Pathways and Opportunities for Winona Educators to get Results for Underserved

Populations (POWER-UP)

Table of Contents

Introduction

The long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on students show loss of learning from which educators will need to recover for years to come. In fact, the pandemic-related school closures and learning disruptions may cost school-aged children an estimated 6 to 9 percent of their lifetime earnings (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2020). The Education Recovery Scorecard, a collaboration with researchers at the Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University and Stanford University's Educational Opportunity Project, reported that, nationally, from 2019 to 2022 the median school district lost about a half a year's worth of achievement growth in math and about a quarter of a year in reading (Fahle et al., 2022). Across Texas, the researchers estimated students lost about five months (using a 9-month school year) in math and about one month in reading from 2019 to 2022 (Education Recovery Scorecard, 2023). Effective teachers in classrooms is an efficient means to overcome learning loss over the long term. Unfortunately, often the least experienced teachers are placed in the most challenging schools, where students were likely to have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 (Bailey et al., 2021; Pier et al., 2021).

Winona Independent School District (ISD), a rural Texas Local Education Agency (LEA), is partnering with the nonprofit National Institute for Excellence in Teaching to apply for a Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program grant to implement a comprehensive, data-driven human capital management system (HCMS) that includes performance-based compensation and career advancement opportunities (Absolute Priority 1). Through Pathways and Opportunities for Winona Educators to get Results for Underserved Populations (POWER-UP), Winona ISD aims to meet the project objectives of improving teacher effectiveness, school

leader effectiveness, and student achievement in its three high-need schools (<u>Absolute Priority</u> <u>2</u>).

POWER-UP will directly impact 6 school leaders, 93 teachers, and 1,081 students through the implementation of five HCMS strategies/activities: 1) create a clear vision for HCMS improvement and alignment; 2) implement a valid and reliable evaluation to accurately measure teacher and school leader effectiveness; 3) establish formal, instructionally focused roles for teacher leaders; 4) implement job-embedded professional learning for teachers and school leaders; and 5) create and implement a performance-based compensation system for teachers and school leaders.

POWER-UP will provide necessary resources to enhance Winona ISD's current HCMS, ensuring an effective and aligned HCMS that supports hiring, developing, and retaining an effective and diverse educator workforce in an inclusive environment (<u>Competitive Preference</u> <u>Priority 1; Competitive Preference Priority 2</u>).

A. Need for Project

(i) Identifying and addressing gaps/weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities

Winona ISD acknowledges the significance of enhancing its HCMS to effectively tackle the challenges it currently confronts and to further build upon the progress it has achieved thus far. The recommendations put forth by the Center for American Progress provide valuable insights into enhancing the district's HCMS. These recommendations include implementing mentorship programs for new teachers, providing high-quality professional development with regular feedback opportunities, offering more career advancement and leadership roles, and ensuring competitive compensation (Konoske-Graf et al., 2016). A stable school workforce contributes to better working relationships and maintaining and advancing organizational

2

knowledge (Ford & Forsyth, 2021), and inversely, teacher turnover has persistent negative effects on teacher quality and student achievement (Sorensen & Ladd, 2020). By adopting these recommendations, Winona ISD aims to create a supportive and stable school workforce, fostering strong working relationships among educators and retaining valuable organizational knowledge. Winona ISD is committed to implementing these recommendations, and POWER-UP would provide powerful resources to support those efforts.

Winona Independent School District (ISD) is situated in the northeastern part of Smith County in Texas, positioned between Dallas, Texas, and Shreveport, Louisiana, with Tyler, Texas, located 15 miles to the south, offering medical and educational facilities. The district provides comprehensive educational programs from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade, catering to a wide range of students. Within the school district, there exists a strong sense of community pride and high expectations for educational quality, which serve as motivating factors in the district's pursuit of excellence. The district includes three schools, all of which meet the TSL definition of high-need (Table 1; Appendix E). Overall, approximately 86% of students in the district are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, highlighting the importance of addressing equity and providing support to students facing economic challenges.

Table 1. Winona Independent School District – School Overview

Campus Name	School Type	% Economically Disadvantaged
Winona High School	High	78%
Winona Middle School	Middle / Junior High	90%
Winona Elementary School	Elementary	89%

Winona ISD's student population reflects a diverse community. The district's student

body comprises various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Approximately 43% of students identify as white, 18% as African American, and around 34% as Hispanic. This diversity underscores the district's commitment to fostering an inclusive and multicultural learning environment that values and respects the backgrounds and experiences of all students. Furthermore, Winona ISD recognizes the needs of English learners within its student population. Approximately 17% of students are English learners, indicating the importance of providing appropriate language support and resources to ensure their academic success and integration within the school community.

Winona ISD recognizes the importance of fostering diversity and representation within its educator workforce to better align with the demographics of its student population. Currently, the percentage of Hispanic teachers in the district (3%) does not closely reflect the percentage of Hispanic students (34%). By acknowledging and embracing the diversity within its student body, Winona ISD is dedicated to creating an inclusive and equitable educational environment that promotes the academic and personal growth of all students, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or language background.

While Winona ISD has made notable progress in improving student performance, there is still a need to further narrow the gap between the district's performance and that of the state. For example, in 2018, Winona students performed 12 percentage points below the statewide average in mathematics. However, by 2022, Winona students had made significant progress and narrowed the gap to just 3 percentage points compared to students statewide. This improvement demonstrates the district's commitment to enhancing mathematics education and the dedication of its students and educators. This proposal would enable the district to raise the bar even higher

– with the goal of supporting every teacher to support each student in reaching proficiency in math.

