

Illinois State Personnel Development Grant:

***The Illinois RtI Network – Professional
Development and Coaching to Support
School Improvement***

CFDA #: 84.323A

Illinois State Board of Education

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ABSTRACT

The Illinois proposal for a State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) will address the established priority of *reforming and improving* [state educational agency] *systems for personnel preparation and professional development in early intervention, educational, and transition services in order to improve results for children with disabilities* and competitive preference priority 1: *Partnerships with LEAs and IHEs to Improve Special Education Teacher Effectiveness*.

The primary, overarching goal of the Illinois SPDG Project is: *Scale up implementation of a coordinated, statewide system of personnel development that will increase the capacity of school systems to establish and use a multi-tiered model of scientific, research-based instruction, intervention, and assessment to improve the progress and performance of all students, including those with disabilities*.

This goal will primarily be accomplished by scaling up the coaching-of-coaches component of Illinois ASPIRE (the Illinois 2005-2009 SPDG Project) through implementation of the Illinois Response to Intervention (RtI) Network. The RtI Network will involve a collaborative partnership of LEAs, regional providers, IHEs, and parent entities; employ personnel with expertise in coaching, school improvement, and RtI; and be responsible for the recruitment, training, and support of a cadre of regionally based external coaches. Data will be collected from participating districts as part of the project evaluation. Key projected outcomes include:

- An increase in the number of educators and parents with current information and up-to-date knowledge and skills in the professional development areas, including research-based practices to improve results for students with and without disabilities.
- An increase in the level and fidelity of implementation of the trained practices over time.
- Improved school and student performance as a result of sustained practices.

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Absolute Priority

The Illinois SPDG Project addresses the established U.S. Department of Education (ED) priority of “assisting SEAs in reforming and improving their systems for personnel preparation and professional development in early intervention, educational, and transition services in order to improve results for children with disabilities.” The project also addresses competitive preference priority 1: *Partnerships with LEAs and IHEs to Improve Special Education Teacher Effectiveness*. Grant funds will be used to carry out a) Professional Development activities and b) Other activities, as specified in the grant application requirements. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), as the state educational agency (SEA) will design and implement **professional development activities** that:

Improve the knowledge of special education and regular education teachers and administrators, and in appropriate cases, paraprofessionals, concerning effective instructional practices, by providing training in:

- *How to teach and address the needs of children with different learning styles and children who are limited English proficient;*
- *Methods of scientifically based reading [and math] instruction, including early literacy [and numeracy] instruction;*
- *Methods of early and appropriate interventions to identify and help children with disabilities; and*
- *Methods of using classroom-based techniques to assist children prior to referral for special education.*

Funds under **other activities** will be used for: *Supporting activities that ensure that teachers are able to use challenging state academic content standards and student academic achievement*

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and functional standards, and state assessments for all children with disabilities, to improve instructional practices and improve academic achievement of children with disabilities.

1. Need for Project

- 1. The extent to which specific gaps and weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities have been identified and will be addressed by the proposed project.*

Illinois Overview

Illinois is continually working to decrease the gaps and weaknesses in services, infrastructure, and opportunities associated with improving the performance of students with disabilities and the overall student population. There are many Illinois needs that the SPDG Project will help to address, including the areas of student performance, least restrictive environment (LRE), special education incidence rates and disproportionality, professional development, and personnel preparation.

In 2008-2009, 867 Illinois public school districts served more than 2 million students age 3 through 21, with populations ranging from fewer than 100 pupils per district to approximately 409,000 pupils enrolled in City of Chicago School District 299. The delivery system for special education services is complex. If large enough, school districts provide their own services; if not, services are provided through a special education joint agreement or a multidistrict agreement. Currently, 68 such agreements provide special education and related services to eligible preschool and school-age children with disabilities. In addition, Illinois has a Regional Delivery System to provide a variety of other services to public school districts. This system consists of three Intermediate Service Centers (ISCs) that serve districts in Cook County and 44 Regional Offices of Education (ROEs) that serve districts in all other Illinois counties. To coordinate services, the ROEs are grouped into six geographic areas (see map in Appendix A). The ROEs

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and ISCs provide a variety of administrative and other school improvement and support services, such as staff development, technical assistance, and information resources to public school personnel, responding to the needs of schools. Illinois also offers regional support to its most struggling schools through 10 Regional System of Support Providers (RESPROs), which deliver intensive professional development, coaching, and technical assistance to districts and schools.

The educational landscape in Illinois has seen many changes since May 2005, when ISBE was awarded funding for its previous SPDG Project (Illinois ASPIRE, or I-ASPIRE), which focused on delivery of professional development and technical assistance on a multi-tiered system of instruction, interventions, and assessment, including RtI. In particular, since then the state special education rules were amended to require the use of an RtI process as part of the evaluation procedures for determining special education eligibility under the category of specific learning disabilities (SLD). In conjunction with that mandate, ISBE was required to develop a State RtI Plan (see Appendix B), which was issued in January 2008 and provides a state framework to support the development of a multi-tiered system, including RtI, to improve educational outcomes for all students. Further, by January 2009 all public school districts were required to complete and submit a District RtI Plan, delineating the steps to be taken in planning for and implementing RtI, including resource allocation and meeting professional development needs.

An analysis of a random sample of the District RtI Plans revealed that districts continue to need external support to implement RtI (see “Professional Development and Personnel Preparation Needs” in this section for further details). These needs include professional development and other resources to support effective implementation of RtI practices, e.g., establishing and/or enhancing a multi-tiered system, evaluating the core curriculum, selecting

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universal screening and progress monitoring tools, monitoring implementation fidelity, and providing administrative leadership. The proposed Illinois SPDG Project will build upon the successes of the previous SPDG Project to address these needs by training and supporting a cadre of external coaches who are employees of LEAs (school districts, ROEs, and special education joint agreements) or ISCs and will provide professional development and onsite coaching to LEA personnel, as well as professional development and other resources for parents. The proposed project will also actively coordinate other resources available through ROEs and ISCs to support improved student outcomes.

Student Performance (Indicator 3 of the Illinois State Performance Plan)

The Illinois State Performance Plan (SPP), Part B, Years 2005-2010, provides the framework for ISBE to address the requirements associated with the measurable and rigorous targets for Indicators 1 through 20, as established by ED, Office of Special Education Programs. Indicator 3 of the SPP addresses participation and performance of students with disabilities on state assessments.

In Illinois, students with individualized education Programs (IEPs) participate in the state assessment in one of three ways:

1. Take the regular assessment without accommodations–
 - Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) for grades 3 through 8, or
 - Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) for grade 11, and/or
 - Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners (ACCESS for ELLs) for the same grades.
2. Take the regular assessment with accommodations.
3. Take the Illinois Alternate Assessment (IAA).

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Student performance falls into one of four levels: Exceeds Standards, Meets Standards, Below Standards, and Academic Warning.

In 2009, 98 percent of Illinois students with disabilities participated in statewide assessment, which exceeds the state-established target of 95 percent specified in the Illinois SPP. However, while participation rates exceed the SPP target, a significant gap continues to exist between the performance of students with and without disabilities. As a group, students with disabilities are not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals in reading and math. Data from the 2008-2009 school year indicate that out of 867 school districts in Illinois, 429 did not make AYP, 184 (43 percent) of which were in federal improvement status. Regarding performance of students with disabilities, according to the Illinois 2008-2009 Annual Performance Report (APR) for Special Education, of the 536 districts with a disability subgroup that met the state minimum “n” size, only 216 (40.3 percent) met AYP for the subgroup of students with disabilities.

The data in Tables 1-4 illustrate the performance gap in reading and math between students with disabilities (SWD) and nondisabled students (NDS) and between low-income (LI) and non-low-income (NLI) students in grades 3, 5, 8, and 11, by showing the cumulative progress/slip-page of the comparative groups. The data are taken from the 2008 and 2009 Illinois State Report Cards. The percentage of proficient scores of the SWD subgroup consistently lags far behind that of the population of NDS; the same is true for the LI subgroup and the NLI population.

As shown in Table 1, in 2008 the performance gap in reading between the SWD and NDS subgroups ranged from a low of 23.0 percentage points in grade 3 to a high of 45.0 percentage points in grade 8. In 2009, the gap between the two groups ranged from a low of 35.0 percentage points in grade 3 to a high of 45.0 percentage points in grade 11.

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**Table 1. Reading–2008 and 2009 ISAT/PSAE Performance Gaps:
Percentage of Students with Disabilities (SWD) and Nondisabled Students (NDS)
Scoring Meets or Exceeds, by Grade Level**

Grade	2008			2009		
	SWD	NDS	Gap	SWD	NDS	Gap
3	43.0	76.0	-33.0	42.0	77.0	-35.0
5	39.0	79.0	-40.0	38.0	79.0	-41.0
8	42.0	87.0	-45.0	46.0	89.0	-43.0
11	19.0	58.0	-39.0	17.0	62.0	-45.0

In the NDS subgroup, the lowest percentage of students scoring proficient in reading performance was in grade 11 (58.0 percent in 2008; 62.0 percent in 2009). Further, the percentage of proficiency for this subgroup gradually increased from grades 3 through 8 in both years, with the largest increase occurring between grades 5 and 8 (8 percentage points in 2008 and 10 points in 2009). However, there was a significant decrease from grade 8 to 11 (by 23.4 and 21.6 percentage points in 2008 and 2009, respectively). The reading proficiency levels of the SWD subgroup averaged 41 percent across grades 3 through 8 in 2008 and 42 percent in 2009, with a significant decrease from grade 8 to 11 in both years (23 percentage points in 2008 and 29 points in 2009).

Table 2 shows that in 2008 the performance gap in reading between the LI and NLI subgroups ranged from a low of 19.0 percentage points in grade 8 to a high of 34.0 percentage points in grade 11. In 2009, the gap between the two groups ranged from a low of 17.0 percentage points in grade 8 to a high of 35.0 percentage points in grade 11.

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**Table 2. Reading–2008 and 2009 ISAT/PSAE Performance Gaps:
Percentage of Low-Income (LI) and Non-Low-Income (NLI) Students**

Scoring Meets or Exceeds, by Grade Level

Grade	2008			2009		
	LI	NLI	Gap	LI	NLI	Gap
3	57.0	85.0	-28.0	58.0	86.0	-28.0
5	58.0	86.0	-28.0	59.0	86.0	-27.0
8	70.0	89.0	-19.0	74.0	91.0	-17.0
11	29.0	63.0	-34.0	33.0	68.0	-35.0

In the NLI subgroup, the lowest percentage of students scoring proficient in reading performance was in grade 11 (63.0 percent in 2008; 68.0 percent in 2009). The percentage of proficiency for this subgroup gradually increased from grades 3 through 8 in both years. The reading proficiency levels of the LI subgroup averaged 62 percent across grades 3 through 8 in 2008 and 64 percent in 2009, with significant increases from grade 5 to 8 (by 12.0 and 15.0 percentage points in 2008 and 2009, respectively). However, there was a significant decrease of 41 percentage points from grade 8 to 11 in both years.

As shown in Table 3, in 2008 the gap between the math performance levels of the SWD and NDS subgroups ranged from a low of 20 percentage points in grade 3 to a high of 36 percentage points in grades 8 and 11. In 2009, the gap between the subgroups ranged from a low of 22 percentage points in grade 3 to a high of 37 percentage points in grade 11.

Early elementary and intermediate students in both subgroups consistently demonstrated a greater proficiency level in math than did older students. In 2008 and 2009, the proficiency level of the NDS subgroup decreased slightly (by 2 percentage points) from grade 3 to 5 but was lowest at grade 11 (a 28 percentage point decrease from grade 8 to 11 in 2008; a 30 percentage point decrease for the same grade span in 2009). There was a greater decrease in the proficiency

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level of the SWD subgroup from grade 3 to 5 (by 13 percentage points in 2008 and 11 points in 2009) and from grade 8 to 11 (by 30 percentage points in 2008 and by 33 points in 2009).

**Table 3. Math–2008 and 2009 ISAT/PSAE Performance Gaps:
Percentage of Students with Disabilities (SWD) and Nondisabled Students (NDS)
Scoring Meets or Exceeds, by Grade Level**

Grade	2008			2009		
	SWD	NDS	Gap	SWD	NDS	Gap
3	68.0	88.0	-20.0	66.0	88.0	-22.0
5	55.0	86.0	-31.0	55.0	87.0	-32.0
8	43.0	86.0	-21.0	45.0	87.0	-19.0
11	13.0	58.0	-36.0	12.0	57.0	-37.0

Table 4 shows that for the LI and NLI subgroups, in 2008 the gap between math performance levels averaged 20 percentage points in grades 3, 5, and 8, and increased to 36 percentage points at grade 11. In 2009, the gap between the two subgroups in grades 3, 5, and 8 averaged 19 percent-age points and was 37 percentage points at grade 11. Early elementary and intermediate students in both subgroups consistently demonstrated a greater proficiency level in math than did older students. From 2008 to 2009, the proficiency level of the NLI subgroup decreased by 3 percentage points from grade 3 to 5 and by 1 or 2 points from grades 5 to 8, but was lowest at grade 11 (a 26 percentage point decrease from grade 8 to 11 in 2008 and 2009). The proficiency level of the LI subgroup also decreased from grade 3 to 5 (by 5 percentage points in 2008 and 4 points in 2009) and from grade 8 to 11 (by 41 percentage points in 2008 and 45 points in 2009).

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**Table 4. Math–2008 and 2009 ISAT/PSAE Performance Gaps:
Percentage of Low Income (LI) and Non Low (NLI) Income Students**

Scoring Meets or Exceeds, by Grade Level

Grade	2008			2009		
	LI	NLI	Gap	LI	NLI	Gap
3	75.0	94.0	-19	76.0	94.0	-18
5	70.0	91.0	-21	72.0	91.0	-19
8	68.0	89.0	-21	71.0	90.0	-19
11	27.0	63.0	-36	26.0	63.0	-37

A special note is required in relation to the large drops in reading and math performance from grade 8 to 11. ISBE recognizes that a primary contributor to this decrease is a lack of alignment between the ISAT and PSAE. Work to be conducted in conjunction with Illinois' adoption of the national Common Core Standards in English/language arts and mathematics (see *Quality of Project Design*, item 6) and involvement in the Illinois College and Work Readiness Partnership (see Appendix C and *Quality of Project Design*, item 6) will address this important issue.

The preceding data demonstrate a significant need in Illinois to improve reading and math instruction for students with disabilities and other at-risk students, including those in the low-income subgroup, in grades K-12. Students cannot perform well on state assessments if they do not develop the skills in the content area assessed. In order to develop those skills, students must have access to high-quality instruction. The data also highlight the importance of early intervening services (EIS) in reading and math. Although districts in Illinois are increasing their provision of such services, there is a need to expand implementation of scientific, research-based reading and math instruction and interventions at early grade levels in order for students to make and maintain growth as they progress into the upper grades, rather than experiencing the current widening gap in their achievement. There is also a need to increase implementation of effective core instruction

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and interventions at the middle and high school levels to address the learning needs of students currently in those grades. Therefore, while I-ASPIRE focused on elementary grade levels, the proposed SPDG Project will expand this focus through grade 12.

To deliver high-quality instruction and interventions, school and district personnel require professional development and follow-up coaching support to implement the knowledge and skills gained through professional development. The SPDG Project will address these needs by implementing a statewide system of professional development and coaching designed to improve the knowledge and skills of general and special education personnel to provide research-based, standards-aligned instruction and interventions, with an emphasis on reading and math, to the diverse learners in their schools. To address competitive preference priority 1, low-performing districts (as identified by the ISBE System of Support) with high percentages (40 percent or more) of students from low-income backgrounds will be given priority in selecting participating districts. In Illinois, low-income students are defined as those who come from families receiving public aid, live in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, are supported in foster homes with public funds, or are eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches.

Least Restrictive Environment (Indicator 5 of the SPP)

Indicator 5 of the SPP addresses placement of students with IEPs in the LRE. The Illinois performance target for Indicator 5 is for 49.3 percent of students with IEPs to be educated in the general education classroom for 80 percent or more of their day.

Table 5 provides a comparison of LRE data from the 2006-2007 through 2008-2009 school years. As illustrated, from 2007 to 2009 there was an increase of 1.23 percentage points in placements inside the general education classroom for 80 percent or more of the day, which equates to approximately 3,300 more students with disabilities receiving their special education

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services in this setting. Further, the 2009 Indicator 5 performance of 50.43 percent exceeds the Illinois APR target of 49.3 percent.

When analyzed by disability category, the data show that in 2008-2009 Illinois placed students with SLD in more inclusive settings at a rate below the FFY 2008 (most recent data available) national average (48.6 percent inside general education 80 percent or more of the school day, compared with a national average of 59.5 percent). The same is true of students with emotional disabilities (ED); in 2008-2009, 26.5 percent of students with ED received special education services in a separate educational facility, compared with 2 in 10 nationally in FFY 2008.

Table 5. Comparison of LRE Data, 2006-2007 to 2008-2009

Placement	2006-2007 & 2007-2008 Comparison			2007-2008 & 2008-2009 Comparison			2006-2007 & 2008-2009 Comparison		
	'07 %	'08 %	Change	'08 %	'09 %	Change	'07%	'09%	Change
Inside Gen. Ed. 80% or more	49.2	49.2	0.00	49.2	50.43	+1.23	49.2	50.43	+1.23
Inside Gen. Ed. < 40%	18.4	18.4	0.00	18.4	18.04	-0.36	18.4	18.04	-1.87
Sep. Schools, Res. Facil., Home/Hosp.	6.2	5.9	-1.70	5.9	5.71	-0.75	6.2	5.71	-2.20

LRE data have implications for students' access to the general curriculum. For children with disabilities, access is often associated with setting rather than with an alignment of instruction with the *Illinois Learning Standards*. While Illinois exceeded its target for Indicator 5 in terms of increasing the percentage of students with disabilities who are educated in the general education classroom the majority of their day, there is a discrepancy in performance when compared with national data. There also continues to be a struggle with providing all students with access to the general core curriculum and scientific, research-based instruction that is

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aligned with the *Illinois Learning Standards*. This highlights the need for preservice and inservice training for general and special education personnel that incorporates such content. The SPDG Project will help address that need by providing these personnel, particularly those working in low-performing districts with high percentages of students from low-income backgrounds, with the necessary knowledge and skills and follow-up coaching to support students with disabilities in accessing the general curriculum in the LRE.

