RACE TO THE TOP PHASE 3

PARTICIPATING LEA: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Last updated March 20, 2012 with an updated Q71 and new Q20-Q21, Q72-73, Q76, Q78-81 and Q92

Eligibility:

Q1. **Is there a maximum number of LEAs that will be approved/accepted? What criteria will be used to determine awardees? Must a district have a certain number of Tier I or Tier II schools or a certain percentage of low-income students to be eligible to serve as a Participating LEA?**

A: There is no maximum number of LEAs that may serve as a Participating LEA. Any public school district in Illinois may serve as a Participating LEA provided that it submits a "Statement of Intent" as further described in Q24 and completes and executes a Scope of Work, in accordance with the specifications set forth by ISBE and the Department of Education, by April 1, 2012. No other criteria will be used for selection of the Participating LEAs.

Q2. **Are charter schools, private schools, non-Title I school districts or special education cooperatives eligible to serve as Participating LEAs?**

A: Only Illinois public school districts are eligible to serve as Participating LEAs. As a result, non-Title I school districts are eligible to serve as Participating LEAs, but private schools and special education cooperatives are not eligible. Charter schools are only eligible if they constitute their own, separate LEA.

Q3. **Will all school districts that meet the requirements to become a Participating LEA (i.e. submission of Statement of Intent, required union support re PERA implementation, and execution of Scope of Work) be funded? Will there be any prioritization of funding?**

A: Any district that meets the requirements to become a Participating LEA will receive a share of the $21.4 million Participating LEA RTTT3 grant award based on its relative share of Title I, Part A funding. There is no other prioritization of funding.

Q4. **May a school or schools within a school district participate even if the school district does not choose to be a Participating LEA?**

A: No; however, a Participating LEA is not required to implement all RTTT3 initiatives in every one of its schools. The scope of implementation for each Participating LEA will be specific to that Participating LEA and negotiated with ISBE as part of the Scope of Work process so as to sufficiently ensure meaningful implementation across the Participating LEA.

Q5. Is it a requirement that districts with a "Tier I" or "Tier II" school must apply for federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds in order to serve as a Participating LEA?

A: While it is not a Participating LEA requirement that a school district with SIG-eligible schools apply for SIG funds, a district with SIG-eligible schools that chooses not to apply for SIG funds would need to demonstrate in its RTTT3 Scope of Work how, without SIG funds, it intends to meaningfully improve its lowest-performing schools. This Scope of Work must be approved by ISBE before a school district can become a Participating LEA.

Q6. Can private schools receive Race to the Top funds?

A: Generally no. While the U.S. Department of Education permits the inclusion of private school teachers, students and other educational personnel in activities funded through the State's share of the RTTT3 grant award, ISBE did not include any proposals in its application (that the Department of Education has now approved) to use the State's share of RTTT3 funds for this purpose. As for Participating LEA grant funds, ISBE will work with each Participating LEA on its Scope of Work. While ISBE is not aware of specific areas where it would approve contracts or other arrangements between Participating LEAs and private schools using Participating LEA grant funds, it is conceivable that a Participating LEA could propose to ISBE some arrangement involving private schools that aligns with the State's application and the Participating LEA expectations.

Grant Award Funds and Use of Grant Award Funds:

Q7. How will grant awards for Participating LEAs be calculated? If districts withdraw after the initial determinations of award notices, will the grant awards to the remaining Participating LEAs increase? If so, when would the LEAs be notified of an increased award?

A: Participating LEA grant awards will be calculated based on the total number of Participating LEAs and their relative share of Title I, Part A funding. If districts withdraw after the initial determination of award notices, the grants awards to the remaining Participating LEAs will increase. ISBE may notify Participating LEAs of any change to their grant award during the period of time between March 1 and April 1, 2012 (the deadline for districts to complete and execute Scopes of Work). A final award notice will be provided as soon as possible after April 1, 2012.

Q8. Is there a minimum amount for Participating LEA grant awards?

A: No, there is no minimum amount for a Participating LEA grant award.

Q9. Is there a way for districts to predict or estimate their potential Participating LEA grant award?

A: No, unfortunately there is no way for districts to estimate their potential Participating LEA grant award as each grant award is based on the total number of Participating LEAs and their relative share of Title I, Part A funding.

Q10. **Is a district automatically eligible for the Participating LEA RTTT3 grant award upon submission of its Statement of Intent?**

A: No, in order to become a Participating LEA, a district must also complete and execute a Scope of Work, in accordance with the specifications set forth by ISBE and the Department of Education, by April 1, 2012.

Q11. **Is there an estimate as to what percentages of district expenses for implementation of the Participating LEA Expectations will be covered through the Participating LEA grant award?**

A: No, the percentage of district expenses for implementation of the Participating LEA Expectations that will be covered through the Participating LEA grant award will vary greatly across Participating LEAs depending on the ultimate size of the grant award and the work that each district needs to complete to implement the Participating LEA Expectations.

Q12. **What are permissible/non-permissible expenses for use of the Participating LEA grant award?**

A: Participating LEAs are given wide latitude in the use of their grant award, provided that such funds are used in a manner that is consistent with implementation of the Participating LEA Expectations and the State's RTTT3 Plan. As described in Q89, 10% of the Participating LEA's allocation must be used for development and implementation of local assessment frameworks and items. While ISBE may develop further guidance on permissible/non-permissible expenses for Participating LEA grant funds, such funds can not be used for:

- Facility construction, modernization, renovation, repair, or maintenance, except for technology upgrades and enhancements that relate to the implementation of the Illinois Shared Learning Environment or local assessments;
- Purchase or upgrade of vehicles; and
- Costs related to the administration of statewide summative assessments.