Figure 1. Winona ISD Student Performance Compared to the State

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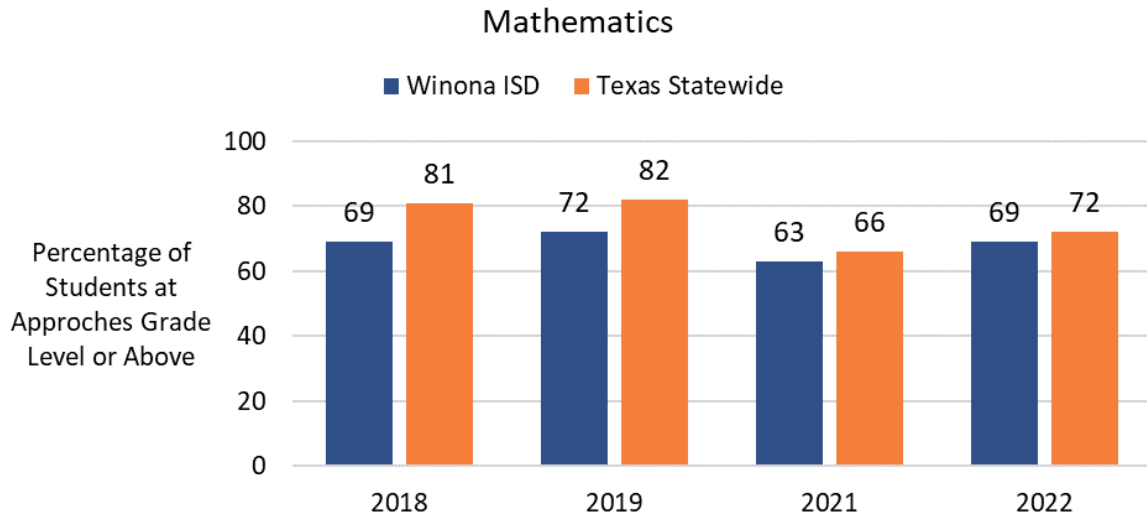
(ii) Build on similar efforts to improve relevant outcomes using existing funding streams

State policy and priorities alignment. The key elements of this proposal align to key state level policy and funding priorities. The state ESSA strategic priorities emphasize recruiting, supporting, and retaining educators, including through a focus on building a positive culture, partnerships to strengthen school success, and closing equity gaps through strategies that increase equitable access to effective classroom instruction. These priorities were advanced through the passage of House Bill 3 in 2019, which created significant new state funding sources for performance compensation and new teacher mentoring. These state resources and policies are directly aligned to our proposal.

House BIll 3 created the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA) to reward highly effective teachers, with a heavy emphasis on teachers working with poor, minority and rural students. To access these state funds, districts must submit and receive state approval of a valid and reliable

evaluation system based on multiple measures of performance including student academic achievement growth, as well as a state approved plan for providing performance compensation to teachers. This proposal will support our efforts to develop and implement a plan for meeting these state requirements using NIET's evidence-based, state approved rubrics for teacher and principal evaluation.

In addition, new state requirements for teacher professional learning and coaching for accelerating student learning will be advanced through this proposal. Under House Bill 4545, passed in 2021, districts must provide students with accelerated instruction by an effective teacher with training in aligned instructional materials. Teachers must receive ongoing, differentiated, targeted, personalized support and feedback for improvement, including professional development on instructional materials for supplemental instruction. This proposal enables Winona to create a professional learning and coaching structure led by teacher leaders working with our principals, to provide this support. Investing in building more effective human capital management systems will enable us to continue to raise the bar on our expectations for great classroom teaching, and help our students to reach their goals.

(iii) Part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning

POWER-UP is a comprehensive initiative designed to strengthen the Winona ISD HCMS by fostering coherence and shared goals among educators. By providing the necessary structures, protocols, and tools, this proposed project aims to enhance instructional expertise through collaborative efforts. One key feature of the project is to establish an equitable, rigorous, valid, reliable, and objective process for evaluating educator effectiveness within the district. This evaluation process will incorporate multiple performance measures, including student academic achievement, ensuring a comprehensive assessment of educators' capabilities and contributions.

6

Currently, Winona ISD utilizes NIET's Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric to support teacher growth. This rubric includes four domains and 26 indicators that describe teaching practices ranging from unsatisfactory to exemplary. As educators progress towards the exemplary level, they shift from teacher-directed instruction to a more student-centered approach, fostering student investment and ownership in their learning experiences, aligning with Texas' expectations for college and career standards.

In addition to the teacher rubric, the district plans to adopt NIET's Principal Standards Rubric to support the improvement of school leaders. This rubric outlines excellence in school leadership through six domains: school mission, vision, and strategic goal setting; instructional leadership; capacity building; school environment/community and campus climate; ethics and integrity; and school operations/management. These domains, along with their research-based performance indicators, serve as valuable tools for leadership, coaching, support, and evaluation.

By utilizing both of NIET's rubrics, Winona ISD provides consistent support to teachers and school leaders, fostering a common language and processes. This alignment strengthens the overall HCMS, promotes effective instructional practices, and creates a unified approach to enhancing student learning and achievement throughout the district.

NIET's Educator Effectiveness Preparation & Support System (EE PASS), which provides online access to professional development, training, evaluator certification, and data management through a single port of entry, further supports integration of the HCMS. Resources within EE PASS (Appendix F5) include filmed classroom lessons, coaching sessions, teacher professional development sessions, and instructional leadership meetings, as well as key TAP System implementation documents, such as the TAP Leadership Handbook and the TAP Evaluation and Compensation Guide. Winona ISD educators will use this system to facilitate use

7

of educator effectiveness data to make management decisions, such as recruitment, hiring, placement, professional development, advancement, compensation, retention, and dismissal.

(iv) Address the needs of the target population or other identified needs

POWER-UP will address the needs of Winona ISD in multiple ways. The district believes that this comprehensive system supports implementation of sustainable strategies that will allow them to address the root causes underlying its challenges, weaknesses and gaps, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Gaps and Weaknesses Aligned to STRONG Strategies for Improvement

Gaps of Weaknesses/Root Causes	Strategies
Need to implement an evaluation system for school leaders that incorporates observations that are coupled with actionable feedback	Implement a valid and reliable evaluation to accurately measure teacher and school leader effectiveness
Need to offer additional opportunities for career advancement to support the development of a plan to build a leadership pipeline	Establish formal, instructionally focused roles for teacher leaders
Need for professional development that is job-embedded and directly ties to student and educator needs, specifically to support new teachers	Implement job-embedded professional learning for teachers and school leaders
Need to offer more recruitment and reward incentives to compete with salaries of nearby larger districts	Create and implement a performance-based compensation system for teachers and school leaders.

8

Need to more strongly connect evaluation to professional learning; need to provide additional professional learning opportunities to district leaders to support change management and sustainability	Create a clear vision for HCMS improvement and alignment

POWER-UP will support the needs of Winona ISD. The district needs to be able to train and support new teachers coming from a wide diversity of preparation experiences, who are prepared to teach their diverse student population, requiring strengthening of its structures and training. To meet this need, the POWER-UP will include intensive on-site support for district leaders, school leaders, and teacher leaders:

- Quarterly district leader coaching and support sessions, using the District Instructional Framework (F3) will be conducted to ensure alignment and enhancement of HCMS elements, monitor the implementation of the TAP System in schools, and cultivate stakeholder support for impactful systems change.

