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Duval IDEAS: Inclusion Diversifies Education for All Students

Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) requests \$4,000,000 over 5 years for **Duval IDEAS: *Inclusion Diversifies Education for All Students***. As a large, innovative, urban public school district, DCPS is continually looking for high-impact, sustainable practices that support optimal growth and development for all children. With more than 97% of DCPS students in special education (also known as Exceptional Student Education, or ESE) placed in inclusion classrooms, the district needs an effective model that can be implemented across the district's 216 schools to create equitable classroom spaces where all students can thrive. IDEAS is a collaborative study developed by DCPS and the University of North Florida (UNF) to assess the impact of High Leverage Practices (HLPs), a model of practices developed by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) in partnership with CEEDAR Center at the University of Florida.

Absolute Priority #4: Field-Initiated Interventions with Interconnected Support for Student Academic, Social, and Emotional Needs – Through **Duval IDEAS**, DCPS and UNF empirically evaluate High-Leverage Practices (HLPs) as a strategy to support students with disabilities placed in inclusion classrooms. HLPs are a set of 22 practices developed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities and are organized around four aspects: 1) Collaboration, 2) Assessment, 3) Behavioral, and 4) Instruction. The model organically integrates practices that support student academic, social, and emotional development in tandem. The **Duval IDEAS** will include three cohorts of classrooms scattered throughout the district's 97 elementary schools. Using an experimental design, the IDEAS project team will generate a body of evidence documenting the impact of HLPs on academic and behavioral outcomes in inclusion classrooms. The data collection and evaluation plan for this study includes academic outcomes and measures that capture behavioral outcomes and school climate.



Section A. Significance: *Promising New Strategies* Effective strategies for supporting optimal

academic and behavior outcomes for students with disabilities (SWD) are a critical issue for PK-12 school districts. Collectively, U.S. public school districts enroll nearly 8 million SWDs, which is roughly 15% of the total PK-12 student population. According to the Pew Research Center, Florida falls into the average range (see Figure 1), with statewide growth of 15% since the 2000-2001 school year. While substantial national progress has been made in standards for educating children with disabilities, much more research is needed to balance recommended best practices that support student growth, with equitable learning spaces, and district resources.

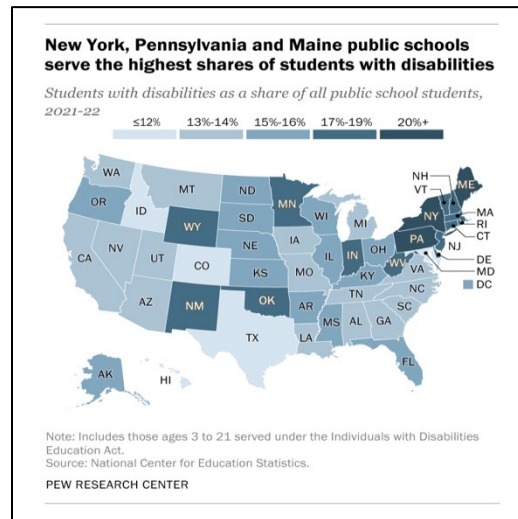


Figure 1. Distribution of students with disabilities by state.

Prior to the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) in 1975,¹ U.S. policy toward educating SWD was primarily exclusionary. For example, as of 1970, U.S. schools only enrolled one in five children with disabilities. Many states had laws in place that formally excluded children who were deaf, blind, emotionally disturbed, or had an intellectual disability. In states where they were welcomed into the public school system, the common practice was to provide their education in a separate environment, including special classrooms and even busing children to different schools. EHA ushered in a new era in education of SWD and solidified the concept of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), where SWD receive education alongside their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent possible.² In the nearly fifty years since passage of

¹ Later renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990

² Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) §§300.114 through 300.117



EHA, the population of SWD in U.S. schools has quadrupled. Their subsequent substantial growth in high school graduation and college matriculation rates has helped shift perspectives on best practices for educating SWD (U.S. Department of Education, 2023).

Inclusion classrooms designed to accommodate a broad cross-section of students now represent the most common placement for SWD. According to the U.S. Department of Education, in the 2020-2021 school year, two-thirds of children with disabilities spent 80% or more of their school day in a traditional classroom. Still this approach has not entirely replaced separate educational models (U.S. Department of Education, 2023). Nationwide, 1.5 million children with disabilities attend school in self-contained units, requiring a lower staff-to-student ratio along with teachers who have specialized certifications and training. With the remaining 6 million children with disabilities spending the majority of their school day in an inclusion/mainstream classroom, school districts need recommended practices and available resources to ensure their classroom teachers and school teams are prepared to appropriately support them appropriately.

While the least restrictive environment approach has been heralded as the recommended practice for decades, it was established based on anecdotal data and the prevailing assumption that inclusion spaces would reduce bias and holistically benefit both disabled and typically developing students. Placement data for SWD from 1990 through 2007 show a substantial shift from more restrictive to less restrictive environments, with the greatest shift occurring at the secondary level (McClesky, 2012). Inclusion must be done right and responsibly to work (Vaughn and Schum 1995) and placement decisions should balance location with instructional quality and student academic outcomes (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Kauffman, 1993; and McClesky, 2007). Studies show that inappropriate learning environments can lead to poor outcomes for SWD, and inclusion may not always be applied effectively or be the best option for all students. Recently, education policy



researchers have attempted to evaluate the true impact and value of inclusion spaces. So far, the data is mixed, with policy researchers posing methodological questions about the body of evidence demonstrating clear benefits associated with inclusion. The Special Education Elementary Longitudinal Study, which evaluated children in inclusion settings at least 75% of the school day from 2000-2006, determined that when compared to peers who spent less than 25% of their school day in an inclusion setting, they had significantly higher reading and math test scores (Wagner et al 2005). A later study found that while much of the available research has identified a relationship between SWD in general education settings and reading and math improvement, overall results of academic outcomes are mixed (Barrett et al. 2019).

