



**Learning While Leading:**

*Improving Educational Leadership Through Evidence-Based Practices*

*in the School Setting*

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The College-Ready Promise respectfully submits this proposal for consideration of the Supporting Effective Educator Development program (SEED) in response to **Absolute Priority 2:** (*Supporting Effective Principals or Other School Leaders*). In this proposal, we will also address the **Invitational Priority** (*Support for the Use of Micro-Credentials*).

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The College-Ready Promise (TCRP) will use strategies supported by **Moderate and, in some cases, Strong evidence**—as defined in the Federal Register—to provide professional development to principals and other school leaders to improve their effectiveness in 80 charter schools in high-need areas (urban Los Angeles and throughout Texas). The project will not only strengthen the participants’ abilities but also build a sustained system for improvement.

TCRP is a national nonprofit focused on serving the most underserved students in charter schools by working with leadership teams to improve their effectiveness. The organization is currently changing its name to Ensemble Learning, so much of our most recent work is associated with that name. Founded in 2009, TCRP’s mission was to prepare students to be college-ready by helping teachers reach their full potential. We pursued this mission by supporting a network of highly effective charter management organizations (CMOs) to further their own and each other’s practice. Through this work, we fostered the continued growth of CMOs, seeded the next generation of innovative schools, set the bar for high quality to meet student needs, and impacted more than 50,000 students.

This project is a natural outgrowth of TCRP’s previous experience, focusing on school leaders with an innovative leadership program funded by this grant. With the guidance of TCRP, the participants will improve their leadership skills by applying them in a common problem of

practice: improving the outcomes for English learners They will focus on English learners in this cohort but will learn skills that transfer to a variety of future complex problems.

TCRP will:

- Guide principals and leadership teams as they assess their current schools' achievement and culture by analyzing test scores (formative and summative as available) and conducting classroom walkthroughs (for the walkthrough rubric, see Appendix A);
- Support the schools as they create or revise their current vision statement;
- Work closely with the school teams on a step-by-step process to create a plan for improvement based on qualitative and quantitative data;
- Provide instructional expertise in effective instruction for English learners;
- Facilitate teams to successfully work together;
- Build a network between the schools that includes high accountability for actions;
- Support the principals with one-on-one coaching; and
- Utilize micro-credentials to deepen participants' learning and mastery of leadership.

Each of these steps will be focused on the skills needed to be a more effective principal but based in the real-life context of the school. The teams will build and practice their leadership skills while focusing on English learners. Based on the report on principal impact by Clifford, Behrstock-Sherrat, and Feters (2012) of the American Institutes for Research, we posit that improved principal and school leader practice will improve both school culture and teacher instruction, which in turn improves student outcomes (for a logic model including measurement tools, see Appendix E). **At the grant's conclusion, each charter school will have a more effective principal, a pipeline of trained school leaders, and improved student outcomes at their sites.**

In this project, we carefully synthesize the research on the best way for adults to learn into a coherent program for improving school leadership. In the following table, we outline the research-based steps taken in this process. We describe “what” we will be doing, “who” will do it, and the research base for that action, or “why” we are using that method.

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH BASE FOR PROGRAM		
What	Who	Why
Use multiple sources of data to identify areas of weakness	School leadership teams supported by TCRP	Ikemoto and Marsh (2007); Levin and Datnow (2012); Mandinach and Honey (2008); Wohlstetter, Datnow, and Park (2008)
Create a network of learners working on the same issue	TCRP	Bolam et al. (2005); Chapman and Harris (2004); Feger and Arruda (2008); Jacob, Goddard, Kim, Miller, and Goddard (2014)
Provide one-on-one coaching to principals	Coaches embedded in CMOs	Gates et al. (2014); Goff, Goldring, Guthrie, and Bickman (2015); Nunnery, Ross, Chappell, Pribesh, and Hoag Carhart (2011); Parkinson, Salinger, Meakin, and Smith (2015)
Implement job-embedded improvements	School leadership teams supported by TCRP	Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, and Powers (2010); Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995); Gates et al. (2014); Jacob et al. (2014); Nunnery et al. (2011)
Use data to evaluate improvements	School leadership teams supported by TCRP; AIR	Ikemoto and Marsh (2007); Levin and Datnow (2012); Mandinach and Honey (2008); Wohlstetter, Datnow, and Park (2008)

