

Strategic Learning Initiatives: Planning and Pre-implementation

First 6 month Activities:

- Identify the principal.
- Hire a Transformation Officer.
- Hire On-site SLI SIG Facilitator.
- Screen, interview and hire SIG staff.
- Conduct meetings with district and school leaders to review transformation process.
- Set up a system of communication with district and school leaders to assist in process monitoring and support.
- Conduct a needs assessment to identify baseline strengths and challenges and set priorities for a plan of action.
- Identify School SIG Leadership Team Members.
- Review SIG Leadership Team roles and responsibilities, decision-making parameters, team norms, processes and procedures.
- Design and implement an internal and external communication system for the Transformation efforts.
- Set schedules for department/grade level PLCs to collaborate in school improvement process.
- Design and implement an on-going, job-embedded professional development plan based on identified school needs.
- Conduct initial 4-day Focused Instruction Process professional development sessions for all school staff.
- Develop a school instructional calendar that addresses identified priority instructional goals.
- Identify and implement common assessments linked to the CCSS.
- Design a data tracking information system to inform teaching and learning.
- Design after-school and summer school programs that support SIG Transformation Goals.
- Establish a District Leadership Council for Continuous Improvement.
- Work with district/school and union leadership to review union rules and procedures and set a schedule for on-going dialogue.
- Review district teacher and principal evaluation processes and set dialogue regarding student growth measure component for teacher and principal evaluation.
- Finalize budget for SIG implementation.
- Order materials and supplies to support the Transformation Process.
- Set schedule for Family/Parent workshops and meetings that support instructional goals.
- Provide on-going coaching, modeling and lesson design support for all school staff that enhances instructional skills and strategies and the use of data to improve teaching and learning.
- Develop and finalize MOUs with the union, lead partner, district and school related to the SIG process.

Reference: Dr. Robert Libka, Principal, Trinity Lutheran School, 405 S. Rush St. Roselle, IL. 60172, rjlibka@yahoo.com (630) 894-3263

Strategic Learning Initiatives: Governance

Although a school can articulate a mission of “all students succeeding” or “lifelong learners,” without buy-in from the staff, families, students, or the community, they remain merely words and not a mission that every stakeholder is committed to pursuing. The Governance of a school is what creates a living and breathing mission and vision.

From the beginning of the needs assessment throughout the implementation of the intervention plan and strategies, the school's mission and high expectations for students will be guideposts. The School Leadership Team, composed of school administrators, teachers, community representatives, and parents/families will have as a key strategy the articulation of high expectations for students and staff through active engagement and monitoring of intervention strategies, assessments of student progress, and visible actions of accountability. Through constant communication, careful strategy alignment, and “walking the walk” of accountability, school leaders will model the vision and mission of the school for teachers, parents, staff, and students. In turn, they will ask the entire school faculty to do the same through active agreement and participation in the turnaround strategies and process.

Along with regular and frequent work with grade/department-level teams, SLI will meet on a frequent basis with the School Leadership Team to provide technical assistance and coaching. The focus of this coaching will be to build the school leadership team's capacity to initiate, monitor, and evaluate turnaround strategies, and to establish a collaborative decision-making process. Student achievement and engagement data, classroom observations, and frequent communication with teachers will become structured tools for the articulation of the school's vision, mission, and strategies for turnaround.

SLI also recognizes that a principal's evaluation must be ongoing, not an activity conducted solely at the onset of a formal assessment process. The FIP model provides for regular data collection and assessment that can be used as a component of the evaluation process. Student assessment scores and teacher evaluations contribute to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the principal, provide feedback for the principal and leads to discussion about how the school's leadership can be more collaborative and inclusive.

Lastly, in order to develop and enhance the skills of the School Leadership Team and principal who will assume responsibility for the design, implementation and monitoring of the process, SLI will establish a system of regular meetings that promotes/enhances shared leadership across the school and shared responsibility and accountability for meeting the needs of all learners.

Reference: Brandi Stubblefield, Learning Strategist, Lamphier High School, Springfield School District 186, bstubblefield.k12.il.us (217) 585-0939

Strategic Learning Initiatives: Operational Flexibility

Strategic Learning Initiatives is a non-profit registered in Illinois under the 501(c) 3 statute. The organizational structures include a Board of Directors, President, Vice President for Operations, Directors of program teams including the Education Program Director, the Shared Leadership Team, Professional Development Team, and Family Engagement team, Comptroller and administrative staff.

