

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/04/2022 04:58 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: President and Fellows of Harvard College (S411B220003)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	15
Sub Total	15	15
Strategy to Scale		
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	35	28
Sub Total	35	28
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	15	13
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	35	0
Sub Total	50	13
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Equity	3	0
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. COVID-19	3	2
Sub Total	6	2
Total	106	58

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - EIR Mid-Phase - 2 - 1: 84.411B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: President and Fellows of Harvard College (S411B220003)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 15

Sub

1. (1) The national significance of the proposed project.

Strengths:

The applicant provides compelling nationwide statistics on the lack of progress in reading for US 9-year-olds, that the gap between lower and higher performing students is larger on comprehension suggesting that many students lack the ability to evaluate and learn from complex informational tests (p. e20). Additionally, poverty is amplifying the negative effects of the pandemic on students' reading performance with a decline in Grade 3 reading comprehension scores from 2019 to 2021 (p. e20). When viewed holistically, these data fully support the potential national significance of the proposed project.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 5

2. (2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.

Strengths:

The applicant has successfully spent the past seven years working to design, improve, evaluate, and scale the MORE intervention (p. e20). Scaffolded scientific literacy skills are broadened and deepened as well as built upon year after year within the program (p. e21). The applicant makes use of multi-year schema-building which promotes transfer to unstudied grade level topics that appear on high stakes, end-of-grade reading tests (p. e23).

The applicant has been successful in improving literacy skills with two RCT studies providing moderate evidence on improving students' reading comprehension in Title I schools (p. e22). Scale up has been successfully implemented from 10 schools to 30 schools to the entire district (114 schools) (p. e23). The scaffolded science literacy implementation was in Title I schools which traditionally have the largest learning gaps. These gaps are now more pronounced because of COVID 19. Data (effect sizes) and published articles are provided to support the comprehension score improvement (p. e22). The applicant provides data to initially support the efficacy of the proposed new strategies

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Strengths:

The applicant has successfully implemented a system-wide model of teacher PD. The PD has proven to be more flexible and interactive for teachers because of the use of asynchronous and synchronous learning that supports the adaptation of MORE. Additionally, the uptake of new ideas is supported through a Summer Leadership Institute to train teachers across levels of the system about MORE. The applicant proposes to expand access to additional principals and other system leaders within the district. Obtaining district resource support will further ensure “buy-in” from the school community supporting sustainability (pp. e24-25). The proposed activities are directly linked to increased knowledge of effective strategies.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Strategy to Scale - Strategy to Scale

1. The Secretary considers the strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 28

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

Strengths:

Four barriers with specific strategies to implementation were provided (p. e26). The applicant has successfully scaled up from 30 elementary schools to 114 elementary schools during the past seven years. With additional funding and through the use of a continuous improvement process, the MORE project seeks to continue to refine and expand teacher tools and expand the modules which directly relates to Barrier 1 – a Crowded literacy ecosystem. Another innovative way to overcome the first barrier is the use of a digital app which allows teachers to ability to include the implementation when time allows for their classroom. Another innovative use of the digital app is during the summer for students giving additional time for personalized instruction. To overcome barrier 2 – Compliance focused teacher PD, teachers will be trained to adapt the facilitation to meet the needs of their students. Barrier 3 – High staff turnover is met with a Summer Leadership Institute and “check and connect” integrated system of communication and Barrier 4 – lack of long-term plan for scale which will be met with a technology – enabled infrastructure (p. e26). These strategies to overcome barriers are research-based and innovative in expanding the program.

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Weaknesses:

The check and connect communication plan is not fully described in the application (p. e28). The applicant proposed to create a system with a dashboard that allows them to share daily information on the MORE implementation. It will enable system leaders to the ability to send personalized communications to principals, teacher leaders, and teachers. Details about the communication plan with information on what might be shared daily and how it might help the applicant overcome previously identified barriers to reaching scale would strengthen the proposal.

Reader's Score: 9

2. (2) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Strengths:

The applicant provided a broad management plan based on project objectives by year with responsible institutions and teams (p. e30). These are strengths of the proposal which increases the likelihood that the project will be completed on time and within budget.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide clearly defined responsibilities for institutions and teams or a detailed timeline for the project with beginning and end dates for each milestone. For example, while the applicant does provide overarching responsibilities for each key institution and team, details of the program implementation, dates of implementation and person responsible is not provided. Providing these data would increase the likelihood of effective implementation of the proposed project.

Reader's Score: 3

3. (3) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.

Strengths:

The personnel are highly qualified. The applicant provides data to support an exemplary track record and capacity to bring projects to scale regionally and nationally, implementing and developing partnerships with school districts as well as education agencies and educational leaders at a regional and national level (p. e30).

Weaknesses:

Information on grants management infrastructure would further support the application.