### A. Quality of the Project Design

**A.1. Exceptional Approach.** Only a very few What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)–reviewed studies have addressed principal development and effectiveness and found statistically significant results with methods that meet WWC standards with or without reservations (Gates et al., 2014; Jacob et al., 2014; Nunnery et al., 2011). All three studies we pulled from have met WWC review standards with or without reservations and found a statistically significant positive effect; however, Gates et al. (2014) and Jacob et al. (2014) found no effect on student

performance, only teacher and principal retention, and the program implementation studied by Nunnery et al. (2011) is cost-prohibitive for most schools. TCRP's program builds off the success of these (and other) studies by focusing on improving instruction and leadership skills (Gates et al., 2014; Nunnery et al., 2011), using personalized coaching (Gates et al., 2014; Nunnery et al., 2011), and creating a Professional Learning Network (Jacob et al., 2014). Nunnery et al. (2011) and Jacob et al. (2014) also tout job-embedded instruction through case studies; however, only Gates actually asks principals to use what they are learning in their schools as part of the program. TCRP's program uses the job-embedded focus of Gates et al. (2014) but has adapted it for principals that are already serving, rather than pre-service. Additionally, TCRP's program seamlessly integrates the research-backed pieces of the other programs but at a cost that is affordable to most low-income school districts (allowing for large-scale dissemination) and using a problem of practice that all schools face: the performance gap between English learners and English speakers. This allows our embedded professional development to focus on one specific student group, while providing skills that generalize beyond English learner instruction.

TCRP's approach is based on the research showing that the most effective improvement is contextualized (Croft et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Hirsh, 2009). Building on the lessons we have learned in our teacher effectiveness work and cohorts of schools focused on underserved students, we know that principals develop best in job-embedded, competency-based work focused on the most research-based practices that improve student achievement.

Learning Forward (previously the National Staff Development Council) compiled a list of the qualities effective principals need (Mendels, 2012; see also The Wallace Foundation, 2012). They found that these principals shape a school-wide vision of commitment to high

standards; cultivate leadership; focus consistently on improving instruction; and manage people, data, and processes. We have chosen this framework for our school leadership development because each of these qualities is evidence-based and together will lead to overall school improvement.

**A.1.i Identify and build distributed leadership teams.** We know that principals cannot work in isolation. Carpenter (2015) concluded that a positive school culture is reliant on shared leadership. Effective principals value the support their staff can provide and take advantage of the qualities their teams may possess that they themselves do not (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Furthermore, there is some evidence that distributed leadership is positively associated with student performance (Leithwood & Azah, 2016). Higher performing schools take advantage of the collective knowledge within the school community.

In this project, principals identify and develop the skills of their leadership team to support the growth of English learners, which is the problem of practice we will address collectively in this project. This will not only allow non-principal participants to develop skills and build their capacity for future leadership role but also train principals to cultivate leadership at their schools. The team could also collectively earn micro-credentials which improve the collective depth of knowledge of the team while providing experience in competency-based professional development.

**A.1.ii Vision and commitment to high standards for all.** Another imperative practice for principals is to shape the vision and commitment of the school to high standards for the success of every student. For decades we have known that students live up to the standards we hold for them (Cotton, 1989) and more recently, we have learned that high expectations for all students may be the key to closing achievement gaps (Porter et al., 2008; Raffini, 1993). Although teachers ultimately control their expectations for students, principals and other school leaders can

set a school culture that supports these high expectations because principals are an essential element of creating school culture (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Louis & Marks, 1998); they are responsible for the implementation and support of shared values.