- Monthly school leader training and support sessions will provide comprehensive training on evaluation and leadership practices. Additionally, NIET will offer coaching support to principals to enable them to effectively plan and facilitate effective leadership team meetings and to support instructional capacity building of teachers.

- Monthly teacher leader training and coaching sessions will be conducted, with NIET offering tailored assistance to support teacher leaders in deepening their understanding of effective instructional practices. This support will enable Winona ISD teacher leaders to lead impactful professional learning sessions for teachers with varying levels of experience.

9

**B. Quality of the Project Design (25 points)**

(i) Demonstrates a rationale

The rationale behind POWER-UP is that increases in teacher and school leader effectiveness will result from both increases in the skills of current educators as well as improved recruitment and retention of effective, diverse educators due to the combination of increased support and opportunities for leadership roles and additional compensation (i.e., Berry et al., 2010; Center for American Progress, 2014; Hudgens et al., 2020; Hudson, 2010). Drawing on this rationale, Winona ISD will develop coherent HCMS structures through a clear vision for improvement and a plan for continuing to build alignment across elements of the HCMS. Additionally, Winona will establish systems to support educators and their professional growth through four research-based strategies that form the foundation of the TAP System and our school-level strategies: 1) create a clear vision for HCMS improvement and alignment; 2) implement a valid and reliable evaluation to accurately measure teacher and school leader effectiveness; 3) establish formal, instructionally focused roles for teacher leaders; 4) implement job-embedded professional learning for teachers and school leaders. These elements are further supported by a fifth strategy at the district level, dedicated to creating and implementing a performance-based compensation system for teachers and school leaders. Together, these strategies form a project design that is aimed at improving teacher and school leader effectiveness and, as a result, raising student achievement.

The TAP System theory of action has an extensive record of effectiveness in supporting high-need districts in multiple states to increase student achievement. Examinations of the impact of the TAP System across several locations by different researchers using varied methodological frameworks consistently show its positive impacts on student and school

10

outcomes (Barnett & Wills, 2016; Cohodes et al., 2023; Eren, 2019; Leutscher et al., in press; Mann et al., 2013; Schacter & Thum, 2005; Solmon et al., 2007). Existing TAP System schools in Texas have experienced success in raising student achievement in high-need schools as illustrated below (Figure 3). Logis, Hudgens, and Barnett (2018) employed a quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of the TAP System implementation on student achievement in Texas. Results showed that schools that implemented the TAP System for at least two consecutive years outperformed their propensity-matched schools, as measured by the state assessment. Additionally, paired sample t tests suggested that the average student achievement growth in TAP System schools was statistically significant for math ($t(27) = 3.74$, $p = .001$) and reading ($t(27) = 2.85$, $p < .01$). In contrast, the average student achievement growth did not reach statistical significance in matched non-TAP System schools for either subject area.

Figure 2. Texas TAP System Schools Outperform Matched Comparison Schools
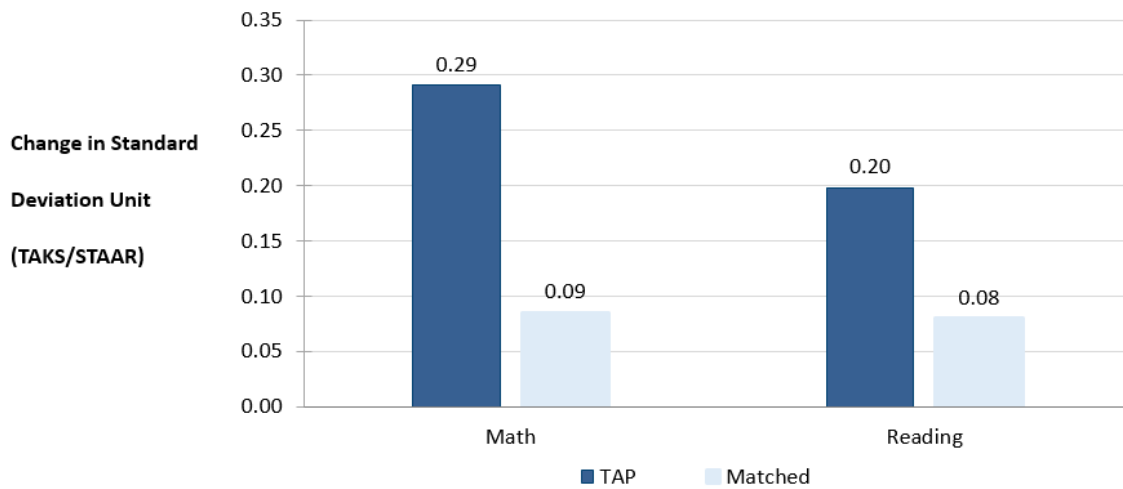
An evaluation of the impact of the TAP System in high-need schools in Louisiana found a statistically significant and positive effect on math achievement during the second and third year of TAP System implementation (Eren, 2019). By the third year, the effect was reported to be "roughly equal to the observed effect from a one standard deviation increase in teacher

quality" (p. 880). The author identified the TAP System as a cost-effective program and suggested future incentive programs include elements of the TAP System such as 1) multiple performance metrics (e.g., instructional practices and student performance), 2) both individual and group-based incentives, and 3) regular feedback to teachers about performance (Eren, 2019).

