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ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 1: HCMS or PBCS

Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township (Applicant/Fiscal Agent), in partnership with 7 other school districts across the country, proposes **Empowering Educators to Excel+ (E3+)**, a *Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program* grant that expands an existing Networked Improvement Community (NIC) to facilitate innovation and improvements across each participating district's Human Capital Management Systems (HCMS) with a specific and purposeful focus on recruiting, retaining, and promoting educators of color. A NIC is a collaborative and structured network that allows individuals and groups to develop, test, and scale improvements, and thereby, accelerate learning (McKay, 2017). This project will expand upon an already successful structure for a multi-state, multi-district consortium of schools and districts to leverage improvements collectively throughout the NIC.

The E3+ project proposes the expansion of a NIC established in the Empowering Educators to Excel (E3) 2017 Teacher and School Leader Incentive program, which includes the original E3 districts ("Core Districts") of Metropolitan School District of Decatur Township (Decatur, IN), Colonial School District (New Castle, DE), Gainesville Independent School District (Gainesville, TX), and Marion County School District (Marion, SC)—while also expanding the NIC to incorporate new, complementary districts ("Companion Districts")



Figure 1: E3+ Networked Improvement Community

including: Rio Grande City Consolidated Independent School District (Rio Grande City, TX), Roanoke City Public Schools (Roanoke, VA), Pike County Schools (Zebulon, GA), and School District of the City of York (York, PA). E3+ will continue the foundational activities implemented in the 2017 grant, now part of each Core District’s “DNA,” and Core Districts will support each Companion District in successfully implementing those key improvements to their HCMS, leveraging lessons learned from their own implementation to accelerate learning and efficiency. While continuing to focus on the greatest school-related influencers on student achievement: recruitment, development, support, and retention of teachers, teacher leaders, and principals within each district’s HCMS, E3+ has an expanded focus on strengthening the full teacher pipeline by strategically recruiting, retaining, and promoting diverse educators—a critical and persistent need in each participating district.

E3+’s project objectives are: one - improve student achievement; two - improve the recruitment, retention, and promotion of educators of color; three - support educator growth through high-quality professional development to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness while also providing opportunities for career advancement; four - continual expansion of the NIC to strengthen the capacity of existing and future member districts; five - evaluate each project activity against student achievement and cost; six - create sustainable systems of constant improvement for each of the previous five objectives. These objectives are clearly tied to our Theory of Action, as demonstrated below.

| E3+ Theory of Action | | |
|--|---|--|
| If districts: | E3+ Related Structures and Activities | Expected Outcomes |
| Realize that similar human capital challenges exist in other districts | Networked Improvement Community: -Training from Core Districts to support Companion Districts with implementation of research-based approaches to improving human capital | -Rapid, continued scaling of effective practices -Dissemination of effective practices and continuously expanding network |
| Operate as part of a Networked Improvement Community with other complementary districts (Companion Districts) to learn faster and improve more efficiently | -National convening where NIC members learn from each other -Educator Diversity Convening to build partnerships between districts, HBCUs, MSIs -Online coaching platform to give/receive feedback, codify best practices, create a virtual library, and share across the NIC and beyond | |
| See their human capital improvement efforts as part of a broader, aligned system | Please see <i>Figure 3: E3+ System of Supports</i> on page 12. | -Improved operations in districts -Elimination of work happening in “silos” |
| Leverage recruitment and retention strategies focused on teachers and leaders of color | -Partnerships with HBCUs, MSIs -Annual NIC Convening, Educator Diversity Convening -Grow Your Own programs | -Recruit/retain more highly effective and diverse educators |
| Implement interconnected research-based approaches to improving and growing human capital | Strategic planning, equity-focused recruitment and retention, Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs), Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), Coaching | -Increased educator effectiveness -Teachers and leaders feel supported -Increased student achievement |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Implement a robust career ladder to provide opportunities for professional advancement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Career ladder with Collaborative Teacher, Lead Teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal -Stipends -Leadership and Aspiring Leadership Academies to support growth | -Advance educators through the educator pipeline in each district |
| Continuously evaluate the progress of each improvement effort as well as the effects each effort has on other parts of the district | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Data dashboards for strategic planning, recruitment and retention, ILTs, and PLCs -Online coaching platform -Robust external project evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Enhanced data-driven decision making -Practice of routinely re-evaluating -Increased student achievement |
| Continuously expand their networks to include fresh perspectives and promote innovative, sustainable practices | Addition of new Companion Districts to the NIC each year to provide continuous learning and innovation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sustainability of project activities -Sustainable system of constant improvement |
| Then districts will maximize outcomes that can be scaled within their organization and across other organizations, leading to sustained improvement over time in the entire education sector. The replicability of this project will utilize cross-functional dependencies that make it faster and more efficient to scale. | | |

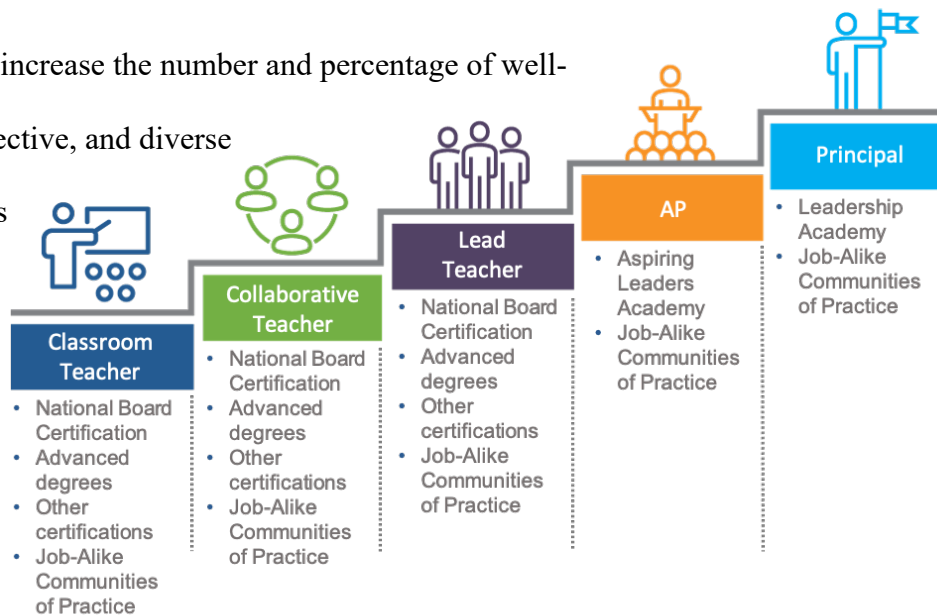
Table 1: E3+ Theory of Action

ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 2: High-Need Schools

E3+'s proposed project activities are concentrated on teachers and school leaders serving high-need schools across the four Core Districts and four Companion Districts (8 total school districts and 91 schools). The majority of schools participating in E3+—78 schools or 86%—meet the TSL criteria of a high-need school (at least 50% free or reduced-price lunch/FRPL). The average FRPL rate across the participating schools is 70.6% percent. A complete list of all schools in which the project activities will be implemented and data indicating which schools are high-need is included in **Appendix E**.

COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 1—*Supporting Educators and Their Professional Growth*

E3+ is designed to increase the number and percentage of well-prepared, experienced, effective, and diverse teachers and school leaders through its aligned system of supports and project activities. All educators will be provided with high-



quality, evidence-based professional development to support their individual growth. E3+ will provide ample opportunities for job-specific

Figure 2: E3+ Career Ladder

collaboration, as it will have communities of support for job-alike roles at every level—from superintendent to teachers. Structured opportunities for collaboration and support have been linked to meaningful instructional changes (Ermeling, 2010) as well as stronger student performance (Edmonson, 2012, et al., 2014). Customized professional development will include Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs), Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and Coaching—all targeted at building educator capacity.