Q13. **May RTTT3 funds be used for professional development/substitute teacher costs associated with implementation of the RTTT3 Participating LEA Expectations? May funds be used to hire staff at the school and district level to assist with implementation of the Participating LEA Expectations?**

A: Yes, Participating LEA grant funds may be used for professional development/substitute teacher costs and hiring of staff at the school and district level, provided such funds are used in a manner that is consistent with

implementation of the Participating LEA Expectations and the State's RTTT3 Plan. Furthermore, all use of Participating LEA funds will be subject to ISBE approval through the budget component of the Scope of Work.

Q14. May RTTT3 Participating LEA funds be used for Pre-K?

A: RTTT3 Participating LEA grant funds may be used for Pre-K provided that such funds are used in a manner that is consistent with implementation of the Participating LEA Expectations and the State's RTTT3 Plan. For example, use of such funds for Pre-K to elementary standards alignment activities or professional development associated with the Illinois Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) would be permissible activities. However, all use of Participating LEA grant funds will be subject to ISBE approval through the Scope of Work budget component.

Q15. Is there any requirement that a certain percentage of the Participating LEA grant award must be used for professional development (similar to certain requirements re Title I funds)?

A: No, there is no requirement that a certain percentage of the Participating LEA grant award be used for professional development.

Q16. How and on what schedule will the Participating LEA awards be disbursed? If on a reimbursement basis, approximately how long between submission of reimbursement request and receipt of payment?

A: Participating LEA grant funds will be available to Participating LEAs on a reimbursement basis beginning in mid- to late- April, 2012. Federal guidance requires that grant funds only be drawn and distributed to sub-recipients (i.e. LEAs) to meet "immediate cash needs" of the grant. As a result, ISBE moved to a reimbursement model for all Federal grant funds in FY 2012. Participating LEAs will submit expenditure reports through the Electronic Expenditure Reporting System in IWAS and can generally expect receipt of payment in 4-5 business days. Further information on ISBE's reimbursement model for federal grant funds is available at, http://www.isbe.net/funding/ppt/2012_fed_reimb_webinar_pres050511.pdf.

Q17. Will there be any competitive sub-grants available through RTT3 funding? If so, may a Participating LEA also apply for these funds?

A: ISBE will offer sub-grants to school districts out of the State's portion (as opposed to the Participating LEA portion) of the grant award for performance evaluation training and induction and mentoring supports. The sub-grants out of the State's portion for performance evaluation training will be made available to all school districts, regardless of whether the school district is a Participating LEA, and will not be administered on a competitive basis. Sub-grants out of the State's portion for induction and mentoring will only be made available to Participating LEAs. However, depending on the number and identity of the Participating LEAs, it is possible that the budget for induction and mentoring will not be sufficient to fund all

Participating LEAs. If this is the case, ISBE will award these funds to Participating LEAs on a competitive basis.

In addition, ISBE is using the State's grant award to fund Participating LEA implementation of a Survey of Learning Conditions. The State will directly fund the vendor's cost of administration for schools within Participating LEAs. If the budget for the Survey of Learning Conditions is not sufficient for all schools within Participating LEAs, ISBE will use a competitive process to select the schools within Participating LEAs where the survey will be administered.

Q18. **If a district is a Title I targeted district, may it use such funds in combination with its RTTT3 funds to assist schools across the district or only at the targeted schools?**

A: There is no restriction on using Participating LEA grant funds in combination with other funds, provided Participating LEA grant funds are used in a manner that is consistent with the implementation of the Participating LEA Expectations and the State's RTTT3 Plan, and the use of such funds is permissible pursuant to the rules and regulations of the other funding stream(s).

Q19. **What are the reporting requirements for Participating LEAs regarding use of grant funds?**

A: Most of the reporting requirements for RTTT3 Participating LEAs will be incorporated into the Scopes-of-Work/District Continuous Improvement Plans. Certain additional reporting requirements may be developed, if needed, to comply with Department of Education monitoring and compliance requirements.

Q20. **Are districts required to use other sources of district funds in order to support implementation of the RT3 Participating LEA Expectations?**

A: There is no requirement that district funds, other than Race to the Top Participating LEA Grant Awards, be used to support implementation of the RT3 Participating LEA Expectations. However, the State's Race to the Top Phase 3 Plan and the Participating LEA Expectations were specifically designed to promote alignment with the State's current and future plans for improving the educational outcomes of children throughout the State. For example, Race to the Top Phase 3 funds, both at the State and district level, will be used for implementing the Common Core Learning Standards in Math and English Language Arts, advancing teacher and principal effectiveness, providing educators with data to better inform and improve classroom instruction, and promoting Programs of Study and STEM fields of study. Given the noted congruencies, Participating LEAs are strongly encouraged to examine how other funding sources can be used or re-allocated to support implementation of the RT3 Participating LEA Expectations.

Q21. **By when must a district spend its Participating LEA Grant Award?**

Districts must spend their Participating LEA Grant Award by December 22, 2015, the end of the grant period. While Participating LEAs are given wide latitude in the use of their RT3 Grant Awards, districts will be required to allocate such funds in accordance with their ISBE-approved budget. See also Q16.

Information and Materials:

Q22. **Will the February 7 and February 21 webinars and power point presentations be available for viewing including audio?**

A: The power point and webinar presentation are available at: http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/htmls/applications.htm.

Q23. **Is there a current list of the lowest performing 20% of districts in the State?**

A: Yes, the current list of the lowest performing 20% of districts in the State is available at http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/default.htm.

