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COMPASS: Collaborative Organizational Model to Promote Aligned Support Structures

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COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 7

Iredell-Statesville Schools' proposed program, *COMPASS: Collaborative Organizational Model to Promote Aligned Support Structures*, will focus on innovations that support effective teachers and principals by using research-based strategies including Response to Intervention (RtI) and Professional Learning Communities (PLC). These strategies are supported by four key structures which incorporate Instructional Facilitators (IF), [REDACTED] Instructional Technology (IT) Coordinators, and Exceptional Children (EC) Specialists. Our program will align the functions of our support structures to increase teacher effectiveness which include innovations to support the unique learning needs of students with disabilities and limited English proficient (LEP) students.

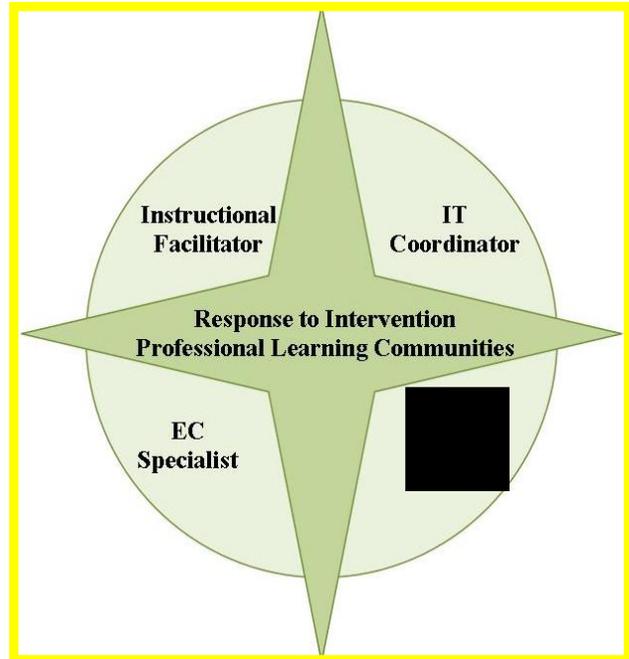
❶ *Improve Academic Outcomes*: Our teacher support structures currently work independently with much of the support for students with disabilities and LEP provided by EC and ESL Specialists. Alignment will improve our services to these students through: further development of an inclusive practices model; collaboration across all four structures for combined support of all teachers through the lens of RtI; coordination of individualized education plans; and focused resources to better support the PLCs. ❷ *Close Achievement Gaps*: Alignment will enable teachers to learn how to blend regular and special education interventions to better meet student needs through inclusive practice. Research shows that when students are performing below their peers, schools often guide these students into special education services even though they do not have a disability.¹ This tendency has also led to an overrepresentation of culturally and linguistically diverse children in special education. Focus will be placed on resources to strengthen the core instruction and determine appropriate classroom interventions rather than referring students immediately. ❸ *Increase College- and Career-Readiness*: Research shows that RtI positively impacts students of diverse backgrounds including students with special needs and LEP.² Since 2006, we have had success in improving our graduation rates for LEP students by 29% and for students with disabilities by 19%. Support from the four structures will be aligned to provide the skills teachers need to coach students in developing their knowledge of career and college choices.

A. NEED FOR THE PROJECT AND QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN

(1) Exceptional Approach to the Priorities

Iredell-Statesville Schools (I-SS) is a North Carolina school district just north of the Charlotte metro area with a mix of rural and suburban communities serving over 21,100 students in 35 schools. We have seen promising results since we began implementation of the core components of our program model in 2003. Student achievement before this time was grim: 61% graduation rate; 7% dropout rate; 23 percentage point gap in reading for blacks and 43 for students with disabilities; and 57th worst in the state for SAT. The following examples provide a current snapshot of our high-need school district:^{3,4,5} 35% free and reduced lunch rate; 6% limited English proficient students; 11% students with disabilities; 21% single parent families; and 16% of adults not graduating from high school. Although our district continues to be characterized by high-need students, positive outcomes still remain. In addition to raising our graduation rate by 20% since 2002, our dropout rate is at its lowest in our history. Over 98% of our teachers are now highly qualified with trend data showing that our district has remained above state and regional percentages since 2004. Through *COMPASS*, we will continue to improve upon these significant gains, especially for our high-need students. Our innovative project focuses on *Absolute Priority 1: Innovations that Support Effective Teachers and Principals* and was developed based on our successful implementation of our Performance Excellence Model which is recognized as a national best practice.⁶ Response to Intervention (RtI) and Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are two key strategies we implement to develop highly effective teachers. These strategies are supported by four key structures which include Instructional Facilitators (IF), [REDACTED] Instructional Technology (IT) Coordinators, and Exceptional Children (EC) Specialists. We envision collaboration across all four delivery structures for combined support of all teachers which is depicted in the “compass” in Figure 1 below. Our district has seen promising results in student academic achievement through the individual implementation of these research-based components. However, through *COMPASS*, we will *address a largely unmet need with a focus on*

high-need students. We found that the IF structure is working well to support teachers, but the other three structures are not supporting teacher effectiveness to the fullest. For example, district data showed that 50% of students referred to a specialist were not eligible for special education services, which indicates that teachers may not be providing the necessary instructional strategies to enable some students to succeed in the classroom.



Upon returning to the classroom, we also found that some of these students, who were not eligible, were not getting the interventions they need due to the lack of a formal, aligned process to support teachers and their students. We will take this implementation to the next level by blending each component and providing cross functionality of the support structures to increase teacher effectiveness and ultimately improve the academic achievement of our high-need students. *This practice has not already been widely adopted* enabling our district to build on our existing performance model and meet Absolute Priority 1 through the following key components.

