

**Introduction:** Houston Independent School District (Houston ISD) is the largest public school system in Texas and the seventh-largest in the nation, covering 333 square miles within the Greater Houston area. Houston ISD has 283 schools and 29,402 personnel, including 12,287 teachers, 263 Principals, and 438 Assistant Principals/Deans. Houston ISD serves a highly ethnically-, culturally-, linguistically-, and economically-diverse population of 215,627 students, as shown in Table 1. Houston ISD has been identified as a high-need local educational agency (LEA) based on the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2015 Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) for school districts. Residing within the District’s geographic boundaries are 78,939 children, ages 5 to 17 that live below the federal poverty level. The federal poverty level percentage for Houston ISD, at 32.1%, exceeds the average for the state of Texas at 22%. Houston ISD has identified 86 schools that meet the definition of high-need schools, as defined by the U.S. Department of Education and Texas Education Agency (TEA), including Priority and Focus Schools and high-poverty, low-achieving schools. The high-need schools are identified on the attached list in the appendices (Requirement 3: Documentation of High-Need Schools).

<b>Table 1. Demographics for Houston ISD and Texas (2015-2016)</b>									
<b>Communities</b>	<b>Enrolled</b>	<b>AA</b>	<b>A/O</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>ED</b>	<b>SWD</b>	<b>ELL</b>	<b>At-Risk</b>
<b>Houston ISD</b>	215,627	25%	5%	62%	8%	76%	7%	30%	64%
<b>Texas</b>	5,284,252	13%	6%	52%	29%	59%	9%	19%	50%

*Source: Houston ISD, Facts and Figures & PEIMS Report, 2015-2016; TEA, 2015-2016 TAPR Report. AA– African American, H– Hispanic, A/O – Asian/Other, W – White, ED– Economically Disadvantaged, SWD– Students with Disabilities, ELL– English Language Learners.*

**Absolute Priority 1: Human Capital Management System (HCMS)***A description of the existing Houston ISD district-wide Human Capital Management System*

*A Declaration of Beliefs and Visions*, the guiding force for policy and student achievement, has been the District's roadmap to success for more than two decades. This document has guided the District to higher levels of student achievement and financial stability. Houston ISD's student population, reflecting Houston's diversity, is an asset and the District understands that it must ensure that every student, regardless of their culture, ethnicity, language, race, or economic status, has both equal opportunity and equal access to a high-quality education evidenced through results of growth and achievement. That promise is based on the following: (a) Overall student-achievement must be improved so that every student makes at least one year of instructional progress in core educational areas; (b) There can be no achievement gap between socioeconomic groups and/or children of color; (c) Recruitment and retention of effective/highly effective teachers are the keys to enhancing quality of education and increasing student achievement; (d) School autonomy must be carefully monitored, supported, and developed; (e) Meaningful family and community engagement must be increased; (f) The community has a legitimate voice in reform, and (g) Parent and community engagement are critical.

These beliefs shape the vision of what Houston ISD should be—an educational system that:

(1) Empowers schools to customize their programs to meet student needs and to be autonomous and accountable for performance; (2) Offers school choice while ensuring equity of resources; (3) Values and cultivates the knowledge and skills of personnel, especially teachers and principals; and (4) Seeks meaningful engagement with the community in all major decisions.

Houston ISD's Strategic Direction for District reform and improvements, created from the Beliefs and Visions document, drive the decisions that directly impact the performance of its more

than 215,000 students. The Strategic Direction includes Five Core Initiatives: 1) Effective Teachers in Every Classroom; 2) Effective Principals in every School; 3) Rigorous Instructional Standards and Supports; 4) Data-Driven Accountability; and a 5) Culture of Trust through Action. Each of these initiatives supports the framework that will be used to increase student achievement. The components to provide the foundation of reform and support the human capital management system (HCMS) in place in Houston ISD include a performance-based evaluation and compensation system for teachers, principals, and the superintendent designed to help recruit, reward, support, and retain the best and brightest educators for schools.

*Houston ISD's Human Capital Management System* - Houston ISD has several departments within Human Resources to support its more than 29,000 employees. The departments are: (a) **Compensation and Rewards** - Handles salary schedules and compensation. Houston ISD discontinued the former compensation program in order to make improvements to the current human capital management system and to focus on providing sustainable performance-based compensation systems that would support the District's high needs schools; (b) **Human Capital Accountability** - Provides support for performance appraisals and employee relations; (c) **Human Capital Management** - Provides support for new hires, transfers, staffing, resignation, and leaves; (d) **Human Resources Business Services** - Takes care of the business aspects of hiring, such as background checks, fingerprinting, certification, customer service, and human resources information systems; (e) **Leadership Development** - Provides for the development and support for current and aspiring leaders; (f) **Professional Support and Development** - Ensures that continuous learning opportunities, individualized coaching support, video exemplars and effective practices, and an online/blended learning environment are provided for teachers; (g) **Talent Acquisition** - Responsible for employee recruitment and selection, onboarding and organizational

development, as well as substitute teachers; and (h) **Human Resources Information Systems** - Handles reporting and ensures data integrity for business partners.

*Teacher and Leader Recruitment Efforts:* Teachers: Currently, Teacher Recruitment teams attend career fairs at universities in and out of the state of Texas and internationally each year. The focus is on the recruitment of top new talent graduating from college and university teacher prep programs and experienced teachers. The District also has an Alternative Certification Program to provide teacher-interns an opportunity to teach while obtaining their certification. Additionally, the District partners with local universities to offer field observation opportunities in Houston ISD schools and to help university students meet student teaching requirements. Houston ISD holds teacher selection events throughout the school year to provide principals the opportunity to meet and interview candidates from a teacher pool to fill vacancies at their campuses. Additionally, the District will hold specific campus hiring events for strategic staffing at the principal's request if they need extra assistance to staff their school.

School Leaders: Houston ISD has created principal pipelines, a pool for internal and external candidates. The District has created a leadership development framework for those who are ready to take on leadership in Houston ISD. Principal Candidate Development Opportunity (PCDO), Assistant Principal Candidate Development Opportunity (APCDO), and the School Leadership Academy (SLA) are designed for internal candidates. The Principal Pipeline and Assistant Principal Pipeline are designed for external candidates. Principal candidates may find out about job opportunities through District and university job fairs, websites, and social media.

***The HCMS currently includes an Evaluation and Support System for teachers and school leaders that reflects clear and fair measures of performance, based in part on demonstrated improvement in student academic achievement (Absolute Priority 4);***

*Evaluation and Support System for Teachers:* The current Texas Education Code (TEC §21.352) requires school districts to use the state-developed evaluation system or a locally developed system that contains the same components required of the state system. Houston ISD has chosen to develop a teacher appraisal and development process in lieu of the statewide process. As with the state system, Houston ISD created Teacher Appraisal and Development System (TADS) because the previous PDAS did not meet the needs of educators. Houston ISD's locally developed TADS provides regular feedback along with annual teacher evaluation based on student performance data. Houston ISD's rigorous teacher appraisal system provides tools and resources for ensuring excellent teaching.

