

1. PARTNER BACKGROUND

1a. Organization name: The Institute for Student Achievement

1b. Organization Mission and Connection to Louisiana’s Plan for Struggling Schools

The Institute for Student Achievement (ISA), a division of the non-profit Educational Testing Service (ETS), is a 22-year-old national high school redesign organization whose mission is to transform chronically low-performing high schools into personalized, vibrant, high-performing educational organizations that both reclaim their sense of agency and develop their capacity to graduate all students prepared for success in post-secondary education and careers. ISA’s mission and high school redesign approach is well-aligned with Louisiana’s plan for assisting struggling schools by providing supports and plans for school improvement that are co-designed among local school systems, external whole school redesign partners and the state.

2. EVIDENCE OF TRACK RECORD OF STUDENT AND SCHOOL OUTCOMES

2a. In any format, please illustrate your organization’s track record in dramatically improving schools or systems of schools and/or radically increasing outcomes for targeted subgroups of students.

ISA has successfully engaged in high school transformation initiatives since 2001 in such cities as Atlanta (12 schools), Detroit (six schools), and Minneapolis (one school). ISA’s largest footprint is in New York City, where ISA has partnered with more than 30 public high schools. ISA’s network of high schools serves predominantly high need students: more than 70% are from families living in economic hardship; 96% are minorities and nearly two-thirds enter ninth grade below grade level in mathematics and reading. ISA’s partner-school network has impacted more than 80,000 students, providing them a pathway to high school success and college readiness, and more than 4,000 teachers, counselors, and school leaders.

ISA has a proven record of effectively preparing high-need students to be college and career-ready graduates. Two independent and rigorous evaluations conducted by the Academy for Educational Development and IMPAQ International found that ISA’s approach to whole school redesign has positive and significant impacts on the educational outcomes of high-need students in general, and African American males in particular.¹

- **Attendance:** ISA 9th and 10th graders are 1.5 times more likely to meet the 90% minimum attendance standard than comparison students, and ISA 12th graders attend, on average, 3.5 more school days.
- **Promotion:** ISA students are over 5 times as likely to be promoted to 10th and 11th grades as their comparison peers, and more than 3 times as likely to be promoted to 12th grade.
- **Credit Accumulation:** ISA students earn, on average, 6.3 more high school academic credits in 4 years than their comparison peers.
- **On-Time High School Graduation:** ISA’s largely African American and Latino student population has a 4-year cohort graduation rate of nearly 80%. This dramatically exceeds the national high school graduation rate for African American students of 60% and Latino students of 58%.
- **College Success:** 90% of ISA students persist to the third semester in college, as compared to the national rate for all students of 77% and the national average for African Americans and Latinos of 55%. After 4 years in college, 81% of ISA students have either graduated or still enrolled.

¹ The two ISA evaluation reports can be found at: <http://www.studentachievement.org/results/research/>

Furthermore, ISA was identified by the U.S. Department of Education as one of three organizations nationwide to have a demonstrated record of success in implementing whole-school reform. A rigorous review of ISA's evidence conducted by the *What Works Clearinghouse* resulted in a determination that the ISA model met the requirements of the Department's evidence-based, whole-school reform model. ISA was the only high school whole school reform provider selected under the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program.²

3. YOUR ORGANIZATION'S MODEL

ISA's whole-school high school redesign approach is grounded in seven research-based and validated principles that work synergistically. The seven principles serve as a framework to transform the organizational and educational practices and the culture of a school. The result is a personalized and rigorous educational program that embodies the values and goals of the school community and produces a college-going culture. The seven principles are:

1. **a college-preparatory instructional program** that provides all students with rigorous inquiry-based curriculum and instruction aligned with state standards and that embeds content and numeric literacy in the content areas;
2. **a dedicated team of teachers and counselors** that personalizes students' experience and provides a consistent support network throughout students' four years of high school;
3. **Distributed Counseling™** — a school-wide student advocacy and safety-net system in which every student has a go-to faculty person who serves as that student's advocate and family contact; through Distributed Counseling, all faculty members take responsibility for students' academic, social, and emotional development to produce trusting and caring relationships with students that faculty can leverage to increase students' achievement;
4. **extended school day and year** that provide additional opportunities for student enrichment and remediation;
5. **continuous professional development** that establishes a collaborative professional learning community in which teachers and school leaders participate in individual and team coaching as well as in other professional development opportunities;
6. **parental involvement** and engagement in their child's education so that parents/caregivers are able to be informed partners in the education of their children and will have confidence in the school to provide effective pathways to their children's future; and,
7. **continuous organizational improvement** through the use of data to monitor program implementation and student performance outcomes.