SLI staff and resources are able to support work with up to twenty to thirty schools and their districts through contracts, depending on the location of the districts in the USA. SLI has the capacity to work in the lowest income neighborhoods and rural areas with charter schools and regular public schools, with early childhood programs, family engagement programs in independent centers and K-12 schools. A key to the success of SLI in working with a wide variety of schools and in leading a number of transformation efforts is our ability to understand the improvement needs of the schools and be adaptive and flexible in our approach to working with the schools.

The following staff will be provided for each school for the implementation of SLI's SIG project: Project Director, Process Facilitator, Finance Coordinator, Shared Leadership Facilitator, Professional Development Facilitator, and two Family Engagement Facilitators. These staff will be used as process support, as described in the proposal document, on an as-needed basis for leadership, professional development and family engagement initial training, workshops, seminars, staff, leadership team and administrator coaching and modeling of school improvement strategies and processes. This level of staffing provides the maximum flexibility for any engagement.

The strength of the proposal submitted by SLI lies in its applicability to all K-12 school levels. The Focused Instruction Process (FIP) model has repeatedly demonstrated success across K-12 classrooms, in the lowest income neighborhoods around the country. It is a process that is continuously adjusted to meet diverse student needs, providing a level of flexibility that results in better utilization of resources and increased effectiveness.

Reference: Brandi Stubblefield, Learning Strategist, Lanphier High School, Springfield School District 186, bstubblefield@springfield.k12.il.us (217) 585-0939

Strategic Learning Initiatives-Teacher/Principal Evaluation with Student Growth Component

The Strategic Learning Initiatives (SLI) plan for implementing a rigorous, transparent and equitable performance evaluation for teachers/principals with student growth as a significant factor uses multiple objective sources of data to arrive at the performance ratings. The plans are transparent in that both teachers and principals are informed in advance as to what the standards and criteria are for levels of performance. The principal/teacher evaluation system will be aligned with **The Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA)** that was implemented in September 1, 2012.

The sources of teacher evaluation data include: observations, documents such as units and lesson plans, management plans, student academic performance (using value added measures and additional measures of student growth and development) and case material (e.g. videos, teacher developed resource materials, and individual student educational plans). A partnership between SLI and the **Danielson Group and Teachscape** will offer ISBE and Illinois districts a rigorous, transparent, and equitable performance evaluation system for teachers. The **Danielson Group** has been an active trainer of the **Framework for Teaching Evaluation** across the state of Illinois, and has trained over 11,000 observers and administrators in the evaluation process. This partnership will provide powerful tools for observation and evaluation management and professional learning management as well as on-the-ground services to prepare observers and other professional staff in SIG schools to conduct accurate observations and evaluations, engage in professional conversations, and guide professional learning.

Using the **Illinois State Model for Principal Evaluation** and the **Illinois Performance Standards for School Leaders Rubric Evaluating Practice of Principals** as a framework, SLI will work with the school district to develop and align evaluation standards and a rubric for principal evaluation. The standards include:

- Living a Mission and Vision Focused on Results
- Leading and Managing systems Change
- Improving Teaching and Learning
- Building and Maintaining Collaborative Relationships
- Leading with Integrity and Professionalism
- Creating and Sustaining a Culture of High Expectations

Student growth is a critical component of the SLI partnership with the school district. The project's assessment and leadership teams, in collaboration with district staff and principals, will ensure that extensive data are regularly collected on student performance on academic performance, attendance rates, reduction of discipline referrals/student suspensions, cohort graduation rates and or "on track" rates and other interim assessments. The academic assessments, based on collaboration with school districts, could include: data from Response to Intervention (RTI), Analysis of Engagement Time (AET), Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS), Aimweb.com, Curriculum Based Measures (CBM) and a variety of standardized state assessments, including the PARCC and EPAS, of student achievement in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics and science. Based on previous and current student data, school district staff will analyze the degree to which value has been added to student performance or whether there has been significant growth at the .05 levels.