Despite the mixed evidence on near-term academic outcomes, there is promising evidence that inclusion positively impacts on holistic development and long-term outcomes. Post-high school outcomes have been documented repeatedly in studies of SWD and present strong evidence of inclusion as the recommended approach. A study by Theobald and colleagues using longitudinal data from Washington State found that SWD who spent more time in traditional classrooms had higher on-time graduation rates, were more likely to enroll in college, and had better employment outcomes (Theobald et al 2019). Additionally, the national longitudinal transition study found that students educated in primarily mainstream classrooms had better workforce outcomes following graduation (Blackorby and Wagner, 1996). Dr. Laura Schifter, a Harvard University lecturer on education policy and special education, reached similar findings in her 2011 study (Schifter, 2011).

Critics of the literature comparing inclusion to self-contained units have cited key methodological flaws in the research, including pervasive selection bias (Gilmour, 2018). Children with higher academic abilities and fewer behavioral problems are more likely to be placed into inclusion classrooms. This trend is compounded by systemic inequities in the educational system



that negatively impact low-income and minority children. According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD), Black and brown children are more likely to be identified as special education, and are then more likely to receive harsher discipline and be placed into a more restrictive environment (NCLD, 2020; Morgan et al 2022). A 2022 meta-analysis of the research supporting inclusion by the Campbell Collaborative found mixed results. The research team began with 2,000 studies, but ultimately removed 99% of them due to design concerns. They found that nearly all the research supporting inclusion was based on qualitative studies describing the personal experiences of SWD and their non-disabled peers, with no comparison of academic outcomes. Implementing studies with an experimental design to compare inclusion and self-contained settings is nearly impossible, as children cannot be randomly assigned to these educational environments. They should be placed in the best space for their needs, which usually results in children with milder disabilities placed in inclusion settings and those with more severe disabilities in self-contained units. Recent research has identified significant variability in determining what the LRE is for a student, and compounding factors may lead a student to be placed unfairly in self-contained settings if the general education teacher has trouble supporting positive behavior or learning outcomes (Morgan et al. 2022).

The critical shortage of qualified special education classroom teachers has further complicated the inclusion debate. Nationwide, school districts are comparing the challenges of hiring and retaining special education teachers to the same obstacles they face with secondary foreign language and physics teachers. While this crisis gained national attention during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been a longstanding problem for school districts. In the 2020-2021 school year, 40% of school districts nationwide reported a shortage of special education teachers. While this was slightly lower than the percent struggling to hire foreign language (43%) and just



above those struggling to find physics teachers (37%), the shortage of special education teachers raised alarms because of its broader impact, cutting across all grade levels and subjects. By the end of the 2022 school year, the rate of districts reporting a shortage of special education teachers had grown to 45% (IED, 2022). Both nationwide, and in Florida, special education teachers have been identified as the instructional position that is **the most** in need of certified staff (IES, 2022). In Florida, special education was the top certification area taught by teachers without the required certification, with nearly 9,000 teachers out of field and 1,480 vacancies (FLDOE 2022).