Learning will happen amongst members of the NIC in a variety of ways—virtually through an online platform, in-person at annual convenings including the Annual NIC Convening and Educator Diversity Convening, and quarterly through Educator Diversity Council meetings. Additionally, structured opportunities will also be in place to allow for educators to advance in their careers. In return for stipends, teachers and leaders can assume teacher leader

roles at their schools with additional responsibilities. Not only will this career ladder support educators' career growth as they progress through the ladder, but it will also provide additional, critical support to other educators, such as assistance to achieve a National Board Certification or pursue an additional certification or graduate degree. The E3+ NIC serves as a conduit for professional growth for educators, as it allows them to share successes and resources with one another and work through challenges together. It also provides the relatively small E3+ school districts, and in some cases very rural districts, with an expanded network of peers and greater opportunities for collaboration. While Core District educators will provide valuable support and guidance to Companion District educators, Companion Districts will also bring a fresh perspective and new approaches to solving common problems. Therefore, the NIC is mutually beneficial for all member districts' educators.

COMPETITIVE PREFERENCE PRIORITY 2—*Increasing Educator Diversity*

E3+ is designed to improve the recruitment, outreach, preparation, support, development, and retention of a diverse educator workforce through a systems-level approach and aligned activities. All activities will incorporate initiatives and processes that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion. As a key project objective of E3+ is to **recruit, retain, and promote educators of color**, the following project activities will support attainment of this goal.

Educator Diversity Convening: The Educator Diversity Convening is an annual convening that brings together leaders and students from HBCUs, MSIs, and the E3+ districts. The goal of this convening is to share best practices around recruiting and retaining diverse educators. Additionally, this event will serve as a catalyst to establish partnerships between districts and HBCUs/MSIs to create a diverse educator pipeline that will feed into the districts.

Year-round, multi-stakeholder recruitment and retention systems: The E3+ districts will implement evidence-based practices to strengthen and diversify their educator pipelines. Strategies and practices that will be implemented to increase the number of teachers and leaders of color will align to nationally recognized strategies including Grow Your Own programs and structured leadership opportunities (i.e. career ladders and Leadership Academies).

Educator Diversity Council: Each district will have an Educator Diversity Council. The NIC will also have a NIC-level Educator Diversity Council that includes members from each district's council. The Educator Diversity Councils will focus primarily on increasing educator diversity and holding all participating districts accountable to reaching this objective. Recruitment and retention activities will not only support increased numbers of teachers and leaders of color within each district, but by virtue of having more teachers and leaders of color will also ensure more equitable practices overall in the schools and districts, which will then benefit all students. Research has found that all students benefit from having teachers of color because they bring “distinctive knowledge, experiences, and role modeling to the student body as a whole” (Carver-Thomas, 2018, p. 5).

I. NEED FOR PROJECT *(i) Addressing gaps and weaknesses*

E3+ seeks to address the gaps and weaknesses of participating districts by utilizing a systematic approach to how teachers are recruited, retained, provided feedback and professional development, recognized, and given opportunities to lead and advance (CPP 1). The Core Districts have established and sustained a successful NIC since 2017, where they can easily share resources and best practices and work to address common challenges. However, without the introduction of new districts and ideas, it's possible for learning to stagnate (Zamir, 2018). Therefore, the E3+ project will include a diverse set of districts across a broad geographic

region, as “the range of expertise and experience within the NIC can provide a wealth of ideas for testing as possible improvements” (LeMahieu, 2015).

By forming an expanded NIC, the Core and Companion Districts will work in partnership to address their most significant challenges. The Core and Companion Districts have been specifically paired to concentrate activities on high-need schools and equip teachers and school leaders to best meet the needs of their populations (AP 2). Notably, all four Companion Districts are struggling to recruit and retain diverse educators and teachers of color (CPP 2). This was also a challenge for the Core Districts prior to the E3 grant implementation, but have since made significant positive strides. Core Districts can share their lessons learned and best practices with their Companion Districts. This will be mutually beneficial to both Core and Companion Districts as it will allow Companion Districts to learn faster and will also help Core Districts solidify their practices as they work with Core Districts to replicate them.

Though the Core Districts have made promising initial results, more work is needed to specifically focus on recruiting and retaining effective educators and increasing educator diversity to ultimately impact student achievement (CPP 2). This is especially critical for high-need schools with a majority of students of color, as they tend to get less than their fair share of the highest-performing teachers compared to schools that serve more advantaged students, (Partee, 2014a) and research shows that students benefit from having teachers who look like them (Fregni, 2019). With both Core and Companion Districts working together as an NIC towards common objectives of increasing teacher diversity and supporting educator growth, even more progress will be made in the E3+ project.

Therefore, with an increased focus on all aspects of building a diverse and effective educator pipeline and a larger NIC to learn from, E3+ seeks to address identified gaps and

weaknesses that remain a challenge in the Core Districts and also exist in their Companion Districts in the following areas: an **aligned HCMS**, **recruitment** and **retention of teachers of color**, **advancement of teachers and leaders of color**, and **structures for supporting educators and their professional growth** (AP 1). The table below summarizes the most significant gaps and weaknesses that have been identified and will be addressed.

| NEED: An Aligned HCMS (AP 1) | |
|---|---|
| <i>Gap:</i> The Companion Districts overall lack consistency and alignment in their HCMS. Currently, evaluators are not consistently identifying effective teachers, as evidenced by the high average percentage of teachers rated effective or higher in all Companion Districts - 87.5%. Additionally, opportunities for professional development are not consistent, are not linked to building teacher capacity, and do not meaningfully align with evaluation. | <i>Strategy:</i> The Core Districts have each successfully developed an aligned and comprehensive HCMS. The Core Districts and E3+ Project Team will provide training and support to the Companion Districts to implement interconnected research-based approaches to improving human capital. |
| NEED: Recruitment and Retention of Teachers of Color (CPP 2) | |
| <i>Gap:</i> The Companion Districts struggle with recruiting and retaining educators of color. Teachers of color make up less than 5% of all teachers in three of the four Companion Districts and the fourth district is almost entirely homogeneous (98% Latinx). This also remains a need for Core Districts who also have fewer teachers of color relative to | <i>Strategy:</i> Each district will create year-round, multi-stakeholder recruitment/retention systems and will leverage partnerships with HBCUs/MSIs to build a diverse educator pipeline. Districts will also implement “Grow Your Own” programs to begin engaging middle school and high school students to consider a career in teaching. The annual Educator Diversity Convening |

| | |
|--|--|
| their student populations (<i>see Table 3: Participating Districts Data on page 18</i>). | will focus on recruiting/retaining more educators of color and building partnerships between districts and HBCUs and MSIs. |
| NEED: Structured Opportunities for Advancement of Teachers and Leaders of Color (CPP 2) | |
| <i>Gap:</i> While the Core Districts have established Career Ladders through E3, the Companion Districts lack clear pathways and opportunities for teachers to move from the classroom to leadership roles. Additionally, 35% of E3+ participating schools do not have any administrators of color on staff. | <i>Strategy:</i> Districts will implement a career ladder with several levels to provide teachers and leaders with a clear pathway to advance their careers. Partnerships with HBCUs will also allow educators to receive tuition reimbursements and/or stipends to obtain an administration certification or graduate degree. |
| NEED: Structures for Supporting Educators and their Professional Growth (CPP 1) | |
| <i>Gap:</i> Though all districts currently provide professional development to their teachers and leaders, they lack consistency and vary in their ability to provide individualized or targeted feedback and support. Companion Districts also do not have structured opportunities for collaboration. | <i>Strategy:</i> E3+ will utilize Leadership Academies and Aspiring Leadership Academies to equip educators with the skills needed to serve in a leadership role. E3+ educators will also participate in PLCs to allow educators to work through similar Problems of Instructional Practice. The online platform will also allow all members of the NIC to give and receive feedback to support their professional growth. |

Table 2: Identified Needs, Gaps, and E3+ Strategies

Need for Project: (ii) *Building on related efforts*

E3+ builds on a similar and related effort to improve Relevant Outcomes. E3+ seeks to leverage the work and success of the 2017 E3 grant while increasing the number of districts, educators, and students impacted and elevating its focus on the recruitment, retention, and promotion of diverse educators (AP 1; CPP 2). Each participating district will utilize and

combine different funding streams in order to integrate district and local priorities with the project goals of E3+. The similarities and differences between the districts' HCMS funding approaches include: Colonial (Title I, IIA, DE Opportunity Funds, DE Residency Grant, Local); Decatur (Title I, IIA, State, Local); Gainesville (Title I, IIA, State, Local); Marion (Title I, IIA, ESSER I & II, State, Local); Rio Grande City (Title I, ESSER I & II, State, Local), Roanoke (Title I, Title IIA, ESSER I & II, State, Local), Pike (Title I, Title IIA, State, Local, L4GA Literacy Grant), and York (Title I, Title IIA, Title III, State, Local). Notably, the majority of schools served by these districts are high-need and therefore receive Title I funding (AP 2).