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Strategic Learning Initiatives-Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention Incentives and Strategies

Strategic Learning Initiatives (SLI) will collaborate with school and district leadership on plans to develop job descriptions that are linked to performance and recruit teachers and principals from colleges and universities of high quality, both in Illinois and across the United States. The hiring will be based on the need for teachers at various grade levels and in academic areas identified in the audit/entry processes. SLI will review, with the LEA, their hiring policies and procedures in order to ensure that they are consistent with affirmatively hiring a highly qualified and diverse school staff.

In order to effectively retain highly qualified principals and teachers, SLI will review with district and school administrators and school leadership teams how effective programs of induction can be established, which include programs of professional development (PD) and mentoring based on the needs of principals and teachers. An on-going PD process, for all teachers, will be job imbedded, based on the latest research on effective teaching and administrative practice, as well as teacher and principal expressed needs. SLI's comprehensive approach to PD is designed around a reform model that substitutes one-time workshops for deeper, sustained learning opportunities for all school staff, with extensive on-going PD sessions supported by follow-up support in terms of coaching, demonstrations, and reflection sessions. In this regard, the project will create professional learning communities at each school, a structure that has been shown to be effective in enhancing teacher effectiveness, creating a shared sense of responsibility for student success, increasing staff satisfaction and morale, contributing to greater likelihood of systemic change, and ultimately impacting student achievement (McLaughlin and Talbert, 2006). The projects focus on school-wide and grade level teams is an approach that helps schools to sustain improved teaching practice beyond the life of the project.

At the core of SLI's view of the teacher as a leader is the concept of learning communities that requires the principal to conceive the school as a learning organization under the principal's leadership, a school that has a continuing focus on the capacity to teach children to learn. Such a principal is continuously improving teachers' capacity to teach children. In this regard the principal in SLI's principal PD and coaching sessions will learn how to establish a culture of learning in their school, one where teaching and learning pervade the life and the interpersonal relationships within the school building.

SLI's perspective on the principal as instructional leader means the principal needs to become an expert on teaching and learning by keeping abreast of the latest research and practice on curricular and instructional designs. Having that knowledge, however, is only the first step in being an effective instructional leader. SLI's principal PD will demonstrate to principals how their actions must communicate that teaching and learning must be at the center of what is happening at the school. SLI will collaborate with principals to acquire five essential skills necessary for improved teaching and learning at their schools:

- Becoming effective resource providers.
- Learning to use interpersonal skills to maintain trust, spur teacher motivation, and develop a culture of collegially among their staff.
- Developing an instructional vision and accompanying instructional plan for the school.
- Providing teacher with on-going feedback on their teaching.
- Creating opportunities for teachers to learn about and practice the most recent research on teaching and learning.

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Strategic Learning Initiatives: Rewards Associated with (Improving Student) Achievement or Graduation Rate

SLI's Focused Instruction Model (FIP) has an immediate and increasingly positive influence on overall culture and climate to create a stable learning environment. This transformation is the result of growing a community of learners, both students and adults, in which high expectations are the norm. Continuous learning leads to the continuous improvement of daily work, which then accelerates the closing of the achievement gap, and develops, shared leadership across grade levels of the building and the district. The project creates professional learning communities, a system that has been shown to be effective in enhancing teacher effectiveness, creating a shared sense of responsibility for student success, increasing staff satisfaction and morale, contributing to a greater likelihood of systemic change, and ultimately impacting student achievement. The following are the primary improvements in school culture that will create a positive and stable learning environment: therefore improving student learning and the graduation rate of students:

- Parents and guardians become more involved in their children's education at home and within the classroom.
- Teachers undergo a transformation in the professional development programming and coaching as they learn to communicate more effectively with parents and students.
- Trust, collaboration and respect among parents and guardians and teachers grow and create a positive climate for learning.
- Retention of teachers increases as a result of the improved environment where students are taught in a way that is measured and reinforces weekly.
- The principal and other administrators are empowered to communicate better, and are perceived by parents/guardians and teacher alike to be "part of the solution".
- Students are transformed in that they experience improved results; many for the first time, and communicate in a more positive manner with their teachers.
- Community members become more involved in the schools and become more impassioned about the school's mission.
- The development of positive behavioral learning and socio-emotional supports, and behavior management that reward positive student behaviors, including addressing students with special emotional needs and those who are the victims of bullying sets the stage for a positive and stable learning environment.

