Leadership for Ector's Accelerated Performance (LEAP)

Table of Contents

Leadership for Ector's Accelerated Performance (LEAP) addresses Absolute Priority 1 (Human Capital Management Systems and Performance-Based Compensation Systems), Absolute Priority 2 (High-Need Schools), Competitive Preference Priority 1 (Promoting Equity in Student Access), and Competitive Preference Priority 2 (Supporting a Diverse Educator Workforce).

This initiative is a partnership of the Ector County Independent School District (ECISD: Odessa, TX) and the Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC, the applicant). ECISD, located in West Texas, serves more than 33,500 students in 41 schools.

CTAC is a national leader in human capital management reform and performance-based compensation. CTAC's capacity building and evaluation services supported the Denver Public Schools in launching the ground-breaking Pro-Comp Initiative, which catalyzed the enactment of the federal Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) program. For more than 22 years, CTAC has worked with school districts and charter networks to develop, implement, and evaluate TIF and Teacher and School Leader (TSL) initiatives that strengthen the capacity of educators, increase student achievement in high-need schools, and create greater equity in district practices and results.

A. Need for Project

A.1. Identify Gaps and Weaknesses

ECISD is a district on the rise. The Texas Education Agency, in 2018, gave the district an overall score of 67, and a rating of D. In 2019, under new leadership, the district took strategic measures toward improvement. By 2021-22 (the most recent year for which there are data), the district's overall score had grown to 82, and it received a rating of B.

ECISD is a diverse, high-need school district. Thirty-three of ECISD's 41 schools (80%) are high-need schools. Students from low-income families and diverse students comprise the majority of ECISD enrollment and are continuing to grow. Specifically, 78.9% of students are Hispanic, 22.5% are English Learners, and 62.1% are considered economically disadvantaged.

Table 1. Student Demographics in ECISD

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Total Number of Students	33,159	33,813	31,874	31,807
Ethnicity				
African American	3.9%	3.9%	3.9%	3.7%
Asian	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%	0.9%
Hispanic	76.3%	77.2%	78.0%	78.9%
White	17.3%	16.4%	15.3%	14.7%
Others	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.9%
Economically Disadvantaged*	56.4%	55.1%	55.3%	62.1%
English Learner	18.6%	20.6%	21.2%	22.5%
Special Education	8.6%	9.1%	9.7%	9.9%

Note. *As measured by the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch percentages.

LEAP focuses on 10 schools that are high-need and currently underperforming, but with strong potential for growth. There are 9,739 students, 556 teachers, and 10 principals at these schools.[1] Moreover, LEAP's human capital management system changes extend to all 33,500 students, 1,875 teachers, and 41 principals.

Table 2. LEAP High-Need Schools in ECISD

School Name	Enrollment	% FRPL	% Black	% Hispanic	% White	% Others
Blackshear ES	602	80.9	9.0	82.6	4.7	3.7
Bonham MS	970	64.5	6.0	78.7	12.9	2.4
Bowie MS	1,013	64.5	3.2	83.4	10.8	2.6
Dowling ES	377	82.0	5.8	80.4	12.5	1.3

---

[1] Throughout this project narrative, references to "high-need schools" with respect to project objectives, outcomes, and implementation refers to the 10 LEAP high-need schools identified in Table 2.

School Name	Enrollment	% FRPL	% Black	% Hispanic	% White	% Others
Downing ES	833	62.4	0.5	94.4	4.1	1.0
Goliad ES	572	81.6	2.6	76.0	17.1	4.3
Odessa HS	3,914	65.4	2.4	88.5	7.6	1.5
Sam Houston ES	357	77.3	5.9	82.1	8.4	3.6
San Jacinto ES	473	82.5	5.1	84.8	8.7	1.4
West ES	652	96.5	1.1	84.8	13.3	0.8
All ECISD schools	31,807	62.1	3.7	78.9	14.7	2.8

ECISD is improving student academic growth. ECISD has moved to rapidly recover learning following the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020-21, the first year of testing following the pandemic, the percent of students who met or exceeded standards was 24.3% in math and 29.5% in English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR). ECISD significantly grew student learning in 2021-22. Scores improved to 30.1% in math. Moreover, in ELAR, scores rose to 38.1%—exceeding the pre-pandemic performance of 33.7%.

Despite this promising growth, ECISD continues to perform below the state average. Further, in comparison to white students, Black and Hispanic students underperform in both ELAR and math. English Learner performance has consistently been below the overall achievement in the district. The achievement levels of ECISD's Hispanic students—the largest student population in the district—are lower than their peers in Texas.

Table 3 displays the most recent State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) performance for LEAP's 10 high-need schools.

Table 3. Math and Science Achievement, Percent Met or Exceeded Standards, 2021-22, State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR)

School Name	High-Need	% Black		% Hispanic		% White		% All	
		Math	ELAR	Math	ELAR	Math	ELAR	Math	ELAR
Blackshear ES	Y	14	21	26	31	31	44	25	31
Bonham MS	Y	18	26	25	28	30	37	26	29
Bowie MS	Y	17	27	24	32	28	34	24	32
Dowling ES	Y	17	17	21	33	42	42	24	34
Downing ES	Y	…	…	25	26	28	33	25	26
Goliad ES	Y	13	25	25	31	18	29	24	31
Odessa HS	Y	13	20	18	21	21	33	18	22
Sam Houston ES	Y	22	22	26	32	25	13	26	31
San Jacinto ES	Y	46	46	49	54	59	59	49	54
West ES	Y	…	…	28	19	23	14	28	19
All ECISD schools	N/A	19	33	29	36	37	49	30	38
Texas Overall	N/A	25	40	34	44	54	67	40	52

Note. "…" means that the number of students is too small to report.

ECISD needs to improve the human capital management system. This pattern of underperformance reveals gaps in ECISD's human capital management system (HCMS). The gaps are in three areas: developing and retaining talent, aligning incentives to instructional priorities and high-need schools, and building and expanding a diverse workforce.

Gap 1: Developing and Retaining Talent

ECISD needs to rapidly develop the expertise of its novice teachers. In 2021-22, nearly 40% of ECISD teachers had 0-5 years of experience. At the 10 LEAP schools, the percentage of teachers with 0-2 years of experiences ranges from 22%-45%. Teacher effectiveness is positively

associated with years of experience, with more experienced teachers producing both high student achievement and improvements in student behaviors (Ladd & Lucy, 2016; Kini & Podolsky, 2016).

Diverse students need teachers with high levels of ELAR and math instructional skills. Teacher effectiveness contributes greatly to student academic outcomes (Opper, 2019). In 2021-22, in ECISD the average score on the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) was 3.5 on a 5.0 scale. For LEAP schools, this average was lower at 3.3.

Moreover, on average, teachers in ECISD score lowest in the dimensions of Differentiation (2.4) and Monitor and Adjust (2.5). These dimensions look at whether teachers can differentiate instruction to diverse student needs and whether they can use student data to make adjustments to lessons. These T-TESS findings highlight a critical need for teachers to strengthen instructional skills that are necessary to reach all students.

High-need, low-performing schools need a deep pool of instructional leaders to strengthen teachers' impact on student achievement. Principals are essential to addressing the learning needs of students. Principals are key to building a school climate in which teachers and students are supported and academic improvement efforts can rest (Grissom et al., 2021). However, principals alone cannot succeed in providing instructional leadership at the schools. Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) are an evidence-based approach that supports principals to broaden and deepen instructional leadership capacity within schools (Klar, 2013; Stosich, 2020). Yet, ECISD does not currently have a formalized structure that develops and provides this capacity.

Response to Gap 1. LEAP establishes a three-year induction program to provide novice teachers with instructionally focused professional development to rapidly develop their skills. LEAP also strengthens principals' knowledge of ELAR and math content and standards. It improves their instructional leadership. It strengthens the ability of principals to implement the teacher evaluation system with fidelity. Further, LEAP establishes Acceleration ILTs (A-ILTs) to broaden the instructional leadership capacity of the schools and provide ongoing coaching and support to ELAR and math teachers.

Gap 2: Aligning Incentives to Instructional Priorities

ECISD needs to recognize and reward effective educators and student achievement. Developing and rewarding instructional improvement and instructional leadership are linked to stronger student achievement and growth (Gates et al., 2019; Hamilton et al., 2012; Slotnik et al., 2004; Slotnik et al., 2013; McRobbie et al., 2016). ECISD needs a performance-based compensation system that recognizes and rewards effective educators who teach in high-need schools and improve student ELAR and math achievement.

ECISD needs to attract and retain effective teachers and principals at its high-need, low-performing schools. In 2021-22, the district had a teacher turnover rate of 22%, higher than the state average. Lowering turnover is critical to school success. Students who experience high teacher turnover score lower in both ELAR and math (Ronfeldt et al, 2013). Moreover, principal turnover is detrimental to overall school performance, resulting in lower teacher retention and lower student achievement, particularly in high-need schools (Beteille et al., 2012; Miller, 2013). Research indicates performance bonuses are associated with increased principal satisfaction and retention (Chiang et al., 2015; Wellington et al., 2016).

