I. A. District Overview

The LEA must demonstrate a commitment to success in the turnaround of its lowest achieving schools and the capacity to implement the model proposed. The district overview must contain the following elements:

> i. *Describe the district motivation/intention as well as the theories of action guiding key district strategies to support its lowest achieving schools and ensuring that all students graduate high school ready for college and careers.*

As a "Focus" district with 19 of its 33 schools identified as "Priority" schools, the Syracuse City School District (SCSD) is committed to turning around all of its underperforming schools by accelerating student achievement, closing achievement gaps, and ensuring that all students graduate high school with the skills and knowledge to prepare them for college and career success. The **theory of action** regarding turnaround is that "if the seven principles of school turnaround (strong leadership, effective teachers, increased instructional time, rigorous instructional programs, use of data to inform instruction, safe and healthy students, and family and community engagement/school culture) are present and implemented in a systematic manner, *and* if we build capacity *and* if we hold stakeholders accountable, then students will make dramatic achievement gains and ours will be schools in good standing."

The commitment is evidenced by bold steps taken to accelerate this turnaround. In July 2011, Superintendent Dr. Sharon Contreras initiated comprehensive external reviews by nationally recognized experts in school and district reform to review practices, processes and systems, and to identify areas for systemic improvement and transformation. Reviewers included: Collier Educational Consulting, LLC; Cross & Joftus, LLC; and Schoolhouse Partners, LLC. Areas identified for improvement included organizational structure, curriculum, recruitment, selection and deployment, professional development, evaluation, retention, and promotion.

In March 2012, Dr. Contreras engaged representatives from various stakeholder groups in the development of a five-year Strategic Plan that contains a clear vision, mission, and goals, objectives and strategies that support our theory of action. The plan identifies a set of core measures and milestones at critical moments of a student's educational trajectory, and establishes an educational community that graduates every student as responsible, active citizens, prepared for success in college, careers and the global economy.

Notable elements of the plan are: CCSS-aligned ELA and math curriculum frameworks and assessments; rollout and capacity building for the Teaching and Learning Framework, including professional development; development of a new incentivized teacher and school leader recruiting and hiring system with strategic compensation and career pathways; implementation of a multiyear "Advanced Management System" connecting evaluations, student performance data and curriculum management: and a focus on increasing and improving internal and external communications with all stakeholder groups.

> ii. *Provide a clear and cogent district approach and set of actions in supporting the turnaround of its lowest achieving schools and its desired impact on Priority Schools.*

The SCSD is prepared to build upon its current initiatives, and has launched comprehensive district-wide transformation strategies that are focused on four high-impact levers that incorporate the turnaround principles and will accomplish our desired goal of having all schools in good standing.

1) **Curriculum and Instructional Programs** – Beginning in January 2012, teachers (K-12) were involved in writing a new curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core State Standards. In addition, SCSD established and has been implementing a comprehensive professional development plan which has allowed us to provide PreK-12 teachers with research-based instructional strategies in the areas of Data Driven instruction, ELA and Math. Through collaboration with the Syracuse Teachers Association (STA) there is common planning time in schools, monthly job-embedded and after-school professional development for all teachers, and quarterly day-long Saturday Academies on topics that support the curricula and instructional programs. This professional development is often delivered by nationally-recognized experts. *(Strong Instructional Program, Using Data to Inform Instruction)*

2) **High Quality Teaching and Leadership** - SCSD was among the very first cohort of districts to have a state-approved APPR plan. The plan's Teaching & Learning and Leadership frameworks and rubrics provide a common language that defines expectations aligned to the Common Core and links performance with incentives. (*Strong Leadership, Effective Teaching)*

3) **Innovation and District Structure** - In 2013-14 SCSD implemented the Innovation Zone (iZone), a buffered space within the district in which a cluster of seven low-performing schools are given the resources, autonomy, flexibility, and support needed to produce our desired outcomes of rapid and sustainable gains in student achievement. The SCSD followed suit in 2014-2015 with the implementation of another cluster of high priority schools (Cohort 5). Lessons learned from the iZone and Cohort 5 are the catalyst for broader, district-wide reform. Successful practices are expanded with a focus on extending the school day and redesigning the schedule which will apply to Grant Middle School. *(Redesigning the school day – additional time for student learning and collaboration)*

4) **Standards of Service and Systems of Support** - District Central Offices have been reorganized to provide more support to school administrators, staff, students and families by increasing accountability and improving recruitment, hiring, supporting and retention mechanisms. An Office of School Transformation and Innovation (**OSTI)** provides customized support for the lowest performing schools. The OSTI provides a highly specialized school support staff with three core functions: streamlined support to pursue innovative and sustainable reform efforts; close monitoring of performance and outcomes; and engagement of stakeholders in the school transformation process. (*Safe school environment, climate, culture and mechanisms for family and community engagement)*

> iii. *Describe the evidence of district readiness to build upon its current strengths and identify opportunities for system-wide improvement in its Priority Schools.*

In alignment with the Regents Reform Agenda and the review findings of external experts, significant initiatives have been undertaken in recent years to build upon current strengths,

providing opportunities to transform the teaching and learning systems and establish a culture of high expectations and co-accountability. For example:

- The Superintendent led in the development and adoption of a comprehensive five-year Strategic Plan, Great Expectations, which serves as the framework for decision-making;
- The APPR plan, with frameworks and rubrics for Leadership and for Teaching & Learning, was among the first approved by NYSED. The SCSD has provided extensive professional development on implementation of the CCSS in English Language Arts and Mathematics, and on the current Teaching & Learning (T&L) Framework and Rubric. During the summer of 2014 alone, preK-12 teachers and support staff participated in over 4,000 hours of professional development. We expect this focus to increase significantly this summer;
- The SCSD has established a district-wide data-driven culture through its participation in Race to the Top Network Team training, and ongoing turnkey training and intensive professional development for teachers and leaders; the District is working to develop and support a comprehensive end-state Teacher and Leader Effectiveness continuum that will achieve a robust systems approach to recruitment, development, retention and equitable distribution of effective teachers and school leaders.
- The SCSD implemented an Innovation Zone (iZone) and SIG Cohort 5 cluster, to provide models of educational excellence that will foster widespread educational reform throughout the District. Overseen by the SCSD Office of School Transformation and Innovation (OSTI) and supported by the Office of School Reform with the expertise of external partners, the iZone demonstrates how to prioritize turnaround strategies and supports for chronically underperforming schools.
- The SCSD secured a federal Turnaround School Leaders Program grant from the United States Education Department. This grant, in partnership with consultants from Education First and Public Impact is specifically focused on the training and capacity-building of turnaround school leaders – principals and lead teachers, in those struggling schools.
- In partnership with Insight Education, all schools receive a school review and analysis of their school improvement efforts. This review provides a guide for improvement and the development of strategies moving forward.
- The District has contracted with the National Center for Time & Learning to review building schedules and establish the most effective use of instructional time for students and staff.

I B. Operational Autonomies (4 points)

i. Describe the operational autonomies the LEA has created for the Priority School in this application. Articulate how these autonomies are different and unique from those of the other schools within the district and what accountability measures the district has put in place in exchange for these autonomies.

In exchange for greater accountability for performance results, the Syracuse City School District (SCSD) is providing no less than **three** operational autonomies to Grant Middle School. The school will utilize autonomies that are different and unique from many schools throughout the SCSD.

Syracuse City School District - 1003(g) School Improvement Grant, 2015-2020, Grant Middle School

1) Staffing – Firstly, the school leaders, in consultation with the Superintendent Receiver, will have discretion over staffing. Through an *Innovation Framework: College Pathways School Design*, the SCSD will empower the principal with the unique opportunity to review the quality of the staff and make recommendations to the Superintendent Receiver regarding the retention of only those who have the ability to be successful. Furthermore, staffing in the school will be by mutual consent, whereby both the principal and the candidate mutually agree to the job placement. (In most other district schools, teachers are assigned by central office staff based on certification vacancies created by such factors as retirement, leaves of absence, resignation and seniority). As an additional accountability measure, teachers electing to work in Grant Middle School must commit to and sign a year-to-year Election-to-Work Agreement (EWA), which defines the school's unique working conditions (including but not limited to professional development requirements, curricular program and length of the school day and school year). The principal will be given the authority to enforce the EWA. Staff who do not follow the terms and conditions contained therein may be required to transfer. Furthermore, the principal will be held accountable for the quality and effectiveness of the school's teaching staff.

2) Use of Time During and After School – The instructional day and year in the school will be collaborative and will be extended by approximately 200 hours beyond the existing school year schedule. Furthermore, the school will establish additional time to be dedicated to professional development. The principal, working collaboratively with the Superintendent Receiver and the Community Engagement Team, will research and study creative scheduling options and develop and implement a new schedule that meets both the instructional and social-emotional needs of their students as well as the professional development needs of staff. The Superintendent Receiver and/or her designees will make changes to collective bargaining agreements that are necessary to implement extended learning time. The principal and CET will research, identify and contract with educational enrichment partners that can offer additional supports and services as Grant Middle School.

For accountability purposes, school and district leaders and the CET will review the proposed plans for high quality and sustainability, recommend modifications as necessary, and provide approval for the 2015-2016 school year. The building principal and external evaluator will conduct ongoing monitoring to ensure that additional time is used in the most effective and appropriate way possible to improve achievement for students and to support professional learning for staff.

3) Educational Partner Selection – External reviewers recommended focusing on doing a few things well, because multiple initiatives driven by availability of funds had led to incoherence and inconsistency across the district. A conscious decision to follow reviewer recommendations was made and the Superintendent directed that programs and practices that were ineffective in achieving desired results be abandoned. Having analyzed results of the DTSDE reviews, District-level leadership noted a number of findings and recommendations for the school. Senior leadership identified potential partners to provide support and conducted a rigorous vetting process to assess for clarity and strength, experience, evidence of success and capacity.

The SCSD Chief Academic Officer has vetted and provided information on a range of partners for school improvement. The partners will provide support at the outset of the project. The

school has already begun to identify *additional* or *unique* school-level needs that might best be addressed by other organizations. With discretionary funding included in the SIG and Persistently Struggling Schools Grant budgets for external partnerships to support professional development and student enrichment, the principal, in consultation with the CET and Superintendent Receiver, will submit recommendations for partner organizations to aid in the implementation of whole-school turnaround, AVID Schoolwide and personalized blended learning. This process will ensure that the school has access to proven, research-based strategies, and discretion to choose appropriate partners to address those needs. Partners and principals will agree upon the scope and sequence of service, and partners will be held to these parameters. Following each professional development opportunity, staff will complete evaluation surveys and the principal will observe to ensure that new knowledge and skill is put into practice.

> ii. *Provide as evidence formally adopted Board of Education policies and/or procedures for providing the school the appropriate autonomy, operating flexibility, resources, and support to reduce barriers and overly burdensome compliance requirements.*

The Board of Education is committed to providing Grant Middle School with the appropriate autonomies, operating flexibility, resources, and support to reduce barriers and overly burdensome compliance requirements. As evidence of this support, the Board of Education will pass a resolution (draft attached) to approve the negotiation of an agreement between the Syracuse City School District and the Syracuse Teachers Association. This agreement will assure that the school shall continue to follow state and federal laws and regulations, however the school shall be exempt from certain Board rules and District policies not directly tied to state and federal laws and regulations. Priority Schools will strive for a model of collaboration and shared decision-making at the school site, embodying freedoms from locally-imposed constraints.

The Principal, in collaboration with the School Leadership Team, the Community Engagement Team and the Superintendent Receiver, will set the school vision, create the annual school-specific agreements and achievement goals, coordinate the internal appeals process, draft aligned school reform/improvement goals and plans, and monitor performance and progress. In an effort to change the perception in our community, a rebranding of the school's image, based on the mission and vision, will be instrumental in providing educational opportunities for students who are on a path to college and careers.

> iii. *Submit as additional evidence, supporting labor-management documentation such as formally executed thin-contracts or election-to-work agreements, or school-based options, that state the conditions for work that match the design needs of Priority School.*

A draft Election-to-Work Agreement (EWA) for Grant Middle School is attached. The EWA will be signed by both the principal of the school and the staff who elect to work in that school.

I C. District Accountability and Support (4 points)

The LEA must have the organizational structures and functions in place at the district-level to provide quality oversight and support for its identified Priority Schools in the implementation of their SIG plans. The LEA plan for accountability and support must contain each of the following elements:

i. Describe in detail the manner by which the district ensures that all federal requirements of a school's chosen model are fulfilled and continue to be fulfilled throughout the duration of the grant.

The Syracuse City School District has developed and will implement a whole-school change model with the goal of achieving dramatic school-level achievement gains such that the school will be in good academic standing within three years. The requirements and parameters set forth in the Request for Proposals (RFP) serve as the quality standard for, and are part of, the SIG plan. The SCSD will fully implement the SIG plan in Grant Middle School, through available resources including but not limited to the SIG 1003(g) funds.

The SIG plan is designed to meet one of the seven federal-designated intervention models, *Innovation Framework*. This intervention model is consistent with the United States Department of Education's requirements for SIG funding. In addition, the SIG plan for Grant Middle School directly aligns with the United States Secretary of Education's seven (7) turnaround principles. Coupling this intervention model's requirements with the Secretary's turnaround principles, and the design elements of high quality schools, provides a framework for bold and dramatic school change.

ii. Identify specific senior leadership that will direct and coordinate district's turnaround efforts and submit an organizational chart (or charts) identifying the management structures at the district-level that are responsible for providing oversight <u>and</u> support to the LEA's lowest achieving schools.

The Syracuse City School District is fortunate to have a visionary Superintendent (Superintendent Receiver) to steer district and school improvement efforts. Dr. Sharon L. Contreras, a 2010 graduate of the prestigious Broad Superintendent's Academy, attended Binghamton University where she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature. She has also earned a Master of Arts in Teaching; a Master of Arts in English Literature and a Master of Science in Educational Administration from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She recently completed her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Dr. Contreras has served as a high school teacher, curriculum specialist, principal, area superintendent and assistant superintendent in Rockford, Illinois; the Chief Academic Officer of Clayton County Public Schools in Jonesboro, Georgia, where she is credited for developing a rigorous K-12 curriculum, expanding Advanced Placement and gifted programming, introducing research-based interventions for struggling students, developing a research and evaluation department and parent information/registration center, and significantly improving the high school graduation rate; and--just prior to her transition to Syracuse--the Chief Academic Officer for Providence (RI) Public Schools, where she implemented an Aligned Instructional System, improved the graduation rate, and rolled out a Pathways to Prosperity initiative to provide high school students with greater access to college and careers.

In her first two-and-a-half years in Syracuse, Dr. Contreras successfully led the SCSD in the development and adoption of *Great Expectations: Syracuse City School District Strategic Plan 2012-2017.* With resounding support from the Board of Education and the Syracuse community, the strategic plan defines the important work the district is undertaking to ensure the realization of its vision: "to become the most improved urban school district in America."

The principal of Grant Middle School is Pamela Odom who was appointed to that position in the past year. She possesses a wealth of experience and a strong background to establish and lead the *Innovation Framework* at the school. Her qualifications correspond to the requirements for Principal, a job description of which is attached.