Lanphier High School in Springfield, IL. demonstrates how SLI and the Focused Instruction Process have a major impact on students' academic achievement. Lanphier is an urban high school with 67% low-income families and 39% African American students out of a total population of 1,137. Planning for the project started in the spring of 2011 and the training was delivered in September, October, and November 2011. As more faculty learned about the impact the process was having on student achievement and motivation, additional staff wanted to get involved in the process. By the end of November 2011, virtually the entire faculty, 105 teachers, had volunteered for the training. As a result, Lanphier was implementing a full school English/Language Arts instruction process in all classrooms by mid-December. After only one year using SLI program interventions students reading scores on the ACT increased dramatically from 33.3 meeting to 41.7, an 8.7 percentage improvement. Lanphier had the highest gain in the ACT composite measure of any of the sixteen federally supported School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools.

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Strategic Learning Initiatives: Extended Time

Research by Marzano (2003) estimates that students have approximately 1,008 instructional hours during the course of a school year, assuming a school calendar of 180 days and approximately 5.6 hours per day devoted to instruction in all academic areas. For students who are well below grade level and in schools with poor student performance, additional time in the school day is needed to close achievement gaps. An additional one-hour of time per school day would add 180 instructional hours or 30 instructional days to the school year. This would significantly increase time for core academic subjects, targeted academic intervention for students, and enrichment.

One use of this additional time will be for the implementation of Success Time, a key instructional intervention and master scheduling strategy of the FIP model. As stated earlier, within the FIP model, one period per day (30 minutes) is set aside to re-teach or enrich a skill that was taught previously. Groups are formed on the basis of results of the FIP skill assessment administered according to the FIP Calendar of Skills.

Specific after-school activities at the project school will be tailored to the needs of each school community. For families with unique parental needs, after-school programs will become a critical area within this project's model. Extended opportunities will be created for learning beyond the end of the school day so that students and parents/families can take part in enriching academic experiences and a myriad of after school programs that are aligned with their personal needs. Such programs will be designed and delivered by faculty, students, and community partner organizations. These programs will enable students, parents, teachers, and administrators to collaborate with one another on teams in workshops, which will explore how learning can be enhanced and enlivened. All of the parent programs will emphasize how parents can support students in ways that go beyond teaching just the basic skills to also include the acquisition of knowledge that is truly meaningful to their children. Through this project, families would learn how to support student learning at home and to develop an additional understanding of how they can inspire student learning.

The School Leadership Team will determine the best approach for each school during the needs assessment and action planning phases. A critical aspect of this determination will be the availability and effectiveness of the schools' existing afterschool programs, and the willingness of the school to extend learning time for students and collaboration time for teachers. SLI will work closely with the school in identifying and implementing effective methods for extending learning time, and will provide a variety of programmatic options for making the best use of this time.

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Strategic Learning Initiatives: Comprehensive Instructional Reform

Third-party research shows that using the SLI Focused Instructional Process, schools will jump-start their standardized state test scores across grade levels 2-6 times faster than prior average progress rates. With SLI's support, school leadership teams customize school structures and processes to focus the school stakeholders on the priority needs of each school. In addition, an extensive process of networking is established within and among schools to reduce isolation and support collaboration.

Aligned with an effective coaching process that uses weekly formative assessment data for the common core standards to monitor student progress and plan instructional interventions, the Focused Instruction Process (FIP) model has repeatedly demonstrated success across K-12 classrooms, in the lowest income neighborhoods around the country. It is a process that is continuously adjusted to meet diverse student needs, providing better utilization of resources and increased effectiveness. The basic structure at the elementary school level in which all teachers typically teach literacy and mathematics enables whole staff engagement in the main subject focus areas of the FIP process. This generates a school-wide or whole school concentrated effort focused on improving student achievement.

A key outcome of the SLI model is increased collaboration among all staff through a process of identifying and resolving problems. This improved way of working together improves classroom results while deepening the respect among all the staff for previously unrecognized creativity, energy and commitment, thus growing a more effective collegial culture. SLI emphasizes that a change in the culture is important ally in the transformation of a school.