The TADS system was created to provide actionable, timely feedback that will help teachers to make good and contextual professional development choices to improve their teaching practices. The characteristics of this system include: (a) *Multiple Measures of Performance:* These measures include rubric-based observations; a teacher-directed goal-setting process that allows teachers, in consultation with their campus leadership team or principal, to identify key areas for improvement and track growth toward those goals (referred to as the Goal-Setting and Professional Development Plan); and a measure of student growth at the level of the individual teacher. (b) *Clear, Timely, and Useful Feedback:* A rubric with four performance levels (Highly Effective - 4, Effective - 3, Needs Improvement - 2, and Ineffective – 1) that clearly differentiate practices. The rubric allows for immediate feedback that is built into the document. Teachers can self-assess and look to the practices in the levels above his or her observation score to understand which practices will elevate their performance. (c) *Goal-Setting and Professional Development:* This plan allows teachers to determine their professional growth goals, build a professional development plan to attain those goals, and track the progress of their development over the course of the year based

on both their assessment of their practice within their unique teaching context and the feedback received during the ongoing formative and end-of-year summative conversations with their appraiser. (d) *Student Growth Measure*: A student growth measure at the individual teacher level based on student growth as measured by state assessments (STAAR) and/or based on student learning objectives, portfolios, or district pre- and post-tests.

*Evaluation and Support System for School Leaders*: School Leaders in Houston ISD are evaluated on the School Leader Appraisal Scorecard based on school performance, student performance, and District-wide teacher effectiveness which is focused on improving practices that are linked with student achievement, including: (a) Demonstrating knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (b) Serving as a change agent in their schools; (c) Establishing order and discipline; (d) Conveying clear goals for the school; and (e) Serving as an advocate for the school within the community. Each school is assigned to a School Support Officer whose job is to provide individual coaching and feedback to principals and hold monthly meetings with school leadership. Texas Education Agency has mandated that local education agencies must include student achievement data in the principal evaluations, based in part on students' STAAR scores.

***A data system that links Educators with student academic achievement data;***

To ensure success, the District uses performance management tools integrated into a system of electronic data collection for monitoring and analysis. The Teacher Dashboard is designed to provide teachers the ability to review student performance and other relevant information such as student attendance and at-risk indicators. Principals are able to correlate student performance in their schools with teacher performance in a timely fashion in order to make informed hiring decisions. The Principal Dashboard enables administrators to view in-house school data in any variety of ways – whole school, by grade, by teacher, individual student or

subject, as well as view attendance, discipline, and statewide assessment data. Additionally, principals can use real time data to gauge student engagement, assess school culture, and take necessary steps towards meaningful school improvement issues. The Chief School Officer Dashboard provides school and district level summarizations on key Board Monitoring System metrics for use by the School Office in monitoring schools' performance.

***How the HCMS uses performance information from the Evaluation and Support System***

Houston ISD uses the Teacher Appraisal and Development System (TADS) and the School Leader Scorecard to determine the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders, as well as the retention of effective/highly effective teachers and leaders. These systems also determine the types of professional development needed, as well as whether or not the experience of the teachers and leaders is a good match for the schools. The District determines how much support the teacher or leader should receive before that person is exited from the position. The system is also used to identify those who are ready for promotion and additional leadership roles.

**(a) Evidence of Support**

**(1) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.**

The Houston ISD project will focus on ensuring equity to the participating high-needs schools (as defined in the TSL notice) by providing high quality teachers and leaders to increase academic achievement and close the achievement gap. Houston ISD has created a plan that will provide a substantial compensation for highly effective teachers and school leaders to specifically serve high-need students and campuses. This project will be a collaborative process, involving the needs and voices of all stakeholders.

*The Teacher Appraisal and Development System (TADS)* - A key factor of Houston ISD's human capital strategy is to improve teacher effectiveness by clearly articulating professional expectations formally adopted by the District and providing targeted professional development for teachers. Since TADS was introduced, the proportion of effective and highly effective teachers has increased, while the proportion of needs improvement and ineffective rated core teachers has decreased, although there is room for improvement, especially on high-need campuses (Houston ISD, 2017).

*Standardized curriculum* - The curriculum is aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and to the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). As common standards-based curriculum, this ensures Houston ISD teachers will have access to the resources necessary to plan, teach, and assess instruction and student learning effectively. Teachers use a Scope and Sequence document that provides a brief outline of the standards and a recommended teaching order for a particular course/grade-level.

*Literacy by 3* - Designed to have every student reading at or above grade level by third grade, the initiative provides leveled book rooms at each elementary campus and classroom libraries for every K-3 teacher. Rigorous, ongoing professional development for Literacy by 3 is provided for both teachers and principals.

*Literacy in the Middle* – Houston ISD is expanding the Literacy by 3 program to include middle school students. The Literacy model includes best practices for read-alouds, independent reading, writing, and small-group instruction across all core disciplines for students in grades 6–8. Ultimately, students will be further engaged in their classes while advancing their literacy levels at the same time. Schools will have additional classroom materials and classroom libraries to provide more access to literary resources for students. Middle-school teachers are receiving summer or pre-service training to align strategies and develop proficiencies.

*Video Exemplars* – Video exemplars are produced by different instructional departments to



showcase effective practices that are aligned to the instructional practice rubric to support teaching and learning. *Digital Resources* – Houston ISD provides multiple opportunities for students to use digital resources. Through the Library Services Department, digital resources and online databases are available to all students, teachers, parents, and administrators in Houston ISD. Campus access is available through any district computer; access to these resources outside of Houston ISD campuses requires a user name and password. *The HUB/Power UP* - The districtwide Power UP initiative to transform teaching and learning provided laptops for high school student use in the classroom and at home. As part of Power UP, Houston ISD launched the HUB, a K-12 online platform that is becoming the center of collaboration, personalization, curriculum, instruction, and communication for all Houston ISD staff and students. The HUB is being used by educators and students to give everyone involved in a child’s education the information, digital tools, and resources they need to learn together—both inside and outside the classroom. *District level assessments* – The District offers three levels of assessments that are provided to students. The tests are of different levels: summative (i.e., STAAR), formative (i.e., benchmarks and pre-approved assessments), and online (i.e., TELPAS).

**(2) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project involve the collaboration of appropriate partners for maximizing the effectiveness of project services.**

*Out of District Partnerships:* Houston ISD has several collaborative partnerships outside of the District that will assist with improving teacher pedagogy and success. Partnerships with local universities allow Houston ISD to align teacher education with the requisites of high-need schools, to ensure that teachers receive the knowledge and skills they need to work in these schools.

*Teach Forward Houston Program:* This partnership with University of Houston College of Education targets high school students for teacher pipeline development within four years.

Through this program, the District pays for students' unmet college tuition need and provides program supports and training. Through the grant, the District will be able to expand the program by providing: a) paid summer internships for students after college freshman year, b) incentives for summer work at high-need campuses, c) first acceptance for teachers hired (once the student graduates) at high-need campuses; and d) targeted professional development for first year teachers focused on high-need classrooms. *Bilingual Teaching Cohort:* Houston ISD is the most culturally-diverse district in Texas. This partnership with the University of St. Thomas targets paraprofessional employees who are bilingual to serve specific needs of a growing English language learner (ELL) student population. Through this program, the District will pay for employee tuition and a stipend for successful completion for a larger population of teachers. Additionally, the District will provide cohort supports and certification preparation opportunities. In addition to hiring from within, Houston ISD will search for high quality bilingual and other teachers of color to support the students since teacher diversity is important. Teachers with similar backgrounds to their students can be powerful role models for students, further motivating them (OECD, 2010). Houston ISD also has a strong partnership with the Association of Hispanic School Administrators (A.H.S.A.), a professional organization for employees of Houston ISD and surrounding school districts dedicated to developing and advancing school leaders that can best help make the lives of students better. The Houston Area Alliance of Black School Educators' (HAABSE) primary mission is to enhance the education of all students and to exercise leadership in providing valuable professional services and strategies. This organization is a committed partner with Houston ISD through its efforts and strives to improve significantly the ability of Black educators to promote problem resolution.

