

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 6/24/11 12:00 AM

### Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Education, Georgia Department of -- Curriculum and Instruction Curriculum, Inst. and Assess.  
(S371C110049)

**Reader #1:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Quality of State-level activities</b>		
<b>Quality of State-level activities</b>		
1. State-level activities	37	33
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Quality of the State subgrant competition</b>		
<b>Quality of the State subgrant competition</b>		
1. State subgrant comp	28	24
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Project management</b>		
<b>Project management</b>		
1. Project management	15	13
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Adequacy of resources</b>		
<b>Adequacy of resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	19
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Priority</b>		
<b>Effective Use of Technology</b>		
1. Competitive Priority	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		
<b>Improving Learning Outcomes</b>		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 2</b>		
<b>Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making</b>		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>94</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - SRCL - 5: 84.371C

Reader #1: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Education, Georgia Department of -- Curriculum and Instruction Curriculum, Inst. and Assess. (S371C110049)

## Questions

### Quality of State-level activities - Quality of State-level activities

1. In determining the quality of State-level activities, the Secretary considers: See Sub-Criteria

Reader's Score: 33

#### Sub Question

1. How the SEA will carry out the required State-level activities (described in the Additional Requirements section of the NIA) and how it will align those activities with its comprehensive State literacy plan.

#### Strengths:

The SEA has a well developed and comprehensive plan for implementing activities in alignment with the state's literacy plan. Strong evidence of this is provided in the documentation (pp. e9-11) chart which includes a listing of Strategies for Academic Success, identifying key components of the Georgia State Literacy Plan, comprised of nine research-based components representing best practices for literacy instruction. Elements include all aspects of literacy learning as well as core and intervention literacy programs developed and in use by the state. The applicant recognizes the importance of designing and developing activities in the SRCL that promote and build capacity in the LEAs (p. e12), so that work can continue beyond the funding period.

#### Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses noted in this section.

Reader's Score: 10

2. The SEA's goals for improving student literacy outcomes throughout the State for all students (e.g., limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities), including a description of the data (which may include data gathered through a needs assessment) that the SEA has considered or will consider and a clear and credible path that the SEA will take to achieve these goals with the support of its LEAs.

#### Strengths:

The SEA has established a comprehensive list of performance measures that will be used to achieve the goals of the project. Identified data includes collection of baseline data and annual performance measure data to provide evidence of the success of the implementation of the project. (p. e. 12) Using a needs assessment, schools and systems will determine the strengths and weaknesses of current practices and design goals and activities within a school improvement plan. The plan will be aligned with the state's literacy plan, thereby providing a system which school participants are familiar with. Performance measures will be disaggregated by subgroups to ensure all students are included.

**Sub Question**

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant has described overarching goals, objectives and outcomes, (p. e8) which indicate the research questions to be studied. These goals, as described here, do not align with the data collection nor to they provide a clear and credible path for achieving them.

**Reader's Score:** 7

- 3. How the SEA will provide technical assistance and support to its SRCL subgrantees (and, at its discretion, to other LEAs or early childhood education providers) to enable them to implement a high-quality comprehensive literacy program and to improve student achievement in core academic subjects.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides good evidence of the technical support given to the subgrantees through the process. Educational specialists and monitors will visit each school site six times during the first year of implementation and quarterly in Years 2 and 3 to assess progress and provide on-site technical assistance. (p. e- 13). Table 2 (p. e15) provides a comprehensive listing of the technical assistance webinars on a variety of informational topics to be provided to subgrantees and support their involvement in the process from its initial stages through completion.

**Weaknesses:**

Alignment of the actual and specific technical assistance with the project activities and goals would provide useful information to subgrantees. The projected schedule and integration of the technical support with specificity with the other aspects of the grant would provide more clarity and connection with key components of the project. (p. e41)

**Reader's Score:** 4

- 4. How the SEA will evaluate the State's progress in improving achievement in literacy for children and youth from birth through grade 12, including disadvantaged students, including: (1) whether the evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluator (whose role in the project is limited solely to conducting the evaluation); (2) whether the evaluation will use methods that are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the objectives of the proposed project; and (3) how the SEA will use evidence to inform and continuously improve the design and implementation of its activities.**

**Strengths:**

The SEA will utilize an independent evaluator (p. e13) to conduct ongoing formative and yearly summative evaluation. The individual must have the necessary background and training to develop and design appropriate methodology for such an evaluation. (p. e45) The independent evaluator will provide formative data summaries that will be used to refine professional learning and set state implementation goals. Evaluation methods are feasible and appropriate to the proposed project individual will be responsible for conducting and summarizing surveys, achievement data and implementation data. The State will be requesting a totally electronic evaluation and the evaluator will work directly with the Research and Evaluation specialist who will coordinate this aspect of the project. There is a clear connection with the evaluation aspect and how the data gathered through the process will be used to inform future design and implementation of its activities.

**Weaknesses:**

There are no noted weakness in this section.

**Reader's Score:** 10

- 5. How the SEA will disseminate information on project outcomes, disaggregated by student subgroup, and in formats that are easily understood by, and accessible to, the public, and how the SEA will make that information useful to varied groups (such as families, educators, researchers, other experts, early childhood education providers, and State leaders).**

**Sub Question**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides information about how information will be disseminated to various stakeholder groups. SRCL staff will host three poly com conferences per year for the purpose of data dissemination. (p. e13) Conferences will be archived and a yearly report produced that provides information in a format that is easily understood.

**Weaknesses:**

While the applicant has indicated plans to disseminate the project information, these plans are not an integral part of the project process. There is little information about the differentiation of information so that all stakeholder groups are included and informed about the project, its work and its outcomes. In particular, the way families will be informed has not been included or directly addressed. As families represent key stakeholders in developing literacy skills, this group should not be overlooked.

**Reader's Score: 2**

**Quality of the State subgrant competition - Quality of the State subgrant competition**

- 1. In determining the quality of the applicant's proposed SRCL subgrant competition, the Secretary considers: See Sub-Criteria**

**Reader's Score: 24**

**Sub Question**

- 1. The extent to which the SEA will run a rigorous, high-quality competition for subgrants, including how it will review and judge:**  
**a) The LEA's or early childhood education provider's capacity to successfully implement its proposal.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides good evidence that they will run a rigorous, high quality competition for subgrantees. Superintendents will be notified via U.S. Mail and then a follow up email will be sent to inform them of the opportunity. Funding will be used for three categories or cohorts to include large urban, suburban and rural systems and will focus on building capacity and sustainability. Cohorts will receive graduated funding based on need and gains made with participants developing a literacy system team to work on the proposal. (p. e 15). Early Childhood specialists will serve as members of the team.

Specific information regarding how the subgrants will be judged is clear and specific. Three readers will review each grant using a scoring template for each section, with comments required to justify scores. Training will ensure that reviewers understand the process and assess using consistent guidelines. Reviewers will evaluate subgrant applications for capacity to implement the project, (pp. 17-18), inclusion of the Georgia SRCL assessment protocol and evaluation, and project-based design based on a comprehensive literacy needs assessment and locally developed literacy plan.

**Weaknesses:**

There are no weaknesses noted in this section.

**Reader's Score: 3**

- 2. (b) The extent to which each SRCL subgrant applicant has proposed a comprehensive high-quality literacy program that meets all of the requirements set out in paragraph (d) of the Additional Requirements section in the NIA and that:**

**Sub Question**

- (1) Addresses the needs of disadvantaged students and proposes to implement activities in schools and early learning programs with the highest levels of need and capacity for improvement.**
- (2) Is informed by a needs assessment described in the application and is designed to support effective teaching and to improve student achievement of struggling readers.**
- (3) Involves other agencies, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, and families in activities that promote the implementation of effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides good evidence of subgrantees submitting proposals representing high quality programs. The Request For Proposal will require subgrantees to demonstrate how they will serve the highest poverty and highest need schools. They will be required to describe their capacity for change and improvement within the proposal. Subgrantee applicants will complete a question-based application that is built around the system data, the comprehensive literacy needs assessment, literacy plan and assurances. (p. e. 16)

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not clearly address how families and nonprofit agencies will be included in activities to promote the implementation of effective literacy instruction. Omission of these groups is a big oversight as the represent important voices in the process that should be included in the implementation phase of the process. As a result, is not as clear how key stakeholders will be involved in the activities promoting literacy efforts.

**Reader's Score: 6**

- 3. (c) The extent to which each SRCL subgrant applicant demonstrates that it will implement a coherent strategy to improve literacy instruction that aligns activities under the SRCL subgrant with literacy instruction supported with other Federal funds, including with funds the entity receives under Title I, Title II-A, and Title III of the ESEA and, as appropriate, the Head Start Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, and State and local funds.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant presents evidence requiring subgrantees to submit documentation of all funding streams as shown in Table 6, p. e49 in the proposal, to ensure that all grant funds are used to supplement, rather than supplant, other funding. The applicant refers to the importance of alignment of funds to detail how all will be expended and ensuring that funds are used to supplement literacy. Georgia Department of Education will require applicants to submit audit findings for the past five years. Past performance of an applicant in carrying out a previous award, such as the applicant's use of funds, achievement of project objectives and compliance with grant conditions.