ISA uses job-embedded professional development to implement its model. School development-leadership (SDL) coaches collaborate with school leaders to identify priority outcomes that the school wants to achieve. Then principals and SDL coaches collaborate to develop a customized, strategic implementation plan to enact these principles in ways that are targeted to achieve the outcomes. Content coaches work with teachers to develop and implement a college preparatory instructional program that is aligned with the school's outcomes as well as district and state standards. ISA provides summer and winter institutes at which school teams participate in school planning sessions, curriculum, instruction, leadership, and counselor sessions, and technical assistance workshops.

3a. How will you differentiate your services to meet the unique needs of schools and districts in Louisiana?

²See <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/sigevidencebased/index.html>

ISA partners with districts and schools to implement ISA's comprehensive school redesign framework of seven research-based principles in customized ways which allow schools to develop and effectively operationalize a college going culture that will result in students graduating high school academically, socially, and emotionally prepared for college and careers. ISA's approach is collaborative and capacity-building so that whole school redesign strategies and solutions developed by the ISA-school partnership map onto the outcomes which schools aim to achieve. This ensures that school stakeholders have ownership of the process and resulting changes so that schools have the capacity to independently sustain the reforms once the partnership has concluded.

3b. What are the attributes of your ideal partner school or district?

The attributes of ISA's ideal partner school and district include: sharing the beliefs and values undergirding ISA's model of comprehensive school reform; seeing the ISA partnership as their strategy to achieve the outcomes they have identified; committing to the collaborative and customized planning and implementation of ISA's seven research-based principles as the framework for the reform; allocating existing resources and time to structures and activities necessary to produce the desired changes; and adjusting existing policies and practices that may be unintentional barriers to successful implementation of the ISA model. Those beliefs and values posit that high schools can build the capacity necessary to graduate their students prepared for college and careers. ISA's ideal district or high school partner seeks to graduate their students prepared for success in college or careers and believes that they can achieve this outcome through the capacity building process of the ISA partnership. That capacity building process focuses on developing a college going culture, close student-teacher relationships, and quality leadership and instruction. An ideal partner is NOT looking for an off-the-shelf, scripted solution that will be imposed on them to fix them. An ideal partner actively collaborates with ISA school leadership and content area coaches to develop and implement strategies that enact a college preparatory instructional program; a student-advocacy/advisory system so that every student is connected to a school adult who knows him/her well and is the family liaison; and continuous organizational improvement processes. ISA's ideal district partner identifies a district liaison to work with ISA's project manager to support the partnership. Both district and school support ISA's accountability activities that monitor fidelity of implementation and assess the effectiveness of the partnership.

3c. Describe your experience working with other third party providers to support coherent school and district improvement. School redesign efforts are led by a team which includes the principal, district representatives, school site leaders, and ISA staff. Additional third party providers may be invited by the principal to participate on that team to ensure coordination of services and coherence of the redesign. Almost all ISA school redesign efforts include third parties so this type of collaboration is common practice.

3d. What support from the state, district or school partners would enhance your success in Louisiana?

The most important component of partner support is compatibility—the match—of vision and mission regarding outcomes. ISA is committed to supporting underperforming high schools to develop the capacity to graduate their students prepared for college. State, district and school support for this mission is critical to ISA's success with its partner. The state, district, and school need to view the collaborative and customized design and implementation of ISA's seven research-based principles as valid and as the right strategy to help the school achieve their outcomes. The state, district, and school's willingness to address existing policies and practices that may be unintentional barriers to the successful implementation of the ISA strategy will also enhance ISA's success. The appointment of a state and/or district liaison to work with ISA's project manager on effective implementation will also enhance ISA's success.