As the initial work of our cohort will be on supporting English learners, the school team will take a deep dive into the experience of English learners and adults' attitudes about these students through surveys and empathy interviews (University of British Columbia, 2018). This will provide qualitative data about the standards being held for these students. The teams will combine that information with the quantitative student data on multiple measures and create a gap analysis: How is the school performing currently on multiple measures? Where does it want to go? There will be explicit articulation of the goals and vision for English learners' achievement and school experience.

**A.1.iii Instructional improvement.** The most important aspect of our work with the principals will be improving instruction. Principals who create opportunities for professional development, collaboration, and learning have teachers who are consistently improving their skills (Portin et al., 2009). Additionally, it is important for principals to emphasize and endorse evidence-based pedagogical strategies both with groups of teachers and with individual teachers as needed (The Wallace Foundation, 2012).

These skills are paramount as the transition to more rigorous standards has created even larger divides in underserved populations. During this first round of work focused on English learners, principals will need to increase their own capacity and understanding of high-quality instruction. Our work with the leadership teams will be on research-based instructional strategies for English learners, coaching teachers on how to use them and leveraging their leadership team to model and support other teachers. Led by the principal, these instructional strategies become the road map for the team to reach their goals and vision for their school.

*A.1.iv Create and manage systems.* Finally, principals must be able to create and manage systems at their sites. They must be able to plan, implement, support, advocate, communicate, and monitor. Effective principals manage people, data, and processes throughout their schools. They hire effective teachers that support the culture the principal has created and put in place processes to retain these teachers (such as building in professional development time, using the skills of their staff, and building a culture that supports and includes teachers). Effective principals help their staff to thrive and reduce organizational turnover (Darling-Hammond, 2007). During this project, participants will be assessing and improving their systems based on the data they collect. For instance, we are collecting teacher retention data each year. Principals will be able to consider this data and make changes to improve it year-over-year. These efforts will be supported by TCRP, the coaches, and the network of peers.

*A.1.iv.a Data systems.* Effective principals understand how to use data to drive instruction. Data-driven decision making utilizes information from a variety of sources and assessments to target instruction to students' needs (Mandinach & Honey, 2008). Recent studies have highlighted the important role that principals play in data-driven decision making (e.g., Ikemoto & Marsh, 2007; Levin & Datnow, 2012; Mandinach & Honey, 2008; Wohlstetter et al., 2008). Principals use data both to set goals and to create the culture in which data is an important part of instruction. Principals provide the learning opportunities for teachers to talk about and find patterns in their students' data as well as modeling effective data usage. The participants will experience and build capacity with this skill by analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data of English learners with guided practice, protocols and templates for data analysis.

*A.1.iv.b Improvement systems.* To manage both the people and the use of data within their schools, effective principals must also put in place processes. Processes such as regular data reporting, soliciting staff feedback, and what to do when a student is failing allow the principal to

ensure that his or her goals are being met across the organization and frees him or her for oversight and accountability.

During our work with these participants, they will identify and work on all of their school's systems. Their fellow principals and leadership teams not only will provide accountability for all of this work but also may have improved and new systems for each other. Coaching will also provide principals with a critical friend with principal experience to assess and improve the effectiveness of these processes.

**A.2 Quality, Intensity and Duration of Services.** The program will have four different support structures for principals:

**A.2.i Coaching.** Each principal will have a coach to support his or her development and become more effective (for the job description, see Appendix F). Evidence shows that coaching is beneficial in a variety of business and educational settings (Gates et al., 2014; Goff et al., 2015; Grant, 2011; Hagen, 2012; Pousa, 2012; Pousa & Mathieu, 2014; Parkinson et al., 2015). In this project, the coach will be embedded in the charter school organization to help contextualize the work and allow the coach to support the principal within the system in which he/she works. Following Goff et al.'s (2015) recommendations, coaches will specifically instruct school leaders on how to address staff feedback and engage with faculty, facilitate principals' self-reflection, and help clarify and prioritize issues in their schools. Coaches, hired by TCRP and the charter management organization at the start of the project, will be available to support them on micro-credentials and accountability visits. They will also help address any issues that the participants identify throughout the course of the program. Specific qualifications for the coaches will include experience as a successful school leader, depth of understanding of instruction, and interpersonal skills. All coaches will be trained together in a series of specialized in-person meetings. Coaches will initially meet with principals every week. Whenever possible,

these meetings will be in person; however, if travel or school schedules do not allow, they may be virtual. Coaches will report to someone within the CMOs the work with, but be supported by two Regional Directors from TCRP who will each report to the CEO.