Reader's Score: 8

4. (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths:

The applicant will create an inclusive integrated communication toolkit that includes infographics, PP presentations, podcasts, and YouTube videos to share project findings to both region and national audiences. Evidence was provided to support dissemination through peer reviewed journals and state and local education briefs (p. e34). An online teacher toolkit will also be created to support further replication by system leaders, principals, coaches, and teachers. Tumblehome e-books will also be available on the website to support school year and summer reading activities. Additionally, in-house expertise at Harvard University, GSE will disseminate findings through the Usable

Sub

Knowledge website and its Education Now series (p. e34).

Weaknesses:

Evidence of publications or other dissemination strategies, for parents and other non-academic people, were not addressed. Including all stakeholders in the dissemination plan would support continuous improvement and likely lend support to further project development and replication.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 13

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.**

Strengths:

The theory of change is based on Coburn's exceptional multidimensional approach which addresses causes for implementation failure through sustained ownership of practices. The three core components clearly align with the four dimensions of scale for schools and systems (p. e35). For example, published results support increased student achievement through thematic science lessons and texts, digital app activities, and formative assessments (p. e36).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted.

Reader's Score: 5

- 2. (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides clear, measurable goals and objectives that align with the related outcomes (p. e37). Objectives are provided with activities and specific percentages to determine the effectiveness of the program. For example, one objective is that 95% of students will take the state assessment. A second example is teachers will score 80% on teacher quizzes within asynchronous modules (p. e37).

Weaknesses:

While there are specific targets for percentages of participation, there does not seem to be a specific target in reading scores for the effect size between students who receive the treatment and those students who do not receive the treatment (p. e37). While percentage of participation are important to show fidelity of the implementation, the increase in test scores shows the effectiveness of the intervention. All of the objectives

Sub

appeared to be geared toward fidelity of implementation with none geared toward the impact of the intervention. The application would have been stronger if a student achievement goal with percentage of improvement between treatment and control group had been included.

Reader's Score: 3

- 3. (3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

Strengths:

The study targets students in high-poverty schools, using a Tier-1 intervention that provides teachers with tools and PD where teachers work in teams to extend or modify core components to improve reading comprehension and improve academic achievement for all learners (pp. e38-39). Additional supports include the Summer Leadership Institute and the check and connect communication plan. These activities are appropriate and will meet the needs of high-need students.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses were noted

Reader's Score: 5

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:**

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

- 1. (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 without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)).**

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

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

Strengths:

N/A

Sub

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

3. (3) 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:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

4. (4) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Projects designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students in middle school or high school that examine the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, including rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including one or more of the following:
- (a) Student-centered learning models that may leverage technology to address learner variability (e.g., universal design for learning (as defined in this notice), K–12 competency-based education (as defined in this notice), project-based learning, or hybrid/blended learning) and provide high-quality learning content, applications, or tools.
 - (b) Middle school courses or projects that prepare students to participate in advanced coursework in high school.
 - (c) Advanced courses and programs, including dual enrollment and early college programs.
 - (d) Project-based and experiential learning, including service and work-based learning.
 - (e) High-quality career and technical education courses, pathways, and industry-recognized credentials that are integrated into the curriculum.

Strengths:

This priority was not addressed by the applicant.

Weaknesses:

This priority was not addressed by the applicant.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. **Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through:**

(a) **conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and**

(b) **using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K–12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.**

Strengths:

The applicant will provide all learners in moderate to high-poverty schools with access using a rigorous and innovative approach to improving reading comprehension through the integration of science content during literacy instruction. Evidence based instructional practices were provided (i.e., PL, rigorous course work) with expanded learning time during the summer. The students included in the project were the most impacted by the pandemic (p. e19). Taken together, these approaches are likely successful ways to close the gap caused by COVID-19.

Weaknesses:

There was no evidence of community asset-mapping included in the proposal. No data was specifically provided around students who have become disengaged from learning including students remotely learning. No specific strategies were provided for reengaging and supporting students and their families in the proposal.

Reader's Score: 2

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/04/2022 04:58 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/06/2022 10:52 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: President and Fellows of Harvard College (S411B220003)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	15
Sub Total	15	15
Strategy to Scale		
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	35	28
Sub Total	35	28
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	15	12
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	35	0
Sub Total	50	12
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Equity	3	0
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. COVID-19	3	2
Sub Total	6	2
Total	106	57

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - EIR Mid-Phase - 2 - 1: 84.411B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: President and Fellows of Harvard College (S411B220003)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 15

Sub

1. (1) The national significance of the proposed project.

Strengths:

This proposal provided a plethora of literature on literacy in early grades which contributed to verifying the national significance of the proposed project. Especially informative were the reading data from the NAEP set. This proposal provided a context for widespread need for this project, much of which could be found on e19 & e20.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

2. (2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.