❖ **Response to Intervention (RtI)**: After extensive research and planning, we began initial implementation of this approach in January 2009 with student interventions provided through three tiers of increasing intensity: in-classroom support, specialists offering support in the classroom, and one-on-one support.⁷ In addition to the tiered interventions, struggling students are further supported by an average of 140 hours a week across the district of targeted, ongoing academic assistance by tutors which include parents and community groups. The focus of our RtI strategy is to employ a universal screening approach that will provide the information to make high-quality decisions about the instructional needs of students; build the skills of teachers on how to use student/classroom data to drive instructional decisions; and provide in-classroom modeling,

feedback, and coaching relative to appropriate interventions. RtI begins with an examination of the core learning approach in all key curriculum areas and makes a baseline assumption that if core instruction is meeting the needs of the students in a classroom, then at least 80% of the students are successful.⁸ If the data does not support this assumption, then focus is placed on the core learning approach and improvements are defined and implemented before removing struggling students from the classroom. This strategy will be supported by the use of AIMSweb which is a benchmark and progress monitoring system based on direct, frequent, and continuous student assessment.⁹ This tool received the highest possible rating for predicative validity and reliability.¹⁰

❖ **Professional Learning Communities (PLC)**: PLCs are an effective means to provide teachers with hands-on skill building and collaborative support to transform teaching practices.¹¹ In 2005, our district introduced the Learning-Focused approach to PLCs. Meeting weekly, each teacher is in at least one PLC. Central to our approach is in-depth examination of student data in terms of strengths, weaknesses, subgroup, system level, and individual school performance. Key elements of our PLCs include:¹² a clear understanding of the knowledge, skills, and learning goals each student is to acquire as a result of each course, grade level, and unit taught; shared consensus on what constitutes quality student work for consistency; common formative assessments to monitor learning and identify high-need students for systematic interventions; student data to assess individual and collective instructional effectiveness; and a continuous improvement process. Teachers will use the Performio web-based continuous improvement tool to link their instructional strategies with results while more easily tracking student progress toward mastery of standards.

❖ **Teacher Support Structures**: Our district has four structures operating independently of one another but providing support to our RtI and PLC approaches. These structures are foundational to professional development, coaching, and assistance to the classroom learning system. Through our district Leadership Academy, each cadre is assisted to maintain their skills so they will be the highest level of support possible for teachers and staff. The key roles of the support structures and current personnel include: ❶ *Instructional Facilitator (IF) (32 supporting 34 schools)*: Since 2003,

our district has implemented the IF model, which supports the quality of teachers through intensive on-site professional development using the PLC and RtI strategies. The roles of IF are trainer, coach, and support for teachers. IFs receive professional development and coaching every two weeks from two district IF Coordinators so they can deliver training on-site, coach teachers, and form linkages to the other support structures. This approach has an ongoing feedback loop that is informed by data collected through rubrics, observations with inner-rater reliability, and teacher evaluations.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

③ *Exceptional Children (EC) Specialist (7 with 5 schools each)*: This specialist serves as a coach and teacher support for exceptional children. A district Coordinator oversees this team and provides linkages to the other support structures. ④ *Instructional Technology (IT) Coordinator (7 with 5 schools each)*: This staff serves as trainer, coach, and teacher support for technology. A district Coordinator oversees this team and provides linkages to the other support structures.

❖ **Aligning Operational Support Structures**: Our I-SS Model for Performance Excellence, which has been the support approach for all students, was built around the Instructional Facilitator. We will use *COMPASS* to scale up the model by aligning the services of our four support structures highlighted above to improve achievement of high-need students and increase the number of highly effective teachers. This alignment enables the identification of “best practice” interventions and the replication of those interventions across grade levels/departments within a school and across the district. The use of our online instructional resource, Teachscape will be strengthened.¹³ These content specific modules include strategies teachers take directly back to the classroom and are used in PLCs as a resource for helping teachers strengthen core instruction and provide other RtI tiered interventions. The alignment will also support our teacher recruitment program which has raised the number of applicants and minorities in our district. Incentives such as signing bonuses, moving allowances, at-risk supplements to recruit and retain teachers for

math, science, EC instruction, and at-risk schools led to a teacher turnover rate less than the state average and waiting lists for most job openings. Table 1 highlights key areas the alignment will support. Each of these defined areas will receive more efficient and effective support through a consistent model that better channels resources from the four structures.

Table 1. Key Areas Alignment Supports	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping teachers move high-need students to proficiency and support inclusive practice • Sustaining PLCs to provide stronger support during three-tiered RtI interventions • Correlating Educational Value-Added Assessment System data with teacher performance ratings from evaluation process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring of principals by Executive Directors • Mentoring of new teachers by IFs • Innovation Showcase – honors teacher and leader experts in the schools • Using PD Plans as growth models • Aligning evaluation systems at all levels • “Of the Year” awards and selection criteria

❖ **Evaluation System for Teacher Effectiveness:** Although the focus for teacher effectiveness is on student learning, a systematic evaluation process that increases the expertise of the teacher throughout the entire system and provides solid mechanisms for teachers to improve instruction is necessary.¹⁴ Aligning and providing immediate support through our four structures will enable our district to support teachers based on individual evaluations rather than a one size fits all approach. Central to this process is the use of both leading indicators which are predictive of future student achievement (i.e., formative assessments) and lagging indicators which confirm patterns to inform instructional decisions and teacher effectiveness.¹⁵ Using multiple rating categories and measures of effectiveness, these evaluation tools drive professional development and in-class coaching and support individual growth to develop highly effective teachers. 📍 *North Carolina Teacher Evaluation System:* Our rubric was developed to exemplify the NC Professional Teaching Standards. The rubric is used in conjunction with the standards and aids administrators in conducting teacher observations. These materials form the core of the NC Teacher Evaluation

System and assess teachers to determine if they are highly effective. Teacher performance is noted on one of four levels: Developing, Proficient, Accomplished, or Distinguished with objectives in each area. These standards include: demonstrate leadership; establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of students; know the content they teach; facilitate learning for their students; and reflect on their practice. This process uses an online database to capture the teacher evaluation data, link to student performance, and identify gaps. This information helps inform our four structures, provide professional development and in-classroom coaching, and support growth plans. ❷ *Classroom Walkthroughs*: District administration, principals, assistant principals, and IFs conduct five random walkthroughs a week to determine teacher effectiveness and level of implementation of key instructional strategies that are being professionally developed and coached. The data for each school goes back to the IF for analysis through PLCs which assess student performance and determine additional coaching needs by grade level, departments, or individuals until the approach is mastered by all teachers. ❸ *Teacher Growth Plans*: The NC Teacher Evaluation System rubric is used to determine areas of strength and improvements. Each teacher works with an administrator to define areas of improvement, and they co-create a Professional Development Plan that is implemented through the school year and shared with the IF for coaching purposes. Alignment of the four structures will increase the number of resources available to support Professional Development Plans and link to student academic performance.