Incidence Rates and Disproportionality (Indicators 9 and 10 of the SPP)

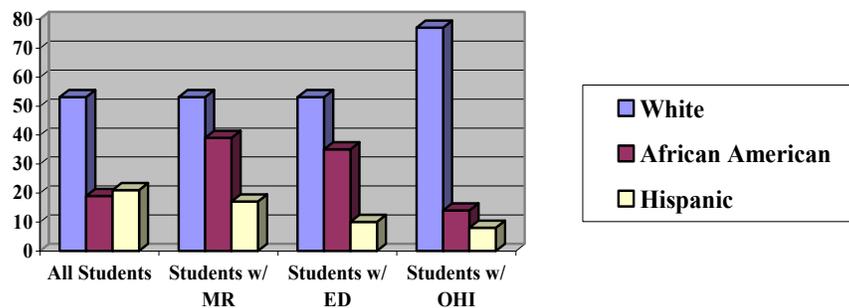
In 2008-2009, more than 281,000 of the 1.87 million Illinois children age 6 through 21 were identified as children with disabilities under IDEA, which represents approximately 15 percent of the total school population in this age group. According to the Illinois December 2008 Child Count, the number of students age 6 through 21 identified as SLD decreased to just under 130,500 in 2008, compared with nearly 140,000 in 2006. Denton and Vaughn (2010) cited evidence showing that 80 percent to 90 percent of students identified as SLD have significant reading difficulties. While the decrease in the Illinois SLD population since 2006 is encouraging and may be associated in part with increased implementation of EIS in the state, there is still a need to expand the provision of EIS focused on reading and math to provide needed services to struggling students before patterns of failure lead to greater learning gaps that result in SLD.

When it comes to race/ethnicity, according to the 28th Annual Report to Congress (ED, 2006; most current report available), nationwide black students are 2.83 times more likely to be identified as having mental retardation (MR) and 2.24 times more likely to be identified as having ED than all other racial/ethnic groups combined. Illinois data reflect this trend in that black students make up just over 19 percent of the total school population age 6 through 21, but represent more than 39 percent and 35 percent of the children identified in the categories of MR

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and ED, respectively (see Figure 1). Conversely, white students are considered underrepresented in the MR category, in that they make up approximately 53 percent of the total school population age 6 through 21, but only 42 percent of the MR category. In the OHI category, however, white students make up 77 percent of the population and are thus overrepresented, while black students make up 14 percent of the OHI population and are underrepresented, as are Hispanic students at 8 percent (compared with 21 percent of the total student population age 6 through 21).

Figure 1. Student Percentages by Race/Ethnicity



While Illinois met the Indicators 9 and 10 performance target of 0 percent of districts having special education disproportionality due to inappropriate identification, there is still a need to assist districts in addressing disproportionality issues. The SPDG Project will provide such assistance. Traditionally, the only way that students could get direct assistance to address their learning or behavioral challenges was to identify them as being eligible for special education, which often leads to overidentification of children in certain disability categories and of certain ethnicities. The SPDG Project will focus on a problem-solving model using RtI for early identification of the needs of students at risk of academic failure due to learning and/or behavioral difficulties; implementing a multi-tiered system of standards-aligned instruction, intervention, and assessment, with an emphasis on reading and math, to address those needs; and data collection to closely monitor student progress. Therefore, the project will support efforts to improve instruction and early identification and response to students' learning needs, thereby

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reducing the potential for inappropriate identification of students as special education-eligible.

Professional Development and Personnel Preparation Needs

In January 2008, ISBE released the State RtI Plan, which provides a state framework to support the development of a multi-tiered system of scientifically, research-based instruction, interventions, and assessment to improve educational outcomes for all students. In January 2009, all public school districts in Illinois were required to complete and submit a District RtI Plan delineating the steps to be taken in planning for and implementing RtI, including resource allocation and meeting professional development needs. In fall 2009, Great Lakes West Comprehensive Center, in collaboration with such entities as the Center on Instruction, IDEA Partnership, National RtI Center, SISEP Center, and North Central Regional Resource Center, conducted a review of a representative sample (90) of the district RtI plans. As a result of that review, district needs related to effective RtI implementation were identified.

The district RtI plans were categorized along two dimensions: stage of implementation (Buy-In/Information Gathering, Initial Implementation, Scaling Up Implementation, Full Implementation) and perceived level of commitment (low, moderate, high). The majority of district RtI plans were classified as being in either the Buy-In/Information Gathering or Initial Implementation stages, with moderate to high levels of commitment to implementation of RtI. Nearly all of the plans suggested that the districts, regardless of their implementation stage or level of commitment, may need extensive support in monitoring and evaluating RtI implementation and involving parents/families in the district RtI plan. Accordingly, the following professional development needs were identified:

- Selection and implementation of universal screening and progress monitoring measures and the use of data for instructional decision making.

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- Aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessments with the national Common Core Standards in language arts and mathematics and the *Illinois Learning Standards* in the other core curricular areas.
- Effective instructional strategies, including teacher coaching and monitoring of instruction at the classroom and district levels.
- Involving a wide range of stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and others, in the development of district RtI plans.

The Illinois SPDG Project will clearly address the needs illustrated here through its focus on professional development and embedded coaching, including observation of classrooms, team meetings, etc., for participating LEA teams of general and special educators and administrators focused on topics that match the priorities that emerged from the review of the district RtI plans.

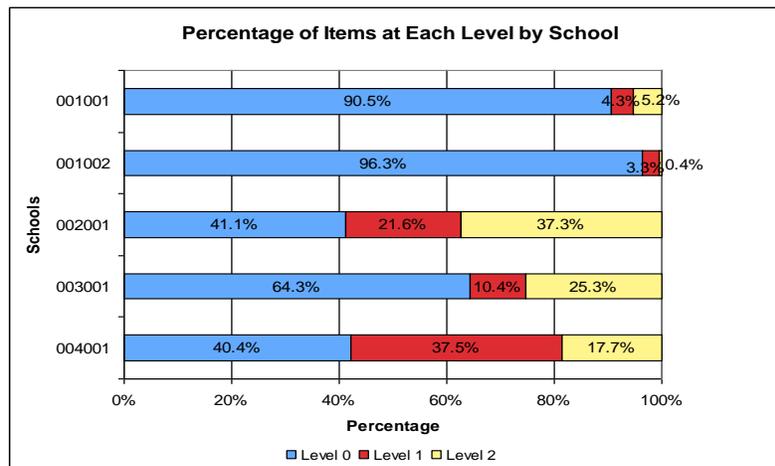
With regard to personnel preparation needs in the area of RtI, I-ASPIRE conducted a review of course syllabi from preservice and graduate programs (e.g., school psychology, special education, elementary education, school administration) at IHEs partnering in the project, as well as interviews with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) director at each participating institution. To conduct the syllabi review, an IHE checklist (see Appendix D) was developed and subsequently used to evaluate the extent to which the IHE curricula include the problem-solving process, RtI, and EIS content. The checklist contains five sections: 1) Three-Tier Problem Solving and RtI, 2) Universal Screening and Problem Identification, 3) Scientifically Based Reading Instruction in a Three-Tier Model, 4) Scientifically Based Progress Monitoring Tools, and 5) Effective Problem-Solving Teams.

Five IHEs participated in this process, submitting 85 syllabi for review. Syllabi were rated on a scale of 0 to 2 (0=No evidence that the component is included in class; 1=Component is mentioned

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in class; 2=Component is mentioned in class AND there are required readings, assignments, and/or projects for application). Figure 2 displays the overall implementation level of each IHE. These data show that only two of the five IHEs (002001 and 004001) implemented components at a higher level than the other IHEs, although the majority of items were still at Levels 0 and 1. Overall, these data show relatively low levels of implementation of RtI content in the participating IHEs.

Figure 2. Overall Implementation Level, by IHE



When analyzed for each of the five major sections of the IHE checklist, data showed that each item was implemented to some degree by all IHEs. While universities implemented content associated with the three-tiered problem-solving model and RtI section more often (22.5 percent of IHE programs at Levels 1 and 2) than the other sections, all five sections had more than 75 percent of the items at Level 0, indicating no evidence in course syllabi of a majority of the components involved in RtI.

A comparison was also made of syllabi by type of program (e.g., special education, school psychology, elementary education). School psychology programs, while having relatively low levels of implementation (58.8 percent of items at Level 0 and 28.4 percent at Level 2), were found to include components of RtI at a higher level in their instruction in comparison with other programs (e.g., special education, with 94.6 percent at Level 0 and 5.4 percent at Level 2).

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Through interviews with NCATE directors it was also shown that the majority of programs expect students to obtain RtI content through their field placements (e.g., student teaching, internships), rather than through explicit coursework instruction. The interviewees could not, however, verify that field placements were actually selected so as to ensure the district or school had a system in place through which RtI practices were implemented.

Although the review of IHE syllabi involved a relatively small sample of IHE program coursework, the data illustrate a need to expand partnership activities with IHEs to conduct further program reviews and incorporate RtI content into preservice and graduate coursework. The SPDG Project will address this need through the establishment and implementation of an IHE Partnership, the purpose of which will be to work directly with IHEs to incorporate critical RtI elements (e.g., differentiated instruction; formative assessment; scientific, research-based interventions) into undergraduate and graduate preservice program curricula and develop a process for identifying and placing undergraduate and graduate students in field experiences where RtI practices are in place.

Personnel Needs

Illinois issues a report on educator supply and demand in the state every three years. The most recent report currently available is from 2008. The following statistics and tables are taken from the *Educator Supply and Demand in Illinois Report, December 2008* (ISBE, 2008):

- Total Illinois public school enrollment peaked in 2007 after increasing every year since 1990, and enrollment for school year 2008 saw a slight decrease of 4,300 students.

Secondary enrollment increased by more than 2,500 students, while elementary enrollment decreased by nearly 7,000. Total K-12 enrollments are expected to decline through 2012 by an average of 6,500 students per year, with about 5,000 fewer students in grades 9-12

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than in 2007 and 16,000 fewer students in grades K-8. These changes are expected to have an impact on the relative demand for secondary and elementary teachers.

- The total number of educators reported in 2008 was 156,805, an increase of 2 percent (or 3,069 educators) over 2007. The overall increase in educators corresponds to a 1.9 percent increase over the number of teachers reported in 2007. The overall number of administrators increased by 6.3 percent. The total number of full-time teachers employed in Illinois public schools in school year 2008 was 131,478, an increase of 2,410 or 1.9 percent. Downstate districts and Chicago increased the number of full-time teachers by 1.9 percent and 1.7 percent, respectively.
- The last survey of unfilled positions was completed as of October 1, 2007, where Illinois public schools reported a total of 1,330 unfilled positions, 102 fewer than reported the previous year. The areas with the greatest number of unfilled positions in the 2007-2008 school year were Learning Behavior Specialist I (LBS I; special education certificate that covers all disability categories except blind/visually impaired, deaf/hard of hearing, and speech/language), speech/language pathology, self-contained elementary, and bilingual education. Table 6 provides data on unfilled LBS I and related services personnel by region (downstate and Chicago).

Table 6. Number of Unfilled Special Education and Related Services Positions, 2007-2008

Position	Downstate	Chicago	State
Learning Behavior Specialist (LBS) I	197.5	201.0	398.5
Speech/Language Pathologist	166.5	–	166.5
Psychologist	27.9	–	27.9
Social Worker	6.0	–	6.0
Totals	397.9	201.0	598.9

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- Through 2012, it is estimated that Illinois will need about 10,999 new teachers a year or about 43,500 first-time and re-entering teachers through 2012 (36,000 general and almost 7,500 special education teachers). Historically, re-entries have filled just over 40 percent of teacher vacancies a year, so Illinois districts will need to hire approximately 17,000 re-entries and 26,000 first-time teachers from 2008-2012. In the same time period, Illinois is expected to need more than 3,400 administrators and 4,100 other educators.
- As shown in Table 7, the number of teacher education program completers in all program areas has continually increased since 2004, with the greatest increase occurring in alternative certification and administrative programs.

Table 7. Number of Program Completers

	2004*	2005*	2006*	2007*
Early Childhood	467	365	460	610
Elementary	3,312	3,558	3,803	4,372
Secondary Programs	2,361	2,012	2,327	2,820
K-12 Programs	932	1,078	1,177	1,846
Special Education Programs	666	851	908	1,196
School Service Personnel	553	636	755	977
Administrative Programs	898	1,453	1,682	3,257
Alternative Certification	106	221	251	505
Totals	9,295	10,174	11,363	15,583

*Number of Institutions Reporting: 43 in 2004, 39 in 2005, 41 in 2006, 60 in 2007

- Approximately 88 percent of the 2007 educational workforce was employed in the same position in 2008 and 5 percent were retained in Illinois public schools but in a different position. Since 2000, 92.4 percent of educators have been retained in Illinois schools.

In terms of data specific to special education and related services personnel, Table 8 provides the number of Illinois school districts that had shortages in 2008, as compared with 2007. As

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shown, in 2008 the number of school districts with special education personnel shortages decreased between 9 percent and 16 percent in each position category, with the exception of bilingual special education teachers, which increased by 8 percent.

Table 8. Number of Districts with Shortages in SED Personnel, 2008

Positions	# of Districts with Shortages	% Change from 2007
Special Ed–Cross Categorical*	320	-9.0
Special Ed–LBS I	301	-8.0
Speech/Language Pathologist	301	-9.0
Special Ed–SLD*	274	-14.0
Special Ed–ED*	270	-16.0
Special Ed–Bilingual	196	8.0

*now encompassed by the LBS I certificate

According to data collected by the ISBE Educator Certification and Educator and School Development divisions, Illinois has 23 public and private IHEs that prepare special education teachers, school service personnel, and administrators. The tables in Appendix E provide a complete list of all IHEs with approved educator preparation programs, as well as complete data, by IHE, on the number of certificates issued to candidates completing approved elementary education, special education, school service personnel, and administrative programs at each IHE in 2008-2009 and the number of candidates recommended for certification to date in 2009-2010. Table 9 shows the overall total number of LBS I, speech/language pathologist (nonteaching and teaching), school psychologists, and school social worker certificates that ISBE issued in 2008-2009 to candidates who completed an approved teacher education program that same year, and the overall total number of candidates in these same categories who have been recommended for certification to date in 2009-2010. As shown by these data, Illinois is making progress toward increasing the supply of qualified special education personnel.

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Table 9. Certificates to Candidates in 2008-09 and Candidates Recommended in 2009-10

Certificate Type	LBS I	S/LP Type 75 (non-teaching)	S/LP Type 10 (teaching)	School Psychologist	School Social Worker
# certificates issued to candidates completing approved programs (2008-09)	1148	230	0	114	360
# candidates recommended for certification (2009-10*)	1035	194	0	106	307

*to date

In order to address personnel supply and demand in the state, including recruitment and retention, ISBE will continue to partner with teacher preparation IHEs and LEAs through such programs as the Illinois New Teacher Collaborative (INTC) and the Illinois New Principal Mentoring Program (INPM). INTC is at the forefront of providing statewide leadership for promoting new teacher induction and mentoring programs and supplying resources for those who support new teachers. INTC makes information and resources pertaining to attracting and retaining new teachers and enhancing their teaching available to schools and communities.

INPM is designed to ensure that every new principal in Illinois receives a high-quality mentoring experience so he or she thrives during the first year and beyond. The program is defined by standards and criteria that focus professional development experiences and enhance new principal leadership. New leaders receive mentoring from proven, trained mentors who are paired with new principals based on geography, grade level, and need. INPM is constantly evaluated for continual improvements to make certain that the needs of new educational leaders and their students are being met.

The ISBE Educator and School Development Division will also continue its relationship with IHEs in reviewing and approving, in conjunction with the State Teacher Certification Board,

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general and special education personnel and administrator preparation programs. In addition, teacher preparation IHEs in Illinois have received federal Personnel Preparation Grants in the past, and ISBE has partnered with them in those endeavors. For example, ISBE partnered in the STEP=UP program at the University of Illinois Chicago (UI-C), which is a six-year federal grant project designed to recruit and prepare special education teachers and university faculty who are dedicated to working in urban settings with children, adolescents, and families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It is also expected that several IHEs will submit applications under the new Personnel Preparation Grant competition released June 14, 2010, and ISBE will offer to partner with any IHEs awarded a grant that addresses special education personnel needs. Such partnerships will ensure that the SPDG Project activities are integrated, to the maximum extent possible, with activities of IHE projects funded under section 662 of IDEA.

Other activities will be carried out under the Illinois Title II, Part A, application and plan, including implementation of the Illinois Teacher Equity Plan, in partnership with LEAs, ISCs, teacher unions, IHEs, the business community, and other critical stakeholders. The Teacher Equity Plan was amended in January 2010 (see item 6 of *Quality of Project Design* for further details), and to meet the needs of Illinois' lowest performing schools, there is an emphasis on preparing teachers and principals to focus on differentiated instruction, student learning, and school improvement. The plan also provides for induction, mentoring, and professional development programs that focus on the instructional needs of children. ISBE recognizes the need for high standards of quality from all educators if student achievement is to improve. The agency has developed a strong framework for educator quality through updated professional teaching standards, standards-based professional preparation programs, enhanced certification tests, and recertification requirements. With state-level policies and activities that promote high-

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quality teachers in all classrooms and improved environments that promote and nurture student, teacher, and administrator learning, student achievement will improve over time.