The school-based ELA and Mathematics Instructional Coaches will play key roles in offering unique support to teachers at Grant Middle School. The ELA MCLs (Multi-Classroom Leader), Math MCL, and Behavioral MCL, in collaboration with the MCLII will continue to extend their reach to more students by providing their assigned teachers with on-the-job professional learning. The Personalized Blended Learning Coach will provide building-level support for all PBL activities at Grant Middle School. Every Coach will be selected in part for his/her ability to provide high quality, job-embedded professional development in not just content, but also key turnaround competencies (e.g., positive classroom management techniques and engaging and culturally-relevant instruction).

An Extended Learning Time Lead Teacher will also be added to the staff to oversee all enrichment activities within the building. This highly-skilled professional will recruit CBO partners, coordinate schedules, and monitor program effectiveness, among other tasks.

A Community Liaison position will also be added to the staff to bridge gaps between refuge communities, school staff, community agencies, and families. This full-time employee will be instrumental in building relationships with parents, families, and our refugee communities in order to increase access and parental involvement.

The district-level organizational chart reflects the direct-line support to the school available from all departments of the SCSD, including the Offices of Student Accountability (OSA), Operations, Talent Management (Personnel), and Finance. Chief Officers are in the process of identifying effective employees in each department who will serve as a cross-functional work team dedicated to fast-tracking key services to the school. The principal will be able to streamline bureaucratic processes, and reach out directly to key support personnel.

Lastly, it is vital that the school work in close alignment with the district's Office of Teaching and Learning, to ensure that all teachers benefit optimally from the outstanding initiatives underway to develop both materials and capacity for rigorous Common Core instruction. To streamline communications and ensure clarity and alignment, the Instructional Coaches who support the school, the PBL Coach, ELT Lead Teacher and the AVID Facilitator will collaborate actively with their colleague coaches and content area supervisors from across the district.

All structured interactions between district and school leadership will be regularly scheduled and guided by clear protocols to ensure time is well spent and that meetings remain data-driven, results-oriented, and anchored in a "Plan-Do-Study-Act" cycle to ensure continuous process improvement. SCSD is a pilot district for DataCation in the development and early implementation of an adaptive data dashboard that will empower the principal and coaches to monitor and assess school level change on a regular and ongoing basis.

Timeframe of Key Interactions and Persons Responsible

Interaction	Persons Responsible	Timeframe
School-level Data Dashboards (operational and achievement data)	Principal and School Leadership Team (SLT). (With OSA support)	Semi-monthly through 2015-16 school year; thereafter as necessary
Action meetings	Principal	Weekly, utilizing Action Steps protocol
Math Coach Academy, Literacy Coach Academy, Teaching & Learning Meetings	Organized by Chief Academic Officer and Teaching & Learning Supervisors; attended by all school-level coaches	Staggered semi-monthly; organized by Chief Academic Officer and Teaching & Learning supervisors
School-Support focus meetings	Executive Director of Teaching & Learning, and Executive Director of Middle School	Weekly, utilizing Action Steps protocol
SCSD Senior Staff Meetings	Organized by Superintendent , attended by Executive Director of Middle School	Weekly Senior Staff
Board of Education updates and workshops	Principal	Quarterly or as requested by Superintendent of Schools
Regular school-level meetings with AVID Facilitator and EPO	Principals and School Leadership Team	As determined by the Principal
NYSED quality updates and supports	Chief Academic Officer, Director of Special Programs	As determined by NYSED

iii. Describe in detail how the structures identified in "i" of this section function in a coordinated manner, to provide high quality accountability and support. Describe and discuss the specific cycle of planning, action, evaluation, feedback, and adaptation between the district and the school leadership. This response should be very specific about the type, nature, and frequency of interaction between the district personnel with school leadership and identified external partner organizations in this specific Priority School application.

The principal, acting in concert with the Superintendent Receiver and the Community Engagement Team, will ensure that all components of the plan are implemented and that the goals of the plan are achieved. The principal will attend all plan meetings, issue notices of meetings, and follow up on all commitments developed at the meetings. The principal will oversee and monitor the external partners and address any issues that may arise with their involvement with the project. The principal will initiate and coordinate communications within the school about the project (e.g., with the School Leadership Team); as well as communications outside of the school (e.g., with Executive Director of Middle School).

iv. For each planned interaction, provide a timeframe and identify the specific person responsible for delivery.

The **Principal,** with guidance and assistance from the Superintendent Receiver, will serve as the primary school-based administrator for *College Pathways*. She will ensure successful implementation of the SIG plan, toward the goal of becoming a "School in Good Standing." She will directly address any day-to-day obstacles that may arise. To ensure that the program is school-based, the principal will have meaningful involvement in all relevant decisions for implementing the SIG plan at her school; and no program modification will be made without her approval after consultation with the Community Engagement Team;

The **AVID Facilitator** will oversee the establishment and implementation of *AVID School wide*. Particular responsibilities are maintaining and reviewing data (e.g., testing), working directly with the external partners, and assisting with program modification;

The **Personalized Blended Learning Coach** will provide building-level support for all PBL activities at Grant Middle School.

The **Extended Learning Time Lead Teacher** will be added to the staff to oversee all enrichment activities within the building. This highly-skilled professional will recruit CBO partners, coordinate schedules, and monitor program effectiveness, among other tasks.

The **Executive Director of Middle School** will monitor *College Pathways* at Grant Middle School. She will be regularly updated on the program activity, and intervene as necessary to ensure that the program is keeping with the district goal for all students to be college- and career-ready. Any modifications to the program will be done under her guidance, and in conjunction with the superintendent.

I D. Teacher and Leader Pipeline (4 points)

The LEA must have a clear understanding of the type and nature of teachers and leaders that are needed to create dramatic improvement in its lowest-achieving schools. In addition, the LEA must have a coherent set of goals and actions that lead to the successful recruitment, training, and retention of teachers and leaders who are effective in low-achieving schools. The LEA's plan must include each of the following elements:

    i.   Identify and describe recruitment goals and strategies for high poverty and high minority schools to ensure that students in those schools have equal access to high-quality leaders and teachers.

The Syracuse City School District (SCSD) recruits and selects highly effective teachers and principals as early as possible through a comprehensive set of recruitment strategies and rigorous yet candidate-friendly selection processes. The SCSD has demonstrated the capacity to attract large numbers of candidates with a range of prior experiences to lead and teach in high-poverty, high-minority schools, particularly through the SCSD's experience staffing seven Innovation Zone (iZone) schools that launched in the fall of 2013. The SCSD has since expanded and improved its recruitment efforts, preparing the SCSD to meet the goal of selecting high-quality candidates for all forecasted school leadership vacancies.

SCSD has developed a comprehensive strategy to attract great educators to the District's 33 schools, especially the schools that have historically struggled the most. The SCSD prepares vacancy projection models for teacher and school leader positions, which allow District leaders to more strategically plan recruitment activities. The SCSD's marketing and branding campaign includes a recruitment website for active and passive job seekers: www.JoinSyracuseCitySchools.com. In and effort to expand and diversify recruiting, the SCSD advertises through such means as: targeting teacher and leader preparation programs (including those at historically black colleges and universities and those with strong reputations for producing excellent educators); paid advertisements in Education Week's Top School Jobs; social media; representation at more diverse, on-site recruitment fairs; and increasing the number of formal partnerships with educator programs at colleges and universities, including a teacher

residency program for high-need subject areas at Syracuse University. In partnership with SUPES Academy, the Superintendent launched a Syracuse Aspiring Leaders Academy (SALA) to build a stronger pipeline of internal candidates for future school leadership opportunities. To build a deeper and wider pool of applicants, candidates from within that pool are being trained and selected with increasingly greater precision.

The SCSD is also continuing best practices in its selection processes. For candidates who are invited to interview for teaching and leadership positions, the SCSD uses rigorous selection processes, grounded in rubrics for assessing candidates on core competencies of instruction and leadership. The teacher selection rubric is fully aligned with the SCSD Teaching and Learning Framework, which was approved by the New York State Education Department. The District is committed to continuing and expanding the practice of hiring teachers and other staff through mutual consent, given that this has been shown to lead to greater satisfaction, high levels of effectiveness, and longer retention.

ii. *Describe the district processes for altering hiring procedures and budget timelines to ensure that the appropriate number and types of teachers and principals can be recruited and hired in time to bring schools through dramatic change.*

The Teaching and Learning Framework focuses on the practices that are particularly effective in teaching students of color, students with disabilities, English language learners, and economically-disadvantaged students. The SCSD teacher hiring process components, screening tools (including the EPI, which uses a comparable four-domain framework of effective instructional practice), and scoring mechanisms are all linked to the core competencies of the SCSD Teaching and Learning Framework. The process for hiring teachers includes: early recruitment of highly effective candidates, more rigorous application screening, initial interview, teaching demonstration/video, reference checks, and school site interview.

Candidates are required to complete performance tasks and role play scenarios. Staff involved in the hiring process are trained in using these tools. SCSD's top teaching experts (e.g., teacher leaders, coaches or department heads) assist in the review of candidates. Half of all new teachers are selected by the end of April and the rest of the District's known vacancies are filled by the end of June, ensuring new hires are fully prepared for the start of the school year.

Expedited hiring based on data-based vacancy forecasts allows SCSD to recruit and secure top talent for district classrooms, rather than waiting until the summer when the best candidates have already accepted positions in other districts. Also, as the District builds a deeper and wider pool of applicants, candidates are selected from within that pool with greater precision than ever before. From the www.JoinSyracuseCitySchools.com website, potential applicants can link directly to the SCSD job board and apply for one or multiple jobs through an online application.

All certified staff apply through a new www.TeacherMatch.com platform, whereby teacher applicants complete, as part of their initial application, a research-based online assessment that measures pedagogical skills, attitudinal factors, and cognitive ability. TeacherMatch created the Educator Professional Inventory (EPI) in partnership with a variety of organizations including the University of Chicago, NWEA (known for the design and implementation of MAP adaptive student assessments), and Education Analytics, which was founded by researchers from the

Value-Added Research Center of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. This assessment tool aids in identifying those teachers who will both challenge and support students in the classroom.

iii. Identify and describe any district-wide training programs designed to build the capacity of leaders to be successful in leading dramatic change in low-achieving schools. In addition, describe how these programs are aligned to the implementation of the specific model chosen (Turnaround, Restart, Transformation, Innovation Framework, Evidence-based, or Early Learning Intervention). Provide a history of these or similarly purposed programs in the district, how they are or have been funded, and identify whether the school principals chosen to lead the new school designs proposed in this application have emerged as a direct result of these programs. Please identify the goals in terms of quantity and quality of effective leader development.*

The principal and assistant principal in Grant Middle School will participate in a variety of district-wide training programs. Additionally, all school leaders will participate in district-wide training, as outlined in the attached chart. SCSD provides a Summer Leadership Institute and monthly Principal Leadership Academies throughout the school year. These professional development initiatives have been funded through the Title I 1003 (a) ELA and STEM Enrichment, Professional Development in Advanced Coursework and Leadership Academies grants, and Title IIA: Teacher and Leader Recruitment and Professional Development. The Summer Leadership Institutes and school-year Leadership Academies cover such topics as: Leadership of the Common Core/CCSS Scope and Sequence as reflected in the SCSD curriculum, Five Pivotal Practices that Shape Instructional Leadership, and Developing Shared Understanding of the APPR Requirements through actionable feedback in teacher effectiveness.

SCSD has partnered with Education First and Public Impact to develop and implement a program that will build the capacity of current and aspiring turnaround school leaders as they lead their schools through the implementation of rigorous curricular and instructional practices aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards. The program will build the capacity of principals to effectively lead their schools in such a way as to foster an increase in achievement levels for all students. This program includes eight (8) on-site training sessions, each focused on seven (7) key topics designed to build the capacity of leaders to be successful in leading dramatic change in low-achieving schools. This program develops and monitors Individual Learning Plans for each of the principals or aspiring principals that participate in the program. Lastly, this program provides one-on-one coaching and mentoring for each participant by experienced administrators who have a proven track record of success in urban school leadership. These mentors make on-site visits, regular telephone check-ins, and provide in-the-moment telephone and email support to participants.

The SCSD will research, identify and contract with external consultants with demonstrated expertise in evidence-based, whole-school turnaround efforts. These strategic partners will provide analytical tools, data, implementation infrastructure, information and specialized professional development designed to build the capacity of school and district leaders.

In addition, to aid in the successful implementation of AVID Schoolwide and personalized blended learning, school leaders and CET members will conduct site visits to model schools and/or programs with a track record of success. During these visits, team members will have an opportunity to observe best practices in action, review operations and infrastructure, and ask

iv. *Identify and describe any district-wide training programs designed to build the capacity of teachers to be effective specifically in low-achieving schools. Provide a history of these programs in the district, how they are or have been funded, and identify whether the instructional staff chosen for the new school designs proposed in this application have emerged as a direct result of these programs. If the programs are newly proposed, please identify the goals in terms of quantity and quality of effective teacher development.*

The SCSD provides ongoing, high-quality training and support to ensure teachers in low performing schools have the capacity to effectively instruct students. District-wide training programs have been specifically designed to support teachers. Additionally, teachers will participate in district-wide professional development designed to build capacity of *all* teachers. SCSD provides district-wide training for teachers using funds provided through such sources as the General Fund, and Title I, Title IIA, Title III, and Title I 1003(a) School Improvement Grants. Teachers regularly participate in trainings that include but are not limited to Data-Driven Instruction, Common Core Learning Standards, Annual Professional Performance Review, Instructional Framework, Curriculum Orientation, Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), Danielson/Teachscape, team-building, classroom management and restorative justice. Teachers at Grant Middle School will also be offered intensive, high-quality professional development designed to assist with the implementation of AVID Schoolwide.

The SCSD is committed to incorporating personalized blended learning into its classrooms. As the district begins to implement its vision of "*my goals, my pace, flexible time, flexible space,*" the SCSD will conduct intensive, high-quality professional development by external experts and district professional developers with a wealth of experience and knowledge.

v. *Identify in chart form, the district-offered training events for items "iii & iv" above, scheduled during the year-one implementation period (September 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016). For each planned event, identify the specific agent/organization responsible for delivery, the desired measurable outcomes, and the method by which outcomes will be analyzed and reported. Provide a rationale for each planned event and why it will be critical to the successful implementation of the SIG plan.*

[An attachment to this proposal, *District-Offered Training*, reflects training events for teachers and leaders to occur during the year-one implementation period.]

I E. External Partner Recruitment, Screening, and Matching (4 points)

The LEA must have a rigorous process for identifying, screening, selecting, matching, and evaluating partner organizations that provide critical services to Priority Schools.

i. *Describe the rigorous process and formal LEA mechanisms for identifying, screening, selecting, matching, and evaluating external partner organizations that are providing support to this Priority school.*

The SCSD has a rigorous process for identifying, screening, selecting, matching and evaluating partner organizations that will provide critical services in support of intervention efforts in Priority schools. A rubric is used to determine whether partners' services are insufficient, meet

criteria, or exceed those criteria, which include: 1) clarity and strength of the organization's model and whether it provides exceptional innovative approaches; 2) experience and ability to replicate success in school turnaround including success of hired staff and supporting partners; 3) evidence of sufficient research and theoretical base to support; 4) governance structure and qualifications of key staff, including effectiveness; and 5) substantiation and explanation of the costs of the scope of work.

