

Letter of Intent Feedback

April 22nd, 2015

Dear Heidi,

Thank you so much for submitting a letter of intent (LOI) to the Race to the Top-District (RTT-D) Project 3B Investment Fund.

First, the thoughtfulness and quality of your LOI was very apparent. We know you put a lot of time and energy into this process, and it showed. Thank you! Second, we are very encouraged to hear of the work your district is embarking upon in this final round of P3B funding. We were excited to see the strength of the proposal ideas on behalf of creating strong PreK-3rd grade systems focused on building leadership capacity and improving the instructional core, supported with data.

We know your LOI was intended to communicate your initial ideas for this proposal, and not all of the components of the proposal might be in place at this time. This feedback is intended to address some initial questions in hopes of strengthening your proposal and includes thoughts and strategies from our RTT P3B team, PSESD's Race and Equity team, the Road Map Birth to 3rd Grade Workgroup, and the Road Map ELL Workgroup.

To start, the following is general feedback about what we learned through our review of all RTT-D LOIs for Project 3B:

Lessons Learned

- P3B has supported district and school leaders' attendance at early learning institutes in previous rounds. Many LOIs indicate additional leaders would be attending an institute through Round 3. What learning has occurred and how is the district sharing lessons based on past sessions? What have been the results in terms of leadership capacity being built?
- More reflections are needed on lessons learned and how those lessons influence decisions being made about P-3 systems.

Regional Focus

- More focus of participation in regional efforts and collaborations such as:
 - Highlighting K registration as a regional effort and collaboration
 - Partnerships with other districts
 - Bringing forward the work being done with WaKIDS
 - Districts participating in JumpStart and Play and Learn have an opportunity to share best and promising practices. These efforts can vary widely and could benefit from the sharing of what is working. This can also benefit K transitions for the populations that are highly mobile in the road map region.
 - Participation **by district decision makers** in P3 Leads meetings and the Harvard Institute

Equity and Engagement

- Incorporate a strong outreach strategy for immigrant and refugee parents, which specifically targets families of children who have not had access or exposure to traditional early learning settings and who may be in Family Friend and Neighbor (FFN) or informal care settings.

Consider the partnerships available with community-based organizations who work closely with immigrant and refugee populations served in each district

- The word “Equity” was not explicitly stated in the majority of the LOIs. Highlighting how your proposal focuses on equity in addition to addressing language and ethnicity will be helpful when the focus is on closing the opportunity gap.
- Specifically call out strategies for engaging immigrant and refugee families in place of general language such as “throughout the community.”
- Incorporate specific and ongoing opportunities for immigrant and refugee parents and families to participate in shared-governance structures for district level as well as building level decision-making, and ensure the cultural and language value they bring is seen as asset-based.
- Attendance itself isn’t specifically called out or focused on very heavily. Chronic absenteeism is very high in the region yet research is strong that supports this as a key factor in student success. There is a great opportunity with how much has been invested in Full Day Kindergarten and ways districts can engage in an effort such as this that centers on family engagement.
- No LOIs mentioned support for bilingual/dual language development. Research shows the importance of the strong development of a student’s first language and that there is disruption in the learning of both languages if PK-K students are not in a setting where they are learning both.

Sustainability

- In cases where P3B Rounds 1 and 2 have supported a district P-3 leadership position, how does the district demonstrate increased financial commitment of this position in Round 3 and beyond?
- What are the system-level data tools that will continue to live on after the grant is gone that will continue to give us more information and support a data informed approach?
- How will projects intentionally leverage other RTT projects?

We wanted to share additional specific feedback about Auburn’s letter:

LOI Strengths

- Shaping the strategy based on data is a strength. Data was shared from the 2013-14 (Round 1) school year.
- Adding Family Engagement Liaisons is a strength. Are Liaisons in all of the elementary high need schools? What does district parent survey data show about the impact of Liaisons?
- Cultural competent strategies/questions called out are a strength.
- Only proposal with this level of specificity about social justice.

Opportunities to strengthen full proposal

- Identified targeted students are far too broad. Should be more specific on student subgroups – call out specific groups, for example ELL and specifically targeted languages.
- Why have they chosen identified schools? Be specific with the need of these schools based on data. Some of these schools already seem to be doing well in terms of closing achievement gaps – are there other schools to prioritize?
- The LOI could be shared with the Equity leader in Auburn to ensure it aligns with a focus on racial equity.



RACE to the TOP

- Data reflection could be stronger. Are there additional data points besides DIBELS that support outlined strategies? There needs to be stronger data and evidence that proposed instructional strategies are working. What do data from the 2014-15 (Round 2) data show? What do DIBELS and other data show specifically in the high-need elementary schools and for students in poverty and/or who were ELL?
- What are the lessons learned or course corrections and/or deep reflections since this work has been a continuation from rounds 1 and 2?
- There is room to consider how participation in regional work could be improved. While there is typically someone representing Auburn at events and meetings, decision makers are often not present, limiting Auburn's involvement and participation. Additionally, given the late promotion of the event, only 2 districts were able to attend the promising practices event. We'd like to see greater reflection on how Auburn's participation in regional efforts could be improved and expanded.
- Need to give more evidence for why choosing to use GLAD – what is the evidence that it has been successful? (in Auburn specifically or regionally, nationally, etc. Need some data to prove it's merit)
- How are these social justice questions actually being used? How is it changing practice? (PLCs, administration, etc?)
- Identify how the family engagement work will continue to deepen.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions about this feedback. Please visit <http://roadmapracetothetop.org/project-3b-investment-fund-for-prek-3rd-grade-strategies-and-systems/> for updated information as well as updated versions of the RFP.

We look forward to working with you in the development of Auburn School District's proposal.

Sincerely,

Jessica de Barros
Executive Project Director
Road Map Region Race to the Top Grant

Mary Waldron
P3B Manager