Application Logistics:

Q24. **Is there a specific form "Statement of Intent" and where can we find it?**

A: Yes, it is available at http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/default.htm.

Q25. **If a district previously committed to serving as a Participating LEA or Super LEA under the State's Phase 2 RTTT Application, does it need to resubmit a "Statement of Intent"?**

A: Yes, any district that wishes to serve as a Participating LEA under the State's RTTT Phase 3 Application must submit a new Statement of Intent, available at http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/default.htm.

Q26. **Is there a "Scope-of-Work" template?**

A: Yes. The Scope-of-Work template will be provided in early March to all districts that submit Statements of Intent by February 29, 2012. The requirements for the Scope of Work were addressed during the February 7 webinar, available at: http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/htmls/applications.htm.

Q27. **Once a district submits a "Statement of Intent," may it later decide that it does NOT want to serve as a Participating LEA? What is the deadline for withdrawal?**

A: A district that has submitted a "Statement of Intent" may elect to withdraw from participation in RTTT3 prior to April 1, 2012 without penalty. However, the Statement of Intent should only be submitted to ISBE if the district has carefully considered the responsibilities and expectations of a Participating LEA and is committed to moving forward with the process of becoming a Participating LEA.

Otherwise, submission of such Statement of Intent will distort the information ISBE provides to other LEAs that have indicated their intent to participate in RTTT3 and negatively impact the State's planning and preparation for implementation.

Q28. Does a district need to obtain local school board support/approval to serve as a Participating LEA?

A: There is no requirement that a school board approve a district's participation in RTTT3. However, best practice would dictate that a district bring the matter to the school board and ISBE has built time into the Participating LEA application process for this purpose.

Q29. Will ISBE identify specific RTTT3 Participating LEA compliance indicators, or will Participating LEAs be responsible for selecting their own indicators?

A: Yes, ISBE will identify specific RTTT3 Participating LEA compliance indicators by incorporating such indicators into the redesigned District Continuous Improvement Plan. Addressing the RTTT3 Participating LEA compliance indicators will constitute a district's "Participating LEA Scope of Work" for Race to the Top 3 purposes. Participating LEAs will not be responsible for selecting their own indicators.

Q30. Will a district with only high schools be required to work with its primary feeder elementary schools, even if such schools are in a district that is not a Participating LEA, to implement the Participating LEA Expectations?

A: ISBE expects Participating LEAs to work with their feeder school(s)/district(s) on alignment related activities in support of the implementation of the Participating LEA Expectations even if such feeder districts are not serving as Participating LEAs. However, ISBE understands that Participating LEAs will not have control over the level of participation and commitment of non-Participating LEAs.

Q31. What role, if any, will Regional Offices of Education have in the implementation of the Participating LEA Expectations?

A: ISBE will partner with the Regional Offices of Education to provide statewide supports to assist Participating LEAs with implementation of the Participating LEA Expectations throughout the RTTT3 grant period.

<u>Union Support</u>:

Q32. What must local teachers unions agree to in order for the district to serve as a Participating LEA?

A: In order for a district to serve as a Participating LEA, the local teachers union's leader must sign the Statement of Intent and thereby agree to accelerated Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) implementation. Section 24A-2.5 of the School Code requires union agreement to a PERA implementation date earlier than the date

otherwise required by statute. In addition, the local teachers union must agree to work with the district to develop a "peer evaluation system," as further described in Q43 through Q47.

Q33. If a district does not obtain the required local teachers union leader's signature indicating agreement to support PERA early implementation, can this district still be a Participating LEA? Can ISBE require union support of PERA early implementation?

A: No, the local teachers union leader's signature indicating support for PERA early implementation on the Statement of Intent is required to be a Participating LEA. Without this signature, the district will not be eligible to serve as a Participating LEA. ISBE can not require local teachers union support of PERA early implementation.

Q34. What reasons can a district provide to its local teachers union to gain their support for early PERA implementation and general overall support for implementation of the Participating LEA Expectations?

A: Each local teachers union will need to assess the Participating LEA Expectations and the relationship of the RTTT3 plan components to local priorities and objectives. The following points may be relevant to this assessment:

- Participation in the State's RTTT3 Plan will provide Participating LEAs with a number of additional supports and resources to improve classroom instruction and student outcomes.
- Under RTTT3, school districts will have at least one year, and in some instances two years, of "no stakes" implementation of the student growth component of teacher performance evaluations, which will allow districts the time to modify teacher performance evaluation systems as needed prior to "full stakes" implementation.
- RTTT3 grant awards will also allow districts to implement certain Participating LEA Expectations with additional funding, tools and supports that will eventually become requirements for all districts.

Q35. What Participating LEA Expectations, aside from PERA implementation, will districts that chose not to serve as Participating LEAs have to eventually implement?

A: At this time, the only Participating LEA Expectations that will be required of districts that choose not to participate in RTTT3 are (i) PERA implementation (on the regular rather than accelerated implementation schedule); (ii) Rising Star implementation, for districts at certain performance levels in the State's accountability system; and (iii) Common Core State Standards implementation (as State assessments will generally measure district, school, and student performance in relation to the Common Core State Standards). While none of the other Participating LEA Expectations will be required of non-participating districts, districts are encouraged to move forward with plans to establish a local assessment system that incorporates

student growth measures across the curriculum, as such a local assessment system will support the district's eventual implementation of PERA. In addition, districts will be encouraged to integrate with ISLE (see Qs 48-70), as ISBE will increasingly utilize ISLE for the sharing of data, tools and resources with districts. Districts, in turn, will be able to access these no-cost or low-cost ISLE-based applications, tools and resources that may otherwise be prohibitively expensive to support the delivery of personalized instruction aligned to the Common Core State Standards.