**Weaknesses:**

There are no weaknesses noted in this section.

**Reader's Score: 2**

- 4. The extent to which the SEA will give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education that propose to serve high-poverty schools or a high-poverty population, based on a definition of poverty and process for applying the priority provided by the State.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant provides good evidence of how they will give priority to LEAs serving high poverty schools. Subgrantees will be required to identify need based on the analysis of student data and recommendations from the literacy plan. Areas of root cause analysis, concern and findings will be required of applicants (p. e37) to ensure all eligible students are identified.

**Sub Question**

**Weaknesses:**

The applicant does not refer to its state definition of poverty. This information is not clearly aligned with the process for subgrantees. It is unclear whether all LEAs will be eligible to compete or just those with these designated populations.

**Reader's Score: 4**

**5. The extent to which the SEA will give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education whose applications are supported by the strongest available evidence.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant describes in detail how subgrantees will be required to complete a comprehensive needs assessment to serve as the local cornerstone for formation of a literacy plan. (p. e. 38). Information about the building blocks for literacy suggest the connection to early childhood providers. In this way, priority will be given to those programs with the strongest available evidence. Subgrantees will be required to provide specific, evidence-based research to support all strategies within the local literacy plan. Reviewers will look closely at the research cited in applications to ensure alignment with findings of rigorous causal research reported in peer-reviewed journals. (p. e18) Priority will be given in the point scoring rubric for those LEAs whose applications are supported by the strongest available evidence.

**Weaknesses:**

There are no weaknesses in this section.

**Reader's Score: 4**

**6. The extent to which the SEA will develop or update a process, or use an existing process, to review and judge the evidence base and alignment with State standards for the curricula and materials that LEAs propose to use in implementing their subgrants, and how the SEA will make the process and results of any such review publicly available.**

**Strengths:**

The SEA outlines the process that will be used for reviewing and judging curricula and materials. They thoroughly describe how the LEAs will have training in the identification of scientifically based reading research materials, programs and strategies. Per Georgia law, all materials purchased with state funds must be aligned with the state's performance standards. ( p. e22). Current revisions to curricular materials to align with Common Core State Standards are underway. Webinars will provide assistance to grantees to find materials with rigor to fit their literacy plan. The website reinforces and provides information making the review process public and accessible to all.

**Weaknesses:**

There are no weaknesses noted in this section.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Project management - Project management**

**1. The Secretary considers the following factors in determining the quality of the project management plan: See Sub-Criteria**

Reader's Score: 13

Sub Question

1. (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 for accomplishing project tasks.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has provided a clear and concise management plan with specific duties and responsibilities for key personnel. The project will be managed by Georgia's Department of Education Literacy Team, which includes veteran managers who have experience with leading large scale reading initiatives. demonstrating a clear understanding of the importance of project goals and objectives. (p. e.39) Table 3 provides a schedule with projected dates activities and annual milestones to be completed over the course of the five year period.

**Weaknesses:**

There are no weaknesses noted in this section.

Reader's Score: 6

2. (ii) **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key personnel.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has identified key personnel to oversee and manage the project. Strong evidence exists of the training, background and experience of these individuals, through the inclusion of resumes and curriculum vitae. These documents include extensive background and experiences for individuals who will oversee and coordinate the project. They have demonstrated their expertise through translating outcomes, completing analyses of previous literacy projects, and presenting at national conferences and in peer-reviewed journals. Job descriptions for intended personnel reflect specific background and qualifications that are well matched to the proposed activities within the project. (pp. e0-e6) These are targeted to specific experience and level of training and expertise for the project work.

**Weaknesses:**

There are no weaknesses noted in this section.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (iii) **The extent to which the State will ensure a diversity of perspectives in the design and implementation of the proposed project, including those of: families, teachers, early childhood education professionals, officials from other State and local agencies, Head Start Advisory Councils, professional organizations, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, and libraries.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has aligned the proposed work in this project with the work of the state literacy team. This Literacy Task Force is comprised of fifty members of various educational contexts and represent a broad range of stakeholders and perspectives. The task force includes membership from higher education organizations, after school program representatives and other educational representatives (p. e48) thereby ensuring a diversity of background, training and perspectives.

**Weaknesses:**

While the applicant has recognized the importance of a team of diverse perspectives and outside educational experts to serve in a capacity connected to prior state-level literacy initiatives, the roles of these individuals has not been made explicit. The work of the external partners has not been well-developed so these individuals are an integral part of the design and implementation of the project.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 2

Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources

1. The Secretary considers the following factors in determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project: See Sub-Criteria

Reader's Score: 19

Sub Question

1. (i) The extent to which the costs described in the SEA's budget are reasonable in relation to the number of objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project .

**Strengths:**

The applicant has provided good information with a budget plan that supports the design and activities of the proposed project. The budget narrative, (pp. e0-e4) provide a comprehensive overview of how the budget is allocated across key activities and aspects of the projects. The basis for determining costs was through the actual costs, which are associated with current salaried employees, and estimated costs which were calculated by using data from other state programs and activities. Administrative expenditures will be used in accordance with state budget accounting policies and procedures. Tables 1 through 5 provide the budget item or activity, with associated costs and level of priority importance to the project. The accompanying budget narrative provides good justification for the objectives, design and signifance of the project.

**Weaknesses:**

There are no noted weaknesses in this section.

Reader's Score: 10

2. (ii) The quality of the SEA's plan to ensure that SRCL subgrant funds are allocated as follows:
- \* At least 15 percent to serve children from birth through age five.
  - \* At least 40 percent to serve students in kindergarten through grade five.
  - \* At least 40 percent to serve students in middle and high school, through grade 12, including an equitable distribution of funds between middle and high schools.

**Strengths:**

The SEA will ensure that subgrantees allocations are met in a number of ways. They will require that applications that comply with the percentages to serve each age level population. The project design requires a needs assessment, root cause analysis and use of data to support the fund allocation. (p. e18) The application rubric provides a specific point value for this criteria being met. Subgrant applications falling outside of these percentages will not be funded. In addition, the state has process for monitoring grant spending so these requirements will be adhered to.

**Weaknesses:**

There are no weaknesses noted in this section.

Reader's Score: 4

3. (iii) The extent to which the SEA will use the grant to leverage other State and Federal funds in order to maximize the impact of the grant and how it will support LEAs and early childhood education providers in integrating funds with other local, State, and Federal funds and in developing a plan for sustaining funding after the end of the subgrant.

**Sub Question**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has met this criteria by requiring subgrantees to integrate funds from federal, state and local grants. The subgrantee application provides for this in the scoring rubric (p. e19). Documentation must be provided to show alignment with other funding sources. Table 6, Education Expenditures, (pp. e49-50), provides information on other grant fund allocations.

**Weaknesses:**

While other funding sources have been referenced throughout the application, the actual integration does not seem as clear. Limited information is given about how the funds should be maximized in a way that is evident to the reader. While the issue of a plan for sustainability was carefully woven throughout this proposal, it was not addressed with regard to leveraging other grant funds in order to do so.

**Reader's Score: 2**

4. (iv) **The extent to which the SEA will award SRCL subgrants of sufficient size to support projects that improve instruction for a significant number of students in the high-need schools or early learning programs serving children birth through five that the SRCL subgrantee would serve.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has required subgrantees to provide data to support the extent they will serve significant numbers of students in high needs schools or early learning. Past performance and success with previous grants along with work on the state literacy plan will be required evidence. The Building Blocks to Literacy framework provides the project design for this criteria. The Georgia Department of Education will award subgrants that will be significant in size in order to achieve the goals set forth in the program. (p. e50) It is expected that these grants will range from \$200,000 to \$500,000 depending upon the size of school or center and the need determined through the needs assessment and the applicant's literacy plan.

**Weaknesses:**

There are no weaknesses noted in this section.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology**

1. **To meet this priority, an applicant must (1) propose to use technology--which may include technology to support principles of universal design for learning (as defined in the NIA)--to address student learning challenges; and (2) provide, in its application, an evidence-based (as defined in the NIA) rationale that its proposed technology program, practice, or strategy will increase student engagement and achievement or increase teacher effectiveness.**

**Background: The effective use of technology is a critical tool for improving learning outcomes and providing teachers with high-quality professional development. Use of concepts, ideas, programming techniques, and computer-assisted text displays that give access to the text for students who cannot access traditional print, including limited-English-proficient children and students with disabilities, is a basic tenet of universal design for learning (as defined in the NIA) and can help improve students' literacy and language development and identify and address student learning challenges.**

**Strengths:**

The applicant has provided strong evidence for how the two criteria for technology use will be met. Subgrantee applications may include the use of technology and how the principles of universal design will be used to meet student learning needs. (p. e22) The Request For Proposal requires evidence-based rationale to demonstrate how the technology will increase student engagement and achievement or increase teacher effectiveness. Within the needs assessment process, subgrantees will have to determine the current

instructional technology that is in use and how it is being utilized by staff. Electronic assessment, both formative and summative, will provide ongoing progress monitoring throughout the project.

**Weaknesses:**

There are no noted weaknesses in this section.

