

**U.S. Department of Education - EDCAPS
G5-Technical Review Form (New)**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/18/2019 10:54 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Pasadena Unified School District (U411C190282)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	15
Sub Total	20	15
Total	20	15

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - EIR Early Phase Tier 2 - 1: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Pasadena Unified School District (U411C190282)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice).

(2) The extent to which the evaluation will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings.

(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.

(4) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

Strengths:

The proposed external evaluator for the project has expertise and experience (Appendix B) to be able to conduct an evaluation for a project of this scope and magnitude. Also, the dedicated resources in the proposed budget (budget narrative) would be sufficient to complete the proposed evaluation tasks.

The proposed propensity score matching design (p. 19-21) for the impact study with students and teachers matched at baseline utilizing detailed measures of outcomes could produce evidence of the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations. In addition, the proposed evaluation also includes an inclusion of appropriate estimates of minimum detectable effect sizes for measured effects (p. 21) to provide magnitude and statistical significance of study-reported estimates of the effectiveness of the project intervention. The stated intention to use three-level hierarchical linear modeling, difference-in-difference approach, and grounded theory (p. 24-26 and Appendix L) are appropriate for this design to produce evidence about the project's effectiveness.

The proposed evaluation (p. 22-23) includes a detailed stated intention to disseminate the results of the evaluation through extensive publications and presentations that could provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings.

The narrative includes a detailed Logic Model that includes inputs/activities, outputs, and short-term, medium-term, and long-term outcomes clearly articulating the key project components and mediators (p. 26).

The proposed data measures outlined in the narrative (p. 23-34) could provide valid and reliable performance data on the key performance measures relevant to the stated goals of the project (e.g., Authoritative School Climate Survey, Resilience and Youth Development Module, and Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation Checklist) through utilization of instruments that have demonstrated reliability and validity with diverse populations.

Weaknesses:

The narrative states that a cost-benefit analysis will be included in the evaluation, but no details are provided on how this would be conducted. Thus, no determination can be made as to the extent to which this portion of the evaluation would provide additional guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings.

The pilot study proposed to have been the basis for this experimental design (Appendix M) simply provides data points of grades, behavior referrals, and attendance pre- and post-measures. No details or clarification are provided as to how this pilot study was conducted as a model for the proposed Phase-I implementation pilot program or how it is relevant to the proposed study. This would allow for a better assessment of the extent to which the proposed methods of evaluation would produce evidence about the project's effectiveness.

Measurable thresholds for acceptable implementation are provided for project outcomes (p. 3, p. 10-11); however, there is no justification given as to the appropriateness of the targets given or that they were not simply arbitrarily designated.

The application would be strengthened with more information about how the data for the implementation study (which is stated to be based on surveys, focus groups, interviews, and observations on p. 13) will be collected. In the evaluation narrative discussion of the Phase-I implementation pilot program, there is mention of those things but no details are provided, making it difficult to assess the extent to which the data produced would be valid and reliable. For example, details regarding how observation protocols would be established for classroom observations would strengthen the application.

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Pasadena Unified School District (U411C190282)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	14
Sub Total	20	14
Total	20	14

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - EIR Early Phase Tier 2 - 1: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Pasadena Unified School District (U411C190282)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the evaluation to be conducted of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the evaluation, the Secretary considers the following factors:

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards with or without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in this notice).

(2) The extent to which the evaluation will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings.

(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.

(4) The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

Strengths:

Project YEES proposes a quasi-experimental design using propensity score matching to examine student outcomes (p. 25; Appendix D). The application defines the variables to be utilized, the Hierarchical Linear Model ("HLM") equations (Appendix L), and discusses how both attrition and baseline equivalence will be handled under a variety of difference scenarios (pp. 20, 24-25) which is a strength of this proposal since, if well implemented, will likely meet WWC criteria for meeting standards with reservations. The proposal describes (p. 14) a process of twice monthly meetings and formative memos to provide formative evaluation feedback to project staff which will likely allow for assessing interim progress as well as provide opportunities to make mid-course modifications. The project also proposes to create "four accompanying videos" (p.22) that will help document the developed Response to Intervention/Restorative Practices/Social Emotional Learning ("Rtl/RP/SEL") model and provide an interesting dissemination vehicle for sharing learning from the project and will likely assist in replication of the project in other settings which is a strength of the proposal.

Another strength of the proposal is the elucidation of the various evaluation instruments (pp. 9, 23) the project will use along with the associated psychometrics of them which provides confidence the project will be able to collect valid and reliable data.

The proposal includes a logic model and theory of action (pp. 10-11, Appendix G) which will likely help frame the evaluation. Finally, the project intends to hire an external evaluator (Strategic Partner Schools Group) with an appropriate mix of evaluation expertise (e.g., methodological, content, experience) which will contribute external objectivity and will likely provide confidence for the evaluation work as well as any potential findings to project stakeholders (p. 16).

Weaknesses:

The application articulates several quantitative outcomes as part of its intended goals (p. 10) such as "maintain 100% from the Tiered Fidelity Inventory ("TFI") Assessment for Tier 1 interventions", and "increase the TFI Assessment for Tier 3 interventions by 125% (40% to 90%)", but fails to explain how the target numbers were derived. For instance, without

some additional baseline information about current or previous rates or background knowledge, it is difficult to determine how reasonable they might be, and the values appear arbitrary. It is unclear how these thresholds are necessary for acceptable implementation.

While the application includes a logic model (Appendix G), the application could be strengthened by refining it to show more specifically the hypothesized linkages between individual program activities, outputs, and program outcomes, rather than one bulleted block list of each, and how the evaluation design will test these causal hypotheses. This would be especially helpful for potential replication or testing in other settings.

The application would also be improved if it contained an evaluation plan which included more details about the data collection strands and methodologies. For example, the application mentions “surveys, focus groups, interviews, and observations” (p. 13), but provides few details as to what quantitative or qualitative methods will be used to analyze them. It is not clear how many of each of these will be conducted or their duration. For the on-site observations, the proposal would be strengthened by including a discussion of how the validity and reliability, including interrater reliability, of the protocol(s) will be established and what the unit of analysis (e.g., classroom or school) of the on-site observations will be. For focus groups (p.13), a discussion of how large they will be, how members will be selected or sampled, and how long they will be, would improve the proposal. The proposal would also be strengthened if powered to increase the minimum effect size for classroom practice and non-cognitive impacts (p. 21) which is necessary for determining the validity and reliability of project outcomes.

It would also be helpful if the program evaluation budget narrative section (Budget Narrative) was tied to specific evaluation activities (hypothetically for instance, x hours or y% of the research associate’s time for analyzing student outcomes or conducting focus groups) in order to allow for the determination of the adequacy of the evaluation resources.

The proposal would also be strengthened by including a more detailed methodological discussion of the proposed cost/benefit analysis (p.26) and how the various costs and benefits will be monetized for this analysis which is necessary for determining the validity and reliability of this analysis.

Finally, some of the results from the pilot shown in Appendix M appear to show changes in project outcome measures, such as a 118% increase in suspensions and decreases in final grades, that are opposite of what the project would presumably desire. The proposal would be strengthened by discussing and clarifying these results which would be helpful in determining the effectiveness of the project strategies as well as for replication in other settings.

Reader's Score: 14

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