(2) Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

The vision of *COMPASS* is to create highly effective teachers with the support they need to ensure all students succeed. Table 2 highlights our program goals and objectives.

Table 2. COMPASS Goals and Objectives
Goal 1: Increase teacher effectiveness to ensure all students succeed (Absolute Priority 1).
Objective 1.1 At least 70% of teachers will receive an overall score of “Accomplished” and/or “Distinguished” for all five standards on the NC Teacher Summary Rating Form in Year 1, increasing by 5 percentage points per year in Years 2-5, or until the percentage of teachers reaches

Table 2. COMPASS Goals and Objectives

95%. *Measure: NC Teacher Evaluation System data, compiled annually*

Objective 1.2 A minimum of 85% of teachers will achieve 2 out of 2 professional goals listed on their NC Teacher Growth Plan in Year 1, increasing 3% each year for Years 2-5 or until 100% of teachers achieve 2 out of 2 professional goals. *Measure: NC Teacher Evaluation System data*

Objective 1.3 At least 80% of targeted teachers will participate in one hour weekly professional learning opportunities facilitated by the four support structures from September until June of each program year. *Measure: PLC Attendance records, compiled annually*

Objective 1.4 The percentage of students that are referred and do not qualify for special education will decrease 10% in Year 1, decreasing 15 percentage points in Years 2-5, or until 5% of student referrals are not eligible. *Measure: District administrative data, compiled annually*

Objective 1.5 At least 70% of teachers will report an increase in the understanding and use of technology in Year 1, with an increase of 5% in Years 2-5, or until 95% of teachers report an increased understanding and use of technology. *Measure: Annual Year-end Teacher Survey*

Goal 2: Improve academic achievement of high-need students.

Objective 2.1 At least 70% of high-need students in grades 3-8 will meet or exceed their expected rate of growth in Year 1, increasing 5 percentage points per year in Years 2-5, or until the percentage achieving growth is 95%; disaggregated by subgroups. *Measure: Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS), End-of-Grade (EOG) Tests*

Objective 2.2 At least 70% of high-need students in grades 9-12 will meet or exceed their expected growth curve in at least one of the 10 mandated content areas in Year 1, increasing 5 percentage points per year in Years 2-5 or until all show growth in at least one of the ten mandated content areas; disaggregated by subgroups. *Measure: EVAAS, End-of-Course (EOC) Tests*

Objective 2.3 The graduation rate for high-need students will increase by at least 3% per year or

Table 2. COMPASS Goals and Objectives
until 95% graduate. <i>Measure: District data, compiled annually</i>
Goal 3: Improve academic achievement of students with disabilities and LEP (CPP 7).
Objective 3.1 At least 70% of students with disabilities/LEP in grades 3-8 will meet or exceed their expected growth curve in Year 1, increasing 5 percentage points per year in Years 2-5, or until the percentage of students with disabilities/LEP achieving growth is 95%; disaggregated by subgroups. <i>Measure: EVAAS, EOG Tests</i>
Objective 3.2 The average district SAT score for students with disabilities/LEP will increase by 5 percentage points in Year 1 and 10 in Years 2-5 or until the average for these students is 1072 points or more; disaggregated by subgroups. <i>Measure: District data, compiled annually</i>
Objective 3.3 100% of students with disabilities/LEP in Years 1-5 will be provided with the option of pursuing a differentiated diploma designed to assist special needs students in obtaining a high school diploma; disaggregated by subgroups. <i>Measure: District data, compiled annually</i>
Objective 3.4 The graduation rate for students with disabilities/LEP will increase by 3% per year or until 85% graduate; disaggregated by subgroups. <i>Measure: District data, compiled annually</i>

We will also address all short- and long-term performance measures defined in the i3 Notice to improve student achievement as follows: ❶ We will implement *COMPASS* with fidelity to the approved design; ❷ The evaluator will provide evidence of our strategies' promise for improving student outcomes and high-quality implementation data and performance feedback for periodic assessment of progress towards intended outcomes; ❸ Completed evaluation information will identify key elements and project approach to facilitate further development, replication, or testing in other settings; and ❹ We will document the cost per student served and per student per strategy for strategies that prove promising for improving student educational outcomes.

B. STRENGTH OF RESEARCH, SIGNIFICANCE/MAGNITUDE OF EFFECT

(1) Research-Based Findings that Support the Proposed Project

Our hypothesis is that a systematically, aligned support structure to provide sustained professional development for teachers will increase teacher effectiveness and positively impact student outcomes as outlined in our program’s logic model (see Appendix H). The following highlights *examples* of research-based findings (see Appendix H for citations) that support key components of *COMPASS* based on evidence standards developed by What Works Clearinghouse.¹⁶