Reviewing their record of success in addressing the identified needs of our schools, SCSD consulted with this SUNY Oswego for clarification on services they could provide. This information was shared with district leaders who agreed that the recommended partner (as EPO) would suit school-level needs. The Superintendent Receiver, school leadership and CET will use the same due diligence process in determining other partnerships that may be necessary to support the implementation of AVID Schoolwide and personalized blended learning as well as identifying a highly-qualified external independent evaluator to assess program implementation.

ii. *Describe the LEA processes for procurement and budget timelines (and/or any modifications to standard processes) that will ensure this Priority School will have access to effective external partner support prior to or directly at the start of the year-one pre-implementation period and subsequent implementation periods.*

Inherent in school improvement is the notion of reducing overly-burdensome operational or bureaucratic barriers. Grant Middle School is among the very lowest performing schools in Syracuse, and its needs will take precedence. The Superintendent is committed to ensuring that purchase requisitions, contracts and work orders for goods and services needed to support the school will be expedited. In some cases, identified partnerships have *already* been formalized (i.e., AVID), and experts are actively working to support school and district turnaround efforts. Moving forward, the principal will work with the School Leadership Team to identify and prioritize additional needs, and to select *additional* partners or supporting organizations accordingly.

iii. *Describe the role of the district and the role of the school principal in terms of identifying, screening, selecting, matching, and evaluating partner organizations supporting this school. Describe the level of choice that the school principal has in terms of the educational partners available and how those options are accessible in a timeline that matches the preparation and start-up of the new school year.*

Having analyzed results of school reviews (i.e., IIT Review), District level leadership noted a number of common findings and recommendations. District leadership identified a potential partner to provide support and—following the rigorous process described in E.i.—assessed them for clarity and strength, experience, evidence of success and capacity. Reviewing their record of success in addressing the identified needs of our schools, SCSD consulted with the partner for clarification on services they could provide. This information was shared with district leaders who agreed that the recommended partner (as EPO) would suit school-level needs. An Outside Educational expert, Insight Education, was also chosen to review and analyze the SIG plan, and to provide support and guidance through regular meetings with school leaders. The Superintendent Receiver, school leadership and CET will use the same due diligence process in determining other partnerships that may be necessary to support the implementation of AVID

The Superintendent Receiver, school leadership and CET are identifying additional school-level needs that might best be addressed by other organizations. The principal will review these prospective partners and will work cooperatively with the Executive Director of Middle School to formally add these partners in the project. This process will ensure that the school has access to proven, research-based strategies and effective partners, while maintaining operational autonomies. The principal will ensure that any barriers to utilization of selected services are removed and that procurement of partner services will be expedited.

1 F. Enrollment and Retention Policies, Practices, and Strategies (2 points)

The LEA must have clear policies, practices, and strategies for managing student enrollment and retention to ensure that Priority Schools are not receiving disproportionately high numbers of students with disabilities, English-language learners, and students performing below proficiency.

> i. *Identify and describe similarities and differences in the school enrollment of SWDs, ELLs, and students performing below proficiency in this Priority School as compared with other schools within the district. Discuss the reasons why these similarities and differences exist.*

In the 2014-2015 school year, Grant Middle School enrolled 695 students, of whom 19% are English language learners (ELL), and 19% are students with disabilities (SWD). As reflected in the chart below, Grant Middle School serves a significantly higher percentage of ELLs than the District-wide rates. The percentage of students with disabilities is equal to the district-wide rate.

Grant Middle School is located on the City's north side, which has a high concentration of economically-disadvantaged students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. As a major resettlement area in New York, the growing refugee and immigrant populations have fueled growth in specific neighborhoods and led to increases in the ELL population at Grant Middle School. The SCSD is seeking to ensure that schools such as Grant Middle School do not receive a disproportionate rate of ELL students, but that ELL enrollment is balanced across the district.

	% SWDs	% ELLs	Grade 6 % not meeting standards		Grade 7 % not meeting standards		Grade 8 % not meeting standards	
			ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
Grant M.S.	19	19	92	92	93	94	98	99
SCSD	19	14	92	92	93	94	91	99

Data Source: *April 2014 NY State Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Math Assessment results; not meeting the standards is defined as scoring at levels 1 and 2. SWD and ELL data are from 2014-15 NYS BEDS data.*

The academic performance of SCSD students in grades 6, 7, and 8 is far below acceptable levels, which is mirrored in the performance of the students at Grant Middle School. Further, the percent of Grant Middle School 8th grade students who do not meet NYS standards in ELA significantly exceeds the District average. In no grade, in either ELA or Math, do the assessment results for Grant Middle School students exceed the district averages. Believing that this could in part be due to the need for strong instructional leadership, Grant Middle School is proposing to implement the *Innovation Framework* model, to launch a whole-school design. It is expected

that staff changes resulting from this model--in concert with the proposed whole-school redesign efforts that incorporate the requisite seven principles and a plan to meet the varying needs of this diverse student population--will reverse student achievement trends and close the gap between Grant Middle School and other middle schools in New York.

ii.   Describe the district policies and practices that help to ensure SWDs, ELLs, and students performing below proficiency have increasing access to diverse and high quality school programs across the district.

The district enrollment, which exceeds 21,000, represents diverse racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds in grades preK-12 (19% are SWD, and 14% are ELL). 91% of students performed below proficiency on the NYS ELA assessments in 2014 (91% on the Math assessments). SCSD's mission is to build, support and sustain school communities that provide *all* students with a high quality education that prepares them to graduate as responsible, active citizens ready for success in college and careers and prepared to compete in a global economy. Following comprehensive external diagnostic reviews of the district's practices, processes and systems, SCSD enacted a five-year Strategic Plan to serve as a framework to ensure that *all* students have increasing access to diverse and high-quality school programs through the implementation of five reform-based goals. Pertaining specifically to SWDs and ELLs, Goal 3 of the Strategic Plan calls for the development of an infrastructure to support student success. The underlying strategies include changing the service-delivery model for ELLs to encourage successful transition to English in accord with the research on second language acquisition and in recognition of the academic and social benefits of bi-literacy; and initiating a multi-year process to restructure the service-delivery model for SWDs, aligning special education services to the Response to Intervention (RtI) model, and developing a streamlined identification process.

In addition, the Directors of Special Education and ELL/Bilingual work closely with each school and other administrators to ensure that the needs of the SWD and ELL populations are met across the educational spectrum. Special Education and ESL specialists (including the Director of ELL/Bilingual, the ESL/Bilingual Instructional Specialist, and representatives from the R-BERN) are integral members of the comprehensive school and district review teams. Furthermore, Special Education Quality Assurance Reviews are conducted by NYSED annually to assess district performance in ensuring access to the general education curriculum by SWDs.

Thorough reviews of ESL programming are conducted annually by NYSED and SCSD administrators and throughout the year by the SCSD ELL AMAO Corrective Action Plan Team. SWDs' and ELLs' access to diverse and high-quality school programs across the district is further assured by the following: the annual review process of student IEPs; district-wide professional development for all teachers on the CCLS, Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) and differentiating instruction; provision of assistive technology, appropriate level curriculum materials, and native language texts; and school/home communication translated into multiple languages to ensure broader awareness and access to extracurricular opportunities and summer programs for students. SCSD also employs bilingual, bicultural Nationality Workers to assist with home/school communications.

iii.   Describe specific strategies employed by the district to ensure that Priority schools in the district are not receiving or incentivized to receive disproportionately high numbers of SWDs, ELLs, and students performing below proficiency.

SCSD ensures that a full continuum of special education services and ESL programming is equitably balanced and distributed across all schools in the District, thus Priority and non-Priority schools in the SCSD receive equitable shares of English language learners and students with disabilities. The District utilizes a central registration process with formalized procedures and protocols to ensure that SWDs and ELLs are appropriately placed during the initial enrollment process in schools with capacity to provide services for students with extenuating needs. SCSD follows a neighborhood schools philosophy, whereby placements are based primarily on a student's residency. Consideration is also given to the enrollment location of siblings, but it is not SCSD policy to consider student proficiency levels in making decisions regarding school placement.

I G. District-level Labor and Management Consultation and Collaboration (2 points)

The LEA/school must fully and transparently consult and collaborate with recognized district leaders of the principals' and teachers' labor unions about district Priority Schools and the development and implementation of the plan proposed for this specific Priority School proposed in this application. The evidence of consultation and collaboration provided by the LEA must contain each of the following elements:

> i. *Describe in detail the steps that have occurred to consult and collaborate in the development of the district and school-level implementation plans.*

At the district level, all schools are guided by the goals and initiatives laid out in the five-year strategic plan, *Great Expectations 2012-2017*, which also serves as the basis for the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP). The presidents of both STA (teachers) and SAAS (administrators) were members of the Core Planning Team and participated actively in an intensive, collaborative process of drafting, discussion, and community review. The strategic plan's five goals express a firm commitment to impacting all three components of the instructional core (students, teachers, and content) as well as moving the district itself toward becoming a high-performing organization with a true culture of accountability for student achievement.

Collaborative, constructive conversation between STA, SAAS, and SCSD has been a distinctive hallmark of the district under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Sharon Contreras, as evidenced by the successful negotiation of an APPR agreement that was one of the first approved by NYSED. After additional months of negotiation, union and district leadership's shared commitment to the students of Syracuse has also allowed them to craft and agree upon a groundbreaking Memorandum of Understanding that will allow flexible working conditions and innovative staffing practices in SCSD's targeted Priority schools, including utilization of an Election-to-Work Agreement that underscores each teacher's personal dedication to turning around Priority schools such as Grant Middle School.

Specific to the process of developing the proposed SIG implementation plan, the Chief Academic Officer, Executive Director of Teaching & Learning, and Director of Professional Development have provided professional development and technical assistance to all Priority schools, assisting them in planning to implement accountability mandates associated with New York State's ESEA Waiver.

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> ii. *Complete the Consultation and Collaboration Form and submit with this application (Attachment A).*

Please see the completed Consultation and Collaboration Form (Attachment A).

II. A. Assessing the Needs of the School Systems, Structures, Policies, and Students (4 points)

The LEA/school must demonstrate a critical and honest assessment of structural/systems gaps and needs, as well as student achievement gaps and needs that are identified as the result of a systemic analysis process. The assessment of needs section must address each of the following elements:

> i. *Use statistics and descriptive language, to describe the population of students the school serves, and the unique needs of sub-groups (e.g.: students with disabilities, English language learners, students from households that are eligible for free or reduced lunch, first-generation college-goers, and/or students traditionally underrepresented in college).*

Grant Middle School is located in the northside of Syracuse, a high-poverty area that is riddled by gang activity, and violent crimes including shootings. Of concern is the number of youth from this area who are involved in serious crimes including burglaries and robberies. Families here experience compounding risk factors of illiteracy, mental health issues, drug use, and incarceration that present enormous barriers for students. Many parents are unemployed or underemployed. Many students will be the first generation in their families to attend college.

In the 2014-15 school year, Grant Middle School enrolled 695 students in grades 6-8. Among the student population 19% are students with disabilities (SWD); and more than 70% are from low-income households. Students of color comprise 67% of the student population. Specifically, the racial/ethnic composition of the school is as follows: (43%, African-American; 10%, Hispanic [any race]; and 14%, Asian, American Indian, or multi-racial). English language learners (ELL) represent more than 19% of the student body, significantly higher than the districtwide average of 14%. The low academic performance of student subgroups is demonstrated in the chart below.

Student academic performance at Grant Middle School

Group	Grade 6 % not meeting standards		Grade 7 % not meeting Standards		Grade 8 % not meeting standards		% not meeting standards (all grades)	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
All students	92	92	93	94	98	99	94	95
African American	97	99	97	100	100	100	98	100
American Indian	***	***	***	***	***	***	100	100
Hispanic (any race)	87	87	100	100	96	***	94	95
Asian/Pacific Islander	93	92	88	91	97	***	92	94
White	87	85	88	86	98	97	90	88
Gen Ed	***	90	92	***	98	100	93	94

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SWD	100	100	100	***	100	97	100	99
LEP	100	100	100	100	100	***	100	100
Economically Disadvantaged	93	94	94	95	99	***	95	96

Data Source: April 2014 New York State Grades 3-8 English Language Arts and Math Assessment results; not meeting the standards is defined as scoring at levels 1 and 2. *** Data suppressed.

Average daily attendance for Grant Middle School students is 96%, which is comparable to the district-wide average. In the 2013-14 school year the out-of-school suspension rate was 26%, nearly double the district rate of 14% for students in grades 6-8. Discipline referrals and suspensions significantly impact the academic program and decrease students' "opportunity to learn." As part of its receivership plan, Grant Middle School has committed to enhancing school safety and decreasing the school's suspension rate. As of October 20, 2015, there had only been 2 serious incidents at the school, and 29 out-of-school suspensions as compared to 58 during the same time frame in the previous year.

The NYS Education Commissioner recently identified Grant Middle School as "Persistently Struggling." The Commissioner gave this designation to schools where "… whole generations of students have been left behind;" and obliges districts "… to develop robust plans to improve student performance" and "act on conditions that have persisted for too long in these schools." The Board of Regents Chancellor calls upon communities "… to come together to fundamentally rethink how these schools carry out their obligations to students and families."

> ii. *Describe the systematic in-depth diagnostic school review of the school conducted by the district, a Joint Intervention Team (JIT), Integrated Intervention Team (ITT), and/or related outside education experts to determine its existing capacity, strengths, and needs. Include the means by which community and family input were included in this review.*

The NYSED Integrated Intervention Team (IIT), using the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE), issued a "School Final Report" in October 2014. The review was co-led by an Outside Educational Expert (OEE) and a representative from the New York State Education Department, and also included a district representative, a Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SESIS), and a representative from the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN). The review team visited a total of 48 classrooms during the two-day review. Reviewers conducted focus groups with students, staff and parents, who examined documents provided by the school, including curriculum maps, lesson plans, school-wide data, teacher feedback, and student work. On the date of the review, the principal had been in her post only six weeks.

> iii. *Describe the results of this systematic school review, including the existing capacity, strengths, and needs to dramatically improve student achievement.*

The IIT issued a rating of *Developing* for each Tenet (Tenet 2 - School Leader Practices and Decisions; Tenet 3 - Curriculum Development and Support; Tenet 4 – Teacher Practices and Decisions; Tenet 5 – Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health; and Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement). Notably, the IIT found the school to be "ineffective" in sub-tenets 3.4, 4.4 4.5, 5.4, 6.3 and 6.4.

iv. Discuss how the LEA/school will prioritize these identified needs in the implementation of the SIG plan.

In the "School Final Report" the IIT issued the following recommendations:

Tenet 2 - Improve progress towards achieving school-wide goals by ensuring that: school leaders and staff monitor and evaluate progress towards the school's major priorities each semester to check on the impact that new systems are having; school staff seek views from parent and student representatives at small and large group meetings each semester and incorporate them into the monitoring process; school leaders monitor the quality of instruction in line with the APPR, providing specific feedback on areas for improvement and arranging follow–up sessions after each visit to check that agreed improvements are being implemented; and school staff at all levels use information from evidence-based systems to inform their evaluation.

Tenet 3 - Improve the quality of curriculum planning and raise teacher and student expectation of achievement by assigning school leaders, multi-classroom leaders (MCLs), and coaches who will: work with teachers at weekly coaching sessions, using for example their lesson plans or assessment data, to reflect on how to match curriculum and tasks to the needs of students of all abilities; encourage and support teachers in planning a wider variety of tasks and assessment opportunities, which engage students' interest and give them opportunities to make decisions (e.g., on how to demonstrate their learning and how to develop higher-level skills), through meetings, feedback or training activities; provide further guidance to teachers on how to set and use targeted goals for students; and monitor teachers' provision of feedback to students with walkthroughs.