[A.2.ii Network meetings](#). On top of facilitating the project, TCRP will run network meetings to build a Professional Learning Community (PLC). PLCs are a tool often used in a variety of businesses to help people work collaboratively. A PLC in education is teachers and/or school leaders working together on an ongoing continuous cycle of inquiry and improvement to improve student outcomes (DuFour & Eaker, 2008). Impactful PLCs include a shared purpose, shared leadership, a culture of collaboration, collective inquiry, and continuous improvement (Bolam et al., 2005; Feger & Arruda, 2008). PLCs can be used regularly in a variety of contexts (subject-specific teams, grade-level-specific teams, etc.) and promote a culture of collaboration so teachers are supported in their efforts to continuously problem solve and improve their practices (Chapman & Harris, 2004). Research has anecdotally suggested that principal PLCs are effective at improving school performance (Elmore, 1997; Haycock, 1998). One principal PLC organized around improving students' literacy led to a climb in student ELA achievement over the 10 years the PLC was in place (Haycock, 1998). The National Staff Development Council convened a principal PLC to help 12 schools close the achievement gap. They found that engagement was so high that 67% of the original participants were still involved in the PLC after six years. TCRP will also convene a principal PLC by working with 80 principals and their leadership staff in two cohorts. Each cohort will be divided into groups of eight schools, a size that we have found is conducive to networking, to create 10 independent networks. These networks will be determined by grouping schools with similar student populations: grade levels, language proficiency levels, number of students, and number of languages spoken.

Our network meetings have three purposes. First, they build a network of committed educators in one geography. Face-to-face meetings are important to build trust and get to know other professionals working on the same challenges in similar communities. TCRP has found that participants leave our meetings with an average of three new peer relationships. These connections extend the impact of the work well beyond the grant completion. Second, the meetings provide time for the principals to plan and reflect with their school leadership team. With a facilitated agenda by TCRP, the principal has time to work with his/her team without interruptions or administrative tasks interfering with the complex challenges of increasing instructional effectiveness. Principals who spend more time on instruction and coaching and less on administrative tasks have schools with higher student performance (Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2009). Finally, these meetings provide time to build principals' and leadership teams' competency in instruction, initially English learner instruction. Principals who serve as both managerial and instructional leaders are more effective at improving student performance in their schools (Glickman, 1989; Marks & Printy, 2003; Wahlstrom, Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010). TCRP will provide in-person expertise on how to better instruct English learners. It will include examples of high-quality classroom instruction, as well as practice providing feedback to teachers on ways to improve. The content available and evidence required for related micro-credentials will also be shared. The project will have five face-to-face meetings for the networks of eight schools.

There will also be a series of virtual network meetings for support of participants working on the same micro-credential. The BloomBoard platform includes virtual coaching, facilitation of a micro-credential PLC, and coaching support aligned with the work of all of their micro-credentials that are also aligned to the face-to-face meetings and evidence-based content.

**A.2.iii Accountability events.** Principals and school systems often make plans with great intentions, but other challenges get in the way. Unfortunately, teaching and learning often suffer and get pushed aside. In order to keep the instructional work front and center, each principal will have three accountability events with the network, including TCRP. These may include a school walkthrough, a presentation on the school's latest data, an observation of a professional development, or the generation of evidence to complete a micro-credential aligned with their work. These events will be aligned with their individual plan and attended by network participants, as well as coaches. As every principal will go through these, they will build trust and collaboration at a deeper level.

**A.2.iv Micro-credentials.** The use of micro-credentials presents a unique opportunity to personalize and capture the work of our participants. TCRP, in partnership with BloomBoard, will build and use micro-credentials aligned with the work of the cohort. These will allow principals to confirm and build their competency in a specific skill as needed. The micro-credentials will provide evidence that the leader and the leadership team have developed the core skills previously outlined as necessary to highly effective schools. TCRP and BloomBoard will provide the support needed for them to be successful.