Within the District, the project will work in partnership with cross-functional teams in Human Resources, School Leadership, Curriculum and Instruction, schools, and other divisions of the District. A plan of this magnitude requires investment in every level of the organization.

***In-District Partnerships:*** Houston ISD has several departments that will work to assist the District in its efforts to increase student achievement and provide leadership, technical assistance, and serve in essential roles within the scope of the project. The following departments will work collaboratively to provide District-wide technical assistance to the project: (1) *Grants Department* will focus on finding additional grant funds to support the project and to provide general grants management and assistance; (2) *Research and Accountability Department* will assist in accessing data for all formative and summative evaluation reports, as well as the student demographic data; (3) *Accounting, Budgeting, and Procurement Departments* will aid in managing budgets, tracking of expenses, ensuring purchases follow EDGAR laws; (4) *Legal Department* will assist in the development and approval of contracts with all external consultants and vendors; (5) *Information Technology Department* will provide a secure, robust technology infrastructure, to support both learning in the schools, and the rigorous assessment and analysis necessary to meet the District's educational and operational goals; (6) *Curriculum and Development Department* will provide District-wide support and guidance to school administrators, teachers, parents, and students regarding all curriculum information using a rigorous core curriculum based on state guidelines and provide all Houston ISD teachers with access to a powerful professional development network (e.g., continuous learning opportunities, individualized coaching support for teachers, video exemplars and effective practices, literacy routines, online/blended learning environment) that meets their individual needs to support the District's vision of effective teaching and rigorous learning in every classroom; (7) *The College and Career Readiness Department* is committed to

providing higher education access to all Houston ISD students and works closely with campuses and District departments to create and maintain a college-bound culture throughout the District. The department also works with schools to help students to gain knowledge, skill sets, and behaviors needed to compete successfully in the technologically-advanced workplace that the global economy presents. (8) *Family and Community Engagement Department* will provide schools with support, assistance, and professional development for school administrators and teachers to build the capacity, tools, and strategies of school-based staff to effectively engage their students, families, and surrounding communities; (9) *Student Support Services Department* will assist schools by providing support to sustain the social-emotional growth and health and wellness of all students and their families to improve their academic outcomes so that they will graduate from high school on time and are college and career ready; (10) *Communications Department* will use multiple platforms to share information and engage Houston ISD students, staff, parents, and community members, such as through the District's website and social media channels, as well as work with schools to help them create robust, interactive, and informative websites; (11) *Special Education Services Department* will provide supports to students with disabilities, ages three to 21, and their families in gaining college/career readiness and independent living skills through active engagement in grade level curriculum; (12) *Multilingual Programs Department*, through its four major divisions (Title III, Bilingual/English as a Second Language, Migrant Education, and Refugee), will serve all Houston ISD schools by providing expertise, guidance, support, and training necessary to educate English Language Learners and by guiding campus administrators and training teachers so that there are highly effective teachers in all Bilingual/ESL classrooms; (13) *School Choice Department* will oversee the District's efforts to offer students and their families multiple education options, which include neighborhood schools, Magnet programs,

specialty schools such as career academies, early college high schools, and charter schools; (14) *The Schools Office* is responsible for oversight and management of the schools and provides professional support for school leadership; (15) *Human Resources Department* is responsible for administering, supervising, and developing all areas of human resources management in Houston ISD; and (16) *Office of Leadership Development* will lead the District's efforts to develop, recruit, and retain highly effective leaders who increase student achievement for every student.

This project will be led by the Office of Leadership Development. The mission of Houston ISD's Office of Leadership Development is to focus on developing highly effective school leaders who increase student achievement for every student by helping teachers learn what it means to teach in a rigorous manner and how to achieve relevance by changing the nature of curriculum and instruction. The quality of effective campus leadership has a major impact on school culture and equity (Habegger, 2008; Villarreal, 2001), teacher turnover and effectiveness (Beteille, Kalogrides, and Loeb, 2011), and student success (Leithwood et al., 2004), especially at high-need schools (Seashore-Louis et al., 2010).

**(3) The proposed project will integrate with or build on similar or related efforts to improve relevant outcomes using existing funding streams from other programs or resources.**

Houston ISD has a Teacher/School Leader program similar to the one proposed; however, the supports in this program have not been previously implemented in the District at the scale proposed in this project. Currently, schools with teacher leaders provide a partial payment towards a teacher stipend; but the level of support proposed for this program is unprecedented. The teacher leader role will be expanded to include more duties and more money. The existing program supported teachers with roles that defined their leadership. The proposed project will expand to have clearly defined, different roles and different levels, depending on the experience and/or

expertise of the teacher leader. The District currently has teacher mentors. In this project, teacher mentors in the program will have more duties that will directly impact the teacher mentee and the mentorship will expand to up to three years, instead of the traditional one year. The mentors will earn additional money for these additional duties. Also, principal mentoring has existed for first year principals offering mentors for one year. This project will support principals for up to two years and will extend to struggling principals.

Houston ISD's proposed project, entitled Project **Leveraging Effective Academics Districtwide for Equity and Resources for Students (Project LEADERS)**, will revise the District's existing performance-based compensation system (PBCS) model to provide teacher and school leaders with incentives and awards for increasing student achievement, increasing equity, and additional duties. These incentives are designed to award differentiated compensation to instructional staff based on student growth, achievement data, and additional responsibilities. This project will change the previous model by ensuring that teachers are well-trained and supported by teacher leaders and mentors. To be eligible to participate in this program, educators and school leaders must meet all of the eligibility requirements that are applicable to their current position.

**(b) Need for Project**

**(1) The extent to which the proposed project will provide services or otherwise address the needs of students at risk of educational failure.**

Houston ISD's Project **LEADERS** seeks to build local capacity to implement a comprehensive human capital system that integrates performance-based compensation systems to recruit, hire, develop, retain, and reward highly effective teachers and campus-based leaders (i.e., Principals, Assistant Principals, and Deans) to serve and increase the academic achievement of all students at the targeted 86 high-need campuses. A major dimension of the framework is the need

to cultivate a performance culture of high expectations that also values and retains results-oriented employees, while also providing an equitable education to all students. While poverty and its related problems are more likely to exacerbate the educational disadvantages experienced by children (Coley and Baker, 2013), quality teachers are more important to student achievement than other aspects of schooling (RAND, 2012).

As shown in Table 2, the District’s high-needs Priority, Focus, and low-achieving schools rated “Improvement Required” (IR) by TEA, compared to Houston ISD and Texas tend to have the following characteristics: (1) Higher percentages of minority student enrollment; (2) Higher percentages of economically disadvantaged students; and (3) Higher percentages of students at-risk for educational failure. In Texas, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) identifies persistently low-performing School Improvement Program (SIG) schools as Priority schools or Focus schools; for the 2016-2017 academic year, Houston ISD has 48 Focus schools, 22 Priority schools, and 16 low-achieving schools (IR) by TEA, based on their unacceptable performance in meeting required target scores and high-need status, which is an indicator of students at risk for academic failure.

