purpose of equipping them with the skills and knowledge to support their children's literacy. <b>Benchmarks:</b> 5% in year one; 10% in year two</p>	<p>Sign-in sheets; annual survey</p>	<p>Ongoing as events take place; annually</p>

Feedback from parents and other stakeholders will be gathered through an annual **Performance Survey**, which is a validated instrument developed for the purpose of gathering valid, reliable performance feedback. The survey gathers qualitative feedback and asks respondents to provide information regarding his/her opinion of the initiative or program, perceived strengths and weaknesses, areas of concern, and other thoughts so that this input can be used to refine the project.

**Collecting Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) data:** In addition, we will also collect and report: GPRA 2) the percentage of participating 3rd-grade students who meet or exceed proficiency on State reading or language arts assessments.

*(ii) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes*

The evaluation plan described above includes multiple feedback loops to continuously gather student, teacher and administrator feedback for the purpose of reviewing assessment data (monthly) to refine, strengthen and improve the program approach. This process includes regular project meetings among school-based project personnel and monthly meetings of the full Literacy Advisory Council. As noted above, the evaluator will prepare quarterly programmatic and financial reports, which will be reviewed and discussed during these meetings. Parents will be provided with progress updates during regularly-scheduled parent-teacher conferences held throughout the year.

As indicated throughout this proposal, East Saint Louis School District 189 is one of the most impoverished school districts in the country. More than 98% of our students live in poverty and our district resources are already stretched beyond their limits. As such, outside financial support is essential to launching this desperately-needed intervention. *Get Ready, Get Set, Go Read* will

sustainably support the district's efforts to improve the literacy rates of thousands of the most at-risk students in the State of Illinois. Without Department of Education funds, this critically-needed literacy project will not take place and thousands of at-risk children will continue to struggle both academically and socially.