

**Abstract: Supporting Behavior and Improving School Climate through the Elementary to Middle School Transition: Whole School Restorative Practices in AISD**

Austin Independent School District's (AISD) proposed project will evaluate the impact of implementing restorative practices (RP), a school-wide approach to climate and discipline, within a feeder pattern of elementary (ES) and middle schools (MS). This application, submitted under EIR Early Phase's **Absolute Priority 1 and 2**, represents the next generation in improving school climate, behavioral supports and correctional education, with a unique focus on transition points between ES and MS. A rigorous evaluation, incorporating a four-year quasi-experimental design utilizing propensity score matching and an implementation study, will generate **evidence of effectiveness** by demonstrating the impact on a cohort of students transitioning from ES to MS in which schools at both levels utilize a consistent approach to school climate that addresses the root causes of the uses of and disparities in exclusionary discipline.

The primary goal of the proposed five-year project is to reduce disparities in exclusionary discipline by employing RP within an existing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) framework. To reach this goal, we must: guide and support teachers as they adopt RP in their classrooms; create a sustainable school-wide RP culture and high likelihood of program continuation in participating schools and throughout the district; ensure replicability for and applicability to ES and MS in various communities. We will assess our progress toward these larger goals through short and long-term objectives of student and campus-level academic and behavioral outcomes (including narrowing of gaps between groups of students) as well as changes in teacher practice.

Partners: Independent evaluator, American Institutes for Research (AIR); RP expert University of Texas at Austin, Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue

# of students: approximately 6,500 AISD students, approx. 2,700 MS students at Burnet, Garcia, Dobie, Mendez Middle Schools, and an average of 3,500 at 6 feeder ES in Y1, with 100 additional students per year after.