Given that the Core Districts have successfully established a NIC, the two-pronged next steps to deepen impact are to: 1) expand the scope of the NIC to include new, complementary districts; and 2) simultaneously focus the Core Districts on their teacher and school leader human capital pipelines. These next steps are based in research that emphasizes the importance of cross-district collaboration for continued learning and growth (Chapman & Muijs, 2014; Jackson & Temperley, 2006) and evidence that suggests school districts must focus on improving their human capital systems in order to recruit, retain, develop, and promote educators at all levels of the organization more effectively (Konoske-Graf et al., 2016). Several resources can be leveraged from E3 to support the successful implementation of E3+: Playbooks for launching Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs), Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), recruitment and retention, and coaching; training materials and resources for implementation of these activities; and data dashboards to track and monitor progress of these initiatives.

The Core Districts will also provide invaluable support to each new Companion District as they implement the foundational system of activities, since Core Districts have refined the proposed interventions through their own implementation over the last several years. Though

each Companion District will be paired with an experienced Core District, they will still have access to the entire network and can leverage the strengths of each individual district. Each Core District has also developed expertise from their implementation of the key activities of E3 and excels

in specific aspects. Therefore, each E3 district will provide support to all Companion Districts based on these identified strengths: **Colonial** - PLCs, ILTs, Leadership Academies; **Decatur** - Human Resources, Finance; **Gainesville** - Implementing a Career Ladder; **Marion** - Communications, Strategic Planning.

Need for Project: (iii) Comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning

E3+'s approach is part of a comprehensive effort to improve

teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students. All of the activities in E3+ are aligned, evidence-based, and have a clear focus on improving teaching and learning through building human capital (AP 1). Every level of the school system is also included to ensure a comprehensive effort, drawing upon a field of scholarship that argues that “significant and sustainable change” in education can only be achieved with a systemic approach that integrates efforts to improve every aspect of an organization (Cowan et al., 2012) (CPP 1).

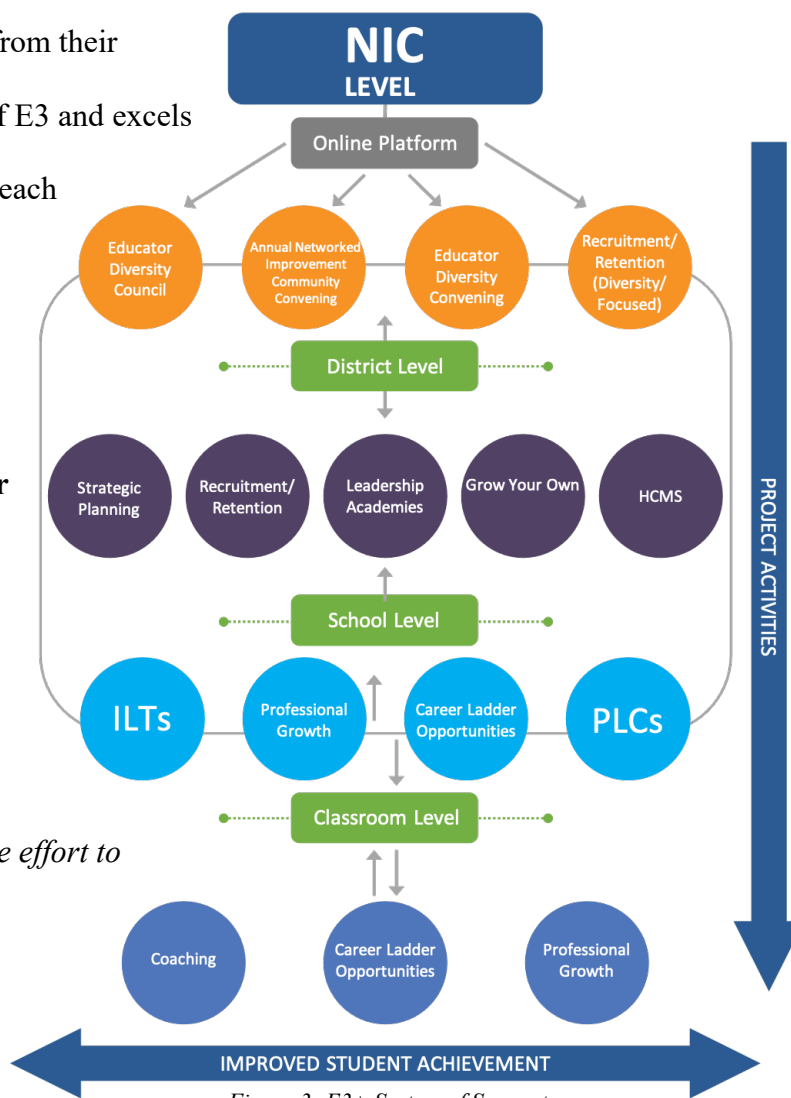


Figure 3: E3+ System of Supports

Furthermore, changing entire systems rather than implementing one-off interventions builds organizational capacity and ensures improvements are sustained beyond the tenures of individual teachers or leaders (Stoll, 2009). The Core and Companion Districts will have a common vocabulary and systems in place, but have flexibility to adjust to meet their local context which allows best practices to be shared easily and efficiently.

Community-Level Components (NIC)

1. *Online Platform*: An online platform will be used to connect all educators across the NIC virtually. The platform will also allow educators to give and receive feedback on their practice so they have 24/7 access to a tool that supports their growth (CPP 1).
2. *Network Convenings*: Convenings are critical aspects of E3+ as they bring together educators and leaders from each district to deepen connections across the NIC and continue collaboration (AP 1). The Annual Networked Improvement Community (NIC) Convening will serve as an annual convening and provide district educators and leaders with opportunities for collaboration, feedback, and action steps to take back to their own districts. The Educator Diversity Convening will also serve as an annual gathering with a specific focus on recruiting and retaining educators of color, an integral component of E3+. This event will convene leaders and students from both HBCUs and MSIs and the participating E3+ districts to build partnerships and further build an educator pipeline.
3. *Companion Districts*. Each year, additional Companion Districts will be added to the NIC and paired with a Core District, providing a powerful opportunity for new learning, ideas, and collaboration (AP 2). The partnerships between experienced districts (Core Districts) and new districts (Companion Districts) allow for more efficient knowledge transfer of effective

processes for Companion Districts and an expanded network and opportunities for collaboration for Core Districts.

4. *NIC Educator Diversity Council.* A member of each district's Educator Diversity Council serves on the NIC Educator Diversity Council. The Council will share findings, provide thought partnership, and ensure accountability on E3+'s project objectives focused on diverse educators (CPP 2). The Council ensures consistency across the NIC and represents a commitment to diversity at the NIC level. The Council will also present at the annual Educator Diversity Convening to disseminate findings and best practices.
5. *Job-Alike Communities of Practice.* To increase cohesiveness across the network, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) will be established at every level (from superintendent to teacher) and will be focused on connecting educators with similar problems of practice (CPP 1). PLCs will use the online platform to stay connected.

District-Level Components

1. *Strategic Planning:* Each district will develop a new strategic plan or update its existing plan. This will ensure alignment between the strategic plan goals and priorities to school-level improvement goals, which will be carried out by ILTs (CPP 1).
2. *Recruitment/Retention:* Each district will implement key recruitment and retention strategies to increase teacher diversity (CPP 2). Districts will build equity-driven, year-round recruitment systems to attract and retain effective and diverse educators in their high-need schools. Partnerships with HBCUs and MSIs will also include opportunities for educators to receive tuition reimbursements and/or stipends to obtain an administration certification.
3. *Leadership Academies:* School leaders will participate in tailored Leadership Academies and Aspiring Leadership Academies that will focus on the successful implementation of E3+

improvement processes (CPP 1). These academies will also provide leaders and aspiring leaders the skills needed to advance in their careers (CPP 1).