Response to Gap 2. LEAP establishes and aligns performance-based compensation to improved ELAR and math instruction, instructional leadership, and student results at under-performing schools. It strengthens the HCMS by aligning evaluation, professional development, career pathways, and incentives. LEAP provides a recruitment program to incentivize effective principals to move to high-need schools. Further, LEAP strengthens the recruitment, development, and retention of highly effective educators at underperforming schools and underscores the district's commitment to rapid improvement.

Gap 3: Building and Expanding a Diverse Workforce

ECISD needs a more diverse teacher workforce. The district is diversifying its workforce. Currently, ECISD's teaching force is 40% Hispanic and the principal force is 42% Hispanic. However, these percentages do not match the composition of the student body (79% Hispanic).

This is important because the outcomes of diverse students improve when they are taught by a same-race teacher (Dee, 2004).

ECISD needs to prepare all educators to provide culturally responsive instruction and instructional leadership. ECISD further recognizes that all teachers, regardless of race, must be prepared to teach their diverse student body with research-based, instructional strategies. Simply put, ECISD needs to develop the skills of all teachers and principals to deliver culturally responsive instruction and instructional leadership as a core part of the effort to increase student achievement.

ECISD needs to advance the preparation of effective, diverse educators to take on teacher leadership positions. While the student population is nearly 80% Hispanic, Assistant Principals in ECISD are 35% Hispanic and Principals are 42% Hispanic. Having a diverse principal is associated with improved academic performance for diverse students (Pitts, 2007). ECISD therefore needs a pipeline to help skilled, diverse teachers enter teacher leadership positions (a critically needed stepping stone for school leadership positions).

Response to Gap 3. LEAP implements targeted recruitment strategies for diverse teachers in partnership with six Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). LEAP provides training for teachers, principals, and A-ILTS on reaching diverse learners with high-quality instruction. LEAP also creates an Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy that identifies and prepares effective, diverse teachers to become instructional leaders at the schools.

A.2. Build on Related Efforts

LEAP integrates with and builds on the following foundational efforts in ECISD.

ECISD expands recruitment efforts. During a four-year period from 2019 to 2023, *ECISD lowered its teacher vacancy rate from 18% to 1%*—the lowest ever in the district. ECISD took several creative measures to lower vacancies including strategically using their compensation plan to respond to market data on teacher pay. ECISD is now one of the highest paying districts in the state for first year teachers.

Additionally, ECISD began implementing several grow-your-own initiatives. For example, in 2018-19, ECISD established the _Odessa Pathway to Teaching_, a district operated educator preparation program. *ECISD is one of only three public school districts in Texas that is authorized to operate an alternative certification program for teachers.* In 2021-22, there are 50 candidates enrolled in the program, and 60% of candidates are Hispanic. Furthermore, in 2021-22, there are 15 interns, individuals who have already completed part of the program and are working in the schools, of which 44% are Hispanic.

In partnership with Odessa College and UT-Permian Basin, ECISD implemented _Future Teachers of Odessa_, a four-year program for students in which they can earn up to 78 semester credit hours toward a bachelor's degree in education. Future Teachers of Odessa is in its third year, with 91 students currently in its pipeline, 55% of which are Hispanic.

ECISD also established a _Para-to-Teacher_ program to assist paraprofessionals in completing their B.A. degrees and certificate programs. Participants remain employed as paraprofessionals and are committed to teaching in ECISD for at least two years once they earn a standard certification. Currently, there are 42 participants and 60% of participants are Hispanic. Through these initiatives, ECISD is investing in both short- and long-term pathways to develop many future effective and diverse teachers.

ECISD connects excellent teaching to incentives. In 2019, ECISD implemented the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) program, funded by the Texas Education Agency. TIA rewards teachers' performance based on evaluations, student growth, and school growth. The TIA awards are based in part on ECISD's calibrated T-TESS teacher evaluation system, which is aligned with the statewide performance standards. TIA has been embraced at all levels of the district from the school board to the teachers' association.

ECISD prioritizes collaboration with teachers and principals. In implementing the TIA program in ECISD, the district established structures and processes for teacher and principal engagement. For example, ECISD established a steering committee for the TIA program with principal and teacher representatives as equal leadership partners. Further, ECISD created a

teacher focus group which meets 6 times per year to review TIA implementation and guide communications to their schools. ECISD's track-record of developing performance-based compensation systems in collaboration with teachers and principals is modeled through TIA, and is built upon and replicated in LEAP as the new incentive program is implemented.

ECISD invests in instructional improvements. ECISD has transformed the instructional expectations in ELAR and math in the district. ECISD has implemented its first district-wide instructional framework for ELAR and math. This framework includes set expectations for timing and approved materials, which all teachers are expected to follow.

Moreover, ECISD is turning high-quality teachers into teacher leaders to expand their reach beyond a single classroom. In 2020-21, ECISD implemented the Multi-Classroom Leaders (MCL) model where selected teacher leaders mentor a grade-level team of teachers while still leading their own classroom. Currently, 68 teachers serve as MCLs across 23 schools. The MCLs are 44% Hispanic, 51% white, and 5% Black.

LEAP builds on ECISD's efforts. ECISD has taken significant steps to recruit new teachers into the district. It has built a new incentive program in collaboration with stakeholders and invested in instructional improvements. While the district is showing promising signs of growth, they are not yet translating into strong student achievement results at every school. LEAP expands on these efforts to directly address the need for better student results in 10 high-need, low-performing schools.

A.3. Comprehensive Effort to Improve Teaching and Learning

LEAP is the critical next step to advance ECISD's HCMS effort to retain and develop teachers and principals at high-need schools and improve the quality of teaching, instructional leadership, and student achievement. By developing and retaining talent, LEAP improves novice and experienced teachers' ability to implement rigorous instruction and accelerate learning. LEAP also supports effective instruction by developing the instructional leadership capacity of principals and A-ILT members. LEAP concentrates these efforts at schools with high numbers of

economically disadvantaged students and English Learners to ensure their equitable access to effective educators.

LEAP aligns incentives to instructional priorities by establishing a Performance-Based Compensation System (PBCS) to reward educators who improve their instructional practice and increase student growth in ELAR and math. It rewards effective educators and principals who take on positions at high-need schools serving a diverse student population.

LEAP addresses the need to successfully recruit and retain more diverse teachers. LEAP also ensures that teachers, principals, and A-ILT members have the instructional strategies to effectively reach diverse learners. It further creates a pipeline to advance effective, diverse teachers into teacher leadership positions throughout the district.

A.4. Successfully Addressing Needs

LEAP's three project components directly address gaps in the district's HCMS. LEAP improves and expands the HCMS by aligning professional development, evaluation, compensation, recruitment and retention, and career pathways for teachers.

Table 4. ECISD Needs and LEAP-Aligned Strategies by Project Component

ECISD Needs	Aligned Strategies
Component 1: Developing and Retaining Talent	
• Advance the skills of novice teachers. • Retain teachers at the lowest performing schools. • Develop a deep pool of instructional leadership capacity for ELAR and math. • Provide culturally responsive instruction and leadership.	• Provide a comprehensive three-year induction program for new teachers. • Develop the instructional ability of educators to effectively serve diverse learners. • Strengthen principals' knowledge of ELAR and math content and standards and improve their instructional leadership. • Establish and develop Acceleration ILTs to broaden the instructional leadership and coaching capacity.

ECISD Needs	Aligned Strategies
Component 2: Aligning Incentives to Instructional Priorities	
- Reward effective instruction and leadership to increase student achievement. - Attract and retain effective teachers and principals at low-performing schools.	- Create a PBCS to reward educators who increase students' ELAR and math achievement. - Reward teachers who assume new A-ILT leadership roles. - Provide a recruitment and incentives program which recruits effective principals to 10 high-need schools.
Component 3: Building and Expanding the Capacity of a Diverse Workforce	
- Recruit and retain diverse teachers to match its student population. - Develop more diverse teachers to take on teacher leadership roles.	- Implement targeted recruitment strategies for diverse teachers. - Build principals' ability to implement a comprehensive teacher recruitment and retention strategy for diverse educators. - Create an Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy—a pipeline for effective, diverse teachers.

Overall. Building on the district's impressive efforts to date, LEAP's three key components—developing and retaining talent, aligning incentives to instructional priorities, and building and expanding a diverse workforce—directly address the gaps that are resulting in underperformance at LEAP high-need schools.