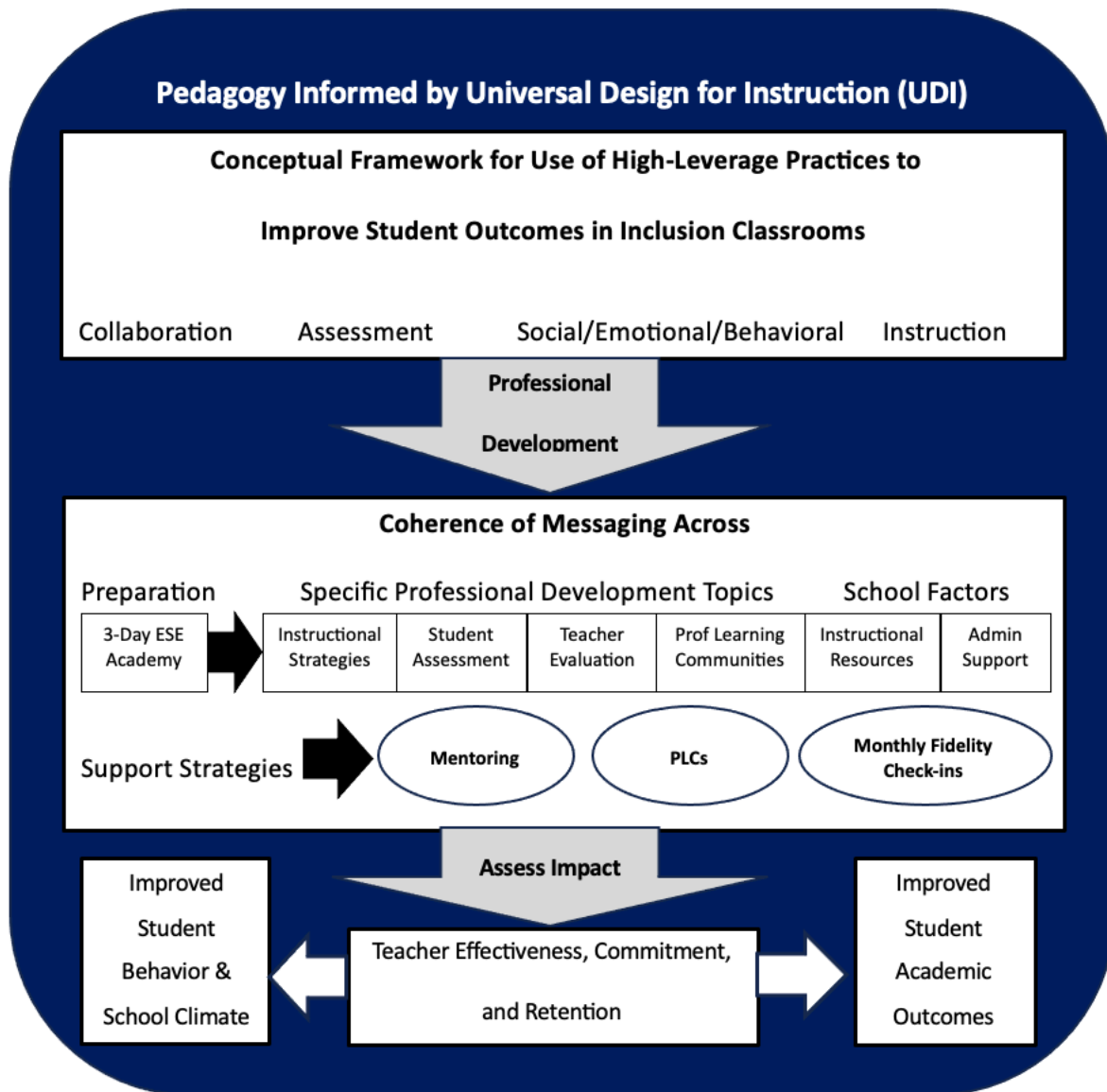
The continually shrinking pool of new classroom teachers is only expected to exacerbate the challenge of staffing self-contained classrooms. According to researchers from Brown University and the University of Albany, interest in the teaching profession among high school seniors has fallen 50% since the 1990's; job satisfaction of classroom teachers is at a 50-year low and new teachers entering the profession has fallen by one-third since 2013 (Ingram, 2023).

Duval IDEAS will help address this critical problem by evaluating High-Leverage Practices, an intervention model that empowers teachers to organically differentiate their classroom spaces to support academic, social, and behavioral development for both SWD and their non-disabled peers (Cartagena, 2020). This study will contribute to the body of research related to the LRE debate and address systemic issues contributing to teacher turnover and declining job satisfaction.

Section B. Quality of the Project Design *1. Conceptual Framework.* **Duval IDEAS** will explore the impact of High-Leverage Practices (HLPs) as a framework to improve academic and behavioral outcomes of SWD in inclusion classrooms. Our team will provide participating teachers with targeted professional development in the four HLP pillars: Collaboration, Assessment, Behavioral, and Instruction. After completion of a three-day Academy, classroom teachers will



implement the HLP model over the course of one academic year. Because the HLP framework embraces a whole-child developmental approach, with strategies to support academic achievement in tandem with behavioral outcomes, impact data measures will include student achievement in ELA and mathematics alongside changes in discipline issues and other school climate indicators.



HLP was developed as a strategic framework for special education teachers to use in self-contained classrooms; however, since its publication, it has become recognized as a possible approach for mainstream classroom teachers to support SWD in an inclusion space. **Duval IDEAS**



will utilize this application of HLPs. To support implementation of HLPs in this context, classroom spaces will be shaped by Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, which is a framework for improving and optimizing teaching and learning for all humans. The conceptual framework for Duval IDEAS is an adaptation of the HLP conceptual framework for ESE teacher induction programs published by Billingsly et al. Figure 2 on the following page depicts our conceptual framework for Duval IDEAS, which

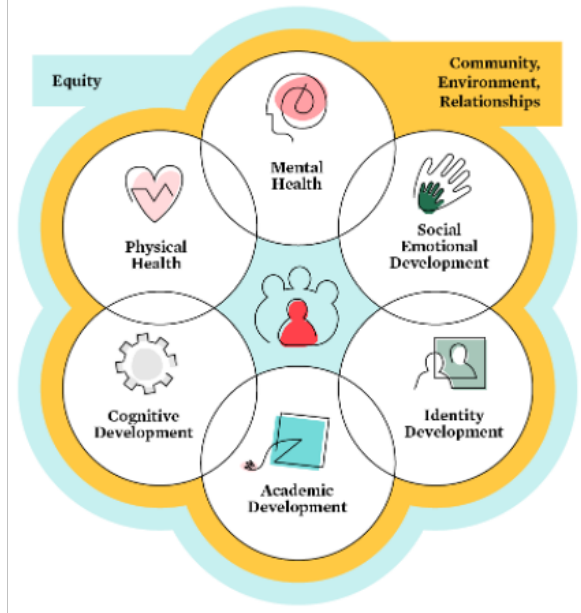


Figure 3. Chan Zuckerberg Initiative
Whole Child Development Model

synthesizes the core components of the HLP model with their associated professional development topics and contributing school-level factors. The entire model is framed by Universal Design for Instruction (UDI), which embraces instructional strategies and practices that naturally support all learners, reducing the number and complexity of accommodations.

Theoretical Foundation: HLPs take a whole-child approach to instruction grounded in the fundamentals of teaching. Given the interconnected nature of academic and social-emotional development, this whole-child approach is critical in creating classroom spaces where all children can thrive. This approach fosters classrooms that leverage an asset-based approach to embrace equity and support multi-faceted growth and development for all children.