4. *Educator Diversity Council*: Representatives including teachers, principals, and district leaders will make up districts' Educator Diversity Councils, which will provide a level of accountability to E3+'s commitment to diversity (CPP 2). Each council will include educators of color whose voices have been historically marginalized and will ensure that hiring practices and professional growth are equitable at the district-level. This brings accountability, consistency, and commitment to the goal of increasing diversity at the district-level across E3+ districts.
5. *Career Ladder*: E3+ will offer structured opportunities for principals and assistant principals to advance in their careers, including district-wide Leadership Academies and Aspiring Leadership Academies (AP 1).

School-Level Components

1. *Instructional Leadership Teams*: ILTs will be accountable for devising, launching, and sustaining improvement goals aligned to district goals articulated in the strategic plan (CPP 1).
2. *Professional Learning Communities*: PLCs seek to address the root causes of common challenges and validate promising instructional practices that can be scaled across the school and as well as the NIC (CPP 1).
3. *Career Ladder*: E3+ will offer a clear and transparent career ladder for teachers to advance into leadership roles. Each school will have Collaborative Teachers and Lead Teachers which will give teachers more responsibilities in return for a stipend and will also provide support additional to their school colleagues (AP 1).

Classroom-Level Components

1. *Coaching*: E3+ educators and school leaders will receive in-person and virtual coaching from Collaborative and Lead Teachers as well as from E3+ project personnel (CPP 1).
2. *Feedback*: Educators will be incentivized to provide feedback to other educators through the online platform. In return, they will receive feedback from another educator (CPP 1).

Need for Project: (iv) *Addressing the needs of the target population*

As a result of the Core Districts' experience with the 2017 E3 grant, we have seen a need to evolve the E3 structure and shift from a flat, horizontal structure to a vertical structure. Rather than having four very similar districts as was the case in E3, E3+ includes diverse districts with complementary strengths and weaknesses to expand the network and infuse it with new perspectives and opportunities for innovation. In return, Core Districts can lend their expertise to maximize efficiencies in the Companion Districts as they implement the foundational activities of E3+.

The districts participating in E3+ serve a large number of high-need students which could benefit from increased teacher and principal effectiveness and a stronger pipeline of diverse and effective teachers (AP 2). Additionally, as all E3+ districts have fewer than 25 schools and 5 of 8 districts have fewer than 10 schools, they would all benefit from access to more resources and collaboration. Therefore, E3+ project activities have a specific focus on the levers to improve student outcomes, specifically for disadvantaged students, through a systematic focus on teacher and leader recruitment, development, and advancement (AP 1).

Identified need: Lack of diverse educators - In the 2017-18 school year, about 79% of public school teachers were white, whereas only 47% of students were white (NCES, 2021a). This demographic mismatch is also evident in the participating E3+ schools - E3+ districts serve

on average 66% minority students while only 25% of E3+ teachers are teachers of color. A recent study found that racially diverse educators have a positive impact on educational outcomes for all students, not just students of color (Kress, 2019); therefore, diversifying the racial composition of the teaching workforce is an imperative goal for all school systems.

Project Elements Addressing Need: 1) Equity-focused recruitment/retention systems, 2) Partnerships with HBCUs/MSIs, 3) Grow Your Own programs (AP 1; CPP 2).

Identified need: Lack of diverse leaders and clear pathways for advancement -

Representation of school leaders of color mirrors the data on teachers of color, with white principals comprising 78% of public school principals nationwide in 2017–18 (NCES, 2020). This national trend is also reflected in participating E3+ districts: 35% of E3+ schools do not have any administrators of color (CPP 2). Meanwhile, studies have shown that the presence of school leaders of color is linked to positive student outcomes and increased recruitment and retention of teachers of color (Green, 2018; Grissom et al., 2017; Bartanen & Grissom, 2019).

Project Elements Addressing Need: 1) Leadership Academies and Aspiring Leadership Academies focused on preparing more leaders of color, 2) Career Ladder with associated stipends, 3) Opportunities for reimbursements/stipends to obtain a certification, graduate degree, or National Board Certification (AP 1; CPP 2).

Identified need: Lack of clear structures for professional development - Though all E3+ districts build in time for professional development throughout the school year, there is a lack of alignment to teachers' evaluation and a minimal focus on building capacity (CPP 1). Student achievement results across E3+ are relatively low with an average proficiency of 43% in math and 44% in ELA in 2019, though 88% of teachers were rated as effective or higher. There is a clear discrepancy between how teachers are measured and how students are performing.

Project Elements Addressing Need: 1) Job-embedded professional development, 2) Peer feedback via online platform, 3) PLCs for job-alike collaboration and support (CPP 1).

The table below highlights district-level data that includes student academic achievement, demographic, and socioeconomic information. School-level data for the 91 participating schools, including high-need schools data, is included in **Appendix E**.

| DISTRICT | Student Pop. | FRPL % | Minority % | '18-'19* State Math (Avg- all grades) | '18- '19* State ELA (Avg-all grades) | Teacher Turnover Rate 19-20 | % Teachers of Color | Avg # of Years Principal has been at School |
|---|--------------|--------|------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|---|
| CORE DISTRICTS | | | | | | | | |
| COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT (15 SCHOOLS) | 9,823 | 63% | 73% | 25% | 36% | 7% | 22% | 4.2 |
| GAINESVILLE ISD (5 SCHOOLS) | 3,057 | 74.6% | 71% | 75.2% | 61.4% | 28% | 15% | 2.8 |
| MARION COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT (9 SCHOOLS) | 4,081 | 100% | 80% | 18% | 22% | -- | 53% | -- |
| MSD DECATUR TOWNSHIP (9 SCHOOLS) | 6,777 | 60.6% | 39% | 27% | 30% | 13% | 4% | 4.6 |
| COMPANION DISTRICTS | | | | | | | | |
| PIKE COUNTY SCHOOLS (5 SCHOOLS) | 3,429 | 35.2% | 11% | 33% | 38% | 10% | 2% | 3.3 |
| RIO GRANDE CITY CONSOLIDATED ISD (15 SCHOOLS) | 9,997 | 71.2% | 99% | 70% | 64% | 6% | 98% | 3 |
| ROANOKE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS (24 SCHOOLS) | 13,900 | 60% | 67% | 86% | 79% | 13% | 5% | 7.1 |
| SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CITY OF YORK (9 SCHOOLS) | 5,973 | 100% | 91% | 12% | 25.2% | 8% | 3% | 3.2 |

*Due to inconsistent/unavailable data due to COVID-19, data for SY19-20 is not included.

-- District could not provide this data

Table 3: Participating Districts Data

Not only will the E3+ activities address the needs of the target population, but the strategic pairing of the Companion Districts with experienced Core Districts will also further support the identified needs of each participating school district. As shown in the table below, the needs and strengths of the new Companion Districts are complementary to the Core Districts and vice versa. The partnerships, therefore, will be mutually beneficial for both the Companion and Core Districts in addressing identified needs (AP 2).