Q36. What if district does not have a union or a collective bargaining unit?

A: If a district does not have a union or a collective bargaining unit, then the local teachers union leader's signature is not required on the Statement of Intent. If this is the case, a district should note this on the Statement of Intent it submits to ISBE.

Performance Evaluations:

Q37. By what date do Participating LEAs need to implement PERA (for districts in the lowest-performing 20% and districts NOT in the lowest-performing 20%)?

A: For Participating LEAs that are **not** in the lowest 20%, the "no stakes" PERA implementation may apply for two years (2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years), with full implementation required on or before September 1, 2015. For Participating LEAs that **are** in the lowest 20%, "no stakes" PERA implementation will only apply for one year (2013-2014 school year), with full implementation required on or before September 1, 2014.

Q38. How did ISBE determine the lowest-performing 20% of school districts for purposes of the date of PERA implementation?

A: Under Section 24A-2.5 of the School Code, the State Superintendent must define "lowest-performing 20%" of school districts for purposes of PERA implementation timelines. ISBE determined the lowest-performing 20% of school districts based on a three-year average (i.e., from 2009-2011) performance of the "All student groups" category for the percent meeting/exceeding standards on state assessments in reading and math combined. Separate "lowest-performing 20%" calculations were made for elementary districts, high school districts, and unit districts. The lowest-performing 20% designation is only for purposes of determining PERA implementation timelines and has no relationship to federal or state accountability determinations.

Q39. Will ISBE provide support to Participating LEAs for PERA early implementation?

A: Yes, ISBE will provide supports, as further described in the Participating LEA Expectations, available at http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/default.htm, to Participating LEAs for PERA early implementation. These supports include development of an evaluator pre-qualification and training program and sub-grants to Participating LEAs for principal and teacher evaluators to participate in training. The

RTTT3 Plan's strategies for "Assessments for Learning" will also assist with the measurement of student growth across the curriculum.

Q40. Will the State support evaluator training costs for all districts in the State, or for only those districts who serve as Participating LEAs?

A: ISBE support for evaluator training costs will be made available to all school districts in the State.

Q41. What organization/entity will be conducting the PERA Research-based Study?

A: ISBE does not yet know the identity of the entity that will be conducting the PERA Research-based Study. However, ISBE is planning issue a procurement for this entity in June, 2012.

Q42. What is expected of Participating LEAs with regard to the PERA Research-based Study?

A: Participating LEAs are expected to work with the entity selected to develop and administer the PERA Research-based Study by providing data and information to this entity and allowing the entity to conduct school-based visits to observe practices related to PERA implementation.

Peer Evaluations:

Q43. Will the peer evaluations be strictly formative, or a required factor in re-employment decisions?

A: As a Participating LEA, the peer evaluations must relate to the district's summative evaluation process and therefore will serve as a factor in employment decisions. However, ISBE will allow all Participating LEAs to pilot the new peer evaluation on a "formative" basis during the 2013-2014 school year, provided that all Participating LEAs must use the peer evaluations for summative evaluation determinations beginning in the 2014-2015 school year (the timeline for implementation of a peer evaluation system is not impacted by whether a Participating LEA is fully implementing PERA in 2014-2015 or 2015-2016; regardless the Participating LEA must use a peer evaluation system in the 2014-2015 for the summative evaluations that count).

Q44. Does the peer evaluation expectation apply to all teachers or only those in remediation?

A: The peer evaluation system must apply to a "significant portion of summative evaluations" as stated in the Participating LEA Expectations. Each Participating LEA and its local teachers union should work together to determine what a "significant portion" means in their local context, provided that such determination will be reviewed by ISBE for reasonableness.

Q45. If a Participating LEA and its union are unable to come to an agreement on how to implement the peer evaluation system, what will be the consequences?

A: If a Participating LEA and its local teachers union are unable to come to an agreement on a peer evaluation system, the Participating LEA will have to demonstrate to ISBE the steps it has taken to explore peer evaluation options and try to reach an agreement with the local teachers union, including the various options and approaches the Participating LEA and the teachers union considered. At this time, ISBE may work with the Participating LEA and the teachers union to facilitate further discussions to reach a compromise, including the possible development of a modified system that complies with PERA and the goals of the State's RTTT3 Plan. To the extent that ISBE determines that the Participating LEA is not working towards implementation of its Scope of Work, ISBE may taken action appropriate under the terms of the RTTT3 grant, including without limitation termination and potential recovery.

Q46. Will ISBE provide districts with a model peer evaluation system or any helpful examples?

A: The Performance Evaluation Advisory Committee (PEAC), in coordination with ISBE, will work with teachers and administrators from Participating LEAs to provide resources that will assist Participating LEAs in the development of their peer evaluation systems. However, recognizing that peer evaluation systems may vary greatly across districts, ISBE is looking to the Participating LEAs to serve as leaders in the development and/or implementation of new or existing peer evaluation systems that can, in the future, be extended throughout the State.

Q47. If a district chooses not to serve as a Participating LEA, will a peer evaluation system be required under PERA?

A: No, while a peer evaluation system may be developed under PERA, it is not required.

Illinois Shared Learning Environment and Technology Upgrades:

Q48. What is the Illinois Shared Learning Environment (ISLE)?

