

Literacy Mid-South (LMS) is a nonprofit organization providing critical literacy resources, programming, and cross-sector collaboration to the Greater Memphis, TN, area. In partnership with Memphis-Shelby County Schools and the Center for Research in Education Policy (CREP) at the University of Memphis, Literacy Mid-South seeks an Early-phase Education Innovation and Research grant to support *Tutor901: High-Impact Tutoring for High-Needs Students*, which will address Absolute Priorities 1 and 4.

The Tutor901 intervention is built upon the high-impact tutoring model, a proven strategy for accelerating student learning defined by shared characteristics of successful tutoring programs (Dietrichson, 2017). Literacy Mid-South seeks to tailor this intervention explicitly to support high-needs students. LMS will provide high-impact tutoring services to 1,500 2nd-4th grade students each school year across 18 MSCS elementary schools. The Tutor901 program builds on high-impact tutoring by incorporating three best practices for supporting high-needs students: 1.) Equipping tutors to make tutoring sessions trust-filled, supportive learning spaces (Balfanz, 2018); 2.) Recruiting, training, and retaining tutors reflective of students tutored (Gershenson, 2022); and 3.) Providing intentional student and family support beyond tutoring (Mol, 2011).

This program has four proposed goals: 1.) Accelerate students' literacy development through high-impact tutoring; 2.) Foster trusting, safe learning spaces for students within tutoring sessions; 3.) Develop a pipeline of highly-trained, diverse tutors committed; and 4.) Provide an intentional infusion of high-quality, culturally responsive books. Long-term contributions include the development and rigorous evaluation of a high-impact tutoring model designed explicitly to accelerate high-need students' learning for broader adoption. Aligned to the Department's definition of "underserved students," for this project a "high-needs student" is considered a student who is living in poverty, a student attending a school with high concentrations of students living in poverty, a student of color, and/or a student performing significantly below grade level.

This intervention will be rigorously evaluated through a mixed-methods, matched-pair quasi-experimental design (QED) evaluation to examine both impacts and factors affecting variation in outcomes—learning what works, for whom, and under what conditions. The evaluation will involve approximately 36 schools, 144 tutors, and 1,200 students annually in the Memphis-Shelby County Schools, an urban public school district in Memphis, TN. Schools recruited to the project will be matched on factors such as grade levels taught, prior student performance on tests of reading/ELA, and student demographics (e.g., socioeconomic status) to increase the likelihood that baseline equivalence will be attained.

Literacy Mid-South hypothesizes that students receiving tutoring will demonstrate accelerated growth towards grade level proficiency in reading and increased SEL outcomes through bonds with their tutors. The **main findings** will be the effects of program implementation on student achievement for the overall sample (i.e., all students combined) in treatment vs. control schools in one domain, Student Achievement, with one outcome – reading. Student SEL outcomes, effects within high-needs student subgroups (females, BIPOC status, IEP students, and economically disadvantaged), and available i-Ready scores in all grades and TCAP ELA scores at the end of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades will serve as **supplemental** outcome measures. The evaluation will produce evidence with the potential to meet WWC standards with reservations.