B. Quality of the Project Design

B.1. and B.2. Rationale with Relevant Literature and High-Quality Plan for Implementation

LEAP has two goals: **(1) increase student achievement at high-need, low-performing schools, and (2) develop an effective, diverse, and supported educator workforce**. To

achieve these goals, LEAP has eight project objectives that directly align to the three key project components:

Table 5. LEAP Objectives by Project Component

Objectives
Component 1. Developing and Retaining Talent
Objective 1. Accelerate novice teachers' abilities to be effective instructors.
Objective 2. Strengthen principals' abilities to provide effective instructional leadership.
Objective 3. Establish A-ILTs to increase schools' instructional leadership capacity.
Objective 4. Develop the instructional ability of ELAR and math teachers and the instructional leadership ability of A-ILTs to effectively serve diverse learners.
Component 2. Aligning Incentives to Instructional Priorities
Objective 5. Reward teachers, principals, and A-ILT members for improving ELAR and math instruction that increases student achievement.
Objective 6. Recruit effective principals to high-need schools.
Component 3. Building and Expanding the Capacity of a Diverse Workforce
Objective 7. Recruit, support, and retain diverse teachers at high-need schools.
Objective 8. Provide a pipeline for diverse teachers to transition into teacher leadership positions.

The relationship of the project objectives and components to the relevant outcomes is illustrated in the logic model (see Appendix A). The design of each project component, the aligned objectives, and the relevant literature base are described below.

Component 1: Developing and Retaining Talent

Objective (Obj.) 1. Accelerate novice teachers' abilities to be effective instructors. Studies establish positive relationships between teacher induction and teaching practices (Stanulis & Floden, 2009) and student achievement (Glazerman et al., 2010; Schmidt et al.,

2017). Instructionally focused induction programs have significant and lasting impacts on teachers. Induction affects teacher commitment and retention, teacher instructional practices, and student achievement (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Yet, one study finds that less than one percent of teachers actually receive a comprehensive induction (All4Ed, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

A comprehensive three-year induction program is essential in ECISD where so many teachers are inexperienced. Elements of effective induction include mentoring, collaboration time with other teachers, analysis of student work, coaching on different instructional models, and constructive feedback (Ingersoll, 2012; Martin et al., 2016).

Obj. 1. Implementation. LEAP implements a comprehensive, three-year induction program that is instructionally focused. This induction program is rooted in the essential elements of how children learn. Teachers learn to provide students with instruction that builds their fluency in foundational skills (e.g., math facts, phonics and phonemic awareness) and supports the acquisition of complex skills (e.g., reading comprehension or thinking like a mathematician). LEAP's induction ensures teachers incorporate both types of skills into their lessons. LEAP also builds the capacity of novice teachers to apply key elements of accelerating student learning: setting high-expectations, providing all students with grade-level content, offering concrete feedback to students, and presenting them multiple opportunities to practice (TNTP, 2018).

LEAP's induction focuses on these skills in the context of teachers' content areas and grade-levels. It supports teachers in understanding, at the lesson plan level, what they need to do in the classroom each day. Novice teachers also learn how to diagnose what students are thinking and identify approaches that will help them to learn.

Through this induction program, novice teachers will practice and receive feedback on their learning for three years through structured professional development sessions and coaching from school leaders. In addition, they will receive mentoring from a skilled, experienced teacher in their first year in the district. Novice teachers will receive two days of induction prior to the school year and monthly training sessions throughout the year. CTAC will guide and co-lead

induction with ECISD at the 10 high-need schools. Over the course of LEAP's three years, this induction program will migrate to novice teachers district-wide.

Obj. 2. Strengthen principals' abilities to provide effective instructional leadership. Research findings indicate "highly effective principals can raise the achievement of typical students in their school by between two and seven months in a single year" (Branch et al., 2013). Principals' instructional leadership is positively correlated with school culture (Sahin, 2011; Parlar et al., 2021), classroom instruction (Bellibas et al., 2020), teacher professional development (Graczewski et al., 2009), and student achievement (Hou et al., 2019; Robinson et al., 2008).

Obj. 2. Implementation. LEAP develops the instructional leadership skills of principals and their ability to manage an instructional leadership system and provide coaching and feedback. LEAP provides principals with monthly training that is sequenced for what happens instructionally at each phase of the school year and includes the research base that underpins each practice. The content focuses on instructional leadership models, the science of how adults learn, and executive leadership to manage systems for improving instruction. This training is customized to the individual needs of each principal, driven by the student achievement and teacher evaluation results at each school. Moreover, LEAP provides principals with a toolkit of resources and approaches to improve instruction at their schools (see Section B.2.c).

Obj. 3. Establish A-ILTs to increase schools' instructional leadership capacity. Principals cannot effectively lead instructional improvement alone, particularly in high-need schools (Thessin et al., 2020). One structure that supports principals to deepen instructional leadership capacity within schools is instructional leadership teams (ILTs). This team-based approach to school instructional leadership significantly affects teacher instruction and student achievement (Dexter & Barton, 2021; Heck & Hallinger, 2009). LEAP establishes Acceleration ILTs (A-ILTs) to deepen the instructional leadership capacity at each of the 10 high-need schools and address the increased learning needs of students.

Obj. 3. Implementation. A-ILTs are a new formalized structure for leadership in ECISD which establish expanded roles and pathways for teachers to become leaders. A-ILTS are comprised of four effective teachers, selected by the principal and district based on the teachers' high-performance evaluations and impact on student academic growth.

LEAP builds the capacity of A-ILT members to: serve as exemplar teachers, provide targeted professional development to ELAR and math teachers, implement individual and group coaching for teachers, and inform instructional resource decisions at the school level.

The monthly training develops A-ILT members in five key areas: (1) building an understanding of what effective teaching and learning look like; (2) taking deliberate actions to build a school culture which engenders trust and where ideas to improve practice are shared; (3) using data to focus on particular elements of instruction at both the individual teacher and school levels; (4) structuring interactions to improve teacher practice through observations, coaching, and curricular content trainings; and (5) guiding reflection on school progress and needed mid-course improvements.

Obj. 4. Develop the instructional ability of ELAR and math teachers and the instructional leadership ability of A-ILTs to effectively serve diverse learners. Culturally responsive curriculum and instruction are key to providing students, especially students of color, with deeper learning experiences and nurturing the ability to achieve at high levels (Hammond, 2015, pp. 12–20). Culturally responsive teaching can increase both student engagement and student achievement (Byrd, 2016). Teachers who have culturally responsive practices embedded in their professional development and implement these practices have significantly higher achievement scores in reading and math (Powell et al., 2016).

LEAP addresses these curricular and instructional needs by: (1) examining the foundational features and pedagogical practice associated with the curriculum in ELAR and math; and (2) training ELAR and math teachers, principals, and A-ILTs on high-leverage culturally responsive practices.

Obj. 4. Implementation. In terms of curriculum, LEAP conducts a two-part Inclusion Curriculum Review that analyzes six key aspects of a curriculum. Part One focuses on *Foundational Features*. It examines the level of rigor of the tasks, the representativeness of authors, characters, experts, and others in the curricular material, and the coherence of the curriculum across content areas and grade levels. Part Two focuses on *Pedagogical Practices*. It examines whether the curricula contain suggestions for material use that help personalize instruction for all students, promote student agency through allowing student choice, and structure meaningful collaboration between students.

LEAP analyzes a purposeful sample of the curricula for each grade band in ELAR and math. In Year 1, K-8 ELAR and math are reviewed. In Year 2, English I and II and Algebra I are reviewed. In Year 3, the implementation of the improved curricula is reviewed and refined. The findings and recommendations chart a path to improve the curricula and bring standards-based meaningful experiences to all students.

Drawing on best practices, LEAP's approach systematically prepares teachers, A-ILT members, and principals to implement culturally responsive instructional practices. In particular, LEAP focuses on training educators monthly to provide on-grade-level content to all students, regardless of their starting points. In addition, LEAP develops educators' ability to provide students with feedback that is focused on student practice, provided frequently to all students, and framed positively. Furthermore, LEAP trains educators on how to both value the experiences of all kids and make explicit connections between those experiences and the academic content.

Component 2: Aligning Incentives to Instructional Priorities

Obj. 5. Reward teachers, principals, and A-ILT members for improving ELAR and math instruction that increases student achievement. When PBCS is implemented effectively, teachers have greater access to student data, use data more effectively to establish growth expectations, focus earlier on students who may need assistance, and monitor progress (Slotnik

et al., 2004). Performance-based compensation for principals and school leaders is associated with acceleration in student achievement growth (Hamilton et al., 2012).

Obj. 5. Implementation. LEAP establishes a PBCS aligned to improving ELAR and math instruction and increasing student achievement. Two hundred and seventy-eight teachers at the 10 LEAP schools teach ELAR and math in grades K-12 and are eligible for performance-based compensation. Ten principals and 40 A-ILT members are eligible for performance-based compensation, see Table 6. A-ILT members are also eligible for $5,000 stipends for assuming these new teacher leadership roles.

Teachers, A-ILT members, and principals are awarded performance-based compensation, respectively, based on three tiers of student growth. Student growth is calculated as the percentage of students that met or exceeded their projected growth for each teacher. For example, a student growth of 50 means 50% of a teacher's students met or exceeded their projected growth.