Another study (Cohodes et al., 2023) examined long-term impacts for eighth grade students enrolled in South Carolina schools implementing the TAP System. Exposure to the TAP System in eighth grade had positive impacts on long-run educational attainment: 1) increased likelihood of twelfth grade enrollment and 2) increased likelihood of on-time high school graduation. TAP System exposure also had positive social benefits: 1) reduced arrest rates in adolescence and early adulthood and 2) less reliance on social welfare programs in adulthood. The benefits improved with more exposure to the TAP System: students exposed to the TAP System for four years had an improvement in twelfth grade enrollment rate more than three times that of students exposed for one year. Overall, the analyses of the impact of the TAP System showed that "it improved longer-term educational attainment and reduced criminal activity

(ii) Relevant literature review, project implementation plan, and appropriate methods

The TAP System's theory of action is grounded in the literature (for a full list of the references, see Appendix F7). Studies conducted across multiple grade levels, multiple locations, and multiple years consistently demonstrate the positive impact of the TAP System on school leader (Hudgens & Barnett, 2017), teacher (Leutscher & Barnett, 2020; Logis et al., 2022), and student (Cohodes et al., 2023; Eren, 2019; Mann et al., 2013; Springer et al., 2014) outcomes. The positive impact of the TAP System can be attributed to its four elements – multiple career paths, ongoing applied professional growth, instructionally focused accountability, and performance-based compensation (PBC) – which both individually and as a whole have been

12

shown to promote educational outcomes (see Figure 3). A comprehensive approach to school reform that focuses on supportive structures for teachers has been shown to be highly effective for improving student achievement (Park et al., 2019).

Figure 3. The Core Elements of the TAP System

Multiple Career Paths. Increasingly, schools are shifting away from traditional leadership structures toward an approach in which administrators work with teacher leaders to drive instructional improvements (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Teacher leadership roles, such as the mentor and master teacher roles in the TAP System's multiple career paths structure, allow effective teachers to utilize their expertise through modeling effective instruction and mentoring other teachers (Nguyen et al., 2020; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Moreover, studies show that teacher leadership is associated with positive school, teacher, and student outcomes, including school instructional improvement; teacher job satisfaction, self-esteem, effectiveness, and retention; as well as student achievement (Muijs & Harris, 2003; Schott et al., 2020; Shen et al., 2020; Snoek & Volman, 2014; Supovitz, 2018). These studies provide compelling evidence of teacher leadership's pivotal role in driving school improvement.

13

Ongoing Applied Professional Growth. Effective teacher professional development is key for improving instructional practices and student outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Hill et al., 2022). The ongoing applied professional growth element of the TAP System adheres to the features of professional development that research has found to be effective: models effective practice, incorporates active learning, promotes collaboration among teachers, can be sustained over time, and relates to teacher needs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Desimone et al., 2002). Indeed, research shows that teacher learning and student achievement increase when professional development is teacher-led, ongoing, collaborative, and relevant for teachers (Archibald et al., 2011; Bowgren & Sever, 2010; Doğan & Adams, 2018; Hill & Papay, 2022).

Instructionally Focused Accountability. To improve classroom instruction, thorough assessment of teachers' practices that is coupled with high-quality feedback is essential. Studies show that teacher evaluation and support systems that include observation and follow-up feedback have positive effects on self-reflection and collaboration, instructional practices, and student performance (Kraft et al., 2020; Ritter & Barnett, 2016; Song et al., 2021; Therriault et al., 2020). Additionally, research shows that to be impactful, feedback needs to be specific, actionable, and objective (Frasier, 2022; Scheeler et al., 2004; Steinberg & Sartain, 2015; Taylor & Tyler, 2012; Thurlings et al., 2013; Tuma et al., 2018). The TAP System's instructionally focused accountability centers around implementing evaluation systems that include multiple observation and feedback cycles to improve instructional quality and student performance.

Performance-based Compensation. PBC is one strategy for HCMS that has been associated with improved teacher and student outcomes (Cohodes et al., 2023; Eren, 2019; Hanushek et al., 2023; Waynet et al., 2018). A report of a Teacher Incentive Fund program found that teachers in schools implementing PBC reported greater job satisfaction, had more

14

improvement in observation scores, and had more improvement in student achievement compared to teachers in control schools (Chiang et al., 2017). Additionally, a meta-analysis showed that the positive effects of teacher merit pay on student achievement were equivalent to about four additional weeks of learning (Pham et al., 2020). PBC in the TAP System aligns with the best practices identified in the literature including employing multiple performance measures (both individual and group/school), providing comprehensive individual feedback alongside professional development opportunities, fostering strong leadership, conducting reliable analysis of student performance, and offering substantial award amounts (Boyd et al., 2005; Chingos & West, 2012; Eren, 2019; Ritter & Barnett, 2013).

District-level Support. Improvement at the school level requires districts to shift the role of the central office personnel as overseers to that of collaborators with educators to enact district initiatives and goals (Bjork & Blasé, 2009) and build their capacity for improvement (Honig et al., 2010). A district-level focus on instructional leadership has the potential to increase the effectiveness of principals (Goldring et al., 2018). A recent report showed that the impact of having an effective principal on student achievement is on par with the impact of having a similarly effective teacher (Grissom et al., 2021).

Character education. Character education is a learning process through which students and adults in a school community understand, care about, and act on core values such as respect, justice, civic virtue, and responsibility for themselves and others (Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, 2005). The essential purpose of character education is to equip students with the intellectual skills to make wise decisions on their own (The Jubilee Centre for Character & Virtues, 2022). Character education helps students develop positive personal traits and dispositions that are beneficial for lifelong success (Encalade & Staggs, 2021). Research

evidence supports the importance of character education for developing student social and emotional skills (e.g., Durlak et al., 2011; Goldberg et al., 2019), regulating student behavior and discipline (e.g., Holtzapple et al., 2011; Parker et al., 2010;), enhancing school climate (e.g., Allensworth & Hart, 2018), and advancing student achievement (e.g., Jeynes, 2019; McCormick et al., 2021). As noted in the Framework for Character Education in Schools released by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2022), "In a broad sense, character education permeates all subjects, wider school activities, and a general school ethos. … The sensible question to ask about a school's character education strategy is not, therefore, whether such education does occur, but whether it is intentional, planned, organized, and reflective, or assumed, unconscious, reactive, and random." Winona ISD will use this grant opportunity to intentionally use the structures of the TAP System to support character education efforts.

   Project implementation plan and appropriate methods. The partners in this grant have developed a high-quality plan for project implementation and successful achievement of objectives. Project strategies will be accomplished using key activities described in detail next (see Table 3 for an overview).

Table 3. Overview of POWER-UP Strategies and Activities

Strategy	Key Activities
Implement a valid and reliable evaluation to accurately measure teacher and school leader effectiveness	• Train teacher and principal evaluators on the evaluation process using the NIET rubrics. • Perform multiple cycles of observation and feedback for school leaders and teachers. • Use evaluation data to inform human capital decisions.