While many areas of school change need to be addressed for dramatic, sustainable improvements, research affirms that student-teacher interaction and personal bonding is the pivot point for school turnaround. In order for any school to see improvements in student achievement, significant improvements in the focused interaction of students and teachers must be the central strategy. The Focus Instruction Process (FIP) of Strategic Learning Initiatives is the key strategy for effecting change in classroom instruction. FIP is a research-based strategy designed by classroom teachers. It is based on the highly successful strategies used by schools and businesses that integrate high performance and continuous improvement principles (Sebring, et. al., 2006; Simmons, 2006).

FIP will provide teachers, principals, and district staff with a powerful framework of new structures and processes for integrating school improvement strategies, which research shows consistently results in significantly improved student achievement.

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Strategic Learning Initiatives: Job-embedded Professional Development

Sustained and intensive professional development (PD) will play an instrumental role in the Strategic Learning (SLI) SIG Transformation Process. SLI's comprehensive approach to PD is designed around a reform model that substitutes one-time workshops for deeper, sustained learning opportunities for all school staff, with extensive on-going PD sessions supported by coaching, demonstration and reflection sessions. In this regard, the project will create professional learning communities at the school, a structure that has been shown to be effective in enhancing teachers' effectiveness, creating a shared sense of responsibility for student success, increasing staff satisfaction and morale, contributing to the greater likelihood of systemic change, and ultimately positively impacting student achievement.

The professional development times and offerings will be based on identified school needs as determined by the initial school needs assessment, a review of student assessments, classroom observations and the teacher's professional growth plan. The on-site SIG professional development facilitator will work with individual teachers, small groups and the entire staff to identify PD needs and provide workshops, coaching, modeling and reflection sessions that will enhance teacher skills and support improved student achievement.

SLI's instructional model utilizes the Focus Instructional Process (FIP) as a framework for its' work. The professional development that teachers' experience, facilitated by an SLI professional development facilitator, during FIP provides them with new teaching and learning strategies. FIP is largely organic in terms of a teacher's professional development. Each of the eight steps in the process will empower teachers to communicate better with their students, with parents/families, with other teachers, and with school and district administrators, The Focused Instruction Process has a cumulative effect of establishing shared leadership within/across the school.

More specifically, FIP will begin with a series of workshops whereby teachers learn how to incorporate the eight steps of the process into their curricula. Teachers will transfer knowledge to students through the common core standards-based FIP focus lesson. Through the focus lesson step, skills are highlighted that allow students a vehicle for navigating and comprehending knowledge in all content areas in a meaningful way. Regular formative assessments are administered to monitor student progress toward mastery of the skills/standards. Student instructional interventions and enrichment sessions are scheduled for students based on the formative assessment results. Weekly grade level/department meetings provide teachers the opportunity to share instructional successes and challenges and offer instructional support and feedback to each other. Through continually communicating with each other in the weekly planning time about lesson planning, re-teaching, and enrichment, teachers will undergo a transformation in communication and delivery of instruction.

Strategic Learning Initiatives has implemented the FIP instructional improvement model and provided professional development services over the past ten years in Illinois SIG schools in DePue High School, and Lanphier High School in Springfield, twenty Chicago Public Schools, Glen Oaks High School in East Baton Rouge, LA and Para los Ninos Charter School in Los Angeles, CA.

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Strategic Learning Initiatives: Data Driven Instruction

The first step Strategic Learning Initiatives (SLI) will take in collaborating with school districts or schools will be to focus on conducting an assessment of needs in a wide range of areas; including: the overall structure of the district, curricula, school climate, the quality of instruction, school finances, program effectiveness, human capital, the governance of the district and school system, student achievement, current parent/family participation in school programming, student attendance, mobility and truancy, language needs of students (e.g. Limited English Proficiency needs), special education programming, cultural instructional needs, and substance abuse, school climate, and teacher instructional needs. This assessment/audit will jump-start the SLI's relentless focus on data and on the sharing of information with administrators, teachers, students, and parents/families to contribute to the students' and schools' improved performance. As part of that audit, expectations, roles, responsibilities, and key performance measures and school change metrics will be reviewed and clarified by the school leadership teams collaborating with SLI.