**Reader's Score:** 5

**Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes**

1. **To meet this priority: An applicant must propose a project that is designed to improve school readiness and success through grade 12 in the area of language and literacy development for disadvantaged students.**

**Background:** Improving the language and literacy development of disadvantaged students is essential to improving academic achievement for these students in all content areas. The 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results show disproportionately large numbers of disadvantaged students struggle with developing the necessary pre-literacy and literacy skills needed to read, comprehend, and use language effectively. This results in persistent gaps in academic achievement through the elementary and secondary school years and in high school graduation rates, and presents civic and economic difficulties for these students later in life. Meeting the language and literacy needs of disadvantaged students, including limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities, is a particular focus of the SRCL program.

**Strengths:**

The applicant has provided strong evidence for how this priority will be met. The SRCL project builds upon and integrates with the goals, objectives and initiatives implemented within the state over the past fifteen years. The citing of other literacy programs in place aligned with the proposed activities and goals demonstrate the integration of this project with current work. A comprehensive literacy plan from birth through career and technical training ensures learning outcomes will be met. (p. e6)

MET

**Weaknesses:**

There are no noted weaknesses in this section.

**Reader's Score:** 0

**Absolute Priority 2 - Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making**

1. **To meet this priority: An applicant must propose a project that is designed to collect, analyze, and use high-quality and timely data, especially on program participant outcomes, in accordance with privacy requirements (as defined in the NIA), to improve instructional practices, policies, and student outcomes in early learning settings and in elementary and secondary schools.**

**Background:** Accurate, timely, relevant, and appropriate data, and the effective use of that data for informed decision-making, are essential to the continuous improvement of children's literacy and language development. In developing comprehensive literacy plans and programs, it is important for States to consider strategies that provide educators, as well as families and other key stakeholders, with the data they need and the capacity and training to use those data to improve school readiness, respond to the learning and academic needs of students, improve educator effectiveness, inform professional development practices and approaches, and make informed decisions that increase student pre-literacy, literacy, and language development.

**Strengths:**

The applicant has proposed a project that is data-driven throughout all aspects of the work. Data will be used from the beginning stages in webinar training to assist applicants in understanding and developing their applications (. p. e7) and throughout the establish goals, assess needs, demonstrate effectiveness and inform future work for continuous improvement. Professional learning will stress and incorporate the use of data at all levels so teachers and school leaders have a clear understanding of its value and usefulness to inform their work.

MET

**Weaknesses:**

There are no noted weaknesses.

**Reader's Score:** 0

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### Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Education, Georgia Department of -- Curriculum and Instruction Curriculum, Inst. and Assess.  
(S371C110049)

**Reader #2:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Quality of State-level activities</b>		
<b>Quality of State-level activities</b>		
1. State-level activities	37	33.5
<b>Sub Total</b>	37	33.5
<b>Quality of the State subgrant competition</b>		
<b>Quality of the State subgrant competition</b>		
1. State subgrant comp	28	25
<b>Sub Total</b>	28	25
<b>Project management</b>		
<b>Project management</b>		
1. Project management	15	12.5
<b>Sub Total</b>	15	12.5
<b>Adequacy of resources</b>		
<b>Adequacy of resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	15
<b>Sub Total</b>	20	15
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Priority</b>		
<b>Effective Use of Technology</b>		
1. Competitive Priority	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	5	5
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		
<b>Improving Learning Outcomes</b>		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	0	0
<b>Absolute Priority 2</b>		
<b>Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making</b>		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	0	0
<b>Total</b>	105	91.0

# Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - SRCL - 5: 84.371C

Reader #2: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Education, Georgia Department of -- Curriculum and Instruction Curriculum, Inst. and Assess. (S371C110049)

## Questions

### Quality of State-level activities - Quality of State-level activities

1. In determining the quality of State-level activities, the Secretary considers: See Sub-Criteria

Reader's Score: 33.5

#### Sub Question

1. How the SEA will carry out the required State-level activities (described in the Additional Requirements section of the NIA) and how it will align those activities with its comprehensive State literacy plan.

#### Strengths:

Strengths

Subcriterion i Georgia builds their proposed language and literacy program on a strong base of a long standing history of reading initiatives dating back more than 15 years and federally funded literacy programs (p. 4-5). Teachers in the state appear to have a strong foundation from training in high quality, evidence based literacy instruction. The applicant provided extensive information on the details of the proposed literacy instruction. The applicant provided a comprehensive and coherent plan for supporting subgrantees in aligning their literacy plans with that of the states literacy plan (p. 12-13).

#### Weaknesses:

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i No weaknesses noted in this section

Reader's Score: 10

2. The SEA's goals for improving student literacy outcomes throughout the State for all students (e.g., limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities), including a description of the data (which may include data gathered through a needs assessment) that the SEA has considered or will consider and a clear and credible path that the SEA will take to achieve these goals with the support of its LEAs.

**Sub Question**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion ii The applicant provided extensive information about the needs of the children in their state and the approach they will use to meet the needs of children birth to 12th grade (p. 2-11). The applicant included clear and objective process goals it will use to improve literacy services in the state (p. 6-7). The applicant is also providing ample support to subgrantees to support their efforts in developing their own need's assessment.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion ii The applicant did not include any information about specific child literacy outcome goals to measure the effectiveness of the project intervention. The project has proposed multiple literacy assessments and it would be helpful to the projects to actually set goals of how children in the state will improve as a result of this project.

**Reader's Score: 6**

**3. How the SEA will provide technical assistance and support to its SRCL subgrantees (and, at its discretion, to other LEAs or early childhood education providers) to enable them to implement a high-quality comprehensive literacy program and to improve student achievement in core academic subjects.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion iii - The applicant included an extensive list of technical assistance webinars that it will provide to subgrantees through its poly com system (p. 15). This will allow the technical assistance to be more accessible to all programs, including those that are rural. The applicant is proposing a comprehensive list of topics that should effectively support the subgrantees to provide high quality literacy programs.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iii No weaknesses noted in this section

**Reader's Score: 5**

**4. How the SEA will evaluate the State's progress in improving achievement in literacy for children and youth from birth through grade 12, including disadvantaged students, including: (1) whether the evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluator (whose role in the project is limited solely to conducting the evaluation); (2) whether the evaluation will use methods that are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the objectives of the proposed project; and (3) how the SEA will use evidence to inform and continuously improve the design and implementation of its activities.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion iv The applicant provided a very strong evaluation plan for this project. The project proposes to use an independent evaluator whose only role will be to conduct the evaluation (p. 13). The application included a summary of the evaluator's job roles and the desired qualifications (p.45) which should result in an effective evaluation of the project. The applicant also included specific assessments

**Sub Question**

that will be required for all project children (p. 30). These are standardized, include assessments of child literacy outcomes as well as standardized classroom observation measures. This selection of assessments will guarantee continuity across the subprojects and will be a strong approach to assessing project outcomes. The applicant also provided an intense approach to an ongoing assessment loop that includes twice yearly classroom monitoring, twice a month analysis groups and monthly check-ins with their assigned SEA staff member (p. 31). The strength of this approach is that the applicant will train and support subgrantee projects to learn these evaluation skills.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iv No weaknesses noted in this section.

**Reader's Score: 10**

**5. How the SEA will disseminate information on project outcomes, disaggregated by student subgroup, and in formats that are easily understood by, and accessible to, the public, and how the SEA will make that information useful to varied groups (such as families, educators, researchers, other experts, early childhood education providers, and State leaders).**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion v The applicant has proposed to disseminate information about the project in a variety of formats which should make its efforts more effective. The applicant will host three poly com conferences per year for the purpose of data dissemination (p. 13). They also propose to produce yearly reports, provide a summary of the evaluation and a fact sheet to stakeholders (p. 13-14).

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion v It would have strengthened this section if the applicant had acknowledged that different audiences (parents, teachers, faculty, policy makers, families with a child with special needs, ESL needs) might need varying formats, contents and levels of information they disseminate about the project.

**Reader's Score: 2.5**

**Quality of the State subgrant competition - Quality of the State subgrant competition**

**1. In determining the quality of the applicant's proposed SRCL subgrant competition, the Secretary considers: See Sub-Criteria**

**Reader's Score: 25**

**Sub Question**

**1. The extent to which the SEA will run a rigorous, high-quality competition for subgrants, including how it will review and judge:**

**Sub Question**

- a) **The LEA's or early childhood education provider's capacity to successfully implement its proposal.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion i (a) It appears the applicant has the capacity to run a rigorous, high quality competition based on their successful history of administering state initiatives and federal grants (p. 4). The applicant has provided a comprehensive and carefully considered plan for organizing the competition and evaluating the applications. The applicant will require potential subgrantees to develop their application with a literacy team which should ensure that the subgrantee develops the most comprehensive plan possible before submission and with full participation of all stakeholders that the plan will have a better likelihood of being fully implemented if funded. The applicant will select reviewers using a rigorous screening process (p. 17-18) to ensure the most appropriate and knowledgeable reviewers evaluate submissions. Additional reviews will be selected with specific expertise by age/grade group (birth-age 5, kindergarten-grade 5, grade 6-12) and balanced by types of grants (urban, suburban, rural) (p. 17). The SEA will determine LEA/ECE provider capacity by evaluating the subgrantee's literacy needs assessment and their locally developed literacy plan. This plan should ensure a fair and knowledgeable review of the application.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i (a) No weaknesses noted in this section.

