**Playful Learning Institute (PLI), PK-3 Competitive Grant (Fund Code 347)**

**Question and Answer Document**

This Question and Answer document includes questions that were asked at the Bidder’s Conference, the Drop-In Question and Answer session, and emailed to the Department. It has been organized into five categories:

* General;
* Team Membership;
* Professional Development and Coaching;
* Curriculum and Instructional Practices;
* Materials and Supplies; and
* Budget

**General**

Q: *Do we have to apply for all the grades PreK-3?*

A: Yes, this Institute is designed for all five grade levels. Schools applying with all five grade levels are preferred and will be given priority in the review process.

Q: *What are the requirements for participation and expectations for the educators and district? What are the benefits of participation?*

A: Please see the RFP for requirements and expectations. The benefits of participation include professional development to support playful learning, coaching for playful learning, financial support for buying supplies and materials, and the ability to contribute to the evaluation of the Institute, which will inform future opportunities.

Q: *How does the PLI align with the standards*?

A: The PLI is intended to provide tools and strategies for educators and administrators to deliver instructional opportunities that are intentionally designed to align with learning standards as outlined in our state’s Curriculum Frameworks in ways that are playful and responsive to the developmental needs of younger students.

Q: *What will the outcomes of the PLI be*?

A: The goal of the PLI is to support educators and administrators to deepen their understanding of what playful learning is, its connection to learning and strategies to implement it. Through coaching, we will learn more about the opportunities and challenges of incorporating playful learning practices across diverse settings. In the longer term, we are hoping that the PLI evaluation will help us gauge how to improve and expand this work with a larger number of schools and districts.

Q: *How do you define inclusive classroom?*

A: We define “inclusive” to mean a classroom in which students both with and without disabilities are educated together.

Q: *How do you convince administrators that playful learning is a positive approach?*

A: Boston Public Schools has [data](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/13UHLlp6JazpZ9U08qpDDfmOxNJxsgtU4GcIsIUCeoxM/edit#slide=id.g20742d7fb98_0_6) to show that the *Focus* curriculum provides opportunities that narrow the achievement gap for Black and Latinx students. The *Focus* curriculum incorporates the science of reading in multiple ways, including decodable texts aligned with both a foundational literacy learning sequence and engaging units of study.

Q: *Are the questions under, "****Interest in the Playful Learning Institute,****" considered the narrative?  If so, is it acceptable to answer the questions directly under, in 2-3 sentences OR should the questions be combined into a formal paragraph-form narrative?*

A: Questions 1-4 as listed in the *Interest in the Playful Learning Institute* section are considered part of the narrative. Whether answers are provided directly under the question or in a formal paragraph form is up to the applicant.

Additionally, as outlined in Part III instructions, responses should provide sufficient detail for the reader and be at least 2-3 sentences each in length. This narrative section should be no more than 10 pages, not including the District Team section or the attachments requested in Question 7, with 1” margins and a minimum of an 11-point font.

**Team Membership**

Q: *Do we need to apply with the names of the educators who will be part of the team now?  Individual availability may change depending on when the PD takes place.*

A: Yes, you need to include the names of all educators proposed for the team to the extent possible. We will prioritize applications where all team members have been identified. We understand that availability may change depending on when the PD takes place.  The district will need to ensure that, if a teacher that is listed in the application is not available to participate due to the timing of the professional development, another educator will be available to join the team.

Q: *Can a team bring more than the required number to the PD?*

*In addition to the classroom teachers and administrators, can coaches and support staff join the team if interested?*

*If Pre-K and Kindergarten have paraprofessionals, should they be included on Part III, for training purposes?*

A: We do encourage participation of as many educators working together with the participating grade level teams as possible. For those 5 teams selected to participate  in the pilot, other staff in the selected school(s) beyond those required team members may attend the professional development sessions—including but not limited to paraprofessionals, coaches, inclusion and English learner support staff. However, coaching will only be available for the 10 educators and 2 administrators.

Q: *With the 2 classroom teachers per grade required, what if you only have 1 PK class and the rest have multiple classrooms?  Do we have to have 2 PK teachers?*

*Do we need a grade level teacher from each grade PK-3?  We have a small school that is interested in applying and the school includes 1 class at each grade.*

A: If your district enrollment is such that you only have one classroom at a particular grade(s), it is okay to not meet the 2 classroom requirement. Be sure to note in the narrative the configuration of your school/district so that grant readers will understand why the 10 educators requirement has not been met.

*Q: We have two preschool classrooms. One is inclusive and has a morning and afternoon session.*

*The other is substantially separate. Are we able to apply?*

A: Presuming that you don’t have a second inclusive preschool classroom, you can apply. In your narrative, please provide explanations/rationale for why there aren’t two inclusive classrooms identified for any grade level, if applicable.

Q: *If a wellness teacher teaches second grade, can they count as the 2nd grade teacher?*

*Can a special education teacher who teaches only 2nd grade be the 2nd teacher?*

A: In both cases, if the educator is with the students for the majority of the day and is responsible for the delivery of the core academic content (e.g. math, science, literacy, social studies, etc.) for students with and without disabilities, they can be one of the educators representing their particular grade. If this is not the case, they can attend professional development but wouldn’t be one of the 10 educators identified for coaching.