The tier levels are: Tier I, 50-59.9 percent student growth; Tier II, 60-69.9 percent student growth; and Tier III, 70 percent or higher student growth. A-ILT members and principals receive awards based on the student growth scores of all eligible teachers in their school combined, using the same tier levels—I, II, and III.

Table 6. Performance-Based Compensation by Position, Grade Level for each Year

Position	Measurement	Tier I Award	Tier II Award	Tier III Award
Teachers, K-3	NWEA MAP Reading & Math	$9,000	$12,000	$15,000
Teachers, 4-8	STAAR Reading & Math, NWEA MAP Reading & Math	$9,000	$12,000	$15,000
Teachers, 9, 10	STAAR End-of-Course English I, II, or Algebra I, NWEA MAP Reading & Math	$9,000	$12,000	$15,000
A-ILT Members	Student growth for all eligible teachers	$9,000	$12,000	$15,000
Principals	Student growth for all eligible teachers	$20,000	$25,000	$30,000

Obj. 6. Recruit effective principals to high-need schools. Levin et al. (2020) report that 42% of secondary principals intended to leave in the next three years. Of these principals, 32% indicate they intend to go to another school while 19% indicate they intend to leave the profession altogether. These data are supported by findings from the RAND Corporation which indicate 16% of principals retired or resigned in 2021-22, more than double the rate from 2020-21 (Diliberti & Schwartz, 2023).

Financial incentives are an important driver in recruiting. Sign-on bonuses appear to be an effective tool in recruiting principals (See et al., 2020). Further, 48% of employers offered undergraduate or graduate tuition assistance as a benefit in 2022 (SHRM, 2022). When asked for motivation to remain in their position, principals rank highly having more time to spend on instructional leadership and being able to support their teachers (Doan et al., 2022).

Obj. 6. Implementation. LEAP implements the Principal High-Need Schools Recruitment Program to encourage effective principals to move to, and stay at 10 high-need schools.

The Principal High-Need Schools Recruitment Program includes (1) a *sign-on bonus* of $20,000; (2) a teacher *recruitment fund* of $50,000 principals can use to provide sign-on bonuses of $10,000 to effective teachers they recruit to the school; (3) an additional $15,000 to be used at their discretion to offer *additional professional development* to their staff; (4) $8,000 in *tuition assistance* for three years to be used in the pursuit of an advanced degree or to pay-off existing student loans; and (5) *preference for future district positions* by serving at least three years at a school identified as hard-to-staff.

Component 3: Building and Expanding the Capacity of a Diverse Workforce

Obj. 7. Recruit, support, and retain diverse teachers at high-need schools. Students are more likely to attend school, achieve, and graduate when at least one of their teachers is the same race or ethnicity (Gershenson et al., 2017). English Language Learners benefit from having teachers who speak their home language and show increases in reading and math achievement (Loeb et al., 2014).

Further, principals have a large influence on recruiting, developing, and retaining teachers. Principal support is a deciding factor in teacher decisions to remain in their schools, even more important than salaries (Learning Policy Institute, 2017). Strong school leadership predicts a higher retention rate of more effective, diverse teachers (Sun, 2018). Diverse teachers indicate that the school culture and climate which principals lead directly influences their decision to stay (Dixon, et al., 2019).

Obj. 7. Implementation. LEAP develops targeted recruitment strategies, partnering with six regional Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) to recruit new, diverse teachers into the district. The strategy includes the extensive use of social media. It supports ECISD in engaging earlier with the HSIs, reaching out to students using in-person and virtual platforms, and hosting sessions about what it means to be a teacher in ECISD. LEAP also establishes a new district recruiter position to raise the profile of the district, drive the social media campaigns, and make it a premier and welcoming location for diverse teachers.

In an effort to develop and retain diverse educators, LEAP provides monthly executive coaching to the 10 high-need school principals to reduce bias and create an inclusive school culture.

Obj. 8. Provide a pipeline for diverse teachers to transition into teacher leadership positions. Research indicates that diverse teachers face additional barriers in advancing to leadership positions (Perrone, 2022). These barriers include lack of access to pipeline programs, leading to underrepresentation.

Obj. 8. Implementation. LEAP provides the Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy to enable talented, diverse teachers to transition into teacher leadership roles. The Academy identifies twelve effective, diverse teachers each year who want to advance to instructional leadership positions. Participants have to meet the criteria of high performance evaluation, growth in student achievement, principal recommendation, and approval of the Associate Supt. of Human Capital. Academy participants receive a year-long program of learning experiences

provided by accomplished leaders at CTAC/ECISD. The program develops the instructional

leadership capacity of participants to advance practice and lead change at the school level.

The Academy is based on the Aspiring Leadership program of the Maryland State

Department of Education which has been recognized as a national exemplar by the Council of

Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association.

B.2.c. Methodological Tools

LEAP uses field-proven methodological tools as delineated in Table 7.

Table 7. Methodological Tools

Methodological Tools	Objectives
Quality Teaching Practices. CTAC's nine teaching practices aligned to evidence-based practices for improving instruction (Marzano, 2009; Hattie, 2009).	1, 4
Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices. Based on the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings, these modules provide instructional leaders with approaches for creating inclusive, representative classroom environments.	1, 2, 3, 4
Structured Coaching. This support for A-ILT members develops their capacity to lead instruction at their school and to focus on building trust, setting goals, calibrating observations, and communicating feedback.	2, 3, 4
Unpacking Standards Sessions. Focused on state standards for ELAR and math, these sessions guide instructional leaders through a replicable process for unpacking content standards to turnkey with classroom teachers.	2, 3, 4
Executive Coaching. Each TSL principal receives monthly coaching focused primarily on instructional leadership and change management.	6, 7
Inclusion Curriculum Review. Examines curricular features critical to an inclusive student experience and the choices teachers make on how to use them.	1, 2, 3, 4
Texas Principal Evaluation and Support System (T-PESS) Rubric. This rubric is based on rigorous state standards for principal performance.	2, 4, 5, 6

Methodological Tools	Objectives
Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS) Rubric. This rubric is based on rigorous state standards for teacher performance.	3, 4, 5, 6
STAAR Math and Science Assessments. These are the state assessments used in years 2 and 3 of the initiative. Year 1 serves as the baseline.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
NWEA MAP Growth Assessments. These are the district assessments used in years 1, 2, and 3 of the initiative in Math (K-8) and English Language Arts and Reading (K-8), as well as Algebra I, English I and II (High school).	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
HR Teacher Recruitment Protocols. These are the updated HR recruitment practices targeting diverse teachers of color and include hiring goal metrics.	7
Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy. The academy is the vehicle for advancing ECISD teachers into school leadership positions.	8
A-ILTs. A new formalized structure to increase instructional leadership capacity in ECISD and pathways for teachers to become leaders.	3

B.3. Methods of Evaluation

CTAC is a national leader in conducting TIF/TSL evaluations, having evaluated initiatives in Denver, CO; Charlotte-Mecklenburg, NC; Prince William County, VA; Henrico County, VA; Delhi, CA; Tracy, CA; and Harmony Public Schools, TX. CTAC is conducting the LEAP evaluation.

Overview. The evaluation strategy is two-fold. The first part is comprehensive and focuses on the overall TSL initiative. The second part is targeted and focuses on the study of ECISD's HCMS as it relates specifically to principals and A-ILT members.

Part 1. Comprehensive Evaluation of LEAP. Using a mixed-methods approach with both qualitative and quantitative data, CTAC carries out an ongoing *formative* evaluation that provides regular performance feedback and assessment for adjustments and improvement, and a *summative* evaluation to assess progress toward achieving the intended impacts.

The multiple sources of data include: (1) interviews and focus groups with educators, and parents; (2) survey responses from educators, parents, and students (5th grade and above); (3) teacher, principal, and A-ILT evaluation and performance data; (4) financial incentive payout data; (5) human resources data; (6) artifacts; and (7) student achievement data. These data are used in the project evaluation and the study of the HCMS.

The following key questions guide the comprehensive evaluation of the initiative:

- To what extent is LEAP being implemented with fidelity?

- What factors enhance or impede effective implementation of LEAP?

- To what extent does LEAP improve teachers' instruction, principals' leadership, and A-ILTs' instructional leadership?

- To what extent does LEAP promote equity in student access to and increase the diversity of effective teachers and principals?

- What is the impact of LEAP on increasing student achievement and closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing students?

- To what extent does LEAP strengthen the recruitment and retention of teachers and principals, especially highly effective educators, at underperforming schools?

These questions focus on both the implementation and the impact of the LEAP initiative. In assessing the fidelity with which LEAP is implemented and the effect it has on key outcomes, the evaluation is specifically designed to help inform ECISD's efforts to make continuous improvements over the life of the grant.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews and Focus Groups. CTAC conducts confidential interviews and focus groups annually with educators, and parents using protocols developed in collaboration with ECISD. We customize the protocols to the role of the participant and examine the perceptions of frontline educators on the implementation and impact of the components of LEAP. CTAC conducts thematic analyses to identify common themes and key issues in the discussions based on similarities across interview and focus group participants.