❶ *Professional Development*: Professional development (PD) that is sustained and intensive is related to gains in student achievement.¹⁷ Over 20% of gains in student achievement were found with 49 hours of intensive PD per year. Changes in teacher practice are supported by sustained, intensive PD activities which include applications of knowledge to teacher instruction and influence on teaching practices that lead to gains in student learning.^{18,19} Studies find a 70% increase in teacher implementation following highly-quality PD with coaching as contrasted to only a high-quality workshop.^{20,21} Teacher attitudes and efficacy, teaching practices, and student outcomes are key areas that coaching impacts.²² ❷ *Highly Effective Teachers*: Effective teachers are a prevailing factor in student academic success.²³ A teacher categorized as “most effective” generates student achievement that is 54 percentile points higher than achievement generated by a “least effective” teacher. Studies find that performance-based teacher evaluations can have significant criterion validity.²⁴ Teachers that earn higher evaluation scores lead to more student learning gains compared to teachers with lower scores. A study of students with three highly effective teachers in a row increased their performance on assessments as contrasted to students with ineffective teachers.²⁵ ❸ *Response to Intervention (RtI)*: Teachers in schools that are closing achievement gaps use data to inform instruction.²⁶ Teacher efficacy is associated with perceptions of RtI outcomes such as improved intervention, collaborative team process, and data-based decisions.²⁷ Studies find that when students are performing below their peers, schools often guide these students into special education services even though they do not have a disability.²⁸ This process leads to the overrepresentation of culturally diverse children in special education. Field research in Minneapolis public schools found the number of black students referred for special

education and the number placed in special education over a four-year period were reduced with RtI.²⁹ ④ *Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)*: Studies find that school improvement comes from forming teachers into collaborative teams that outline student learning indicators; collecting ongoing evidence of that learning; and assessing outcomes together to learn which instructional strategies are working and what needs to be modified.³⁰ Improvements in teacher practice and student outcomes have been found from professional development that enables teachers to define concepts and skills they want students to learn.^{31,32} Researchers found increases in math and reading scores of 64 Texas schools functioning as PLCs.³³

(2) Previous Project Attempts with Promising Results

Scoring in the top 6%, we achieved the National Institute of Standards and Technology Baldrige award in 2008 for our districtwide implementation of our Performance Excellence Model.³⁴ Their Criteria for Performance Excellence is based on a systems perspective for understanding performance management reflective of validated management practices.³⁵ Our model was recognized as a best practice both by the Baldrige application scorers and the site visit team which spent four days validating the fidelity of implementation of the model across our district. One core component of this model is raising achievement and closing gaps or the learning triangle which is illustrated in Appendix H. A series of key questions resides within this learning triangle to focus organizational and individual action on students and stakeholders and effective and efficient operations. The model is structured around an ongoing, continuous improvement approach (Plan-Do-Study-Act) which ensures the use of gap analysis to constantly improve delivery of services to both staff and students. *COMPASS* will take the model to the next level by aligning the services of our four support structures to improve achievement of high-need students. We found that the IF structure is working well to support teachers at our schools, but the other three structures are not supporting teacher effectiveness to the fullest. Our focus will be to provide a more systematic, formal cross-functionality of these supports to increase the number of highly effective teachers at all 35 schools. Initial implementation of these components has already provided very promising

results. With over 98% of our teachers rated as highly qualified, our district has closed reading gaps and significantly increased student achievement for all groups of students (see Section C). Alignment of the four support structures will enable our district to fine tune our RtI and PLC approaches and improve upon our promising results so all students achieve success.

(3) Proposed Project will have a Positive Impact

In addition to the promising results we have achieved through the initial implementation of our program components, prior research also indicates *COMPASS* will likely have a positive impact. With the alignment of our four structures and use of the RtI and PLC, *COMPASS* includes all five components below which demonstrate that effect sizes on student achievement are significant.

Table 3. Effectiveness of Staff Development^{36,37}				
Components	Knowledge	Skill Acquisition	Classroom Application	Student Effect Sizes
Present Information	40-80%	10%	5%	0.01
Present + Model	80-85%	10-40%	5-10%	0.03
Present + Model + Practice + Feedback	80-85%	80%	10-15%	0.39
4 components above + Coaching	90%	90%	80-90%	1.68

Compared to other professional development in high-achieving countries, research finds US teachers have four disadvantages: ❶ taking on the cost of professional development; ❷ limited opportunities to engage in extended learning opportunities and collaborative communities; ❸ limited district investment in professional learning and time for sustained, ongoing development and collaboration; and ❹ lacking influence in essential areas of school decision making.³⁸ A study conducted by the National Staff Development Council to measure the status of PD found two key questions that districts need to consider: how can districts strengthen their capacity to offer high-quality professional learning that is successful at improving teacher instruction and supporting student learning; and how can districts assess the impact of their efforts over time.³⁹ *COMPASS* will contribute to learning about practices that have the potential to reduce the disadvantages that US teachers face as well as help shed light on ways to answer the two preceding questions. Since

districts across America are struggling with defining an approach that will provide a replicable RtI model, our work will also contribute to student achievement issues in a relative gap area.

C. EXPERIENCE OF THE ELIGIBLE APPLICANT

(1) Past Performance in Implementing Projects of the Size and Scope Proposed

Outperforming our peer districts and the state, our district achieved 94% of 2008 Adequate Yearly Progress goals. Since 2002, we have made significant gains in student achievement, closed reading gaps, increased the graduation rate, reduced the dropout rate, and increased the number of highly qualified teachers. This past performance was achieved by implementing projects similar in size and scope to *COMPASS* which include: ❶ *Smaller Learning Communities*: These US Department of Education grants (5 high schools; 6,309 students; \$6,000,154 over 5 years) provide rigorous, academic environments to improve academic performance, graduation rates, and postsecondary success for all students. ❷ *Baldrige Award*: We achieved this National Institute of Standards and Technology award of \$100,000 in 2008 for our districtwide implementation of our Performance Excellence Model which was built around the Instructional Facilitator. This model is recognized as a national best practice and was adopted by our district in 2003.⁴⁰ We currently have 32 IFs supporting 34 schools. ❸ *Response to Intervention (RtI) Approach*: After extensive research and planning, we began implementation of RtI in January 2009 in all 35 schools. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We have also established a tutoring initiative to support tiered interventions by providing additional academic assistance to struggling students. ❹ *Professional Learning Community (PLC) Approach*: In 2005, our district began the implementation of the PLC approach, which is implemented in all 35 schools with every teacher in the district in at least one PLC. ❺ *Success, Awareness & Growth through Enrichment (SAGE)*: Awarded by the NC Department of Public Instruction (4 schools; 160 students; \$425,000 over 4 years) to focus on dropout prevention through after school enrichment for high-need students. ❻ *Carol White Physical Education Program*: This US Department of Education grant (31

schools; 21,000 students; \$1.3 million over 3 years) provides opportunities to expand physical education programs through professional development, equipment, and program supports.