**Reader's Score: 3**

2. (b) **The extent to which each SRCL subgrant applicant has proposed a comprehensive high-quality literacy program that meets all of the requirements set out in paragraph (d) of the Additional Requirements section in the NIA and that:**
- (1) **Addresses the needs of disadvantaged students and proposes to implement activities in schools and early learning programs with the highest levels of need and capacity for improvement.**
  - (2) **Is informed by a needs assessment described in the application and is designed to support effective teaching and to improve student achievement of struggling readers.**
  - (3) **Involves other agencies, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, and families in activities that promote the implementation of effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion i (b) A comprehensive literacy needs assessment will be required to be submitted with the application and is weighted 25 out of a possible 100 points. A proposal scoring under 75 points will not be funded so applicants will have to submit this needs assessment to be considered for funding (p. 20).

**Sub Question**

The applicant will also provide technical assistance to subgrant applicants in conducting a comprehensive needs assessment and developing a site-based literacy plan (p. 15) so this should provide sufficient support for all programs to meet this requirement, especially those programs with little previous grant experience.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i (b) There was limited information included about how the applicant would support the subgrantees in involving other agencies/programs in the literacy program. The applicant stated that subgrantees would be required to submit the minutes or sign-in sheets to ensure inclusion of agencies and other organizations (p. 38). Without providing any additional support, training or incentives to coordinate with other programs the plan of requiring proof of inclusion is not a strong strategy for ensuring this coordination. Also, there was really no information provided about how the applicants serving various age/grade levels would coordinate their efforts or interface.

**Reader's Score: 6**

3. (c) **The extent to which each SRCL subgrant applicant demonstrates that it will implement a coherent strategy to improve literacy instruction that aligns activities under the SRCL subgrant with literacy instruction supported with other Federal funds, including with funds the entity receives under Title I, Title II-A, and Title III of the ESEA and, as appropriate, the Head Start Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, and State and local funds.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion i (c) The applicant provided a clear plan to ensure that the subgrantees proposed literacy interventions are aligned with literacy instruction supported with other federal funds. For example, the applicant will require subgrantees to submit audit findings for the past 5 years for all state and federal grants and the past performance of how subgrantees will carry out previous awards will be factored into how the application is scored and whether they are ultimately awarded the subgrant (p. 19).

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i (c) No weaknesses noted in this section.

**Reader's Score: 2**

4. **The extent to which the SEA will give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education that propose to serve high-poverty schools or a high-poverty population, based on a definition of poverty and process for applying the priority provided by the State.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion ii The applicant proposes to award grant funds to LEAs/ECE providers that include school with free or reduced lunch rates that exceed 70% (p. 39). Subgrantee applicants will be given 5 additional points for their application if their numbers exceed 70% free and reduced lunch rates (p. 19) which will clearly support the programs with the most needs. Within the grant application, potential

**Sub Question**

subgrantees will need to complete information documenting eligibility (for example, highest number of students not meeting standards, needs improvement status in reading/language arts, highest number/percentages of children who are counted under Title I, Part A) (p. 18). This will provide specific information from which the applicant can make fair evaluations and weigh the needs of programs.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion ii - The applicant stated that once eligibility has been determined, superintendents will be notified via US mail about the opportunity to compete for funding (p. 14) but provided no additional details about how eligibility will be determined. Without specific information about the criteria for determination it is not clear if all eligible programs will have the same opportunity for participating.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**5. The extent to which the SEA will give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education whose applications are supported by the strongest available evidence.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion iii - The applicant has developed rigorous guidelines for evaluating applications and determining the ones with the strongest available evidence. Within the grant application process, subgrantee applicants will be asked to include information (Quality of Project Design) that will be used when reviewing the application and is weighted with more points (35 out of 100 points) than any other area included in the application. Also the reviewers will be instructed to ensure that the proposed interventions have an evidence base including peer reviewed rigorous research (p. 39).

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iii No weaknesses noted in this section.

**Reader's Score: 4**

**6. The extent to which the SEA will develop or update a process, or use an existing process, to review and judge the evidence base and alignment with State standards for the curricula and materials that LEAs propose to use in implementing their subgrants, and how the SEA will make the process and results of any such review publicly available.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion iv It appears from the information provided that the state will use an existing online system (GADOE polycom system) for potential subgrantees to use for technical assistance (p. 15) during their grant writing activities. The project will also solicit grant reviewers through their Department of Administrative Services (p. 17) and make the award information available on the Georgia Department of Education website (p. 20). The subgrantees will be provided with the state's literacy plan to review as they develop their own literacy plan and complete their grant application and must reference the state's plan in their application under Project Design (p.22). By state law all instructional materials purchased with state funds must be aligned with the state's performance standards. It appears that the applicant has a very effective tested system for supporting applicants, reviewing applications and ensuring that the

**Sub Question**

subgrantee's proposed literacy plans are fully aligned with the state's literacy plan.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iv No weaknesses noted in this section.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Project management - Project management**

**1. The Secretary considers the following factors in determining the quality of the project management plan: See Sub-Criteria**

**Reader's Score: 12.5**

**Sub Question**

**1. (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 for accomplishing project tasks.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion i The applicant provided a management plan that included the proposed dates, activities and timelines (p. 41-42). The milestones and activities were sufficiently detailed and clearly defined. This information included time lines for each cohort that will provide guidance in the general activities for each cohort.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i - A more detailed time line with specific dates (rather than year blocks) would have been helpful in determining the adequacy of the plan for achieving the proposed project on time (p. 41-42). For example, it is really not clear during the first year when during that year the grant competition will be held, when Cohort 1 will be announced, when or how long TA will be provided for Cohort 1. Providing more specific dates would have made it clearer if this plan is reasonable. It would have also strengthened the management plan if the person responsible for each of the tasks had also been included in Table 3.

**Reader's Score: 4**

**Sub Question**

**2. (ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key personnel.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion ii The key personnel appear to have the experience and training to administer a grant of this size and complexity. The proposed project director/manager is currently the Literacy Team Project Manager for Georgia Department of Education (p. 43) and she was the past program manager for Georgias Reading First. It appears that the management team has extensive experience in administering large scale grants including the Reading Excellence Act (\$48 million) and Reading First (\$200 million). The applicant is also proposing to include an outside evaluator (p. 40) and provided a summary of the responsibilities and desired qualifications (p. 45) for that role. The applicant also provided detailed summaries of the responsibilities of other key personnel (Learning Architects, Education Specialists and the Research and Evaluation Specialist) and the desired qualifications (p. 44-45). The project appears to have a well experienced management team that should be able to administer a successful and effective grant project.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion ii No weaknesses noted in this section.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**3. (iii) The extent to which the State will ensure a diversity of perspectives in the design and implementation of the proposed project, including those of: families, teachers, early childhood education professionals, officials from other State and local agencies, Head Start Advisory Councils, professional organizations, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, and libraries.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion iii - The applicant provided a detailed summary of the results of a Literacy Task force that has already been convened in Georgia and included a very comprehensive list of recommendations generated by that task force outlining the future plan (p. 46-48) for literacy interventions and support for the future. The task force included a variety of professional stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and have already generated a very detailed and comprehensive plan that should provide an effective educational path for children in the state.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iii - While the applicant provided a detailed summary of the results of a Literacy Task force that has already been convened in Georgia and a very comprehensive list of recommendations generated by the task force outlining the future plan (p. 46-48), there was no information about including families in the previous task force or plans to include family members in the future planning.

**Reader's Score: 3.5**

**Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources**

**1. The Secretary considers the following factors in determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project: See Sub-Criteria**

**Reader's Score: 15**

**Sub Question**

- 1. (i) The extent to which the costs described in the SEA's budget are reasonable in relation to the number of objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project .**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion i - The total amounts listed for each category in the proposed budget seemed reasonable for a project of this size and scope (Appendix, Budget, p. e0-2).

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion i - More detail in the budget and budget narrative would have really strengthened this section (Appendix, budget, e0-2). For example, the applicant included the types of travel that would be anticipated for this project but listed TBD (To Be Determined) for the cost of all trips. The applicant did include a total amount for travel as \$111,100 but did not provide any information about how that total was calculated other than to say estimated based on a travel average for like programs within the agency. Costs per mile or an estimated number or miles would have been more specific and it would have been easier to determine the reasonableness of this proposed cost. The applicant also projected the consultant budget as \$559,000 per year and listed the kinds of consultants that would be hired but provided no information about the kinds of consultants they would be trying to recruit or the amount of time that consultants would be engaged. Without more specific information it is difficult to determine if this total amount proposed for consultants is reasonable.

**Reader's Score: 7**

- 2. (ii) The quality of the SEA's plan to ensure that SRCL subgrant funds are allocated as follows:**

- \* At least 15 percent to serve children from birth through age five.**
- \* At least 40 percent to serve students in kindergarten through grade five.**
- \* At least 40 percent to serve students in middle and high school, through grade 12, including an equitable distribution of funds between middle and high schools.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion ii - The applicant will ensure that subgrants are funded within the requirements (15% for programs serving birth to five, 40% to programs serving children Kindergarten through grade 5, and 40% to serve students in middle and high school) by building these requirements into the application process. The project will not fund subgrantees that have proposed budgets outside these percentages (p. 4). The Georgia Department of Education also has systems in place to monitor spending and will use these

**Sub Question**

systems to ensure that subprojects stay within these budgetary guidelines (p. 4).