Create formal teacher leadership positions for teachers with strong instructional skills	• Establish teacher leadership roles and responsibilities • Recruit and employ qualified individuals as teacher leaders. • Provide ongoing on-site support, coaching, and training specifically tailored to enhance the professional growth of teacher leaders in their job responsibilities.
Implement job-embedded professional learning for teachers and school leaders	• Train school leadership teams to plan, deliver, monitor and improve job-embedded professional learning • Implement weekly collaborative learning opportunities for teachers through cluster meetings • Provide professional development for school leaders
Create and implement a performance-based compensation system for teachers and school leaders	• Establish a PBCS Committee • Create and implement a PBCS for teachers that is based on multiple performance metrics • Create and implement a PBCS for school leader that is based on multiple performance metrics
Create a clear vision for HCMS improvement and alignment	• Formulate a plan for aligning the TAP System with the overarching goals of the district. • Develop a comprehensive plan to actively engage stakeholders in the transformative process of the systems. • Provide specialized coaching and guidance to district leaders to facilitate the successful implementation of a multi-year plan aimed at enhancing the HCMS.

Implement a valid and reliable evaluation to accurately measure teacher and school leader effectiveness

Winona ISD is committed to fostering a shared understanding of effective classroom teaching that aligns with student learning growth and promotes consistency in observation scores across classrooms and schools. To achieve this, comprehensive training will be provided to district leaders, school leaders, and teacher leaders, equipping them with the necessary skills to accurately utilize the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric (Appendix F2) and the NIET Principal Standards Rubric (Appendix F3). Winona ISD already uses NIET's Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric, and will transition to using NIET's Principal Standards Rubric to support alignment around process and language. Ensuring evaluators' expertise remains current, annual certification will be required for all evaluators.

The evaluator training also provides district and school leaders with a structured approach to delivering high-quality feedback that directly influences instructional practices and student achievement. Through this process, teachers will receive both an area of reinforcement, acknowledging an area of strength, and an area of refinement, identifying an area for growth. Specific follow-up, coaching, and support will be provided in the classroom to strengthen teaching and learning. Furthermore, data on areas of growth will be analyzed to inform the design of weekly job-embedded professional development sessions (called cluster meetings n TAP schools) tailored to address these identified needs, providing teachers with ongoing learning opportunities.

Principal supervisors will engage in a comprehensive evaluation process to assess principal practice and support their professional growth. This process includes conducting

beginning, middle, and end-of-year conferences with school leaders, as well as completing two cycles of evidence/artifact collections and observations.

For classroom teachers and teacher leaders, multiple cycles of formal observation will be conducted, providing clear evidence of their instructional practices and the corresponding student learning outcomes. Within two days of each observation, an in-person post-conference will be held, delivering actionable feedback aimed at continuous improvement. These evaluation procedures ensure that principal supervisors and evaluators provide high-quality feedback that supports the development of both school leaders and teachers. The goal is to foster a culture of ongoing improvement and enhance the overall quality of teaching and learning in the district.

Evaluation data from multiple measures of performance, including both teacher and student learning measures, will inform retention decisions and provide information to guide the equitable placement of effective and highly effective teachers. Winona ISD will use NIET's Educator Effectiveness Preparation and Support System (EE PASS), a web-based portal, to support analysis and tracking of evaluation data and trends (Appendix F4). This data will also be used to identify and recruit candidates for teacher leadership roles. Data from principal evaluations will be used to inform retention and placement decisions for leaders, as well as inform high-quality coaching and professional learning opportunities that will be differentiated based on individual needs. Effective use of the evaluation systems, inclusive of high-quality coaching and support encourages teachers and school leaders to stay in the role (Competitive Preference Priority 1).

Create formal teacher leadership positions for teachers with strong instructional skills

The district will create two school-based roles: master teachers and mentor teachers. Master teachers will support approximately 15-20 classroom teachers, lead professional learning,

conduct classroom observations and provide feedback, and participate in the school leadership

team. Mentor teachers, while remaining in the classroom, will be released for a designated

amount of time each week to collaborate with the master teacher to support professional

learning, observe classroom practice, provide intentional support for new teachers, and serve on

the school leadership team. Mentor teachers will support approximately 8-10 classroom teachers.

These teacher leaders will be interviewed, hired, and trained in the first year of the grant.

One key POWER-UP approach is to use teacher leader roles to attract and retain highly

effective teachers and develop a leadership pipeline. The opportunity to receive high-quality

support for improvement is a strong tool for recruiting effective teachers, as are leadership roles

that enable teachers to remain connected to the classroom while playing a role in school

leadership. Formal leadership roles enable teacher leaders to influence their colleagues to engage

in instructional improvement (Supovitz, 2018). This creates a pipeline of leadership in schools,

with effective classroom teachers moving into mentor or master roles as well as administrator

positions. Strategic and intentional recruitment activities will be guided and supported by district

and school leaders.

Implement job-embedded professional learning for teachers and school leaders

The district will work with NIET to train school leaders to lead a high-functioning,

school-wide Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), which is essential to the success of the TAP

System. The ILT, led by the principal and joined by teacher leaders, develops the school plan for

improving student learning. NIET's training builds the capacity of ILTs to manage and

implement research-driven practices, utilize high-impact levers for improving instruction, lead

collaborative learning teams, conduct meaningful observations and ensure all teachers benefit

from individual coaching. District leaders will participate in the training, since they play an

20

important role in reviewing existing practices and expenditures to ensure that school-based, job embedded professional learning is the primary mechanism for teacher professional learning.

The Project Director, in collaboration with NIET, will provide intensive, practice-based training for teacher leaders to enable them to provide high-quality professional learning for classroom teachers (Competitive Preference Priority 1). Our training and support visits in year one will focus on learning recovery and acceleration, to address immediate classroom needs. In addition, teacher leaders will be trained to lead weekly collaborative professional learning teams, analyze teacher and student data, identify and field test student learning strategies, and develop coaching plans for classroom teachers. This intensive core training will occur during the first year of the grant.

Create and implement a performance-based compensation system for teachers and school leaders

The TAP System supports districts to use performance-based compensation for high-performing teacher leaders who lead professional learning for groups of teachers as well as provide coaching and support for individual classroom teachers in their schools. Master teachers and mentor teachers receive salary augmentations ($10,00 and $3,000, respectively) for taking on additional responsibilities. The use of teacher leaders allows the district to better provide all teachers with high-quality opportunities to improve their skills, which in turn, will be rewarded with performance-based compensation.