Surveys. CTAC reviews data from two types of surveys: (1) CTAC develops and administers LEAP surveys annually that seek feedback from ECISD educators, parents, and students (5th grade and above) about the implementation of LEAP. CTAC conducts thematic analyses on the written comments and Mann-Whitney U tests to examine the statistical significance of the differences across groups and years; and (2) CTAC reviews Professional Development (PD) Surveys on the quality, relevance, and usefulness of all PD sessions funded through the grant.

Teacher, Principal, and A-ILT Evaluation and Performance Data. CTAC reviews teacher and A-ILT member evaluation ratings across the key indicators embedded in ECISD's teacher evaluation rubric that aligns with T-TESS. CTAC reviews principal evaluation ratings across the key indicators embedded in ECISD's principal evaluation rubric that aligns with the T-PESS.

Financial Incentive Payout Data. CTAC reviews data related to performance-based compensation awarded to teachers, A-ILTs, and principals, as well as incentives paid to principals through LEAP's Principal High-Need Schools Recruitment Program.

Human Resources Data. CTAC reviews data related to the quality and impact of new recruitment strategies in increasing the diverse teacher workforce. CTAC also examines data related to the quality and impact of the Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy in advancing ECISD teachers into school leadership positions. Further, CTAC uses HR records to assess the extent to which LEAP strengthens the recruitment, development, and retention of teachers and principals, especially highly effective educators, at underperforming schools.

Artifacts. CTAC reviews artifacts and data related to the implementation of LEAP. These include, non-exhaustively, PBCS performance targets and results; professional development resources; and instructional support materials.

Student Achievement Data. To assess the impact of LEAP on student achievement, CTAC analyzes student achievement on MAP Growth assessments, STAAR assessments, and End-of-Course (EOC) exams at the individual student level across ECISD schools.

CTAC employs a quasi-experimental design to compare students of the 10 ECISD schools in the LEAP initiative (7 elementary, 2 middle, and 1 high, collectively called LEAP or treatment

schools) to similar students at 26 ECISD schools not in the LEAP initiative (18 elementary, 4 middle, and 4 high, collectedly called non-LEAP or comparison schools). Among the 41 ECISD schools, 5 are excluded from the comparison schools since they are either very small schools or exam schools. CTAC's evaluation is eligible to meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) group design standards with reservations.

During Year 1 of LEAP, CTAC uses Spring 2023 (Pre-LEAP) MAP Growth, STAAR assessment and EOC exam results as the baseline and finalizes the comparison students' selection by using students in the non-LEAP schools for the students in the LEAP schools. For each student in the LEAP schools, CTAC uses propensity score matching techniques to identify the comparison students that (1) are of the same grade configuration and (2) have similar baseline achievement levels and demographics and satisfies WWC standards for baseline equivalence.

In Years 2 and 3, CTAC uses Spring 2025 and 2026 MAP Growth, STAAR assessment and EOC exam results to examine LEAP's impacts.[2] CTAC employs a multiple regression approach in estimating LEAP's impacts, with statistical adjustment to satisfy baseline equivalence when needed (WWC Procedures and Standards Handbooks, Version 5.0).

Student assessment results are standardized into z-scores to be comparable across grade for each tested student for the baseline and Years 1 to 3 data. These include grades 3-8 and high school grades MAP Growth assessments for math, reading, Algebra I, English I and II; grades 3-8 on STAAR assessments for math and ELA; and high school EOC exams for Algebra I, English I and II. They are obtained from ECISD through a secure data sharing platform. The analyses are also conducted for subgroups of students, such as Black, Hispanic, and White students to examine closing student achievement gaps.

Performance Feedback and Dissemination of Evaluation Learnings. CTAC's evaluation enables regular performance feedback and assessment of progress toward achieving the project's

---

[2] It is too early to estimate LEAP's impacts in Year 1, but CTAC will examine Year 1's student achievement data through descriptive statistics.

intended outcomes. On a quarterly basis, CTAC provides evaluative updates to the Leadership

Council (see Section C. Management Plan) and Project Co-Directors. In each project year,

CTAC produces a management report with interim analyses and findings in summer, and a

formative evaluation report with complete analyses and findings to date in winter. At the end of

the project, CTAC provides a summative evaluation report. *All formative and summative*

evaluation reports are made publicly available and presented to ECISD's Board of Trustees and

the Leadership Council. The findings of the summative evaluation will also be shared broadly

with the educational community (e.g., conference presentations, journal publications).

Part 2. Study of ECISD's HCMS. CTAC is also conducting a study of the HCMS as it

specifically relates to attracting principals to and supporting principals in Hard-to-Staff (HTS)

schools. The following questions guide the study:

- Has the Principal Incentive Package, a comprehensive structure of incentives and supports for placing high-performing principals in HTS schools, been effective?
- Do the teachers perceive better supports from principals in PD and pedagogy?
- To what extent are financial incentives for principals making an impact on student achievement and educator practices? What outcomes are improving?
- How can the quality of the HCMS be improved in supporting HTS schools?

CTAC uses surveys, interviews, and focus groups to examine the perceptions and changes of

perceptions of principals and teachers over time. CTAC also utilizes HCMS records and student

achievement to test (ANOVA or t-test) such relationships as educator practice ratings and

student achievement at the school and district levels. CTAC presents the findings and

recommendations to ECISD leadership and are publicly available on the ECISD website.

C. Quality of the Management Plan

LEAP delivers on the promise of TSL by using evidence-based practices to increase the

number of effective teachers, teacher leaders, and principals serving at high-need schools.

The goals, objectives, outcomes, and metrics for the management plan are described below.

Table 8. Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes

Goal #1: Increase student achievement at high-need, low-performing schools. Goal #2: Develop an effective, diverse, and supported educator workforce.		
Objectives	**Outcomes**	**Metric**
Project Component 1. Developing and Retaining Talent		
Objective 1. Accelerate novice teachers' abilities to be effective instructors.	• Increase T-TESS score averages to 3.5+ on a 5 point scale by end of Year 3 • Increase percent of novice teachers' students meeting state standards in ELAR/math by 3% in Year 2, and by 6% in Year 3 using 2022-23 as the baseline	• T-TESS evaluation ratings • MAP and STAAR ELAR and math tests
Objective 2. Strengthen principals' abilities to provide effective instructional leadership.	• Increase T-PESS score averages to 3.5+ on a 5 point scale by end of Year 3	• T-PESS evaluation ratings
Objective 3. Establish A-ILTs to increase schools' instructional leadership capacity.	• Operationalize A-ILTs at the 10 high-need schools in Year 1 and continue through Year 3 to support ELAR and math teachers and increase student achievement • Increase percent of all teacher's students meeting state standards in ELAR/math by 4% in Year 2, and by 8% in Year 3 using 2022-23 as the baseline	• T-TESS evaluation ratings • MAP and STAAR ELAR and math tests
Objective 4. Develop the instructional ability of ELAR and math teachers and the instructional leadership ability of A-	• Increase percent of teacher's diverse students meeting state standards in ELAR and math by 4% from baseline in Year 2, and by 8% in Year 3 using 2022-23 as the baseline	• MAP, STAAR and EOC ELAR and math tests

| Goal #1: Increase student achievement at high-need, low-performing schools.		
Goal #2: Develop an effective, diverse, and supported educator workforce.		
Objectives	**Outcomes**	**Metric**
ILTs to effectively serve diverse learners.		
Project Component 2. Aligning Incentives to Instructional Priorities		
Objective 5. Reward teachers, principals, and A-ILT members for improving ELAR and math instruction that increases student achievement.	• Increase student growth in ELAR and math each year	• MAP, STAAR and EOC ELAR and math tests • Performance-based compensation award system
Objective 6. Recruit effective principals to high-need schools.	• Achieve the outcome of having an effective principal at all 10 high-need schools	• T-PESS evaluation ratings • Principal retention rates
Project Component 3. Building and Expanding the Capacity of a Diverse Workforce		
Objective 7. Recruit, support, and retain diverse teachers at high-need schools.	• Increase number of diverse teachers in high-need schools to comprise 60% of teachers overall in the high-need schools	• HCMS staffing reports • Teacher retention rates • T-TESS ratings
Objective 8. Provide a pipeline for diverse teachers to transition into teacher leadership positions.	• Achieve the outcome of having 12 teachers per year in the Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy • Increase number of prepared, diverse teacher leaders placed in leadership positions	• Number of annual graduates from the Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy • Number of Academy graduates placed in teacher leadership positions annually

LEAP provides the leadership and project management to ensure fidelity and quality of implementation. LEAP has the active engagement of all key district and CTAC decision-makers, including the Superintendent of ECISD and leaders of partner associations.