2. Significance

1. Likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement.

The SPP guides the work of the ISBE Special Education and Support Services Department in addressing Performance Indicators 1-20, as established by OSEP. The focus of the SPDG Project on improved student outcomes has implications for several indicators, but the most direct link is with Indicator 3 (Statewide Assessment), Indicator 5 (Educational Environment, or EE, Placement) and Indicators 9 and 10 (disproportionate representation in special education and in specific disability categories). The project will target general and special education personnel as participants in the professional development, technical assistance, and coaching activities. When educators improve their knowledge and skills, they become more highly qualified. This, in turn, will help build the capacity of schools to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners in the general education classroom and thereby help schools improve their ability to educate students with disabilities in the LRE (Indicator 5).

In terms of accountability for Indicators 3 and 5, Illinois uses a data-driven approach to focused monitoring, which merges compliance with a focus on outcomes and is aligned and coordinated with the System of Support for low-performing schools. As stated in the ISBE Focused Monitoring Procedures, “Focused monitoring is an approach to providing technical assistance to districts using data to develop and implement activities leading to improved student performance on standardized assessments while focusing on a selected critical performance area. Focused monitoring is a data-driven approach to monitoring that focuses on a small number of carefully chosen priorities that have demonstrated the greatest impact on improving results for

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students with disabilities.” The Illinois formula for focused monitoring is:

Focused Monitoring = Key Educational Procedures and Practices + Educational Benefit

The Illinois focused monitoring system currently provides for three monitoring priorities, as determined by the Illinois State Advisory Council (ISAC): Free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the LRE, Disproportionality, and Effective General Supervision (Part B). Of these three priorities, monitoring activities currently focus on FAPE in the LRE, which actually encompasses Indicators 1-8 of the SPP. Thus, data used include student participation rates and performance on state assessments, including gaps between students with disabilities and nondisabled students; EE placement rates; graduation and dropout rates; etc.

Illinois has a two-tiered system of improvement for districts that are selected for an onsite focused monitoring review and are identified with findings of noncompliance: 1) Within one year from identification, a district must provide evidence of correction that is specific to the critical performance indicator and 2) Within two years from the date of notification, the district must provide evidence of change via trend data. The evidence of correction of the selected critical performance indicator and evidence of systemic change are designed to ensure that modifications have been made and will lead to improved performance on the indicator as reflected in the district data. To carry out improvement activities associated with any finding of noncompliance, districts are required to develop an improvement plan, which must align with all district initiatives and therefore must be incorporated into the District Improvement Plan (DIP) template through which districts not making AYP outline their improvement activities. If the district has an existing DIP, strategies and activities related to the focused monitoring findings must be incorporated into the plan to ensure alignment with current district initiatives.

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For improvement plans requiring professional development and/or technical assistance, several options are available to school districts, including ISBE-funded initiatives. To that end, the availability of professional development and coaching through the proposed Illinois RtI Network will be relevant to the Illinois focused monitoring system and particularly Indicators 3 and 5, in that the services offered through the project will be a potential resource to carry out corrective actions ordered in those school districts cited for noncompliance. The same is true for districts found to have disproportionality due to inappropriate identification under Indicators 9 and 10, as well as those with significant disproportionality. As discussed in the *Need for Project* section, the focus of the professional development, technical assistance, and coaching will have a direct impact on the quality of instruction and the provision of scientific, research-based EIS to students, all of which have implications for improving those areas identified as priorities for focused monitoring and for special education disproportionality.

Focus on Systemic Professional Development and Coaching

Wei, et al., (2009) found that in the United States, “The time and opportunities that are needed for intense, sustained professional development with regular follow-up and reinforcement are simply not in place in most contexts, as evidenced by the short duration of most professional development activities.” (p. 61). Further, foundational research by Joyce and Showers (2002) indicates that the greatest impact on teachers’ classroom application of skills learned through professional development occurs when coaching feedback is provided. As illustrated in Table 10, their research showed that when coaching feedback is a component of training, teacher application of skills increases to 80 percent to 90 percent, compared with 5 percent to 15 percent for components such as presentation of theory, modeling, and practice and low risk feedback.

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Table 10. Relationship of Impact on Teachers and the Types of Training Components Used

	Understand Knowledge and Skills	Actually Learn Skills	Actually Apply Skills in Classroom
Presentation of Theory	85%	15%	5-10%
Modeling	85%	18%	5-10%
Practice and Low-Risk Feedback	85%	80%	10-15%
Coaching Feedback Peer Visits	90%	90%	80-90%

The 2005 Illinois SPDG had as its primary goal the implementation of a regionalized system of personnel development that would increase the capacity of school systems to provide EIS to at-risk students and students with disabilities. Such a system was successfully implemented through the four I-ASPIRE regions (Chicago, North, Central, and South), and project evaluation data (Loyola University Chicago, 2010) show that schools served directly by the project increased their levels and fidelity of RtI implementation and showed improvements in student reading skills (based on curriculum-based measures, or CBMs). However, working on a school-by-school basis limited the impact of the project with respect to scaling up evidence-based RtI practices statewide. To address this issue, in the last two years of I-ASPIRE, a coaching-of-coaches component was added through which a cadre of 80 regionally based external coaches was established. The I-ASPIRE staff provided training, technical assistance, and coaching to these individuals, who in turn served as coaches for districts in their areas. To better support the scaling up of RtI implementation statewide, the Illinois RtI Network, as proposed under the new SPDG Project, will build on the coaching-of-coaches component of I-ASPIRE.

The Illinois RtI Network focuses on the following major goal: *Scale up implementation of a coordinated, statewide system of personnel development that will increase the capacity of school systems to establish and use a multi-tiered model of scientific, research-based instruction,*

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intervention, and assessment to improve the progress and performance of all students, including those at risk and with disabilities.

A set of underlying assumptions will be used to provide a common framework for the activities directed toward achieving this goal:

- Partnerships to accomplish particular goals, objectives, and outcomes through coordination, collaboration, and/or the sharing of resources and expertise, will occur within and across multiple layers (e.g., state, regional, and local), be formed in many ways, and consist of varying structures.
- Current Illinois initiatives that support various aspects of an integrated service delivery system for individuals with disabilities and their families and integrated services provided by ROEs and RESPROs provide the history, experience, and expertise needed to expand and build capacity, given an infrastructure and common vision upon which to build.

The Illinois SPDG Project is designed around a framework built on the following themes:

- Collaborative activities that link partners who are interested in, and who have resources, knowledge, and skills to contribute to, the development of highly qualified personnel.
- Engaging parents as equal partners.
- Linking and integrating special and general education personnel development.
- Working within the current state infrastructure for focused personnel development efforts at local, regional, and state levels, in response to identified needs, with an emphasis on supporting low-performing districts with high populations of students from low-income backgrounds.
- Achieving significant unity regarding the purpose of personnel activities, focusing on improved results.

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These themes will link local, regional, and state activities to the Illinois standards-based certification structure, to common evaluation and data collection, and to research and recommended practice in the education field.

The project structure will entail the establishment of the Illinois RtI Network, which will involve a collaborative partnership of LEAs (school districts, ROEs, and special education joint agreements); ISCs; IHEs; and parent entities such as the ISBE-funded Parent and Educator Partnership (PEP) and Parent Mentor Projects, the Parent Training and Information (PTI) Centers, and the Illinois PTA. The RtI Network will employ personnel with expertise in coaching, school improvement, and RtI, and be responsible for the recruitment, training, and support of a cadre of regionally based external coaches. All professional development provided through the RtI Network will involve a standardized training curriculum through the use of 13 ISBE-developed modules (see Appendix F) focused on improving student performance through the implementation of a multi-tiered system of instruction, intervention, and assessment, with an emphasis on such topics as administrative leadership; scientific, research-based reading and math curricula and instruction at grades K-12; data-based decision making; universal screening and progress monitoring; and parent involvement. In addition, district sites will be identified in geographic regions served by the external coaches to enhance project replicability and to ensure that evaluation can be conducted at the district and school levels. As part of competitive preference priority 1, low-performing districts (as identified by the ISBE System of Support) with large populations (40 percent or greater) of students from low-income backgrounds will be given priority in the selection process. The external coaches, with direct support from the RtI Network staff, will provide technical assistance and coaching to these districts (school personnel and parents) to support implementation of a multi-tiered system of

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instruction, interventions, and assessment, including RtI. They will also use a common coaching framework, further strengthening the systemic nature of the project. Further details of the project design are provided in the *Quality of Project Design* section.

The involvement of LEAs will ensure that the project reaches general and special education personnel, which will help bridge the gap that often exists between the two and will facilitate a more unified system of professional development. The involvement of IHEs will facilitate IHE teacher preparation faculty having access to professional development resources, as well as incorporation of the professional development content of the project into general and special education preservice curricula, thus increasing the systemic impact of the project. The parent involvement that is integral to the project design is also critical to systems change in that the more informed and involved parents become, the greater the likelihood that they will advocate for and support continued implementation of quality practices to improve their children's education.

Building on Successful Initiatives and Systems

The SPDG Project will build upon the success of I-ASPIRE, as well as the System of Support established to work with low-performing schools under ESEA, the Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents of Schools (IARSS) Regional Delivery System, and Statewide Implementation and Scaling Up of Evidence-Based Practices (SISEP). Modeling proven initiatives/systems will enhance the likelihood of systemic change and improvement of the SPDG Project.

I-ASPIRE: Illinois has 15 years of experience with RtI implementation, starting from a small-scale, grass roots approach under the Flexible Service Delivery initiative and expanding to larger scale implementation in recent years through I-ASPIRE and through the Illinois State RtI Plan. Implemented under the 2005-2010 Illinois SPDG, the primary goal of I-ASPIRE is to increase the capacity of school systems to implement a multi-tiered model of scientifically based

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instruction, intervention, and assessment, which includes RtI. The intended long-term outcome of the project is improved progress and performance in reading of students with and without disabilities.

I-ASPIRE established a regionalized system of personnel development via four regional “centers,” each of which employ personnel with expertise in RtI. Through these centers, the project staff have conducted more than 400 training and technical assistance events for district and school teams, with participation by approximately 600 LEAs. They have also provided onsite technical assistance and coaching to 68 schools in 41 districts; in turn, these schools served as data collection sites for project evaluation. As discussed previously, in order to enhance sustainability, in the last two years of the project (2008-2010), a coaching-of-coaches component was added through which I-ASPIRE personnel provided training and support to a cadre of 80 regionally based external coaches. In turn, these external coaches have begun providing professional development and coaching to LEAs in their areas to support implementation of a multi-tiered system of instruction, interventions, and assessment, including RtI.

The evaluation for I-ASPIRE involves several components, including, but not limited to, levels and fidelity of implementation of a multi-tiered model of scientifically based instruction, intervention, and assessment; parent involvement in the RtI process; and student outcomes. The Self-Assessment of Problem-Solving Implementation (SAPSI, see Appendix D) is an evaluation tool used to assess a school’s level and, in part, fidelity of implementation of the critical features and practices associated with a multi-tiered model. Evaluation data from the SAPSI (see Appendix G) show that, over time, as participating schools received training, technical assistance, and coaching, they increased their level and fidelity of implementation of a multi-tiered model. Further, when schools participating in the project for at least three years are

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compared with first- and second-year schools, in almost all cases the third-year schools have higher implementation levels and show evidence of sustaining critical practices.

Project evaluation data from the Parent Survey (see Appendices C and G) also show that as participating schools increased their implementation of critical features and practices over time, parent involvement in and satisfaction with the RtI process increased. Specifically, over time, parents who participated in individual problem-solving meetings at Tier 3 reported increased understanding of and participation in the problem-solving/RtI process, as well as increased understanding of their child's performance. They also reported increased satisfaction with the process overall and indicated that the problem-solving process helped their child's performance.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, with increased levels and fidelity of implementation came improved student performance in reading, as assessed through curriculum-based measures (CBM), i.e., DIBELS and AIMSweb. (CBMs provide a mechanism for universal screening and progress monitoring student-level performance.) For example, the draft 2007-2009 I-ASPIRE project evaluation report (Loyola University Chicago, 2010) includes an analysis of school CBM data in one of the I-ASPIRE regions (see Appendix G), which shows that, overall, participating schools had significant gains on their mean scores on grade 3 reading CBM between fall and winter and between winter and spring for the 2008-2009 school year. Further, the mean scores at each benchmark period were significantly higher for schools that had been participating in I-ASPIRE for three years, as compared with schools that had been participating for two years. These results seem to indicate that, at least in this region, schools that implemented the RtI process demonstrated significant growth and those that implemented for longer periods of time had, on average, significantly higher mean scores on grade 3 reading CBM.

I-ASPIRE also developed a series of high-quality, research-based professional development

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modules that were used to deliver small- and large-scale training throughout the project. These modules subsequently served as the basis for ISBE development of the previously referenced set of 13 standardized training modules focused on improving student performance (see the *Quality of Project Design* section and Appendix F). To ensure consistent presentation of the content, the 13 modules consist of an Instructor Guide (including resources, annotated bibliography, web links, and glossary), a Participant Guide, handouts, and PowerPoint slides. Beginning in fall 2010, these modules will be available through two delivery methods: face-to-face presentations and self-paced online learning via the Illinois Virtual School platform.

The Illinois RtI Network will use the modules as the primary training curriculum in the area of RtI. By using a standardized curriculum and common professional development structure, the consistency of training will be improved, as will the systemic implementation of the knowledge and skills gained by the participants. In addition, use of these modules will support “Use of Funds” (paragraph (a), of the grant application requirements) because the content is designed to “improve the knowledge of special education and regular education teachers and principals, and in appropriate cases, paraprofessionals, concerning effective instructional practices.” With their focus on improving student performance through the implementation of a multi-tiered system of instruction, intervention, and assessment, the modules will directly support professional development activities that provide training in methods of scientifically based reading and math instruction, including early literacy and numeracy instruction, early and appropriate interventions to identify and help children with disabilities, and using classroom-based techniques to assist children before referral for special education.

System of Support: As part of its system for academic accountability, ISBE places schools that are not making AYP on Academic Early Warning (AEW) or Academic Watch (AW) status

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based on the performance of their students on state assessments. In addition, schools that use Title I funding are subject to specific federal requirements related to school improvement under ESEA, with schools that fail to achieve standards being required to offer choice options and supplemental educational services.

Under ESEA, schools face achievement hurdles in reading and math. All students and all subgroups of students are expected to meet or exceed state standards by 2014. As such, states were required to set ever-increasing achievement targets starting in 2003 to move schools toward that goal. As the achievement targets have increased over time, placement of schools and districts in AEW and AW status has increased.

State and federal laws also require that technical assistance or a system of support be established to help these schools improve academic performance. Currently, ISBE has in place a regionalized delivery system to assist schools in academic difficulty. This system consists of 44 statewide ROEs and three ISCs, and was used to create 10 RESPROs, which provide improvement support to schools in AEW and AW status and assist other schools whose performance makes placement on the lists likely in the near future.

In spring 2011, ISBE will launch the enhanced Statewide System of Support (SSOS). Current plans call for the SSOS to have as its centerpiece a Center for School Improvement (the Center), which will provide high-quality, coordinated, and consistent support to the RESPROs and will provide ISBE with greater flexibility to quickly scale up capacity. The Center will be operated as a partnership among ISBE, one or more IHE or nonprofit partners, and IARSS. The Center will also provide coordination and coherence to the SSOS in order to help ensure that Illinois districts and schools receive quality, timely, and relevant assistance, and its staff will share accountability and responsibility for system of support oversight and coordination in the

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following areas: 1) standards-aligned instructional systems, 2) data use and analysis for continuous improvement, 3) educator talent and effectiveness, 4) analysis and dissemination of research and effective practices, and 5) support for low-performing schools (Illinois Priority Schools). The existing RESPROs will coordinate the provision of on-the-ground supports and the Center staff will work with regional staff to coordinate the provision of services and oversight of the system of support.

ISBE believes that successful schools and districts have as their foundation the following essential elements: 1) comprehensive planning for continuous improvement, 2) school culture and climate, 3) community and family engagement, 4) professional development, 5) leadership, 6) curriculum, 7) instruction, and 8) assessment. The SSOS will assist ISBE in evaluating the presence of these essential elements in an LEA by using a specified set of indicators researched and developed as part of Indistar™. These research-based indicators provide a common language statewide to identify gaps and measure progress for continual improvement. Formerly unidentified and absent in the system, these elements and indicators provide substantive direction for all Illinois schools through diagnosis, followed by targeted interventions, differentiated based on level of need, to improve student achievement. Accordingly, interventions will be tiered—Level 1: Continuous Improvement, Level 2: Targeted Improvement, Level 3: Intensive Support, Level 4: Most Intensive Support (see Appendix H).

The Illinois SPDG Project structure will work within the SSOS structure (the Center and RESPROs) in that the Illinois RtI Network will provide a foundation for the project in the scaling up of RtI implementation, with regionally based project staff providing direct support to external coaches in coordination with other SSOS assistance and coaching. The services of the RtI Network will also be aligned and integrated with SSOS services to facilitate consistency of all

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services, sharing of resources, etc., which will further enhance the systemic approach of the SPDG Project. By serving districts identified as Level 2 or Level 3 in the SSOS, including those with high percentages of students from low-income backgrounds, the Illinois RtI Network will provide services to districts with the greatest level of need. By incorporating the work of the Illinois RtI Network into the work of the Center and the SSOS, Illinois will be able to implement a fully coordinated and comprehensive system of professional development, coaching, and support to its LEAs.

IARSS Regional Delivery System: Access to high-quality, consistent professional development is provided to all schools and communities in Illinois through a Regional Delivery System, which is implemented by IARSS and includes 44 ROEs and three ISCs that provide statewide coverage of all schools. It uses a Statewide Framework for Regional Delivery of Professional Development that has provided the infrastructure for creation and delivery of state initiatives. IARSS members have researched, designed, delivered, and evaluated professional development for thousands of educators in areas such as standards alignment, quality classroom assessment, gifted education, and new teacher and principal mentoring, along with programs for content areas such as math and reading. This Regional Delivery System positions Illinois as a unique leader in building capacity and promoting sustainability for reform, while allowing a differentiated approach to better meet the needs of the diverse population. The high-quality and consistent professional development delivered through this regional system also leverages resources and reduces duplication of services, thus increasing cost effectiveness. The IARSS Regional Delivery System will provide an infrastructure for the proposed Illinois RtI Network.