<b>Communities</b>	<b>Enrolled</b>	<b>AA</b>	<b>A/O</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>ED</b>	<b>SWD</b>	<b>ELL</b>	<b>At-Risk</b>
<b>Priority Schools</b>	13,814	63%	1%	35%	1%	88%	10%	18%	71%
<b>Focus Schools</b>	37,280	32%	1%	64%	3%	87%	9%	34%	75%
<b>IR Schools</b>	11,705	49%	1%	49%	1%	86%	11%	29%	72%
<b>Houston ISD</b>	215,627	25%	5%	62%	8%	76%	7%	30%	64%
<b>Texas</b>	5,284,252	13%	6%	52%	29%	59%	9%	19%	50%

*Source: Houston ISD, PEIMS Report, 2015-2016; TEA, 2015-2016 TAPR Report*

As shown in Table 3, the students at the 86 targeted schools tend to have lower levels of academic achievement than their peers in Houston ISD and Texas on the STAAR tests for all grades and core subjects in which the students are tested. The pattern of low academic achievement on the STAAR is present among all student groupings tested; for the 86 schools, there are significant achievement gaps on their STAAR performance for the 2015-2016 school year compared to the District as a whole: (1) There is a 13% gap between all students districtwide and all students at the 86 schools; (2) There is a 15% gap between all students districtwide and all African American students at the 86 schools; (3) There is a 11% gap between all students districtwide and all Hispanic students at the 86 schools; (4) There is a 1% gap between all students districtwide and all White students at the 86 schools; and (5) There is an 14% gap between all students districtwide and all economically disadvantaged students at the 86 schools. Among the 86 schools, the only student group to outperform all students districtwide are the Asian students (i.e., 75% for the Asian students at the 86 schools versus 69% for all students districtwide).

<b>Cohorts</b>	<b>All Students (%)</b>	<b>AA (%)</b>	<b>H (%)</b>	<b>W (%)</b>	<b>A/O (%)</b>	<b>ED (%)</b>
<b>86 Schools</b>	56	54	58	68	75	55
<b>Houston ISD</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Texas</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>67</b>

*Source: TEA, 2015-16 TAPR Report. \*STAAR results show sum of all grades & subjects tested.*

Overall, the cohort of 86 schools tend to have lower levels of achievement on the Reading and Mathematics portions of the STAAR, compared to the District and Texas; proficiency in these subjects are considered strong predictors of future academic success (American Institutes for Research, 2013). For the cohort, the largest achievement gaps on the STAAR tests are found



among all students, African Americans, Hispanics, and economically disadvantaged students at the targeted 86 schools. Among the 18 high schools included in the cohort of 86 targeted schools, the average class of 2015 four-year longitudinal graduation rate at these campuses, at 71%, tends to be lower than Houston ISD (82%) and Texas (89%) and also have a higher dropout rate, at 17%, compared to Houston ISD (11%) and Texas (6.3%) (TEA, 2016).

Houston ISD is having difficulty recruiting, hiring, developing, retaining, and rewarding highly effective and effective teachers at many schools; this is especially the case at the 86 Focus, Priority, and High-Poverty, low-achieving schools. The District recognizes the link between low academic achievement and low high school graduation rates (Ritter, 2015); teacher turnover and ineffectiveness can have a dramatic and adverse effect on students' academic success (Kini & Podolsky, 2016; Ronfeldt et al., 2012). Based on a districtwide analysis, many of Houston ISD's high-need schools have significantly-lower percentages of effective and highly effective teachers.

<b>School Year 2015-2016</b>		<b>Years of Experience (%)</b>				<b>Appraised (%)</b>	
<b>Cohorts</b>	<b>Teachers (#)</b>	<b>Avg.</b>	<b>5 or less</b>	<b>6-to-10</b>	<b>11+</b>	<b>Effective</b>	<b>Highly Effective</b>
Houston ISD	12,287	10	41	19	40	50%	21%
86 Schools	3,885	9	46	18	35	50%	10%

*Source: Houston ISD, 2015-2016 PEIMS Staff Report and 2015-2016 Summative Rating Report*

As shown in Table 4, there is an 11 percentage point gap in the number of effective and highly effective teachers between the 86 targeted schools (60%) and the District (71%). The 86 targeted schools tend to have teachers with fewer years of experience compared to Houston ISD. For the 2015-2016 school year, the 86 targeted schools had a total of 3,885 teachers, with 46% of

the teachers having five years or less of experience, 18% of the teachers having six-to-ten years of experience, and 35% of the teachers having eleven or more years of experience, while only 41% of all Houston ISD teachers have five years of experience or less, 19% of the teachers having six-to-ten years of experience, and 40% of the teachers having eleven or more years of experience.

The 86 targeted schools have significantly higher annual teacher turnover rates and 5-year average turnover rates, compared to Houston ISD as a whole—whether moving to another Houston ISD school or leaving the District. At the end of the 2015-2016 school year, Houston ISD employed 12,287 teachers, including 3,885 teachers at the 86 targeted schools. Although 32% of Houston ISD’s teachers work at the targeted 86 schools, 43% or 1,900 teachers from the targeted schools out of 4,408 District-wide moved from their then-current campus to another Houston ISD school or left the District. Additionally, novice teachers and teachers with one-to-five years of experience also had the highest exit rates from the District (Houston ISD, 2016). For the 2015-2016 school year alone, 52% of all teachers hired or 1,284, were novice teachers and 19% of all teachers hired, or 479, had one-to-five years of experience (Houston ISD, 2016)—overall, this data suggests that less-experienced teachers, with minimal support, never fully-developed their skills and are exiting the District at higher rates than their more experienced colleagues.

Houston ISD is having difficulty in recruiting, hiring, developing, retaining, and rewarding highly effective and effective principals at many schools; each year, the District hires between 30-40 new principals to lead its schools and an even higher number of assistant principals. As of the 2015-2016 school year, Houston ISD has 283 schools with 263 Principals, and 438 Assistant Principals/Deans; there are a few cases where principals are campus leaders at more than one school. In Houston ISD, principals and assistant principals are responsible for the organizational and instructional leadership of their respective schools. The issue of principal turnover rates in

Houston ISD schools was recently raised through a series of community interviews and focus groups (Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates, 2016). An analysis of principal turnover rates in Houston ISD, for 2015-2016, shows the following: (1) All principals districtwide had an average of 3.5 years of experience at their current campus; (2) Priority schools' principals had an average of 1.77 years of experience at their current campus; (3) Focus schools' principals had an average of 1.87 years of experience at their current campus; and (4) High-Poverty schools with the lowest academic ratings had principals with an average of 2.5 years of experience at their current campus.

Based on a districtwide analysis, there are several significant needs that have been identified that contribute to the low academic achievement present in many Houston ISD schools; these include

the following: (1) There is a need to enhance and refine the District's recruiting, hiring, developing, retaining, and rewarding of highly effective and effective teachers and school leaders; (2) There is a need for more highly effective and effective teachers and school leaders to provide rigorous academic offerings for all students, since they are unevenly distributed across schools; and (3) There is a need to provide targeted, sustained professional development (PD) and other supports, in a variety of modalities, to school leaders and teachers, as well as to incentivize them to remain in high-need schools to improve students' academic achievement.