Tenet 4 - Improve the quality of instruction and raise teacher and student expectations of achievement by ensuring that teachers: consistently implement the *Code of Conduct, Character, and Support* across all classrooms so that students are clear on both academic and behavior expectations; teach lessons that provide students with consistent opportunities to ask questions, make decisions, and engage with one another; check during every lesson that all students are assigned work that is manageable but challenging for their differing needs and levels; and set goals every few weeks which students understand, refer to the goals regularly during lessons, and provide guidance to students through ongoing feedback on how to reach their goals.

Tenet 5 - Maintain the drive to improve student social and emotional developmental health and make sure all students feel intellectually safe by ensuring that: school leaders, support staff, and teachers use data along with student and parental views to plan interventions that align to student needs, and support students' goals; school leaders, support staff, and teachers hold regular formal consultations each semester with parent and student representatives to gather their feedback and views through discussion and surveys to check that changes to school policies and practice reflect their priorities; and   school leaders monitor the implementation of the *Code of Conduct, Character, and Support*, to check that teacher expectations are consistent throughout the school and to provide additional support to teachers and students as necessary to clarify expectations and how they can be met.

Tenet 6 - School leaders should: work closely with school staff and parents to establish accurate family contact information and to identify a preferred language and mode of communication for

all parents; provide information and guidance to school staff on how to communicate and work with parents from a range of backgrounds and cultures; and develop a long-term communication plan that enables parents to understand what the school is trying to achieve and how they can support the process at home.

The Superintendent Receiver, School Leadership Team, and CET will review and prioritize the IIT recommendations and findings in the context of SIG requirements for whole school redesign, the SCSD Strategic Plan, and research and best practices regarding school turnaround. Their team will be further guided by district leaders and consultants to ensure that the redesign plan will achieve dramatic school-level achievement gains and prepare the school for long-term transformation. The SIG plan--including the implementation of *AVID Schoolwide* and personalized blended learning--will meaningfully address the recommendations of the IIT as identified in the "School Final Report."

II. B. School Model and Rationale (4 points)

The LEA/school must propose and present the SIG plan as a plausible solution to the challenges and needs identified in the previous section, as well as the appropriate fit for the particular school and community. The SIG plan and rationale must contain descriptions of the following elements:

> i. *Describe the rationale for the selected model (Turnaround, Restart, Transformation, Innovation Framework, Evidence-based, or Early Learning Intervention), the research-based key design elements and other unique characteristics of the new school design. The rationale should reference the identified needs, student population, core challenges, and school capacity and strengths discussed above.*

A number of factors were taken into consideration when selecting the *Innovation Framework* model for Grant Middle School. This model offers several design options for the school to embark on the path of becoming a "School in Good Standing." Of the options available, the most applicable is the *College Pathways School Design*. The school requires a dramatic and comprehensive approach to school improvement which can feasibly be achieved through this model and this design.

Under New York State and federal accountability guidelines, Grant Middle School has recently been designated a *Persistently Struggling* school. Improvement efforts over the years have focused on research-based strategies, but they have clearly not resulted in significant school improvement. While school leadership has changed over the years, none of the improvement efforts have included significant, purposeful programmatic changes, nor have they relied on sufficient district- and school-level accountability measures.

Teacher quality is among the most important school-based factors affecting student achievement. Many Syracuse City Schools, including Grant Middle School, were significantly impacted in recent years by staffing changes associated with the implementation of Transformation and Turnaround Plans in the SCSD Innovation Zone (iZone) and Cohort 5 SIG schools. Grant Middle School saw major shifts as the building lost effective and highly effective teachers to iZone and Cohort 5 schools, and received a large number of new teachers who either opted not to stay in -- or were required to transfer out of -- one of the eleven schools implementing SIG plans. Implementing *College Pathways School Design* at Grant Middle School will include intense,

specialized professional development, providing an unprecedented opportunity to ensure that the school is staffed by highly-qualified and well-trained teachers.

Through the *College Pathways School Design* Grant Middle School will embrace the seven principles of whole-school reform and will be committed to the task at hand. Systemic school review findings and recommendations outline a clear need for the following design components: providing a more rigorous, research-based instructional program aligned to the CCSS; expanding the school day to provide students with additional time to master core content; creating a data-driven instructional culture that ensures that teachers analyze and use data to appropriately differentiate and inform instruction; providing one-on-one coaching support to assist teachers in improving their instructional practices and implementing research-based strategies; increasing parent engagement; and targeted, high quality professional development in the areas of instructional rigor, critical thinking, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), cultural competencies, differentiated instruction, classroom climate, student engagement, maintaining high expectations for all students, and classroom/time management. These principles will be accomplished with the *College Pathways School Design* at Grant Middle School. The proposal will also result in heightened accountability, ensuring that Grant Middle School realizes dramatic school-level achievement gains.

> ii. *Describe the process by which this model was chosen, including all steps taken to engage the school staff, leadership, labor unions, families, and community stakeholders in the design and decision-making processes for model selection and plan development.*

All Syracuse City Schools are guided by the goals and initiatives laid out in the SCSD strategic plan, *Great Expectations*, which is aligned to the District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP). The presidents of both the Syracuse Teachers Association (STA) and the Syracuse Association of Administrators and Supervisors (SAAS) were members of the Core Strategic Planning Team and participated actively in an intensive, collaborative process of drafting, discussion, and community review. Development of the strategic plan also included public meetings, public hearings, forums, and other means of soliciting meaningful input from parents and from the Syracuse community at-large. The five goals of the Strategic Plan express a firm commitment to impacting all three components of the instructional core (students, teachers, and content) as well as moving the district itself toward becoming a high performing organization with a true culture of accountability for student achievement.

Collaborative, constructive conversation between and among STA, SAAS, and the administration is a hallmark under the leadership of Superintendent Dr. Sharon Contreras, as evidenced by the successful negotiation of an APPR agreement, one of the first plans approved by NYSED. The Superintendent, the Chief Academic Officer, and other administrators have provided guidance, professional development and technical assistance to all Priority Schools, assisting them in planning to implement accountability mandates associated with New York State's ESEA Waiver. District senior leadership discussed the plight of Grant Middle School, reviewed the seven intervention/redesign models, assessed progress, and offered technical assistance. Follow-up meetings involving the schools' leadership ensued, during which aspects of each of the redesign models were studied and questions or concerns were raised and discussed.

The process of model selection included a thorough review of trend data, teacher effectiveness data and ratings, and consideration of the impact of the model on the school community. The District Office of Teaching & Learning and the Department of Special Programs crafted the resultant SIG grant application. The proposed plan is a reflection of collaborative work among and between district and school leadership. The plan was reviewed and modified based upon the Demonstrable Improvement Metrics developed and approved by the Superintendent Receiver, School Leadership Team and CET Team.

II. C. Determining Goals and Objectives (6 points)

The LEA/school must determine and present broad goals directly aligned to the in-depth diagnostic review and model selection, as well as specific objectives that have been developed to guide key strategies in a time-specific and measurable manner. This section should demonstrate effort on the part of the LEA/school to backward plan key components of school turnaround specific to the school and must include the following elements:

   i.   *Identify, describe and present at least one goal and corresponding objective(s) directly related to academic achievement in the area of English language arts (ELA). Provide the means by which the objective(s) will be assessed.*

One goal of the *Innovation Framework: College Pathways School Design* at Grant Middle School is improving the academic achievement in English language arts (ELA). The performance of the students in the New York State ELA Assessments at Grant Middle School is far below acceptable levels. Namely, in the 2014 NYS ELA assessments, the students in grades 6, 7, and 8 who met the state standards (i.e., scored at levels 3 or 4) were, respectively, 8%, 7%, and 2%. An objective toward realizing this goal is improvement in the state ELA assessments, and matching the statewide grade-level averages for ELA of: Grade 6, 30%; Grade 7, 31%, and Grade 8, 34%.

To gauge progress, and to ensure that students are "on track" to accomplish this goal and objective, periodic assessments will be provided throughout each school year. Specialized assistance (e.g., tutoring) will be provided to students as necessary. Teachers will be provided with professional development toward improving the reading comprehension and fluency of students. The professional development will also include sensitivity towards students with disabilities (SWD), English language learners (ELL), and students from low-income households (economically disadvantaged). These populations comprise a very large percentage of the enrollment at Grant Middle School, and their positive outcomes are a linchpin to school-wide success.

Students at Grant Middle School will be taking Achievement Network (A-Net) assessments in ELA on October 27-29, 2015. Data from these assessments will be compiled and analyzed by instructional coaches, administrators, and teachers. Data meetings will be held on November 4, 2015, and reteach plans will be put in place in response to data uncovered. Students will also take STAR assessments to benchmark student content knowledge in ELA, and that data will be analyzed and utilized by teachers to scaffold and differentiate instruction. In addition, students were targeted for an intervention class (Language! Live) using SRI data. Seven classes were assigned, and all classrooms are scoring at or above targets at 75%.

The Literacy Instructional Coach, in collaboration with the AVID Facilitator and SUNY-Oswego (the EPO) will collaborate to create a culture and environment where students thrive in reading – and succeed academically. The literacy coach meets with ELA teachers on a weekly basis and teachers bring student work modeling high-level tasks from unit outcome assessments. In addition, Grant Middle School will implement personalized blended learning with instruction targeted to each student's strengths, needs and interests. Leadership professional development will be conducted to support transformation. The school leaders in turn will provide classroom coaching and outstanding, individualized professional development to teachers as they work to cultivate positive school culture and dramatically transform student achievement at Grant Middle School. School leadership will be responsible for providing support in execution of consistent and positive behavior management, engaging and culturally relevant 21st century instructional strategies, and research-based practices for effective school turnaround. These steps correspond with the recommendations of the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT).

ii. *Identify and present at least one goal and corresponding objective(s) directly related to academic achievement in the area of mathematics. Provide the means by which the objective(s) will be assessed.*

Another goal of the *Innovation Framework: College Pathways School Design* at Grant Middle School is improving the academic achievement of students in mathematics. Again, performance in the New York State Math Assessments is unacceptable. Namely, in the NYS Math assessments, the students in grades 6, 7, and 8 who met the state standards (i.e., scored at levels 3 or 4) were, respectively, 8%, 6%, and 1%. An objective toward realizing this goal is dramatic improvement in the Math assessments, and matching the statewide grade-level averages of: Grade 6, 31%; Grade 7, 28%, and Grade 8, 28%.

To gauge progress, and to ensure that students are "on track" to meet this goal and objective, periodic assessments will be conducted of students throughout the school year. Specialized assistance (e.g., tutoring) will be provided to students as necessary.   Teachers will be provided with professional development toward improving the math comprehension of students, including sensitivity towards students with disabilities, English language learners, and students from low-income households (economically disadvantaged), populations which comprise a large percentage of the enrollment at Grant Middle School. Representing the vast majority of the enrollment, their positive outcomes are paramount toward realizing school-wide success.

Students will be taking A-Net assessments in Math on October 27-29, 2015. Data from these assessments will be compiled and analyzed by instructional coaches, administrators, and teachers. Data meetings will be held on November 4, 2015, and reteach plans will be put in place in response to data uncovered. Students will also take STAR assessments to benchmark student content knowledge in Math, and the resulting data will be analyzed and utilized by teachers to scaffold and differentiate instruction. All students participate in a math intervention (ST Math); with 76% of 6th and 7th graders working toward Standards Mastery and 59% of 8th graders working toward Standards Mastery.

The Math Instructional Coach, in conjunction with the AVID Facilitator and SUNY-Oswego (the EPO) will collaborate to create a culture and environment where students thrive in math – and succeed academically. The Math Coach meets with math teachers on a weekly basis and

==teachers bring student work modeling high-level tasks and collaboration, teacher monitoring tools used for selecting and sequencing students. In addition, Grant Middle School will implement personalized blended learning with instruction targeted to each student's strengths, needs and interests.== The primary role of the school leaders is to work with teachers to support best practices in instruction, classroom management and student engagement, provide analysis of School-wide trends in support of school transformation priorities, and make recommendations about potential next steps to address areas of need. These steps correspond to the recommendations of the Integrated Intervention Team (IIT).

> iii. *As applicable, identify and present additional goal(s) and corresponding objective(s) directly aligned and specific to the needs assessment of the school and the school improvement model selected. Provide the means by which the objective(s) will be assessed.*

The self-determined priorities for Grant Middle School are to: establish and implement a shared vision for success to promote a safe and orderly school climate and environment; use data to provide specific individualized interventions for struggling learners; increase classroom rigor to engage students in meaningful lessons; increase the use of higher order thinking/questioning when checking for understanding and delivering feedback; and write and deliver lesson plans that promote the shifts in the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).

Grant Middle School, a Priority School, will pursue implementation of a whole-school change model with SIG funding. An *Innovation Framework: College Pathways School Design* will be developed for the school. Under this intervention model the school will provide supports to prepare students to participate in dual enrollment and college-credit bearing courses in a college-pathway high school, with *AVID School wide*. The school will partner with SUNY-Oswego as its Educational Partnership Organization (EPO) to jointly launch this whole-school redesign.

==Grant Middle School will also implement personalized blended learning. By utilizing digital content, each student will have the ability to work on what they need at their own pace. Their teacher will be able to utilize the data provided by the digital content to quickly assess gaps in skills and understanding and then intervene as needed with by providing small group instruction or more practice or by challenging student who have achieved mastery.==

School leaders and staff will: monitor and evaluate progress towards the school's major priorities each semester to check on the impact that new systems are having; seek views from parent and student representatives at small and large group meetings each semester and incorporate them into the monitoring process; monitor the quality of instruction in line with the APPR, providing specific feedback on areas for improvement and arranging follow–up sessions after each visit to check that agreed improvements are being implemented; and use information from evidence-based systems to inform their evaluation. The principal and the liaison from SUNY-Oswego will meet with staff and review data, to ensure that these recommendations are being followed.

To improve the quality of curriculum planning and to raise teacher and student expectation of achievement, school leaders, instructional coaches, and project staff will: work with teachers at regular coaching sessions, using for example their lesson plans or assessment data, to reflect on how to match curriculum and tasks to the needs of students of all abilities; encourage and support

teachers (through meetings, feedback and training activities) in planning a wider variety of tasks and assessment opportunities to engage students' interest and give them opportunities to make decisions (e.g., on how to demonstrate their learning and how to develop higher-level skills); provide further guidance to teachers on how to set and use targeted goals for students; and monitor, with walkthroughs, teachers' provision of feedback to students.

To improve the quality of instruction and to raise teacher and student expectations of achievement teachers will: consistently implement the *Code of Conduct, Character, and Support* across all classrooms so that students are clear on both academic and behavioral expectations; teach lessons that provide students with consistent opportunities to ask questions, make decisions, and engage with one another; check during every lesson that all students are assigned work that is manageable but challenging for their differing needs and levels; and set goals every few weeks which students understand, refer to the goals regularly during lessons, and provide guidance to students through ongoing feedback on how to reach their goals.

