

**TO:** Eligible Applicants

**FROM:** Northern Regional Professional Development Center (NRPDC)

**DATE:** March 22, 2006

**SUBJECT: Request for Proposals (RFP):** School Demonstration/Data Collection Sites

### **General Information**

**Eligible Applicants:** Public school districts, public university laboratory schools approved by the Illinois State Board of Education and charter schools are eligible to apply, provided they are located in the geographic area served by the Northern Regional Professional Development Center, as shown on the map in Appendix A. Proposed demonstration/data collection schools must house at least grades K-3. Although demonstration districts may contain Reading First schools, schools currently funded through the Illinois Reading First Initiative are not eligible to serve as data collection sites for this project.

**Number of Sites to be Selected:** It is estimated that at least *six* demonstration/data collection sites will be selected in the Northern Region for the 2006-07 school year. Additional sites will be solicited annually during the operation of the project.

**Start Date:** It is estimated that services to the demonstration sites will begin by *May 15, 2006*.

**Application Deadline:** Applications must be received by April 26, 2006. Mail the original and five copies (six in all) to ***Peggy Miller, NSSED-Support Services, 760 Red Oak Lane, Highland Park IL 60035***. No FAX copies of proposals will be accepted.

**Informational Meeting:** All prospective applicants are invited to attend an informational meeting to be held at *The LaSalle/Putnam County Educational Alliance for Special Education (LEASE)* on *Tuesday, April 4<sup>th</sup>* from 9:30 to 11:00 (map enclosed). Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions about the intent or interpretation of this RFP. Attendance is encouraged, but not required. Please RSVP to Peggy Miller at pmiller@nssed.org by March 31, 2006.

**Contact Person:** For more information about this RFP, contact ***Mark R. Shinn, Ph.D. at (847) 275-7200***

### **Background**

In September 2005, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) received a 5-year State Personnel Development (SPD) Grant issued by the U.S. Department of Education under Part D of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004. To implement the objectives of the SPD Grant Project, in February 2006, ISBE funded four Regional Professional Development Centers (RPDCs)—one in the city of Chicago and one each in the northern, central

and southern parts of the state. The Northern Suburban Special Education District (NSSSED) was funded to operate the Northern RPDC, which serves districts in the counties shown on the map in Appendix A.

The overarching goal of the Illinois' SPD Grant Project is to:

*Establish and implement a coordinated, regionalized system of personnel development that will increase the capacity of school systems to provide early intervening services, aligned with the general education curriculum, to at-risk students and students with disabilities, as measured by improved student progress and performance.*

The professional development and technical assistance will focus on designing and providing early intervening services, with an emphasis on reading instruction that is scientifically research-based; progress monitoring; response to intervention (RTI) and standards-aligned instruction and assessment. Existing ISBE initiatives will provide the foundation for the content of the training and technical assistance provided by each RPDC. These initiatives include the Flexible Service Delivery Project, the Standards-Aligned Classroom Initiative and Illinois Reading First. A brief overview of each follows.

Early Intervening Services and Flexible Service Delivery (FSD) Project. Under IDEA 2004, LEAs are allowed to use up to 15% of their IDEA Part B flow-through funds to develop and implement early intervening services for K-12 students not identified as needing special education or related services but who need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in the general education environment. IDEA 2004 also provides that, when determining whether a child has a specific learning disability, an LEA may use a process that determines if the child responds to scientific, research-based intervention as a part of the evaluation procedures.

From 1998 through 2005, ISBE supported the Flex Pilot Project to use a school-based problem-solving approach to providing early intervening services to students at risk of academic failure while monitoring student progress using response to intervention (RTI). A multi-year evaluation of the project showed promising results for students who received such services.

Standards-Aligned Classroom (SAC) Initiative. Since 2000, ISBE has provided funding for the SAC initiative to support the ISBE goal of assisting educators in applying the principles and practices of a "Standards-Led" Educational System to improve teaching and learning. SAC is a highly effective, cost-efficient professional development initiative involving teachers and administrators, the immediate goal of which is to equip teachers with the support, resources, knowledge and skills to align classroom-level assessment and instruction with the Illinois Learning Standards. Given that research shows that the quality of instruction has an impact on student achievement, the ultimate goal of the initiative is to improve student achievement to the extent it is measured by local and state assessments that are aligned with the Illinois Learning Standards.