(2) Significantly Increased Student Achievement and Other Improvements

❖ **Significant Increases in Student Achievement:** NC End-of-Grade (EOG) Tests are designed to measure student performance for grades 3-8 on the goals, objectives, and grade-level competencies specified in the state’s Standard Course of Study. Since our reform efforts began over seven years ago, our district has seen *significant increases in student academic achievement for all groups of students*. For example, in 2002, our district ranked 75th lowest in EOG reading, but by 2008 we moved to the top 20 in the state. Our reading gap for EOG reading was nearly cut in half from 2002 to 2008 for both black students and students with disabilities. Table 4 highlights significant student achievement for our district EOG Test results.

Table 4. End-of-Grade Test Percentage Increase in District Student Achievement⁴¹				
Student Subgroup	Reading 2008 to 2009	Math 2006 to 2009	Reading or Math 2008 to 2009	Reading and Math 2008 to 2009
All Students	11%	17%	10%	12%
American Indian	8%	13%	10%	16%
Asian	12%	14%	9%	13%
Black	15%	27%	14%	14%
Hispanic	12%	21%	11%	12%
Multi-Racial	6%	18%	7%	9%
White	11%	15%	9%	12%
Econ. Disadvantaged	16%	25%	15%	16%
LEP	13%	31%	14%	12%
Disabled	17%	27%	16%	17%

As illustrated above, all students increased achievement by at least 10%. In 2009, our district’s performance for all students on EOG Tests for reading and math was 7 percentage points higher than NC average. In addition, all subgroups either met or exceeded state averages. NC End-of-Course (EOC) Tests sample a student’s knowledge of subject-related concepts from the NC

Standard Course of Study using ten content areas to measure student achievement in grades 9-12.

Table 5 highlights achievement on EOC Tests for students who passed at least one of the ten tests.

Table 5. End-of-Course Test Percentage Increase in District Student Achievement⁴²	
Subgroup	Percentage Increase (Years)
All Students	7% (2007 to 2009)
American Indian	12% (2008 to 2009)
Asian	17% (2003 to 2009)
Black	13% (2007 to 2009)
Hispanic	8% (2007 to 2009)
Multi-Racial	9% (2003 to 2009)
White	9% (2007 to 2009)
Economically Disadvantaged	9% (2007 to 2009)
Limited English Proficient	7% (2008 to 2009)
Students with Disabilities	24% (2003 to 2009)

All students have increased achievement by at least 7% or more on EOC Tests. Also, our average percentage of students passing EOC Tests for all student subgroups is 6% higher than the state.

❖ **Significant Improvements in Other Areas:** Currently, over 98% of our teachers are highly qualified with trend data showing that our district has remained above state and regional percentages since 2004. Pre-test NC Teacher Evaluation data (2008-09) for all five teaching standards show that 49% of teachers were either “accomplished” or “distinguished” while post-test data found that 80% of our teachers met these standards. We started the last two years with 100% of staff positions filled, a teacher turnover rate below NC average, and waiting lists for most job openings. Nearly 20% of principals in our district have ten years of experience or more, and over 25% have an advanced degree, which is higher than NC average. Over 60% of our teachers have at least four years experience, and 31% have advanced degrees. Raising our graduation rate by 20% since 2002, we have also seen increases in subgroups since 2006: multi-racial (67%), LEP (29%), students with disabilities (19%), and black (13%).⁴³ Our SAT scores have significantly improved with average scores on an upward trend since 2004 and remaining higher than state and

national averages. In 2002, our district was 57th in NC for SAT scores, and jumped to 7th by 2008.⁴⁴ Our district also has a variety of key turnaround highlights which are provided in Table 6.

Table 6. Iredell-Statesville Schools Turnaround Highlights⁴⁵		
Measure	2002 Results	2008 Results
Dropout Rate	6.5%	3.8%
Attendance Rate	55 th in state	3 rd in state
National Board Certified Teachers	6%	10%
High School Credit Recovery Courses	500	2,100
Parent Conference Participation	65%	95%
Out of School Suspension	Over 3,500 days	1,750 days

D. QUALITY OF THE PROJECT EVALUATION

(1) Methods of Evaluation are Appropriate to the Size and Scope of the Project

COMPASS was developed based on a logic model explicating the mechanisms through which we will achieve our desired outcomes. A logic model provides an organized strategy to outline and analyze assumptions about how project activities are expected to lead to positive outcomes.⁴⁶ The model will be revisited regularly to guide learning, reflection, and program adjustments.⁴⁷ We will test our model using three primary evaluation questions: ❶ Has *COMPASS* been implemented in accordance with the program model? ❷ Have the key elements and the approach of *COMPASS* been described? ❸ Did students make gains in academic achievement? We will use a mixed-methods approach to triangulate multiple sources of data and significantly enhance the validity of the evaluation process.^{48,49} Sources of quantitative data include: graduation and dropout rates; standardized reading, math, and EOC scores; and teacher evaluation rubric scores. Qualitative information, instrumental in determining project fidelity, will include: interviews, focus groups, open-ended survey questions, observations, and meeting minutes. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods will increase the depth of our information and provide feedback that will enable us to make program adjustments in a timely manner. Focus groups, interviews, and open-ended survey questions derived from multiple sources will be used to diagnose potential issues,

generate solutions, assess reactions to the program, and inform decisions relative to mid-course corrections. These methods include performance measures clearly related to assessing fidelity and outcomes. *COMPASS* will be analyzed at the end of each project year to determine differences in student academic and teacher effectiveness outcomes. Data from quantitative sources will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) and parametric and non-parametric inferential statistics (chi square, t-tests, ANCOVA), and effect sizes will be computed between groups. Quantitative measures include: the Fidelity Index (3x/yr), surveys, administrative records, EVAAS, teacher evaluations, and growth plans. Qualitative data will be coded and analyzed thematically and measured through: administrative records, professional development response/tracking, focus groups, interviews (2x/yr), and surveys.