A. The Illinois Shared Learning Environment (ISLE) is a set of data, reporting, and application services intended to generally provide supportive technologies for P-20 education and workforce development, and to specifically support K-12 educators deliver personalized instruction aligned to the Common Core State Standards. ISLE is described in more detail in Appendix 5 to the State's Race to the Top 3 plan, available at http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/default.htm. A webinar on Race to the Top and the Illinois Shared Learning Environment will be posted on ISBE's Race to the Top website after February 21. The website for the Shared Learning Collaborative (SLC) includes extensive information on the SLC and its services and technologies, which will be an integral component of ISLE: www.slcedu.org.

Q49. **How does ISLE integrate with districts that already have a learning management system (LMS) in place? Does ISLE replace the LMS, or will both exist in the future?**

A: ISLE will provide benefits to all districts, regardless of their current status of LMS deployment. For districts with an existing LMS, the district will be able to leverage free or low-cost ISLE-based applications that may otherwise be prohibitively expensive.

Q50. **If a district currently submits data to the state SIS and also for compliance reports, will ISLE serve as a third system to feed? Is the state going to leverage all this data to reduce reporting needs?**

A: ISBE will have the capability of feeding district data that is already being reported to the state to ISLE so that districts do not need to redundantly submit this data. Beyond this, ISBE is currently assessing all state data collections, including ISLE, to identify ways to streamline reporting and reduce the burden on districts going forward.

Q51. **If a district is considering purchasing a new student information system, should it wait? Will ISLE be able to handle anything the student information system would manage?**

A: While ISLE will offer a robust set of shared technology services to connect educators with usable student information and educational content and tools, there are likely to be many basic capabilities of a typical student information system that are not on the short term horizon for ISLE. By deploying a new student information system at the same time as ISLE, a district could ensure these two efforts are coordinated.

Q52. **How will ISLE interact with Rising Star?**

A. As described in Q71, Rising Star will be embedded into the State's web-based school and district improvement plan templates, which are hosted on the Illinois Interactive Report Card (IIRC) site. IIRC-hosted applications and services will be accessible through the ISLE portal or through a separate IIRC portal. A district may be able to use local data maintained in ISLE to support its data analysis activities in Rising Star on IIRC.

Q53. **Are any districts currently using ISLE? When will ISLE be ready for integration and district-use? Is there a way to test or see a live demonstration of ISLE?**

A: No districts are currently using ISLE. The first pilot phase in 2012 will include the implementation of SLC technology in Bloomington Public School District #87 and McLean County Unit District #5. For Participating LEAs, ISLE technical integration will begin in early 2013.   Participating LEAs are expected to pilot ISLE in early 2014 and fully implement it within the district in the 2014-15 school year.

ISBE will work with Participating LEAs wishing to utilize ISLE on a faster timeline to accommodate their specific use objectives. As ISLE, including the capabilities enabled through SLC technology, is currently under development, there is not yet a live demonstration available. However, additional resources that describe the capabilities of the SLC technology is available at http://slcedu.org/instructional-impact.

Q54. **Will districts incur expenses/costs for ISLE integration? If so, will those costs be covered through RTTT3 funds? Will there be any costs to districts for data warehousing in ISLE?**

A: Depending on the size of a Participating LEA grant award and the status of the Participating LEA's local data system, a Participating LEA may incur costs related to data mapping and local data system integration in excess of the LEA's RTTT3 award. There will be no costs to Participating LEAs for data warehousing in ISLE.

Q55. **Will districts be allowed to use RTTT3 funds for technology upgrades determined necessary for ISLE integration and related RTTT3 Participating LEA Expectations?**

A: Yes, Participating LEA grant funds may be used for technology upgrades determined necessary for ISLE integration, provided that such funds are used in a manner that is consistent with implementation of the Participating LEA Expectations and the State's RTTT3 Plan.

Q56. **Once RTTT funds are gone, what will sustain ISLE? Will Participating LEAs incur any post-grant period costs associated with ISLE?**

A. Illinois is leveraging the multi-state philanthropic investment in the Shared Learning Collaborative, Race to the Top 3 funds, and a $12 million state capital commitment to develop and implement ISLE. ISLE will be developed to minimize ongoing maintenance and operation costs. ISBE will look to strategically re-allocate other federal and state funding streams to support ISLE beyond its initial development to ensure maintain free access to a comprehensive, freely available, suite of supports and applications. Districts may elect to purchase other applications on a fee-for-usage basis. Post grant-period Participating LEA costs, if any, will likely be related to on-going ISLE professional development activities and be mitigated through the cost-savings Participating LEAs will realize through the use of ISLE rather than locally maintained software and hardware solutions.

Q57. **Is ISLE only for state testing data or can local assessments be incorporated? If so, how is metadata defined in the local assessments?**

A: While state assessment data will be maintained within ISLE, ISLE is designed to incorporate local instructional data (including local assessment data) needed to support applications to improve day-to-day instruction. The metadata schema used for local assessments and all other educational materials will be based upon the

Learning Resource Metadata Initiative (LRMI). More information on the LRMI is available at http://slcedu.org/technology/lrmi.

Q58. How will data in ISLE be accessed and used with respect to student growth calculations? Does the State need to access local data for student growth determinations made with respect to performance evaluations?

A. In January 2012, the Illinois State Board of Education adopted a "value table" model for calculating student growth for State reporting and accountability functions. For more information about Illinois' selection of a growth model, please visit ISBE's State Fiscal Stabilization Fund webpage (http://www.isbe.net/SFSF) and ISBE's Growth Model Working Group webpage (http: //www.isbe.net/gmwg). This growth model will be calculated using data the State collects through state assessments, and therefore will not require any data from ISLE. Separately, districts will need to calculate student growth for all principals and teachers as part of their implementation of the Performance Evaluation Reform Act. Districts may be able to utilize data maintained within ISLE to support student growth calculations for purposes of PERA implementation. While districts will need to calculate student growth for performance evaluations in a manner that complies with ISBE's administrative rules, the State will not need to access any of the data a local district uses for these growth calculations.