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion ii No weaknesses noted in this section.

**Reader's Score: 4**

3. (iii) **The extent to which the SEA will use the grant to leverage other State and Federal funds in order to maximize the impact of the grant and how it will support LEAs and early childhood education providers in integrating funds with other local, State, and Federal funds and in developing a plan for sustaining funding after the end of the subgrant.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion iii The applicant provided specific information about current and projected funding sources for birth to 5 education efforts by type of funding (p. 49-50) which will total more than \$28 million during the next fiscal year.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iii While the applicant provided information about the current and projected state funds that will be used as a base for these grants funds (p. 49-50), there was no information included about how they will use these funds to leverage other state/federal funds or provide a clear plan for sustaining funding after the end of the subgrant.

**Reader's Score: 2**

4. (iv) **The extent to which the SEA will award SRCL subgrants of sufficient size to support projects that improve instruction for a significant number of students in the high-need schools or early learning programs serving children birth through five that the SRCL subgrantee would serve.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Subcriterion iv - The applicant provided guidance about how the SEA will ensure that the subgrants are of sufficient size to support projects that improve instruction for a significant number of students. The project will provide subgrants that range in size from \$200,000 to \$500,000 depending on the size of the school and the level of need demonstrated through the needs assessment (p. 50). The applicant also provided some information about the kinds of expenses that would be included for each program.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

Subcriterion iv The applicant is proposing to provide programs with more funds in the first year and decrease the funds in years 2 and 3 (p. 49). This will allow the project to serve more children but it was

**Sub Question**

not clear from the information provided if three years would be sufficient for substantial effects.

**Reader's Score:** 2

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology**

1. To meet this priority, an applicant must (1) propose to use technology--which may include technology to support principles of universal design for learning (as defined in the NIA)--to address student learning challenges; and (2) provide, in its application, an evidence-based (as defined in the NIA) rationale that its proposed technology program, practice, or strategy will increase student engagement and achievement or increase teacher effectiveness.

**Background:** The effective use of technology is a critical tool for improving learning outcomes and providing teachers with high-quality professional development. Use of concepts, ideas, programming techniques, and computer-assisted text displays that give access to the text for students who cannot access traditional print, including limited-English-proficient children and students with disabilities, is a basic tenet of universal design for learning (as defined in the NIA) and can help improve students' literacy and language development and identify and address student learning challenges.

**Strengths:**

Strengths

The applicant proposed a strong approach to using technology effectively. The subgrantees application includes an item under Project Design which asks subgrantees to describe strategies and materials to support their literacy plan that includes technology (p. 18-19). It was clear from the information provided that technology would not just be an add-on for the sake of including technology but would be used in a complementary way with the other instructional approaches, in an effective way including technology methods that have been well researched and comprehensive in its approach to training and supporting programs in the effective use of technology.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

No weaknesses noted in this section.

**Reader's Score:** 5

**Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes**

1. To meet this priority: An applicant must propose a project that is designed to improve school readiness and success through grade 12 in the area of language and literacy development for disadvantaged students.

**Background:** Improving the language and literacy development of disadvantaged students is essential to improving academic achievement for these students in all content areas. The 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results show disproportionately large numbers of disadvantaged students struggle with developing the necessary pre-literacy and literacy skills needed to read, comprehend, and use language effectively. This results in persistent gaps in academic achievement through the elementary and secondary school years and in high school graduation rates, and presents civic and economic difficulties for these students later in life. Meeting the language and literacy needs of disadvantaged students, including limited-English-proficient students and students

with disabilities, is a particular focus of the SRCL program.

**Strengths:**

Strengths

Georgia builds their proposed language and literacy program on a strong base of a long standing history of reading initiatives dating back more than 15 years and federally funded literacy programs (p. 4-5). Teachers in the state appear to have a strong foundation from training in high quality, evidence based literacy instruction. The applicant provided extensive information on the details of the proposed literacy instruction. The state also has a significant funding stream (Lottery system, \$10.6 billion) used to support educational efforts in the state. Given the extensive funding base and their strong approach to a comprehensive and coordinated literacy effort, this project will improve learning outcomes for project children. The requested grant funds will provide additional learning opportunities for the state's children and teachers above and beyond the comprehensive literacy initiatives that are already in place.

PRIORITY MET

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

No weaknesses noted in this section.

Reader's Score: 0

**Absolute Priority 2 - Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making**

1. **To meet this priority: An applicant must propose a project that is designed to collect, analyze, and use high-quality and timely data, especially on program participant outcomes, in accordance with privacy requirements (as defined in the NIA), to improve instructional practices, policies, and student outcomes in early learning settings and in elementary and secondary schools.**

**Background: Accurate, timely, relevant, and appropriate data, and the effective use of that data for informed decision-making, are essential to the continuous improvement of children's literacy and language development. In developing comprehensive literacy plans and programs, it is important for States to consider strategies that provide educators, as well as families and other key stakeholders, with the data they need and the capacity and training to use those data to improve school readiness, respond to the learning and academic needs of students, improve educator effectiveness, inform professional development practices and approaches, and make informed decisions that increase student pre-literacy, literacy, and language development.**

**Strengths:**

Strengths

The applicant has developed an elegant and comprehensive framework for using the data to improve literacy outcomes (p. 7). The SEA will develop protocols to provide guidance to subprojects on effective screening, diagnostic measures to help with instruction/grouping and ongoing progress monitoring (p. 31). This is seen as a very strong approach to data-based decision making since the applicant will be building internal sustainability by training and supporting programs to become engaged and knowledgeable in data-based decision making.

PRIORITY MET.

**Weaknesses:**

Weaknesses

No weaknesses noted in this section.

**Reader's Score:** 0

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**Status:** Submitted

**Last Updated:** 6/24/11 12:00 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 6/24/11 12:00 AM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Education, Georgia Department of -- Curriculum and Instruction Curriculum, Inst. and Assess.  
(S371C110049)

**Reader #3:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Quality of State-level activities</b>		
<b>Quality of State-level activities</b>		
1. State-level activities	37	37
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Quality of the State subgrant competition</b>		
<b>Quality of the State subgrant competition</b>		
1. State subgrant comp	28	28
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Project management</b>		
<b>Project management</b>		
1. Project management	15	14
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Adequacy of resources</b>		
<b>Adequacy of resources</b>		
1. Adequacy of resources	20	20
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Priority Questions</b>		
<b>Competitive Priority</b>		
<b>Effective Use of Technology</b>		
1. Competitive Priority	5	5
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 1</b>		
<b>Improving Learning Outcomes</b>		
1. Absolute Priority 1	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Absolute Priority 2</b>		
<b>Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making</b>		
1. Absolute Priority 2	0	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>104</b>

# Technical Review Form

Panel #5 - SRCL - 5: 84.371C

Reader #3: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Education, Georgia Department of -- Curriculum and Instruction Curriculum, Inst. and Assess. (S371C110049)

## Questions

### Quality of State-level activities - Quality of State-level activities

1. In determining the quality of State-level activities, the Secretary considers: See Sub-Criteria

Reader's Score: 37

#### Sub Question

1. How the SEA will carry out the required State-level activities (described in the Additional Requirements section of the NIA) and how it will align those activities with its comprehensive State literacy plan.

#### Strengths:

[Note: All page numbers referenced below are associated with the page numbers listed at the bottom and are on line 3 of the Georgia DOE address label, directly above "All Rights Reserved."]

#### STRENGTHS

A.(i)

State-level activities are built around nine components: standards, unique B-5 components, formative and summative assessment, response to intervention, best instructional practices, high quality teachers, engaged leadership, clearly articulated plan for transitions and alignment, and instructional strategies for maintaining engagement (3).

LEAs and ECE sites receiving funding will develop a plan modeled after the State Literacy Plan and based on the data garnered from a needs assessment. After strengths/weaknesses of current practices are determined, goals and activities will be designed to improve literacy instruction.

Professional Learning (PL) will be designed for the project by 3 PL architects so it can be tailored to the needs of project sites. The main focus of PL will be using data to inform instruction. It will be collaborative and ongoing (2, Abstract).

All of the project activities supported by the SEA have been incorporated into the State Literacy Plan and have been designed to assist in building LEA capacity. The program manager will direct the implementation of the Literacy Plan objectives and the SRCL state activities and will ensure collaboration among all agency departments (11-12).

#### Weaknesses:

#### WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Sub Question**

**Reader's Score: 10**

- 2. The SEA's goals for improving student literacy outcomes throughout the State for all students (e.g., limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities), including a description of the data (which may include data gathered through a needs assessment) that the SEA has considered or will consider and a clear and credible path that the SEA will take to achieve these goals with the support of its LEAs.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTHS

A.(ii)

To improve student literacy outcomes through improvements in instructional practices, the SEA will (1) equip all project classrooms with rich literacy materials and (2) the Professional Learning Architects will design evidence-based PL for teachers and providers (8).

