

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

**Applicant Name:** TNTP, Inc.

**Project Title:** Empathic Instruction: Strengthening student-teacher relationships to increase attendance and reduce disciplinary action

**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:** 50,000

**Grade level(s) to be served by the project:** 6th, 7th, and 8th grades

**Definition of high-need students:** Black and Latinx students, students with disabilities, and students with prior suspensions, all of whom are either disproportionately suspended or have high amounts of chronic absenteeism nationally and/or in Virginia where the project will take place.

**Brief description of project activities:** TNTP will implement, scale, and evaluate Empathic Instruction, an easy-to-implement and scale, research-based intervention for teachers that has been shown to lead to lower and more equitable suspension rates (██████████, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016; ██████████ et al., 2022). This innovative professional development involves two 40-50 minute online exercises per year, focusing on fostering teacher empathy, perspective-taking, and growth mindsets. Supported by a randomized controlled trial, Empathic Instruction has demonstrated positive student outcomes, particularly in reducing racial disparities and overall discipline rates (██████████ Paunesku, & Walton, 2016; ██████████ & Ruiz, 2020; ██████████ et al., 2022).

**Summary of project objectives and expected outcomes:** This project aims to lower suspension rates, improve student-teacher relationships, cultivate in students a stronger sense of belonging and more trust in adults in the school, increase attendance rates, and improve academic outcomes, particularly for Black and Latinx students, students with disabilities, and students with prior suspensions.

**Summary of how the project is innovative:** Empathic Instruction is innovative because it diverges from anti-bias approaches by aiming to sideline biases in teachers' decision-making processes, rather than directly combating biases.

**Other studies related to the proposed project:** ██████████ et al., 2022; ██████████, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016

**Proposed implementation sites:** This project will serve up to 75 middle schools in Virginia. We have secured a state-level letter of support from the Virginia Department of Education, which serves approximately 350 middle schools.

**Organizations partnering with this project:** WestEd, our independent evaluator, will conduct a randomized control trial. Mindset Science Solutions will provide the Empathic Instruction intervention content.