(2) High-Quality Implementation Data, Performance Feedback, and Progress Assessment

❖ **High Quality Implementation Data:** The extent to which any program achieves its desired outcomes is clearly linked to maintaining fidelity to the program model. To quantify implementation we will use: ❶ ratings comparing known best practices to existing practices based on project documentation, records, observations, and administrator interviews; and ❷ surveys and interviews completed by individuals delivering or receiving services. We will follow recommended practices including the use of: multiple data sources;⁵⁰ objective, behaviorally anchored criteria to reduce inference;⁵¹ and dichotomous items to minimize subjective assessments.⁵² This data will be compiled quarterly into a quantified Fidelity Index that will allow us to assess the extent and quality of implementation components. The index will be used as a guide to implement *COMPASS* as intended and allow our management team to monitor quality.⁵³

❖ **Performance Feedback:** Our logic model (Appendix H) ensures that both continuous quality improvement and program enhancements are guided by evaluation results. Our model has a built-in feedback loop emphasizing the provision of timely, regular, and useful feedback to stakeholders for informed decision-making relative to needed changes in program activities. Upon compiling data from record reviews, interviews, and structured observations, the evaluator will promptly

deliver results to project leadership and stakeholders. The evaluator will facilitate quarterly meetings to effectively communicate evaluation findings to stakeholders in a variety of user-friendly methods such as single-page “snapshots” depicting implementation and outcome data.

❖ **Periodic Assessment of Progress toward Outcomes:** Previously presented in Table 2, our performance measures include annual benchmarks to monitor progress and reflect annual increases we anticipate as our project matures and service delivery is more refined. Short-term performance indicators will signify progress towards long-term outcomes of student academic achievement and teacher effectiveness. Embedded in performance objectives, annual benchmarks will be used to chart our actual progress against our targeted progress. Evaluation methods including surveys, interviews, and focus groups will enable us to assess short-term changes in teacher knowledge, attitudes, and self-efficacy aspirations that are linked to long-term outcomes.

(3) Information about the Key Elements and Approach to Facilitate Further Development

If our program is to be replicated in other settings, its structure must be fully delineated. For each key aspect we will describe: ❶ service delivery according to length, intensity, and duration; ❷ content, procedures, and activities subsumed under each key aspect; ❸ roles and qualifications of the four support structures responsible for service delivery; and ❹ inclusionary and exclusionary characteristics defining our target population. This process will ensure if *COMPASS* does produce expected outcomes, then these measures of structure will promote external validity by providing adequate documentation and guidelines for replication. We will also track and document the step-by-step implementation approach through a careful review of meeting minutes, the quality of the collaborative partnerships, and the contextual environment in which the program operates.

(4) Sufficient Resources to Carry Out the Project Evaluation Effectively

The Evaluation Group (TEG) will serve as the independent, third-party evaluator for *COMPASS* guided by Lead Evaluator, Dr. Felix Blumhardt (see Appendix C for resume). TEG has more than 19 years of demonstrated experience in planning, implementing, and evaluating large federal, US Department of Education grant programs. TEG’s experienced team has expertise in all areas of

evaluation, including research design, measurement, benchmarking, test and survey construction, data analysis, and reporting. TEG will collect data through web-based surveys using Zarca software, and paper surveys are quickly and accurately analyzed with OMR software. SPSS is used to analyze quantitative data and Atlas Ti to analyze qualitative data.

E. STRATEGY/CAPACITY TO FURTHER DEVELOP/BRING TO SCALE

(1) Number of Students Proposed and Capacity to Reach Students

Through *COMPASS*, we will serve all 35 schools in our district which includes 21,168 students and 1,564 teachers. Based on our current infrastructure and successful experience implementing key components, our district brings a strong capacity to reach the proposed number of students and meet the Absolute Priority to support effective teachers and principals. District IFs support 34 schools, while [REDACTED] EC Specialists, and IT Coordinators currently support all 35 schools. We will expand the number of IFs and EC Specialists to increase our capacity to reach all students. Aligning our four support structures will enable us to reach the proposed number of students and provide high-quality, research-based interventions to ensure academic success.

(2) Capacity to Further Develop and Bring to Scale the Proposed Program

The following highlights our capacity to further develop and bring to scale our proposed program.

❶ *Qualified Personnel*: Our strongest capacity is evidenced by 81 high-quality personnel that already provide support to our schools including Instructional Facilitators, [REDACTED] EC Specialists, and IT Coordinators (see Appendix C for qualifications). We will add two new EC Specialists, three IFs, and an Intervention Specialist who will build districtwide understanding of interventions and serve as a link between the four support structures.

❷ *Management Capacity*: As outlined in Section C, our district has a variety of successful experiences managing projects of a similar scope to *COMPASS*. To ensure continuity of alignment of the four support structures, the following district supports contribute to our capacity and participated in the planning of our project: one IT and two IF Coordinators; EC Director; Associate Superintendent of Instruction; and Leadership Academy Director.

❸ *Financial Resources*: In addition to our in-kind district

personnel contributions, we bring a variety of private sector partnerships that committed matching funds and in-kind donations totaling \$1,000,000 once the grant is awarded. These include: Teachscape (\$200,000), Performio (\$175,000), [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] See Appendix D for letters of support and budget narrative for matching funds.

(3) Feasibility of the Proposed Project to be Replicated Successfully

Through *COMPASS*, we will define the cross-functional alignment, re-train staff on our four structures, and implement the collaborative model to allow systematic replication with relative ease. Through our Leadership Academy, in-house trainers provide professional development, coaching, and support on topics such as inclusive practice and systems approach which is created “by practitioners, for practitioners.” We will also partner with the NC Department of Public Instruction which formulated an RtI model to provide technical assistance to LEAs to foster replication throughout the state.⁵⁴ We have presented key components in 13 states, further confirming our model can be used in a variety of settings and student populations. Research shows RtI implementation positively impacts students of diverse backgrounds including LEP and students with disabilities.⁵⁵ Our district is also characterized by a variety of student populations from rural and suburban communities which provides a diverse lab environment for replication.