| Companion Districts | Core Districts |
|--|---|
| Roanoke City Public Schools <i>Strengths:</i> Principal retention/experience (average of 7 years of experience) <i>Needs:</i> Increased recruitment and retention of diverse educators (teachers of color make up only 5% of teachers in the district, a demographic mismatch as 41% of its students are minority.) | Colonial School District <i>Strengths:</i> Implementing effective recruitment strategies to hire more teachers of color. From the 2018-19 to the 2019-20 school year, the number of new teachers of color hired increased from 16% to 33%. <i>Needs:</i> Candidate pool with greater number of diverse candidates. |
| School District of the City of York <i>Strengths:</i> All but 2 schools have administrators of color (7 out of 9 schools have at least 50% admin of color). <i>Needs:</i> Increased recruitment and retention of diverse educators (teachers of color make up only 3% of teachers in the district, a demographic mismatch as 91% of its students are minority). | MSD of Decatur Township <i>Strengths:</i> Have implemented many recruitment and retention practices, particularly to support new teachers (monthly meetings with new hires, mentor programming, etc.). <i>Needs:</i> A greater number of teachers and administrators of color. |
| Rio Grande City CISD <i>Strengths:</i> High student proficiency in math. | Gainesville ISD <i>Strengths:</i> Has improved the diversity of teachers hired - |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Large percentage of teachers/leaders of color.</p> <p><i>Needs:</i> Recruiting and retaining certified and effective teachers given the rural nature of the district.</p> | <p>in 2019-20, the number of teachers of color hired increased from 12% to 40%.</p> <p><i>Needs:</i> Schools have a high number of first year teachers (on average, 15% of teachers at each school).</p> |
| <p>Pike County Schools</p> <p><i>Strengths:</i> Experienced teachers in the district; only 4 first year teachers in the entire district. Pike also reports 99% of their teacher hiring is complete by May 1.</p> <p><i>Needs:</i> Increased recruitment and retention of diverse educators and administrators.</p> | <p>Marion County School District</p> <p><i>Strengths:</i> 7 out of 9 schools have at least 1 administrator of color.</p> <p><i>Needs:</i> Attracting high quality teachers and targeted strategies to compete with other districts for human capital. Only about 50% of the district's hiring is complete by May 1.</p> |

Table 4: Complementary Strengths and Needs of Core and Companion Districts

II. QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN: (i) Demonstrates a rationale

The E3+ Theory of Action is intended to maximize outcomes that can be scaled within districts and across other organizations, leading to sustained improvement over time in the entire education sector and resulting in improved outcomes for high-need students. The E3+ interventions focus on expanding a collaborative NIC to share best practices and resources to ensure each district's HCMS produces more effective and diverse teachers. To achieve this, E3+ will create a systematic approach for: a continuously expanding **NIC** to “encompass a diversity of knowledge and experiences” (Rohanna, 2018); **recruitment and retention** (with focus on educators of color); **professional development** (ILTs, PLCs, Coaching, Leadership Academies to support educator growth); and **feedback** (coaching, online platform). E3+ purposefully aligns these evidence-based treatments in a comprehensive system of macro-micro level strategies and supports. Each proposed project activity is outlined in the following section and includes

research-based evidence and results from prior experience

implementing these activities for each level of the school system:

Community (NIC), District, and School/Classroom.

COMMUNITY LEVEL

Proposed Activities: Continuously expand and connect a

Networked Improvement Community (NIC) (AP 2). E3+

seeks to expand its original NIC to include 8 districts and 91

schools. The NIC (or “cross-school collaboration”) will be connected

across geographic boundaries with an online platform to allow for continued communication and

collaboration. **Evidence-based rationale:** According to research from the Carnegie Foundation,

“such testing across contexts is essential in order to learn how to implement effective ideas

reliably and at scale” (LeMahieu, 2015). Additionally, the ability to connect virtually has proved

especially powerful, as demonstrated by the shift to virtual instruction and schooling due to

COVID-19. **Prior experience developing and implementing activity:** Decatur was part of the

E3 NIC from the 2017 TSL program and can leverage the efficiencies and lessons learned from

establishing the NIC as it expands to include four additional districts. The E3 Core Districts had

many similarities, and the addition of Companion Districts with complementary strengths and

challenges will provide necessary complexity to spur innovation and growth.

DISTRICT LEVEL

Proposed Activities: Build upon and improve HCMS to recruit, retain, and advance diverse

educators (AP 1; CPP 2). Each district will build upon their existing systems to create a more

aligned and robust HCMS. E3+ will focus on the recruitment of highly effective teachers as

identified through the effective evaluation systems and retention of effective teachers through



Figure 4: E3+'s Systematic Approach

incentives including career ladder opportunities, performance based compensation by way of stipends, and administrative and instructional support. This grant will also assist participating districts in developing a targeted strategy to recruit effective educators including innovative marketing campaigns, Grow Your Own models, and building partnerships with HBCUs and MSIs. To support retention, E3+ is focused on providing a career ladder and highly effective professional development opportunities to current human capital to increase effectiveness of all teachers in each of the participating districts. To support advancement, district-level Leadership Academies and Aspiring Leadership Academies will also provide customized professional development with modules tailored for current and aspiring leaders.

| Type | Metrics | Range |
|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Administrator Stipend | Required: Student Achievement at a minimum of 35%; Other possible metrics: Evaluation data, survey results, Student Learning Objectives, Professional Development Evaluation, retention, other local (approved) metrics | \$5,000-\$10,000/year |
| Lead Teacher Stipend | | \$8,000-\$10,000/year |
| Collaborative Teacher Stipend | | \$5,000-\$8,000/year |
| Recruitment & Retention Bonuses | | \$5,000-\$20,000/year |

Table 5: PBC Stipends (AP 1)

Evidence-based rationale: Research indicates that human capital management practices play an important role in attracting, retaining, and developing effective educators. Additionally, “a systematic approach to human capital management supports innovations” (Kraemer, 2015).

Neither recruitment nor retention alone will have the human capital impact that is needed; rather, a simultaneous effort to keep effective educators and find additional, effective educators will create the needed results. **Prior experience developing and implementing activity:** Decatur and the three other Core Districts previously implemented many of the district-level E3 activities under the 2017 project, including Leadership Academies, a Career Ladder, and a year-round

recruitment and retention system. In a 2019 survey of E3 Leadership Academy participants, it was reported that 100% of administrators strongly agreed or agreed that Leadership Academies were aligned to district priorities and were relevant to their role, and 94% strongly agreed or agreed that they were supportive of their professional needs. Additionally, all E3 districts previously implemented a three-rung career ladder that gave teachers additional responsibilities in return for stipends; this added to an increased teacher retention rate among performance based compensation earners - 97% compared to the overall average teacher retention rate of 87%. Lastly, as a result of the recruitment and retention systems E3 districts have implemented, districts have been able to attract a greater number of prospective teachers of color each year. In Marion, around 50% of new hires are teachers of color.

SCHOOL/CLASSROOM LEVEL

Proposed Activities: Levers to improve teacher and school leader effectiveness (CPP 1). E3+ districts will implement aligned, evidence-based activities focused on supporting educator growth at the school and classroom level. These include establishing Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) at every school, role-specific Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and job-embedded coaching and calibration through the online platform. **Evidence-based rationale:** The logic to improve student outcomes as a result of E3+ activities is quite linear—there is no greater school-related impact on student achievement than the teacher in the classroom (McCaffrey et al. 2004; Rivkin et al. 2005; Rockoff, 2004; Sanders & Rivers, 1996; Wright et al. 1997). The second greatest school related impact on student achievement growth is principal effectiveness (Seashore-Louis et al. 2010). Therefore, all schools and participating districts will implement the most impactful levers to improve both principal and teacher effectiveness. ILTs allow school leaders to tap into the collective wisdom of the school staff in order to move a school forward

and generally leads to more robust implementation (Edwards & Gammell, 2016). When successfully implemented, PLCs have been shown to improve both teacher perception and student achievement (Brown, Horn, & King, 2018). One-on-one coaching has been found to improve the quality of teachers' instruction much more than other traditional professional development (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018). **Prior experience developing and implementing activity:** Decatur and the other Core Districts previously implemented these school/classroom level E3 activities under the 2017 project and took away several lessons learned to increase efficiency in future implementation. E3 established an ILT at each school, which all now utilize an ILT dashboard to track ILT implementation and efficacy which has led to a true culture of improvement at each school. All E3 districts now use a PLC model for their school-level professional development, which has been received positively. A survey of participating teachers found that 74% reported that their practice has improved. Coaching has also become integral to educators ongoing professional development and E3 districts have tiered teachers to influence the frequency and type of coaching support teachers are receiving.