School leaders, support staff, and teachers will maintain the drive to improve student social and emotional developmental health and make sure all students feel intellectually safe by using data along with student and parental views to plan interventions that align to student needs, and support students' goals; and hold regular formal consultations each semester with parent and student representatives to gather their feedback and views through discussion and surveys to check that changes to school policies and practice reflect their priorities. School leaders will monitor the implementation of the *Code of Conduct, Character, and Support*, to check that teacher expectations are consistent throughout the school and to provide additional support to teachers and students as necessary to clarify expectations and how they can be met.

Progress will also be gauged by improvements in: student attendance; attendance by instructional staff; interim assessment data; student course completion data; instructional staff turnover rate; instructional staff APPR ratings; in-school and out-of-school suspension rates (School-wide and by sub-group); chronic absenteeism rates; student achievement rates; state assessment data disaggregated by sub-group; student achievement rates compared to State-wide rate; and student achievement rates compared to district-wide rates.

> iv. *Complete the School-level Baseline Data and Target-Setting Chart (Attachment B).*

For the purposes of this RFP, goals are intended to be broad and to guide the formation of (more specific) objectives. An objective is a statement of intended outcomes that is clear, focused, measurable, and achievable in a specified time frame. In addition, it should be noted that more than one objective may apply to a given goal.

Please see completed School-level Baseline Data and Target-Setting Chart (Attachment B).

II. D. School Leadership (6 points)

> i. *Identify and describe the specific characteristics and core competencies of the school principal that are necessary to meet the needs of the school and produce dramatic gains in student achievement. Please refer to, "Competencies for Determining Priority School Leaders" which may be found at: http://www.p12.nysed.gov/turnaround/CompetenciesforDeterminingPrioritySchoolLeaders.html.*

There are several specific characteristics and core competencies of a school principal that are necessary to meet the needs of the school, to ensure efficient school operation and produce dramatic gains in student achievement. As such, SCSD and NYSED approved a leadership rubric to help identify new leaders and to evaluate current leaders, which consists of two main parts to increase student achievement: highly effective instructional leadership and highly effective organizational leadership.

An effective *instructional leader* must: establish and implement a shared vision; build and maintain a climate of accountability for learning; drive high-quality, rigorous, student-centered instructional programs; create a culture of data-driven decision making; and develop and coach teachers and instructional staff. An effective *organizational leader* must: manage the organization, operations and resources to promote a safe, efficient and effective learning environment; establish a culture of learning, growth, positive behavior and high expectations; lead with integrity, fairness and ethics; manage and lead change and innovation; and engage families and the entire community of stakeholders.

Overall, these skills and attributes are matched with a deep-seated philosophy that all students can be college and career ready. Using this rubric and other best practices, the SCSD drafted a job description for a School Principal (attached). The qualifications of the current principal correspond to these requirements. She has held this position less than a year, and will be retained at Grant Middle School for the *Innovation Framework: College Pathways School Design*.

> ii. *Identify the specific school principal by name and include in this narrative a short biography, an explanation of the leadership pipeline from which she/he came, as well as the rationale for the selection in this particular school. In addition, provide an up-to-date resume and track record of success in leading the improvement of low-performing schools; OR*

Pamela Odom will serve as principal of Grant Middle School. Her background in education is extensive and she is well-qualified to oversee the school for *Innovation Framework: College Pathways School Design*. Ms. Odom has more than twenty years of experience with the Syracuse City Schools, including serving as principal of Clary Middle School for several years. At Clary, notably, she oversaw the successful planning, implementation and administration of separate gender academies. Her background corresponds to the job description for Principal (attached).

> iii. *If the specific persons who will serve in this position are not yet known, describe the action steps necessary to put leadership in place, and identify the formal LEA/school mechanisms that enable this personnel action. The principal selected to lead the school must be in place no later than September 1, 2015, to ensure sufficient time to lead summer activities in preparation for the beginning of the school year. Identify any barriers or obstacles to accomplishing these tasks, as well as strategies for overcoming them. If the principal selected to lead the school is not in place by September 1, 2015, or does not meet the quality standards set forth in this application, the SIG will be suspended immediately and the LEA will be at risk of having the grant terminated.*

n/a

> iv. *Provide the specific job description and duties, aligned to the needs of the school, for the following supporting leadership positions; 1) assistant principal/s who will serve in the building; 2) School Implementation Manager (SIM), if the school is utilizing one.*

The District is committed to ensuring that there are effective instructional leaders at the helm of every school, along with high-quality teachers in every classroom. Assistant Principals (also known as *Vice Principal*) will provide transformational leadership in the planning and management of Grant Middle School and will be responsible for assisting in implementing a school improvement model that focuses on: high student achievement; building a positive school climate that supports the whole student and establishes a culture of learning; leveraging research and data to drive instructional practice; and building a high-performing staff to achieve the school's vision and goals. The Assistant Principals will collaborate with parents, community members, the SCSD central office, consultants, and other stakeholders to implement new educational programs, school culture, systems reform, tools and other resources to accelerate student achievement. The Assistant Principals will have strong experience teaching in urban schools to accelerate student achievement and learning performance, and proven success in assisting in the turnaround of this *Persistently Struggling* school.

Lisa Costanzo was appointed to the position of Assistant Principal at Grant Middle School in the past year. She possesses the qualifications to serve as Assistant Principal and will continue in that role. Doug Kasouf will also serve as an Assistant Principal.   Their resumes and the job description for Assistant Principal are attached.

> v. *Describe and discuss the current supporting leadership profile of the school in terms of quality, effectiveness, and appropriateness to the model proposed and needs of the students. Identify specific individuals who will remain in supporting leadership positions from the previous administration and discuss the strategies employed by the new school principal and the LEA/school to ensure buy-in and support from the entire leadership team. Identify any barriers or obstacles to obtaining leadership buy-in or support as well as strategies for overcoming them.*

The current supporting leadership team at Grant Middle School consists of a principal, and two vice principals. These administrators meet on a regular basis with grade level teams to ensure that their vision for the school is realized. Although the principal and vice principals were appointed to these positions at this school during the past year, they each possess an extensive background in education.

The School Leadership Team (SLT), which meets regularly, is comprised of the principal, the vice principal, staff members representing each grade and the teachers' union, and parents. Team leaders review information from SLT meetings with their teammates and additional questions are discussed at the monthly faculty meetings. SLT meetings and faculty meetings for the school year are scheduled in the fall. The Labor Management Team also meets monthly to address labor or management issues with the District administration. The principal and assistant principals are in their first year at Grant Middle School, and will remain at the school for *College Pathways*.

An AVID Facilitator, Community Liaison, and PBL Coach will be included as school leaders for this initiative.

II. E. Instructional Staff (6 points)

The LEA/school must have the mechanisms in place to assign the instructional staff to the school that have the strengths and capacity necessary to meet the needs of the school and its students.* This section must contain the following elements:

This standard and the actions that accompany it are required regardless of the model chosen. If the Turnaround model is chosen for the Priority School in this application, responses to this section should be planned/proposed in the context of the requirements for that model, retaining no more than 50% of existing instructional staff. A new school staff meeting the Turnaround requirement must be in place prior to September 1, 2015. If Turnaround staffing requirements are not met by September 1, 2015 SIG funding will be immediately suspended and the LEA will be at risk of having the grant terminated.

   i. *Identify the total number of instructional staff in the building and number of staff identified as highly effective, effective, developing and ineffective (HEDI) based on the school's approved APPR system.*

Grant Middle School currently has a total of 63 instructional staff members. The 2013-14 NYS School Report Card for Grant Middle School revealed that 15% of the teachers are "Highly Effective;" 82% are "Effective;" and 3% are "Developing." No teachers were rated as "Ineffective."

   ii. *Describe and discuss the current school-specific staffing picture in terms of quality, effectiveness, and appropriateness for the needs of students in this school. In addition, describe the specific quantitative and qualitative change that is needed in this school's staffing between the time of application and the start-up of model implementation, and throughout the implementation period of the grant.*

It is critical for low-performing schools to be staffed with strong, high quality teachers and administrators who can be effective change agents. Substantial changes in staffing and leadership have occurred at Grant Middle School as a result of district-wide staffing changes in recent school years, resulting in significant disruption to the school. In the last several years, the school has undergone several changes in leadership. To establish consistency, Pamela Odom, who was appointed as principal in the past year, will remain in that role for *Innovation Framework: College Pathways School Design*. She is well-qualified for this position.

Grant Middle School has a large number of veteran teachers – nearly 80 % of the teachers have more than three years of teaching experience. The APPR will serve as a basis for identifying effective teachers and for identifying those who require additional professional development to meet the goals of *College Pathways*. Teachers who do not improve, as measured by APPR, following ample professional development will be replaced. This will address the need to ensure that the school's instructional staff is of the highest quality and committed to the *Innovation Framework*.

Grant Middle School's 63 instructional staff members (excluding administrators) consist of 13 special education teachers, six teaching assistants, 11 common branch elementary teachers, six math teachers, three social studies teachers, five English teachers, four physical education teachers, three music teachers, three science teachers, three ESL teachers, two art teachers, two technology teachers, and two school counselors. There is one each of: family and consumer science teacher, health teacher, industrial arts teacher, library/media specialist, literacy coach, reading teacher, social worker, Spanish teacher, and speech and hearing impaired teacher.

Quality - Most of Grant Middle School's staff have advanced degrees in education - 92% hold a Masters Degree. All teachers have valid teaching certificates, and all classes are taught by teachers with appropriate certification. The turnover rate among teachers is 14%. The teacher

absence rate is 6.5%, and average teacher attendance is 95.7%. All teachers are engaged to varying degrees and levels in ongoing professional development.

Effectiveness - Despite the qualifications and years of experience of the instructional staff, students at Grant Middle School are woefully underperforming. At every grade level, in both ELA and Math, the percentage of students that have met State standards is extremely low, and in most cases, even lower than the SCSD average.

Appropriateness - Although two-thirds of the enrollment are "students of color," all but two teachers are white. Nearly one-fifth of the students have disabilities (SWDs), and thirteen teachers have special education certification. Nineteen percent of the students are English language learners (ELL) (compared to 14% district-wide) and three teachers have ESL certification. With such a high population of SWDs and ELLs in an inclusive school, the district must make every effort to hire, train and regularly evaluate teachers whose expertise is SWDs and ELLs. In addition, efforts to attract and hire more teachers "of color" to ensure that its teaching staff is more representative of the demographic makeup of the school's student population are needed.

    iii. For each key instructional staff to be employed at the start of model implementation identify and describe the characteristics and core competencies necessary to meet the needs of its students.

The SCSD looks for teachers and leaders who: believe strongly that all students can learn at high levels, demonstrate commitment to serving urban students and to closing the achievement gap, demonstrate willingness to put the interests of students above all others, actively contribute to a culture of high expectations in their school and district, and adapt seamlessly to the complexities of the urban school environment. Teacher selection focuses on the practices that are particularly effective in teaching to students "of color," students with disabilities (SWDs), English language learners (ELL), and economically disadvantaged students.

The SCSD selects school leaders who demonstrate competency in: (1) strategic leadership: vision, cultural and equity leadership; (2) instructional leadership: achievement focus; (3) instructional leadership: instructional expertise; (4) human resources management: staff development and coaching; (5) relationship building and communication; (6) managerial leadership; and (7) change management.

    iv. Describe the process and identify the formal LEA/school mechanisms that enable all instructional staff to be screened, selected, retained, transferred, and/or recruited. Identify any barriers or obstacles to assigning the appropriate staff as required by the model and new school design, as well as strategies for overcoming them.

New Instructional Staff: To overcome specific barriers to assigning appropriate staff to priority schools, the SCSD has developed several components of its comprehensive strategy to attract great educators to the District's 33 schools, especially the Priority Schools. The SCSD prepares vacancy projection models for teacher and school leader positions, which allow District leaders to strategically plan recruitment activities. This data-based model for forecasting future vacancies removes a barrier to early hiring and desirable candidates being hired by other districts. This common challenge in urban school districts has been repeatedly highlighted by

national experts on teacher recruitment and selection as a reason districts like the SCSD fail to attract the highest-quality teacher candidates. The SCSD's vacancy projection models, along with a generous financial retirement notification incentive offered to teachers and other selected employees, have minimized this barrier.

Recruitment: The www.JoinSyracuseCitySchools.com site provides a full picture of serving in Syracuse – and what it will take to be successful doing so. This includes data on the demographics and current performance of SCSD students; information about innovative SCSD programming (Syracuse Latin School, iZone); highlights of the SCSD commitment to develop all teachers and principals through a meaningful APPR and to reward excellence with performance-based bonuses and new, highly paid teacher leadership opportunities; staff and student photos celebrating the district's diversity and focus on rigorous academics; and profiles of District teachers, school leaders, and support staff. These profiles give a realistic preview of the job for candidates who are inspired by the SCSD's mission to become the most improve urban district in America.

This recruitment campaign is a key element of the SCSD's work as the District seeks a special type of educator: one who is passionate about urban education and energized by the challenge of transforming a district. To many prospects, Syracuse is not on their radar and job-seekers have no clear way to learn about working at SCSD. With this website at the core, the SCSD is building a deeper, more diverse teacher applicant pool, particularly in high-need subjects like math, science, ESL, and Special Education. This big focus on recruitment extends the reach for new candidates beyond the region, attracting strong teachers, leaders, and support staff from throughout the northeast.

Screening and Selection: Teacher applicants must complete a research-based online assessment that measures pedagogical skills, attitudinal factors, and cognitive ability. TeacherMatch created this assessment – called the Educator's Professional Inventory (EPI) – in partnership with a variety of organizations including NWEA, known for the design and implementation of MAP adaptive student assessments; the University of Chicago; and Education Analytics, which was founded by researchers from the Value-Added Research Center of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, among others. School leader applications include a series of essay questions aligned with the District's Building Leadership Framework.

The Office of Talent Management conducts two rounds of screening before principals consider applicants who successfully advance into the candidate pool for principal evaluation. The selection team reviews basic candidate and certification information and the results of the Educator's Professional Inventory. Selected applicants then participate in a phone interview with a standard set of questions; only candidates scoring, on average, in the "effective" range are advanced to the pool for consideration by the principal. Principals then review a teaching sample and decide whom to interview. On-site interviews are led by principals using a standard rubric and question bank. References are checked for candidates before recommending hire.

The screening process focuses on both a review of teaching materials (lesson plans, assessments, unit calendars) *and* a teaching demonstration (either live or recorded), all of which are evaluated and scored according to the core competency rubric. There is also an emphasis on candidate's

pedagogy and content areas. Finally, within the screening event and school site interview, candidates attempt performance tasks, such as analyzing student data and creating an instructional plan based on the data, as well as role playing (e.g., dealing with a disruptive student). For each priority school (including Grant Middle School), all probationary teachers selected to teach in the school will be offered a position only on the condition that they will be terminated if they do not remain – or the principal does not want them to remain – in the same school for their full probationary period.

Existing Staff: The process for retaining and transferring existing staff is based upon employment contracts. This can be a barrier and an obstacle, as principals do not entirely have "free reign" over their personnel decisions. However, the District has established processes – which are now tested through the experience of staffing seven Innovation Zone and four Cohort 5 schools through a mutual consent process – that minimize these barriers whereby staff are selected fully through mutual consent. Both the principal and the teacher must agree on the assignment.