Description of Foundational Components: The HLP model for special education includes 22 unique practices organized into four groupings. Refer to Appendix for a chart from Billingsly et al for categories and their associated HLPs.



Structure of the Professional Development: Each cohort of teachers (120 per year) will participate in a 3-day training (ESE Academy) during pre-planning days before the start of the school year. During this program, teachers will receive the following instruction:

Day 1: Foundations of ESE; IEPs 101; 4 Pillars of Universal Instruction

Day 2: Collaborative Planning and Teaching; Differentiated Grading and Assessment

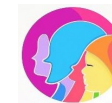
Day 3: Behavior and Instructional Strategies to Support the Needs of All Students

These competencies will be critical for effective implementation of HLPs, details in Appendix J.

Ongoing Support: In addition to the ESE Academy, each cohort of teachers will commit to meeting with a mentor and participating in monthly asynchronous check-ins. Mentors will provide peer-to-peer feedback and support for implementation of HLPs. Teachers will also complete a monthly self-assessment that will be discussed with their mentor teacher.

Fidelity Monitoring: The self-assessment checklists will serve as a formative fidelity monitoring tool. Additionally, teachers will also have a classroom observation and receive constructive feedback on their implementation of HLPs. Lesson plans and other documents will serve as a cross-check for correct implementation of HLPs.

Study theory of action: The assumptions behind the collective training activities of Duval IDEAS are that knowledge and effective use of HLP strategies will improve teachers' success at engaging the differential learning and behavior needs of SWD, ultimately improving their academic and behavioral outcomes. We expect to see an increase in teacher efficacy and student motivation that mediates these outcomes. As a result of this success in the classroom, inclusion will be determined as the appropriate LRE for more students, and teachers will be more likely to remain teaching in inclusion classrooms long-term. A detailed project logic model is included in the Appendix.


Table 1. Goal 1: Increase behavioral and academic outcomes of high-need ESE students.

Obj. 1.1 Implement high-leverage practices in General Education classrooms to improve ESE students' behavior and discipline.

Intended Outcomes: Improved student social behavior, Reduced disciplinary referrals, and Reduced suspensions.

Obj. 1.2 Embed high-leverage practices into lesson plans to increase ESE students' academic motivation and performance.

Intended Outcomes: Increased student motivation, Increased proficiency in ELA, and Increased proficiency in Math

Goal 2: Increase teacher knowledge, efficacy, practice, and retention.

Obj. 2.1 Develop teacher mastery for implementing HLPs with ESE students in General Education classrooms

Intended Outcomes: Increased teacher knowledge/use of HLPs, Increased teacher efficacy for implementing inclusive practices, and Increased rates of ESE students remaining in inclusive classrooms.

Obj. 2.2 Support teacher effectiveness and retention through provision of Professional Learning to implement HLPs.

Intended Outcomes: Improved teacher perceptions of PD, Increased instructional practice effectiveness, Increased teacher retention

Goal 3: Refine a replicable, sustainable model for teacher professional learning in implementing HLPs with GE ESE students.

Obj. 3.1 Implement IDEAS with fidelity to maximize student impacts.

Intended Outcomes: High-fidelity implementation

Obj. 3.2 Sustain, expand, and build toward systemic impacts.

Intended Outcomes: Improved discipline, Increase in children performing on grade-level in ELA and Math



3. Project Will Address Needs of the Target Population. Duval IDEAS will improve academic and behavioral outcomes for all elementary children, but particularly for SWD placed in inclusion classrooms. While the district's goal is to place each SWD child in the LRE for their disability, significant behavioral problems or academic underperformance will result in a child being moved into a more restrictive environment. The Florida Department of Education Bureau of Exceptional Student Education sets annual targets for key student indicators. One of those annual targets is the percentage of SWD served in separate schools or residential facilities. Currently, Duval is short of its target due to its higher-than-average percent in self-contained placements (FLDOE, 2022).

The district strategically selected elementary schools for this project to proactively address some of the larger, systemic problems facing the district in terms of student academic achievement and discipline. The district is currently not meeting 6 of the 14 ESE indicators. In addition to a higher percentage of children in self-contained classrooms, DCPS is struggling with measures related to preschool environments, preschool outcomes, parent involvement, child find, and post-school outcomes. The preschool and child find indicators are particularly concerning for elementary school indicators. Elementary age ESE children are already more likely to be placed into a more restrictive environment (NCLD, 2020). Based upon DCPS data, preschool ESE children are positioned to enter Kindergarten with significant behavioral and academic gaps. The districts preschool ESE children are failing to meet established state standards for academic, social, and emotional growth; failing to acquire and use knowledge and skills; and failing to demonstrate age-appropriate behaviors (FLDOE, 2022). These achievement and outcome gaps mean that many of Duval's youngest ESE children are entering elementary school lacking the necessary social, behavioral, and cognitive skills to be successful in a traditional inclusion classroom.



These challenges are exacerbated by classroom teachers who lack traditional preparation to support ESE students. While the district does have more than 1,000 teachers., it is less common for elementary teachers to have ESE certification, particularly in grades K-2. Additionally, across all grade bands, ESE students are underperforming on state ELA support whole children development and respond to student behavioral problems and academic achievement gaps.