Management Structure

The **Leadership Council** (LeaderC, meets every two months) oversees the entire initiative, reviews formative and summative
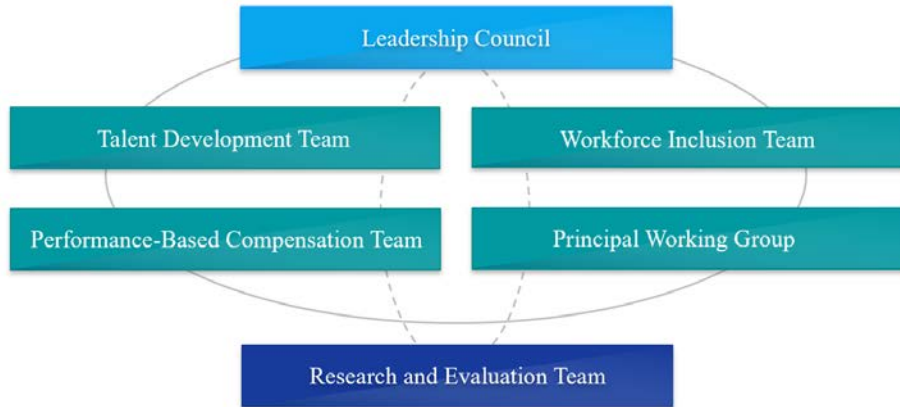
evaluations, ensures progress toward all project objectives, and makes adjustments to strengthen implementation. The Leadership Council consists of the highest-level decision-makers in the district and the partner associations. As such, the Leadership Council is empowered to cut through issues of turf or jurisdiction so that LEAP is substantive and extensive. In so doing, the Leadership Council sends a clear message about the importance of this initiative. <u>***Members***</u>: ███████ Superintendent of Schools, ████ █████ Chief of Schools, ██████ ██ Executive Director of Human Resources, ██████ █████ Associate Superintendent of Human Capital, █████ ██████ Chief Executive Officer (CTAC), Teacher and Principal Representatives, and Project Co-Directors ████ █████ (ECISD) and █████ ██████ (CTAC).

The **Talent Development Team** (TalentT, meets monthly) guides the professional development for the teachers, principals, and A-ILT members. The team establishes and develops Acceleration ILTs to broaden the instructional leadership and coaching capacity of the schools. It provides a comprehensive three-year induction program. <u>***Members***</u>: ████ █████ Executive Director of Talent Development, █████ ██████ Director of Talent Development, Teacher and Principal Representatives, ██ ██████ Coordinator of Instructional Development

(CTAC), ██ ████ Coordinator of Leadership Development (CTAC), and Project Co-Directors.

The **Workforce Inclusion Team** (WorkT, meets every two months) guides the efforts to change human resources practices and implement targeted recruitment strategies to attract a diverse workforce at ECISD. It develops targeted recruitment strategies, partners with regional Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), provides executive coaching to school principals, and creates a pipeline for teachers to teacher leadership roles through the Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy. *__Members__*: ██ ████ Executive Director of Talent Development, ████ ████ Associate Superintendent of Human Capital, ████ ██ Assistant Director of Health Services/Athletics & Diversity Team Member, ████ ██ Coordinator of Workforce Diversity (CTAC), and Project Co-Directors.

The **Performance-Based Compensation Team** (PBC-T, meets every two month) guides the implementation of the PBC system at ECISD. It establishes PBC guidelines and examines all evidence submitted for rating and approval. It provides recommendations for payouts, and for addressing PBCS concerns and appeals, to the Leadership Council. *__Members__*: ████ ████ Chief Financial Officer, ██ ████ ██ Director of Human Resources, ████ ██ Research Data Analyst and Strategist, ██ ██ Chief Officer, Finance and Management Systems (CTAC), and Project Co-Directors.

The **Principal Working Group** (PWG, meets every two months) engages the 10 principals in real-time problem-solving to strengthen the implementation of LEAP. The Principal Working Group provides opportunities for meaningful networking and implementation support. *__Members__*: Principals of 10 high-need schools, ████ ██ Chief of Schools, and Project Co-Directors.

The **Research and Evaluation Team** (R&Eval, meets every two months) reports directly to the Leadership Council. It provides regular formative feedback on progress towards project objectives, outcomes, implementation, and potential improvements and course corrections along with summative reporting. *__Members__*: ████ ██████ Director of Research & Evaluation,

██████ ██ Research Data Analyst and Strategist, ██████ ██ Coordinator of Evaluation (CTAC), Teacher and Principal Representatives, and Project Co-Directors.

CTAC/ECISD Project Team

The LEAP project team is comprised of highly skilled professionals from both ECISD and CTAC. The leadership and execution of the grant is co-led by the two Project Co-Directors, ██████ ██ for ECISD and ██ ████ for CTAC. The Executive Project Leads, ██████ for ECISD and █████ ████ for CTAC, co-chair the Leadership Council and ensure successful project implementation.

Provided below are short bios for executive members of the team. Resumes for the following key personnel are included in Appendix B.

Ector County Independent School District (ECISD) Staff

Superintendent of Schools, ECISD (██████ *Ed.D., FTE 0.15)* is the catalyst for ECISD rising to new levels. He serves as the Executive Project Lead. He oversees all aspects of project implementation, including fiscal, instructional, and human resources; impact; and outcomes. He has 35 years of experience in education, and 26 years as a school administrator.

Associate Superintendent of Human Capital, ECISD (██████ ████ *Ed.D., FTE 0.35)* provides HCMS management strategies and helps guide educator recruitment and retention efforts. With 22 years of experience in education, including 8 years as a district administrator, his expertise includes monitoring and aligning systems and resources across multiple departments.

Chief of Schools, ECISD (█████ ████ *Ed.D., FTE 0.30)* provides instructional leadership training and coaching for principals and designs professional learning for aspiring teacher leaders. Her areas of expertise include leadership development, recruitment and retention, and school improvement. She has more than 20 years of experience in education and was named Houston Independent School District's Secondary Principal of the Year in 2017.

Executive Director of Human Resources, ECISD (██████ ██ *Ed.D., FTE 0.35)* leads ECISD's strategic initiatives to recruit and retain highly effective staff members. With experience

in operations, finance, CTE, and compliance, he has led department and campus turnaround efforts, specialized funding initiatives, and guided program implementation and effectiveness.

Director of Human Resources, ECISD (████ ████ *FTE 0.50)* serves as the Co-Director and oversees the day-to-day operation of the project. She directs and coordinates project staff to ensure all milestones and timelines are met. She has three decades of experience in education, including more than 12 years in school and district leadership roles.

Executive Director of Talent Development, ECISD (████ ████ *FTE 0.40)* oversees multiple programs focused on teacher development and support, including pipelines for recruiting new teachers and ECISD's First Year Teacher Academy and Mentor Program. She has 24 years of experience in education and specializes research-based instructional strategies.

Director of Research & Evaluation, ECISD (████ ████████ *Ph.D., FTE 0.25)* leads research and evaluation aligned to the district's vision and goals. She serves as a liaison to the external evaluator, helping to monitor progress toward program objectives and outcomes. With more than 25 years of experience, she specializes in continuous improvement processes.

District Inclusion Recruiter, ECISD (New Position, FTE 1.0). The recruiter will develop targeted recruitment strategies, partnering with regional Hispanic Serving Institutions to recruit new, diverse teachers into the district. The recruiter will also create an outreach campaign to raise the profile of the district and promote ECISD as a premier and welcoming location for diverse teachers.

Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC)

CTAC is a 45-year-old, national nonprofit, with extensive expertise and national experience in successfully leading and managing large-scale projects and federal grants. CTAC has served as the lead or partner on 17 successful U.S. Department of Education grants, including EIR, SEED, and TIF/TSL. Our grant management expertise ensures on-time, on-budget completion of goals and objectives, including meeting reporting requirements and performance measures.

The CTAC program team is composed of highly skilled, experienced professionals.

Chief Executive Officer, CTAC (████ ████ *FTE 0.25)* serves as Executive Project and Fiscal Leader. He provides executive leadership and fiscal oversight of the initiative. He has provided extensive assistance to 45 state education agency leaders and departments, superintendents, state and local boards of education, unions and leadership teams nationally.

Project Co-Director, CTAC (████ ████ *FTE 0.50)* serves as Co-Director, Project Management. He provides overall project management for the grant, is the primary point of contact to the U.S. Department of Education, and serves as liaison for the project. ██ ████ has led multiple large-scale federal and state projects and system-wide efforts.

Coordinator of Leadership Development, CTAC (████ ████ *FTE 0.35)* provides instructional leadership training and coaching to principals, teachers, and A-ILT members. He builds educator capacity to use standards-based curricula to improve student and teacher outcomes.

Coordinator of Instructional Development, CTAC (██ ████ *Ed.D., FTE 0.25)* provides instructional leadership training to teachers, principals, A-ILTs, and district leaders. His expertise includes leadership development and data-driven instructional improvements.

Coordinator of Evaluation, CTAC (████ ██ *Ph.D., FTE 0.35)* leads education research and evaluation for numerous CTAC projects (including TSL) and holds a What Works Clearinghouse certification. ██ ██ is an expert in the area of program effect evaluation, including designing evaluation questions, methodologies, and instruments. He has extensive experience in student achievement data analysis and teacher performance analysis.