SISEP: Illinois is one of four states chosen to work with ED and the National SISEP Technical Assistance Center to scale up evidence-based practices. The central focus of this work

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is to create an infrastructure for implementation of any evidence-based practice. The goal is to ensure the full and effective use of evidence-based practices and other innovations to benefit students in every school in Illinois.

Research over the past several decades (Fixsen, et al., 2005) has made it clear that the infrastructure required for making full, effective, and consistent use of innovations is missing from state systems of education. Innovations *and* an infrastructure are needed for implementation; neither is useful without the other. There are many innovations. It is not sufficient to continue with demonstration sites, projects, and pilots that only create islands of excellence. The platform, or infrastructure, from which those innovations can be launched, implemented, sustained, and improved must be built in order to benefit students in every Illinois classroom.

The Illinois SISEP project is the Integrated System for Student Achievement (ISSA) and, to date, has involved work focused on the development of implementation teams at the state, regional, and district levels. The first Illinois state and regional implementation teams are already working within the IARSS Regional Delivery System to create an infrastructure for implementation that will allow ISBE and LEAs to systematically and reliably make full and effective use of current and future innovations. As work under SISEP moves forward it will be integrated with the work of the Center in that the Center will coordinate the continuing Illinois efforts to develop a truly integrated SSOS for all Illinois schools. ISSA implementation work will be coordinated with the tiered delivery system of services and supports for districts and schools in improvement status and will focus on the Illinois-identified eight essential elements for effective school improvement discussed. Accordingly, because SISEP and the proposed SPDG Project will work within the SSOS structure, their activities will be aligned and integrated

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with one another and with SSOS.

Other Initiatives: Beyond SSOS, the IARSS Regional Delivery System, and SISEP, the SPDG Project will also be coordinated with activities supported through IDEA, Part B, funds retained at the state level for personnel and professional development purposes, thereby increasing the systemic impact of the project. Through the Illinois Statewide Technical Assistance Center (ISTAC), ISBE funds several projects that provide professional development and technical assistance statewide to educators and parents that are aimed at improving results for children with disabilities and school systems overall. Four of the seven projects (see Appendix I) are most relevant to the SPDG Project: 1) Project CHOICES is a grant-funded LRE initiative of ISBE, and its purpose is to increase the capacities of school districts and educational personnel to educate and provide supports and services to children and youth with disabilities in the educational environments in which they would participate if not identified as having a disability. 2) The Illinois Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports Network provides training, technical assistance, and coaching to help schools and communities address the needs of students with ED and other at-risk students. 3) The Illinois Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project provides training and technical assistance focused on educating and supporting children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families. 4) PEP advances the ISBE priority to improve the delivery of training and technical assistance to parents and educators of school-age children throughout Illinois. PEP also provides in-kind support for the Parent Mentor Project, through which parent mentors help parents of children with disabilities to effectively navigate the educational system in partnership with school district personnel.

Requiring the Illinois RtI Network to collaborate with the ISTAC projects will result in a more comprehensive, coordinated system of professional development and technical assistance.

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It will also provide for sharing resources and expertise across projects, thereby increasing the statewide reach of the RtI Network.

Focus on Reading and Math

As previously discussed, evidence suggests that 80 percent to 90 percent of children identified as having SLD are so identified because they have significant reading difficulties. In addition, educational outcome data (Aud, et al., 2010) continue to demonstrate poor outcomes in literacy, with the average National Assessment for Educational Progress grade 4 reading scale score remaining unchanged from 2007 to 2009, and only small improvements in grade 8 scores for the same time period. Toregesen (2004) also found that lack of literacy skills leads to the continued cycle of underachievement, low graduation rates, and poor postsecondary and employment outcomes.

Given the large body of research on reading and its impact on student performance, it is incumbent upon states to carry out systemic efforts to improve reading instruction in schools. Through 2009-2010, Illinois used the Reading First program to target high-poverty, low-performing schools that housed at least K-3 and were committed to carrying out activities that would result in classrooms with the following characteristics:

- Implementation of a high-quality reading program based on scientifically based reading research that includes instructional content based on the five essential components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- Ongoing use of assessments and progress monitoring strategies that inform instruction.
- Coherent instructional design that includes explicit instructional strategies, coordinated instructional sequences, ample practice opportunities, and aligned student materials.
- Scientifically based intervention strategies designed for students not making sufficient progress to bring them to grade level.

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Although federal funding for Reading First has ended, its key characteristics will continue to be implemented as Illinois moves forward in supporting district efforts to improve student literacy. For example, ISBE recently received federal funding for a four-year Striving Readers project, which is designed to: 1) raise middle and high school student literacy levels in Title I-eligible schools with significant numbers of students reading below grade level and 2) build a strong, scientific research base for identifying and replicating strategies that improve adolescent literacy skills. Participating high schools will establish a Striving Readers course designed as a Tier 2 intervention (using Passport Reading Journeys III) for grade 9 students who are two grade levels below benchmark. The students will be randomly assigned to the treatment or control group. Students will earn course credit in addition to their regular English course.

The SPDG Project will include a focus on scientific, research-based reading instruction and improvement strategies that align with the Reading First characteristics. Because the grade levels addressed by the project will expand from elementary to K-12, the project activities will also align with the goals of the Illinois Striving Readers Project.

In terms of math, Illinois does not currently operate specific initiatives focused on improving math instruction. However, as shown by the performance gaps on ISAT and PSAE between students with and without disabilities and between low-income and non-low-income students (see *Significance* section), this is an area of need in Illinois. Accordingly, 3 of the 13 ISBE modules are focused on math, and these will be used by the SPDG Project to deliver professional development in the area of math. The content of these modules aligns with the essential scientifically based components of math instruction (conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, strategic competence, adaptive reasoning, and productive response), as recommended by the National Research Council (2001). Other resources, such as those available through OSEP-

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funded centers, e.g., the National RtI Center and the IRIS Center, will also be incorporated to enhance project services.

The use of SPDG Project funds will ensure access to training for special and general education teachers statewide, with particular support for teachers in low-performing districts (at Level 2 or Level 3 under SSOS) with high populations of students from low-income backgrounds, and promote high-quality reading and math instruction on a statewide basis for children and youth with disabilities and other at-risk learners in grades K-12.

3. Quality of Project Design

1. *Clearly specified and measurable goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved.*

Overall, the project goal and objectives will be accomplished through ISBE coordination and oversight; subgrant and contractual activities; collaboration at the state, regional, and local levels; and stakeholder involvement through ISAC and the ISBE RtI Stakeholder Group (see Appendix J). The project goal, objectives, and activities are detailed in Table 11 (also see Figure 4, Project Logic Model, in Quality of Project Evaluation section for Outputs and Outcomes/Impact of each objective). The project goal addresses qualitative issues regarding education personnel by supporting professional development and personnel preparation activities that not only respond to personnel development needs in the state, but are also based on IDEA and ESEA. The goal will be achieved primarily through the Illinois RtI Network and is designed to help build a long-lasting infrastructure for professional development by requiring partnerships at many levels, focusing on common professional development content across the state and establishing a cadre of regionally based (within the six ROE areas; see map in Appendix A) external coaches who will be existing employees of LEAs, ISCs, or other entities, and therefore will continue to support district and school teams long after the project ends.

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Table 11. Goal, Objectives, Activities, Responsible Parties

<p>Goal: Scale up implementation of a coordinated, statewide system of personnel development that will increase the capacity of school systems to establish and use a multi-tiered model of scientific, research-based instruction, intervention, and assessment to improve the progress and performance of all students, including those with disabilities.</p>		
<p><i>Objective 1: Deliver research-based professional development, technical assistance, and coaching to increase the number of general and special education administrators, teachers, and other personnel and parents who understand and implement a multi-tiered system of instruction, intervention, and assessment, resulting in improved student performance.</i></p>		
Activity	Responsible Parties	Deliverables/Evidence of Completion and Timelines
<p>1.1. Establish (via a competitive RFP) and implement the Illinois RtI Network, including hiring of staff (1.0 FTE Project Coordinator and at least 12.0 FTE Regional Coordinators across 6 ROE areas).</p>	<p>ISBE cross-agency management staff, Project Director, Illinois RtI Network subgrantee (for implementation)</p>	<p>RFP issued; 10/10 Subgrant awarded; 2/11 Project staff hired; 3/11</p>
<p>1.2. Recruit regionally based cadres of individuals who will serve as external coaches to provide coaching and mentoring support to identified LEAs (at least 90 coaches initially, each serving one or more districts, with 7 to 10 added annually).</p>	<p>Project Director, Illinois RtI Network staff, in collaboration with Network partners</p>	<p>Applications for external coaches issued (see Appendix K); 4/11 External coaches identified; signed agreements allocating FTE of coaches in place with LEAs, ISCs, etc.; 6/11, then annually thereafter</p>
<p>1.3. Provide professional development (at least 10 sessions per year) and coaching (onsite at least twice monthly) for the external coaches cadre to gain knowledge and skills in coaching and in a multi-tiered model of scientific, research-based</p>	<p>Project Director, Illinois RtI Network staff, ISBE Curriculum and Instruction Division staff (for ISBE modules)</p>	<p>Training curriculum and materials for coaching developed (including 13 ISBE modules); 4/11, with periodic updates/revisions RtI Network staff fully knowledgeable of content of 13</p>

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Activity	Responsible Parties	Deliverables/Evidence of Completion and Timelines
instruction, intervention, and assessment, including RtI; includes support for external coaches by project staff through onsite coaching and mentoring, job shadowing, coaches networking meetings, etc.		ISBE modules and other training content; 5/11 Training sessions scheduled, delivered, and evaluated; 6/11 through project end Ongoing support for external coaches scheduled and provided; 6/11 through project end
1.4. Using predetermined criteria, recruit and select districts to receive external coaching services and serve as data collection districts (up to 90 districts initially, with 7 to 10 added annually).	Project Director, Illinois RtI Network staff, External Coaches	Signed agreements with districts in place; 8/11 and annually thereafter At least 70 percent of participating districts at Levels 1 or 2 in the SSOS and have high percentage of low-income students.
1.5. Deliver professional development (at least 8 per year per region) and coaching (onsite at least twice monthly) to district- and building-level staff, including internal coaches.	External coaches, employers of external coaches (e.g., LEAs, regional providers), Illinois RtI Network staff	Training sessions scheduled, delivered, and evaluated; 10/11 through project end Coaching, including onsite visits, telephone and e-mail consultation, and cross-site meetings, delivered and evaluated; 10/11 through project end
1.6. Use ISAC and the RtI Stakeholder Group to review and provide input on project activities to make continual project improvements based on evaluation data.	Project Director, Illinois RtI Network Project Coordinator	Regular updates to ISAC and RtI Stakeholder Group; semiannually 2011-2015

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<p><i>Objective 2: Increase the number of parents who participate and their level of participation in the educational decision-making process for their child across district sites.</i></p>		
Activity	Responsible Parties	Deliverables/Evidence of Completion and Timelines
<p>2.1 Include the Illinois PTA, PEP, and/or the PTIs as active participants in the Illinois RtI Network.</p>	<p>Project Director, Statewide Parent Consultant, Illinois RtI Network staff</p>	<p>Illinois RtI Network subgrant applications clearly specify parent entities as co-applicants and/or as partners; 1/11</p>
<p>2.2 Provide subgrant(s) to the PTIs to partner with other parent entities and the Illinois RtI Network in a) printing and disseminating parent materials on RtI, including the role of parents in the RtI process, and b) delivering training (at least five events per year) on RtI and related topics for parents of students with and without disabilities.</p>	<p>Project Director, Statewide Parent Consultant, PTIs</p>	<p>Subgrant(s) issued by 1/11 Partnership with other parent entities (e.g., PEP, Illinois PTA) established by 3/11 Parent materials produced and disseminated; 5/11 and annually thereafter Training sessions scheduled and delivered; 5/11 and annually thereafter</p>
<p>2.3 Require participating district sites to include parent representatives on the district leadership team to provide input on the effectiveness of school-level implementation.</p>	<p>Illinois RtI Network staff, external coaches, district administrators</p>	<p>Parent names submitted by site administrators; 8/11 and then annually as new sites are added Meetings held and records reflect parent participation; by 3/11 and ongoing through project end</p>
<p>2.4 Facilitate active participation by parents in Tier 3 problem-solving and/or IEP meetings.</p>	<p>District sites (leadership), school teams, parents</p>	<p>Documented parent participation and completed parent surveys; semiannually through project end</p>

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<i>Objective 3: Increase the number of IHE undergraduate and graduate educator preparation programs that implement RtI content in their curricula.</i>		
Activity	Responsible Parties	Deliverables/Evidence of Completion and Timelines
3.1 IHEs participate as a partner in the Illinois RtI Network.	IHE partner representatives	Illinois RtI Network applications clearly specify IHEs as primary or co-applicants and partners; 12/10
3.2 Establish and implement IHE Partnership via a competitive RFP.	Project Director, Stakeholder Groups	RFP issued; 10/10 Subgrants awarded; 2/11
3.3 Collaborate with the Illinois RtI Network to provide training opportunities (using the 13 modules) for IHE leadership and faculty.	IHE Partnership, Illinois RtI Network Project Coordinator	Training modules delivered either in person or via online system; Summer 2010 and then regularly through project end
3.4 Work with teams at IHEs with largest educator preparation programs to conduct reviews of preservice program course syllabi for RtI content.	IHE Partnership, Project Evaluator, participating IHEs	IHE teams established (ISU, SIUE, SIUC, EIU, UI-UC, NIU, WIU, NLU); 5/11 Checklist completed for selected programs; 5-10/11
3.5 Provide technical assistance via workgroups, e-mail, and telephone for IHE teams to incorporate RtI content into existing preservice programs.	IHE Partnership, Illinois RtI Network	Workgroups established; 11/11 Workgroups conducted; 1-6/12, annually thereafter Content incorporated and implemented; fall 2012 through end of project
3.6 Establish or refine a process for IHEs to forge collaborative relationships with districts to increase the number of graduates employed in low-performing districts with high populations of	IHE Partnership, RtI Network, Project Director, ISBE Educator and School Development staff	Process established in Year 2 and implemented thereafter

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students from low-income backgrounds.		
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Objective 4: Refine and implement a comprehensive evaluation process to measure the effectiveness of project activities.

Activity	Responsible Parties	Deliverables/Evidence of Completion and Timelines
4.1 Issue RFSP for and select project evaluator.	ISBE Management, Project Director, Illinois RtI Network subgrantee	Agreement in place; 3/11
4.2 Refine and implement the project data collection system, incorporating and building on existing ISBE data collection systems.	Project Director, Project Evaluator, Illinois RtI Network staff	Data collection structure refined and operable; 5/11
4.3 Refine and implement project evaluation tools.	Project Evaluator, Illinois RtI Network staff, IHE Partnership staff	SAPSI, Fidelity Checklist, Data Protocol, TA Logs, Parent Survey, IHE Checklist Tools refined and implemented; 5/11
4.4 Provide training to project staff, external coaches, and participating district staff on evaluation system and tools and data entry.	Project Evaluator, Illinois RtI Network staff, IHE Partnership staff	Online training sessions scheduled and provided; begin 8/11 and as needed thereafter
4.5 Provide semiannual data analysis and progress reports to ISAC and the RtI Stakeholder Group to inform and make continual improvements in project activities.	Project Evaluator, Illinois RtI Network staff, IHE Partnership staff, Project Director, Project Data Specialist	Data Analysis and Progress Reports and meetings with ISAC and RtI Stakeholder Group; semiannually throughout project

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Activity	Responsible Parties	Deliverables/Evidence of Completion and Timelines
4.6 Produce and present to ISBE an annual report of program effectiveness based on project data.	Project Evaluator, Illinois RtI Network, IHE Partnership	Annual Report within 90 days after end of each grant year
4.7 Complete and submit the annual project report to OSEP.	Project Director, Project Evaluator	OSEP Annual Report; May 2011 and annually thereafter

2. Project design is appropriate to/will address target population or other identified needs.

The ultimate target population of the Illinois SPDG Project is students with disabilities and other at-risk students who will benefit from having highly qualified personnel prepared to work toward ensuring student success in the general education curriculum. The immediate targets of the grant activities are the personnel themselves and parents.

By employing personnel who are regionally based in the six Illinois ROE areas (see Appendix A), recruiting and supporting external coaches to work directly with districts in those regions, and aligning the work of the external coaches with the tiered supports provided through the Center under SSOS, the Illinois RtI Network (Obj. 1) will be able to provide personnel with access to professional development that will increase their knowledge and skills in working as a team to implement a multi-tiered model of instruction, intervention, and assessment, including RtI, to support school improvement. Requiring districts to have parent representation on the district leadership team and coaching school teams on involving parents in the RtI process will provide parents with opportunities to understand such concepts as scientific, research-based curricula, instruction, and assessment and RtI, as well as how to work as partners with school personnel to enhance their children’s learning. Involvement of the PTIs and other parent entities will further increase parent knowledge and participation. Overall, these activities will strengthen

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the capacity of school systems to address the diverse learning needs of students at the local level.

Involving educator preparation IHEs as partners will help address the needs of administrator, teacher, and related services personnel candidates and IHE faculty. Through the IHE Partnership (Obj. 3), work will be carried out at Illinois IHEs with the largest educator preparation programs to incorporate RtI content into personnel preparation curricula and field experiences. To support this work, subgrants will be made available to the participating IHEs. In addition, faculty from all IHEs will have the opportunity to participate in the professional development activities provided by the project by attending large-scale trainings and/or accessing the ISBE and other modules (e.g., IRIS Center materials). The IHE Partnership will provide a mechanism for communicating information about training opportunities to IHE faculty. The IHE Partnership will also focus on assisting universities in forging collaborative relationships with school districts to facilitate the placement of highly qualified general and special education teachers in low-performing districts with high percentages of students from low-income backgrounds.