As a formative assessment process that emphasizes teacher use of data and collaborative reflection on accountability, the Focused Instruction Process (FIP) does require well-developed formative assessment tools in alignment with the standards. Rather than mandating specific formative assessment tools, those resources already in place in the school will be reviewed. In the event that teachers cannot design or are in need of more structure formative assessment supports, SLI has experience with several systems and will advise the school leadership in the selection process. Many schools have opted to purchase an online standardized formative assessment system to support their instructional reforms.

After data have been used to create a plan, the instructional focus areas for the Common Core and/or College Readiness Standards will be developed. That plan includes the development of the instructional calendar. Areas of instructional focus will be selected from the state accountability requirements and matched to student learning needs. Teachers also will be asked to implement the instructional focus in the following five steps:

1. Posting and highlighting the instructional focus at the beginning of class when student attention is at a peak
2. Building upon success and student's prior knowledge with a warm-up of previously covered standards-based material to maintain and retain student understanding.
3. Delivering a lesson plan focused on the new standards.
4. Guiding practice to reinforce the new skills and concepts.
5. Assessing for understanding, enriching, and remediating when necessary.

The FIP instructional delivery will be aligned with school curricula. After a focus lesson has been taught for a period that is determined by the leadership team designed instructional calendar, that skill will then be tested/assessed. Based on the results of this assessment, students will be assigned to a success group for re-teaching, or enrichment. At this point, the students will undergo additional lessons at their appropriate level (i.e., re-teach, maintenance, or enrichment) for another period as designated by the instructional calendar.

References: Brandi Stubblefield, Learning Strategist, Lanphier High School, Springfield School District 186, bstubblefield@springfield.k12.il.us (217) 585-0939

Strategic Learning Initiatives: Parent and Family Engagement

SLI's Parent/Family Engagement Program will focus on maintaining high academic expectations for students, building school, family, and community partnerships, and strengthening the connection between parents and caregivers through interactive workshops. This approach supports the idea that parents and caregivers are a child's first teachers.

SLI will focus on teaching and coaching parents on how they can become more involved in and more supportive of their children's learning. The SLI model encourages parents to maintain high academic expectations for students and to understand that home is a place of learning, and that parents have a vital role in helping their children to become better learners. The Parent Engagement Program equips and coaches parents and caregivers with knowledge, strategies, and tools that enable them to perform effectively in assisting their children and others.

Parents/families will be recruited into the program by a variety of methods, including sending flyers home with students, advertising the workshops within the entire school via posters, personal direct invitations to parents/caregivers, and phone calls. Participation rates tend to be higher when schools participate in the program voluntarily. In addition, the participation rate is higher when school principals and the rest of the school community are committed to the workshop program. SLI has successfully offered incentives to parents directly (e.g., "bring in another parent to receive a free gift") through promotions conducted within the school to build excitement among parents and caregivers and to increase the all-important and very positive word-of-mouth that this program generates.

A cornerstone of SLI's work in parent/caregiver engagement is that its workshops are interactive, offer easily applied and practical education, and are very hands-on. SLI offers a series of annual participatory hands-on educational workshops for parents/families, teaching them strategies and methods they can use at home with their children to develop students' understanding of concepts and skills. To maintain high expectations for students, parents will be encouraged and coached on how to model learning as a continuous process. This is crucial in fostering a lifelong love of learning in their children. With topics ranging from reading and math games and nurturing positive self-esteem to highly effective strategies for teens, the SLI workshops give parents useful and effective tools that strengthen learning for the whole family. These tools will help to build leaders in the home and community, and deepen the relationship between parent and child. SLI also will build leaders in the schools by training parents to lead the workshops and by coordinating ongoing parent involvement.

References: Judith Sauri, Principal, Richard Edwards Elementary School, Chicago Public Schools, 4815 S. Karlov Av. Chicago, IL. 60632, jmsauri@cps.edu, (773) 535-4875

Strategic Learning Initiatives: Sustainability

SLI's transformation model creates a culture of participative problem solving, collaboration, consistency, ownership, and accountability. Teachers that contribute to the transformation of a school using this model experience both a skill and motivation increase as they see the results they are able to create and sustain. This creates a world-class teaching and learning system within a school and a sustainable and scalable model that enables all schools in a district to take full responsibility for their performance.