Illinois Reading First. According to the report of the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002), evidence suggests that 90% of children identified as having specific

learning disabilities are so identified because they have not been taught to read. Given the wide body of research on reading and its impact on student performance, it is incumbent to improve reading instruction in schools. The Reading First program targets high-poverty, low-performing schools that house at least kindergarten through grade 3 and are committed to carrying out activities that will result in the following: (a) implementation of high-quality reading program based on scientifically-based reading research, (b) on-going assessment and progress monitoring, (c) clear expectations for reading achievement, (d) coherent instructional design and (e) scientifically based intervention strategies.

To enhance project reliability and to ensure that evaluation can be conducted at the school and student levels, school demonstration/data collection sites will be identified within selected school districts located in the geographic area served by each RPDC. Thus, the purpose of this RFP is to establish six such demonstration/data collection sites within the northern region. These sites will receive professional development and technical assistance services from the RPDC and, in turn, be required to fulfill certain requirements, as discussed below under Program Specifications.

### **Program Specifications**

**Services to Northern Region Demonstration/Data Collection Sites:** Schools selected as data collection sites will receive the following services from the Northern Regional Professional Development Center (NRPDC):

- Opportunities to participate in monthly large scale trainings within the Northern Region at no cost;
- Regular staff development through on-site coaching from one of three Regional Coordinators and the Project Director;
- Financial support up to \$20,000 per year for a Local Coach(es) to support implementation of the Center's objectives;
- Financial support from a pool of \$20,000-40,000 per year for substitute release for training participants;
- Financial cost for an independent evaluation of the scientific basis of the district's reading program by national experts, the Consortium On Reading Excellence (CORE), a nationally recognized professional agency with an established history of success nationwide;
- Financial contributions to scientifically based progress monitoring software [AIMSweb® or DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills, SWIS (School-wide Information System)] and
- An independent evaluation of your district's special education procedural manual by highly qualified persons.

**Demonstration/Data Collection Site Commitment:** In order to receive the services delineated above, districts submitting an application under this RFP must agree to the requirements set forth in "Commitments Needed for Success" in Appendix B. These include certain district- and school-level administrative, financial and personnel commitments, as well as parent involvement and data collection and reporting requirements.

## Proposal Requirements

Each proposal must include the information specified below in a narrative format, in the order in which it is presented. The narrative must be double-spaced using a 12-point font and should not exceed 10 pages.

1. **District and School Commitment:** Proposals must outline specific activities the district and school will carry out in order to meet the requirements specified in Appendix B. Letters of agreement/commitment from the individuals listed below must also be submitted as attachments to the proposal. Refer to Appendix B for the minimum required content of these letters.
  - a) District superintendent
  - b) Director of special education, and
  - c) Principal of the school identified as a data collection site.
2. **District and School Demographic Data:** Proposals must include an outline of the district's and demonstration/data collection school's demographic data. See Appendix C "Data Collection Site – District and School Demographic Data" document for the minimum required content for this section.
3. **Statement of Need and Expected Outcomes:** Proposals must describe the district's and data collection school's needs that will be addressed through participation in the project, including specific gaps, barriers, or weaknesses. Proposals must also identify measurable student, school and district outcomes, tied to the identified needs that will result from participation as a demonstration/data collection site.
4. **District and School Experience with Initiatives and Programs:** Proposals must describe the district's and data collection school's current and/or previous level of involvement in and extent of implementation (e.g., beginning, intermediate, fully implementing) of academic and/or behavioral initiatives and programs. Include information on any reading initiatives implemented to date in the district and/or school. Specify any existing curriculum-based measures (e.g., DIBELS) or data collection tools (e.g., AIMSweb®) currently in use. In addition, discuss any involvement the district and/or school has had with the following ISBE-funded projects:
  - Flexible Service Delivery Project
  - Standards-Aligned Classroom Initiative,
  - Illinois Reading First,
  - Project CHOICES,
  - Illinois Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project,
  - Emotional and Behavioral Disorders/Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (EBD/PBIS),
  - Parent Mentor Project and/or Statewide Parent Technical Assistance Center, and/or
  - STARNET

If the district and/or school has not been explicitly involved with the projects listed above, but has been involved with educational systems reform or any elements of the initiatives, please describe those experiences.

### **Proposal Review**

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated according to the criteria listed below.

- 1. District and School Commitment (20 points):** The proposal demonstrates clear administrative, programmatic and fiscal commitment (including the required letters of commitment) and capacity to fulfill the demonstration/data collection site requirements as set forth in Appendix B.
- 2. District and School Demographic Data (10 points):** The proposal provides detailed and current demographic data as set forth in Appendix C, thus providing a clear picture of the district's and school's performance status on the indicators delineated therein.
- 3. Statement of Need and Expected Outcomes (15 points):** The proposal clearly defines the district's and school's needs that will be addressed through participation as a demonstration/data collection site and provides convincing evidence that without assistance from the project, these needs would not be met. The proposal also delineates projected student, school, and district outcomes that: a) are measurable, b) are clearly linked to the identified needs and c) will result in systems change and an increased capacity to support students' learning in the general education environment.
- 4. District and School Experience with Initiatives and Programs (5 points):** The proposal describes in detail the level of district and school involvement in academic and/or behavioral initiatives and programs, resulting in a comprehensive picture of the district's and school's current systemic capacity.