Additionally, all educators will be able to earn performance-based compensation based on 1) observations ratings and 2) student growth. Teacher observation ratings are based on multiple observations using the NIET Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric. A weighted average of observation ratings and responsibility indicators creates an overall, end-of-year Skills,

21

Knowledge, and Responsibility (SKR) score for each teacher. The SKR scores range from a 1.0 (unsatisfactory performance) to 5.0 (exemplary performance) in half point increments. For school leaders, final ratings on the Principal Standards Rubric will be used. Scores also range from a 1.0 (unsatisfactory performance) to 5.0 (exemplary performance) in half point increments.

To determine the measure(s) for student growth, the district will form a Performance-based Compensation System Committee. This committee will be responsible for overseeing the alignment of PBCS measures with the district's mission, goals, and objectives. The committee will play a crucial role in communicating the functioning of the PBCS to key stakeholders, including teachers, school leaders, and other relevant personnel. They will provide clarity on how PBC will be calculated and distributed, fostering transparency and understanding throughout the process. Another important task of the committee will be to monitor the timely calculation and distribution of performance awards. By ensuring accuracy and efficiency in this area, they will contribute to the overall success of the PBCS.

Finally, the committee will actively explore how the PBCS can complement other incentives within the larger Human Capital Management System (HCMS) strategy. This collaborative approach will maximize the effectiveness of the various components of the HCMS, leading to enhanced outcomes for educators and students alike.

Create a clear vision for HCMS improvement and alignment

Winona ISD will engage NIET to provide coaching and training for district leaders to plan for effective implementation in order to 1) assess district structures and create a plan for aligning elements of their HCMS to district goals; 2) strengthen evaluation processes to produce valid and reliable measures of teacher and principal performance; 3) identify key decision points where performance data will drive HCMS decisions including recruitment, hiring, placement,

22

retention, career advancement, and dismissal; and 4) refine a strategic compensation plan that will advance a more effective staffing structure and more diverse faculty in schools.

The district sees a growing opportunity to strengthen the support provided to educators, so that they can help their students build a well-rounded skill set, including often less emphasized character traits such as autonomy, curiosity, judgment, reasoning, and resourcefulness. Winona ISD and NIET will work collaboratively to support teachers effectively integrating and delivering character education within the classroom environment. Programmatic solutions have offered short-term triage as schools seek to recover learning loss and navigate virtual learning situations; however, educators are needing support that will build systems centered on research-based best practices and sound teaching to embed character and social-emotional learning support within their work without adding more to their plate. Winona ISD's solution to this is to integrate character education into HCMS improvements.

Supporting teacher educators requires a collaborative effort that begins at the district level. This is even more true for supporting new teachers who are making the transition from preparation to practice. Winona ISD is committed to support induction efforts through this collaborative effort in an effort to establish structures and a network of support that builds the confidence of new teachers as professional educators. NIET will support this work by ensuring the individuals supporting induction have knowledge of effective instructional practices, high-quality strategies to coach novice teachers, and create opportunities for collaborative learning through program design (i.e., cluster meetings). NIET will support Winona ISD to identify current practices, areas of strength, and opportunities for improvement; establish a timeline for implementation and recommended training and consultation needs; and prioritize professional learning based on needs.

23

(iii) Methods of evaluation provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment

The project evaluation will be led by NIET's Research and Evaluation Department, a department with extensive experience supporting large-scale evaluations of education programs (Appendix B). The evaluator will work collaboratively to lead a formative and summative evaluation with two purposes: 1) to supply grant partners with timely data to improve the project for the populations served and 2) to assess program impacts. The evaluation plan aligns with the project's logic model stating that if programmatic structures, trainings, and supports are put in place at the district and school level to help strengthen and align district HCMS, there will be 1) an increase in teacher effectiveness, 2) an increase in school leader effectiveness, and 3) improvement in student achievement. The evaluation plan (Appendix F6) is organized around four research questions aligned with the nine Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 measures; it will serve as a working document to ensure the project is on track to meet objectives.

The project's logic model (Appendix A) will be used to communicate clearly the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes expected from the intervention. The evaluator will identify program implementation measures and data collection instruments that can be embedded into the program delivery (such as systems for tracking training session attendance and engagement) as well as data reporting systems that can be used to drive continuous monitoring and improvement of program implementation. The evaluator will track program progress and analyze fidelity of implementation (Research Question [RQ] 1: How is the project being implemented and to what extent is implementation sustainable?). Qualitative data used to assess fidelity of implementation will include program artifacts, surveys, and interviews with partners. NIET's annual school review process, which consists

24

of classroom, ILT, and PLC observations, will serve as one of these critical data sources for assessing fidelity of implementation and providing feedback to district and school leaders.

Each year, the evaluator will interview school and district personnel to assess perceived quality of the program and program impact. To ensure reliability and validity, interview responses will be used in combination with a review of documents and system reports. This data triangulation allows for a higher level of validity in the qualitative research process. Interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and coded by at least two researchers. This work, along with analyses of implementation fidelity measures, will help identify key variables that impact implementation.

Qualitative and quantitative data will also be used to address the remaining research questions about program impact (RQ2: What are the effects of participation in the project on teacher outcomes? RQ3: What are the effects of participation in the project on principal and other school leader outcomes? RQ4: What are the effects of participation in the project on student achievement?). In addition to interview and survey data, the evaluator will obtain longitudinal administrative data from the district and the state. These data will include administrative records (e.g., position vacancies, new hires, and teacher and school leader demographics), retention rates and evaluation ratings for teachers and school leaders, and student outcomes (primarily student achievement).

The evaluation will incorporate regular communication between the evaluator, key project personnel, and each district through quarterly update meetings to review plans, progress, and preliminary data. As detailed in the evaluation plan, the evaluator will provide timely summaries of findings from analyses of program implementation and impact data. For example, program data and artifacts will be discussed during monthly meetings with the

25

project director, and educator effectiveness and student achievement data will be examined and shared with key personnel annually. At the conclusion of the grant, the evaluator will assess the overall accomplishment of goals and conduct a thorough analysis of lessons learned.