Q: *What if Preschool is not located in your school?*

A: It is okay if PK through 3rd grade classrooms aren’t co-located in the same building; if this is the case, the team administrator for the building where the PreK is located should be included on the team along with the administrator of the building where the remaining grades are located.

Q: *I only have three teachers per grade. Getting two per grade could be hard. We have another school in the district - if I can't get 2 here can we bring in the other campus?*

A: We are interested in fostering a community of educators all working in the same building,

whenever possible, so we will prioritize selecting applications where grade level teams are in the same building to facilitate easier interaction and mutual support. With that said, applicants can bring in another campus/school building, if needed, and an explanation for this should be included in your narrative.

**Professional Development (PD) and Coaching**

Q: *Will the 10 hours of in person training be on 2 consecutive days?*

*We can't free up so many teachers during the school day, can we do the PD days out of school?*

A: For the in-person 10 hours of PD, the goal is to have all members of all five teams together. We will do our best to meet the scheduling needs of all teams to the extent possible. It is not yet determined when that portion of the PD will take place — before the end of the school year, or in the summer – as the plan is to wait until the 5 pilot sites are awarded and then determine what timing works best. If it turns out it is easier to schedule the 10 hours on two days back to back, or easier to schedule two days a week apart, we will consider both options and see what the teams prefer.

Q: *Can you give an example of what the professional development may look like?*

A: There are two components to the PD plan: asynchronous pre-work and in-person PD. We are designing the asynchronous/prework PD now and expect it will include readings on the pedagogy of play, (why we do what we do), podcasts and/or videos, a deep dive into the *Focus* Curriculum, and a chance to reflect, as well as an opportunity to meet with our team.

The in-person PD will include an overview of the *Focus* curriculum’s pedagogy and design, an in-depth look at the components and practices, some videos, and opportunities to engage with the practices and components. This professional development will be interactive.

Coaching will include two persons who intimately know the curriculum and practices, who will come to your school to do observations and to sit down with the group of teachers or with individual teachers. They will use an observation and feedback form.

Q:  Is *the 3-5 hours of coaching per month per teacher or per group?*

*It states that coaching will be 3-5 hours for educators and 1-2 hours for administrators per. month.  Will each teacher get 3-5 hours of coaching or is it 3-5 per building?*

A: The 3-5 hours of coaching per month as outlined in the competitive grant is per educator. Each coach will work out the coaching plan with the team and the 3-5 hours of coaching will likely include a combination of both individual 1:1 coaching as well as coaching with a group of educators.

Q: *How many hours will the asynchronous PD be in the spring?*

A: We estimate that there will be 5-8 hours of asynchronous PD, likely including an hour or less to complete a reflection tool and an hour or less to meet with the BPS/DESE teams after completing the asynchronous work; this online meeting will provide opportunities to capture the team’s thinking about the potential direction of the playful learning work and help inform planning of the in-person PD.

Q *Have you considered sharing the asynchronous work for those that do not receive the grant?*

A: We have not yet planned for this but appreciate the recommendation. We will take this into consideration.

**Curriculum and Instructional Practices**

Q: *Can we choose to do the FOCUS curriculum with some grades, but focus on practices with others within this institute?*

A: Yes, different grade level pairs of teachers may choose differently whether to implement the content of the *Focus* Curriculum (units of study) or use their current curricular programs and apply the instructional practices.

Q: *Since Focus Curriculum is only PK-2, how does that work for grade 3? Why is grade 3 included?*

*The Focus curriculum available is currently just from PreK to grade 2. What will be possible for the third grade team?*

A: The second grade *Focus* curriculum intentionally incorporates instructional practices that prepare children for learning routines in grade 3.  Thus, third grade teachers will be supported to use playful learning practices that support their curricular programs currently in use in participating districts, rather than to implement specific *Focus* units of study.

Q: *If we're not selected, could we have access to some of the materials and create our own coaching for staff?*

A: The *Focus* Curriculum is open source and available on the [Boston Public Schools Early Childhood website](https://www.bpsearlylearning.org/). Additionally, the Institute will result in the creation of playful learning resources that will be shared on the [Department’s early learning website](http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/earlylearning/).

**Materials/Supplies**

Q: *Is there a recommended list of materials to be ordered for classrooms?  For instance, center/studio materials.*

A: Yes, the current supply list can be found [here](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1xD1M3Byp9TfBxuiqd58sUMwbb3uKLn6hbw_LpoYJ7HA/edit*gid=1106163777__;Iw!!CUhgQOZqV7M!lQrrrm74GgRd_YfKEfe1t922T6N1GD-ntRq7ZcDeaMhS5gnVuDujktYfLxwBJG_B7b7oV_KlmLUjB6qDq_ojlQy3BfMXsQCRovNw$).  The list linked here can be used for rough informational purposes (e.g., budgeting), not for direct ordering. Coaches and the BPS team will work with districts to identify needed materials based on the path taken by the school team (i.e., implementing the Focus curriculum and/or the core instructional practices). Please note: BPS is updating the list this spring so the one linked here should just be used for informational purposes.

**Budget**

Q: *On the budget sheet, how do I calculate the cost of the coach?*

A: Applicants do not need to include costs for coaching in their grant budgets. Coaching will be provided by the Boston Public School team and will be paid for by the Department separate from the grant.

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