Q59. Will ISLE display local data in a variety of ways, such as by student, grade, subgroups, etc.?

A: Yes. The ISLE dashboards will be highly customizable so that teachers and administrators will have tailored displays of the information most relevant to them. More information on the dashboards is available at http://slcedu.org/technology/dashboard.

Q60. Will metadata "tagging' include teacher evaluation language to personalize professional learning?

A: The metadata schema used for local assessments and all other educational materials will be based upon the Learning Resource Metadata Initiative (LRMI). The LRMI specification will continue to grow and evolve over time and may eventually include teacher evaluation elements. More information on the LRMI is available at http://slcedu.org/technology/lrmi.

Q61. What does it mean to "leverage ISLE and the redesigned State Report Card" for parent and community engagement? Will a parent be able to login to ISLE and review recommendations for their child?

A: The redesigned State Report and ISLE will provide additional information, tools and resources that will help Participating LEAs develop more effective and targeted parent and community engagement activities. Participating LEAs will be expected to demonstrate how this additional information and resources will be used to improve parent and community engagement at the district-level. While ISLE's initial focus is

to provide access to tools and resources for educators, future phases will focus on providing access to additional stakeholders, including parents and students.

Q62. Who will develop the learning maps? Will there be professional development for teachers on how to use the learning maps?

A: The learning maps are being developed by the Shared Learning Collaborative (SLC), the multi-state collaborative developing technology and services that will be an integral component of ISLE. SLC's technology will feature learning maps to help teachers and students most effectively track student progress against the Common Core State Standards. ISBE will ensure teachers have access to professional development on the use of such learning maps through the Center for School Improvement and supports made available by the SLC.

Q63. If a student moves from one district to another, will their learning map follow them?

A: Yes. A student's learning map will be available to other participating districts if he or she moves. More information on the Learning Maps is available at http://slcedu.org/technology/learning-maps.

Q64. When a student leaves a district, will the old district still have access to future data (assessments, etc.) the student accrues at the new district?

A: Districts retain ownership and control of their data. If a student moves to a new district, data captured by that district will only be shared in accordance to that district's privacy and security policies and applicable laws. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) restricts the sharing of data to a student's prior district, when the student no longer attends that district.

Q65. Will there be actual curriculum materials on ISLE that districts can purchase?

A: Yes. The SLC technology will make it easier for teachers to access educational content purchased by their schools and districts along with free tools from a variety of publishers, developers and academic researchers.

Q66. Have the data ingestion models been tested for scale?

A: Because the SLC technology will be a multi-state platform, scalability is a top design consideration for the data ingestion models. More information about data ingestion is available in the Pilot Phase Project Documents at http://slcedu.org/sites/default/files/downloads/SLC_Products_Docs.zip.

Q67. Districts will be required to map their data to the Core Entity Model. Has this model been defined?

A: The core entity model will use the Ed-Fi specification of CEDS. More information on data domains is available at http://slcedu.org/technology/data-store.

Q68. How will user management be handled? Will it integrate with the district's current AD environment? Will all users receive new usernames and passwords?

A: ISLE will integrate with districts' directory service. The district will ultimately be responsible for authenticating the end user and managing the authentication credentials. More information on identity management is available in the Pilot Phase Project Documents at http://slcedu.org/sites/default/files/downloads/SLC_Products_Docs.zip.

Q69. How will student identity be protected in this system?

A: Privacy and security are top concerns and many steps are being taken in the design effort of ISLE and the SLC technology to protect student privacy, including locally-controlled role-based access. More information on privacy and security is available at http://slcedu.org/technology/privacy-and-security.

Q70. Will all districts eventually be required to participate in ISLE?

A: At this time, there is no plan to make participation in ISLE mandatory.

Rising Star and Participating LEA Scope of Work:

Q71. What is Rising Star and where can districts go to learn more about the Rising Star continuous improvement system?

A. Rising Star is a comprehensive continuous improvement process that ISBE is embedding into the State's web-based school and district improvement plan templates. Rising Star uses indicators of effective practice, at both the district and school level, to provide the structure for improving teaching and learning as part of a continuous cycle of assessment, planning, implementation, and progress monitoring. To learn more about the Rising Star continuous improvement system, districts can visit the Statewide System of Support (part of ISBE's Innovation and Improvement Division) at: http://www.isbe.net/sos/htmls/state_sys_support.htm. Once on this webpage, scroll down to "ROE/ISC and RESPRO Operational Resources" where various materials regarding Rising Star are located.

Q72. What is a Process Manager?

As part of the Participating LEA Scope of Work and the web-based continuous improvement system, each Participating LEA is required to select a "Process Manager" for the district. The Process Manager is the person who interfaces with the web system, prepares agendas and worksheets, distributes documents to team members in advance of meetings, and enters the team's minutes and work products into the system. The Process Manager also distributes coaching comments and research briefs available on the system to team members and enters the team's response to coaching comments in the system to maintain a dialogue with the Improvement Coach (as defined below). The district superintendent and the district Process Manager have the same access privileges to the web-based system.

Q73.   What is an Improvement Coach?