Strengths:

The proposal is strong in its evidence that the project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on existing strategies—the purpose for the Mid-Phase Expansion Grant. The proposal provides specifics of MORE which was very helpful as opposed to a generic overview. (Kim & Burkhauser et al., 2021; Kim & Burkhauser et al., 2022; Kim, Rich and Scherer, 2022) The applicant has included what they've learned will indicate success on expansion (e21-e23). It is clear that the expansion will build on the teacher-friendly tools used in the initial implementation of MORE.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Sub

Strengths:

The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies is evident. The Research-Practice Partnerships outlined (pp. e24,e25) show a strong linkage from only looking at findings to implementation of practices. Especially notable is the proposal's discussion of its work with a hybrid shift to professional development as well as how the work of MORE will potentially impact content area subjects other than reading.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Strategy to Scale - Strategy to Scale

- 1. The Secretary considers the strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 28

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.**

Strengths:

The proposal clearly outlines the applicant's strategy to address a national barrier to student literacy. The information on page e28 includes the teacher research on PD effectiveness and the potential to overcome apathy. The proposal identifies potential barriers and provides resolution to overcoming them.

Weaknesses:

The applicant may have included as a barrier the risk of breach of confidentiality (although addressed later in the proposal) and how to overcome this risk. Another potential barrier that would have been helpful to identify is students' access to technology and internet during the summer. Explaining how this had been done with the initial study as well as if that would work with the expansion would have been a significant contribution.

Reader's Score: 8

- 2. (2) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

Strengths:

District partnership responsibilities were outlined (p e30) and clearly made apparent the initial working relationship that had been established and would be built upon. Consideration was given to amount of work of each partner? at different times during the chronology of the project. The use of SMART goals to delineate roles and responsibilities was particularly effective.

Sub

Weaknesses:

The proposal did not clearly narrate the roles and responsibilities of the Summer Institute. Additional delineation would have been helpful to see which partner was the primary lead and how others would participate. The proposal was somewhat vague on the grants management process because...

Reader's Score: 4

- 3. (3) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.**

Strengths:

The applicant's capacity to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level working through partners was evident on pages e19-e20 and in the published studies the proposal included. The conceptual framework outlined outcomes of pedagogy as well as those of learning. The applicant has put together a unique framework that includes treatment that will affect both teacher outcomes as well as student ones. CVs of personnel presented qualified personnel. Additional evidence for meeting the requirements of achievement on this factor came from the management plan and the budget.

Weaknesses:

The proposal could have been strengthened by including a more detailed description of the partnerships' roles in the design and delivery of the summer institute would have contributed to a clearer picture of all personnel who are managing the process and scale up.

Reader's Score: 8

- 4. (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Strengths:

Appropriate and adequate mechanisms that the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information of the project was evident. Especially noteworthy was the description of the integrated communication toolkit & online teacher toolkit. The published studies provide evidence of how the applicant has already begun to disseminate information about the initial findings of MORE

Weaknesses:

Audiences were not specifically identified for the dissemination of the project. The proposal did not include all stakeholders to which the information would be communicated (e.g., community, students, families).

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 12

Sub

1. **(1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.**

Strengths:

The applicant's capacity to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level working through partners was evident on pages e19-e20 and in the published studies the proposal included. The conceptual framework outlined outcomes of pedagogy as well as those of learning. The applicant has put together a unique framework that includes treatment that will affect both teacher outcomes as well as student ones. CVs of personnel presented qualified personnel. Additional evidence for meeting the requirements of achievement on this factor came from the management plan and the budget

Weaknesses:

Providing MORE with an extenuated detailed description of the partnerships' roles in the design and delivery of the summer institute would have contributed to a clearer picture of all personnel who are managing the process and scale up.

Reader's Score: 4

2. **(2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.**

Strengths:

Table 4 on page e37 is concise and informative. The proposal outlines how the applicant has delineated the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved as well as how they are to be measured.

Weaknesses:

The proposal could have been strengthened by including including information, such as... from previous goals, objectives, and outcomes of the initial MORE project/work.. Furthermore, the proposal could have been strengthened by including objectives or outcomes about how students will achieve on the state test. For instance, while the proposal includes a Ninety-five participation rate on the state test as an indicator, it does not include an objective related to the intended performance of participating project students on that assessment

Reader's Score: 3

3. **(3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

Strengths:

It is apparent that the applicant has ensured that the project addresses the needs of the target population. Using an alternative to students who qualify for free and reduced lunch (e.g. neighborhood poverty) and using research citations to validate is commendable and provides evidence that the applicant in fact is targeting the population as defined in the NIA.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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:

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

1. (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 without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)).

Strengths:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score: 0

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

Strengths:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score: 0

3. (3) 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:

n/a

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score: 0

4. (4) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

Strengths:

n/a

Sub

Weaknesses:

n/a

Reader's Score: 0

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. **Projects designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students in middle school or high school that examine the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, including rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including one or more of the following:**
 - (a) **Student-centered learning models that may leverage technology to address learner variability (e.g., universal design for learning (as defined in this notice), K–12 competency-based education (as defined in this notice), project-based learning, or hybrid/blended learning) and provide high-quality learning content, applications, or tools.**
 - (b) **Middle school courses or projects that prepare students to participate in advanced coursework in high school.**
 - (c) **Advanced courses and programs, including dual enrollment and early college programs.**
 - (d) **Project-based and experiential learning, including service and work-based learning.**
 - (e) **High-quality career and technical education courses, pathways, and industry-recognized credentials that are integrated into the curriculum.**

Strengths:

This competitive preference priority was not addressed by the applicant.

