

Education Innovation and Research Program (EIR) Project Abstract

Applicant Name: Center for Leadership and Educational Equity

Project Title: Plan, Lead, Act, Network, and Sustain (PLANS) for Equitable Student Outcomes

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

Absolute Priorities the Project Addresses: (select all that apply)

- Absolute Priority 1-- Demonstrate a Rationale (Early), Moderate (Mid), Strong (Expansion)
- Absolute Priority 2-- Field-Initiated Innovations—General
- Absolute Priority 3-- Promoting STEM Education
- Absolute Priority 4-- Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs
- Absolute Priority 5-- Educator Recruitment and Retention

Competitive Preference Priorities the Project Addresses: (select all that apply)

- Competitive Preference Priority 1— Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners
- 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: 13,600

Grade level(s) to be served by the project: K-12

Definition of high-need students: The ‘target population’ for this proposal refers to students who are underserved in participating schools (evidenced by student outcome data) from specific subgroups (i.e., students who are categorized as economically disadvantaged, receiving special education services, multilingual learners, and/or from a marginalized racial group). Participating leaders will use data to identify a specific subgroup of high need students that will be referred to as their “focal group”. This term is used to minimize the deficit-based language of “high need” being used to label students. The participating leaders' focus will be on leading improvements that aim to increase outcomes for focal groups.

Brief description of project activities: PLANS for Equitable Student Outcomes is a professional learning program that utilizes the evidence-based program components of experiential learning, data use for continuous quality improvement, and interactive learning. The components are delivered through coaching, professional learning sessions, network sessions, and asynchronous modules and resources for groups of educational stakeholders, school teams, educators, school leaders, and district leaders to support their school improvement processes aimed at increasing equity for high need focal groups of students. The PLANS theory of change posits that implementation of these evidence-based program components will result in improved schoolwide Core Leadership Practices of a wide diversity of leaders, which in turn will increase school leader retention and ultimately improve student achievement in math and English language arts (ELA), particularly for students in high-need focal groups.

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Summary of project objectives and expected outcomes:

Expected outcomes (measured in impact evaluation):

- Improved student achievement in ELA and math
- Increased school leader retention

Project Objectives (measured in performance measures):

- increases high and equitable outcomes for students
- Increase **school community capacity to use the assets and needs** of students and the community to improve school improvement planning
- Increase in **all staff** ability to implement the **Core Leadership Practices** in support of widespread leadership and improved academic outcomes for high need student focal groups
- Increase **school leadership capacity** to implement the **Core Leadership Practices** in support of widespread leadership and improved academic outcomes for high need student focal groups
- Increase **principal supervisors to support** school leaders and educators improvement efforts
- **Strengthen district leadership** to support school-level leadership, leader retention and achievement of improvement goals.
- Adapt and curate **curriculum materials** to make open to public
- Strengthen **marketing** infrastructure for scaling
- **Disseminate findings, resources, and services** in other districts and state contexts

Summary of how the project is innovative: PLANS provides an alternative to the existing school improvement strategies (e.g., mandates and resources) by fostering leadership practices that support deeper implementation by building the capacity of educators, leaders, and stakeholders to use Core Leadership Practices to drive and sustain effective school improvement processes.

Other studies related to the proposed project: There is a growing research-base on school leadership development practices that result in important outcomes (i.e., student achievement, leader retention) which CLEE's research has informed (██████ et al., 2011; 2013; 2017; 2021; Herman et al., 2017). However, there is a significant need to add to the evidence-base on leadership development strategies and leadership curriculum that meets the high standards in What Works Clearinghouse for moderate and strong evidence. PLANS will strengthen and build on the leadership development studies that currently qualify as moderate evidence (Gates et al, 2019; Nunnery et al., 2011). Further, PLANS will extend this leadership development research to apply to a diversity of educational leaders (i.e., leadership teams, educators, and stakeholders). Finally, PLANS will also extend the research by focusing on leadership practices that positively impact high need focal groups of students.

Proposed implementation sites: 68 elementary, middle and high public schools from Local Educational Agency (LEA) partners across Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island.

Organizations partnering with this project: American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct the evaluation and LEAs from across Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island to implement PLANS.