Election-to-Work agreements: In exchange for greater accountability for performance results, staffing at the school will be by "mutual consent" whereby both the teacher and the principal must agree to the placement (see draft Election to Work agreement). Those staff who do not meet the "mutual consent" requirements would be able to request a transfer through the SCSD Office of Talent Management. The District is committed to overcoming the challenges created by the need to transfer large numbers of teachers due to requirements for priority schools while having limited flexibility to remove teachers from the District altogether due to State laws and collective bargaining agreements. This is being addressed by the District by minimizing the ability of probationary teachers to "opt out" of priority schools.

Voluntary transfers can be requested – and can be considered on a rolling basis – at any time. Administrative transfers can occur contingent upon the teacher and the supervisor being notified of the reasons, and the teacher being advised of open positions in the district. Administrative transfers may also occur as a result of position reductions, in which case teachers with the least seniority are released from their position and some shifting of staff among buildings occurs to fill available positions (determined by seniority in tenure area). Any teacher who is laid off is placed on a recall list for seven years (placement on the list is determined by time as a district employee, not by tenure area), during which time they have rights to any position that becomes available for which they are certified.

II. F. Partnerships (6 points)

The LEA/school must be able to establish effective partnerships for areas where the LEA/school lacks specific capacity on their own to deliver. The external partnership/s may vary in terms of role and relationship to the governance of the school. For example the type and nature of educational partner may range from a community-based organization providing wrap-around services with no formal governance functions to an Education Management Organization (EMO) that has a direct role in governing the school. In either case, the partnerships articulated in this section should be those that are critical to the successful implementation of the school. LEA/schools are encouraged to have a few targeted and purposeful partnerships with a shared goal of college and career readiness, rather than a large variety of disconnected partner groups/services with multiple goals. For partnerships selected to support the implementation of the SIG plan, the LEA/school must provide a response to each of the following elements:

The Syracuse City School District will partner with the State University of New York at Oswego (SUNY-Oswego), to institute *Innovation Framework: College Pathways School Design* at Grant Middle School. This Educational Partner Organization (EPO) has a successful track record of providing assistance to PK-12 schools, including the SCSD. For the *College Pathways School Design*, the EPO will assist in implementing *AVID School wide*.

SUNY-Oswego has a successful record of implementing AVID, including significant experience with the Syracuse City School District. Since fall 2012, Grant Middle School has hosted several clinically rich residency candidates for semester-long, full-time, placements that included field experience, student teaching, concurrent course work, and professional development for mentor teachers and candidates. Graduate and undergraduate candidates have been placed with teachers of Special Education, TESOL, English, mathematics, and social studies. Mentor teachers and teacher candidates create co-teaching teams, doubling the attention given to every student in the classroom throughout the day from September through May. Key themes of every clinically rich program include attention to Common Core Learning Standards, Teacher Performance Assessment (APPR and edTPA), data driven instruction, and clinically rich teacher preparation.

For the 3-year (2015-18) partnership to support this School Improvement Grant Initiative, SUNY-Oswego is ready to place six to fifteen teacher candidates each semester in Grant Middle School: one each with a social studies, math, and English teacher; three-to-seven with 6th grade teachers and three with three TESOL teachers. The candidates will support the school's efforts to strengthen the AVID program, as well as supporting the entire school's whole-school change model with the goal of achieving dramatic school-level achievement gains. In addition to supplying full-time, full-semester teacher candidates, a number of Junior-level Education majors will also visit the school on a weekly basis to work in and support the AVID program each year.

Working with more than 60 graduate and undergraduate clinically rich residency candidates and their mentor teachers there have been many positive results over three years of this 21st century (transformative) approach to teacher preparation. An external evaluator of one of the residency programs, the Oswego Residency Initiative for Teacher Excellence (ORITE) graduate program, stated, *"The overarching goal of the Oswego Residency Initiative for Teacher Excellence is to strengthen teacher preparation and residency programs to ensure that new teachers…have the*

skills to boost student learning and be highly effective in today's diverse and challenging classrooms. Evidence from the Year 2 independent evaluation of the program strongly suggests that this goal is well on its way to being achieved" (Abacus Research Consultants, Inc, March 2015).

Using internally analyzed data collected from candidates and mentors from the ORITE program, the TESOL undergraduate residency program, and the most recent addition, the MST Adolescence Education program, several outcomes/benefits to students have been identified, including: higher quality instruction than what traditional teacher preparation can provide; more individualized instruction and support from two trained adults (mentor teacher and candidate); more exposure to latest research-based methods and techniques; increased opportunities to learn about college and career ready skills from teacher candidates; and opportunity to observe and participate in instructional collaboration and co-teaching in action.

The Superintendent Receiver, School Leadership Team and CET will determine other partnerships that may be necessary to support the implementation of AVID Schoolwide and personalized blended learning as well as identifying a highly qualified external independent evaluator to assess program implementation.

> ii. *Complete the Evidence of Partner Effectiveness Chart (Attachment C). This evidence should be able to be validated by an external source that each partner organization selected has a proven track-record of success in implementing school turnaround strategies that result in measured and timely successes with respect to the school's needs.*

Please see Evidence of Partner Effectiveness Chart (Attachment C).

> iii. *For any key external partner funded through this plan, provide a clear and concise description of how the LEA/school will hold the partner accountable for its performance.*

SUNY-Oswego will be held accountable for its performance in the *Innovation Framework: College Pathways School Design* at Grant Middle School. The AVID Facilitator will directly oversee the activities of the EPO. At the onset of the plan, s/he will meet with the EPO and regularly thereafter throughout the duration of the project. S/he will clearly delineate what is expected of the EPO who will inform the AVID Facilitator how those expectations will be met. The AVID Facilitator will include the progress of the EPO in his/her reporting on the project, and will prepare reports particular to the EPO as necessary. The AVID Facilitator will address any issue that may arise relative to the activities of the EPO. In addition, the Superintendent Receiver, school leadership and CET will engage a highly qualified external independent evaluator to assess program implementation.

II. G. Organizational Plan (4 points)

The LEA/school must provide a sound plan for how the school will be operated, beginning with its governance and management. It should present a clear picture of the school's operating priorities, delegation of responsibilities, and relationships with key stakeholders. The organizational plan must contain the following elements:

Please see the attached organizational chart for Grant Middle School.

ii. *Describe how the structures function in day-to-day operations (e.g., the type, nature, and frequency of interaction, data-sources used to drive discussion and decision making, manner in which the results of interactions are communicated and acted upon, etc.).*

The Principal serves as a true instructional leader and visionary, guiding the school's culture and climate toward its mission and vision. In doing so, she must spend time in classrooms and hallways to ensure effectiveness of the instructional program. The principal is also responsible for ensuring safety and order so that the integrity of the redesign effort is not diminished.

The principal meets weekly with school leaders to ensure that open lines of communication exist to assist the team in effectively leading school improvement efforts. The weekly administrative meeting also allows for the continuous monitoring of the goals identified in the redesign plan at the school. The principal focuses the discussions for such meetings on both formal and informal data points that allow action steps to be created and completed for ensuing administrative meetings.

Day-to-day operational and discipline concerns are handled by the vice principal, who works directly with grade-level teams in supporting their instructional work in classrooms and in managing resources. The vice principal also provides guidance to support staff, including counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses, custodians and clerks, etc.

Monthly meetings of the School Leadership Team (SLT) will utilize protocols developed to address the school's specific needs and progress towards its goals; the SLT may evolve to a schedule of meeting more often (e.g., weekly) as the team deepens capacity and as the school addresses unanticipated challenges. These meetings will allow the SLT to examine data collected through the *Data Dashboard* and other data points to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the instructional initiatives and goals in the school. SLT members redeliver to the entire school strategies, plans and outcomes from the SLT meetings. This is accomplished through regularly scheduled grade-level and department and whole-school faculty meetings in the building.

The CET meets at least monthly to review and monitor the school's receivership plan progress and to aid in the modification, refinement and implementation of the plan as needed.

iii. *Describe in detail, the plan for implementing the annual professional performance review (APPR) of all instructional staff within the school. Include in this plan an identification of who will be responsible for scheduling, conducting, and reporting the results of pre-observation conferences, classroom observations, and post-observation conferences.*

SCSD implements an objective, fair and equitable rating system that provides the right supports to the right teachers and school leaders so all can continuously improve their practice. The shared commitment to this work is outlined in the Syracuse City School District strategic plan, *Great*

Expectations 2012-2017, a goal of which is to recruit, develop, support, and retain effective teachers and school leaders.

Teachers with ineffective ratings cannot move to or remain in priority schools. Teachers have access to a minimum 50 hours of professional development, guided by principals based on evaluation data and Improvement Plans. Each year, the SCSD Office of Talent Management and the Superintendent determine whether to approve recommendations for tenure based in large part on APPR data.

The current APPR process for instructional staff has three components as follows:

1) **State Growth Measure (20%)** - Twenty percent of every teacher's APPR score is based on data from State assessments. Grades 4-8 ELA and Math Teachers will be evaluated on student growth on state assessments. For teachers of other courses with State assessments, student growth as measured by Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) developed for each grade and course. The District uses state assessments (including Regents exams), state-approved third party assessments and SCSD-developed assessments to measure growth for these teachers. Teachers of grades and subjects with no State assessments earn a State growth score based on school-wide growth.

2) **Local Measures (20%)** - Twenty percent of every teacher's APPR score is based on progress toward meeting teacher-developed goals. For Grades 4-8 ELA and Math Teachers, these goals are achievement goals based on the State assessments. For all other teachers, these goals are SLOs developed based on SCSD-developed assessments, including authentic performance tasks.

3) **Professional Practice (60%)** - The majority of every teacher's APPR score is based on assessments of instructional practice, measured through classroom observations by administrators and trained Peer Observers. The Danielson Framework for Teaching is used for teachers in Grades 6-12. Through the Peer Observer program, every teacher has access to expert feedback from a peer in the same content area.

The Peer Observation program enables the district to nearly double the number of observations with feedback for each teacher; all teachers are observed 3-4 times as part of the teacher evaluation process rather than just the two times required by administrators. Altogether, tenured teachers receive at least three observations: two by a certified administrator (one unannounced); and one by a peer observer (announced). All observations are weighed equally, so a teacher's Professional Practice score is the average of scores from all observations.

At the Exchange Conference for announced observations, the evaluator and practitioner review the rubric and standards of practice; and sign and save the Exchange Conference Form. Prior to actual observation, the practitioner uploads Teachscape Reflect of the pre-observation conference form and the lesson plan. The evaluator and the practitioner will then discuss: goals and objectives of the lesson; alignment to district curriculum and Common Core Learning Standards; instructional practices; modifications/accommodations; and assessments.

Evaluators record observation evidence in Teachscape Reflect. At the post observation conference, the evaluator and the practitioner engage in discussion reflecting components of the applicable evaluation framework rubric. The evaluation process is completed with the evaluator completing and submitting Teachscape Reflect; the practitioner approves the written Observation Form; and the evaluator confirms completion of the evaluation process in Teachscape Reflect.

The principal, with oversight by the Chief Academic Officer, is responsible for ensuring that all administrator observations are assigned among all building administrators and completed according to the APPR plan. The Chief Academic Officer also manages the work of Peer Observers to ensure that peer observations are conducted with meaningful compliance.

iv. *Provide a full calendar schedule of the events listed in "iii" for the 2015-2016 school year that reaches all instructional personnel who will staff the building.*

Proposed APPR Implementation Timeline for 2015-2016

Task	Tenured	Non-Tenured
Exchange Conference	By September 30, 2015	By September 30, 2015
Observation Process Begins	By October 1, 2015	By October 1, 2015
First Observation	By December 31, 2015	By December 31, 2015
Second Observation	By January 31, 2016	By January 31, 2016
Third Observation	n/a	By March 15, 2016
Last Observation	By May 15, 2016	By April 15, 2016

II. H. Educational Plan (8 points)

The LEA/school must provide an educationally sound and comprehensive educational plan for the school. The LEA/school must provide a detailed educational plan with a description of each of the following elements:

i. *Curriculum. Describe the curriculum to be used with the model, including the process to be used to ensure that the curriculum aligns with the New York State Learning Standards, inclusive of the Common Core State Standards and the New York State Testing Program (see: http://engageny.org/common-core-curriculum-assessments).*

Standards-driven Curriculum - The New York State Learning Standards (inclusive of the Common Core) are the foundation and driver of the curriculum taught and learned at Grant Middle School. To ensure equal access to and mastery of the expected learning standards, all English Language Arts and Mathematics curricula are designed around the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The core academic program in the District, including Grant Middle School, is based on three inter-related aspects of the instructional core: teachers (instruction), students (learning), and content (curriculum).

The curriculum is a set of guidance tools—comprised of standards, pacing guides, detailed instructional units, and interim, curriculum-based assessments—incorporating all CCLS and in alignment with NYS testing program expectations. Personalized blended learning curriculum and assessments will be developed for use at Grant Middle School. All Grant Middle School teachers have access to the curriculum tools and resources, at school and elsewhere, via the district's curriculum central website. Additional information about the new standards-driven curriculum may be found at http://www.syracusecityschools.com/districtpage.cfm?pageid=561.

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Mathematics - The standards-based curriculum for mathematics emphasizes core conceptual understandings and mathematical procedures starting in the early grades. The standards progress from grade to grade, coordinate with each other within a grade and are clustered together into coherent bodies of knowledge. The mathematics curriculum units and other curricular materials and guidance may be found at http://www.engageny.org/mathematics. Multiple CCLS-aligned resources are referenced in the curriculum unit maps and are available for teacher use. Additional aligned resources will be obtained. Supplemental resources are provided for teachers at http://www.syracusecityschools.com/districtpage.cfm?pageid=561.

English Language Arts - The ELA curriculum units provide the sequencing and pacing of CCLS based instruction supported by rigorous text selection, scaffolded teaching points, and regular checks for understanding that guide teachers' daily lesson plans. The curriculum offers suggestions for instructional strategies and additional resources but is not intended to dictate classroom practice. The Language Arts curriculum units and other ancillary curricular materials and guidance may be found at
http://www.syracusecityschools.com/districtpage.cfm?pageid=561.

Multiple CCLS-aligned resources are referenced in the curriculum unit maps and are available for teacher use.

> ii. *Instruction. Describe the instructional strategies to be used in core courses and common-branch subjects in the context of the 6 instructional shifts for Mathematics and 6 instructional shifts for ELA. Provide details of how the events of instruction in additional required and elective courses will be arranged to reflect all of these instructional shifts. Describe a plan to accelerate learning in academic subjects by making meaningful improvements to the quality and quantity of instruction (Connect with iii below.).*

All Academic Areas - In all subject areas, the major aim of the curriculum is to build the capacity of teachers to deliver high-quality, highly effective instruction, grounded in rigorous standards, curriculum and content, and focused on the differing needs of our students. Language Arts and Mathematics curriculum units contain specific guidance for instruction (including the instructional shifts) in the form of teaching points in each curriculum unit, rubrics, exemplars, and sample suggested lesson plans. In addition, the district has provided guidance related to expected instructional dosages (time/focus) within ELA and Mathematics and across all content areas ensuring equal access to the expected curriculum for all students. Full-time Literacy and Mathematics Instructional Coaches will provide on-going professional development, support, and guidance to teachers as they plan and deliver lessons based on the new curriculum making effective use of the expected instructional shifts.

Students participate in a tiered interventions system, including tier 1 (during the school day), tier 2 (during and after school--a variety of discipline content-focused after school programs), and tier 3 (for students in need of specially designed instruction and support). Professional development and coaching support/guidance are provided to teachers in the area of accelerated learning in a variety of venues such as Saturday learning academies, Superintendent's conference days, and campus-based professional learning sessions.