C. Quality of Project Personnel The *Duval IDEAS* project team includes a partnership of DCPS and UNF educators and researchers. Key personnel include the DCPS Project Director and Co-Investigator, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (DCPS); along with UNF Co-Investigators [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. This team has collectively designed the *Duval IDEAS* PD content and will continue to work in collaboration throughout the scope of the project. CVs are in Appx B, and qualifications follow:

Project Director/Co-Investigator—DCPS: The DCPS project will be headed by [REDACTED] [REDACTED] currently serves as a lead professional learning instructor in Duval County schools targeting both general and ESE teachers and is certificated in ESE, reading, and autism spectrum disorders. Responsibilities: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] will oversee the primary training and coordination activities.

Co-Investigators – University of North Florida: The UNF project research team includes four additional Co-Investigators who bring expertise in disabilities/ESE education, inclusion, curriculum design, and professional learning and instruction. They will collaborate on the project design, implementation, evaluation strategies, and dissemination efforts. Responsibilities: Duties of the Co-Investigators include assisting with the development of the overall design and implementation of the project: 1) adjustment of training materials and development of any additional instructional or evaluation tools required for the study; 2) participation in project meetings, consultation with evaluators on analysis and research findings; 3) leading the



development of the dissemination plan, including participation in the writing and submission of findings; 4) managing the IRB process. Expertise: [REDACTED] is a former K-12 educator with a Ph.D. in Special Education who has specializations in math, instructional model design, and program evaluation for students and adult learners. [REDACTED] is also a former teacher with expertise in special education inclusion, research methods, with a focus on reading. [REDACTED] has operated federal grants funded by the U.S. Department of Special Education Programs. [REDACTED] is a former ESE specialist and teacher with experience in inclusion, qualitative research, and curriculum design. [REDACTED] is a former ESE/special education teacher and current postdoctoral fellow who serves as coordinator on a US Dept. of Education Teacher Quality Partnership grant. [REDACTED] also has worked with children with disabilities and educating teachers on best inclusion practices with the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System.

Evaluation team—CIC Planning Group: The third-party evaluator has an extensive background in educational research, is trained in WWC Group Design Standards, and has experience evaluating EIR and other large-scale federal grants, including two current EIR Florida projects. The firm has developed and validated the motivational climate tools that will be used in this study. CIC specializes in evaluating motivational, social-emotional, and academic outcomes, and has worked in North Florida for 30 years. Responsibilities: CIC Planning Group will serve as evaluation team, with [REDACTED] as lead evaluator. CIC will oversee all evaluation duties and will work with Co-Investigators on continuous improvement and dissemination of findings.

Project personnel: Key personnel: Lead ESE Training Specialist, to be hired: DCPS has budgeted for a Lead Specialist to operate as training project lead under the direction of the Project Director. The Lead Specialist will be hired upon receipt of the award; be certificated in ESE Education and knowledgeable in professional learning instructional strategies; have a bachelor's degree (Master's



preferred), and 3-5 years of experience providing PD activities for ESE teachers. **Additional personnel:** DCPS will hire two additional grant-funded Training Specialists (non-key personnel) who will be tasked with implementation of the training, ongoing supports, and data collection. These 1.0 FTE-each Specialists will be hired in year 1 of the project. The grant will also hire a part-time graduate research assistant who will contribute to data collection and analysis.

Encouraging underrepresented groups: DCPS will hire personnel if this project is funded. We promote diversity and equity in the recruitment and hiring of members of underrepresented groups through various strategies. First, the district Office of Equity and Inclusion works with the DCPS Human Resources division to ensure diversity in hiring practices. Additionally, DCPS and UNF have aligned with other community partners on the “1,000 by 2025 Initiative,” which has a goal of recruiting 1,000 minority educators to the district within the next two years. Finally, DCPS is a grantee of the USED’s School Based Mental Health program, and aligned work includes financial incentives for mental health personnel, coupled with recruiting diverse individuals to these roles.

D. Quality of Management Plan DCPS has convened a highly qualified team to ensure effective management of project outcomes. The *Duval IDEAS* partnership includes accomplished academics in the fields of ESE, professional learning, and aligned research methods. The project team will consist of a DCPS lead Co-Investigator, 4 Co-Investigators from UNF, 1 Lead Training Specialist and 2 Supporting Specialist from DCPS, and an Evaluator. The grant will support administrative activities and a part-time graduate assistant and fiscal personnel to assist with grant management.

Implementation partner management responsibilities—DCPS: DCPS will serve as the fiscal agent and lead grantee of *Duval IDEAS*, with the responsibility of managing grant requirements and the training plan. The oversight, management, and coordination of this project will fall to Project Director/Co-Investigator ([REDACTED]) who will lead grant administration. She will be



supported by a Lead Specialist who will coordinate the training activities under the Project Director. Two additional Specialists will support training and coaching efforts with teachers.

DCPS has the fiscal capacity to lead *Duval IDEAS*; we will employ routine cost-control mechanisms and have a history of successfully managing large federal- and state-funded projects. The district is currently a grantee for 4 USED grants totaling more than \$30 million. DCPS also operates active awards from the USDA, US Department of Justice, Department of Defense, and Department of Health and Human Services. Fiscal management for this project will be monitored by the Project Director using SAP software to track segregated funds, with support from finance department personnel in Budget, Accounting, and Grants (supported through indirect costs).

Supporting partner responsibilities—UNF: The role of UNF will be to provide expertise towards training and evaluation activities and to manage the IRB process and dissemination plan. DCPS and UNF have a long history of co-operating special projects together. The UNF Co-Investigator team has experience providing PD to DCPS educators in DCPS schools. Additionally, many students who graduate from the UNF education program go on to teach in Duval schools. The UNF team will advise in the management of the program through continuous improvement.