The needs of students with disabilities and other at-risk students will be addressed when school personnel and parents apply the knowledge and skills they learn through their participation in the project's systemic professional development. In the participating districts, technical assistance from the Illinois RtI Network staff and external coaches will further enhance the application of the acquired knowledge and skills and implementation levels and fidelity. As a result, it is anticipated that instruction will be improved and, in turn, student performance will increase. Data will be collected at the district and school levels to measure student progress, which will take the project evaluation to the student level.

Criteria for selecting participating districts will be established by ISBE, in conjunction with ISAC and the RtI Stakeholder Group, and will include, but not be limited to:

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- Student performance on state assessments in reading and math
- AYP status for the general population and subgroups, including identification as a Level 2 or Level 3 LEA under SSOS
- Free and reduced lunch count (this factor and AYP status will be used to target low-performing districts with high percentages of students from low-income backgrounds)
- Suspension/expulsion rates
- Disproportionality
- LRE data
- Special Education General Supervision and Focused Monitoring report results

Use of criteria such as those listed here will ensure that more intense project services will be provided to districts with the greatest need. This will also help to ensure that economically disadvantaged and minority children are not taught at higher rates by teachers who are not highly qualified. It is proposed that at least 90 participating districts be identified by Year 2, with new districts added each year thereafter to expand the impact of the project.

3. Proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of training in the field.

The primary purpose of the Illinois SPDG Project is to effect a significant, systemic change in how Illinois manages its special education personnel development system, resulting in an infrastructure that will last beyond the grant period. The goal, objectives, and activities are linked through overarching themes of recommended practice in general and special education and personnel development, and through themes of partnership and collaboration. Criteria grounded in these themes guide the major activities.

All of the primary activities are designed to extend well beyond the “one-time” workshop approach and to greatly expand the benefits to be derived from sustained, long-term professional

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development opportunities. In particular, the coaching-of-coaches component will significantly increase the sustainability of effective practices linked to school improvement, and this approach is supported by research (Joyce & Showers, 2002). Further, as discussed previously, the external coaches will be existing employees of LEAs, ISCs, and/or other entities, and their employers will allocate a specific FTE of their positions for coaching. While the Illinois RtI Network will train and coach the external coaches, financial support from the project will primarily be in conjunction with training and travel expenses. Funds to offset salary costs of the coaches may also be provided but would be reduced over time so that the coaches' employers assume the full cost of salaries by the end of the project. Therefore, when the project ends, the salaries of the external coaches will continue to be paid by their employers, thus significantly decreasing the likelihood that their positions will be eliminated when the project ends.

Figure 3 provides a schematic of the project structure. As discussed previously, the largest component will be the Illinois RtI Network (Obj. 1) and will involve a collaborative partnership of LEAs, regional providers, IHEs, and parent entities. Because ISBE is required to competitively bid projects of this magnitude, the Illinois RtI Network will be established by issuing a subgrant through a competitive request for proposals (RFP) process. Those eligible to serve as the administrative agent for the subgrant will be LEAs, which include districts, ROEs, and special education joint agreements. The Illinois RtI Network will be responsible for:

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Figure 3. SPDG Project Organization

*includes the Center for School Improvement

- Delivery of professional development in effective coaching and the ISBE training module topics (see “Modules to Support Improved Student Performance” on page 52 and Appendix F).
- Working with LEAs, ISCs, and other entities to: 1) hire or contract with individuals who will serve as regional coordinators in the six ROE areas and 2) recruit and select regionally based external coaches who are employees of those entities and provide training and support to these individuals in their coaching role (see Appendix K for sample external coaches application used under I-ASPIRE).
- Developing and maintaining a project website, which will be required to meet a government- or industry-recognized standard for accessibility.
- Working with the IHE Partnership to review and incorporate RtI content and competencies into IHE general and special education preservice curricula.

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- Working with the PTIs to refine existing and develop additional parent informational and training materials and deliver training to parents.
- Working with ISBE to identify participating districts to be served by the external coaches and regional coordinators.
- Supporting the external coaches in working directly with the participating districts to:
 - Provide training and technical assistance, including support for internal building coaches;
 - Coordinate small group meetings of staff across sites for reflection and networking; and
 - Carry out district-, school-, and student-level evaluation activities.
- Working with the project evaluator to facilitate data collection for evaluation.
- Collaborating with other ISBE training and technical assistance initiatives.

The regionalized placement of Illinois RtI Network staff and external coaches in the six ROE areas will serve to strengthen the project's coherence and sustainability. Because all regional coordinators and external coaches will use a standardized training curriculum for professional development and a common framework for technical assistance and coaching to the participating districts, the consistency of the project will be greatly enhanced. Focusing the professional development, technical assistance, and coaching on a common theme will also increase the coherence and sustainability of the project and enhance the ability to evaluate project effectiveness. Further, the administrative agent of the Illinois RtI Network will be required to have or obtain ISBE approval as a provider of continuing professional development. Therefore, the project will provide an additional resource to teachers and administrators in meeting certificate renewal requirements since individuals trained through these activities will receive Continuing Professional Development Units toward renewal of their certificates and endorsements, as required in Illinois.

The use of existing, proven professional development curricula and materials such as the

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13 ISBE modules (see list below and Appendix F), as well as instructional coaching (Knight, 2007) and cognitive coaching (Center for Cognitive Coaching, 2010) content, will further strengthen the integrity and sustainability of the project. Because the 13 modules were developed by an ISBE contractor, they can be widely reproduced and shared.

Modules to Support Improved Student Performance: ISBE has committed to providing professional development to school districts to assist in their implementation of a successful multi-tiered system, including RtI, for all students by the start of the 2010-11 school year. ISBE used the results from school district RtI self-assessments and district RtI plans to determine the types of state-level assistance districts expect to need, with particular emphasis on the professional development necessary to implement this process. ISBE funded the design and development of 13 professional development modules as part of its ongoing responsibility to provide service and support to school districts to improve student performance, based on the information available. Because districts will be at different stages of implementation, they will be able to access the modules in accordance with their professional development needs. Each module has the following components: Instructor Guide (including resources, annotated bibliography, web links, and glossary), Participant Guide, Handouts, and PowerPoint slides.

1. Overview and Use of Three-Tier Instruction and Intervention Model to Support Improved School Performance
2. School Leadership for Improved School Performance
3. Parental Involvement for Improved Student Performance
4. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners and Improved Student Performance
5. Scientific, Research-Based Assessment for Improved Student Performance
6. Data-Based Decision-Making

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7. Scientifically based Instruction and Interventions
- 8-10. Determining and Designing Effective Interventions in Literacy (Module 8: Grades K-3, Module 9: Grades 4-8, Module 10: Grades 9-12)
- 11-13. Determining and Designing Effective Interventions in Mathematics (Module 11: Grades K-3, Module 12: Grades 4-8, Module 13: Grades 9-12)

Participating districts will be required to enter into an agreement with the Illinois RtI Network, which will include a commitment to work with project staff to implement the district RtI plan, as integrated within the DIP. Specifically, districts must agree to review the DIP to identify strategies and resources aligned with RtI implementation (e.g., differentiated instruction; scientific, research-based curricula and interventions; formative assessments; shared leadership; parent involvement) and determine any gaps or weaknesses, including the need to reallocate resources to align with the identified priorities. If any gaps or weaknesses are identified, the DIP will be revised. These requirements will improve coherence and sustainability of district-level activities conducted under the project.

The IHE Partnership (Obj. 3) will also increase coherence and sustainability of the training program. The partnership will initially target the eight Illinois IHEs that prepare the largest number of educators, including teachers, related services personnel, and administrators, and expand to other IHEs where feasible. These IHEs are Illinois State University (ISU), Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and Edwardsville (SIU-C and SIU-E), Northern Illinois University (NIU), University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign (UIUC), Western Illinois University (WIU), Eastern Illinois University (EIU), and National-Louis University (NLU). Three of these IHEs have provided letters of support for or agreements to partner with the SPDG Project, with the other four public IHEs encompassed in the letter of support from the chair of the Illinois

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Association of Deans of Public Colleges of Education, which she submitted on behalf of all public universities with educator preparation programs. These letters demonstrate the commitment of IHEs to participate. Of the eight IHEs, ISU, NIU, SIU-E, SIU-C, and NLU partnered with the I-ASPIRE regional projects under the previous SPDG.

Each of the participating IHEs will establish one or more teams to conduct the work outlined under Objective 3, which will be guided through a partnership with the Illinois RtI Network and the project evaluator using the I-ASPIRE IHE checklist. In order to participate in and receive funding under the partnership, IHEs will be required to commit to making changes in their curricula to incorporate RtI content. As a result, new personnel exiting these preservice programs will have the knowledge and skills necessary to implement RtI practices, thereby increasing sustainability beyond the project period.

The parent partnership activities supported through the PTI subgrants (Obj. 2) will involve refinement of existing and development of additional parent informational and training materials and delivery of training, in collaboration with the Illinois RtI Network. Involvement of multiple parent entities (e.g., the PTIs, Illinois PTA, PEP) will enhance the scope of parent outreach and the use of a common set of materials will result in parents receiving consistent, accurate, and up-to-date information during the project period and beyond.

4. Proposed project reflects up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice.

The National Staff Development Council (2001) has established context, process, and content standards for high-quality, comprehensive, outcome-based staff development. These standards focus on such practices as adult learning communities, leadership to guide continuous instructional improvement, using student data to determine adult learning priorities and help sustain continuous improvement, applying research to decision making, collaboration, evaluating

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effectiveness, and relying on research-based strategies for content and delivery.

The professional development to be provided through the SPDG Project is consistent with the standards summarized herein and is based on research and effective practice. The 13 modules were developed by a team of individuals with in-depth knowledge of the content and involved consultation from Illinois practitioners (e.g., general and special education administrators, RtI coaches) and state and national experts, including the National RtI Center. Several of the modules contain materials from the research-based training modules developed under I-ASPIRE, the content of which was drawn from the work of such experts as David Tilly of the Heartland Education Association in Iowa, Mark Shinn of National-Louis University and formerly of the University of Oregon, Dan Reschly of Vanderbilt University, David Prasse of Loyola University-Chicago, and George Batsche of the University of South Florida (USF).

The modules are available for in-person delivery and online self-paced learning via the Illinois Virtual School (<http://www.ilvirtual.org/>). The training intervals and process are designed appropriately for adult learning. For example, the online courses are developed in an asynchronous environment and in a format to be self-led without instructor input. Frequent self-checks are built into the course modules to allow individuals to monitor their own progress. Additional learning resources and opportunities are built into the courses to serve as an opportunity for extended learning when individuals perform poorly on self-checks.

As previously cited, the foundational research of Joyce and Showers (2002) showed that coaching has the greatest impact on teachers' classroom application of skills learned through professional development in that skill mastery and application improve when follow-up support is provided. Accordingly, a key component of the Illinois RtI Network will be the training and support of a cadre of regionally based external coaches who will provide direct support to

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participating districts in their areas. The coaching framework will be based on principles of instructional coaching (Knight, 2007) and cognitive coaching (Center for Cognitive Coaching, 2010), both of which are research-based and aligned with work being conducted under Illinois SISEP activities. In addition, Dr. George Batsche and his staff of the Problem-Solving and RtI Project at USF have agreed to partner with ISBE in the SPDG Project, and in that capacity will consult with the Illinois RtI Network on the coaching-of-coaches component.

At the school level, the project will support districts in using proven methods for universal screening and progress monitoring, such as CBMs. Foundational research (Lloyd, et al., 1998) has found that when teachers use valid, brief measures to set high reading goals and then monitor progress and make regular adjustments in instruction, reading outcomes are significantly improved. CBM involves monitoring student progress through direct, continuous assessment of basic skills in such areas as reading fluency, comprehension, spelling, mathematics, and written expression. Other foundational research by Fuchs and Deno (1991) shows that CBM is highly correlated with more expensive, less instructionally relevant measures and when used in conjunction with decision rules results in improved learning of students who are not making progress toward grade-level expectancies. More recently, Shinn (2010) cited two studies by Hintze and Silberglitt (2005) and Silberglitt and Hintze (2005) that compared the diagnostic accuracy and predictive validity of reading CBM (R-CBM) with high-stakes state reading tests. Specifically, these studies reported “ranges of predictive efficiency of 0.65 to 0.76 for sensitivity and 0.78 to 0.82 for specificity, with predictions from the winter Grade 1 R-CBM and the end of grade 3 state reading test.” (p. 277).

Because the SPDG Project will expand its focus through grade 12, existing resources for implementing RtI at the middle and high school levels (e.g., the ISBE math modules) will be

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supplemented with other research-based content and strategies appropriate for this age. For example, resources available through the National High School Center and the University of Kansas, Center for Research on Learning (e.g., the Strategic Instructional Model, which is a research-validated literacy program) will be accessed and used.

5. *The proposed project will establish linkages with other appropriate agencies and organizations providing services to the target population.*

State-Level Linkages

At the state level, linkages with other agencies and organizations will occur in several ways. ISAC and the RtI Stakeholder Group (see Appendix J) will provide stakeholder input to guide the work of the project (see ISAC's letter of support for the project). To ensure input from a wide range of stakeholders, membership across these two groups includes representation from:

- Parents
- General and special education teachers
- Related service providers (e.g., school psychologists and social workers)
- Administrators, i.e., school district superintendent, building principal, special education director
- IHE general education and special education department faculty
- ROEs and/or ISCs
- Illinois Teacher Unions
- State agency representatives from Illinois departments of Corrections, Human Services-Office of Rehabilitation Services, and Children and Family Services

The receipt of current project information will allow both groups to identify ways that the project can support the accomplishment of their priorities and to provide recommendations of

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ways to improve the project.

To ensure linkages with the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), which is the state agency responsible for vocational rehabilitation and Part C early intervention (EI; birth to age 3) programs, ISBE will continue its direct involvement with the Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) and the Illinois Interagency Council on Early Intervention (IICEI). The Interagency Coordinating Council Act, 20 ILCS 3970, established the ICC in 1990 to facilitate collaboration among state agencies and improve outcomes for youth with disabilities. The state superintendent of education and the secretary of IDHS serve as ICC co-chairs. In addition, the ISBE assistant superintendent of special education is the agency representative to the ICC. The ICC is charged with gathering and coordinating data on services for transition-age youth with disabilities; providing information, consultation, and technical assistance to state and local stakeholders; assisting state and local stakeholders in establishing interagency transition agreements; conducting an annual statewide evaluation of student transition outcomes and needs; and providing in-service training to consumers in developing and improving awareness of transition services. Student outcome data from the SPDG Project evaluation that are relevant to transition-age students will be shared with the ICC during the project in order to enhance the ability of ICC to carry out its work. ISBE representation on the ICC will also facilitate alignment of the State Personnel Development Plan with the state plan under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The IICEI is a governor-appointed advisory council that provides advice to and assists IDHS in the performance of its duties related to the EI Program in Illinois. Council members include state agency representatives, parents of children with disabilities, public or private EI providers, and a representative of the Illinois General Assembly. The ISBE Early Childhood Division Administrator is an IICEI member, and her representation ensures that ISBE, as the SEA,

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provides input and technical assistance to improve the quality of professional development available to meet the needs of personnel serving infants and toddlers with disabilities.

Another state-level linkage will involve parent organizations. As stated in the National PTA publication, *PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships*, “Research consistently demonstrates the benefits of family-school-community partnerships: Higher teacher morale; increased communication among parents, teachers, and school leaders; more parent involvement in supporting teaching and learning; more community support for the school; greater student success.” (pp. 6-7). Parent organization linkages will occur through the project activities involving the PTIs, which will include partnerships with PEP, the Parent Mentor projects, and the Illinois PTA. Further information about the involvement of these entities is provided in the *Adequacy of Resources* section, item 2.

State linkages will continue to occur with professional organizations such as the Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education (IAASE), IARSS, Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA), Illinois Principals Association (IPA), Illinois School Psychologists Association, and the Illinois Teacher Education Division of the Illinois Council for Exceptional Children. Several of these organizations provided letters of support for the proposed project and have indicated that the activities will complement and align with their professional development efforts. ISBE has well-established relationships with these and other organizations through the current Illinois SPDG Project and other agency activities, including the RtI Stakeholder Group.

Regional and Local Linkages

Linkages will occur at the regional level by requiring the Illinois RtI Network to hire regionally based staff (regional coordinators) and collaborate with LEAs, ISCs, and IHEs in those areas to recruit and select the external coaches who will work directly with district teams

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and to identify and serve participating districts, including low-performing districts (i.e., at Level 2 or Level 3 for SSOS) with high percentages of students from low-income backgrounds. Further, establishment of networks of participating districts in the six ROE areas served by the regional coordinators and external coaches will support linkages at the local level among districts, schools, parents, and community service providers.

6. *The proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous student academic standards.*

Illinois is considered a national leader in establishing rigorous learning standards in all core academic subjects and an accountability system that measures student progress toward those standards. In fact, Illinois is participating in the National Common Core Standards in language arts and mathematics, which were adopted through emergency rulemaking at the June 2010 State Board of Education meeting. In 2007, the State of Illinois entered into the Illinois College and Work Readiness Partnership—an agreement among ISBE, the Office of the Governor, and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to develop policies and programs to ensure that more Illinois students are prepared for college and the workforce. From 2007 through 2009, this Partnership focused on three policy areas: 1) college- and work-ready learning standards, 2) state education data systems, and 3) interventions in low-performing schools and districts.

As the result of the review of the *Illinois Learning Standards* undertaken as part of the College and Work Readiness Partnership, Illinois recognized the need to revise its learning standards to reflect college- and work-ready expectations. In October 2008, ISBE, in partnership with the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Illinois Community College Board, the Office of the Governor, and the Illinois Business Roundtable, joined 33 states in the American Diploma Project (ADP). The involvement of Illinois in ADP has included an external and internal review

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of the *Illinois Learning Standards* in English/language arts and math. Teams of secondary and postsecondary educators have convened to compare the *Illinois Learning Standards* with the ADP exemplary standards and to clarify what it means to be ready for college success. The teams have been working to revise the *Illinois Learning Standards* in order to bring needed coherence between standards, curriculum, assessments, and college-entry requirements. The ADP highlighted the need for new, higher standards at all grade levels, and the Illinois adoption of the Common Core Standards will build off of its ADP foundation. As Illinois moves forward with implementation of the Common Core Standards, ISBE will ensure that the Illinois RtI Network, by integrating its services with the IARSS Regional Delivery System, supports districts in aligning instruction, interventions, and assessments with the standards. Accordingly, schools will be supported in providing all students, including those with disabilities, with access to the rigorous academic curricula required by the standards in order to enable them to move successfully beyond high school into postsecondary education or employment.