**(2) The extent to which specific gaps or weaknesses have been identified, including the nature and magnitude of those gaps or weaknesses.**

To identify gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities, Houston ISD conducted a district-wide analysis of schools across the District using a variety of data collection methods. For the proposed project, Houston ISD plans to build on its current infrastructure of supports, but notes that many improvements are still needed to address the many challenges and issues that the District's high need, high-poverty schools encounter daily. Although Houston ISD

is seeking to improve challenging areas of performance across the District, there are still opportunities to grow student achievement through the enhancement and refinement of targeted teacher and principal staffing efforts. Although site-based management, at the campus level, allows District schools to make their own campus decisions, many times this means that each campus may differ in the types and breadth of services that they can provide for all students.

Throughout the District, the “highest poverty schools have a significantly lower percentage of high performing teachers as compared to more affluent schools” and there is a “need to provide them with incentives to attract effective teachers and better tools to remove low performers” (Houston ISD, 2017, p. 9). Additionally, the District’s teacher turnover rate for 2015-2016, at 20%, further compounds the challenges of providing an effective teacher in every classroom (TEA, 2016); each year, the District hires approximately 2,000 teachers—and many teacher positions remain unfilled when the school year begins—and 30-40 principals, but their recruiting, hiring, placement, and retention still remains an ongoing challenge to meet districtwide needs.

Currently in Houston ISD, teachers are offered various types of professional development (PD), but they are not receiving consistent support across the District; for instance, on a recent survey of Houston ISD teachers, only 24% reported receiving PD or coaching from an appointed campus-based mentor or Teacher Leader, which was also identified, in the same survey, as the most meaningful type of PD by novice teachers and teachers with up to five-years of experience (Houston ISD, 2016, p.17-18). The survey results also revealed that 57% of teachers without a campus-based mentor or Teacher Leader reached out to other teachers at their respective school to support their instructional practice; among teachers, this indicates strong support for having a mentor and/or Teacher Leader. For the 2016-2017 school year, the 86 targeted schools have low levels of participation in the District’s Teacher Leader program; five out of 22 Priority schools (or

23%), 14 out of 48 Focus schools (or 29%), and seven out of 16 high-poverty, low-achieving (IR) schools (or 44%). By providing meaningful PD, mentoring, career pathways, and opportunities to collaborate with other teachers, teacher effectiveness and staff cohesion will enhance equity and improve student achievement (Almy & Tooley, 2012).

Principal turnover rates at the 86 targeted schools tends to be higher than Houston ISD overall. A 2010 study on principal turnover in Texas found that the average principal tenure was less than five years (Blazer, 2010). Low student achievement and teacher turnover can be improved by better educating school leaders (Kini & Podolsky, 2016), but it takes an average of five years for a highly effective principal to improve the school climate and quality of instruction to improve students' academic achievement (School Leaders Network, 2014).

Although Houston ISD has a tradition of decentralizing decisions to the school level, which is emerging nationally and internationally as a best practice (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2005), the District's current systems do not sufficiently support a consistent standard of excellence in school leadership for all schools. Houston ISD lacks a system to identify high quality principals and assistant principals within the District or externally from across the country. While some principals may do well with little oversight and support from the central office, others do not. There is still a need to ensure that all principals are empowered as instructional leaders and decision-makers with clear expectations. With the right supports and standards, principals are best positioned to improve the quality of instruction within schools and strengthen parent and community engagement (The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

The District has a newly established leadership development program that should enable it to "grow its own" school administrators and to identify, recruit, place, and retain strong or promising school leaders. In Houston ISD, although training and development opportunities have

existed for principals and assistant principals, they have not been uniquely designed to address the leadership needs of leaders who are managing and negotiating all the realities that exist on the District's most vulnerable campuses. The Principal Preparation Program and Leadership Cohort experiences need to be tailored to honor the work and meet the needs of principals and other school leaders working at the most challenging campuses. There is also the need to better develop the principals' and other school leaders' abilities to manage change (i.e., human capital management), promote instructional excellence, and increase equity in all instructional programming that is responsive to the needs of diverse learners, especially at the 86 targeted schools.

There are several significant gaps and weaknesses that have been identified that contribute to low academic achievement present in many Houston ISD schools; these include the following:

- (1) Houston ISD needs to enhance and refine its human capital and compensation systems that will optimize how it manages (a) acquiring strong talent, (b) providing ongoing professional development opportunities, (c) nurturing, rewarding, and challenging high-performing staff, and (d) evaluating staff to inform personnel decisions to create a stronger workforce with the collective capacity and expertise to enable enhanced educational outcomes;
- (2) Increase equity in the allocation of effective teachers and principals, and resources, and student access to challenging academic programs;
- (3) Strengthen recruiting/staffing policies and practices to attract and retain top talent, especially in high-need schools;
- (4) Provide rigorous, aligned, and fair teacher and campus-based leader appraisal systems;
- (5) Provide individualized support and targeted professional development, with the commensurate incentives to encourage staff stability for teachers and campus-based leaders;
- (6) Offer meaningful career pathways and differentiated compensation to retain and leverage effective teachers and campus-based leaders; and
- (7) Provide resources to students that will support their socio-emotional and behavioral growth which will

allow teachers to maximize instructional effectiveness. The proposed project will serve as a catalyst for systemic changes that will positively impact all students.

**(c) Quality of the Project Design**

***(1) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale.***

Houston ISD's proposed project seeks to build local capacity to enhance the District's comprehensive HCMS and integrate performance-based compensation systems (PBCS) to reward highly effective teachers and school leaders to serve and increase the academic achievement of all students at the targeted 86 high-need campuses. The District will conduct meetings from within and outside of the District in order to gain input on how to construct an evaluation and support system for principals. The HCMS will improve how it manages the four inter-related functions of (1) acquiring strong talent, (2) providing ongoing professional development opportunities, (3) nurturing, rewarding, and challenging high-performing staff, and (4) evaluating staff to inform personnel decisions to create a stronger workforce with the collective capacity and expertise to enable enhanced educational outcomes (Myung, Martinez, and Nordstrum, 2013). Project **LEADERS** will enable the District to create and implement a more robust, holistic, and flexible school leader appraisal and development system and improve the current teacher system. This project will provide needed direction to new teachers to support their initial training, allowing them to be nurtured and effective with guidance from an experienced high performing teacher and attract high performing teachers to high-need schools. The six principles that drive this school improvement are around the following framework: (a) Leadership Excellence; (b) Teaching Excellence; (c) Instructional Excellence; (d) School Design; (e) Social and Emotional Learning Support; and (f) Family and Community Empowerment (Daggett, 2014).

Schools in the twenty-first century and beyond require substantially more resources than schools required in years past. They require effective teachers and leaders who can continue to develop human capital. Teacher and school leader PD and leadership focuses should be geared towards improving teaching and learning. Key leaders must also be empowered in their schools to overcome the challenges before them and to be compensated fairly and equitably. In Houston ISD's project, the focus will be on ensuring equity to these high-needs schools by providing high quality teachers and leaders to increase their academic achievement and close the achievement gap. It will be a collaborative process, involving the needs and voices of all stakeholders.

According to a recent report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the importance of developing and supporting school leaders; nurturing a positive and supportive school environment; training, recruiting, and retaining competent teachers; providing effective learning strategies; and engaging parents and communities with high-needs schools for sustainable improvement cannot be overstated. The effects of well-prepared teachers and effective school leaders on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors, such as poverty, language background, and minority status (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Schacter, 2004; Borman and Kimball, 2005, and Waters, Marzano, and McKnulty, 2003). To accomplish this, four key strategies drive this project: (1) Strengthen recruiting and staffing policies and practices; (2) Establish a rigorous and fair appraisal system; (3) Provide effective individualized support and PD; and (4) Offer meaningful career pathways characterized by increased responsibility and pay. Houston ISD's educator evaluation system will provide participating teachers and school leaders with timely, regular, accurate, useful feedback on performance and individualized development that will be used for continuous improvement.