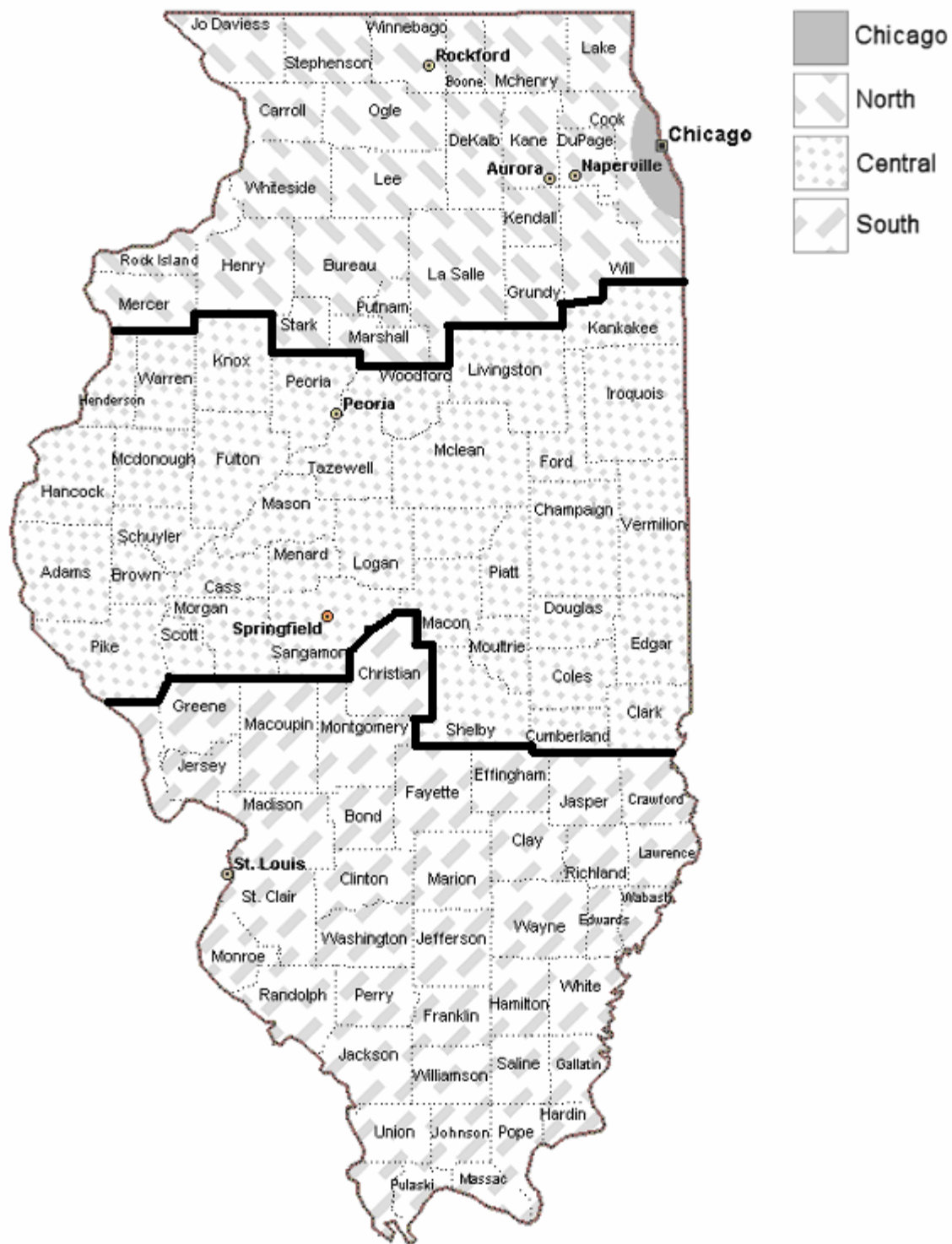
**Awards will be considered on the basis of total points.** It is important that a diversity of students and districts be represented in the operation of the demonstration/data collection sites. Therefore, after all applications have been evaluated against the criteria above and have received a final score from 0 to 50, additional factors will be considered prior to selection of the sites. Districts and schools will be selected to establish sites that are diverse with respect to:

1. Size of districts (i.e., small, medium, and large),
2. Geographic location and applicant type (i.e., rural, urban, suburban) and
3. Student population demographics.