Also relevant to the SPDG Project is the fact that Illinois recently proposed revisions to its Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (IPTS), which define the overall knowledge and skills that teachers must have in their professional roles to ensure that Illinois students meet or exceed the expectations defined by the *Illinois Learning Standards*. The revisions were developed by a committee of practitioners, of which the current SPDG project director was a member. In particular, revisions were made to better address the specific needs of individualized instruction (special education, English language learners, and gifted) and reflect current research and best practices, including multi-tiered instruction, intervention, and assessment practices. In addition, the proposed revisions further incorporate literacy and technology standards for prekindergarten through grade 12. The assumption behind this application is that students with disabilities will

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be taught in general education classrooms, to the maximum extent appropriate, and will have access to the general education curriculum. The IPTS will ensure that teachers not only have knowledge of the curriculum and the skills to teach it, but also have knowledge and skills that enable them to work together to help students achieve and be successful. The IPTS are an important source of content for the activities of the Illinois SPDG Project, linking training activities directly to outcomes for students.

Project activities will also be integrated, to the maximum extent possible, with activities under any Personnel Preparation Grant project operated by an Illinois IHE. As discussed under Personnel Needs in the *Need for Project* section, ISBE has partnered with IHEs that have received these grants in the past, including the partnership in the STEP=UP program at UI-C. ISBE will also offer to participate with any IHE awarded a grant that addresses special education personnel needs under the Personnel Preparation Grant competition released June 14, 2010. Such partnerships will provide an important mechanism for sharing resources across projects and incorporation of training content into project curricula, thereby supporting a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning.

The SPDG Project will be aligned with other ISBE personnel development activities. For example, in Illinois educators are required to complete continuing professional development in order to renew their teaching and administrative certificates. The Illinois RtI Network will be required to have or obtain approval from the ISBE Educator Certification Division as a provider of continuing professional development. Thus, the SPDG Project will provide an additional resource to teachers and administrators in meeting certificate renewal requirements, since individuals trained through these activities will receive Continuing Professional Development Units toward renewal of their certificates and endorsements.

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In addition, the ISBE Special Education and Support Services Department has worked closely with the ISBE School Support Services for All Schools Center in implementing the Illinois highly qualified requirements to ensure that they align with ESEA and IDEA. The current SPDG project director is involved in agency work to implement highly qualified requirements for special education personnel. The professional development and technical assistance provided through the SPDG Project will support this implementation, particularly since it emphasizes collaboration between general and special education personnel in providing high-quality instruction to all students, including those with disabilities. This, along with the project activities associated with incorporating the professional development content into general and special education IHE preservice curricula, will further support a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning.

All activities of the SPDG Project are aligned with the Illinois Title II, Part A, application and plan. The Illinois plan for preparing, training, and recruiting high-quality teachers and principals seeks to have a positive impact on student achievement through development of preparation programs and opportunities for educators to be retrained in content areas of highest need. Through standards-based preparation programs and professional development opportunities targeted to specific-content/grade-level needs, educators will be given the resources to improve knowledge and skills. The fact that the activities in the Illinois Title II, Part A, plan target high-need schools, including low-performing schools whose student populations include minority students and students who are economically disadvantaged, will also help to ensure that these students are not taught at higher rates by teachers who are not highly qualified. Further, ISBE has a mechanism for examining professional development being provided by various agency divisions to determine alignment with state priorities and state professional

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development provider criteria in state law. This mechanism will be used to review the professional development to be provided through the SPDG Project.

In January 2010 Illinois amended its State Equity Plan, which focuses on “developing highly effective teachers and leaders who are prepared to work to meet the instructional needs of each child, including those who have special needs and/or are English Language/Bilingual Learners.” To meet the needs of the lowest performing schools, there is also an emphasis on preparing teachers and principals to focus on differentiated instruction, student learning, and school improvement, all of which align with the principles of the SPDG Project. The Illinois Teacher Equity Plan includes such components as:

- Strengthening professional development by coordinating statewide efforts to provide training to high-need districts and linking evaluation of teachers and principals to student learning growth and school improvement.
- Supporting national competency-based teacher standards attainment in high-need schools.
- Providing induction and mentoring for high-need schools, including Beginning Teacher Induction Pilot Programs and Principal and Superintendent Mentoring Programs.
- Establishing data systems to track teacher data, including a new longitudinal data system that will interface with existing educator data systems to produce information regarding highly qualified status of teachers.
- Establishing scholarship/forgivable loan/alternative programs for high-need schools aspiring teachers and principals.
- Working with the legislature to develop statutory changes and the funding necessary to provide incentives for effective teachers who teach in high-need schools.

SPDG Project activities will directly support these Teacher Equity components through

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emphasis on partnerships and collaboration between LEAs and IHEs, delivery of high-quality professional development, and technical assistance and coaching components.

4. Quality of Project Personnel

- 1. Employment of persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented.*

As an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, ISBE is committed to providing equity in employment and services, irrespective of gender, race, national origin, color, disability, or age. While no new ISBE personnel will be hired through this grant, personnel will likely be hired by external entities under project subgrants. The administrative agents of the subgrantees will be required to seek applicants from underrepresented groups and to provide any special accommodations required for an applicant to participate in the application or interview process. Accommodations will be made in the workplace to enable employees to perform their roles efficiently and effectively.

- 2. Qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.*

Elizabeth Hanselman, ISBE assistant superintendent for special education, will provide general oversight for the Illinois SPDG Project. Ms. Hanselman holds a bachelor of science degree in special education and a master of arts degree in legal studies, with an emphasis in administrative law. She also holds a Type 10 LBS I (special education teacher) certificate. Ms. Hanselman has more than 20 years of experience in the field of education, including special education teaching experience, and 16 years of service at ISBE. She has in-depth knowledge and experience in Illinois teacher certification requirements and development of state certification tests, including IHE collaboration, as well as management experience in special education general supervision and monitoring and education policy and leadership. Ms. Hanselman is responsible for policy

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and procedural coordination of special education projects and services for ISBE. She works to facilitate and promote teamwork throughout ISBE in relation to special education. In addition to her oversight role within ISBE, Ms. Hanselman is an invaluable resource as a liaison to local, regional, state, and national special education organizations and agencies.

As the project manager, David Andel, ISBE division administrator for special education services, will provide administrative direction for the project. Mr. Andel holds a bachelor of music degree in music education and a master's degree in educational administration. He also holds general administrative and superintendent certificates. Mr. Andel has 28 years of experience in the field of education, including teaching and administrative experience, and two years of service at ISBE. He coordinates and oversees the administration of focused monitoring; IDEA, Part B, discretionary projects (e.g., ISTAC); and the APR, Part B. His management experience at the school, district, and state levels will strengthen his role as project manager.

Kathryn Cox, principal education consultant in the ISBE Special Education Services Division, will serve as project director. Ms. Cox has 29 years of experience in the special education field, including 20 years at ISBE. She has management and staff experience in preparation and administration of federal grants, state funding programs, policy development, pupil personnel services program consultation, programmatic technical assistance, parent training and partnerships activities, and personnel preparation and development. Ms. Cox has served as project director for the current Illinois SPDG for nearly seven years. She holds a bachelor of science degree in education, standard elementary and secondary teaching certificates endorsed in special education, and a master of arts degree in business administration. She also holds a Type 75 school administrator certificate, with an endorsement for special education director.

Dawn Camacho will serve as an intra-agency coordination consultant for the project through

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her direct involvement with the Focused Monitoring System and cross-division activities to coordinate this system with SSOS. (As discussed in the *Significance* section, all SPDG Project activities will align with the Focused Monitoring System and SSOS.) Ms. Camacho will facilitate such coordination, in collaboration with the project director. Ms. Camacho is a principal education consultant in the ISBE Special Education Services Division and is responsible for coordinating the division's focused monitoring activities, which involves ensuring that the team leaders have the tools necessary to provide adequate technical assistance to districts, and is involved in agency RtI activities. She has approximately 10 years of experience in special education as an educator and consultant. Ms. Camacho holds a baccalaureate degree in education and a master of arts degree in educational administration. She also holds teaching certificates in elementary and special education and a Type 75 administrative certificate.

Scott Beaver will serve as the project data specialist at ISBE. Specifically, he will serve as a data liaison to the project evaluator and will facilitate access to the various ISBE data systems required for project evaluation, e.g., the School Report Card, the Special Education Data System (SEDS), LEA Profiles, the Student Information System (SIS), and the Longitudinal Data System (LDS). Mr. Beaver is a principal education consultant in the ISBE Special Education Services Division and is responsible for coordinating the special education data collection, analysis, and reporting efforts required by IDEA, Part B. He has nearly six years of experience in the education field as a high school math teacher and ISBE consultant. Mr. Beaver holds a bachelor of science degree in mathematics and a master of science degree in education (Instructional Technology Leadership) and completed a graduate study in statistics. He also holds teaching certification in secondary mathematics.

(See the Résumés component of this proposal.)

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3. *Qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of project consultants or subcontractors.*

The qualifications required of consultants, subgrantees, and subcontractors are directly linked to the specific requirements of the appropriate activity to be addressed. Additional ISBE staff will contribute technical assistance and support to the project by consulting on professional development content, such as scientific, research-based reading and math instruction; parent partnerships; evaluation activities; and disbursing funding to subgrantees. The staff time of these individuals is anticipated to be less than 2 percent each.

Marica Cullen, ISBE Curriculum and Instruction Division Administrator, has nearly 22 years of experience as an educator, including teaching, school administration, and state agency management. Her responsibilities at ISBE include oversight and coordination of implementation of the *Illinois Learning Standards*, with an emphasis on standards-aligned reading and math instruction. Her division also coordinates ISBE's work under the Illinois RtI Plan. Ms. Cullen and/or a member of her staff will provide consultation on scientific, research-based reading and math instruction and RtI. Tim Imler, ISBE Funding and Disbursement Division Administrator, has multiple years of experience with state and federal grant budgets and disbursements. He and his staff will process the approved Illinois RtI Network, IHE Partnership, and PTI subgrants and monitor expenditures via subgrantee expenditure reports and voucher payments.

Debra Kunz is the Statewide Parent Consultant for ISTAC and will serve as the parent consultant to this project. She will work with PEP, the Parent Mentor Projects, and the PTIs to facilitate the parent collaboration activities of the SPDG Project. Ms. Kunz is the parent of an adult son with disabilities, and she has numerous years of experience in parent advocacy and technical assistance, including more than five years as the director of an Illinois PTI.

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The ISBE Educator and School Development Division and the Innovation and Improvement Division will also provide support. Patrick Murphy, Division Administrator of Educator and School Development at ISBE, has multiple years of experience in education as a teacher, school administrator, and ISBE administrator. He and his staff have a thorough working knowledge of certification requirements and IHE preservice programs and will provide consultation to the SPDG Project in that capacity. Carol Diedrichson is a principal consultant in the Innovation and Improvement Division and works with the SSOS for Illinois schools and districts in academic status. She has worked with ISBE in improvement efforts since 1993 and is the agency SSOS contact, overseeing the development, review, and implementation of improvement and restructuring plans for districts and schools. She will provide consultation to the SPDG Project to facilitate collaboration with SSOS.

The administrative agent for the Illinois RtI Network, working in coordination with ISBE management and the SPDG project director, will be responsible for hiring the Project Coordinator and Regional Coordinators. The Project Coordinator will be a full-time position and will be responsible for coordination of all activities to be conducted by the Illinois RtI Network, including professional development, technical assistance, and coaching. Qualifications for this position will include multiple years of experience in the field of education, with K-12 administrative experience preferred, including LEA experience in implementing school improvement processes; at least three years experience managing a technical assistance project of similar magnitude and scope; strong knowledge and skills in school improvement and RtI; experience and skills in working with adult learners, and at least a masters degree in education or a related field.

Regional Coordinators will be part- and/or full-time positions and will be responsible for delivery of training and technical assistance support to the external coaches and project data

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collection. Required qualifications will include multiple years of experience as an educator, either in a teaching or administrative capacity; at least two years experience working in a consultant or coaching capacity; strong knowledge and skills in school improvement and RtI; experience and skills in working with adult learners; and at least a Bachelor Degree in education.

The project evaluator will be employed by the administrative agent of the evaluation contract. Required qualifications will include a doctorate degree and multiple years of experience in research and evaluation methods, including a successful track record with evaluation projects of similar magnitude and scope.

E. Adequacy of Resources

1) The adequacy of applicant support, including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources.

The principal ISBE office is located adjacent to the Capitol in Springfield, Illinois, with a satellite office in Chicago. ISBE staff is provided with adequate space and equipment, including up-to-date computers, printers, and Internet access to perform their job responsibilities. The agency video teleconferencing system connects the Springfield office with the Chicago office, allowing staff and agency committees to interact in both video and audio formats. The agency also uses technology for online meetings and webinars, e.g., GoToMeeting.

The project will be managed through the ISBE Special Education Services Department, Special Education Services Division-Springfield, , in collaboration with the Curriculum and Instruction and Innovation and Improvement divisions. Special Education Services is responsible for general supervision and monitoring of special education programs, programmatic technical assistance and guidance to educators and parents, the SPP, the State Personnel Development Plan, the educational surrogate parent program, and grant-funded initiatives to

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improve service delivery to school-age students. Staff from these and other ISBE divisions will support the project, including Educator and School Development, Data Analysis and Progress Reporting, Funding and Disbursements, Legal, and Data Systems. ISBE administers numerous federal grants and has well-established fiscal and programmatic procedures to ensure they are carried out efficiently, effectively, and in compliance with all federal requirements. ISBE staff members have worked diligently to develop, coordinate, and align the efforts of this grant with ESEA; IDEA, Parts B and D; and other federal and state initiatives that significantly improve Illinois educational services.

2) *The relevance and demonstrated commitment of partners to project implementation and success.*

Collaborative partnerships are an integral part of the SPDG Project. Multiple partnerships will be formed within and across local, regional, and state levels. The roles of required and other partners who will participate actively in specific, known ways in the activities outlined in this application are described here briefly. (See letters of agreement to partner from or existing interagency agreements with these entities.)

Required Partners

Institutions of Higher Education: Two IHEs have formally agreed to partner with ISBE in the SPDG Project. ISU partnered with ISBE under I-ASPIRE via the School Psychology Department's role in the project evaluation. The Dean of the College of Education at ISU submitted a letter agreeing to partner with ISBE under the new application by collaborating in implementation of the IHE Partnership, including the process utilized to review IHE undergraduate and graduate preservice program curricula and incorporate RtI content into such curricula. ISU will also share informational, training, and other resources with the project to

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maximize its capacity and disseminate information about project activities.

Loyola University Chicago will continue its partnership with ISBE in the proposed SPDG Project by sharing expertise in project evaluation (based on the role of Loyola's Center for School Evaluation, Intervention, and Training in the I-ASPIRE evaluation) and assisting ISBE in reaching out to other IHEs in the process of incorporating RtI content into IHE preservice program curricula; sharing informational, training, and other resources with the project to maximize its capacity; and disseminating information about project activities. Dr. David Prasse, Dean of the School of Education, submitted a letter of agreement to partner in this capacity.

IHEs are also represented on ISAC, which will serve as one of the mechanisms for stakeholder input to the project. In addition, IHEs will be eligible applicants for the IHE Partnership component of the proposed project. They will also be required partners in the Illinois RtI Network. Therefore, IHE partnerships are guaranteed at the state and regional levels.

State Agencies: To address the requirement that ISBE partner with the state agency responsible for administering IDEA, Part C, education, child care, and vocational rehabilitation programs, DHS has agreed to partner with ISBE through existing mechanisms, including interagency agreements for transition from Part C to Part B and secondary transition. The interagency agreement for Part C has been updated to incorporate data sharing to improve Part B Child Find activities and assessing child outcomes. DHS and ISBE are now able to track each child as he/she exits Part C and transitions to Part B early childhood special education services or other preschool services and programs. The updated agreement is included with this application. As discussed under "Linkages" in the *Quality of Project Design* section, ISBE partners with DHS through the IICC (secondary transition services) and the ICEI. In addition, ISBE has an interagency agreement with the Illinois Head Start Association, the purpose of which is to

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promote development of a statewide, coordinated, interagency service delivery system for preschool children—from birth until eligible for public school—and their families. This agreement is currently being updated, and a draft of the revised agreement was not available at the time of proposal preparation.

There are also collaborative efforts in professional development for EI and early education and care providers. Specifically, Child Find products and activities are coordinated with EI and products are available to all early childhood entities. Also, through STARNET, the following collaborations occur:

- Representatives from EI, child care, colleges and universities, special education, state-funded Pre-K programs, Head Start, and others are members of each STARNET regional advisory committee.
- All STARNET training is open to the representatives listed above, as space allows, and collaboratively sponsored training is conducted. Training and technical assistance are also provided for transition of children from Part C to Part B services.
- Resource libraries are open to families and early childhood personnel.
- STARNET and the state Pre-K technical assistance system meet regularly and coordinate activities.

The ISBE Division of Early Childhood, DHS, Head Start, the Illinois subdivision of the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children, and Children's Home and Aid collaborate to conduct Sharing a Vision, a biennial statewide early childhood conference. To expand on the established partnership with EI, child care, Head Start, and other programs, the professional development provided through the SPDG Project will be open to personnel from these programs, as space allows.

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Local Educational Agencies: In preparing this grant proposal, ISBE received input from LEAs via their representation on the existing SPDG Project Advisory Committee. Such input will continue to be solicited under the proposed project by utilizing ISAC and the RtI Stakeholder Group as advisory bodies to the project.