Quality of the Project Design: (ii) *Relevant literature, a plan for project implementation, and methodological tools*

E3+ activities are grounded in evidence and supported by relevant literature. The foundational framework of a NIC comprising multiple, heterogeneous school districts is based on a model developed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching over a decade ago and implemented to accelerate improvement in various contexts since then (McKay, 2017). Following these principles, E3+ districts will collaborate to generate innovative solutions to common challenges related to educator effectiveness and diversity. A case study by LeMahieu

et al. (2017) illustrates the success of a NIC at creating and scaling up “change ideas” in multiple school systems to improve teacher effectiveness, supporting the E3+ NIC approach.

The E3+ NIC’s focus on improving educator effectiveness draws upon consistent research indicating that “among school-related factors, teachers matter most” for students’ academic and non-academic success (Oppen, 2019; Doan, 2019). Effective school leadership is also essential for improving student outcomes, with research showing that principals have nearly the same degree of impact on student achievement as teachers, but with a larger scope given their influence over the entire school (Grissom et al., 2021). E3+ specifically emphasizes support for teachers and leaders of color, who are underrepresented in public schools compared to the growing population of students of color (NCES, 2021a; NCES, 2020), yet who demonstrate proven benefits for students of color and white students alike. Racially diverse school leadership is associated with improved school outcomes such as lower suspension rates and more equitable representation of students of color in gifted courses (Green, 2018; Grissom et al., 2017).

E3+ utilizes evidence-based structures and seeks to improve the structures and supports that contribute to educator effectiveness, thereby ensuring students have access to diverse, high-quality teachers and leaders who are continuously improving their practice. Recent literature on ILTs suggests that “shared decision-making on an ILT serves to improve the likelihood of high-quality outcomes” and favorable teacher impressions of the instructional decisions being made (Weiner, 2016). PLCs have been shown to build teacher capacity and professional effectiveness, thereby influencing student outcomes (Stoll et al., 2006). Kraft et al. (2018) recently conducted a meta-analysis of the literature on instructional coaching, revealing its positive causal impact on instruction and achievement.

Given the importance of effective educators for student learning and well-being, recent research uncovers some alarming trends. Teacher turnover is 50% higher in Title I schools than in non-Title I schools and 70% higher in schools that primarily serve students of color than in majority-white schools, leaving the highest-need students most likely to suffer the consequences of a constantly churning teacher workforce. These trends are problematic because high teacher attrition is both financially costly for school districts and academically costly for students (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Thus, E3+ strives to implement strategies to support and retain these critical teachers.

Teachers of color are often compelled to leave teaching due to inadequate resources and lack of collegial support (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Implementing a targeted, year-round approach to recruitment and retention demonstrates a district's commitment to supporting teachers and creating the conditions that encourage them to stay. Promoting school leader effectiveness and diversity is also an integral part of E3+, as principal quality is closely linked to teacher satisfaction and retention (Learning Policy Institute, 2017), and Black principals have a positive influence on the hiring and retention of Black teachers (Bartanen & Grissom, 2019). Additionally, HBCU-district partnerships and Grow Your Own programs have been cited in the literature as promising strategies for increasing teacher diversity (Underwood et al., 2019; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Muñiz, 2018). Finally, E3+ incorporates career ladders and leadership academies as strategies to improve career advancement opportunities for teachers, especially teachers of color, who often report facing a lack of professional support for career advancement (Dixon et al., 2019).

E3+'s project implementation timeline is included below, which includes clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Legend: PD – Project Director; PC – Project Coach; SLC – School Leader Coach; RRC – Recruitment and Retention Coach; GM – Grant Manager; TA – Technical

Assistance Partner; *– Activity will lead to project sustainability

| Project Activity | Person Responsible | Year 1 | | | | Year 2 | | | | Year 3 | | | |
|---|--------------------|--------|----|----|----|--------|----|----|----|--------|----|----|----|
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| Pair Core Districts with Companion Districts and relationship building | PD | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hire other project-level positions | PD, GM | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create multi-channel communication campaigns to recruit new staff to increase teacher diversity and publicize information; disseminate project information and project success to key stakeholders* | RRC | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Work with each district to create specific metrics for effectiveness at every level | PD, PC | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create a process for collecting data needed for the project | PC, GM | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish an Educator Diversity Council for each district and a collective NIC Educator Diversity Council for the overall NIC | PD, PC | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Develop training on fiscal management and processes of TSL grant for partners | GM | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Administer baseline project-wide assessment to students and leadership surveys | PC | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Each school PBC metrics approved by E3+ districts | PD, PC | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Strategic Planning process with each district's key stakeholder group | PD, GM | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Quarterly Project Reports to all schools | PD | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Post and hire Lead Teachers | PD, SLC | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Post and hire Collaborative Teachers | PD, SLC | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Provide Instructional Leadership, PLC, Coaching Training to all ILT members | SLC, PC, TA | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Provide access to the online platform for all educators | SLC, TA | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Provide Coaching Training to all teachers | SLC, PD, TA | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| National Education Leaders' Workshop | PC, SLC, TA | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Educator Exchange with MSIs and HBCUs | RRC, TA | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Monthly Recruitment/Retention sessions and working group activities to attract and retain effective and diverse educators | RRC | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Leader and Aspiring Leaders in the Academies work to identify their POIP | PD, SLC | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish job-alike PLCs for all district roles and identify POIPs | PD, PC | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Begin PLCs and peer coaching with feedback for all teachers | PD, SLC, PC | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Leadership Academies and Aspiring Leaders Academies | PD, SLC, TA | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Host annual symposium & training for district & school leaders interested in joining the NIC* | PD, RRC, TA | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Annual Project E3+ evaluations to determine if lead and demonstration leaders retain those roles in upcoming years | ALL | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify relevant conferences to present project activities & preliminary results | PD, PC | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Conduct annual school reviews to measure fidelity of implementation | ALL | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Calibration Activity for leaders, teachers and coaches | SLC, PC, TA | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gradual Release Model: ILT Train the Trainers* | SLC, TA | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gradual Release Model: PLC* | PC, TA | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gradual Release Model: Coaching* | PC, TA | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Gradual Release Model: Recruitment and Retention* | RRC, TA | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Prepare/submit high-quality, data-rich Annual Performance Report to US DoE | PD, GM | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create an adaptive Sustainability Model for each partner district* | PD, PC, GM | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Annual Board Presentation | PD | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 6: E3+ Project Implementation Timeline

The methodological tools that we will employ in this project will be firmly connected to the proposed objectives and need for the project. These methods have been chosen based upon the aforementioned research and our extensive experience employing them in previously successfully funded projects. Please see the following section for additional details.

Quality of the Project Design: (iii) *Methods of evaluation*

All participating E3+ districts will cooperate with the U.S. Department of Education on any evaluation of the program. Additionally, E3+ will engage Steve Cantrell with Middle, LLC to develop a robust external evaluation (see Appendix B for resume). Our project evaluation (Appendix F) will produce data to be used by E3+ project staff and school district personnel. The evaluation will be based on the E3+ logic model (Appendix A) and theory of action, and will also utilize the TSL Performance Measures to gauge implementation progress and determine the impact of activities.

E3+ focuses on improving student opportunities, especially for the most vulnerable students, through better teaching and learning, strengthened by better systems for human capital management. E3+'s primary focus is to improve its participating districts' HCMS. To this end, the evaluation will monitor and display key implementation metrics, develop results and process measures, build measurement and visualization capacity, provide rapid feedback and forecasting, and assess the impact of selected interventions. The evaluation will measure implementation for each major grant activity and estimate change for each grant objective. The evaluation will report annually on each objective and make it clear where each district has or has not made progress. Similarly, the evaluation will report whether implementation was successful in terms of scale and quality for each grant activity. This descriptive approach will generate accurate measures of objectives attainment and accurate measures of grant activity implementation.

Evaluate Progress towards Grant Objectives: Measure change over time. Each grant activity aims to advance one of three priority objectives – recruit, retain, and promote educators of color (objective 2); support educator growth (objective 3); or expand and develop the Networked Improvement Community (objective 4). E3+ considers these three objectives as drivers of student achievement (objective 1). The remaining two objectives, return-on-investment (objective 5) and sustainability (objective 6), while essential, can be measured and analyzed only after some time has elapsed.