Evaluation partner responsibilities—CIC: The evaluation partner has a history of overseeing DCPS projects that adhere to WWC standards, and has the primary responsibility of managing the evaluation plan, including leading meetings with EIR technical assistance. If funded, DCPS requests to execute a sole-source contract with CIC Planning Group, an evaluation firm with expertise in research methods, program evaluation for educational contexts, educational psychology, and needs assessments. CIC is familiar with the Northeast Florida region and Duval Schools. DCPS will contract with CIC as a sole source provider because the evaluation model and Motivational Assessment tools, which are instrumental in assessing program outcomes, are



proprietary tools developed by CIC and currently used in other research conducted within the district. The district has completed a sole-source posting on 07/26/2023 with no dissent, and will bring the contract to the School Board for review and approval prior to execution. This procurement plan is in alignment with 2 CFR 200.317-200.326 as well as state and district policy. DCPS requests approval from this Federal entity to engage a sole source contract.

Management plan: DCPS will ensure effective oversight of the project by employing the following management strategies: 1) Weekly meetings with Co-Investigators (and evaluators periodically) that include continuous improvement feedback on training activities management; 2) Quarterly DCPS finance reviews to manage fiscal activities; 3) monthly EIR TA meetings to manage evaluation activities; 4) Administrative support activities from DCPS Budget, Accounting, and Grants departments as needed (funded by indirect).

Table 2. Description	Responsible	Due	1	2	3	4	5
LEGEND: PD=Project Director; I=Co-Investigators; S=Specialists; E=Evaluator; F= Finance							
IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE-- JAN 2024-DEC 2028							
STARTUP ACTIVITIES							
Weekly check-in meetings, EIR TA meetings begin, startup activities	PD, I, E, F, S	February	x				
Contracts completed, staff hired; Training & recruitment plans develop	PD, I, F, S, E	April	x				
Training materials, eval plan finalized	PD, I, S, E	June	x				
ONGOING ACTIVITIES							



Table 2. Description	Responsible	Due	1	2	3	4	5
LEGEND: PD=Project Director; I=Co-Investigators; S=Specialists; E=Evaluator; F= Finance							
Annual reporting due	PD, I, E, F	April		x	x	x	x
Post data collection	PD, S, E	May		x	x	x	x
Materials ordered for coming year	PD, S	June-July	x	x	x		
Cohort recruited for the coming year	PD, S	June-July	x	x	x		
Previous year data analysis, reporting	PD, I, E, S	June-Dec		x	x	x	x
Training series begins for the Cohort	PD, S	August	x	x	x		
Baseline data collected for the year	PD, S, E	August	x	x	x	x	
Dissemination plan finalized	PD, I, E	December		x			
Quarterly Finance reviews begin	PD, F	Quarterly	x	x	x	x	x
EVALUATION TIMELINE-- JAN 2024-DEC 2028							
Pilot	E	See detailed eval timeline in Appx J	x	x			
Implementation	E		x	x	x	x	
Annual Impact	E			x	x	x	
Sustained Effects	E				x	x	x
Final Impact Study	E						x



Results of project are to be disseminated in ways to enable use of information and strategies:

The **Duval IDEAS** dissemination plan includes local, regional, and national dissemination of findings. Local/National level: Presentation at conference: The project budget includes funding for up to 8 team members to participate in one conference annually. The **Duval IDEAS** team will apply to present at conferences such as the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), the National and State Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), Teacher Education Division of CEC, and the National Association of Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) conferences. Presentation topics will program design descriptions, implemented best practices, and analysis. National level: Submissions of relevant findings: The final level of dissemination for **Duval IDEAS** will be the writing and submission of papers to peer-reviewed journals, co-authored by the project director, co-investigators, and evaluation team. The schedule/plan for writing and submission will be developed as a collaborative of the co-investigators and evaluation team, led by the project director. The time budgeted to be contracted with Co-Investigators will include a plan for papers and presentations completed for submission to professional outlets.

E. Quality of the Project Evaluation **E1. Meets WWC standards without reservations.** The evaluation employs a cluster RCT designed to meet WWC Standards without Reservations to examine the impact of **Duval IDEAS** on student outcomes, teachers, mediation effects, and implementation fidelity, identifying the factors related to maximum student outcomes. The study addresses two confirmatory research questions that align with the logic model, goals, and objectives. **RQ1:** What is the impact of IDEAS on ESE students' outcomes, including: (a) motivation/engagement in learning, (b) behavior, and (c) academic achievement in ELA and Math? **RQ2:** What is the impact of IDEAS on teacher outcomes, including: (a) self-efficacy for implementing inclusive practices, (b) instructional practice effectiveness, and (c) retention?



The study also addresses four exploratory questions. **RQ3:** Does the intervention increase the likelihood of GE ESE students remaining in an inclusive environment? **RQ4:** To what extent does the intervention impact students without disabilities? Is there a positive or neutral effect? **RQ5:** To what extent do changes in teacher knowledge, use of strategies, and motivation explain (i.e., mediate) the impact of the intervention on student outcomes? **RQ6:** What contextual and implementation factors impact the effectiveness of the intervention?

Random Assignment. The intervention will be implemented across three cohorts of teachers. K-5 teachers will be recruited from a pool of 104 high-need elementary schools. Approximately 240 teachers will be randomly assigned to treatment ($n=120$) or control ($n=120$) conditions within each cohort. All students enrolled in teachers' classrooms will be eligible for inclusion in the study. We expect 20 total students per teacher, and conservatively estimate 10 percent ($n=2$) ESE students per teacher. After randomization, we estimate an analytic sample of 360 teachers and 720 ESE students (7,200 total students) per condition, from across 50 schools.