Weaknesses:

This competitive preference priority was not addressed by the applicant.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. **Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through:**
 - (a) **conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and**
 - (b) **using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K–12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.**

Strengths:

Page e24 outlines the need to replace free & reduced lunch status as a way to ensure the target population is indeed identified and reached. Although this is not community asset mapping, it does provide a focus on underserved students. Research cited show that students of poverty were impacted most negatively by COVID-19, . Evidence-based instructional approaches and supports (pp. e43-e45) outline ways that will address student opportunities to meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses. The summer component of MORE for students provides expanded learning time to accelerate learning.

Weaknesses:

The proposal could have been strengthened there been data that identified the number of students that have been/will be affected and fall into the category of the target population. More explanation of community mapping along with results of needs assessments would have also strengthened the proposal.

Reader's Score: **2**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/06/2022 10:52 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/02/2022 02:04 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: President and Fellows of Harvard College (S411B220003)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	15
Sub Total	15	15
Strategy to Scale		
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	35	27
Sub Total	35	27
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	15	14
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	35	0
Sub Total	50	14
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Equity	3	0
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. COVID-19	3	2
Sub Total	6	2
Total	106	58

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - EIR Mid-Phase - 2 - 1: 84.411B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: President and Fellows of Harvard College (S411B220003)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 15

Sub

1. (1) The national significance of the proposed project.

Strengths:

The applicant provides information about the reading achievement of 4th grade students on NAEP along with long-term data that “suggests that US 9-year-olds have made no gains in reading comprehension overall” and that gaps between “lower- and higher-performing students is larger on comprehension tasks than on basic word-reading skills”. This project is an intervention for those lower performing students which could improve their ability to “evaluate and learn from complex informational texts.” Addressing a high area of need with a successful intervention that isn’t overwhelming to teachers or a takeover of the current curriculum would be a great advantage nationally. (p. e20)

The proposal involves a professional development model, Adapted MORE (p. e24), that is more “interactive and flexible” (p. e11) allowing some variation in how teachers implement their learning and the curriculum based on the “wide variety of school and classroom contexts” (p. e24) that they work in. Knowledge of the effectiveness of this model would be valuable for educational interventions applied across the nation because there could be more use

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

2. (2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.

Strengths:

This proposal expands on a previous project where effect sizes from a literacy assessment, for students who received treatment, ranged from 0.11 to 0.40. This previous project was replicated with an increased “intensity and dosage” so that the science reading comprehension outcome resulted in an effect size of 0.18. With previous positive results, this project effectively represents an approach that is built on promising strategies.

The professional development component of the proposal will continue with a model that the applicant has been

Sub

improving for several years. Typical implementation of new programs focuses on “compliance”; however, the model for this proposal will reflect the Adaptive MORE model. Teachers who have participated in the adaptive type of professional development were found to provide “students with more lessons and opportunities to engage in discussions about the science schema” resulting in “significantly higher” science reading tests. This promising model for professional development presents an alternative to typical PD strategies. (p. e24)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Strengths:

Additional understanding of the MORE model as a reading intervention could present many possibilities for using content as a vehicle for intervention. Students receiving interventions during regular instruction rather than outside of school or in a pull-out situation would greatly benefit because they would not lose instructional time with higher achieving peers.

COVID-19 forced educators toward online instruction which is now being used regularly along with in-person teaching. Additionally, professional development has increasingly become available through online formats. The professional development proposed in this application takes advantage of the online format and includes team-based learning. More knowledge about this approach to professional development will contribute valuable information, particularly because of the savings of both time and money that it provides.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Strategy to Scale - Strategy to Scale

1. The Secretary considers the strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 27

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

Strengths:

The applicant points out that one of the barriers to scaling is the amount of new curriculum or required professional development that teachers encounter. To counteract the lack of willingness to use MORE is by creating a

Sub

curriculum that can be provided during the “Tier I science block in 30 lesson hours.” (p. e27) This project will continue expansion by adding 4th grade curriculum to the current grades 1 through 3. Clearly, additional curriculum is what is required in order to expand which will be the result of this project.

Staff turnover is always an issue with the continuation of initiatives because of the need for new hires to get “up to speed” on the practices of a district. The desire to accomplish this through a summer onboarding program is a reasonable approach to overcoming this barrier.

Previously, the applicant created staff development that uses online team-based learning to provide support to teachers as they made adaptations to the curriculum (MORE). This approach effectively helped teachers adapt the curriculum and encouraged continued use. The applicant states that there is a barrier to scaling because of the emphasis on “compliance-focused teacher PD.” (p. e27) By creating additional modules for professional development for teachers at the 4th grade level using the proposed model, the project will expand the grade levels which have the necessary tools. These modules must be developed so that expansion can occur.

Weaknesses:

The applicant discusses the creation of “an integrated system” that will share implementation information on a daily basis. This system is one of the strategies the applicant has identified to overcome “high staff turnover among systems and teacher leaders”. (p. e28) The application lacks justification for how this strategy addresses the barrier of staff turnover.