(4) Estimate of the Cost of the Proposed Project

To determine an accurate estimate of start-up and operating costs, our i3 task force worked with an expert financial analyst from Venture Architects to develop a financial model. Based on this model, estimated costs of implementation are \$5,011,931 per year which includes 60 full-time staff plus fringe benefits, substitute teachers, travel, online assessment tools, professional development and consultation, evaluation services, indirect costs, and matching funds. A line item breakdown of this model is provided in Appendix H. Since *COMPASS* serves 21,168 students, the average cost per student to implement this innovative program is \$237. The following cost estimates are required to successfully replicate this model on a larger scale: \$23.7 million for

100,000 students, \$59.2 million for 250,000 students and \$118.5 million for 500,000 students.

(5) Mechanisms to Broadly Disseminate Information and Support Replication

Through the support of our Leadership Academy, we currently participate in a variety of activities to broadly disseminate information on our model (e.g., served 22 districts across the US). We will continue to share best practices through *COMPASS* including: presentations at national conferences; site visits, training, and coaching for districts across the nation; technology such as SKYPE conferencing, Teachscape Modules, and web pages; partnering with NC Department of Public Instruction to roll out RtI statewide; and participation in the US Department of Education's Open Innovation Portal to promote collaborations and communities of practice. As a Baldrige Award recipient, our district is invited to present and keynote at a variety of conferences to share information about our performance excellence strategies that others can tailor for their own needs.

F. SUSTAINABILITY

(1) Resources and Stakeholder Support to Operate Beyond the Length of the Grant

Our focus is to define a systemic approach to support instructional staff in meeting the needs of all students which will be sustainable beyond the life of the grant. The following highlights the current resources and support from stakeholders that contribute to the sustainability of our project:

❶ *Executive Cabinet*: The decision making body of the district works in tandem with the superintendent. With approval from our Board of Education, the cabinet supported pursuing an i3 grant and committed to ensuring sustainability. ❷ *Task Force*: Our district created an i3 task force which includes the following leaders: Leadership Academy and PD Directors; Associate Superintendents of Instruction and Learning; two IF Coordinators; and EC Director. These leaders will continue to serve on the task force to develop our sustainability plan. ❸ *Leadership Academy*: By providing ongoing, skill-embedded training, our approach to budget development is to build internal capacity to sustain professional development with our personnel through the Leadership Academy. ❹ *Four Support Structures*: The core of our model is the four teacher support structures which include IFs, EC Specialists, [REDACTED] and IT Coordinators. These positions are already

embedded in the district and our School and District Improvement Plans. We will add two EC Specialists and three IFs to ensure all schools are supported and our district will absorb costs once funding ends. Blending the support of the structures will allow us to better use resources and build our capacity to offer professional development after the grant period. ⑤ *Management Capacity*: As outlined in Section C, we have a variety of successful experiences managing projects of a similar size and scope to *COMPASS*. To ensure continuity of alignment of the four support structures, the following embedded districtwide supports will contribute to the sustainability of *COMPASS*: one IT and two IF Coordinators; EC Director; Associate Superintendents of Instruction and Learning; Leadership Academy Director; and a new staff, Intervention Specialist, which will be supported by the district after the grant ends. ⑥ *NC Department of Public Instruction*: The sustainability of our RtI approach will be supported by our State Education Agency which has formulated an RtI model providing free technical assistance to LEAs. [REDACTED]

(2) Planning for the Incorporation of Project Activities into the District's Ongoing Work

Working throughout the grant period, our task force will engage in the following sustainability planning process: ① *Where We Are*: We will take inventory of where we are and examine our capacity. For example, the Leadership Academy has the capacity to provide much of the professional development that will be required to build the cross-functional knowledge among our support structures. ② *Where We Are Going*: We will clarify what programmatic aspects need to be sustained and develop a vision for sustainability. Aligning to the state RtI model, we will clearly define the cross-functional model of support and its implication as well as professional development for the four structures. ③ *How We Will Get There*: We will focus on leveraging district and community resources to increase capacity, which includes increasing our capacity to provide professional development to teachers in key instructional and intervention areas so that we are not dependent on hiring external trainers. ④ *Written Plan*: We will develop and implement a written plan that details major strategies and implementation phases to achieve sustainability.

G. QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PERSONNEL

(1) Management Plan Responsibilities, Timelines, and Milestones

The *COMPASS* management team will provide overall project direction and will be accountable to the Executive Cabinet. Meeting quarterly, this team will be led by our Project Director and includes our Intervention Specialist, IF and IT Coordinators, EC Director, Leadership Academy Director, and the external evaluator. Our timeline to bring *COMPASS* to scale includes three key phases (professional development, pilot schools throughout 1/3 of the district, and districtwide implementation). The first year of our grant will be focused on professional development to ensure our four support structures are aligned with an understanding of how they connect to develop highly effective teachers. Periodic, ongoing activities throughout the grant period include: evaluation team visits and reports (quarterly); joint professional development (monthly); and i3 task force sustainability planning (quarterly). Table 7 provides an overview of our five-year plan.

