

Name of Grant Program: School Redesign: Expanding Learning Time to Support Student Success - *Planning Grant*

Fund Code: 226

PART III – REQUIRED PROGRAM INFORMATION

GROUP B NARRATIVE

Work to Date: The Gateway Regional School District submitted a Preliminary Implementation Plan in August 2007, following 10 months of public meetings, surveys, dissemination of information, and planning by committees to explore expanded learning time for the entire district. The district encompasses 7 small towns in rural Western Massachusetts, with very low population density and very long bus rides. At 205 square miles, the Gateway Regional School District is the 3rd largest school system in Massachusetts. In total, our school bus routes equal traveling from Huntington, Massachusetts to Huntington Beach, California three times a week. Due to the complexity and economic impact of our busing system, the district must move forward as a whole, or not at all.

The Gateway Regional School District serves approximately 1400 students in 5 elementary schools, a regional middle school, and a regional high school. Each level (elementary, middle and high) has had its own committee made up of teachers, administrators, other staff, parents, and—in the case of the high school—students. Each has conducted its own study, including surveys of staff, parents and students, research reviews, and participation in Mass 2020 trainings. Grant and planning oversight was provided by a district-wide Steering Committee. The community was kept apprised throughout the year through press releases, a dedicated web site, two public meetings, and a mailing to all student households.

Work to be Completed: A number of tasks still need to be completed before submitting the final Implementation Plan in December, 2007. The committees will reconvene in October and November to do the following:

- **Finalize a list of community partners and obtain Memoranda of Understanding with them.** This task is challenging for Gateway schools as they are located some distance from the urban centers of Pittsfield, Westfield, Holyoke and Northampton, which are rich in community resources such as music centers, museums, YMCA's, Boys/Girls Clubs, and other partners whose missions are aligned with core content and enrichment education.
- **Finalize each school's schedule of course offerings.** Each school in the district must inventory its own staff and community resources to fine-tune their schedules and create a sound educational plan, to meet the expectations outlined on the Gateway ELT website at <http://www.grsd.org/administration/documents/JuneELTPPT.pdf> This process is to result in clarification and confirmation of additional offerings for both core content areas and enrichment programs.
- **Finalize the district calendar.** A number of ideas for increasing learning time were proposed, and one calendar—in particular—received favorable feedback from stakeholders. This calendar needs to be approved by collective bargaining units and the Gateway Regional School Committee.
- **Complete negotiations with collective bargaining units.** To date, involved bargaining units (teachers, para professionals and secretaries) have agreed to work on sidebar agreements related to staff schedules and compensation for those working an expanded schedule. Negotiations need to continue to agree upon rates, schedules and any other working conditions that will be impacted through ELT.
- **Continue process of measuring public support.** Each survey to date has shown increasing public support. We believe the reason for this is that stakeholder input has shaped the proposed calendar and course offerings, and that parents increasingly understand the value and benefits of becoming an ELT district. Once the above tasks are completed and the ELT proposal is finely-tuned, we will hold a third public meeting and run one additional survey to the approximately 850 Gateway families, prior to submitting our implementation plan in December.
- **School Committee Vote to Move Forward.** The Superintendent will seek approval of the Gateway Regional School Committee on the Implementation Plan to be submitted in December.

Additional tasks will need to be completed after the December submission, once the district knows whether or not the Department of Education has approved our implementation plan. Those tasks include finalizing changes to bus contracts and launching a marketing campaign aimed at reducing parent fears about the change and resulting out-of-district school choice (and perhaps attracting incoming school choice students in the process.)

Timeline: The following timeline will be enacted with the award of this grant proposal.

MONTH	TASK	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE
October 2007	Level Committees reconvene; use summer survey findings to clarify schedules and course offerings; identify partners and develop MOU's	Committee Chairs	10/31/07
	Each school conducts straw poll of staff to determine in-house talents & interests; gain sense of #s of staff interested in being part of expanded day.	Gateway Leadership Team	10/31/07
	All committees represented at October Mass 2020 meetings	Committee Chairs, Superintendent	10/25/07
November 2007	Plan and market public forum.	District ELT Committee	11/6/07
	Hold final Public Forum	District ELT Committee	11/15/07
	Send survey to 850 district families with final proposed schedule, calendar and program offerings	Superintendent; PR Specialist	Out 11/19; Due back 11/26
	Complete collective bargaining sidebar agreements with teachers, paras and secretaries	Superintendent, Chief Financial Officer	11/28/07
	School Committee Vote to move forward	Superintendent	11/28/07
December 2007	Final implementation plan submitted to Mass 2020/DOE	Superintendent, Grantwriter	12/3/07
January – March 2008	Change bus contracts to reflect new district-wide schedule for 2008-09 school year	Superintendent, Chief Financial Officer	3/31/07
	Final MOU's with partners for first half of 2008-09 school year obtained	District Leadership Team	3/31/07
April – June 2008	Marketing materials for the 2008-09 school year are created and distributed	PR Specialist	6/30/08

Budget Narrative:

ITEM/COST	DESCRIPTION
Contractual/Other \$500	Legal fees toward renegotiating bus contracts; grant will support 3 hours at the rate of \$175/hour
Printing & Reproduction \$2000	\$1,300 for photocopying and printing for invitations to the public forum and brochures that explain why Gateway is becoming an ELT district (to reduce or prevent outgoing school choice); \$700 for postage mailing the final survey to 850 households (families/guardians of all district students) with enclosed, stamped return envelope.