Reader's Score: 9

2. (2) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Strengths:

The organizations listed as responsible for the milestone accomplishment are aligned with the strengths and abilities of those organizations. For example, Groundswell Global Research is listed as responsible for random assignment which makes sense because GGR will be providing the evaluation.

Weaknesses:

Milestones are too general. For example, “Curriculum creation” doesn’t state how much should be created. The plan lacks the detail needed to inform responsible parties of the expectations so that milestones can be accomplished.

Because milestones are so general, responsibilities for the organizations listed are unclear. For example, Harvard Graduate School of Education is responsible for the Summer Leadership Institute. The applicant has not identified who at the Harvard Graduate School of Education will lead this particular activity. In addition, no details or guidance has been included. This will be accomplished during SY2 and SY3, but in order for schools to plan for this, there likely needs to be a hard cutoff date for completion so that details can be shared, such as when, how long, where, etc. (p. e30) Detail such as this is missing throughout the management plan which weakens the proposal.

Reader's Score: 3

3. (3) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.

Sub

Strengths:

The budget narrative, beginning on page e186, shows a breakdown of the percentage of the Project Director's time that will be spent working on this project. He has extensive experience with large projects in education and is currently on staff with HGSE. This leadership strengthens the proposal.

Other key personnel also have resumes indicating strong backgrounds (beginning on page e64) along with a breakdown of their time commitments in the budget narrative. Time commitments appear adequate for the project given the number providing assistance as well as the employment of a full-time Project Assistant. (pp. e186-188)

Salaries and benefits are sufficient and large enough to attract qualified applicants for positions that have not been filled. Travel costs are included along with supplies as well as expenses for the evaluation. The budget shows thorough consideration of expenses.

Weaknesses:

The applicant has not addressed how key personnel, who are already employed, will have the time available to commit to an additional project. The proposal could be a continuation of another project that is ending, but without this information, it's unclear whether or not these individuals will have the time to provide the proposed services.

The proposal does not include information about the financial management for the grant. While it's likely that there is a department in the lead organization or one of the partner organizations, the applicant fails to state how the expenditures will be handled so that tracking of funds can occur and assurance of proper and legal steps have been taken.

Reader's Score: 8

4. (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths:

The "SERP team will create an online teacher toolkit" (p. e34) that will provide the information needed for replication of the project. This feature will allow others to easily access lessons and other components for implementation creating a strength in this proposal.

Leveraging of the participating organizations, such as Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, and networks allows identification of educators who would likely be interested in promising new approaches to improve student achievement.

The proposal identifies the types of communication that will be used to disseminate information when describing the "integrated communication toolkit". This toolkit will include "PowerPoint presentations, podcasts", that will allow team members to "share findings broadly to regional and national audiences. Dissemination efforts will be enhanced by having access to the variety of proposed presentation tools.

Weaknesses:

Mechanisms for dissemination have been generally identified, but including detail and organization would improve the proposal. For example, the plan lacks a timeline and is vague regarding who the "team to share findings" will include (p. e34).

Dissemination of information and results is limited to educators. The applicant has not addressed other entities that would be interested and influential when considering implementation of MORE such as school board members or

Sub

PTOs. Adding this aspect would strengthen support for further development.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 14

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.

Strengths:

The proposal is based on the hypothesis that “a multiyear, schema-building approach to content literacy” promotes transfer. (p. e23) An example of this concept occurs on pages e22 and e23, and previous research on MORE has demonstrated success. The framework for the proposal is strong and promising because of the positive findings from the previous project and the adjustments that have been made to improve results.

The professional development included in the project enlists team-based learning which has also been identified as producing positive outcomes for students. The PD for the project is also supported by research which strengthens its overall framework.

The MORE Theory of Change graphic provides additional details about how the underlying principles have been implemented and builds the understanding of how the components of the project work together. (p. e35)

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

2. (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Strengths:

Pages e37 and e38 display the table of outcomes and objectives. Each of the objectives is measurable and has both long- and short-term outcomes along with the measurement tool to be used.

Weaknesses:

One of the measurable objectives for Objective 2 is: “Average response on using MORE principles in other subjects is ‘characteristic.’” There is no explanation for what this means.

The proposal does not clearly connect how the objective activities will result in the overall goal of improving student achievement. For example, there is no justification about why “80% of teachers complete asynchronous modules” would ultimately affect student achievement. The connection can be created by inferring that teacher participation in

Sub

the modules will improve teacher instruction which will result in higher student achievement, but this connection is not stated explicitly. (p. e37)

Reader's Score: 4

3. (3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.

Strengths:

MORE is used during content instruction, typically in science or social studies. It is an intervention but provides Tier 1 content. This is a benefit for the students in “moderate to high-poverty schools” who need improved literacy without the disadvantages of a pull-out intervention. MORE is entirely suitable to students in these schools or for any students.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses are noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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:

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

1. (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 without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)).