As part of the Participating LEA Scope of Work and the web-based continuous improvement system, each Participating LEA is required to select an "Improvement Coach" for the district. The Coach's role in this continuous improvement process is to increase the capacity of the team to function within a culture of candor in order to determine the accurate level of implementation of effective practices while striving toward universal and consistent practice. The Coach serves the district and schools best when helping the improvement team understand the meaning of each indicator, gather information necessary for an accurate assessment of current practice relative to the indicator, plan improvement, and monitor results until the team is assured that the practice is fully implemented. The Coach interacts with the team in a way that might be called "metacognitive guidance." That means "thinking out loud" to model for the team how to analyze current performance relative to an indicator and how to plan concrete steps leading to its full implementation. By thinking out loud, asking critical questions, and holding the team to a high level of candor, the Coach embeds in the team the abilities and procedures for continuous improvement. Thus the most effective improvement coaches prompt the team to think more deeply or differently about its work and makes suggestions for accessing resources or considering new ideas. While the Coach may challenge the team to consider the strength of the evidence it provides for full, partial or no implementation, the team is not accountable to the Coach but to themselves and their students.

Q74.   Are there district-associated costs with implementation of the "Rising Star" program?

A: There are no direct district costs. District personnel will need to engage in the continuous improvement planning process.

Q75.   If a district is already using Rising Star for its strategic/improvement planning, will its plan(s) be transferred to a new system, continue "as is" or will the district have to start over?

A: RTTT3 indicators will be embedded into Rising Star and as a result, districts currently using Rising Star will be able to continue to use this system and their current plans. Though, the plans will need to be updated to incorporate the RTTT3 indicators.

Q76.   What do districts that are currently using Rising Star, either through the Illinois Interactive Report Card (IIRC) or the Center for Innovation and Improvement (CII), need to know to complete the Participating LEA Scope of Work through the web-based system?

Districts currently using Rising Star should be familiar with the process of assessing indicators of effective practice and creating continuous improvement plans to address the indicators. As further described in the Scope of Work Planning Template,

available at http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/default.htm, 15 of the 17 RT3 Participating LEA Expectations have been tied to existing Rising Star District-level indicators and two new indicators have been created for the remaining two RT3 Participating LEA Expectations. For each of these indicators, districts will need to create a plan which addresses implementation of the RT3 Participating LEA Expectation. If a district has already assessed and created a plan for one of the indicators that is now tied to a RT3 Participating LEA Expectation, it will need to revisit the indicator and revise as needed to incorporate implementation of the RT3 Participating LEA Expectation. Districts currently using Rising Star will also need to complete the other components of the Participating LEA Scope of Work, as detailed in Q78.

Q77. If a district currently receives Statewide System of Support funds and is participating in Rising Star, will the RTTT3 funds be "in addition" to these funds or replace these existing funds?

A: The RTTT3 funds will be "in addition" to any existing funding, provided the district will need to demonstrate how the RTTT3 Participating LEA funds are being used to implement the Participating LEA Expectations.

Q78. What constitutes the Participating LEA Scope of Work?

A: In order to serve as a Participating LEA, a district must complete a Participating LEA Scope of Work, which includes detailed plans that address the LEA's specific goals, activities, timelines, key personnel, budgets and annual targets for key performance measures. In addition to these detailed plans, districts must (a) review and indicate their agreement with the Race to the Top Phase 3 Participating LEA and Program Assurances and (b) complete the Race to the Top Phase 3 Participating LEA Data Request, which includes information needed for ISLE integration planning as well as information ISBE is required to provide to the Department of Education to fulfill certain data requirements. Districts will complete each of the Participating LEA Scope of Work components through the web-based continuous improvement system available on the IIRC website (http://iirc.niu.edu/). In order to assist districts with the Scope of Work process, ISBE has created a Scope of Work Planning Template, which includes more detailed instructions and other helpful information. The Scope of Work Planning Template is available at: http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/default.htm. Additionally, the March 8th webinar and corresponding materials are available at http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/htmls/applications.htm and ISBE will be hosting a subsequent webinar on March 22nd to further assist districts in completing the Participating LEA Scopes of Work.

Q79. How do districts access the web-based Participating LEA Scope of Work?

A: To access the web-based Participating LEA Scope of Work, go to the IIRC's website at: http://iirc.niu.edu. In upper right corner of the homepage, click on "Log-in to MyIIRC," then enter your MyIIRC password which takes you to the district's

data dashboard. From the data dashboard, click on the E-plans tab and then districts may either access the web-based Scope of Work through the Illinois Interactive Report Card's (IIRC) or the Center for Innovation and Improvement's (CII) platform.

Q80. What is the level of detail expected for the Scope of Work for the March 30th submission? What is needed by March 30th?

A: The Participating LEA Scope of Work will serve as the district's roadmap for implementation of the RT3 Participating LEA Expectations. As a result, districts are strongly encouraged to submit a Scope of Work that demonstrates the district's thorough and thoughtful consideration of each of the 17 Participating LEA Expectations. Districts, as outlined in the Scope of Work Planning Template, available at http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/default.htm and on the web-based Scope of Work, available at http://iirc.niu.edu/, will need to complete a plan, with the following components, for each of the RT3-related indicators:

- A description of the current level of implementation;
- An assignment of the person responsible for managing the plan;
- A description of how the objective will look when implemented;
- A description of corresponding activities for the entire RT3 grant period;
- A list of detailed tasks for at least the next twelve months; and
- Budget information to complete the objective.