Winona ISD and NIET will disseminate reports at the local, state, and national levels through newsletters, research and policy reports, professional conferences, social media, and other public forums throughout the year. At the **local level**, Winona will establish quarterly communications to monitor progress, ensure implementation is on track, address any challenges, and share the results of the project. Additionally, NIET's Communications team will work with Winona to promote schools' success in local media. Ongoing communications through social media, email, and the district website will build awareness, understanding, and support for the HCMS/PBCS among teachers, principals, other school personnel, and the community (Appendix F8). NIET will provide Winona with opportunities to share results at the national level through NIET annual conferences, research and policy reports, and social media.

At the **state level**, information about project implementation and findings will be shared with community stakeholders in Texas through presentations at state and regional conferences, such as the Southwest Regional Education Association annual meeting. Finally, at the **national level**, the project results will be disseminated via public repositories (e.g., the Public Domain Clearinghouse on Communities360, a portal for the U.S. Department of Education's Effective Education Development grantee communities), presented at professional conferences (e.g., American Educational Research Association, National Forum to Advance Rural Education, and National Teacher Leadership Conference), and shared at

26

meetings with policymakers and legislators. NIET has previously shared promising findings in Washington, D.C. during Congressional Hearings, meetings with policymakers and legislators, and other advocates for educator quality, and it will continue to do so to inform policy and impact educational reform. The evaluator will also incorporate findings into the annual performance reports to address progress toward key performance measures.

C. Quality of the Management Plan (25 points)

Winona ISD will serve as the fiscal agent for the proposed TSL grant. The district has served successfully as the fiscal agent for multiple state grants and will utilize these experiences and strategies to implement the proposed grant's clearly defined responsibilities and milestones on time and within budget. Table 4 is organized around three key components: 1) the project milestones and tasks, 2) key personnel who will perform these tasks, and 3) timeline for completing them. The milestones described on Table 4 are aligned to the logic model (Appendix A) and project description within Section B, including each of the five project strategies represented as S1-S5. The responsible party column denotes who will lead each milestone or key task, and includes: District Administration (DA), Project Director (PDs), school leaders (SL), teacher leaders (TL), and NIET. Quarter 1 begins in October of each year. Milestones are in bold and the activities to meet those milestones are in plain text

Additionally, the submitted budget narrative provides the cost details. Winona ISD's leadership and budget teams are well experienced in managing and executing large-scale projects on time and within budget.

Table 3. Milestone and Key Tasks Summary

Milestones (bold)	Responsible	Quarter			
Key Tasks to meet each milestone (connection to Strategy 1-5)	Party	1	2	3	4

Year 1 - Milestones and Key Tasks					
Complete Project Start-up					
Establish TSL Advisory Board (S5)	PD	✓			
Kickoff meeting with district leadership (S5)	PD, DA, NIET	✓			
Provide data-driven implementation workshops (S1-S4)	PD, DA, NIET	✓			
Establish PBCS Committee (S4, S5)	PD	✓			
Hire communications manager & develop communications plan (S5)	PD		✓		
Establish Project Advisory Committees and Schedules					
TSL Advisory Board meetings (quarterly) (S5)	PD, DA, NIET	✓	✓	✓	✓
PBCS Committee meetings (quarterly) (S4, S5)	PD, DA,		✓	✓	✓
Establish cluster schedule for 2023-24 (S3)	SL, PD, DA	✓			
Hire Master Teachers					
Establish committee for master teacher and mentor teacher selection (S1)	PD, NIET	✓			
Recruit, interview, hire master and mentor teachers (S1)	PD, SL, DA	✓			
Deliver Foundational Training					
CORE Training on elements of the HCMS (evaluation, professional learning, goal setting, instructional leadership, differentiated support for new and under certified teachers) (S1-S5)	NIET, DA, SL	✓	✓	✓	✓
NIET National Conference and Summer Institute (S1-S3)	PD, DA, SL, TL		✓	✓	
Deliver Annual Coaching and Support					

Task	Responsible	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Provide on-site school support and coaching (monthly) (S1-4)	NIET	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide district support (bimonthly) (S4)	NIET	✓	✓	✓	✓
Collaborative learning group for school leaders (quarterly) (S2)	PD, DA, NIET		✓	✓	✓
Collaborative learning group for teacher leaders (quarterly) (S2)	PD, SL, NIET		✓	✓	✓
Begin TAP Implementation for school year 2023-24					
Teacher observations, cluster meetings, ILT meetings (S1-3)	SL, TL	✓	✓	✓	✓
School leader and ILT observations, goal setting (S1-3)	SL, TL	✓	✓	✓	✓
School Reviews (S1-5)	NIET			✓	
Complete Project Monitoring and Evaluation Tasks					
Baseline data collection (observation, survey, interview, student growth) (S4, S5)	PD, Research	✓			
Implementation and quality assurance meetings (monthly) (S1-5)	PD, SS, LEAs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Calculate and Award Performance-based Compensation					
PBCS Committee meetings (quarterly) (S4, S5)	PD, DA	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enter PBC data into data management system (S4)	PD, SL			✓	✓
Calculate PBC awards for teachers and school leaders (S4)	PD, DA			✓	✓
Award PBC for teachers and school leaders (S4)	DA				✓
Years 2 and 3 – Milestones and Tasks					
Conduct Project Advisory Committees (Hire as needed)					
TSL Advisory Board meetings (quarterly) (S1)	PD, DA, NIET	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recruit, interview, hire new teacher leaders (if necessary) (S3)	DA, SL			✓	✓
Continue Delivering Trainings					

29

Quarterly trainings with master teachers (S2 S3)	PD, NIET	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quarterly trainings with school leaders (S1-3)	PD, NIET	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quarterly training to provide differentiated support for new and under certified teachers	PD, NIET	✓	✓	✓	✓
NIET National Conference and Summer Institute (S1-3, S5)	PD, DA, SL, TL			✓	✓
Deliver Annual Coaching and Support					
Provide on-site school support and coaching (monthly) (S1-3, S5)	NIET	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide district support (bi-monthly) (S5)	NIET	✓	✓	✓	✓
Master teacher meeting (quarterly) (S2)	PD, NIET		✓	✓	✓
Continue TAP Implementation for school years 2024-25 and 2025-26					
Teacher observations, cluster meetings, ILT meetings (S1-3)	SL, TL	✓	✓	✓	✓
School leader and ILT observations, goal setting (S1-3)	SL, TL	✓	✓	✓	✓
School Reviews (S1-5)	PD, SS			✓	
Calculate and Award Performance-based Compensation					
PBCS Committee meetings (quarterly) (S4, S5)	PD	✓	✓	✓	✓
Enter PBC data into data management system (S1, S4)	PD, SL	✓	✓	✓	✓
Calculate PBC awards for teachers and school leaders (S4)	PD, DA			✓	✓
Award PBC for teachers and school leaders (S4, S5)	DA				✓
Complete Project Monitoring and Evaluation Tasks					
Implementation and quality assurance meetings (monthly) (S1-5)	PD, DA, NIET	✓	✓	✓	✓
Data collection (observation, survey, interview, growth) (S1-5)	PD, Research			✓	✓