One of the factors that restrict the improvement of school performance is teacher turnover. School leadership that limits teacher turnover will increase productivity and sustainability. A primary goal of our transformation process is to shift the school culture towards collaboration, teamwork, and increased teacher confidence in their improved abilities. As this culture shift takes place, teachers experience an increase in their energy and commitment for teaching and learning.

Staff hired with federal funds will no longer be needed once ISBE support ends, as new organizational structures will have been established to continue the project, e.g. teacher leadership teams as well as school-wide, planning, instructional leadership, grade-level, cross-grade level, lead teacher, and department teams. After the funding ends, school staff, along with project teachers and partners will continue their participation as part of their regular professional assignments.

In addition, a wide range of systems will have been built at each participating school to ensure that the schools have the capacity to continue the school reform activities developed under ISBE funding by the lead partner. Those include systems for: audit and assessment, professional development, leadership programs, community and parent/family involvement, school safety, after-school programming, expanded scheduling for student learning, transition from grade to grade, evaluation of principals and staff, evaluation of program effectiveness, the infusion of effective learning technologies, supporting high expectations for student learning, equity and access to learning for students from all backgrounds, financial planning, and the development of human capital. Essentially, ISBE funds will enable the project to institutionalize the teams and systems provided by lead and partner organizations.

The participating LEAs and schools, as part of the work of the lead partner, will also undertake planning to seek out public and private funding from local, state, and federal sources. SLI will offer workshops to the Leadership Teams in the districts and at schools on how to effectively apply for funding from such agencies. Those workshops will enable the districts and schools to identify potential public and private RFP's so that they can submit detailed grant applications, and to develop a template that can be used for a variety of grant applications. By the end of the project's three years, each LEA and/or school will have developed and written at least one grant proposal and submitted it to a public or private foundation for funding.

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Strategic Learning Initiatives: Lead Partner

Strategic Learning Initiatives (SLI), a not-for-profit Chicago school reform agency, proposes, in collaboration with its community partners, to implement a School Improvement Grant (SIG) lead partner a three-year demonstration and scale-up project. The project will focus on the Focused Instruction Process (FIP), a project that demonstrates how schools can both be turned-around or transformed into high performing and accelerated learning organizations of adults and children.

SLI utilizes a theory of change that integrates key systemic components for rapid school transformation:

- Identifying the Problem: Low student achievement levels of students of poverty attending schools without either a systemic, research-based model for transformation or access to appropriate technological support.
- Developing a Strategy: SLI integrates a research-based school and district success model, which increases student achievement. Rigorous Instruction, Shared Leadership, Professional Capacity, Family and Community Engagement, Culture of Trust, Collaboration, continuous Quality Improvement, Networks of Neighborhood Schools, and Systemic Problem Solving.
- Clarifying Assumptions: The success of the model depends on the buy-in from the district leadership and school staff and their commitment to the continuous improvement process.
- Acknowledging Challenges: Funders and schools have limited funds available for improvement services. The continuous change of the district level vision, priorities, and personnel can be an obstacle for achieving and sustaining high performance.

As a lead SIG partner, the overall goal will be to accelerate improved student and adult performance by leveraging systemic change focused in the improvement of school culture, principal and teacher effectiveness, and family engagement, the primary drivers of student success. SLI works with low-performing schools to develop a dynamic system of data-driven decision-making, professional development and peer support. These elements maximize the value and impact of the organization's process to sustain and continuously improve positive learning results. Over more than two decades, SLI has worked with more than 70 schools in Chicago, Springfield, Decatur, East St. Louis and DePue IL, Tucson, AZ and Los Angeles, CA. .

SLI believes that a powerful transformation process is within the reach of virtually every low achieving school district in the nation. It can be quickly demonstrated and scaled using the resources that most school districts has already available. SLI's school reform model reflects an accelerated pace of learning for both the students and adults in the district. The school and district leadership focuses on transforming the process of instruction using school leadership teams plus existing strategies and tools. Finally, the stakeholders learn how to continuously improve their results and sustain them with a commitment to data-based decision making on a daily basis, and sharing the results with the school and across the district. Moreover, SLI's process takes advantage of over 40 years of systemic research from education and business. The best results from this research about turbo charging organization performance and instruction have been integrated to create the breakthrough model, the Focus Instruction Process.

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