LEA/ECE applicants will be required to employ UDL components (23) and a four-tiered "Response to Intervention" model for all students (3, 32-33). An "Implementation Guide" (37) for sites will provide assistance in developing effective literacy paradigms.

The SEA will encourage applicants to support and challenge students while minimizing barriers. Applicants will be encouraged to explore multiple formats and media, multiple pathways with which students can act, interact, and create, and multiple ways to motivate students (24).

The LEAs receiving funding from the SEA's proposal will provide a needs assessment, which will begin with existing achievement data, and progress will be tracked across the grant period. Georgia's End-of-Course English Language Assessment (ELA) for 8th grade and high school students and the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) / English Language Assessment (ELA) will be used with 5th grade students. Four-year-olds will be assessed in terms of gains made (4% or higher) in oral language skills (12). The decision to use the same testing instrumentation for pre- and post-assessments increases the reliability of student outcomes.

A clear and credible path provided by the SEA is illustrated by the Technical Assistance webinars that will be provided to sub-grantee applicants. These include a) eligibility and school selection and formation of a site-based Literacy Team; b) conducting a comprehensive needs assessment and developing a site-based literacy plan; c) standards and raising the bar, d) writing the sub-grant, budgets, and materials selection; e) data-driven instruction/assessments, reporting and evaluation; f) literacy strategies; g) technology and print materials; h) developing a transition plan; and i) writing across the curriculum (15). The inclusion of the last webinar, "Writing Across the Curriculum," provides an appropriate ending for the steps involved in the SEA's goal toward establishing content literacy for all Georgia students.

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 8**

- 3. How the SEA will provide technical assistance and support to its SRCL subgrantees (and, at its discretion, to other LEAs or early childhood education providers) to enable them to implement a high-quality comprehensive literacy program and to improve student achievement in core academic subjects.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTHS

A.(iii)

**Sub Question**

The project maximizes the potential for building pedagogical content knowledge and skills associated with literacy achievement across content areas (18). The first page of the Narrative for this application begins with "Literacy is paramount in Georgia's Strategic Plan. All teachers, therefore, are literacy instructors.... Specifically, content area teachers at all grade levels must include reading comprehension of subject-specific texts in all [content] areas... Content area teachers must address the components of adolescent literacy: advanced word study, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and motivation. In addition improving content literacy in all grade levels will lead to improved graduation rates and improved readiness for college and careers (1, 2)." The SEA reinforces this concept two ways: by providing a sub-grant webinar, entitled "Writing Across the Curriculum" (15) and by offering opportunities for students to access information through a variety of print or digital texts with specific organizational patterns and features (1-2). Sub-grantees will be required to benchmark all content areas' state literacy standards with national and international academic content and achievement standards (47).

LEAs and ECE providers will have access to high-quality Professional Learning to build competence in evidence-based practices in literacy instruction, provided by the SEA in a variety of methods, including face-to-face, synchronous poly com conferencing, and asynchronous online archives. Education Specialists/Monitors will visit each assigned school several times a year to provide site-specific technical assistance (13). Training will encompass instructional practices and strategies, assessment and data analysis, materials selection, and integration of technology (3).

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score:** 5

- 4. How the SEA will evaluate the State's progress in improving achievement in literacy for children and youth from birth through grade 12, including disadvantaged students, including: (1) whether the evaluation will be conducted by an independent evaluator (whose role in the project is limited solely to conducting the evaluation); (2) whether the evaluation will use methods that are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the objectives of the proposed project; and (3) how the SEA will use evidence to inform and continuously improve the design and implementation of its activities.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTHS

A.(iv)

The SEA will use an independent evaluator who is 100% dedicated to the project and who will provide three webinars per year to present student achievement data to the district leadership, teacher teams and state leadership. S/he will coordinate with the Professional Learning Architects to ensure that a continuous process of improvement is occurring (13). Overall project evaluation will address six primary research questions (8).

Education Specialist/Monitors will visit each of their sites six times the first year of implementation and four times each remaining year to assess progress and provide site-specific TA. Each visit will be electronically recorded (13). The Reading First data portal will be used to collect data from project sites (44). This is significant because the SEA is making use of data and evaluation from a previous successful literacy initiative (44).

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

**Sub Question**

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 10**

- 5. How the SEA will disseminate information on project outcomes, disaggregated by student subgroup, and in formats that are easily understood by, and accessible to, the public, and how the SEA will make that information useful to varied groups (such as families, educators, researchers, other experts, early childhood education providers, and State leaders).**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTH

A.(v)

The SEA will host 3 poly com conferences (which will be archived for convenience) per year for data dissemination (13). In a yearly report the Research/Evaluation Specialist will highlight yearly outcomes and summarize the evaluation from the outside evaluator. All reports will be aggregated, disaggregated, and written in a format that is easily understood by all stakeholders (14). The SEA will develop and update website materials throughout the duration of the grant (41-42).

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 4**

**Quality of the State subgrant competition - Quality of the State subgrant competition**

- 1. In determining the quality of the applicant's proposed SRCL subgrant competition, the Secretary considers: See Sub-Criteria**

**Reader's Score: 28**

**Sub Question**

- 1. The extent to which the SEA will run a rigorous, high-quality competition for subgrants, including how it will review and judge:**  
**a) The LEA's or early childhood education provider's capacity to successfully implement its proposal.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTHS

B.(i)(a)

The SEA's requirements for sub-grantees are demanding and worthy of a high-quality competition. Each sub-grantee application will be scored by 3 reviewers who must supply vitae as well as evidence of their knowledge of reading research, GA standards, GA Common Core, GA Literacy Plan and teaching experience. They must attend a conference for training or train via a recorded session and complete an interview confirming their understanding of their responsibilities. Their ratings must be accompanied with justification comments (17).

**Sub Question**

Sub-grants must substantiate that their design is based on a literacy needs assessment and a local literacy plan. Their plan must support GCCP standards in literacy as well as GA standards in science and social studies and GA early childhood standards. Already implementing a Tier I Core Instructional program will be beneficial for the sub-grantee (18).

The implementation capacity for sub-grantees will be judged on audit findings, past performance with other awards, adherence to statutory requirements and assurances of complying with federal civil rights laws (17-21). This demonstrates how SEAs value their schools and the quality of the school personnel to plan and perform exceptional educational/training opportunities for all of their students (Pre-K to 12), teachers, administrators, parents, and communities. The meticulousness of the submissions demonstrate how the applicants value their State leadership.

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score:** 3

2. (b) The extent to which each SRCL subgrant applicant has proposed a comprehensive high-quality literacy program that meets all of the requirements set out in paragraph (d) of the Additional Requirements section in the NIA and that:
- (1) Addresses the needs of disadvantaged students and proposes to implement activities in schools and early learning programs with the highest levels of need and capacity for improvement.
  - (2) Is informed by a needs assessment described in the application and is designed to support effective teaching and to improve student achievement of struggling readers.
  - (3) Involves other agencies, nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, and families in activities that promote the implementation of effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students.

**Strengths:**

STRENGTHS:

B.(i)(b)(1-3)

The process and results of the sub-grant applicant review will be posted on the GADOE website (20).

A comprehensive literacy needs assessment will be the foundation of the sub-grantee applicant's Literacy Plan (18). Applicants are required to identify need based on the analysis of student data and recommendations set forth in the local literacy plan (37).

The RFP will require prospective sub-grantees to demonstrate how they will serve their highest poverty and highest need schools by specifically addressing ELLs, students with disabilities, assessment data, and graduation rate (16). This will comprise 25 out of a possible 105 points in the sub-grant application (18).

TA webinars will be sponsored by the SEA throughout the 60 month grant cycle. Initial training will be the summer 2012 through 2013 for all participants. Additional Professional Learning (PL) may be included based on identified needs within the literacy plan or in relation to technology tools. The Professional Learning Architects will design and provide PL in the area of language/literacy B-12 levels (21). The inclusion of the TA webinars and the PL based on identified needs adds to the comprehensiveness of each sub-grantee's proposed projects by providing appropriate teacher supports.

Technology will be used to support the principles of universal design for learning and to address learning challenges of all students including those with disabilities and learning differences that are being educated in regular classrooms. UDL reflects an awareness of the unique nature of each learner and the need to accommodate differences creating learning experiences that maximize his/her progress

**Sub Question**

(22-23).

The sub-grant application will require the minutes and sign-in sheets for the system Literacy Task Force ensuring the inclusion of agencies, non-profits organizations, CBOs, and families that promote the implementation of effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students (39).

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 8**

3. (c) **The extent to which each SRCL subgrant applicant demonstrates that it will implement a coherent strategy to improve literacy instruction that aligns activities under the SRCL subgrant with literacy instruction supported with other Federal funds, including with funds the entity receives under Title I, Title II-A, and Title III of the ESEA and, as appropriate, the Head Start Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, and State and local funds.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTH

B.(i)(c) The SEA may consider the past performance of an applicant in carrying out a previous award, such as the use of funds, the achievement of project goals, and compliances with grant conditions (19). This indicates a recognition for assessing a sub-grantee's management responsibility and potential commitment to goals.

The sub-grant application shows 10 out of 105 pts for coordinating with state, federal, and local resources and integration with existing programs and family literacy services (19). Coordination with various programs and resources is essential for achieving project goals.