Table 7. <i>COMPASS</i> Management Plan	
Milestones	Person Responsible
Phase 1: September 2010 – January 2011	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive grant award notification, hire staff, confirm match • Align IF [REDACTED] at each school to strengthen PLC support • Participate in monthly, joint professional development to create a common understanding of the RtI approach and how work connects • Facilitate four structures in cooperative development of a delivery of support and services for RtI based on defined success • Design integrated work of four support structures • Expand the professional development approach of the IFs to include the other three structures • Set up a regular professional development support process for the group as a cross-functional entity based on their needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Cabinet • Project Director • [REDACTED] IF, EC Specialist and IT Coord. • Project Director, Intervention Specialist • Intervention Specialist • Project Director, Intervention Specialist • Intervention Specialist, Leadership Academy

Table 7. COMPASS Management Plan	
Milestones	Person Responsible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in professional development and collaborative learning sessions to create a common knowledge base for the group • Engage four supports in the design of cross functional structures to support school teams once base knowledge of RtI is in place • Finalize the implementation model by beginning of 2011 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [REDACTED] IF, EC Specialist and IT Coord. • Intervention Specialist • Management Team
Phase 2: February 2011 – July 2012	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select 4 high-need pilot schools for initial implementation • Begin implementation of the model defined by the group with focus on structured support for groups of schools to leverage the cross-functional resources of the four structures • Document and assess implementation with progress monitoring measures to perform improvement cycles on design work • Update implementation model based on initial pilot results • Select 8 additional high-need schools to begin full implementation • Begin Steps 1 and 2 of sustainability planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Team • Project Director, Intervention Specialist • Project Director • Management Team • Management Team • Task Force
Phase 3: August 2012 – August 2015	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reach full implementation at all 35 schools with cross-functional teams as support systems by beginning of 2012 school year • Build capacity of the school teams to sustain the RtI work with decreased district support • Begin Step 3 of sustainability planning • Finalize written sustainability plan and begin implementation to ensure activities are incorporated in district’s work beyond grant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Director, Intervention Specialist • Project Director, Leadership Academy • Task Force • Task Force, Executive Cabinet

(2) Qualifications, Relevant Training, and Experience of Key Project Personnel

The following highlights qualifications, training, and experience of key project personnel (see Appendix C for resumes and job descriptions). ❶ *Project Director*: Masters degree with five years experience in curriculum and instruction, teacher development, and/or program administration or a combined equivalent of experience and education; skills in management and supervision, implementation of programs, and leadership of districtwide teams. ❷ *Intervention Specialist*: Masters degree with experience in curriculum-based measures; skills in the development, monitoring, and provision of individual and small group interventions, and knowledge of RtI; experience providing professional development and individual coaching regarding universal screens, progress monitoring, curriculum-based measures, and RtI. ❸ *The Evaluation Group*: TEG has more than 19 years of demonstrated experience in planning, implementing, and evaluating large federal, US Department of Education grant programs. The evaluation team will be led by Dr. Felix Blumhardt. ❹ *Instructional Facilitator*: Bachelors degree with five years experience in the classroom setting; experience in teacher development, coaching, and support in curriculum and instruction; knowledge of research-based strategies such as RtI; experience working as a team member. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ❺ *Exceptional Children (EC) Specialist*: Masters degree with five years special education classroom experience; skills in managing a system of oversight for EC student record compliance; ability to communicate effectively with EC teachers, staff and administration. ❻ *Instructional Technology (IT) Coordinator*: Bachelors degree in education with experience in education testing and a NC teaching license; license in Technology Education; knowledge of local, state, and federal testing requirements; experience in the use of technology tools used in testing and evaluation; and ability to analyze data and interpret and apply statistical information.

COMPASS will lead us in the right “direction” and enable Iredell-Statesville Schools to provide innovative strategies to build highly effective teachers to ensure all students achieve success.

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- ¹ (Countinho & Oswald, 2006)
 - ² (IDEA Partnership, 2010)
 - ³ (Kids Count, 2007-2008)
 - ⁴ (United State Census, 2000)
 - ⁵ (North Carolina Department of Pubic Instruction, 2008)
 - ⁶ (NIST, 2008)
 - ⁷ (Fletcher & Vaughn, 2009)
 - ⁸ (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2007)
 - ⁹ (AIMSweb, 2010)
 - ¹⁰ (AIMSweb, 2009)
 - ¹¹ (Annenburg Institute for School Reform, 2004)
 - ¹² (DuFour, 2007)
 - ¹³ (TeachScape, 2010)
 - ¹⁴ (Marzano, 2009)
 - ¹⁵ (Marzano, 2009)
 - ¹⁶ (What Works Clearinghouse, 2008)
 - ¹⁷ (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad, 2009)
 - ¹⁸ (Knapp, 2003)
 - ¹⁹ (Supovitz, Mayer, & Kahle, 2000)
 - ²⁰ (Showers, 1983)
 - ²¹ (Knight, 2007)
 - ²² (Cornett & Knight)
 - ²³ (Marzano, 2009)
 - ²⁴ (Odden, 2004)
 - ²⁵ (Ferguson & Ladd, 1996)
 - ²⁶ (Symonds, 2004)
 - ²⁷ (Nunn, Jantz, & Butikofer, 2009)
 - ²⁸ (Countinho & Oswald, 2006)
 - ²⁹ (Marston, Muyskens, Lau, & Canter, 2003)
 - ³⁰ (Hattie, 2009)
 - ³¹ (Blank, de las Alas, & Smith, 2007)
 - ³² (Wenglinsky, 2000)
 - ³³ (Hughes & Krisonis, 2007)
 - ³⁴ (NIST, 2008)
 - ³⁵ (NIST, 2010)
 - ³⁶ (Joyce & Showers, Student achievement through staff development (3rd ed.), 2002)
 - ³⁷ (Adey, 1999)
 - ³⁸ (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad, 2009)
 - ³⁹ (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009)
 - ⁴⁰ (NIST, 2008)
 - ⁴¹ (Education First, 2003-09)
 - ⁴² (Education First, 2003-09)
 - ⁴³ (Education First, 2003-09)
 - ⁴⁴ (Education First, 2003-09)
 - ⁴⁵ (Iredell-Statesville Schools, 2002-2008)
 - ⁴⁶ (Kellogg Foundation, 2004)
 - ⁴⁷ (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 2003)
 - ⁴⁸ (Cresswell & Clark, 2007)
 - ⁴⁹ (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2004)
 - ⁵⁰ (Unrau, 2001)

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- ⁵¹ (Bond, Becker, & Drake, 1997)
⁵² (Macias, Propst, Rodican, & Boyd, 2001)
⁵³ (Bond, Becker, & Drake, 1997)
⁵⁴ (Sawyer, Holland, & Detgen, 2008)
⁵⁵ (IDEA Partnership, 2010)