Senior Associate, Evaluation, CTAC (██ ████ *FTE .35)* has expertise in school culture and climate, diversity, equity and inclusion, and English language learning. She has worked on district, state, and national initiatives to improve school culture and climate.

Coordinator of Workforce Diversity, CTAC (████ ██ *FTE 0.20)* will co-lead the LEAP Advance Teacher Leadership Academy. He specializes in district and school turnaround efforts, principal mentoring, special education reform, and accelerating learning in Title I schools.

Coordinator of HCMS, CTAC (████ ████ *Ed.D., FTE 0.20)* will co-lead the LEAP Advance Teacher Leadership Academy. She has extensive experience designing professional development that strengthens leadership, instructional practices, and curricular strategies.

Responsibilities, Timelines, Milestones and Tasks

The Leadership Council, three committees, Principal Working Group, and the CTAC/ECISD project team are well-positioned to achieve LEAP's objectives, meet major milestones, and accomplish project tasks on time.

Table 9. LEAP Timelines and Organizational Responsibilities

Tasks	Responsible	Timeline
Project Component 1. Developing and Retaining Talent		
Objective 1. Accelerate novice teachers' abilities to be effective instructors.		
Prepare and structure professional development for all induction program staff	TalentT	Y1 Q1-Q2 Y2 Q1-Q2 Y3 Q1
Provide novice teachers with two-days of induction prior to the school year	TalentT	Y1 Q2, Q4 Y2 Q4 Y3 Q4
Launch and conduct 3-year induction program for each novice teacher in the 10 high-need schools through structured professional development sessions	TalentT	Y1 Q2-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4
Match experienced mentor with a novice teacher for their first year in ECISD	TalentT, and WorkT	Y1 Q1-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4
Migrate the 3-year induction program to all district schools	TalentT	Y3 Q1-Q4
Objective 2. Strengthen principals' abilities to provide effective instructional leadership.		
Deliver monthly principal professional development structured and sequenced for the specific time of the year	TalentT	Y1 Q1-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4

Tasks	Responsible	Timeline
Analyze principal leadership knowledge and skills to differentiate professional learning offerings	TalentT	Y1 Q1 Y2 Q1 Y3 Q1
Provide principals with a toolkit of resources and approaches to improve instruction in their schools	TalentT	Y1 Q1 Y2 Q1 Y3 Q1
Convene Principal Working Group to focus on instructional leadership	PWG	Y1 Q1-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4
Objective 3. *Establish A-ILTs to increase schools' instructional leadership capacity.*		
Formalize A-ILT structure for all 10 high-need schools and select A-ILT members to serve in the role	TalentT, and School Principal	Y1 Q1 Y2 Q1 Y3 Q1
Provide A-ILT members regular, intensive training in five key areas	TalentT	Y1 Q1-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4
Convene A-ILT at the schools between LEAP training sessions	TalentT, and School Principal	Y1 Q1-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4
Objective 4. *Develop the instructional ability of ELAR and math teachers and the instructional leadership ability of A-ILTs to effectively serve diverse learners.*		
Conduct a two-part Inclusive Curriculum Review (ICR) each year focusing on foundation features and pedagogical practices	CTAC, TalentT, and WorkT	Y1 Q2 Y2 Q1 Y3 Q1
Present findings and recommendations from Inclusive Curriculum Review and lead implementation to improve curriculum	CTAC, TalentT, and WorkT	Y1 Q3 Y2 Q1 Y3 Q1
Train educators regularly to strengthen culturally responsive instructional practices	TalentT, WorkT	Y1 Q1-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4

Tasks	Responsible	Timeline
Project Component 2. Aligning Incentives to Instructional Priorities		
Objective 5. Reward teachers, principals, and A-ILT members for improving ELAR and math instruction that increases student achievement.		
Establish and implement processes and measurements for the PBC system for teachers, A-ILTs, and principals	LeaderC and PBC-T	Y1 Q1, Q4 Y2 Q4 Y3 Q4
Communicate how the PBC system will operate and provide timely responses to all inquiries	LeaderC and PBC-T	Y1 Q1-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4
Analyze PBC data used to determine performance-based compensation awards and payout awards	CTAC, LeaderC and PBC-T	Y1 Q4 Y2 Q4 Y3 Q4
Review and refine the PBC system and communicate changes to all school staff	LeaderC and PBC-T	Y1 Q4 Y2 Q4 Y3 Q4
Objective 6. Recruit effective principals to high-need schools.		
Implement Principal High-Need Schools Recruitment Program	LeaderT, TalentT, and PBC-T	Y1 Q1-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4
Identify and recruit effective principals for 10 high-need schools	TalentT	Y1 Q1-Q3 Y2 Q1-Q3 Y3 Q1-Q3
Award Principal High-Need Schools Recruitment Program sign-on bonuses to recruited principals	LeaderC	Y1 Q1-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4
Recommend needed refinements in the recruitment program and communicate any approved changes to all school personnel; provide timely responses to inquiries	LeaderC and PBC-T	Y1 Q4 Y2 Q4 Y3 Q4

Tasks	Responsible	Timeline
Project Component 3. Building and Expanding the Capacity of a Diverse Workforce		
Objective 7. Recruit, support, and retain diverse teachers at high-need schools.		
Establish, recruit, and hire a district recruiter focusing on recruiting diverse teachers		Y1 Q1-Q2
Establish an extensive outreach campaign promoting ECISD as a premier and welcoming location for diverse teachers and raising the profile of the district	TalentT, WorkT	Y1 Q3-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4
Identify and recruit effective, diverse teachers for high-need schools through partnerships with Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)	TalentT, WorkT, and Recruiter	Y1 Q1-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4
Build an extensive teacher recruitment and retention outreach campaign	TalentT WorkT, and Recruiter	Y1 Q1-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4
Provide regular executive coaching to principals to reduce bias and create an inclusive school culture conducive for teacher recruitment and retention	TalentT, WorkT	Y1 Q1-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4
Objective 8. Provide a pipeline for diverse teachers to transition into teacher leadership positions.		
Build criteria to identify candidates for the Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy and revise each year	CTAC, TalentT, and WorkT	Y1 Q1 Y2 Q1 Y3 Q1
Select candidates to participate in the Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy	CTAC, TalentT, and WorkT	Y1 Q1 Y2 Q1 Y3 Q1
Conduct year-long Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy program	CTAC, TalentT, and WorkT	Y1 Q1-Q4 Y2 Q1-Q4 Y3 Q1-Q4

Note. LeaderC = Leadership Council, TalentT = Talent Development Team, WorkT = Workforce Inclusion Team, PBC-T = Performance-Based Compensation Team, PWG = Principal Working Group, R&Eval = Research and Evaluation Team.

Formative and Summative Feedback Cycles

LEAP uses a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle to gather performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress and rapid cycle problem solving, as outlined by the National Implementation Research Network (Jackson et al., 2018). The Leadership Council makes project implementation adjustments as necessary, noting that minor findings can lead to important insights about potential improvements (Taylor et al., 2013).

D. Adequacy of Resources

D.1. Likelihood of System Change or Improvement

LEAP markedly improves and expands ECISD's HCMS. It catalyzes systemic changes to support instruction and student learning. LEAP is a comprehensive effort which aligns key elements of the HCMS—professional development, evaluation, performance-based compensation, teacher leadership pathways, and recruitment and retention—to support equitable student access to opportunity and results at 10 high-need schools.

Professional Development. LEAP enhances the current professional development system in ECISD to rapidly develop the skills of novice teachers and turn experienced teachers into experts.

LEAP *expands induction* to a three-year, comprehensive program for all new teachers in the district. This instructionally focused induction will have a significant impact on teaching practices and student achievement. LEAP develops ECISD's induction model at high-need schools during the grant period in order to implement it throughout the district in subsequent years. This systemic change means that all incoming teachers will receive innovative, in-depth preparation in content knowledge, instructional skills, and responsive pedagogy.

LEAP *strengthens principals' ability* to serve their teachers in several essential areas. LEAP ensures principals develop the expertise to inform, guide, and improve instruction. LEAP positions principals as key to developing a school culture and climate that reaches diverse learners and supports and retains diverse educators. Moreover, through the Principal Working Group, ECISD provides principals with a structure for engaging in real-time, problem solving to

strengthen learning. In so doing, LEAP builds a coalition of principals prepared to lead improvement efforts at 10 high-need schools in ECISD.

LEAP *develops the instructional ability of educators* to effectively serve diverse learners. LEAP provides professional development for educators on research-based, instructional practices proven to support diverse students. It also examines the curriculum to ensure it is rigorous and inclusive for all students and trains educators to implement culturally responsive instructional practices.

Evaluation and PBC. LEAP *establishes a PBCS* aligned to improving ELAR and math instruction and increasing student achievement. This system change ties what educators earn, in part, to what students learn. LEAP further links its calibrated teacher evaluation system to the PBCS and uses it to inform professional development services.