At Grant Middle School, elementary teachers are common branch (for 6th grade). As such, they

have received training and resources in the instructional shifts and will integrate these shifts into the content areas. Elementary special area teachers may participate in Common Core professional learning. All elective/special area teachers will have Common Core and instructional shifts for professional development. The APPR process of developing and implementing Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) has resulted in significant focus on and infusion of the CCLS across discipline areas.

Mathematics - The mathematics curriculum provides clear guidance and supports for the six instructional shifts that teachers must incorporate successfully into their practice (focus, coherence, fluency, deep understanding, applications, and dual intensity). Each curriculum unit explicitly groups standards together in support of these focus areas and shifts. The curriculum also offers specific instructional strategies that align with the Standards for Mathematical Practice for learners, which rest on important "processes and proficiencies" with longstanding importance in mathematics. The SCSD math curriculum and instructional expectations for teachers at Grant Middle School are designed to result in students who: Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them; Reason abstractly and quantitatively; Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others; Model with mathematics; Use appropriate tools strategically; Attend to precision; Look for and make use of structure; and Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

Curriculum maps, instructional guidance tools (teaching points, exemplars, resources, etc.) and professional development for principals, instructional coaches, and teachers are focused explicitly on effective and appropriate use of these mathematical shifts (teachers) and practices (students). Instructional Coaches will provide model lessons and professional development on these instructional shifts.

English Language Arts - Effective implementation of this curriculum will ensure that all students receive instruction that promotes high expectations for learning, increases time spent reading, writing, and talking about text, and provides continuous corrective feedback on individual student performance. The CCLS instructional shifts—(Balancing Informational and Literary Text, Building Knowledge in the Disciplines, Staircase of Complexity, Text-Based Answers, Writing from Sources, and Academic Vocabulary)—are woven throughout and illustrated in the ELA curriculum maps. These shifts are also the focus of teacher professional development. The Literacy Instructional Coach will provide additional assistance, support, and guidance to Grant Middle School teachers in successful enactment of these instructional shifts in their daily practice.

AVID School wide will be implemented to address the priorities and achieve the goals. Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is a global nonprofit organization whose guiding principle is to hold students accountable to the highest standards. Through AVID, they are provided academic and social support, to rise to the challenge. Each day AVID students are exposed to research-based curriculum and strategies day that develop critical thinking, literacy, and math skills across all content areas. Off-campus educational experiences are also included for the students.

AVID has developed a "Schoolwide College Readiness Coaching Tool" to assist schools as they strive to establish AVID School wide, empowering students to become college-ready. School leaders will use this tool to generate deep thinking and rich discussions which address their barriers and their issues around student achievement and college readiness for all students. SCSD has partnered with AVID for the past 10 years and offers AVID elective courses at the secondary level to students who have potential - but who need strategies to support their college readiness. The AVID curriculum standards are aligned to the Common Core Standards.

The District AVID program has a long standing partnership with SUNY-Oswego who, as EPO, will provide AVID tutors to support students in classrooms in Grant Middle School. Training, in the AVID curriculum and tutorial, will be delivered to undergraduate students on their campuses, and conducted by the District AVID Coordinator and an AVID National Trainer. In turn, these undergraduate students will provide support to district AVID teachers in conducting inquiry-based curriculum/tutorials in the classroom.

> iii. *Use of Time*. *Present the daily proposed school calendar showing the number of days the school will be in session and sample daily class schedule showing daily hours of operation and allocation of time for core instruction, supplemental instruction, and increased learning time activities. Describe a logical and meaningful set of strategies for the use of instructional time that leads to a pedagogically sound restructuring of the daily/weekly/monthly schedule **to increase learning time by extending the school day and/or year**. The structure for learning time described here should be aligned with the Board of Regents standards for Expanded Learning Time, as outlined here:*
> *http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2012Meetings/April2012/412bra5.pdf*

In 2015-16 and beyond, SCSD is committed to providing approximately 200 hours of extended learning time (ELT) for every student in Grant Middle School. SCSD intends to support the principal and leadership team in expressing the school's autonomies over use of time during and after school, program selection, and educational partner selection. The chart below offers one example of how ELT at Grant Middle School will be part of an integrated approach to school improvement, based on a thorough analysis of the seminal research conducted by the National Center on Time & Learning (NCTL), "Time Well Spent: Eight Powerful Practices of Successful, Expanded-Time Schools." Instructional and support staff will receive stipends for the extended learning time.

Grant Middle School will refine the delivery of ELT to meet and exceed the requirements of the Board of Regents: integrating academics with engaging and relevant activities; addressing unique learning needs of all types of students; and including enrichment programs that will improve both academic and social-emotional outcomes.

Sample Middle School schedule for 7-hour instructional day:

Time	# of students	Daily Core Instruction: Optimizing time for student learning	Supplemental Activities: Using time to help students thrive in school and beyond
8:00 – 9:15	75	ELA (1st of 2, may encompass a literacy-based classroom community mtg)	*Differentiated opportunities will be offered to meet students' varying needs: small group tutoring, online/virtual learning, deep-dive STEM inquiry projects from PLTW, arts enrichment, etc.*
9:15-20	5	Passing period	
9:20-10:15	55	Science	
10:15-11:35	80	Math ("double dose")	

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11:35-12:05	30	Lunch	
12:05-12:50	45		Elective / Enrichment (PE, art, music)
12:50-12:55	5	Passing period	
12:55-1:35	40	ELA (2nd of 2, may focus on writing or other skill-building)	
1:35-2:20	45	Social Studies	
2:20-3:00	40		Academic support, enrichment, Individualized learning time, etc.

iv. *Data-Driven Instruction/Inquiry (DDI). Describe the school's functional cycle of Data-Driven Instruction/Inquiry (DDI). Present the schedule for administering common interim assessments in ELA and Math. Describe procedures, and schedule of space/time (e.g., through common planning time, teacher-administrator one-on-one meetings, group professional development, etc.) provided to the teachers for the examination of interim assessment data and test-in-hand analysis. Describe the types of supports and resources that will be provided to teachers, as the result of analysis. (See http://engageny.org/data-driven-instruction for more information on DDI).*

A core component of the SCSD Strategic Plan, and of the Grant Middle School *Innovation Framework: College Pathways School Design*, is that of creating shared accountability for learning through the tracking and reporting of student learning and progress. This expectation necessitates the implementation of data-driven instruction at all schools. In Syracuse City Schools, including Grant Middle School, this data driven system is based upon a purposeful and strategic use of performance data from a "nested" system of standards-driven classroom, school, district, and state level assessments.

Grant Middle School and the Educational Partner Organization (EPO) will build additional internal capacity for data driven instruction. With mastery of the New York State learning standards (including the Common Core) as the basis for the assessment system, teachers and other instructional staff will use formative, interim, and summative assessment results to make instructional and programmatic decisions.

State assessment results are used to inform programmatic decisions about intervention plans/schedules, curriculum revisions, instructional program revisions, grade/course placement, etc. District curriculum assessments include curriculum-based unit assessments, ongoing progress monitoring checks, and other campus-determined interim assessments. Teachers and principals will be provided with and use formative and summative assessment results in data meetings, professional development sessions, collaborative planning meetings, etc. A focus for improvement in the area of data-driven instruction includes: 1) development of a more focused teaching plan in response to performance results; 2) implementation of a closer supervision process for enactment of data-driven instructional decision; and 3) re-assessment of students after re-teaching and intervention. The implementation of AVID School wide will facilitate these improvement initiatives.

The District is also implementing Bright Bytes as described below.

The Clarity Platform - The BrightBytes Clarity platform translates complex analysis and cutting-edge research into fast actions that improve student learning. Schools receive a

customized, web-based dashboard highlighting strengths and weaknesses, plus a personalized set of recommended improvements. Each of the modules on the platform includes dashboards at the District, Regional and School-level, reports that pull out the most important research and data at the District, Regional and School-level, and Insights, or research-based actionable next steps that are targeted to user by role (teacher, principal, district staff, etc.) as well as district profile (size, socio-economic information, and achievement information).

Technology and Learning Module - Based on 20 years of research, the Technology and Learning Module helps Syracuse measure the impact that technology is having on learning and 21st Century Skills in the district. This will help administrators understand strengths and gaps in student and teacher skills, which will help to inform planning of curriculum and professional development, especially in the context of the transition to personalized, digital learning. The Chief Financial Officer and Chief Accountability Officer can use the data to understand access to technology both at school and at home as well as how the technology is actually being used in the classroom, which helps to inform the district's SED-required Instructional Technology Plan, the Smart Schools Investment Plan, and the district's purchasing priorities around technology. The Superintendent will be able to use the data to help to make decisions about which initiatives to expand and which to cut. At Grant Middle School, the principal and teachers will see their strengths and challenges as well as the next steps that they can take to improve areas of growth.

Early Warning Module: The Early Warning Module uses predictive analytics to identify students in Syracuse that are at-risk of not graduating and provide supports to ensure that they are successful. Once the students have been identified, the module provides research-based next steps that principals, teachers, counselors and district staff can take to support each individual student. The platform is highly configurable, and can incorporate Syracuse-specific interventions. The module also includes a behavior reporting tool that allows teachers and other school staff to capture behavioral incidents and socio-emotional concerns about students that can help counselors and school staff to intervene and support students before their behaviors rise to point of referrals, suspensions and expulsions. This can specifically help to address concerns about the disproportionate suspension of low-income students of color.

> v. *Student Support. Describe the school-wide framework for providing academic, social-emotional, and student support to the whole school population. List the major systems for the identification of students at-risk for academic failure, disengagement/drop-out, and health issues and then present the key interventions chosen to support them. Describe the school's operational structures and how they function to ensure that these systems of support operate in a timely and effective manner. Student support programs described here should be aligned with Part 100.2 Regulations on implementing Academic Intervention Services.*

Grant Middle School takes a holistic, comprehensive approach toward academic, social-emotional and student supports. In the current environment of limited resources and increasing student exposure to risk, it is critical for the school to make efficient use of available resources while garnering the community support needed to effectively facilitate student performance. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) provides for a school-wide approach to support the entire school community as well as universal interventions that are both preventive and proactive. Recognizing and supporting positive behaviors impacts up to 80% of the student population in a school-wide, systemic manner. MTSS allows time and resources for those students who need targeted group interventions and intensive support beyond the universal

strategies. This approach is supported by a student monitoring system which collects data in the areas of academic, health/wellness and social/emotional development, leading to designations of "on-track to thrive," "on-track," or "off-track" in each domain reflecting student attendance, ELA and math scores, report cards, student suspensions and behavior referral data. The student monitoring system is embedded in the *Student Success Plan* module of eSchool, the SCSD student information system. It allows for the ongoing coordination of efforts among the school and district support staff, Say Yes to Education partners, and community-based organizations in order to match students with the supports, services and enrichment opportunities needed to address identified barriers to success.

The key goals include: *Academic Success* – Teachers and staff regularly review student academic data in order to identify students at-risk of failing; *Social Emotional Success* - Clear behavioral expectations are set for all students and students receive recognition when they meet expectations; *Team Work* - School, family and community partner together to identify children who may struggle in school with behavioral challenges, and identify appropriate supports; and *Effective Interventions* – Plans are designed based on the strengths and needs of the youth and family. The plan is monitored regularly to ensure that it is working and to make adjustments when necessary.

The key interventions, aligned to CR Part 100.2, include enrollment in the afterschool program, tutoring or other appropriate academic intervention services, test score improvement assistance, check and connect strategies, assignment of a mentor, Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART), home visits, social skills groups, anger management groups, earned lunch or special activity with the principal (or other adult in the school), 1:1 counseling with the school counselor, social worker or psychologist; parent meetings, team meetings, daily or weekly progress reports and a mental health clinician referral. Students experiencing extreme physical or emotional health challenges may apply to District Health Services for a Homebound Tutor when school attendance is adversely impacted due to a health condition. Blended Learning shall be incorporated in the College Pathways School Design as applicable.

School Climate and Discipline. Describe the strategies the model will employ to develop and sustain a safe and orderly school climate. Explain the school's approach to student behavior management and discipline for both the general student population and those students with special needs.

The leadership of Grant Middle School is committed to providing a safe, orderly, and productive learning environment for all students. Student behavior is based on respect and consideration for the rights of others. Students are expected to conduct themselves at all times in a manner that will contribute to the best interest of the school.

Students are expected to: participate fully in the learning process – students should report to school and class on time, attend all regularly scheduled classes, remain in class until excused or dismissed, pay attention to instruction, complete assignments to the best of their ability, and ask for help when needed; avoid behavior that impedes their own or other students' educational achievement – students should know and avoid the behaviors prohibited by the student *Code of Conduct, Character, and Support*; take care of their books and other instructional materials, and cooperate with adults and peers; show respect for the knowledge and authority of teachers,

administrators, and other school personnel – students must obey directions, use acceptable and courteous language, avoid being rude or disrespectful, and follow school rules and procedures; and recognize and respect the rights of others – all students should show concern for and encouragement of the educational achievements and efforts of others.

Because student behavior and classroom management ranks high among the school's reform priorities, school leaders will be supported so that they will be able to: work with teachers to support best practices in classroom management and student engagement; provide analysis of school-wide trends in support of school turnaround priorities; and establish clear expectations for behavior and fostering a positive climate for learning. School leaders will provide extensive professional development to staff regarding building positive relationships and managing classrooms as "warm demanders," or "no-nonsense nurturers."

> vi. *Parent and Community Engagement*. *Describe the formal mechanisms and informal strategies for how the school will encourage parent/family involvement and communication to support student learning, and how it will gauge parent and community satisfaction. Programs and initiatives described should be aligned with the Title I requirements for parental involvement, as well as Part 100.11 regulations outlining requirements for shared decision-making in school-based planning; accessible at http://www.p12.nysed.gov/part100/pages/10011.html.*

The Syracuse City School District Parent Involvement Policy has been developed with parents of students in the District, and has been established and is enforced in accordance with Title I and shared decision-making requirements. Before the outset of each school year, the District's School Calendar and District Handbook is posted on the SCSD sebsite and is mailed to every family with a child who attends school within the District. The calendar/handbook displays the District's Parent Involvement Policy in its entirety.

The District has an active Parent Partnership Network, with two full-time parent liaisons. The mission of the Network is to assist parents, the community and District staff in working collaboratively in the learning process. This is accomplished by providing information and referrals, assistance with effective communication, 1:1 support, opportunities for decision making, governance and advocacy, and establishing networks among those who value the uniqueness and diversity of families.

Annually, each Title I school receives a parent involvement allocation and devises a Parent Involvement Plan (PIP). The purpose of the PIP is to help guide each school in utilizing their allocation to encourage parent involvement. Each PIP is based on Title I regulations, while remaining consistent with the District's Parent Involvement Policy. The District's Shared Decision-Making and School-Based Planning Regulation ensures the involvement of parents on School Leadership Teams. One parent on the School Leadership Team (SLT) is designated the Title I representative who acts as a liaison between parents and the SLT on decisions surrounding the application of expenditures. Furthermore, the SCSD sets aside funding for parent engagement activities offered through Parent University, representing a partnership between the District and Say Yes to Education.