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.B.(i)(c)

none

**Reader's Score: 2**

4. **The extent to which the SEA will give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education that propose to serve high-poverty schools or a high-poverty population, based on a definition of poverty and process for applying the priority provided by the State.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTH

B.(ii) The SEA will award 5 competitive priority points for LEA or ECE providers that propose to serve schools in which the free or reduced lunch rate exceeds 70% (39). The inclusion of these points in a sub-grantee's application adds to the importance that the SEA is placing on serving high-poverty schools and populations. At the same time, it doesn't eliminate low-poverty schools with disadvantaged students, who may have outstanding literacy proposals.

**Sub Question**

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 6**

**5. The extent to which the SEA will give priority to LEAs or providers of early childhood education whose applications are supported by the strongest available evidence.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTHS

B.(iii)

A sub-grant proposal scoring less than 75 on a 100-point comprehensive needs assessment will not be funded (20).

Reviewers will be instructed to look closely at the research cited within the application to ensure that proposed instructional practices are aligned with the findings of rigorous causal research reported in peer-reviewed journals (39). If an instructional strategy is going to be used it has to be based on empirical or supported by some form of scholarly research rather than anecdotal or past experience. Peer-reviewed journals are more reliable and valid because of the expertise and direct interest of the peer reviewers. Thus, the SEA's requirement for reviewers to look closely at the research cited in an application adds credence to this criterion.

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 4**

**6. The extent to which the SEA will develop or update a process, or use an existing process, to review and judge the evidence base and alignment with State standards for the curricula and materials that LEAs propose to use in implementing their subgrants, and how the SEA will make the process and results of any such review publicly available.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTH

B.(iv) Sub-grantees are required to provide scientific, evidence-based research to support all strategies within their local literacy plans and reviewers of sub-grantee applications are instructed to ascertain whether cited research supports proposed instructional strategies (39). Connecting instructional pedagogy with theory, empirical evidence, and/or research helps to justify why a method should be attempted or continued, as opposed to basing something on anecdote or past history.

All LEAs and ECE providers are required to use state adopted standards as their curricula. In the case of Georgia, that is the Common Core Standards adopted in 2010. The SEA will provide Webinars to assistant applicants in the alignment of curricula and materials they propose to use. Subsequently, sub-grantees will be provided PL throughout the grant cycle (39). The SEA's process of providing PL through webinars provides the potential for greater support on a continual and more accessible basis.

Besides the webinars mentioned in the paragraph above, the SEA will distribute quarterly reports to stakeholders on the progress of the project as well as progress on the outcomes of the goals. The project's Research and Evaluation Specialist will provide additional webinars three times per year in conjunction with benchmark testing to provide student achievement data to the district leadership,

**Sub Question**

teacher teams, and state leadership (13). The SEA will also maintain and update a website devoted to making the process and results of this literacy initiative publicly available (42).

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**Project management - Project management**

**1. The Secretary considers the following factors in determining the quality of the project management plan: See Sub-Criteria**

**Reader's Score: 14**

**Sub Question**

**1. (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 for accomplishing project tasks.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTHS

C.(i)

The SEA project will be managed by the Georgia Department of Education's (GADOE) Literacy Team (39). This is significant because the Literacy Team includes veteran managers who have been responsible for previous grant awards (39-40).

The GADOE will provide extensive training and follow-up to ensure that all district and early literacy non-profit providers are fully prepared to provide evidence-based literacy instruction (40). This is important in order that sub-grantees do not waste time with non-evidence-based endeavors.

SEA grant personnel will meet six times during the first year for each Cohort and four times a year for Years 2-4 (40). This will help to support effective implementation and continued progress during the grant duration.

GADOE monitors will utilize the grant portal that was established for the state's successful "Reading First" initiative to monitor aspects from sites (40). This part of the plan demonstrates the management team's efficiency.

The Applicant provides a detailed timeline consisting of dates, activities, and annual milestones (41). Part of the milestones entail the development and updating of website materials, which provide public awareness of project accomplishments.

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

C.(i) More specific dates for milestones and accomplishments would be helpful rather than blocks of time (e.g., from Aug, 2011 to June, 2012, the activities entail publishing an SCRL RFP, announcing Cohort

**Sub Question**

I, and providing TA for Cohort I awardees) (41). More specificity for the first year of implementation could help clarify expectations, which would be helpful for ensuring for a smooth start

**Reader's Score: 5**

**2. (ii) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key personnel.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTH

C.(ii)

The proposed staff has worked for many years with literacy and educational management, innovation, and reform. Through their expertise they have attained national stature which has led to their publications in national peer-reviewed journals and presentations at national research conferences (43). The Project Director has notable credentials having already had administrative positions in two multimillion dollar funded projects, "Reading Excellence" and "Reading First" (56) and, has co-authored the 2011 Georgia Literacy Plan, "Building Blocks to Literacy." She is certified in Early Childhood Education and Educational Leadership, has been published (2011) in the Reading and Writing Quarterly, and has made several presentations at conferences about literacy plans (56-59, e0-e3 resume).

The Narrative provides education, qualifications, and specific responsibilities for seven other key personnel positions who will complete the Literacy Team (44-45). Three of these responsibilities entail 1) holding six initial year meetings with each sub-grantee and quarterly meetings for the remainder of the grant cycle (2 Education Specialists/Monitors), 2) adapting the Reading First data portal for use in collecting data from project sites (Research and Evaluation Specialist), and 3) designing and delivering professional learning, both directly and through technology (Early/Grade K-5/ Grade 6-12 Literacy Professional Learning Architects (44-45).

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 5**

**3. (iii) The extent to which the State will ensure a diversity of perspectives in the design and implementation of the proposed project, including those of: families, teachers, early childhood education professionals, officials from other State and local agencies, Head Start Advisory Councils, professional organizations, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, and libraries.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTH

C.(iii)

In 2010, the 2nd Literacy Task Force of the Georgia Department of Education (GADOE) convened to approve a birth-to-five component to the K-12 plan of 2008 to create a seamless literacy plan birth-to-12. The taskforce involved over 50 state-wide, community-wide, and education-wide participants representing all groups of pre-K, general education, and at-risk students. The recommendations that resulted demonstrate the direct intent to be inclusive and to embrace all perspectives to insure a program is carried out in the best interest of the Pre-K-12 community. As a result of their combined efforts, several significant recommendations were made. Most notable were the development of a

**Sub Question**

coherent framework of research-based best practices and instructional models for literacy; the benchmarking of all content areas' state literacy standards with national and international standards; the alignment of statewide, comprehensive early through adolescent literacy initiatives; and collaboration with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission to require a literacy course for certification (46-48).

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 4**

**Adequacy of resources - Adequacy of resources**

**1. The Secretary considers the following factors in determining the adequacy of resources for the proposed project: See Sub-Criteria**

**Reader's Score: 20**

**Sub Question**

**1. (i) The extent to which the costs described in the SEA's budget are reasonable in relation to the number of objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project .**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTHS

D.(i)

Costs are reasonable and justified in relation to the number of objectives, program design, and potential significance. It is estimated that 8850 teachers and 177,000 students will be involved (1, Abstract).

The Applicant demonstrates a realistic appraisal and comprehensive knowledge of associated costs. Costs for personnel and for yearly supplies associated with the project include a) the purpose for the entities and b) the basis for the cost estimates (e.g., costs from previous budget years) (2, 3, Budget).

a) Most notable with this criterion is the fact that the applicant always includes a rationale for every entity, e.g., for travel costs (2, Budget) and for providing language- and text-rich classrooms for Early Learning, Elementary, and Adolescent (34-37).

b) Cost estimates are based on actual costs and estimated costs calculated from data from other state programs. The Applicant points out that costs could decrease as staffing changes and as initial start-up costs are eliminated. If this occurs, the additional funds will be allocated to sub-grantees.

The provision for synchronous poly com conferences and asynchronous online archives illustrates why this Application is exemplary in terms of this selection criterion. The Applicant states that poly com conferences will cut travel time and expenses for face-to-face conferences. Consequently, the SEA will host three poly com conferences per year for the purpose of data dissemination. Conferences will be archived for convenience (13-15; 1, Abstract)

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

Sub Question

Reader's Score: 10

2. (ii) The quality of the SEA's plan to ensure that SRCL subgrant funds are allocated as follows:
- \* At least 15 percent to serve children from birth through age five.
  - \* At least 40 percent to serve students in kindergarten through grade five.
  - \* At least 40 percent to serve students in middle and high school, through grade 12, including an equitable distribution of funds between middle and high schools.

**Strengths:**

STRENGTH

D.(ii)

The Narrative states that sub-grantees will be required to adhere to all OMB, EDGAR, GRPA, and GADOE statutes and performance measures. This includes the 15/40/40 distribution patterns. The SEA may also consider past performance of an applicant in carrying out a previous award, such as an applicant's use of funds, achievement of project objectives, and compliances with grant conditions (19).

The projected award amounts for the sub-grantees (Birth to age 5, elementary, and middle/high school) provides concrete evidence to support the SEA's adherence to the appropriate budgetary allocation percentages (49).