Teachers' efforts are directly linked to student learning (Glasman & Heck, 1992; Hallinger, Bickman & Davis, 1996; Hallinger & Heck, 1998), as is the instructional leadership of a strong principal. Effective classroom learning practices are shaped by strategic instructional leadership, positive school climate, high teacher effectiveness, and supportive family and community engagement. The strategies included in this project, supported by strong theory, are designed to increase student achievement, improve the academic standing of the school, and impact equity. Recruiting teachers who are culturally-responsive and/or providing cultural responsiveness training to teachers can help to increase student success. Identifying the pedagogical practices of teachers (regardless of race) who are successful with students of color, students who live in poverty, or other student characteristics (Cotton, 1991; Delpit, 1995, 2006; Ladson Billings, 1995, 2006, 2009; Li, Nan & Hasan, 2010) can ensure these students from high-need schools receive the type of education that will help them be successful. It is also essential that colleges and universities that partner with the school district be committed to working with the student teachers to help them be successful in a variety of school environments (Diaz, 2004).

Ingersoll and Smith (2004) concluded that mentoring does indeed matter, and that when coupled with other professional development, teachers are less likely to leave the teaching profession and principals are more likely to have success. Several key factors of a successful mentoring program are: a mentor of the same teaching content area, common planning time, regularly scheduled collaboration, and an external teacher network; all of which are included in this project. Research supports the practice of observing model teachers as an effective component of induction programs (Eberhard, et al., 2000; Nielsen, Barry, and Addison, 2007). Through this project, Houston ISD will provide a teacher induction and mentoring process for a period of three years. During this time, professional development will be provided that addresses the unique needs

of a beginning teacher and the vision, mission, climate, culture, and norms of the campus, including classroom management and cultural proficiency (Nielsen, Barry, & Addison, 2007).

To support the development of new or struggling school leaders, the mentor principals chosen to participate in this project should lead schools with similar diverse populations or socioeconomic characteristics and have the expertise and the time to mentor. Professional development for new/struggling principals will include leadership strategies that focus on improving practices that are linked with student achievement and developing teachers. New and struggling school leaders will receive guidance and professional development from their mentor, as well as from the district. School leaders must be prepared to handle issues that are more characteristic of high-need schools such as: student behavior, motivation and engagement; teaching and learning for high-need and/or low performing students; improvement of the physical environment of the school; and cultures of care and achievement (Day et al., 2009). Effective instructional supervision from leaders allows teachers to analyze their own practices and set goals for personal growth (Mielke and Frontier, 2012). The success of school leaders should be tied to the success of the teachers and students.

**(2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

The goals and objectives will be used to measure program success.

**Goal 1: Increase Student Achievement**

**Objective 1.1:** By the end of the project period, the number of effective/highly effective teachers teaching students in high-need schools will increase by 25%, as measured by the baseline year.

**Objective 1.2:** By the end of the project period, the number of effective/highly effective teachers teaching students in mathematics and reading will increase by 25%, as measured by baseline year.

**Objective 1.3:** By the project end, the number of effective/highly effective teachers of students in high-need schools who remain at the school for at least three years will increase by at least 25%.

**Objective 1.4:** By the end of the project period, at least 50% of the highly effective/effective principals in high-need schools will remain at the school for at least four years.

**Objective 1.5:** By the end of each project year, at least 70% of the students of teachers involved in the program will increase their state reading and math test scores by at least 10% as measured by the previous year's scores.

**Objective 1.6:** By the end of each project year, the achievement gap of the project campuses will decrease by at least 3% between lowest achieving student groups and highest achieving student groups in the district; and between high-need and non-high-needs students in the district on reading and math tests taken as measured by most recent state assessments.

## **Goal 2: Improve Human Capital**

**Objective 2.1:** Recruit – By the project end, a comprehensive and effective recruitment system will be expanded to allow for identification of effective/highly effective teachers and principals.

**Objective 2.2:** Hire - By the end of the project period at each participating school, at least 75% of the teaching positions will be staffed by effective or highly effective teachers.

**Objective 2.3:** Retain - By the end of the grant period, participating effective/highly effective teachers will be retained by at least a three times higher rate than less effective teachers.

**Objective 2.4:** Placement – The percentage of effective/highly effective teachers at high-need schools will increase by at least 5% each year, as measured by the previous year's rates.

## **Goal 3: Increase the number of effective and highly effective educators**

**Objective 3.1:** Each year of the project, participating schools will provide at least four opportunities for teacher career pathway roles, based on campus enrollment.

**Objective 3.2:** By the end of each project year, there will be a 30% increase in the percentage of project teachers and school leaders who earn performance-based compensation based on student growth and leadership activities, with at least 90% of the teachers earning performance-based compensation by the end of the project period.

**Objective 3.3:** Houston ISD will provide up to six additional opportunities each year of the project for development and training to strengthen job-related skills and competencies aligned with the teachers'/school leaders' identified areas of focus.

**Objective 3.4:** The number of teachers and principals rated at the highest level who received performance-based compensation and remain in the same high-need school in the District for at least four years will increase by 70%, as measured by the baseline year.

In order to meet the goals and objectives of the project and positively impact academic trends, Houston ISD will: (1) Increase equity in the allocation of effective teachers and principals, resources, and student access to challenging academic programs; (2) Strengthen recruiting/staffing policies and practices to attract and retain top talent, especially in high-need schools; (3) Provide additional supports and wrap-around services to students that will alleviate some of the challenges new and struggling teachers face when teaching students in high-need schools; and (4) Focus recruitment efforts on finding quality teachers inside and outside of the state.

Funding will also be provided for PD for teachers at the high-need schools. The PD that teachers will receive will also be job-embedded and on-going (Elmore, 2002; Kedzior and Fifield, 2004). The professional development will address discipline-specific concepts and skills, student learning (Blank, de las Alas & Smith, 2007; McGill-Franzen et al., 1999), as well as cultural proficiency and classroom management (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Delpit, 2006).

*Institute career advancement opportunities characterized by increased responsibility and pay (Requirement 1). Teachers:* Houston ISD will revise the District's existing PBCS model to provide teachers with incentives and awards. These incentives are designed to award differentiated compensation to instructional staff based on student growth and raising student achievement, TADS data, and additional responsibilities. The District will create a system to better identify experienced, high-achieving teachers and incentivize them to go to or remain on high-need campuses. High-achieving teachers that decide to go to a low performing school to increase student achievement will be eligible for a one-time bonus of [REDACTED] and the opportunity to receive additional bonuses as a career pathway teacher leader. The Career Pathway teacher leaders will serve in a variety of roles, taking on additional duties and responsibilities to support novice teacher growth. Teacher leaders will be eligible for incentives based on the performance of their own students and those in the supported teacher's classroom. The purpose of this plan is to increase the proficiency and capacity of teachers by ensuring that they are well-trained and supported by successful teacher leaders and mentors. The incentives will be provided using metrics to measure student academic progress and state achievement data. To be eligible to participate in the PBCS awards, teachers must have a rating of effective (3) or highly effective (4), tied to the teacher appraisal system (TADS). This will ensure that these teachers have attained success themselves as exemplary teachers. Teachers with a rating of 3 or 4 will be chosen by the principal to be a mentor or teacher leader. Through this project, there will be several layers of the career pathway. The first layer will be that of the mentor teacher. A survey, completed by the district, identified the mentor as the most meaningful type of PD by novice teachers and teachers with up to five-years of experience (Houston ISD, 2016). It also revealed that 57% of teachers without a campus-based mentor or teacher leader reached out to other teachers at their respective schools to support their

instructional practice. The mentor will be eligible to receive up to [REDACTED]. They will receive [REDACTED] for their service and up to [REDACTED] for the teacher(s) they assist if the new teacher attains success. Success will be measured by state assessments and/or district approved assessments. The next layers of support will be in the form of teacher leaders. The following chart shows how they will be paid for teacher success, as well as a description of their role and the qualification required.