LEAs have also agreed to partner with ISBE in the proposed SPDG Project. Northern Suburban Special Education District (NSSSED) and Chicago Public Schools (CPS) District 299 both submitted letters of agreement to partner. NSSSED is an administrative agent for one of the I-ASPIRE regional subgrants under the current SPDG Project and will therefore be an invaluable partner in the proposed project. They have agreed to consult with ISBE on the coaching-of-coaches component of the Illinois RtI Network. NSSSED staff and their member school districts have multiple years of experience in implementing a multi-tiered system of instruction, intervention, and assessment, as well as the use of a coaching model to support and sustain implementation levels and fidelity. They have also carried out extensive professional development in these areas.

With a student population of approximately 409,000, Chicago Public Schools (CPS), District 299 is the largest urban district in Illinois and has significant needs in relation to improved student performance. It has a diverse student population (46 percent Black; 41 percent Hispanic; 83 percent low income) and a high school graduation rate of 70 percent (compared to the state average of 84.5 percent). In 2009, only 62 percent of students met or exceeded standards and the district did not meet AYP, resulting in a state designation of AWS. Like NSSSED, the district is an administrative agent for one of the I-ASPIRE regional subgrants and therefore has experience with RtI implementation. CPS will partner with ISBE by working with the Illinois RtI Network to identify a cadre of external coaches within the district who will have the opportunity to be

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trained and supported through the project (provided the district meets the project participation requirements) and, in turn, will provide direct support to area and school teams in the district. Their partnership in the project also aligns with competitive preference priority #1.

As discussed earlier in the *Significance* section (item 1, Building on Successful Initiatives and Systems), the IARSS Regional Delivery System provides schools and communities in Illinois with access to high quality, consistent professional development. IARSS provided a letter of support for the project, and the Illinois RtI Network will be required to integrate its services within the IARSS Regional Delivery System.

Other state, regional, and local LEA partnerships will be fostered in multiple ways through the project. At the state level, LEAs are represented on ISAC and the RtI Stakeholder Group and will be eligible applicants and required partners for the Illinois RtI Network. Establishment of participating district sites will provide a mechanism for district and school partnerships with the project at the local level.

Other Partners

Parents, including PTIs: In preparing this grant proposal, ISBE received input from parents via their representation on the existing SPDG Project Advisory Committee, and parent input and involvement will be a critical component of the proposed SPDG Project. Illinois has two federally funded PTI centers: Family Matters in Effingham and the Family Resource Center on Disabilities in Chicago. Under the proposed project, the PTIs will continue their partnership with ISBE in the dissemination of informational materials and resources and the delivery of training to parents of students with and without disabilities. They will also be required to partner with other parent entities, including PEP, the Parent Mentor Project, and the Illinois PTA, thereby expanding the parent partnership component of the project. Both PTIs submitted letters

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of agreement to partner in the SPDG Project.

Beyond the partnership with the Illinois PTIs, parents are also represented on ISAC and the RtI Stakeholder Group, which will serve as advisory bodies to the new SPDG Project. Further, as discussed in the *Significance* section, ISBE continues to provide funding for PEP and the Parent Mentor Project, both of which provide invaluable resources for parents. PEP's goal is to "enhance the caregivers' ability to participate actively in their child's education" and supports partnerships between parents and educators statewide. The Parent Mentor Project supports 15 parent mentors at the local level, and each grant site is a collaboration among agencies, e.g., school districts or special education cooperatives and nonprofit parent or disability groups.

As previously discussed, the Illinois RtI Network will be required to partner with one or more parent entities, such as the Parent Mentor Projects in their areas and/or the PTIs, and to collaborate with those entities in delivery of professional development to enhance parents' understanding of RtI. Participating districts will also be required to include parent representatives on district leadership teams and in their child's educational process at the school level.

Governor's Office: ISBE works closely with Governor Pat Quinn's office on all state educational issues. The Governor has six Deputy Chiefs of Staff, one of whose duties include serving as an educational liaison to our agency. Communication with the Governor's office occurs primarily through the office of the State Superintendent of Education, and this mechanism will be used to share information pertaining to the SPDG Project. Governor Quinn fully supports the proposed project, as evidenced by his letter of support.

3) *The budget is adequate to support the proposed project.*

The budget was developed based on the experience of ISBE with I-ASPIRE and other

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existing statewide training and technical assistance initiatives; therefore, ISBE is confident that the proposed budget is adequate to support the planned activities. A significant portion of the budget will be used for professional development and personnel preparation activities. Because the project evaluation is considered essential to improving the quality and ensuring the sustainability of the project, every effort has been made to allocate funds judiciously according to the evaluation activities to be conducted. The salary and benefits for the project director are the only personnel costs included and are essential to maintain the integrity of this project and to accomplish its many activities and anticipated outcomes. The project support staff person and additional ISBE personnel will contribute time and expertise to the project, as discussed in the *Quality of Project Personnel* and *Quality of Management Plan* sections, at no cost to the SPDG Project. ISBE will provide facilities, equipment, and space for personnel and meetings. Further, ISAC and the RtI Stakeholder Group will provide advice at no cost other than expenses incurred to attend meetings. Cost savings also will be accomplished in other ways, for example, ISBE divisions will handle many functions of the project, such as fiscal management. (See *Part II* for detailed budget information.)

4) *The costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance.*

Budget expenditures for the current project as delineated in *Part II* are directly related to the objectives and activities outlined in this proposal. As previously stated, the budget was developed based on the experience of ISBE with existing statewide training and technical assistance initiatives, as well as its experience with the current Illinois SPDG. The statewide initiatives have budget allocations similar to those of the Illinois RtI Network and are able to conduct activities of a similar scope that lead to accomplishment of their project objectives and result in the intended outcomes. Although the activities of this project are ambitious, the

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requested amounts are reasonable and cost-effective given the fact that similar models have been used before, providing ISBE staff and partners with experience regarding cost and satisfactory completion of activities.

5) *Potential for continued support, including demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities.*

The Illinois SPDG Project is designed to enhance the infrastructure of personnel development in Illinois by improving accessibility to training and follow-up support (via coaching) and responsiveness to the needs of educators and parents in the state. The systemic nature of the project ensures that its impact will continue beyond the conclusion of project funding. For example:

- a. A lasting outcome of the project will be the cadre of regionally-based external coaches. As discussed earlier, the external coaches will be existing employees of LEAs, ISCs, and/or other entities, and their employers will allocate a specific FTE of their positions for coaching. Because these entities will not be dependent on project funds to sustain the coaching positions, the external coaches will continue to provide high-quality, research-based professional development and coaching to support implementation of RtI practices at the district and school levels beyond the duration of the project.
- b. The 13 ISBE training modules will continue to be available for face-to-face and online learning beyond the timeframe of the SPDG Project, thereby providing a sustainable source of professional development.
- c. The involvement of IHEs in the Illinois RtI Network and the IHE Partnership will have an impact on preservice curricula so that future teachers, related services personnel, and administrators exit IHE programs with knowledge of and competencies in RtI practices.
- d. The partnerships developed to support these new structures will remain in place. The

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teams within the participating district sites will continue beyond the grant period, which will continually improve services to students. The collaboration of LEAs, ISCs, IHEs, and parents through the Illinois RtI Network will facilitate long-lasting relationships focused on improving student outcomes. Through these collaborative efforts, colleges and universities also will increase their capacity to prepare additional highly qualified personnel with knowledge and skills in RtI.

- e. The partnerships developed between well-trained general and special education personnel will continue to increase the potential of students beyond the duration of the project.

The Illinois SPDG Project offers an opportunity to build a systemic, sustainable infrastructure that connects to other student and personnel reform efforts by providing strategies for integrating general and special education; strengthens partnerships among stakeholders, including parents; and sets in place an effective way of delivering personnel development and supporting and sustaining the level and fidelity of implementation of professional development knowledge and skills.

F. Quality of Management Plan

- 1) *The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing tasks.*

The SPDG Project management plan meets the federal requirements, including provision of sufficient personnel and financial resources through the grant proposal and ongoing daily responsibilities, to produce quality deliverables in a timely manner. As noted in the *Quality of Project Personnel* section, ISBE personnel assigned project responsibilities are Elizabeth Hanselman (project oversight), David Andel (project manager), Kathryn Cox (project director), Dawn Camacho (intra-agency coordination consultant), and Scott Beever (project data

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specialist), Ms. Hanselman will devote 3 percent of her time for Illinois SPDG oversight, the project manager will devote 5 percent of his time to administrative direction for the Illinois SPDG, the project director will devote 70 percent of her time to day-to-day Illinois SPDG Project management, the project intra-agency coordination consultant will devote 3 percent of her time to coordinating and aligning the SPDG activities with the Focused Monitoring System and SSOS, the project data specialist will devote 5 percent of his time to the Illinois SPDG. Also, a support staff person (Pam Corsaut) will devote 5 percent of her time to clerical support.

Other agency staff identified in the *Quality of Project Personnel* section will be involved in coordination of project activities with other programs, initiatives, and projects, including Marica Cullen, Patrick Murphy, and Carol Diedrichson. Each will devote less than 2 percent of time to the project.

Job Responsibilities

The ISBE cross-agency management staff named in this application and the project director will be responsible for overall operation of the SPDG Project and for accomplishing project activities in accordance with the timelines and milestones. The project director will:

- Work closely with other ISBE staff in such divisions as Curriculum and Instruction, Innovation and Improvement, Educator and School Development, and Special Education Services to coordinate and align project activities with other agency programs, projects, and initiatives (e.g., the Illinois Learning Standards; support to low performing schools; personnel preparation, certification, and continuing professional development; focused monitoring).
- Develop, disseminate, and oversee RFPs for the Illinois RtI Network and IHE Partnership subgrants and a Request for Sealed Proposals for the evaluation contract.

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- Develop specifications for and negotiate the PTI subgrant(s).
- Work closely with ISAC and the RtI Stakeholder Group in providing project updates and soliciting stakeholder input to make adjustments in and continually improve the project.
- Provide technical assistance to subgrantees.

The project director will also work other state agencies (DHS, Illinois Board of Higher Education, etc.) and organizations (IAASE, IASA, IPA, IRSS, parent organizations) as needed. Further, the project director will work closely with the project evaluator to ensure that data collected are useful to the project and its participants. The project evaluator's role in determining effectiveness of the grant activities will also link to the project director. As with any other key ISBE personnel, the project director will be responsible for initiating, facilitating, and overseeing other short-term working groups formed to address specific project needs.

Existing ISBE staff will provide clerical support for the project, including completing activities related to preparing for ISAC and RtI Stakeholder Group meetings and follow-up work; processing travel vouchers; completing all work related to the ISBE electronic financial system, including tracking subgrants; and providing other typing, printing, and follow-up activities, as needed. Also, appropriate ISBE staff will handle fiscal activities for the SPDG Project.

Responsibilities, Timelines, and Milestones

Table 11 in the *Quality of Project Design* section delineates all SPDG Project activities, responsibilities, and timelines. Table 12 specifies the expected milestones.

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Table 12. State Improvement Grant Milestones

Activity	Milestones/Project Year	Completion Date
1.1	Finalize and issue RFP for RtI Network, <i>Year 1</i>	10/10
1.1	Award RtI Network subgrant, <i>Year 1</i>	1/11
1.1	Implement RtI Network, <i>Years 2-5</i>	Ongoing
1.2	Recruit and select external coaches, <i>Years 1</i>	4/11
1.2	Expand the number of external coaches, <i>Years 2-4</i>	Annually
1.3	Establish coaches training curriculum, <i>Year 1</i>	4/11
1.3	Deliver professional development and other supports to coaches, <i>Years 1-5</i>	6/11 then ongoing
1.4	Recruit and select participating districts, <i>Year 1</i>	8/11
1.4	Expand the number of participating districts, <i>Years 2-4</i>	Annually
1.5	Deliver professional development to district and school staff, <i>Years 2-5</i>	10/11
2.2	Issue subgrant(s) to PTI center(s) for dissemination of parent materials and delivery of training, <i>Year 1</i>	1/11
2.2	Disseminate parent materials and deliver parent training, <i>Years 1-5</i>	5/11 then ongoing
2.3	Recruit parents in participating districts to serve on district leadership teams, <i>Years 2-5</i>	9/11
3.2	Finalize and issue RFP for IHE Partnership, <i>Year 1</i>	10/10
3.2	Award IHE Partnership subgrant(s), <i>Year 1</i>	2/11
3.3	Deliver training to IHE faculty, <i>Years</i>	Summer 2011 then annually
3.4	Establish IHE teams to review preservice curricula and incorporate RtI content into curricula, <i>Year 1</i>	Spring 2011

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Activity	Milestones/Project Year	Completion Date
3.4 & 3.5	Convene teams and provide technical assistance for review and incorporation process, <i>Years 1-5</i>	5/10 then ongoing
4.1	Issue project evaluation agreement, <i>Year 1</i>	3/11
4.2	Refine and implement data collection structure, <i>Year 1</i>	5/11
4.2	Collect baseline data, <i>Year 2</i>	Fall 2011
4.2	Collect evaluation data at student, school, district, and regional levels, <i>Years 2-5</i>	8/15
4.4	Conduct semiannual data analysis, <i>Years 2-5</i>	Jan. of each year
4.5	Prepare annual performance reports, <i>Years 1-5</i>	Dec. following end of each grant year

2) *Ensuring diversity of perspectives in project operation, including parents, teachers, the business community, various disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, etc.*

Ensuring diverse perspectives is a core guiding assumption of the SPDG Project, and methods for obtaining them are built into all activities at every level. Collaborative partnerships are built into major objectives; occur at local, regional, and state levels; and are generally a precondition for obtaining a subgrant.

Proposal development was also based on ensuring a diversity of perspectives. The current SPDG Project Advisory Committee provided stakeholder input on the focus of the project. This committee represents the required partners, including parents, teachers, district administrators, IHEs, members of the broad education community, and others. ISAC and the RtI Stakeholder Group, which will serve in an advisory capacity under the new SPDG Project, also represent the

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required partners (see Appendix J) and will meet regularly to advise the project director on project activities, thus ensuring input from a wide variety of stakeholders.

Through the partnership required of the Illinois RtI Network, it is expected that a diversity of perspectives will be provided on an ongoing basis from geographically diverse points of view, which will be useful to the continual improvement of the Illinois education system and refinement of various SPDG Project elements.

G. Quality of Project Evaluation

1) The evaluation methods are thorough, feasible, and appropriate to the goals, objectives, and outcomes.

An external evaluator will implement the proposed evaluation plan (see Table 13) annually. Because of the amount allocated for statewide evaluation, ISBE is required to competitively bid the contract for this portion of the evaluation. Eligible applicants will include IHEs and other entities with experience in evaluating projects of a similar nature, scope, and magnitude.

Participating Illinois RtI Network districts and schools will provide data online to the project evaluator. The evaluator will provide aggregate reports to the RtI Network to use for program evaluation and strategic planning. Student, school (building), and district data will be collected by the project coordinator, regional coordinators, external coaches, districts, and schools for analysis and reporting. Additionally, ISBE will provide extant data (e.g., state assessment, EE, and LRE data) to the project evaluator for the purpose of analysis. The evaluator will summarize and analyze project data across all participating regions/districts/ schools

The project evaluator will coordinate and assume responsibility for all project evaluation components, and specifically will be required to:

- Refine existing and/or develop additional project evaluation instruments (existing

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instruments are included in Appendix D). This work will involve collaboration with staff of the Problem Solving and RtI Project at the USF.

- Refine existing and/or develop effective and efficient data reporting mechanisms to be used by the project, aligned with, where appropriate, existing ISBE data collection systems. Emphasis will be placed on accessing student level state assessment data or their equivalent for contextualizing impact data.
- Publish a standardized school district evaluation plan that matches the activities for use by the project.
- Provide data collection and reporting technical assistance to the Illinois RtI Network staff, external coaches, and participating districts and to the IHE Partnership participants.
- Complete annual reports to be reviewed by ISBE, ISAC, and the RtI Stakeholder Group.
- Attend ISAC and RtI Stakeholder Group meetings to provide project evaluation updates.
- Work with Illinois RtI Network staff, participating districts and schools, IHEs, and parents on the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data regarding (a) systematic training and support of external coaches, (b) IHEs' integration of RtI into their curriculum and field placements, and (c) the effects of implementation of the RtI process.

The Illinois RtI Network project coordinator and regional coordinators will be required to:

- Work with the project evaluator and project coordinator on the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data regarding (a) systematic training and support of external coaches, (b) training and coaching services delivered by external coaches, and (c) the effects of implementation of the RtI process.
- Collaborate with the project evaluator to establish the data collection system and the Illinois RtI Network site participants to implement the data collection system.

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- Provide technical assistance to external coaches, and when needed, districts and school sites, on the data collection system.
- Coordinate data collection efforts in the Illinois RtI Network regions and selected nonparticipating network schools in their region for comparison purposes.
- Keep the project evaluator informed of any challenges to the data collection efforts so that technical assistance can be provided.

Staff of the IHEs participating in the IHE Partnership will be required to work with the project evaluator on the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data regarding IHEs' integration of RtI content and competencies into their curriculum and field placements.

Evaluation Plan and Questions

There are four levels of performance resulting from the professional development, technical assistance, and coaching delivered through the project: 1) implementation, 2) fidelity, 3) sustainability, and 4) impact on outcomes. Therefore, evaluation efforts focus on addressing the following questions:

1. *If people are trained, do they implement?*
2. *If people implement, do they implement with fidelity?*
3. *If people implement with fidelity, do they sustain the practice(s)?*
4. *If people sustain the practice(s), what is the impact on student outcomes (school, group, individual)?*

These four evaluation questions serve as the framework for determining the effectiveness of the process being evaluated, as reflected in Table 13.