The Community Liaison will coordinate Family and community communication at Grant Middle School and will seek to include the active participation of parent volunteers in student supports

and services, parent-teacher organization (PTO), and family events and activities. Further, the school's partner organizations are dedicated to supporting the school in strengthening parent involvement including special event planning; and public relations development through community education, involvement and support. <mark>In addition, the CET will engage in strategies to enhance parent participation.</mark>

II.   I. Training, Support, and Professional Development (6 points)

The LEA/school must have a coherent school-specific framework for training, support, and professional development clearly linked to the identified SIG plan and student needs. The framework articulated must contain each of the following elements:

  i.   *Describe the process by which the school leadership/staff were involved in the development of this plan.*

District and school leaders, informed of the school's priority status, and with access to NYSED guidance on ESEA waiver requirements, began to formulate their plans for school redesign several years ago. The central office staff met with the principal to review the seven intervention/redesign models, and discuss the SIG grant application requirements and guidance. Follow-up meetings, which included the Chief Academic Officer, staff from the Department of Special Programs, and the AVID Coordinator, ensued. Once a redesign model was selected based on the needs and strengths of the school, staff from the Office of Teaching and Learning, the Department of Special Programs, and the AVID Coordinator crafted this SIG grant application. <mark>The plan was reviewed and modified based upon the Demonstrable Improvement Metrics developed and approved by the Superintendent Receiver, School Leadership Team and CET Team.</mark>

  ii. *Implementation Period. Identify in chart form, the planned training, support, and professional development events scheduled during the year-one implementation period (September 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016). For each planned event, identify the specific agent/organization responsible for delivery, the desired measurable outcomes, and the method by which outcomes will be analyzed and reported. Provide in the project narrative, a rationale for each planned event and why it will be critical to the successful implementation of the SIG plan.*

The attached Implementation Period Chart represents the planned training, support and professional development events scheduled during the Year One implementation period at Grant Middle School. Included in the last column of the chart are the rationales for each planned event, and why it will be critical to the successful implementation of the SIG plan.

  iii. *Describe the schedule and plan for regularly evaluating the effects of training, support, and professional development, including any subsequent modifications to the plan as the result of evaluation, tying in any modification processes that may be the result of professional teacher observations and/or the results of common student interim assessment data.*

Administrative monitoring visits will be regularly conducted at Grant Middle School to begin assessing the effects of the training, support, and professional development to be provided to the school. The AVID Facilitator, the Literacy and Math Instructional Coaches, SUNY-Oswego (the EPO), and other qualified external consultants will provide job-embedded professional development. The AVID Facilitator, the instructional coaches and EPO will observe each

teacher, providing them with ongoing coaching, feedback and support to strengthen their instructional practice and to improve their classroom management and student engagement skills.

Classroom observations will be conducted by the principal, vice principal and peer observers. In January 2016, after every teacher has been observed, the professional development and coaching schedule will be modified as needed to provide targeted support in identified areas. The principal, vice principal, peer observers, AVID Facilitator and instructional coaches will meet for weekly data meetings to review and analyze student instructional and support data, as well as teacher observations and student interim benchmark data. Based on the classroom observations and data analysis, each teacher will be provided with the necessary support to strengthen any areas that have been identified as needing improvement.

Additional job-embedded coaching will be provided and teachers will have the opportunity to work with a mentor. The EPO will assist in this endeavor. Teachers will be given common planning time to discuss best practices and share ideas. Teachers will be supported and will have the training and resources available to them to provide the best possible instruction for our students.

AVID will provide yearlong professional development to all teachers and administrators, and provide access to curriculum libraries and websites that support schools in the following domains:
- **Instruction:** Entire instructional staff will utilize AVID strategies to ensure college readiness and improved academic performance for all students;
- **Systems:** Governance, curriculum and instruction, data collection and analysis, professional learning, and student and parent outreach will be supported;
- **Leadership:** The vision and tone to promote college readiness and high expectations for all students in the school will be imparted; and
- **Culture:** Beliefs and behaviors will reflect and demonstrate an increase in the number of students meeting college readiness requirements.

School leaders and staff will: monitor and evaluate progress towards the school's major priorities each semester to check on the impact that new systems are having; seek views from parent and student representatives at small and large group meetings each semester and incorporate them into the monitoring process; monitor the quality of instruction in line with the APPR, providing specific feedback on areas for improvement and arranging follow–up sessions after each visit to check that agreed improvements are being implemented; and use information from evidence-based systems to inform their evaluation. The EPO will meet with the principal and review data, to ensure that these recommendations are being followed.

To improve the quality of curriculum planning and to raise teacher and student expectation of achievement, school leaders and instructional coaches will: work with teachers at regular coaching sessions, using for example their lesson plans or assessment data, to reflect on how to match curriculum and tasks to the needs of students of all abilities; encourage and support teachers (through meetings, feedback and training activities) in planning a wider variety of tasks and assessment opportunities to engage students' interest and give them opportunities to make

decisions (e.g., on how to demonstrate their learning and how to develop higher-level skills); provide further guidance to teachers on how to set and use targeted goals for students; and monitor, with walkthroughs, teachers' provision of feedback to students.

To improve the quality of instruction and to raise teacher and student expectations of achievement teachers will: consistently implement the *Code of Conduct, Character, and Support* across all classrooms so that students are clear on both academic and behavioral expectations; teach lessons that provide students with consistent opportunities to ask questions, make decisions, and engage with one another; check during every lesson that all students are assigned work that is manageable but challenging for their differing needs and levels; and set goals every few weeks which students understand, refer to the goals regularly during lessons, and provide guidance to students through ongoing feedback on how to reach their goals.

School leaders, support staff, and teachers will maintain the drive to improve student social and emotional developmental health and make sure all students feel intellectually safe by using data along with student and parental views to plan interventions that align to student needs, and support students' goals; and hold regular formal consultations each semester with parent and student representatives to gather their feedback and views through discussion and surveys to check that changes to school policies and practice reflect their priorities. School leaders will monitor the implementation of the *Code of Conduct, Character, and Support* to check that teacher expectations are consistent throughout the school and to provide additional support to teachers and students as necessary to clarify expectations and how they can be met.

School leaders will work closely with school staff and parents to establish accurate family contact information and to identify a preferred language and mode of communication for all parents; provide information and guidance to school staff on how to communicate and work with parents from a range of backgrounds and cultures; and develop a long-term communication plan that enables parents to understand what the school is trying to achieve and how they can support the process at home.

II. J. Communication and Stakeholder Involvement/Engagement (4 points)

The LEA/school must fully and transparently consult and collaborate with key education stakeholders about the school's Priority status and on the implementation status of the SIG plan. The plan for consultation and collaboration provided by the LEA/school must contain the following element:

   i.   *Describe in detail, the methods, times, and places that will be used for regularly and systematically updating parents, families, the community and other stakeholders on the implementation status of the SIG plan. This should include, but is not limited to, analyses of evidence and leading indicator data to determine the impact of key strategies, as well as planned/approved course-corrections as applicable.*

The Syracuse City School District understands the importance of involving the community it serves in moving forward with dramatic turnaround of its historically underperforming schools. As such, a variety of methods will be utilized to ensure the school community is well informed. The principal will oversee all aspects of volunteer participation, special event planning, organization and promotion; and public relations development through community education, involvement and support. She will serve as the point person for marketing and community

relations, and will provide printed resources and public presentations to Grant Middle School parents, the neighboring community, district central office, the Board of Education, elected officials and potential school partners. The SCSD Director of Communications and the Community Outreach Coordinator will also provide assistance in this endeavor.

Regular updates will be provided over the five-year award period through a variety of media, including but not limited to: the Grant Middle School website and social media outlets (e.g., Facebook and Twitter), parent and PTSO meetings, school newsletters, the School Messenger automated calling system ("robo calls"), community and business partner meetings, mailings, and flyers. Other informal meetings may also be held in conjunction with PTSO meetings or on special event nights. PTSO meetings will be held in the school auditorium and scheduled monthly. Grant Middle School will regularly post documents and updates regarding the *College Pathways School Design* implementation on the school's website during the school year to keep the stakeholder groups abreast of the status of implementation. The school will also send home written communication to parents, providing information regarding the status of the implementation via the school's monthly newsletter and using the school website more frequently when updates occur.

Preliminary Communication Plan

Communication Item	Method	Time / Location
Inform Parents and Community of SIG Plan	PTSO meetings, webpage, Board of Education meeting	Sept 2016: auditorium, web
Extended Learning Initiative Update	PTSO meeting, webpage, newsletter	Sept 2016: Auditorium, web Jan 2017: auditorium, web
Update of SIG Plan	PTSO meeting, webpage, newsletter	Dec 2016, March 2017, June 2016
School Activities	PTSO meeting, webpage, newsletter	Monthly
Parent Involvement & Engagement Activities	PTSO meeting, webpage, newsletter	Monthly
Student Achievement Data	PTSO meeting, webpage, newsletter	Dec 2016, June 2017
Summer Programming for students	PTSO meeting, webpage, newsletter	May 2016: auditorium, web

In addition, the Community Engagement team will meet at least monthly, and will develop strategies for informing key stakeholders about the status of the Receivership Plan.

II. K. Project Plan Narrative/Timeline (6 points)

The LEA/school must provide a project plan and timeline that provides a detailed and specific, measurable, realistic, and time-phased set of actions and outcomes that reasonably lead to the effective implementation of the SIG plan and are directly aligned to the components of the selected model. The project plan must contain each of the following elements:

> i. *Identify and describe the key strategies for year-one implementation period (September 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016) that are aligned to the goals and objectives identified throughout Section II, with specific reference to student academic achievement, staffing, professional development, partnerships and stakeholder involvement.*

With the overarching goal of becoming a "School in Good Standing" before the end of the first three years of the project. Grant Middle School seeks to: develop and implement a whole-school change plan aligned to the tenants of the federally established *Innovation Framework* model; and realize dramatic school-level achievement gains.

Grant School will utilize the following **key strategies** to realize interim targets and achieve success in Year One:

Timeframe	Action
Before September 2015	Ensure that all staff are recruited, hired and in place
September 2015	Formalize agreements with EPO (and other consultants) to serve as primary partner to coordinate and provide enrichment and youth development
September 2015	Prepare plan for ELT
September 2015	Purchase needed supplies and materials (and submit work orders as necessary)
September 2015	Create monitoring/support calendar with differentiated protocols for data and operational dashboards
September 2015 - ongoing	External and job-embedded professional development
September 2015 - ongoing	Provide 180 additional hours of high-quality instruction to all students annually
September 2015 - ongoing	Monitor and track leading indicators early and often
September 2015 - ongoing	Make rapid and dramatic adjustment when leading indicators suggest that school Innovation is not on track for school-wide student success
September 2015 - ongoing	Principal, AVID Facilitator and EPO implement AVID School wide
By April 30, 2016 (for 2016-2017 school year)	Principal determines who may continue to teach in the school; and dismisses ineffective teachers from the school.
By May 31, 2016	Fill teacher vacancies
Summer 2016	Summer Leadership Institute and Professional Development Academies
Summer 2016	Conduct audit of school facilities and resources
Summer 2016	Refine key messages and answers to FAQs about the redesign plan
August 2016	Revise SIG plan
September 2016	Begin Year 2

> ii. *Identify the "early wins" that will serve as early indicators of a successful SIG plan implementation period and foster increased buy-in and support for the plan. In addition, provide evidence of post-implementation planning, such as focused strategies aimed specifically at long-term capacity building and sustainability.*

As implementation of the proposed *Innovation Framework* whole-school redesign plan begins, there will be a number of "**early wins**" that will serve as initial indicators of successful *College Pathways School Design*. For example, the school principal will take specific turnaround actions, including focusing on a limited set of high-priority, short-term goals. She will signal the magnitude and urgency of the need for dramatic change, and will discard failed rules and routines while deploying new tactics for early and dramatic success.

Evidence of growing stakeholder support for turnaround initiatives, school and community investment in what works, and a willingness to discard failed tactics and initiatives will be monitored. The principal and school leadership team will candidly and honestly report on early results and share them in open-air sessions. Professional Development will be scheduled and conducted at the outset. Results from those sessions will be reviewed and analyzed. For example, teachers may become enthused at the prospect of being involved in meaningful improvement for the students. The instructors of the professional development may also reveal

positive attitudes and insights from the sessions, as well as early gains that may be realized from the professional development (e.g., decrease in student tardiness).

> *iii. Identify the leading indicators of success that will be examined on no less than a bi-monthly and/or quarterly basis. Describe how these data indicators will be collected, how and who will analyze them, and how and to whom they will be reported.*

The success of the proposed whole-school redesign plan will depend largely on the speed with which necessary major change can be redirected. **Leading indicators** can provide early evidence about whether the school is on track — and if not, how to intervene to increase the odds of success.

The leading indicators will be examined on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. The SCSD Office of Shared Accountability will gather this data, which will be gathered from a variety of sources, such as eSchool, PeopleSoft, Datacation, and Teachscape. Data will be reviewed by the Chief of Shared Accountability, the Chief Academic Officer, the AVID Facilitator, and the EPO, for review with the school principal. The principal will report this information to the School Leadership Team monthly. The Chief Academic Officer will report this information to the Superintendent of Schools on a monthly basis.

On a monthly basis, the following leading indicators will be examined: short-cycle assessments; student attendance and truancy; health and social/emotional development; and student suspensions and behavior referral data. The Educational Partner Organization (EPO) will quickly utilize this information to address issues identified in the data and will regularly monitor progress. Quarterly, the following indicators will be examined: ratings on the degree to which leaders engage in action; teacher turnover rates; teacher attendance; student turnover rates; report cards; violent/disruptive incidents that may lead to a suspension; school demand; student, teacher, and parent satisfaction; benchmark tests; and building-based indicators that are aligned to Innovation goals and are developed by the School Leadership Team during the first year of implementation.

The Chief Academic Officer and Executive Director of Teaching and Learning will attend a quarterly meeting with the School Leadership Team to discuss this information and assist in the development of any modifications should they be warranted to keep the school's Innovation efforts on target. The Superintendent of Schools, the Chief Academic Officer, and the Chief of Shared Accountability will review the following data annually: school leaders' effectiveness; existence of a plan including Innovation success actions; level of clarity and detail in goals, steps, and timing for all staff; ratings and timeliness of actions to implement steps in the plan; existence of systems to regularly collect, analyze, and use data; distribution of teacher quality; percentage of students taught by highly effective teachers; number of instructional minutes; implementation of instructional practices; participation in professional development; participation on state assessments; and state test results. This information will be reviewed with the school principal, who will then share it with the School Leadership Team.

During the summer months, the principal and the School Leadership Team will further analyze this data and develop strategies to address areas that are not on track for success to be implemented at the start of the following school year. The Chief Accountability Officer will

report this data to the New York State Education Department on an annual basis, or more often (if requested).

    iv. *Describe the means by which the key strategies identified throughout Sections I and II ensure that each of the required elements of the selected model have been met.*

The review of data will determine the students' academic progress, particularly the progress by the students in ELA and Math. With the overarching goal of becoming a "School in Good Standing" before the end of the first three years of the project, Grant Middle School must improve the performance of the students in ELA and Math. The strategies will aid in revealing whether or not the DTSDE Tenets are being realized, and if dramatic school-level achievement is being realized.

The evidence presented in the data, will reveal if the strategies are being realized. The release and review of the data will allow the principal to readily identify what is succeeding, and where to maintain the course of action; and reveal what is not working, allowing the leaders to adjust course appropriately.