It is anticipated that the NRPDC leadership team will make final decisions with regard to selection of demonstration/data collection sites no later than May 12, 2006.

# Appendix A

## Regional Professional Development Center Areas



## **Appendix B**

### **Commitments Required for Success**

The Illinois Regional Professional Development Center's (RPDC) function is to provide training and technical assistance to schools in Illinois that are committed to systems change. This change will require district and building level support and leadership. District level support typically leads to greater increments of improvement in data and sustainability of the processes. The information below outlines the commitments of the RPDC, the districts and the schools.

#### **In addition to the RPDC services listed on page 3 of this RFP, the RPDC will:**

1. Prepare the district and school with district- and school-level planning and overviews to staff (i.e., administrators, building staff) and parents.
2. Support integration of existing and potential district and school initiatives.
3. Provide initial and follow-up team training.
4. Conduct on-site training and provide technical assistance to local and internal coaches.
5. Afford access to and training on data systems for decision-making and reporting.
6. Train teams/coaches in use of data tools.
7. Train and consult with school and district leaders on strategic planning based on data.
8. Provide support to ensure parent involvement in planning, training and implementation activities.

#### **District administration will commit to:**

1. Implement research-validated practices to support achievement within the top three School Improvement Plan goals or objectives in at least one building in the district.
2. Identify a local coach to receive training and guide the implementation of the RPDC efforts within the demonstration district's school(s). Specify the percentage of time this individual will devote to this position.
3. Develop and implement a plan to ensure parent involvement with RPDC efforts at the district and building levels.
4. Designate funds to adequately support RPDC implementation, including partial financial support for scientifically-based progress monitoring software (AIMSweb® or DIBELS, SWIS).
5. Annually provide district report cards and local education agency (LEA) profiles.
6. Review the district's special education procedural manual and take steps to ensure it reflects problem solving and RTI, and submit the manual to an independent evaluation by highly qualified persons.
7. Develop a dissemination strategy to increase visibility.

#### **Building administrator will commit to:**

1. Being an active team participant (attend trainings and team meetings).
2. Identifying and organizing a school leadership team that is representative of the building grade level faculty and support staff and parents (consisting of individuals with collective

knowledge and experience in leadership, curriculum, data-based decision-making and systems change); one member of this leadership team must be identified as the Internal Coach.

3. Securing agreement from the faculty to commit to RPDC training and practices and to review academic and discipline data for decision-making.
4. Reallocating resources based on data outcomes.
5. Providing time and resources for the coach to effectively support RPDC implementation.
6. Budgeting funds for RPDC supplies, materials, travel and substitutes for team trainings/meetings, etc.

### **School leadership team will commit to:**

1. Implementing a team-based, problem-solving process to provide interventions for all students at the universal, targeted and intensive levels.
2. Participate in RPDC trainings and networking meetings (minimum of eight days per school year).
3. Meet twice monthly and develop intensive teams as needed.
4. Work collaboratively with parents and ensure their involvement in planning, training and implementation activities.
5. Use and submit required data on a regular basis (satisfaction surveys and critical components checklists quarterly; AIMSweb or DIBELS, SWIS, school report card, child count data and parent surveys annually).
6. Collect and use data on at least a monthly basis for decision-making purposes.
7. Develop an annual action plan for RPDC activities based on analysis of collected data.

## Appendix C

### Data Collection Site District and School Demographic Data Outline

- Grade levels served (school site must at least house grades K-3)
- Total student enrollment
  - By grade
  - By race/ethnicity
- Number and percentage of students with disabilities
  - By grade
  - By disability type
  - By race/ethnicity
  - Analysis of disproportionality in the identification of students as eligible for special education, if available
- Educational environment/least restrictive environment data for students with disabilities
  - By age/grade
  - By disability type
  - By race/ethnicity
  - Analysis of disproportionality in placement of students, if available
- Socioeconomic makeup of student population, i.e., number and percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch
- Title I status (non-Title I, Title I targeted assistance, or Title I schoolwide)
- Illinois Reading First status (non-Reading First schools only)
- Student performance on state assessment in reading
  - For all students
    - By grade level
    - By race/ethnicity
  - For students with disabilities
    - By grade level
    - By race/ethnicity
    - By disability
  - Analysis of performance gap between students with and without disabilities
- AYP status for general population and subgroups

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