

Education Innovation and Research Program (EIR) Project Abstract

Applicant Name: American Institutes for Research®

Project Title: Bouncy's Ready to Learn Resilience: Improving Classroom Climate and Student Outcomes in Early Grades

Type of Grant Requested: (select one) Early-Phase Mid-Phase Expansion

Absolute Priorities the Project Addresses:

Absolute Priority 1-- Demonstrate a Rationale (Early), Moderate (Mid), Strong (Expansion)

Absolute Priority 4-- Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs

Competitive Preference Priorities the Project Addresses:

Competitive Preference Priority 2— Addressing the Impact of COVID–19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty

Total number of students to be served by the project: 6,000

Grade level(s) to be served by the project: Kindergarten and Grade 1 students

Definition of high-need students: The project will prioritize schools with a large proportion of ethnic minority students, defined as 50% or greater, or a high percentage of students, defined as 50% or greater, living in low-income homes. A high-needs student is defined as a child performing below grade/age expectations and/or is considered part of an underserved population.

Brief description of project activities: The project addresses challenges about how to improve meeting early grade students' social, emotional, and academic needs in high needs schools, with a particular focus on students living in underserved urban communities. Our innovation is the Bouncy program, a character-based, technology-enhanced program that includes three key components: (1) innovative approach to create a safe and caring classroom environment, (2) engaging instructional strategies to teach self-regulatory skills, and (3) a teacher training and implementation support system.

Summary of project objectives and expected outcomes: Project objective 1 is to expand the teacher training and implementation support system. The expected outcomes are PD and coaching videos and an expanded online platform. Objective 2 is to enhance the breathing animatronic. The expected outcomes are integrating speech recognition and speech synthesis technologies and connecting the animatronic to the platform. Objective 3 is to implement and test the Bouncy program for impact. The expected outcomes are getting schools and teachers to agree to participate in the study, treatment and control schools with baseline equivalence, and that Bouncy is implemented with high fidelity. Objective 4 is to analyze, report, and disseminate findings. The expected outcomes are collected and analyzed outcome data, making teachers and district leaders aware of Bouncy.

Summary of how the project is innovative: First, the Bouncy program focuses on the emotional climate of the classroom to meet the basic needs of children. Second, the program recognizes the importance of "playing with purpose" and imaginative play as a key instructional mode for early learners. Third, breathing exercises in the Bouncy program may be more effective because they teach young children to slow down and override an automatic response, a self-regulatory skill that can be acquired over time and with practice.

Other studies related to the proposed project: Several pilot studies evaluated different components of the program (e.g., ██████████ et al., 2023a, ██████████ et al., 2023b, ██████████ et al., 2022). Results demonstrate that combining classroom climate promotion and self-regulatory skill training has promising potential to improve key mediators of achievement among high needs early learners including engagement with learning, self-regulation skills, and disruptive behaviors.

Proposed implementation sites: AIR has established partnerships with three urban districts in three states: (1) Joliet Public School District in Illinois, (2) Boston Public Schools in Massachusetts, and (3) Lamar Consolidated Independent School District in Texas.

Organizations partnering with this project: AIR is partnering with Ripple Effects for this project.