<b>Table 5. Teacher Leader Roles, Incentives, and Qualifications for High-Need Schools</b>			
<b>Teacher Leader</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Incentive</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>
Career Pathway Instructional Excellence Coach	Guides teacher success at the school level; leadership role; assists all teachers	[REDACTED] + [REDACTED] for school growth	Maintains a highest rating (currently 4) on their personal evaluation
Career Pathway Instructional Coach	Guides assigned teacher(s)' success. Assigned to work with specific teachers.	[REDACTED] + up to [REDACTED] for teachers' success	Maintains a high rating (currently 3 of 4) on their personal evaluation
Career Pathway Teacher Specialist	Supports the entire school in a specialized area, not assigned to one teacher	[REDACTED] base for teacher support	Maintains a high rating (currently 3 of 4) on their personal evaluation
Career Pathway Teacher Specialist <b>Plus</b>	Supports the entire school in a specialized area and assigned to work with specific teacher(s)	[REDACTED] base for school-wide support + [REDACTED] for teacher success	Maintains a high rating (currently 3 of 4) on their personal evaluation

*School Leaders:* Ensuring that our most vulnerable schools are led by exceptional leadership talent begins with a comprehensive recruitment and retention plan. This project will allow Houston ISD to support principals at each stage of their employment life-cycle: recruitment, onboarding, development, and retention. The Human Resources Department will build and support recruitment systems and structures that will attract talented principals and allow them to thrive, while being supported in their role.

After the teacher, the principal is the key to increasing student achievement and transforming low-performing, high-need schools (Augustine et al., 2009). The Houston ISD Schools Office will work with principals to make policy changes and develop strategies that support low performing high-need schools by providing good working conditions, systemic support, and incentives to encourage the selection of high quality teachers and school leaders. They will assist them in creating a school culture that is conducive to student growth, including scheduling and flexibility for teacher preparation and training. Surveys from teachers, students, and the community will be used to identify areas for development.

Houston ISD will also revise the District's existing PBCS model to provide school leaders with incentives and awards. These incentives are designed to award differentiated compensation to school leaders based on student growth, achievement data, and support to teachers. The District will create a system to better identify experienced, high performing school leaders and incentivize them to go to or remain on high-need campuses. To this end, Houston ISD will reassign high-achieving principals to low performing, high-needs schools in order to improve student outcomes. High achieving school leaders who decide to go to a low performing school to increase teacher pedagogy and student achievement will be eligible for a one-time bonus of up to [REDACTED] and the opportunity to receive an additional bonus each year in the amount of [REDACTED] for school success.

The school leader mentor will be eligible to receive up to [REDACTED] per year, plus an additional [REDACTED] each year for the success of their mentee principal(s) and maintaining their own success.

The purpose of this plan is to increase the proficiency and capacity of school leaders by ensuring that they are mentored, well-trained, and supported by successful leaders. At the campus level, principals at the low-performing high need campuses will have an opportunity to receive \$ [REDACTED] for several measures, including student and teacher success. If these principals effectively turn-around their former low-performing high need campus, they will have an opportunity to become mentor principals and receive those bonuses.

***Develop an Evaluation and Support System for School Leaders (Requirement 1).*** Houston ISD is committed to developing an evaluation and support system for school leaders that reflects clear and fair measures of school leader performance based, in part, on increased student academic achievement/growth, aligned to the Texas Principal Standards. This evaluation system will also provide ongoing, differentiated, targeted, and personalized support and feedback for improvement, including professional development opportunities designed to increase effectiveness (***Absolute Priority 1***). As stated previously, the School Leader Appraisal Scorecard (Scorecard) that currently evaluates school leaders includes student performance measures but does not provide a strong support system in the form of PD for school leaders. The professional development school leaders will receive through this project will be job-embedded and consist of such topics as climate building and leadership skills, including distributive leadership for other leaders in the school to help handle leadership responsibilities to better balance the load of demands. The evaluation and support system will focus on (a) continuous growth and improvement; (b) guided self-reflection; (c) informed professional development; and (d) improving leadership qualities.



*Additional supports for schools* – Wraparound services are individualized mental health and health services provided in the school designed to meet the specific needs of the child and to help students with emotional or behavioral problems such as poor anger management or trouble getting along with other children. Wraparound services are comprehensive and address multiple life domains across home, school, and community, including family life, basic needs, safety, and social, emotional, educational, spiritual, and cultural needs. Wraparound services in high-need schools are important components of support for the new or struggling teachers because they will assist with student behavior and train the teachers on strategies to identify and if possible, address the needs of the students they teach (Eber, 2005).

**(3) *Evaluation, monitoring, and reporting grant activities to the public.*** Houston ISD will contract with an external evaluator who will work in partnership with the Houston ISD Research and Accountability Department in the implementation of the project evaluation. The evaluator, Project Director, and Program Manager will implement the evaluation plan by applying qualitative and quantitative methods that measure the impact of the program on meeting the stated goals and objectives. In order to monitor the efficacy of the program, classroom and campus observations, site visits, surveys, budgets, and focus groups, as appropriate, will be used to create formative and summative evaluations to modify practices and reinforce expectations. Houston ISD uses a Board Monitoring System to establish a schedule of detailed reporting to the board and community on the District's efforts and effective use of funding to meet the District's facilities standards, and evaluate all major programs, grants, and services on a regular basis. The system requires more in-depth reporting and analysis than is required by state law. The Board Monitoring System was designed to give the board, District administrators, and the public a data-driven accountability system that reports regularly, and it has become a key springboard for steering District policy,

priorities, and initiatives. The progress toward meeting project goals and objectives will be reported annually to the USDE, the community, and the superintendent and board of education through documented reports and forums, as requested.

*(d) Quality of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.*

The responsibility for implementation of the proposed plan is inter-departmental and multi-tiered to guarantee support from all levels of District management including, but not limited to, Talent Acquisition, Professional Support and Development, Elementary/Secondary Curriculum and Instruction, Office of School Leadership, Research and Accountability, Grants, Budgeting, Accounting, and School Offices is integrated into well-established processes and procedures currently practiced. The project director and program manager will provide direct oversight to the program to ensure that the professional development and services that are a part of Project **LEADERS** are of high quality, and the components of this project are completed as directed by the grant, on time and within budget. This integration will enable the District to leverage grant funds to be used specifically to build a strong foundation for career pathways and for recruiting effective leaders and classroom teachers on vulnerable campuses.

The Proposed Project Director and Key Personnel are qualified to carry out their responsibilities as indicated in their biographies below and their attached resumes.

