

## Education Innovation and Research Program (EIR) Project Abstract

**Applicant Name:** Teach For America

**Project Title:** *The Cultivate System: Creating Inclusive, Equitable, & Rigorous Learning Environments for High-Needs Students*

**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:** 350,000

**Grade level(s) to be served by the project:** 5-12

**Definition of high-need students:** Teach For America defines high-need students as those students who attend title I schools, identify as low-income, or are from historically marginalized communities

**Brief description of project activities:** The goal of this project is to improve post-pandemic attendance and academic achievement by improving students' classroom learning conditions, teachers' instructional practices, and students' academic mindsets and academic strategies, through a professional development program that centers on student voice. Specifically, the Cultivate System is comprised of: (1) training for novice teachers and their TFA coaches on the importance of student academic mindsets, academic strategies, and learning environments for social, emotional and academic development; (2) a survey of students' mindsets, strategies, and perceptions of the learning environment that teachers administer *to their students* twice a year; (3) a customized report provided to each teacher that shares results from the student survey and indicates prioritized areas for improvement based on student responses; (4) two years of ongoing professional learning, coaching, and resources to support teachers in making meaning of students' experiences and data and prioritize areas for improvement; (5) research-backed resources and guides to support teachers' prioritized areas for improvement; and (6) ongoing data collection to assess implementation fidelity and inform continuous improvement.

**Summary of project objectives and expected outcomes:** Over the course of a five-year EIR grant, TFA, in partnership with The Consortium and AIR, aims to test the impact of the Cultivate Framework integrated into the TFA model and understand its effects on corps members' teaching practices and the role that it plays in creating positive learning environments in underserved urban and rural schools across the country. Our primary goals target three groups: TFA coaches, TFA corps members, and their students. For coaches, the aim is to train them to

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help teachers use student survey data to create more rigorous and equitable learning environments. For corps members, the goal is to utilize data from the Cultivate student survey to enhance classroom conditions, benefiting student mindsets, behaviors, and development. For students, the goal is to help them develop stronger social-emotional learning mindsets and strategies, improved academic behaviors, and demonstrate greater engagement and motivation, ultimately leading to greater academic achievement.

**Summary of how the project is innovative:** The Cultivate System stands out as an innovative solution by directly incorporating student voice to drive educational improvement. By utilizing biannual student surveys to gather data on student mindsets, strategies, and classroom perceptions, the Cultivate System places student voice at the forefront of educational practice. These surveys allow students to share their lived experiences, giving teachers critical insights into the effectiveness of their instructional methods and classroom environments. This student feedback is then used to create customized reports that highlight prioritized areas for improvement, enabling teachers to make informed adjustments to better support their students' learning and development.

The integration of ongoing coaching and professional development further enhances teachers' ability to respond to real-time student feedback, making the system highly adaptive and impactful. Additionally, by targeting schools significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cultivate System not only addresses current educational disruptions but also builds long-term capacity for fostering equitable and inclusive learning environments. By prioritizing student voice, the Cultivate System ensures that educational strategies are responsive and relevant, ultimately leading to more meaningful and sustained improvements in student outcomes.

**Other studies related to the proposed project:**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Proposed implementation sites:** Schools across TFA's 32 regions

**Organizations partnering with this project:** The UChicago Consortium, AIR