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Table 13. Evaluation Plan to Assess Project Outcomes

<p><u>Project Goal:</u> Scale up implementation of a coordinated, statewide system of personnel development that will increase the capacity of school systems to establish and utilize a multi-tiered model of scientific, research-based instruction, intervention, and assessment to improve the progress and performance of all students, including those with disabilities.</p>
<p><i><u>Objective 1:</u> Deliver research-based professional development, technical assistance, and coaching to increase the number of general and special education administrators, teachers, and other personnel and parents who understand and implement a multi-tiered system of instruction, intervention and assessment, resulting in improved student performance.</i></p>
<p><u>Evaluation Questions:</u></p> <p>1) <i>If people are trained, do they implement?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what degree is the RtI Network delivering the training and technical assistance to the regional coordinators and external coaches as proposed in the project?• To what degree are the regional coordinators and external coaches providing training and technical assistance to districts and building level staff including internal coaches?• To what degree are strategies/methods that are trained and coached by regional coordinators and external coaches as part of the project actually implemented at the district/building/classroom/student levels? <p>2) <i>If people implement, do they implement with fidelity?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what degree are the training and coaching provided by regional coordinators and external coaches being delivered with fidelity?• To what degree are strategies/methods that are trained and coached by regional coordinators and external coaches as part of the project actually implemented with fidelity at the district/building/classroom/student levels? <p>3) <i>If people implement with fidelity, do they sustain the practice(s)?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what degree are the training and coaching provided by regional coordinators and external coaches being delivered with fidelity <u>over time</u>?• To what degree are strategies/methods that are trained and coached by regional coordinators and external coaches as part of the project actually implemented with fidelity <u>over time</u> at the district/building/classroom/student levels?

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4) *If people sustain the practice(s), what is the impact on student outcomes (school, group, individual)?*

- Do increased knowledge and skills of regional coordinators, external coaches, and building personnel lead to improved school performance, as measured by:
 - State assessment and CBM results in reading and math?
 - Increasing attendance and decreased grade retention and suspension/expulsion rates?
- Do increased knowledge and skills of the regional coordinators and external coaches and building personnel lead to:
 - An increased percentage of students with disabilities placed in the LRE?
 - A reduction in the disproportionality of racial/ethnic minorities and students from low income backgrounds in special education referral and placement rates?
 - An increased percentage of students exiting special education?

Data Sources:

- 1) Training and Technical Assistance (TA) Logs and Data Protocol
 - a. Each regional coordinator and external coach will track the number of training sessions given and the number and type of participants. Participants will complete an ISBE training evaluation form for each training session attended, including an assessment of the degree of alignment with state teaching standards.
 - b. Each regional coordinator and external coach will track the number and types of technical assistance they provide and to whom.
 - c. Using a Data Protocol each external coach will track the number and type of coaching and technical assistance supports they provide to district and building level teams. Using a Data Protocol each district and building level team(s) receiving this coaching and technical assistance supports will complete satisfaction and monitoring surveys regarding the supports they receive.
- 2) The Self Assessment of Problem Solving in Schools (SAPSI)
 - a. The SAPSI monitors treatment integrity during coaching/training and verifies fidelity of implementation. It reflects observable critical components for all aspects of the critical skills/methods taught as part of the project.
 - b. The SAPSI will be completed by each Illinois RtI network school at least once per year.
- 3) Fidelity Checklist

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- a. The Fidelity Checklist is designed to monitor the adherence of implementation of RtI activities and products at the school level. This tool allows external evaluation of the implementation of RtI activities by providing a guideline to product review as a means of triangulating the self-reported implementation data from the SAPSI.
- b. It is intended that the Fidelity Checklist will provide reliable and valid data regarding the implementation of the problem-solving and RtI processes.

4) Student Performance and Progress

- a. CBM data in reading and math will be used to assess individual student reading and math outcomes. As part of the project, all participating elementary schools will be expected to universally screen students using CBM probes at least three times per year. At the middle and high school levels, CBMs will also be used, along with other screening tools appropriate for these grade levels.
- b. All of these data will be extracted from district electronic files to the extent possible (using an Internet-based data management system).
- c. While there are initial correlations between ISAT and CBM data, this project will expand the sampling process for creating Illinois norms by looking at the predictive validity of CBM data on student ISAT data.
- d. All standardized accountability assessments in reading and math (ISAT and PSAE) given by Illinois school districts will be used as student outcome measures at grades 3, 5, 8, and 11. Student level ISAT and PSAE outcome measures will be available in grades 3 through 8 and 11. The percentages of students meeting reading and math *Illinois Learning Standards*, as measured by ISAT and PSAE, will be used to determine project impact at the district, regional, and statewide levels, to the extent possible.

5) School Records

- a. School records for Illinois RtI Network participating schools will be reviewed to determine individual, building, district, regional, and statewide effects of the project based on such variables as attendance, suspension/expulsion, and retention rates.
- b. These data are publicly available via School Report Card files from ISBE.
- c. These data will be analyzed annually for participating schools. To the degree possible, pre/post-measures will be assessed for changes associated with project implementation.
- d. These data will also be disaggregated by at-risk groups (including from low income

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backgrounds), to the extent possible, and included as part of the evaluation.

6) ISBE Child Count Data

These data for participating Illinois RtI Network schools and data from LEA profiles at the district level will be aggregated within regions, and subsequently statewide, to determine the level of LRE for students with disabilities who are receiving special education services.

7) ISBE Report Card Data.

Data from school and district report cards will be reviewed to determine the race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and gender composition of the overall school district population of the participating Illinois RtI Network schools. Building and district records will also be reviewed to determine the race/ethnicity, disability category, gender, and socioeconomic status of students referred for and placed in special education.

Timelines:

- 1) Data collection from Training and T.A. logs will be ongoing and summarized semiannually. The Data Protocol will be completed once per year by the external coaches and building level teams to determine fidelity and sustainability of the technical assistance process.
- 2) Regional coordinators and external coaches will use the SAPSI in fall of Year 1 to determine the baseline status of all project components and then at least annually each spring thereafter to assess change over time.
- 3) In spring of each project year, implementation status will be determined for all project components by using the Fidelity Checklist. This checklist will be completed by regional coordinators and external coaches or their district-level designee using the approved sampling strategy to directly assess the degree to which the project model components have been implemented to determine treatment integrity.
- 4) A baseline will be determined for reading and math and/or the state assessment in Year 1 at appropriate grade levels and then will be collected and summarized annually. Ongoing CBM data in reading and math will be collected and summarized annually.
- 5) Attendance, suspension/expulsion, graduation/drop-out, and retention rates will be collected annually.
- 6) A baseline for LRE placement will be determined during Year 1 and then collected and summarized annually.
- 7) Baseline rates for various racial/ethnic, socioeconomic status, gender, and disability

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subgroups will be collected for referral, placement, and exiting for special education. Data will then be collected and summarized.

Objective 2: Increase the number of parents who participate and their level of participation in the educational decision-making process for their child across district sites.

Evaluation Question:

1) *If people are trained, do they implement?*

- Does the training provided by the PTIs and/or the RtI Network increase parent awareness and understanding of RtI?
- Does the implementation of the skills and methods related to this project lead to increased numbers of parents who participate and their levels of participation in the RtI process?

Data Sources:

- 1) Number of parents participating in training sequences and completed evaluation forms.
- 2) As a part of the Fidelity Checklist, a specific subcomponent addresses the level of parent participation in district or building level training.
- 3) The Parent Participation Survey will be completed at least once per year by parents involved in Tier 3 individual student problem-solving meetings and/or IEP meetings in Illinois RtI Network schools.

Timelines:

- 1) Attendance at training will be assessed throughout the timeline of the training portion of the project.
- 2) During Year 1 and in subsequent years, randomly selected participating schools will be reviewed using the Fidelity Checklist to determine the level of parental involvement in training activities.
- 3) During Year 1, a baseline of parent participation at problem-solving and IEP meetings for demonstration sites will be determined using the Parent Participation Survey. Parent participation rates then will be collected and summarized annually.

Objective 3: Increase the number of IHE undergraduate and graduate educator preparation programs that implement RtI content in their curricula and field placements.

Evaluation Question:

1) *If people are trained, do they implement?*

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- To what degree is the IHE Partnership, in collaboration with the RtI Network, delivering training and technical assistance to IHE faculty as proposed in the project?
- To what degree are higher education preservice training programs incorporating the skills/methods that are part of this project into their curricula?
- To what degree are pre-service field placement sites selected based on high levels of fidelity of implementation of RtI?
- To what degree are highly qualified graduates of pre-service programs employed by districts with high populations of students from low income backgrounds?

Data Sources:

- 1) IHE Checklist: The purpose of this tool is to evaluate the extent to which the IHE curricula include RtI content.
- 2) National Association of State Directors of Special Education IHE Blueprint
- 3) The number of IHEs that have an identified process for selecting field placements that align with the training objectives of this project.
- 4) Reviews of the match for employment of teacher candidate graduates into high needs districts using available data from IHEs and ISBE.

Timeline:

Training attendance will be assessed throughout the project and summarized semiannually.

Objective 4: Refine and implement a comprehensive evaluation process to measure the effectiveness of project activities.

Evaluation Questions:

1. To what degree do research-based professional development, technical assistance, and coaching increase the number of general and special education administrators, teachers, and other personnel and parents who understand and implement a multi-tiered system of instruction, intervention, and assessment, resulting in improved student performance?

Data Sources:

All data sources from the first three objectives will inform the evaluation of this objective.

Timeline:

Evaluation data will be reviewed semiannually (via reports to ISAC and the RtI Stake-holder Group), annually (via the project evaluation and OSEP Performance reports), and at project end.

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2) *Evaluation methods provide for examining effectiveness of project implementation strategies.*

As illustrated in Table 13 above and in the project logic model in Figure 4, project evaluation will be formative and summative, based on a variety of sources and data collection methods.

Evaluation goals will include:

- Provide the RtI Network and participating school districts with well-conceived annual analyses of their progress in order to guide data-based strategic planning at the project, district, and school building levels.
- Provide ISBE with ongoing and timely information about project implementation.
- Assess the degree to which the RtI Network, IHE Partnership, and PTIs have implemented project goals and activities.
- Assess the degree to which coaching is provided with fidelity.
- Assess the degree to which participating districts/schools have accurately implemented the training components so that improved student outcomes will be realized through the coaching provided by regional coordinators, external coaches, and internal coaches.
- To the extent possible, assess project effects on academic and behavioral outcomes for participating students, particularly at-risk students and students with disabilities.
- Assess the degree to which IHEs incorporate RtI content and competencies into their preservice program curricula and field placements.
- Assess the degree to which Illinois develops the capacity to support personnel preparation and professional development and provide coaching and technical assistance in the future expansion of this approach.

3) *The evaluation methods include objective performance measures that are related to the intended project outcomes and will produce quantitative and qualitative data.*

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The information above provides a detailed outline of objective performance measures and evaluation tools (see Appendix D) that directly align with the intended project outcomes and will produce quantitative and qualitative data. Existing ISBE data systems will be used wherever possible for collection of school, district, and state level data. These systems include, but are not limited to, SEDS, which collects data specific to students with disabilities and special education programs (e.g., incidence rates/disproportionality, LRE statistics, graduation/drop-out rates, suspension/expulsion); SIS, through which all Illinois public school students are assigned a unique identification number that is used for all data transmissions to and from the state; and LDS, which is under development and when fully deployed, will provide data to help to track the outcomes of Illinois students as they progress from Pre-K through Postsecondary education, and as they enter the workforce.

4) The evaluation methods will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

As stated previously, the project evaluation will be both formative and summative. The formative components of the evaluation plan will ensure that periodic assessment toward intended outcomes occurs. Data will be collected at the student, school, and district levels to monitor the impact of project activities on student and school performance. Data collection at the student level will allow the school-based teams to regularly review student progress and the effectiveness of instruction, assessment, and interventions. This will ensure that timely adjustments can be made to interventions and instruction to improve student performance.

Data collection at the project level will provide for ongoing evaluation of professional development, coaching, and technical assistance activities so that continual improvements can be made. For example, professional development activities will be evaluated using the ISBE

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standardized form in which the evaluation statements are aligned with the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards. As discussed earlier, the Data Protocol will be refined as needed and used by the statewide project evaluator and used to evaluate technical assistance services from the RtI Network. At the state level, the statewide project evaluator will be required to attend ISAC and RtI Stakeholder Group meetings when the SPDG Project is on the agenda and to communicate regularly with the project director, thereby ensuring that continual improvements can be made to the project.

Data collection at the student and school levels will be streamlined through use of web-based evaluation software. For example, the project evaluator for I-ASPIRE utilized a system called Virtual Information Management of Education Outcomes (VIMEO). VIMEO enables users to track and analyze information related to ISBE statewide projects in order to demonstrate the effects of efforts on outcome data. VIMEO is designed to support students, families, and educators in the application of universal, targeted, and intensive level interventions. VIMEO facilitates a data-driven decision making process and provides a mechanism to improve practice on social, emotional, behavioral, and academic supports. The primary features of VIMEO include data collection and reporting options. This software is accessible at the point of service via website and allows users to capture the data efficiently and reliably.

A system such as VIMEO will serve the function of data collection on all project implementation and school-wide outcome data. Users will be able to enter school-related data, demographic information, and technical assistance information related to project events (e.g., training and meetings). The system will also be able to serve the function of data collection on all individual students. Users will be able to enter individual student data and will have access to project data collection instruments. The system will also contain an input/export feature that

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allows for linkage with external databases (e.g., ISBE, National Center for Educational Statistics), which will limit redundant data-collection efforts. Once data are in the system, they can be integrated with data from other sources and exported out to help make diagnostic, formative, and summative decisions.

Figure 4. Project Logic Model, by Objective

Objective 1	Outputs		Outcomes–Impact		
	Inputs	<i>Activities</i> (What we do)	<i>Participation</i> (Who we reach)	<i>Short</i>	<i>Medium</i>
-RtI Network staff & ext. coaches time & skills -RtI Network partnership members -RtI training curriculum (ISBE modules) -Technology -ASPIRE evaluation tools -ISBE staff -ISAC & RtI Stakeholder Group	-Develop additional training curricula (e.g., coaching framework) -Deliver training (at least 8/yr. per region) & coaching services (onsite at least 2X per month) -Establish district leadership and school teams (130 districts)	-Training participants (by role) -Coaching recipients (by role) -District & school team members (by role)	-Increase in number of training & coaching events & number of people trained (TA & training logs) -Increased knowledge & skills resulting from training & coaching (Trng. Evaluation Form) -Increase in number & quality of coaching resources (at least 130 coaches; Data Protocol to evaluate quality)	-Increased application of knowledge & skills (SAPSI) -Increased levels & fidelity of implementation of trained and coached practices (SAPSI, Fidelity Checklist, observation)	<i>Expected Outcomes (during life of project):</i> -Sustained implementation w/ high fidelity -More accurate special education eligibility decisions -Improved student performance on CBM, discipline, etc. <i>Anticipated Outcomes (perhaps beyond life of project)</i> -Increased number of students in LRE -Decrease in disproportionality -Improved student performance on ISAT & PSAE

Figure 4. Project Logic Model, by Objective

<i>Objective 2</i>	Outputs		Outcomes–Impact			
	<i>Inputs</i>	<i>Activities</i> (What we do)	<i>Participation</i> (Who we reach)	<i>Short</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Long</i>
-PTI staff time & skills -Parent training curricula (ASPIRE & ISBE module) -ASPIRE parent materials -District leadership -RtI Network staff -ISBE staff	-Establish partnerships w/ PEP, Parent Mentors, IL PTA -Refine & deliver training (5/yr) -Refine & disseminate parent RtI materials -Identify parent rep. on district teams -Parents participate in RtI process, particularly Tier 3 &/or IEP meetings	-Parents attending training -Parent members of district leadership teams -Parents members of Tier 3 & IEP meetings	-Increase in number of parent training events & materials disseminated -Increased number of parents trained (PTI training logs) -Parents report increased awareness & understanding of RtI resulting from training (Training Evaluation Form)	-Parents and schools report increased parent participation in educational decision-making process (Parent Survey, Fidelity Checklist, sampling of Tier 3 problem-solving meeting notes, IEPs)		

Figure 4. Project Logic Model, by Objective

Objective 3	Outputs		Outcomes–Impact		
	Inputs	<i>Activities (What we do)</i>	<i>Participation (Who we reach)</i>	<i>Short</i>	<i>Medium</i>
-IHE Partnership faculty time & skills -RtI Network staff -Project evaluator -RtI training curriculum (ISBE modules) & IRIS modules -Technology -ASPIRE IHE Checklist -ISBE staff	-Deliver IHE training events (3/yr + online) -Establish & provide TA to IHE workgrps. (at least 8 IHEs) -Conduct syllabi review -Incorporate RtI content into educator prep programs -Establish/refine process to place grads in low-income LEAs	-IHE training participants (by role) -IHE workgroup members	-Increase in the number of IHE training events & the number of faculty trained (IHE & RtI Network training logs) -Increased faculty knowledge & skills resulting from training (Trng. Evaluation Form)	-Increase in the number of educator prep programs that implement RtI content in coursework and field placements	<i>Anticipated Outcomes (perhaps beyond life of project)</i> -Increase in the supply of educators prepared to implement RtI practices after completing approved courses of study -Increase in the number of highly qualified graduates employed by low-performing districts with high populations of students from low-income backgrounds

Figure 4. Project Logic Model, by Objective

Objective 4	Outputs		Outcomes–Impact		
	<i>Activities (What we do)</i>	<i>Participation (Who we reach)</i>	<i>Short</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Long</i>
Inputs -Project evaluation staff time and skills -RtI Network, PTI, & IHE Partnership staff -ASPIRE evaluation tools -ISBE data systems -ISBE staff -ISAC & RtI Stakeholder Group (for continual improvement)	-Refine and implement project evaluation tools -Provide training on evaluation tools and system -Collect evaluation data -Semiannual data analysis and progress reports -Annual project report to OSEP	-RtI Network staff, external coaches, & district & school teams -IHE Partnership participants -PTI staff	-Project staff, external coaches, participating district personnel, & IHE Partnership workgroups implement project evaluation tools and enter data into evaluation system (all project evaluation tools)	-Accurate formative data and information are available and used to evaluate progress of project activities and to continually improve project implementation (all project evaluation tools and ISBE data sources)	-Summative data provide accurate information on project effectiveness (5-year project evaluation data)