

Project Title: Expanding School Readiness to Rural States with Poor Preschool Access: The UPSTART Great Plains TASK Force: **T**aking **A**ll to **S**uccess in **K**indergarten

Type of Grant Requested: EIR Expansion (Rural Applicant)

Absolute Priorities: 1, 2

Invitational Priorities: 1, 2

Total number of students to be served in the project: 3,000

Grade levels: pre-K

Definition of high-needs students: Rural pre-K constitutes a “high-need” population that, like federal support for children with special needs and those from low-income backgrounds, demands national attention (Smith, Patterson, & Doggett, 2008).

Brief project Description: This project forms the UPSTART Great Plains TASK Force, a consortium of local education agencies, state education agencies, and nonprofit leaders dedicated to **T**aking **A**ll to **S**uccess in **K**indergarten across five contiguous rural states: Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota, and North Dakota. The project provides a capacity building framework to implement UPSTART, an innovative home-based early literacy learning model that combines highly individualized software and a successful support model that forms a partnership with parents. Strong evidence shows that UPSTART drives significant gains in school readiness in rural populations, where access to center-based preschools is limited.

Project objectives and outcomes: Objectives include organizing the TASK Force; building capacity of rural district leaders to support early education initiatives; implementing UPSTART to serve 3,000 rural students to improve school readiness; conducting an external, rigorous evaluation; disseminating project findings; and conducting state outreach and advocacy to expand and scale UPSTART to develop school readiness in rural areas nationwide.

Partnering Organizations: AASA (The School Superintendents Association); Rural School and Community Trust; National Rural Education Association; Technology & Innovation in Education; 4 SEAs (MT, WY, ID, SD); 135 LEAs (109 confirmed Rural).