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 4

3. (iii) The extent to which the SEA will use the grant to leverage other State and Federal funds in order to maximize the impact of the grant and how it will support LEAs and early childhood education providers in integrating funds with other local, State, and Federal funds and in developing a plan for sustaining funding after the end of the subgrant.

**Strengths:**

STRENGTHS

D.(iii)

To ensure state and federal funds and programs are aligned, each sub-grantee will submit documentation to establish the fact that grant funds are used to supplement, rather than supplant, other funding (20).

The Applicant provides a justification for everything they will use and all expenses for project activities are designed to assist in building LEA capacity than can be continued beyond grant funding (12).

In addition, sub-grant applications will contain a table requiring LEA/ECE entities to detail how all state, federal, and local dollars will be expended (38). Most notable is the inclusion of graduated funding in which sub-grantees will receive full, partial, and minimal grant funding over a 3-year cohort cycle (1, Abstract). This will help ensure the continuation of site literacy initiatives with local funds.

In Table 6, the LEA shows the share of the state's revenues that have funded and will continue to fund Birth-to-12 education in fiscal years 2010, 2011, and 2012. The amounts include state funds, Title I, Title II-A, Title III, IDEA, and Carl D. Perkins (49-50).

**Sub Question**

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 3**

- 4. (iv) **The extent to which the SEA will award SRCL subgrants of sufficient size to support projects that improve instruction for a significant number of students in the high-need schools or early learning programs serving children birth through five that the SRCL subgrantee would serve.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTHS

D.(iv)

The Narrative states that sub-grants will be awarded to projects that will be significant in size in order to achieve the goals of the program. Awards will range from \$200,000 to \$500,000, depending on three factors: a) the size of the school or center, b) needs determined through a Needs Assessment, and c) the sub-grantee's Literacy Plan. All of these items will guide the material purchases (50). The SEA will also award 5 competitive priority points for LEA/ECE providers in which the free/reduced lunch rate exceeds 70% (39).

An innovative aspect to this project is the SEA's decision to fund 1 urban system, 2 suburban systems and 6 rural systems or ECE centers per cycle for a total of 3 cohorts. Competitive grant cycles with each cycle will last 3 years, but the SEA will continue to collect data for all cohorts for 5 years. Graduated funding levels (see section iii) will also be initiated.

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score: 3**

**Priority Questions**

**Competitive Priority - Effective Use of Technology**

- 1. **To meet this priority, an applicant must (1) propose to use technology--which may include technology to support principles of universal design for learning (as defined in the NIA)--to address student learning challenges; and (2) provide, in its application, an evidence-based (as defined in the NIA) rationale that its proposed technology program, practice, or strategy will increase student engagement and achievement or increase teacher effectiveness.**

**Background: The effective use of technology is a critical tool for improving learning outcomes and providing teachers with high-quality professional development. Use of concepts, ideas, programming techniques, and computer-assisted text displays that give access to the text for students who cannot access traditional print, including limited-English-proficient children and students with disabilities, is a basic tenet of universal design for learning (as defined in the NIA) and can help improve students' literacy and language development and identify and address student learning challenges.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTH

Tech assistance will be provided electronically throughout the project to enable access for all Georgia schools regardless of location (1, Abstract). This is a viable strategy/requirement that will eliminate travel time and

expense.

Electronic test reporting will allow the SEA to build LEA and ECE center capacity to interpret data and use it for goal-setting and for tracking progress toward goals. The formative and summative assessment information will provide LEAs with current, on-going and outcome knowledge about teacher learning and student achievement (1, Abstract).

GADOE (Georgia Dept of Ed) sub-grantees' applications may include the use of technology to support the principles of UDL, to address student learning challenges, and provide evidence-based rationale that the proposed practice or strategy will increase student achievement or teacher effectiveness (22-23). The SEA will provide a grant writing webinar series using the SEA's poly com system for potential sub-grantees prior to each competition (15).

Sites will determine what technology currently exists and is being utilized and the confidence level of staff. New technology will complement existing curricula as defined within the applicant's Literacy Plan (22-23).

The SEA will use the following technology: a) Electronic supports that provide access to print for struggling students and b) Supplemental technology software to support teacher intervention (23).

Applicants will be encouraged to explore multimedia tools with built-in options to make them more flexible than printed books. Key principles will include: a) multiple formats and media such as e-texts and assistive technology, b) providing multiple pathways for student actions and expressions, and c) providing opportunities for multiple ways to engage students' interests and motivation (2-3, 22-24). Based on a recent study involving hypermedia context, the Applicant notes that "technology increases the efficiency of the learning task" by achieving the same results using "hands-on" experiences, but requiring one-third less time. Also, the utilization of technology in this proposal "has the potential to increase equity" in high poverty classrooms by providing new and powerful information and communication sources (35). Most significantly, in terms of the literacy goals for this competition, multiple texts associated with different technology portals, have the power to increase students' reasoning and interests because of the novelty of expressed content (36).

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score:** 5

**Absolute Priority 1 - Improving Learning Outcomes**

- 1. To meet this priority: An applicant must propose a project that is designed to improve school readiness and success through grade 12 in the area of language and literacy development for disadvantaged students.**

**Background: Improving the language and literacy development of disadvantaged students is essential to improving academic achievement for these students in all content areas. The 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results show disproportionately large numbers of disadvantaged students struggle with developing the necessary pre-literacy and literacy skills needed to read, comprehend, and use language effectively. This results in persistent gaps in academic achievement through the elementary and secondary school years and in high school graduation rates, and presents civic and economic difficulties for these students later in life. Meeting the language and literacy needs of disadvantaged students, including limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities, is a particular focus of the SRCL program.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTHS

MET Absolute Priority 1: Improving Learning Outcomes

To strengthen the language and literacy development for disadvantaged students (birth to grade 12) and to improve school readiness, the SEA will require the sub-grantees to include the following in their application:

- Increasing the Pre-K school year to 200 days
- Design/distribute literacy needs and facts about literacy to providers and parents
- Create a website for parents and providers
- Provide assisted tech support for children struggling with pre-literacy skills
- Provide professional learning about literacy to parents
- Training for parents in how to use interactive reading, critical/inferential questioning
- Provide transition literacy program for Pre-K to K

The SEA's project is designed to select research-based intervention strategies or programs which match assessment profiles of students, utilizing components of RTL and UDL. The project will describe how fidelity of implementation will be monitored and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and intervention strategies. It is commendable that the project design will include students who have mastered literacy material ahead of their peers. This ensures that all Georgia students, including those with the strongest academic skills, will be increasing their literacy achievement (31-32).

The following statement from Page 28 provides a rationale for the SEA's direct support of the learning outcomes of students: "Because our experience in PL [Professional Learning] has highlighted the need for direct curricular supports, each classroom in the project will be outfitted with state-of-the-art classroom library materials applicable to the appropriate [grade/age level], with a compilation of texts of varying levels. These materials will support content standards in the classroom.... As part of the LEA needs assessment, the LEA literacy team will inventory what currently exists in each project classroom and indicate both a need for materials and supporting statements indicating for how they will choose materials to purchase." Rather than providing direct support for teachers and indirect support for students, the Georgia project places direct focus on the literacy development of students.

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score:** 0

**Absolute Priority 2 - Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making**

- 1. To meet this priority: An applicant must propose a project that is designed to collect, analyze, and use high-quality and timely data, especially on program participant outcomes, in accordance with privacy requirements (as defined in the NIA), to improve instructional practices, policies, and student outcomes in early learning settings and in elementary and secondary schools.**

**Background: Accurate, timely, relevant, and appropriate data, and the effective use of that data for informed decision-making, are essential to the continuous improvement of children's literacy and language development. In developing comprehensive literacy plans and programs, it is important for States to consider strategies that provide educators, as well as families and other key stakeholders, with the data they need and the capacity and training to use those data to improve school readiness, respond to the learning and academic needs of students, improve educator effectiveness, inform professional development practices and approaches, and make informed decisions that increase student pre-literacy, literacy, and language development.**

**Strengths:**

STRENGTHS

MET Absolute Priority 2: Enabling More Data-Based Decision-Making

What makes this a strength is that it is not just the collection and analysis of data that is the goal, but rather, using the analysis of data as an evidence-based instructional tool for learning. The Narrative explains that

site-based feedback and continuous improvement will include the monitoring of instruction and the classroom environment, student progress monitoring, ongoing summaries of all evaluation data, bi-monthly analysis groups, and monthly check-ins with assigned Education Specialist/Monitors. These procedures will enable site-based staff to use and monitor data to improve program strategies and provide appropriate instruction (30-31)

Electronic test reporting will allow the SEA to build LEA and ECE site capacity to interpret data and use it for goal setting and tracking progress toward goals (2). Instruction targeting assessed needs will be provided in three-week intervals, at the end of which the teacher will use informal measures to determine the impact of the instruction (27).

Technical assistance for prospective applicants will involve the use of data to drive practice, improve educator effectiveness, inform professional learning practices, and make informed decisions that increase student pre-literacy, literacy, and language development (7, 15).

Also, a Needs Assessment based on data will help guide decisions about material purchases (50).

**Weaknesses:**

WEAKNESS

No weaknesses found.

**Reader's Score:**     **0**

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**Status:**             Submitted

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