30

| Analyze data for human capital decisions (S1, S4, S5) | PD, DA, SL | | ✓ | ✓ | |

The proposed grant's project team is extremely qualified with the necessary skills, abilities, and experience to carry out this work successfully from implementation to evaluation, reporting, and fiscal management. Key project personnel will be responsible for ensuring that project tasks are completed on time and all milestones are met (Table 5; Appendix B).

Table 5. Project Team Key Personnel

Personnel	Qualification & Duties	% FTE
██ ██████ ████ Principal Investigator	██ █████ ████ Superintendent of Winona ISD, will serve as the principal investigator (PI) for this grant. ██ ████ will be responsible for providing oversight for the project to ensure that evaluation is carried out as planned, advise the project director and ensure the success of the project. ██ ████ has worked in education for 20 years with numerous Independent School Districts in Texas and has experience as a classroom teacher, principal, and assistant superintendent	10%
████ ████ Project Director	████ ████ currently serves as the Director of Curriculum Instruction and Federal Programs at Winona Independent School District (ISD), and will serve as the grant's project director. As project director, ████ will oversee the project and handle administrative and	

	management duties associated with the grant. Specifically, she will participate in the hiring of master and mentor teachers, coordinate NIET training and support days, participate in monitoring calls and grantee meetings, and submit the semi-annual performance reports.	

D. Adequacy of Resources (30 points)

(i) The likelihood that the proposed project will result in system change or improvement

Winona ISD has a clear vision for the systems improvement we will achieve through the TSL grant. We have in place key elements for success including current use of NIET's Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric, which is a core part of the TAP System. Additionally, educators from K-12 and higher education, and the School Board and community leaders are committed to this work, as noted in the included letters of support. As shared by ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ principal of Winona High School, "through this grant, I expect to see increases in my own instructional leadership skills but also the skills of teacher leaders who help me guide our school to success."

The POWER-UP project will build on this foundation to create a high-quality HCMS that supports improvement in student outcomes. This project will result in systems change at three levels. First, the POWER-UP project will create *change in classroom practice* through: 1) multiple measures of teaching and learning to provide the data to set goals and monitor progress, 2) weekly collaborative learning teams led by trained teacher leaders that provide job-embedded professional learning tied to specific classroom challenges, and 3) individual instructional coaching to provide teachers with hands-on guidance as they implement student learning strategies and improve their practice. School leadership teams build overall instructional

32

leadership capacity to drive s*chool-level change*, including using data to set goals, designing professional learning, and ensuring that coaching and feedback are having an impact. District leadership teams create direct communication and collaboration among central office staff working to support *district-level change* and coordinate these changes in the schools they support. This coordination is enhanced as district leaders plan and deliver training for school leaders and use observation and feedback along with school visits to create a consistent and coherent message for principals about priorities and goals.

(ii) Build local capacity that address the needs of the target population

POWER-UP will prioritize building local capacity to provide, improve, and expand services that address responding districts' teacher, school leader, and student needs. Using the District Instructional Framework (Appendix F4), with its clearly defined indicators for instructional excellence, NIET will support district leaders in improving district practices and embedding those improvements in existing structures and systems to ensure sustainability. To strengthen district systems of instructional support for schools, NIET will collaborate with Winona ISD in identifying high-impact action steps to improve instruction and provide coaching for district leaders aligned to those action steps. In addition, NIET will support Winona ISD in establishing district-level structures for delivering professional learning and coaching for school and teacher leaders.

The district leadership team (DLT) provides a critical focal point for strategic support for schools – bringing together central office leaders with different portfolios or areas of focus to work collaboratively to create coherence in these initiatives at the school level. Support for school leaders includes quarterly collaborative meetings initially led by NIET that will later be facilitated by a member of the DLT and focused on specific areas for improvement

33

based on school visits and observations. This collaborative work helps to extend strong practices and develop a shared commitment to district goals while building leadership capacity. Through these meetings, principals will develop a more consistent approach to evaluating classroom practice, reinforcing expectations across buildings. Teacher leaders attend similar collaborative quarterly meetings led by NIET and a designated DLT leader. Quarterly master teacher meetings provide opportunities to address shared problems of practice based on teacher and student needs and develop strategies for supporting more effective professional learning teams at the school level. Master teachers will work together to calibrate their understanding of strong instruction, creating consistency across the district. This systematic approach of targeted support builds capacity at all levels, including acting as a strong influencing factor in teachers' decisions to apply to and remain in jobs in Winona ISD.

(iii) Resources to operate the project beyond the length of the grant

This TSL project has broad support from stakeholders as evidenced by the letters of support submitted by teachers, school leaders, district leaders, the school board, and project partner NIET (Appendix C). Because it is supported and valued by the community, Winona ISD's Superintendent will use his experience in creating long-term funding for this work and has convened senior leaders in the district to create a multi-year financial sustainability and management plan. The district is currently using existing districts funds to support ongoing implementation of some of the project components, and will continue to use these funds moving forward. Funds that are currently being used, and will continue to be used, include local funding and Title II(A) funding. In addition, the district will aggressively pursue other streams of funding that support all efforts to improve educator effectiveness.

The long-term sustainability and success plan for this project includes building collective buy-in, creating capacity through training and support, increasing educator skills and driving student growth, and establishing financial sustainability. The project is exceeding the 50% match requirement through in-kind time and effort of the districts' career teachers and school leaders. Additionally, NIET is providing in-kind support each year of the grant. The transition of the structure of the school day to support cluster meeting schedules, personnel time and effort, and implementation of the HCMS make up the in-kind contribution, thereby demonstrating district commitment to implementing the system in the long-run. In addition, Winona ISD will continue to review other expenditures to determine if funds can be shifted as the improvements supported by the project show impact.

35