Evaluation Task 1: Measure baseline and annual progress for each grant objective.

Objective 1: Student Achievement. 1a. The evaluation will use standardized test results within each district to establish baseline performance and student growth trajectories for each tested grade and subject.

Objective 2: Improve the recruitment, retention, and promotion of

educators of color. 2a. Recruitment: For all new hires among educators, the evaluation will describe the baseline race and gender characteristics for applicants, finalists, job offers, and filled positions. We will also compare these to the overall district distribution of race and gender.

Finally, we will disaggregate by job type and subject matter. **2b. Retention:** Each year, we will chart stayers and leavers by experience, race, and gender. Where the data allows, we will also show the effectiveness distribution among stayers and leavers. **2c. Promotion:** Each year, we will chart the racial distribution of promotions, compared with the distribution of staff overall.

Objective 3: Increase teacher and school leader effectiveness. 3a. Validity: The evaluation will show the correlation between teacher effectiveness and student achievement growth. **3b.**

Reliability: We will describe each district’s efforts to increase teaching effectiveness measurement reliability, report on the use of an online HCMS platform (a tool to support more reliable classroom observation), and report any data collected by the districts regarding

reliability. **3c. Year-over-year growth:** We will report on the use of adjusted growth measures within teacher effectiveness systems, the percentage of teachers making more growth than previously, and the overall growth at the grade and subject level for each tested subject.

Objective 4: Expand the Networked Improvement Community. 4a. Influence: We will document baseline Human Capital Management System practices for each district and assess the extent that each Core District, within their specialized domain, influences the design of other network districts' systems. **4b. Participation:** We will document participation at major network events and within major network initiatives. **Objective 5: Evaluate each project activity against student achievement and cost. 5a. Cost:** We will estimate the cost, including staff time, for each major project activity. **5b. Performance:** We will demonstrate change over time for Objectives 1 – 4. We anticipate that Objective 1 may lag Objectives 2-4, so will work to detect and describe the extent we can consider these objectives as leading indicators of student performance. **Objective 6: Create sustainable systems of improvement. 6a. Data:** We will share with each district our methods, scripts, and templates for measuring and reporting upon each objective. **6b. Habits:** We will work with the network on one major rigorous study and several smaller rigorous studies to help build the habits of mind consistent with the improvement science principles embedded within the Networked Improvement Community ideal.

This evaluation is designed to measure and report the GPRA Performance Measures annually. Our evaluation of growth on **Objective 1 (increase student achievement)** and **Objective 3 (increase educator effectiveness)** requires student growth estimates, educator effectiveness ratings, and annual change calculations. *These will support GPRA Performance Measures a, b, and c.* Our evaluation of growth on **Objective 2 (recruit, retain, promote educators of color)** requires tracking the hiring process, along with reporting on retention and

promotion. We will pay special attention to improvements in these areas and whether the new career ladders incentivize teachers and leaders to stay and grow. ***These will support GPRA Performance Measures d, e, f, g, h, and i.***

Recruiting Educators of Color: A randomized controlled experiment. Our Core Districts frequently bemoaned the lack of educators of color within their application pipelines. Instead of expecting different results from the same processes, we plan to work with districts, personnel researchers and professionals, and educators of color to design new application processes aimed to attract more educators of color. We will rigorously test these new processes to determine whether this change is, in fact, an improvement.

Evaluation Task 3: Conduct an experimental study of recruiting processes to increase the number of qualified applicants who are educators of color. Our partner districts have expressed a clear need to increase the number of educators of color applying to job postings within their districts. We will help the districts review best practices and research in this area. E3+ will also work with them to obtain advice from knowledgeable persons and organizations. Depending upon the state of prior research, we will either recommend a small scale up-to one year pilot test of several candidate process, or, if the research basis is sound, recommend commencing with a larger study as soon as they are able. Either way, the design of the study is simple: The current district practices represent the status quo or control condition. The new design(s) will be the intervention or treatment. Each job posting will be randomly assigned to either the treatment or control conditions. We will develop the study parameters, including the sample size required to estimate impacts of a meaningful size, during the first year of the grant. We will select an Educator Diversity Council of education and/or human resources researchers to help guide the design and data collection protocols. Our outcome measures will be the number of

educators of color who enter each stage of the recruitment process: Application, candidacy, interview, job offer, and placement.

It is important to note that we intend to design and employ a randomized controlled trial study that will meet the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards without reservations. Our study will be powered to account for clustered assignment to treatment and our analyses will use Hierarchical Linear Modeling or an equivalent method to adjust for district and subject/grade-level effects. Our lead evaluator has considerable experience managing randomized controlled trials. We will support E3+'s districts to conduct field localized experiments. These localized experiments will meet as many of the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Group Design Standards as feasible. There are obvious opportunities to randomize these necessarily targeted interventions to test their efficacy prior to rolling them out systemwide. This is the next evolution and expansion of E3+'s Networked Improvement Community.

III. QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Through Decatur's experience as part of the 2017 E3 TSL grant, the district understands the importance of a detailed management plan to guide project implementation. We also recognize the need for an experienced full-time Project Director (PD) to keep the project on track and manage its complexity. Because the NIC includes 8 districts spread across multiple states, E3+ will utilize a fully-dedicated and skilled PD. Stephanie Hofer, who played an integral role in implementing the 2017 E3 TSL grant in Decatur and has over 20 years of experience in the education sector, will serve as 100% PD on this project. The PD will be the primary point of contact for participating districts and will manage the overall implementation of the project. She will also be responsible for ensuring the project stays on track and within budget. In addition to the PD, several other key personnel will be added to support the project. The table below

includes descriptions of key E3+ project staff. Additional details on their roles and responsibilities can be found in **Appendix F**.

| E3+ Key Personnel | |
|---|--|
| Role | Primary Responsibilities |
| Project Director (PD) <i>Fully-Dedicated; One position for the project</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leads the overall implementation of the E3+ project and provides oversight and coaching to all project staff - Manages the project against milestones, activities, timeline, and budget |
| Project Coach (PC) <i>Fully-Dedicated; One coach per Companion District</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supports E3+ districts with project implementation - Supports with data management and ensures each school has an effective and efficient system for collecting data - Assists all partners in utilizing the online platform |
| School Leader Coach (SLC) <i>Fully-Dedicated; One coach per Core District and two coaches to support the Companion Districts</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides ongoing, job-embedded professional development, coaching, and feedback to principals and schools leaders across districts and supports facilitation of ILTs - Works with administrative team to ensure consistent alignment of project to district initiatives |
| Recruitment and Retention Coach (RRC) <i>Fully-Dedicated; One coach per Core District and two coaches to support the Companion Districts</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implements equity-focused recruitment/retention strategies across the districts; supports districts in building GYO programs - Builds partnerships with HBCUS/MSIs - Provides guidance on communications/marketing strategies for districts and schools - Recruits additional districts to join the NIC beginning in Year 2 |

| | |
|--|--|
| Grant Manager (GM) <i>Fully-Dedicated; One position for the project</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides administrative, fiscal, and operational support across the project, including preparation of internal and external reporting - Provides overall day-to-day support for entire project team |
|--|--|

Table 7: E3+ Key Personnel

E3+ personnel will adhere to the management plan, outlined in the previous Quality of the Project Design (iii) section, which clearly defines their responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

IV. ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES: (i) *Likelihood project will result in system change*

E3+ project activities address every level of the education system—NIC, district, school, and classroom levels—so that organizations can be more efficient and effective at implementing initiatives and addressing challenges. Therefore, as a result of the E3+ project, we expect system changes and improvements to occur. In E3, Core Districts experienced positive outcomes that resulted in system-level change and improvements to their HCMS. With E3+’s increased focus on strengthening the districts’ human capital pipelines and an expansion of the NIC to include four new districts, we expect an even greater impact and system-wide change.