Overall and differential attrition will be assessed as a percentage of randomized teachers and students with missing outcome data (overall and within each condition). If attrition exceeds WWC limits, we will examine **baseline equivalence** (BE) of the analytic sample to test for balance that meets WWC's threshold (Hedges' $g < 0.25$; WWC, 2022), applying covariate adjustments as needed (i.e., $.05 \leq g \leq .25$) in accordance with WWC recommendations. BE will be tested using a model with the same structural components as the impact model described below, but where the pretest is the dependent variable and covariates are omitted. In this approach, the treatment coefficient will be the standardized treatment-control difference at baseline. If needed, matching will be conducted using WWC approaches (Litwok et al., 2017), which will enable the study to meet WWC standards with reservations.



Power analyses were conducted using PowerUp! (Dong & Maynard, 2013) with the following parameters: 50 Level 3 clusters (schools); 14 Level 2 clusters (teachers) per school per condition; 2 Level 1 units (ESE students) per teacher; power = .80, $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed); intraclass correlations (estimated using outcomes from a similar intervention in DCPS) at Level 2 = .03 and $ICC_3 = .18$; covariates (demographics, baseline achievement) accounting for 60 percent of variance at Levels 1 and 2 and 70 percent of variance at Level 3. This yielded a minimum detectable effect (MDE) of 0.13 for ESE student outcomes (RQ1; 3-level cluster RCT). For teacher outcomes (RQ2; 2-level RCT), $ICC = .30$ (based on prior years' observation scores), $R_1^2 = .20$, $R_2^2 = .85$, and all other assumptions the same, power analyses yielded an MDE of .24.

Impact Analyses. Impacts will be estimated using multilevel modeling to account for clustering of students within teachers and teachers within schools (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). In addition to controlling for baseline measures of the outcome in each model, **covariates** will include student demographics presumed to be related to outcomes (e.g., race, lunch status, gender), grade level, and teacher experience. Predictors and outcomes will be standardized using the pooled (weighted) standard deviation prior to analysis. Impacts will be estimated in Stata 18.0 using *xtmixed* with a maximum likelihood estimator. **RQ1** will be tested using a three-level model (students nested within teachers within schools), comparing the motivation, behavior, and achievement outcomes of ESE students in the treatment group with ESE students in the control group. **RQ2** will be tested using a two-level model, with teachers nested within schools, to examine the efficacy, practice, and retention of treatment teachers compared with control teachers. **Full model specifications** for RQs 1 and 2 are included in Appendix J.

Exploratory Analyses. **RQ3** will be tested using the three-level model described in RQ1, but where the outcome is a binary indicator of whether or not the student remained in an inclusive classroom.



RQ4 will also be tested using a model identical to RQ1, but where treatment effects are compared for students without disabilities in the treatment and control groups. **RQ5** will be tested using mediation analyses to determine if teacher knowledge, strategy use, and motivation explain significant variance in predicting student outcomes. **RQ6** will be examined through moderation analyses which will test the interaction effects of contextual factors (e.g., students' primary exceptionality, teacher certification, school Title I status) and implementation fidelity (measured as described in the implementation study; see E3) in predicting student and teacher outcomes.

Measures. Measures of all outcomes aligned with the primary impact analyses (RQ1-2) meet WWC validity standards (WWC, 2022); measures and WWC outcome domains are detailed in Appendix J. **Student motivation** (RQ1a) will be measured using the 20-item Student Motivational Climate Assessment (sMCA; $\alpha=.88$; Wright, 2019), which assesses students' efficacy and engagement in learning. **Student behavior** (RQ1b) will be measured using the School Social Behavior Scale (SSBS-2; Merrell, 1993). The 64-item scale ($\alpha=.98$) is completed by teachers, who rate their students' interpersonal and intrapersonal behaviors on a 5-point Likert-type scale. District data (i.e., number of referrals and number of suspensions) will also provide objective measures of behavior (discipline). **ELA and Math achievement** (RQ1c) will be measured using standardized State Progress Monitoring. These will be collected for treatment and control students three times per year, with fall and spring of each treatment school year used in impact analyses.

Teacher efficacy (RQ2a) will be measured using the 18-item Teacher Efficacy for Inclusive Practices (TEIP; $\alpha=.89$; Sharma, Loreman, & Forlin, 2012), which assesses efficacy for inclusive instruction, collaboration, and managing behavior. Surveys will be collected from treatment and control groups pre- and post-intervention. **Instructional Practice** (RQ2b) will be measured using DCPS' classroom observation tool, which is aligned with Danielson's framework for teaching.



Retention (RQ2c) will be collected annually using district HR data.

The extent to which ESE students **remain in an inclusive classroom** (RQ3) will be measured using district records. This will be collected both as a binary (i.e., 1=remained in inclusive class; 0=moved to self-contained) and as a continuous (number of years in inclusive setting) measure. A checklist (including social, behavioral, and academic factors) will be developed in Year 1 to understand the reasons behind decisions to move students to self-contained classrooms. Checklists will be analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, and refined over the course of the project, yielding a decision-making tool for educators throughout the district. Outcomes for **non-ESE students** (RQ4) will be measured using the same methods as RQ1. **Knowledge and use of strategies** (RQ5) will be measured using teacher self-ratings of the extent to which they use and perceive their own mastery in HLPs. This tool will be developed in Year 1 with a rubric aligned with DCPS' instructional practice observation system. **Teacher Motivation** (RQ5) will be measured using the 27-item Motivational Aspects of Professional Development survey ($\alpha = .94$; Wright, 2021; adapted from Pritchard, 2011), which assesses teachers' perceptions of the quality and relevance of PD, feedback, coaching, leadership support. Measures of **implementation** factors (RQ6) are discussed in E3.