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

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

Strengths:

N/A

Sub

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

3. (3) 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:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

4. (4) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Projects designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students in middle school or high school that examine the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, including rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including one or more of the following:
- (a) Student-centered learning models that may leverage technology to address learner variability (e.g., universal design for learning (as defined in this notice), K–12 competency-based education (as defined in this notice), project-based learning, or hybrid/blended learning) and provide high-quality learning content, applications, or tools.
 - (b) Middle school courses or projects that prepare students to participate in advanced coursework in high school.
 - (c) Advanced courses and programs, including dual enrollment and early college programs.
 - (d) Project-based and experiential learning, including service and work-based learning.
 - (e) High-quality career and technical education courses, pathways, and industry-recognized credentials that are integrated into the curriculum.

Strengths:

The applicant does not address Competitive Preference Priority 1.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not address Competitive Preference Priority 1.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through:

(a) conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and

(b) using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K–12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

Strengths:

The proposal addresses the increased inequities, due to COVID-19, for students of poverty. The intervention will be rigorous and likely to accelerate learning without decreasing time spent in Tier 1 courses.

The project will utilize summertime for students to “practice reading print and e-books about science topics learned in school.” Funding will be used for SERP to create the e-books. This expanded learning time will address learning loss and closing achievement gaps.

Weaknesses:

The proposal does not include community asset-mapping or needs assessments.

Reader's Score: 2

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 08/02/2022 02:04 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/04/2022 10:50 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: President and Fellows of Harvard College (S411B220003)

Reader #4: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	0
Sub Total	15	0
Strategy to Scale		
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	35	0
Sub Total	35	0
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	15	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	35	29
Sub Total	50	29
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Equity	3	0
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. COVID-19	3	0
Sub Total	6	0
Total	106	29

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - EIR Mid-Phase - 2 - 1: 84.411B

Reader #4: *****

Applicant: President and Fellows of Harvard College (S411B220003)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

1. (1) The national significance of the proposed project.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

2. (2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

3. (3) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Sub

Reader's Score: 0

Strategy to Scale - Strategy to Scale

1. The Secretary considers the strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

2. (2) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

3. (3) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

4. (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Sub

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

2. (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

3. (3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Sub

Reader's Score: 0

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:

Reader's Score: 29

Sub

1. (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 without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)).

Strengths:

The proposed evaluation is for a blocked cluster-level randomized controlled trial (RCT) where random assignment takes place at the school-level. This evaluation design may allow for the highest possible What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) rating (Meets Standards without Reservations) to be achieved (pages e39-40). This is a noted strength of the evaluation design, as it would lead to evidence-based outcomes to inform future community practice.

It is anticipated that attrition will remain low because the design allows all participating schools to receive treatment in either grades 1-2 or 3-4. Likewise, the primary student outcome data will be able to be obtained from the state even when students move away from the study schools, which helped attrition rates remain low and comparable in both study conditions in the earlier i3 study in the same state (p. e40). This is a strength that may allow for the study to meet WWC standards without reservations.

The proposed primary outcome assessments for grades 1-2 and grades 3-4 have face validity and do not appear to be over aligned with either study condition (pp. e93-94). The assessment will be administered to both conditions in the same manner and there do not appear to be any confounds that would affect WWC rating.

Weaknesses:

While the proposal indicates the evaluator has a history of low attrition with similarly designed RCTs, the possibility of high attrition should still be considered for this study. If it is determined that there is high attrition (based on WWC criteria), a pre-test must be included for each eligible outcome to determine baseline equivalence of the study conditions. However, a pretest, for the purpose of evaluating baseline equivalence, is not explicitly mentioned in the evaluation plan. For grades 1-2, the Measure of Academic Progress is identified as a pre-test covariate and could feasibly be used to evaluate baseline equivalence in the event of high attrition. For grades 3-4, the North Carolina Beginning of Grade (BOG) assessment is indicated as an available pretest, and it is explicitly stated that there is not a BOG for grade 4 (p. e93). Yet, later, the evaluation plan indicates that the BOG will be used as a pretest covariate (p. e94) but does not specify grade. Therefore, it is not clear if there would be a pretest available for the grade 4 sample. In the event of high attrition, the absence of an eligible pretest for the grade 4 sample would lead to the study being rated as Does Not Meet WWC Group Design Standards, at minimum, for the grade 4 evaluation.

Reader's Score: 17

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

Sub

Strengths:

Each of the six research questions is designed to provide information that would help inform future replication or expansion. The questions will provide information about impact, dosage, key student and school moderators, multiple aspects of implementation, cost, and the impact of scaling MORE in terms of depth and sustainability (pp. e42-43). Collectively, this will allow consumers of the published results to better determine if MORE would be a good fit for implementation in their local setting.

Weaknesses:

It is unclear how dosage (question 2) will be measured when the study is designed for all students to receive two years of the treatment. This is a noted weakness in the alignment of study design and research questions.

Reader's Score: 4

3. (3) 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 evaluation plan clearly indicates key project goals, components, and mediators (pp. e35, e37), and outcomes at each level of analyses (i.e., student, teacher, school, district; pp. e45-46). Thresholds for fidelity of implementation will be determined by several data sources and are both empirically grounded and reflect realistic expectations developed as a result of the prior related studies (p. e44). The thresholds are clear and measurable which is a noted strength.