As a reference, ISBE has prepared "suggested activities" for each of the RT3 Participating LEA Expectations, which may be used as a guide to the level of detail expected by the March 30th deadline. ISBE expects more detailed activities and associated tasks for the first twelve months of the grant period, understanding that districts will update and revise the Scopes of Work throughout the grant period. For additional explanation and instructions, see the Scope of Work Planning Template (referenced above) and the March 8th webinar and related materials, available at: http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/htmls/applications.htm. ISBE will "conditionally" approve the Participating LEA Scopes of Work that are complete and submitted by the March 30th deadline. ISBE will then work with districts during April to further refine the Scopes of Work, with final approval expected during April and May. See Q78 regarding the items which constitute the Participating LEA Scope of Work and must be completed by the March 30th deadline.

Q81. Are the "priority" and "opportunity" scores within the web-based Scope of Work important for Race to the Top?

While Participating LEAs must complete plans for all applicable indicators associated with the RT3 Participating LEA Expectations, districts should use the "priority" and "opportunity" score functions within the web-based system in order to prioritize the RT3 Participating LEA Expectations that are particularly important to the district. These scores may also help districts assess where to allocate RT3 and other funds for implementation.

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Common Core:

Q82. If a district has already started a process for Common Core alignment, would the district be able to continue this process or must the district start a new process to fulfill the Participating LEA Expectations?

A: The district would be able to continue its Common Core alignment process as a Participating LEA.

STEM/Programs of Study:

Q83. What are STEM Programs of Study?

A. STEM Programs of Study are organized around a career cluster and feature a series of orientation and advanced pathway courses--including early college--across education institutions that are accompanied by opportunities for students to enrich their learning through work-based learning experiences as well as demonstrate their understanding through assessments and industry credentialing opportunities. Originally developed and implemented as part of Career and Technical Education, STEM Programs of Study serve as a model for bridging programs across P-20 education institutions and are demonstrated to improve academic achievement, increase graduation rates, and improve transitions to postsecondary education and employment. More information on STEM Programs of Study and STEM Learning Exchanges is available at: www.illinoisworknet.com/ilpathways.

Q84. What Participating LEA Expectations regarding STEM Programs of Study apply to a district that only has K-8 schools? Or only has high schools?

A: The Participating LEA Expectations that apply regarding STEM Programs of Study are outlined in the Participating LEA Expectations, available at http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/default.htm. If a Participating LEA only has K-8 schools, it must establish an individual learning plan program, commencing in 7th grade, in the feeder schools for high schools implementing STEM Programs of Study. If a Participating LEA only has high schools, it must establish two or more Programs of Study promoting critical STEM application areas, and must make efforts to align the Programs of Study with instructional and career awareness programs in its high schools' predominant feeder schools.

Q85. Will ISBE provide Participating LEAs with a standard template for the required "individual learning plans"?

A: ISBE intends to make available models and resources that will help Participating LEAs develop and implement an individual learning plan program to support the Programs of Study model.

Center for School Improvement:

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Q86. Where can a district find additional information about the Center for School Improvement (CSI)? When will the CSI start providing services? Will ISBE issue a procurement process for CSI?

A: A district can find additional information about the CSI through the State's RTTT3 Application, available at http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/PDF/phase3_app.pdf (see pgs. 11-13) or the State's forthcoming Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) waiver application, which will be available on ISBE's website on or close to February 28, 2012. ISBE will issue a procurement for CSI in spring/summer 2012. The CSI will commence services during the 2012-13 School Year.

Survey of Learning Conditions:

Q87. What is a "State-adopted survey of learning conditions" or approved equivalent?

A: A district can find additional information about the "State-adopted survey of learning conditions" through the State's RTTT3 Application, available at http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/PDF/phase3_app.pdf (see pgs. 35-36).

Local Assessments:

Q88. Are there parameters supporting the creation of local assessments under the Participating LEA Expectations?

A: Yes, such parameters are described in the State's RTTT3 Application, available at http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/PDF/phase3_app.pdf (see pgs. 17-18).

Q89. Will Participating LEAs be required to use any of the Participating LEA grant award or otherwise incur expenses to develop, implement or purchase assessment instruments or in order to serve as a pilot for the PARCC consortium and KIDS assessment?

A: Participating LEAs, as outlined in the Participating LEA Expectations, will be required to allocate 10% of the RTTT3 Participating LEA grant award to the development and implementation of Type II or Type III assessment frameworks and items, with all assessment frameworks and items developed using RTTT3 funds made available as "open source" and integrated with an assessment item bank and other assessment supports housed on ISLE. Type II and Type III assessments are described in the State's RTTT3 Application, available at http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/PDF/phase3_app.pdf (see pgs. 20-21). Participating LEAs can use these funds for release time for teachers to assist in the development of these assessments; hiring consultants to design assessment elements; or providing support to general network activity for development of Type II or Type III assessments. Any costs for establishing a local assessment system beyond this 10% allocation will be incurred by the Participating LEA. There will be no cost for

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Participating LEAs to serve as pilot districts for the PARCC consortium and KIDS assessment.

Q90. **Could Participating LEA grant funds be used to purchase existing instruments that have already been tested?**

A: Yes.

High Poverty High Minority Schools

Q91. **How are High Poverty, High Minority schools defined?**

A: For the purpose of its Race to the Top Application, ISBE has defined High Poverty, High Minority schools as:

- "High-minority school" means a school with a minority population that is within the top quartile of minority student membership in the State;" and
- "High-poverty school" means a school in the top quartile in the State as measured by the percentage of low-income students."

Q92. **If a district does not have a High Poverty High Minority (HPHM) school, is the district required to complete the Participating LEA Expectation regarding HPHM schools?**

If a district does not have a HPHM School, as posted at http://www.isbe.net/racetothetop/PDF/phase3-hphm-districts.pdf, the district is not required to address the corresponding RT3 Participating Expectation regarding partnering with teacher preparation programs to promote pipeline strategies for HPHM schools.