*Dr. Dawn Randle* will serve as Project Director. As Leadership Development Officer, Dr. Randle focuses on developing highly effective leaders who increase student achievement for every student. This includes leading a team focused on support and development of Houston ISD's teacher leaders, professional development designers, online learning, campus-based mentors, and

teacher support. As Project Director, Dr. Randle will be responsible for coordinating and collaborating with district departments and external partners who impact the implementation of the grant, and ensuring that the budget and associated expenditures accurately reflect the approved budget awarded. The Project Director will devote 30% of her time, in-kind, to the oversight to the project. The Project Director will also oversee the recruitment, support, and retention of teachers/principal leaders aligned with the goals of Project **LEADERS**.

*Ms. Sandy Gaw*, Assistant Superintendent- New Teacher Development, is responsible for oversight of the Career Pathways (mentor and teacher leader programs) in the district. Ms. Gaw will devote 50% of her time, in-kind, to the project. *Ms. Gail McGee*, Senior Manager - New Teacher & Teacher Leader Support, supports, develops, and oversees teacher development. Ms. McGee will devote 50% of her time, in-kind, to the project. *Dr. Josephine Rice*, Assistant Superintendent - Leadership Development will oversee the professional development of new principals and assistant principals being mentored by retired principals. Dr. Rice will devote 30% of her time, in-kind, to the project. *Dr. Shannon Verrett* and *Dr. Samuel Maldonado* are Senior Managers for Leadership Development. They will each devote 30% of their time to the project.

The principals of the project schools are dedicated to ensuring that this project is successful and will dedicate 20% of their time, in-kind, to the project. Each principal has pledged support of the project by submitting an Intent to Apply form to participate in the project. Principals will provide oversight and campus leadership to the teachers in order to ensure that the instruction is effectively addressing student needs. Each school can have at least four Teacher Leaders.

A full-time Program Manager will be hired with grant funds. The Program Manager will be responsible for the planning and implementation, reporting, financial monitoring and accountability of the grant in collaboration with other District departments participating in the

project. This position requires at least a Bachelor's Degree and three years of experience as a classroom teacher. This person will dedicate 100% of their time to the oversight of the project.

In addition to the District-level departments that are supporting the project, Houston ISD will provide technical assistance through Central Office Administration; other District level supports can be found in the following departments: (a) Grants Department, which provides assistance in general grant management and technical assistance in the completion and filing of progress reports and amendments; (b) Procurement Services Department is responsible for facilitating the processes governed by state and federal law to ensure best practices, and an equally competitive environment for the purchase of all goods and services; and (c) Accounting and Budgeting Departments, which provides assistance in managing budgets, tracking of expenses, purchases, and completion of financial reports as required by the grant.

An External Evaluator will be hired to coordinate and implement an evaluation plan that effectively measures the success of the program to reach the stated goals and objectives. The evaluator's qualifications, relevant training, and experience as an independent evaluator will ensure that the project's evaluation is prudently conducted. This person will also provide leadership in the collection, analysis, and reporting of all pertinent data to facilitate on-going refinements of the project. Dr. Venita R. Holmes, Manager, Department of Research and Accountability, will serve as the contact for the evaluation. This department will provide support as needed as it relates to student, teacher, and campus performance results. The department has access to and experience in reporting student performance data on both state and national standardized assessments and District formative assessments as well as other outcome measures as needed for grant reporting purposes.

The timeline below identifies activities, responsibilities, and milestones of the project.

<i>Timeline of Major Grant Activities Years 1-5 (Oct. 2017 to Sept. 2022)</i>			
<i>Major Activities</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Benchmarks/Milestones</i>
Submit awarded grant for District Board of Education acceptance	Oct. 2017	Grants Department Manager	Approved project available to plan for implementation
Hire qualified Program Manager and other project staff	Dec. 2017	Project Director, Human Resources	Position vacancy filled
Complete contracts for external evaluator and service providers	Dec. 2017 – Sept. 2022	Project Director, Program Manager	Contracts executed; project activities are completed on time and within budget
Meet with participating departments, campus and District administrators	Jan. 2018- ongoing	Project Director, Program Manager	Department and campus responsibilities are acknowledged by agenda and sign in sheet of meeting attendees. Meet at least quarterly.
Purchase supplies and materials for program participants	Jan. 2018- ongoing	Program Manager, Campus designee	Departments and schools prepared to provide services and implement major activities
Recruit Principals, Assistant Principals, and Deans, to work at high-need campuses	Jan. 2018 - May 2022	Project Director, Program Manager, Principals	Principals and other leadership roles hired and assigned to available high-need schools

<i>Timeline of Major Grant Activities Years 1-5 (Oct. 2017 to Sept. 2022)</i>			
<i>Major Activities</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Benchmarks/Milestones</i>
Recruit Principals to serve as Principal Mentors for new principals on high-need campuses	Jan. 2018 - May 2022	Project Director, Program Manager, Principals	Experienced, high performing principals assigned as mentors to principals at high-need schools
Recruit Teacher Leaders, Teacher Mentors	Jan. 2018 - May 2022	Project Director, Program Manager, Principals	Teacher roles identified and paired at high-need schools
Develop topics, schedule, and provide professional development to participating teacher leaders, teachers, and principals, etc.	Jan. 2018 – Sept. 2022	Program Manager, Service Providers, Area Induction Specialists	Teachers begin infusing educational and other strategies that are culturally responsive across the curriculum
Meet with evaluator to develop evaluation plan	Feb. 2018-ongoing	Project Director, Program Manager, Research Department	Written plan to evaluate program components; final reports submitted to funder.

<i>Timeline of Major Grant Activities Years 1-5 (Oct. 2017 to Sept. 2022)</i>			
<i>Major Activities</i>	<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Benchmarks/Milestones</i>
Quarterly meetings with key stakeholders	Aug. 2018- Sept. 2022	Project Director, Program Manager, Principals, Evaluator	Project review determines if changes are needed to the program
Survey program participants (teachers, teacher leaders, students, administrators)	Aug. 2018 – ongoing	Project Director, Program Manager, Program Participants	Evidence of survey results shared with district leadership and participating departments
Final report is submitted to the funding agency	Oct. 2022	Project Director, Program Manager, Evaluator	Project completed on time and within budget; report completed

**(e) Adequacy of resources****(1) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends,**

Houston ISD proposes to implement a project of significant complexity that will directly affect teachers and school leaders each year of the performance period of the grant. Houston ISD is fully committed to the continuation of all program activities beyond the period of the grant. All District staff and campus administrators will actively work to meet the goals and objectives of the project to impact a lasting change in the systems developed under the grant. An investment will be made to seek out other sources to fully continue the program in subsequent years. The District has committed to allocating funds to this project, as indicated in the budget, and has also committed to find funding through foundations, grants, and other resources to support this new direction in the attempt to transform its low-performing high-need schools into schools of choice where students feel safe, valued, and are taught by effective and highly effective teachers.

**(2) The potential for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the on-going program of the agency of organization at the end of the Federal funding.**

The staff development and teacher and principal mentors created through the proposed project will impact the student population of the district for generations to come. The funds requested will be used to support a design and professional development for teachers and school leaders, to increase capacity to attract and sustain highly effective teachers and school leaders, and to develop career pathways that will allow teachers to become effective leaders on their campuses. Project **LEADERS**' funding will be matched with Houston ISD general fund dollars to meet the required 50% match. This will allow the District to improve the education for all students. Houston ISD's partnership with many organizations in the Houston area has laid the groundwork for the district to build and create an equitable college and career readiness culture throughout the district.