E2. Performance Feedback and Assessment of Progress. Feedback and continuous improvement are integrated into the evaluation design. The ongoing nature of data collection and reporting is designed to provide feedback on (a) implementation fidelity, (b) progress toward goals, and (c) sustainability (see full Evaluation Management Plan in Appendix J). Program processes will be examined continually for **implementation fidelity**, allowing for identification of context-specific challenges in need of adaptation (Meyers & Brandt, 2015). Fidelity data will be used for collaborative problem-solving and to improve program implementation, thereby maximizing



impact on student outcomes (Kershner et al., 2014). **Table 3. Evaluation Reporting Timeline**

	Y1-2024				Y2-2025				Y3-2026				Y4-2027				Y5-2028			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Intervention																				
Implementation																				
Program Processes	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X		X							
Formative Fidelity Report			X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X							
Fidelity Study Reporting					X				X				X			X				
Teacher & Student Perceptions																				
Formative			X				X				X									
Annual Impact						X			X				X				X			
Student Behavior/Discipline																				
Formative			X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X							
Annual Impact					X				X				X				X			
Teacher Practice & Student Achievement																				
Formative Reporting			X	X			X	X			X	X								
Annual Impact							X					X					X		X	
Sustained/Longitudinal Impacts											X				X					X

Implementation data will be collected consistent with the intervention timeline, with quarterly formative reports and presentations providing a formal feedback structure to supplement ongoing collaboration across project and evaluation teams. Project leaders and co-investigators will meet monthly with evaluators to incorporate the results of fidelity assessments into their work. Guided by principles of developmental evaluation (Patton, 2016), evaluators will, in turn, use project feedback to adapt evaluation plans as needed. Evaluators will prepare ad hoc reports, quarterly summaries that include project outputs in alignment with scheduled deliverables, and support annual reporting to US ED, with alignment to expected project deliverables and outcomes.

An annual study of implementation fidelity (see E3) will provide formal fidelity assessment for each cohort and highlight areas for improvement.



Formative reports of teacher and student outcomes will provide data needed to monitor **progress toward goals and objectives**. Specifically, progress monitoring assessments (administered three times annually) and discipline data (collected quarterly) will provide early evidence of effects on student achievement and behavior. Surveys, focus groups, school leader feedback, and classroom observations collected semi-annually will provide insight into changes in perceptions/practice. Results of annual impact studies, consistent with the student and teacher impact models described above, conducted separately for each cohort, will be reported in years 2-4 to provide interim evidence of effectiveness. Aggregated impacts across cohorts will be summarized and presented to stakeholders annually. Final impacts will be reported in year 5.

Evaluation will also provide feedback regarding **sustainability** by examining effects over time and assessing longitudinal impacts of the program on ESE students. Sustained effects on student achievement, discipline, and teacher practice will be reported in years 3-5. Intermediate outcomes and fidelity measures will be integrated into impact analyses (RQs 5-6) to enable identification of optimal approaches and processes for sustaining and replicating results.

E3. Key Components, Mediators, Outcomes, Threshold for Implementation. A critical aim of the evaluation is to examine key project components for fidelity to sustain the project's work and highlight strategies for successful replication/scaling throughout the district. As such, the evaluation includes a formal study of implementation fidelity. The implementation study is built on the project's Logic Model, which identifies key project components (HLP-based PD; job-embedded support; and classroom implementation) and specifies the mediators (teacher knowledge, use of HLP strategies, and motivation) through which these key components are expected to impact teacher (efficacy, practice, and retention) and student outcomes (motivation, behavior, and achievement). The implementation study will address the extent to which key



components were implemented with fidelity, examine variation across cohorts and contexts, and identify barriers to and facilitators of fidelity. Implementation evaluation utilizes a **mixed methods** design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) to support innovative, adaptive program development (Patton, 2016) and provide context and conceptual clarity in understanding intervention components. **Qualitative** methods include: Focus groups/interviews with participants (transcribed and analyzed using Dedoose); classroom/coaching/PLC observations; content analysis of student placement checklists (for students moved from inclusive to self-contained settings).

Quantitative measures of fidelity include indicators of participation/dosage (how much of the component was delivered to or completed by participants) and mastery. Component 1: Teacher participation in HLP PD (fidelity threshold: 80% of teachers complete 80% of PD); knowledge of HLPs (90% of teachers report proficiency on 70% of HLPs). Component 2: Participation in PLCs (80% of teachers attend 70% of PLCs offered); participation in virtual support (80% of teachers attend 75% of asynchronous sessions). Component 3: Integration of HLPs into teacher-designed lesson plans (80% of HLPs integrated into 80% of teachers' submitted lesson plans); classroom implementation of HLPs (75% of teachers demonstrate mastery of 75% of HLPs in classroom observations). Data sources are in Appendix J.

In Year 1, indicators, thresholds, rating criteria, and methods for aggregation (across indicators, components, and cohorts) will be refined, which may be further revised based on data collected during the pilot year. Implementation will be measured for the entire sample each year of treatment, with data collected quarterly (see E2). Data will be used to determine if the intervention (and each component) was implemented with acceptable levels of fidelity. Fidelity of each component and the percent of indicators implemented with fidelity will be included as moderators in outcome analyses to examine interaction effects of implementation factors (RQ6).