As a result of the E3 project, improvements occurred at every level: **HCMS, district, school/classroom, and student**. Supporting data highlighting these improvements is outlined in this section. **HCMS:** At the start of the 2017 grant, each Core District had components of an HCMS; however, these systems were siloed and not aligned. The E3 project built upon the districts’ existing systems to create a robust HCMS that is composed of the following elements: teacher and principal professional development, teacher and principal evaluation, teacher and principal performance-based compensation, and a career ladder. Each Core District now has an aligned HCMS that is set up to continue the foundational E3 activities (ILTs, PLCs, coaching,

Leadership Academies) in perpetuity. The implementation of E3 transformed how teachers are provided feedback and professional development, recognized, given opportunities to lead and advance, and given resources to help them succeed. **District:** Each of the participating E3 districts revised their strategic plans to align to the priorities of the grant. This allowed districts to embed the tenets of the E3 district-wide and supported a plan for sustainability. Additionally, E3 districts have reshaped the way that they engage in recruiting and retaining effective teachers. Several of the E3 districts made impressive progress in a short period of time in their district's teacher recruitment and retention results, particularly for teachers of color—Gainesville tripled its percentage of newly hired teachers of color while Colonial doubled theirs. Further, a district-wide Career Ladder has contributed to an increased teacher retention rate among performance based compensation earners - 97% compared to the overall average teacher retention rate of 87%. **School/classroom:** Researchers found that the implementation of PLCs has led to a shift in professional culture including: from teachers blaming external factors for students' underperformance to a focus on internal accountability and an increased openness to collaboration and sharing of practices (e.g., classroom visits, sharing materials, etc.). 74% of teachers report that they have changed their instructional practice and 74% report that their practice has improved. Additionally, as principals and coaches focused on what matters most to improve teaching and learning through the E3 program activities, districts experienced a notable shift in the correlation between teacher effectiveness ratings and student performance. This is evidenced in the included graph for Decatur: prior to implementation of the E3 grant, there was no apparent connection between a given teacher's evaluation score and the academic

performance of the students taught by that teacher. But by year 2 of the grant, this clearly changed and an obvious connection

between teacher effectiveness and student performance appeared (a positive slope). **Student:** Ultimately, all the implemented activities are intended to improve student achievement. Though human capital systems are longer term investments

Teacher Effectiveness Ratings and Student Performance
A comparison of correlations by subject and district, over time
2016-17 2017-18 2018-19

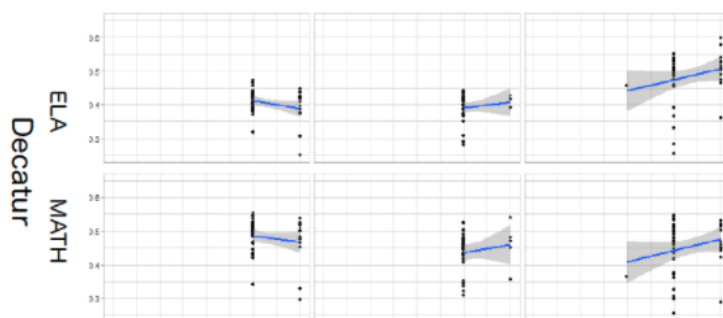


Figure 5: Teacher Effectiveness Ratings and Student Performance in Decatur

and the payoff in terms of student performance will naturally lag the improvements within these systems, E3 districts saw positive impacts on student achievement. In 2019, across grades 3-8, black students outperformed the white students relative to the peer-to-peer analyses. In other words, at each tested grade level, black students showed better results compared to the state averages of other black students than the white students in all districts compared to the state average of other white students.

Adequacy of Resources: (ii) Likelihood of building local capacity to address target population

In order to sustain improvements across whole systems, both capacity and systems for improvement at all levels is required (Fullan & Quinn, 2010). Building local capacity is integral to the design of E3+. As the NIC continues to expand and bring in new districts, effective practices will continue to spread and disseminate across the network. The Core Districts will utilize a Gradual Release Model (GRM) to ensure effective knowledge transfer to the Companion Districts. GRM is a best practice to strategically transfer the responsibility in the learning process (Fisher and Frey, 2013). Core Districts will work closely with Companion

Districts to build the processes and knowledge of how to implement and sustain the project activities in the long term.

Data collection will produce indicators that enable district and school personnel track implementation and will support the project team in estimating whether the interventions are likely to achieve their intended effects. The following tools and resources will be leveraged to do this: 1) An **Online Platform** will house both qualitative and quantitative data. Additionally, the platform allows *all* educators to give and receive feedback, not just coaches, to improve their practice (CPP 1). This capability continuously builds educators' capacity without a need to expend more human capital in the districts (i.e. hiring more coaches); 2) **Dashboards** will collect and track data on the implementation of ILTs, PLCs, strategic planning, and recruitment and retention and will be used to monitor if these activities are being implemented to meet the needs of the target population.

The target population for E3+ is largely minority students and activities are concentrated in high-need schools (AP 2). E3+'s project activities will be implemented to increase the number of effective and diverse teachers, which research shows has a positive impact on a range of academic outcomes for students of color in particular, including school attendance, retention, standardized test scores, advanced-level course enrollment, and college-going rates (Achinstein et al., 2010). E3+ will track teacher assignment by race and student performance to ensure E3+ services are addressing the needs of the target population.

Additionally, expansion of services is a core feature of E3+. Effective practices will be scaled to other districts with complementary needs. We have selected the Companion Districts for E3+ to strategically include districts that have complementary strengths and weaknesses and can most benefit from the E3+ project activities given their high numbers of high-need schools

(AP 2). Additionally, the combination of districts included in E3+ have a diverse range of geography and demography but all have fewer than 25 schools. There are approximately 13,100 public school districts in the U.S., and about 96% of them have fewer than 25 schools (NCES, 2021b). Given that a clear goal of expansion is also built into the E3+ project model, there is a high likelihood of the project building capacity and expanding services to schools and districts across the country. Companion Districts will be responsible for expanding the network and training new complementary districts in future years of the grant, which will solidify the grant activities within their own districts as they scale to new districts.

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

As evidenced by the letters of support and letters of commitment from each participating district (Appendix C), there is strong support and buy-in from key stakeholders including superintendents, board of education members, school and district leaders, teachers, parents, and members of congress. Additionally, all four Core Districts expressed a strong commitment to the sustainability of the project and a desire to expand their NIC to broaden their networks and provide support to Companion Districts. Further, the match intent and ability letter (Appendix D) demonstrates Decatur's commitment to meet TSLs' statutory matching funds requirement. Each district will also match TSL funding at 50% which demonstrates a major commitment of resources to the E3+ project, as confirmed in their letters of commitment (Appendix C).

The E3+ project will also leverage expertise of technical assistance partners who can support with training, coaching, and providing an online platform. Technical assistance partners will also support the logistics of annual convenings. So as not to be a burden on the Core Districts, using technical assistance providers will also contribute to the sustainability of the project activities.

E3+ equips participating districts to sustain and scale project activities for the long-term. E3+ also builds in sustainability through the addition of new Companion Districts in Year 2 and beyond of the grant. New Companion Districts will be supported by the Core Districts as they implement the district-, school-, and classroom-level supports and will receive training from both the Core Districts, Project Coaches, and technical assistance partners. Once effective knowledge transfer has taken place through the Gradual Release Model, Companion Districts will then assume the role of new Core Districts and recruit new districts to join their NIC. To ensure this model is sustainable even beyond the length of the grant, new districts will pay a nominal annual cost to join the network to help maintain quality control of the tools, resources, and supports. Additionally, beginning in Year 3, individual educators (including teachers, coaches, or school leaders) will be able to join the network for a nominal annual fee. This will continuously expand the network and grow the community. Other than the annual subscription, educators will neither spend nor receive money through the platform - the currency in this coaching ecosystem is time. Educators will receive one credit when they provide another educator with feedback, which they can then use to receive feedback.

Lastly, the E3+ budget was purposefully and thoughtfully crafted with sustainability in mind. Decatur, as an experienced fiscal agent, will lend expertise to all project partners on how to sustain personnel and resources beyond the life of the grant. The recurring costs are minor and all participating districts have a plan and necessary funding to maintain all E3+ systems even after the grant period ends. E3+ will use routine cost-control mechanisms that involve work and budget planning as well as systematic review of any project's costs to ensure alignment to detailed work and budget planning.