Teacher Leadership Pathways. LEAP provides two different *teacher leadership advancement* opportunities for diverse, effective teachers to assume leadership positions. First, LEAP establishes A-ILTs that enable teachers to take on new instructional leadership roles in their school and advance ELAR and math achievement. Second, LEAP provides an Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy to advance diverse teachers into leadership roles. These pathways provide effective teachers with opportunities to expand their impact beyond their own classroom.

Recruitment and Retention. LEAP fundamentally changes human resource systems in ECISD, beginning with implementing targeted *recruitment* strategies. It changes recruitment efforts by developing strong relationships with a regional network of six Hispanic Serving Institutions, employing innovative recruitment strategies such as using social media campaigns and engaging both Human Resources *and* Curriculum and Instruction in recruitment. In so doing, ECISD makes recruitment of effective, diverse teachers an institutional priority throughout the district.

LEAP also recruits and retains effective principals to high-need schools through the Principal High-Need Schools Recruitment Program. This program offers multiple incentives—from sign-on bonuses and teacher enticements to tuition assistance and professional development

opportunities—to encourage effective principals to move to and remain at LEAP high-need schools.

ECISD is well positioned to sustain the improvements of LEAP. ECISD is a district on the rise. Over the past four years, ECISD has proven its ability to develop and sustain new initiatives and improve student academic growth. For example, ECISD has shown marked success in recruiting new teachers and lowering the teacher vacancy rate from 18% to 1%. It has established innovative partnerships with colleges and universities and created several grow-your-own pathways (see Section A). ECISD's efforts and their effectiveness have been recognized by the state of Texas, allowing ECISD to be one of only three districts to operate an alternative certification program for teachers.

LEAP builds on these initial successes to expand the HCMS in ways that institutionalize efforts to improve instruction and student achievement, particularly at high-need schools. Based in research and high-leverage strategies (as detailed in Section B), the components of LEAP have strong promise for catalyzing system change and improvement.

D.2. Local Capacity to Provide, Improve, or Expand Services

ECISD's comprehensive plan to increase learning opportunities and results for all students, particularly in high-need schools, depends on growing human and organizational capacities. LEAP is designed to make changes to the HCMS to ensure that all students have an effective teacher and every school has a strong leader to promote student success. LEAP makes equitable student access to effective instruction and learning opportunities the driving purpose across ECISD.

Human Capacities. The capacity building of both novice and experienced *teachers* improves their mastery of ELAR and math content, ability to employ strong instructional strategies, and their skills in reaching diverse learners in the classroom.

LEAP builds *principal* capacity to identify highly effective instruction, determine evidence of student learning, lead the A-ILTs, address student academic needs, support a positive culture

and climate for students and educators, and advance the overall progress of teachers to improve student achievement.

LEAP develops *Acceleration ILTs*, which broaden the school's capacity to coach and train teachers to increase instructional quality and achievement of all students at the school. A-ILTs provide a clear pathway to a leadership position that enables effective teachers to broaden their reach.

LEAP's local capacity building results in increased delivery of high-quality instruction for students at 10 high-need schools and increased student achievement.

Organizational Capacities. LEAP builds the capacity of the *compensation* system to align incentives to instructional priorities and high-need schools. The PBCS recognizes and rewards the accomplishments of teachers, principals, and A-ILT members in advancing content mastery, instructional pedagogy, and student academic achievement in ELAR and math. LEAP establishes a *Principal High-Need Schools Recruitment Program* to encourage recruitment and retention of principals at high-need schools most in need of effective leadership.

LEAP increases ECISD capacity to diversify the teacher and school leader workforce. It changes human resources *recruitment and induction* practices. Further, LEAP strengthens ECISD's *teacher leadership advancement* strategies by establishing A-ILT roles for teachers and creating the Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy. These new organizational capacities increase the diversity of new teachers, provide effective instructionally-focused induction, and ensure a pipeline for effective, diverse teachers to transition to leadership positions.

Importantly, LEAP also integrates the organizational capacity of two key drivers of the human capital management system—human resources and curriculum and instruction—to reinforce ECISD's instructional priorities.

D.3. Resources to Operate the Project Beyond the Length of the Grant

ECISD is committed to ensuring the long-term impact and success of LEAP. The continuation of LEAP is assured by *planning for sustainability on the front-end of the initiative*. In particular, ECISD's operational and fiscal model is based on anticipating and addressing the requirements for organizational sustainability, financial sustainability, and building a broad base of support.

Organizational Sustainability. LEAP strengthens district systems and practices, and builds the capacity of teachers, principals, and A-ILTs to provide robust learning opportunities and increase student achievement. LEAP changes and expands the HCMS to more effectively develop talent, provide performance-based compensation aligned to ELAR and math student achievement, and diversify the workforce. Each component of LEAP is mutually reinforcing and integral to the district's comprehensive approach to improve teaching and learning.

Financial Sustainability. ECISD is dedicated to financially sustaining the systemic components of LEAP to continue improving and expanding its HMCS.

ECISD has a demonstrated track record of sustaining impactful initiatives. All initiatives described in Section A have been implemented, expanded, and financially sustained beyond their initial piloting phase. As indicated in the project budget, ECISD is contributing $6,560,870 in match funding for this initiative (more than 50%), demonstrating a significant commitment to the components of LEAP.

The district is already planning carefully to ensure the sustainability of LEAP. For example, through the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), ECISD has integrated PBC into the culture of the district. Further, LEAP prepares educators to meet the rigorous PBC standards set by TIA. Accordingly, ECISD is targeting this state revenue source to support the PBC component of LEAP after the grant period.

As Table 10 indicates (see page 42), ECISD is aligning the financial needs for sustainability with specific funding sources.

LEAP is using TSL funding to develop and institutionalize different ways of conducting business in ECISD. Just as ECISD established the building blocks for LEAP by institutionalizing various initiatives and leveraging multiple funding sources, it is taking the same approach to sustain the initiative beyond the length of the grant.

Table 10. Projected Three Year Budget to Sustain LEAP's Core Components

Categories	Projected Financial Needs 2026-27—2028-29	Projected Funding Sources
ELAR and math professional development	$400,000	Title II ESSA
A-ILTs	$350,000	District General Fund
Targeted teacher recruitment	$75,000	TIA
Novice teacher induction program	$150,000	Title II ESSA
Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy	$100,000	District General Fund
Performance-based compensation	$2,000,000	TIA
Serving diverse learners training	$125,000	Title I and Title II
Principal High-Need Schools Recruitment Program	$100,000	District General Fund
Total	$3,300,000	Local (DGF), State (TIA), Federal (Title I and Title II ESSA)

Building a Broad Base of Support. The base of support for this initiative, and for the sustainability plan, is both extensive and exemplary (see Appendix C for support letters). The Superintendent, Board President, and teachers association (TSTA) all support LEAP. The initiative also has the support of the Odessa Chamber of Commerce which recognizes the importance of effective recruitment, development, and retention strategies for the educational workforce. Moreover, LEAP builds on partnerships with six regional HSIs (University of Texas-Permian Basin, Odessa College, University of Texas-El Paso, Texas Tech University, Sul Ross State University, and Angelo State University). These partnerships support the recruitment and development of a diverse, well-prepared teacher workforce for years to come. LEAP builds on these exceptional relationships to ensure the project's long-term success.

Conclusion

LEAP addresses the two absolute priorities and two competitive preference priorities. Below is a summary description of how they are embedded in the proposal.

Absolute Priority 1: HCMS or PBCS. LEAP focuses fully on improving and expanding ECISD's Human Capital Management System. LEAP provides differentiated, targeted professional development to increase instructional effectiveness. LEAP establishes a PBCS, in collaboration with teachers and principals, which recognizes and rewards effective instruction, leadership, and students' ELAR and math achievement. It also establishes new teacher leadership roles.

Absolute Priority 2: High-Need Schools. LEAP builds the capacity of teachers, principals, and A-ILTs at 10 high-need schools in ECISD. These high-need schools, where 62% to 97% of students are on free or reduced-price lunch, are the focus of LEAP.

Competitive Preference Priority 1: Promoting Equity in Student Access. LEAP develops and retains talent at high-need schools through a multi-pronged strategy. It accelerates the abilities of novice teachers to be effective instructors. It strengthens the instructional leadership of principals and establishes A-ILTs to increase instructional leadership capacity. LEAP develops the instructional ability of ELAR and math teachers to effectively serve diverse learners. LEAP also provides a Principal High-Need Schools Recruitment Program to encourage effective principals to move to and remain at high-need schools.

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Supporting a Diverse Educator Workforce. LEAP increases educator diversity by implementing key strategies to recruit, support, and retain diverse teachers at high-need schools. The strategy includes partnering with HSIs for recruitment and developing the skills of principals to create a supportive, inclusive school culture for all educators and students. It also creates an Advanced Teacher Leadership Academy to transition effective, diverse teachers into leadership positions.