Weaknesses:

Classroom observations do not take place to determine curriculum implementation fidelity and would strengthen the design to help confer teacher implementation data.

Reader's Score: 4

4. (4) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

Strengths:

There are several strategies in place to provide performance feedback and allow for assessment of progress toward achieving study goals. Through the Summer Literacy Institute and professional development district-level leaders, school leaders and teachers are empowered to take ownership of MORE implementation and set benchmarks of success for themselves as well as make practical adjustments to implementation to help meet goals (p. e46). MORE reports will provide teachers with formative feedback on student use of the app and ability to transfer knowledge. The evaluator will also produce interim and summative assessment results before and after the second year of implementation to allow time for implementation adjustments to be made for the second and third year. This method is a noted strength as it has the potential to allow for continuous improvement of implementation based on multiple data sources.

Weaknesses:

A plan for addressing potential low teacher engagement is not provided. This is a noted weakness in the plan for permitting continuous progress toward achieving the intended outcomes.

Reader's Score: 4

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Projects designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students in middle school or high school that examine the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, including rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including one or more of the following:
 - (a) Student-centered learning models that may leverage technology to address learner variability (e.g., universal design for learning (as defined in this notice), K–12 competency-based education (as defined in this notice), project-based learning, or hybrid/blended learning) and provide high-quality learning content, applications, or tools.
 - (b) Middle school courses or projects that prepare students to participate in advanced coursework in high school.
 - (c) Advanced courses and programs, including dual enrollment and early college programs.
 - (d) Project-based and experiential learning, including service and work-based learning.
 - (e) High-quality career and technical education courses, pathways, and industry-recognized credentials that are integrated into the curriculum.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through:
 - (a) conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and
 - (b) using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K–12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/04/2022 10:50 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/02/2022 08:26 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: President and Fellows of Harvard College (S411B220003)

Reader #5: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Significance		
1. Significance	15	0
Sub Total	15	0
Strategy to Scale		
Strategy to Scale		
1. Strategy to Scale	35	0
Sub Total	35	0
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	15	0
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	35	30
Sub Total	50	30
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 1		
1. Equity	3	0
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. COVID-19	3	0
Sub Total	6	0
Total	106	30

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - EIR Mid-Phase - 2 - 1: 84.411B

Reader #5: *****

Applicant: President and Fellows of Harvard College (S411B220003)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

1. (1) The national significance of the proposed project.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

2. (2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

3. (3) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Sub

Reader's Score: 0

Strategy to Scale - Strategy to Scale

1. The Secretary considers the strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

2. (2) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

3. (3) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

4. (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Sub

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 0

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the proposed research or demonstration activities and the quality of that framework.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

2. (2) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

3. (3) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Sub

Reader's Score: 0

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:

Reader's Score: 30

Sub

1. (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 without reservations as described in the What Works Clearinghouse Handbook (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)).

Strengths:

As proposed, this will be a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) that will assign 100 schools to one of two conditions. Group A will be schools in which their grade 1 and 2 will be in the treatment condition and grades 3 and 4 in the control condition. Group B will be the reverse, where grades 3 and 4 will be in the treatment condition and grades 1 and 2 will be in the control (p. e40). Threat to cluster level attrition is low due to the applicants' relationship with the school district, substantiated by a letter of support from the Deputy Superintendent. Joiners at the cluster level will not be included in the analysis. Threats to student level attrition are low because they are using administrative outcome data that will still be available if a student switches schools within the State. The applicants cite previous grants in which their attrition rate was lower than 9%, with no statistically significant attrition among the treatment and control groups. This is crucial information that the applicants provide and strengthens the quality of this criterion, as it is evident that they are carefully thinking about this particular threat to the internal validity of the study. The main outcomes will be standardized assessments that are not fully aligned with the intervention, have face validity, and strong psychometric properties (p. e91-96). In line with What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards, the evaluator will conduct an intent-to-treat analysis within a three-level nested model. Missing data will be imputed to the mean and a dummy will be included in the analysis to indicate missingness (p. e105). Further, the Deputy Superintendent wrote a letter indicating support for randomization (p. e68), which is always crucial in school based RCTs. Due to these elements, this proposed project has a high likelihood of meeting WWC standards without reservations.

Weaknesses:

A more in-depth discussion regarding how the evaluator will treat joiners at the student level would have strengthened this section, as a significant number of joiners could pose a threat to the internal validity of a study. The narrative provides a model for teacher level outcomes, but these are not clearly specified nor is a rationale included to justify whatever they are. The logic model has two variables that could be teacher outcomes – engagement with more principles and spread of more principles – but those are over aligned with the intervention. In other words, because these principles are part of the intervention, then no teachers in the control group will implement them.

Reader's Score: 19

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

Sub

Strengths:

Replication and scaling are core components of this project (p. e29, e30). Findings will be shared widely, including via a website. The applicants will create a toolkit for communication and for implementation (p. e33-34). One of their main research questions will focus on identifying the dosage and any moderator variables that differentially impact a treatment effect (p. e42). The evaluator will define dosage as the number of years students received the treatment. They will also measure implementation at the school and district level with an eye to gain insight into how others might be able to implement the program. They will use a mixed methods approach to this end to better understand factors such as organizational structure, literacy priorities, and even technology available (p. e43). The applicants plan to employ a generalizability index as outlined in the Standards for Excellence in Education Research (p. e110). The extent to which the evaluation will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings is adequate.

Weaknesses:

The dosage component is unclear. Defined as the number of years a student received the treatment, it is not clear how the applicants will actually gauge dosage effects based on this variable. Since they state that few students will leave their schools (i.e., attrition), then it stands to reason that most students will receive the treatment for two years. The applicants do mention that schools will be availed the opportunity to extend the treatment in the second year to their previous control grades, but not much detail regarding expected sample size is provided. The applicants could consider collecting additional information via teacher interviews and/or classroom observation to measure more nuanced dosage effects. This would help them understand how teachers are actually implementing the intervention in practice with the goal to inform others as they implement it in the future. Another weakness in this section is due to the lack of clarity as to whether or not the materials created will be available at a cost. If the materials created as a result of this grant are not freely available, then this limits the ability of other sites to replicate this intervention.

Reader's Score: 3

3. **(3) 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 application includes extremely well-articulated research questions (p. e22). These incorporate mediators, moderators, fidelity, and dosage factors. The applicants will focus on three outcomes – a science vocabulary and reading comprehension assessment, the K-3 literacy DIBELS, and end-of-course exams (p. e41). The analysis will control for baseline characteristics such as previous test scores, grade level, and school-level characteristics. They provide thresholds for implementation, which are based both on previous research and experience implementing the program before (p. e44). Due to this, their thresholds are extremely concrete and measurable. Other components are also well delineated, linked to previous experience, and aligned with the unique context of each school. 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 is moderately high.

Weaknesses:

The applicants do not provide a thorough discussion of fidelity, including a fidelity checklist. Other than the activities in the app, it is not clear whether there will be classroom observations or other ways to ensure the intervention is being implemented as designed.

Reader's Score: 4

4. **(4) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**

Sub

Strengths:

The applicants demonstrate previous evidence that they have employed formative assessment and have used it to make modifications to the intervention (p. e22). Formative assessment is built into the app component of the intervention (p. e24). Their design includes collection of real-time data to make necessary adjustments over the course of the school year (p. e37). The applicants have articulated goals for percentage of students they expect will complete the formative assessment, increasing likelihood that they will have that data available (p. e37). The fact that this intervention has so much technology embedded will likely facilitate the use of performance feedback and periodic assessment. It is clear in the narrative that the applicants have considered this aspect seriously. For example, not only can their program capture formative data, teachers and administrators are coached to use this information and make it work for them (p. e46). The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes is very good.

Weaknesses:

The applicants could design more supports for the course of the school year for teachers as they adjust instruction based on the formative assessments. While it is great that they give teachers significant ownership, implementing and utilizing formative assessment is a tough skill to master and will require coaching or other supports during the school year. Further, the applicants do not provide sufficient detail and explanation regarding how they plan to make changes in the case that teacher engagement with the modules and teacher portal are not meeting the minimum threshold. In other words, what changes will they make consider making if teachers are not sufficiently engaging with the modules.

Reader's Score: 4

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 1

1. Projects designed to promote educational equity and adequacy in resources and opportunity for underserved students in middle school or high school that examine the sources of inequity and inadequacy and implement responses, including rigorous, engaging, and well-rounded (e.g., that include music and the arts) approaches to learning that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status and prepare students for college, career, and civic life, including one or more of the following:

- (a) Student-centered learning models that may leverage technology to address learner variability (e.g., universal design for learning (as defined in this notice), K–12 competency-based education (as defined in this notice), project-based learning, or hybrid/blended learning) and provide high-quality learning content, applications, or tools.**
- (b) Middle school courses or projects that prepare students to participate in advanced coursework in high school.**
- (c) Advanced courses and programs, including dual enrollment and early college programs.**
- (d) Project-based and experiential learning, including service and work-based learning.**
- (e) High-quality career and technical education courses, pathways, and industry-recognized credentials that are integrated into the curriculum.**

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Projects that are designed to address the impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic, including impacts that extend beyond the duration of the pandemic itself, on the students most impacted by the pandemic, with a focus on underserved students and the educators who serve them through:

(a) conducting community asset-mapping and needs assessments that may include an assessment of the extent to which students, including subgroups of students, have become disengaged from learning, including students not participating in in-person or remote instruction, and specific strategies for reengaging and supporting students and their families; and

(b) using evidence-based instructional approaches and supports, such as professional development, coaching, ongoing support for educators, high quality tutoring, expanded access to rigorous coursework and content across K–12, and expanded learning time to accelerate learning for students in ways that ensure all students have the opportunity to successfully meet challenging academic content standards without contributing to tracking or remedial courses.

Strengths:

NA

Weaknesses:

NA

Reader's Score: 0

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/02/2022 08:26 AM