The use of micro-credentials is part of a personalized, competency-based approach based upon motivational theory. *Drive*, a book written by Daniel Pink (2009), explains that people are not motivated by what one might expect in terms of extrinsic motivators (e.g., economic incentives and salaries), but are instead motivated by the idea of having three things:

*Purpose*—People need to understand how something connects to their own life.

*Autonomy*—Humans want the autonomy to learn, struggle, and engage in the problem.

People wish to learn on their own terms, using the methods that work for them.

*Mastery*—People need a clear path to become a master or expert in the area of focus relevant to each individual.

Taking this motivational theory and applying it to the lens of instruction results in a personalized, competency-based approach to professional development (“CBPD”). CBPD allows educators to master specific content by applying it to their practice and collecting evidence of their learning. In this project, the principal and site leadership team can earn a set of micro-credentials that will demonstrate their skills in multiple areas (for a list of available micro-credentials, see Appendix G). The principal could focus on earning four micro-credentials specific to his/her role. There are an additional three micro-credentials that the members of the leadership team could earn. The principal can determine with their leadership team and coach which specific micro-credentials would be most beneficial to the individual leadership team members. To incentivize the completion of micro-credentials, participants will earn \$250 for their schools’ English learner programming for each micro-credential they complete.

In this project, micro-credentials can extend the learning in three different ways. We expect that participants will complete at least two micro-credentials per cohort based on the needs of the group. Additionally, any participant can decide to dive deeper into a specific area, such as data-driven decision-making, by earning that aligned micro-credential. The integration of micro-credentials not only allows us to provide targeted content woven throughout the face-to-face and virtual meetings and onsite coaching but also ensures all team members are demonstrating their competency as an output of their grant experiences.

**A.3 Strong Partnerships.** TCRP focused on relentlessly increasing the effectiveness of teachers and principals through a revamped evaluation system, professional development, network meetings, and sub-grants for development projects to meet high standards of instruction. The work included teacher and principal professional development. TCRP received a Teacher

Incentive Fund in 2010 to support this work. Our current focus builds on the importance of school leadership and includes cohorts of schools in Southern California, San Antonio, Texas, and nationally. These CMOs are focusing on subgroups of students: English learners or students with disabilities. Our national project uses micro-credentials to increase the outcomes for learners with disabilities. All of this school-based experience makes TCRP uniquely positioned to work closely with schools on research-based techniques to improve leadership.

TCRP will create a comprehensive, coordinated approach to increasing the effectiveness of principals in high-need areas. Partners AIR and BloomBoard will build on their individual strengths to create a strong, continuously improving system that can be replicated beyond our grant. These partnerships create a unique opportunity to combine new ways of developing principals with built-in research about its effectiveness. To support successful collaboration, TCRP will act as a convener for grant partners. AIR, BloomBoard, and TCRP will meet quarterly to monitor progress, examine data, and problem solve. Each meeting will look at a specific aspect of the program—(1) network meetings, (2) coaching, (3) accountability events, or (4) micro-credentials—and data related to its effectiveness.

By collaborating and sharing our varied experiences, the partnership models the accountability and benefits of the network we will build with principals. Just as important are the partnerships that TCRP has with the CMOs they will partner with in service to their students. In its earlier work, before changing its name to Ensemble Learning, TCRP was a tight partnership with four CMOs. Two of those CMOs, Aspire Public Schools and Green Dot Public Schools, are two of the anchor organizations in the Los Angeles cohort. Additionally, ResponsiveEd, Magnolia Public Schools and Uplift Education are interested in participating in this program. (for letters of support, see Appendix C) These CMOs are all strong providers of high-quality schools in high-need areas. Their culture of continuous improvement matches the values of TCRP and

the project. By embedding the coaches in each of the organizations, there is a built-in system for communication. These coaches will also meet quarterly to increase their effectiveness and share best practices, as well as provide feedback on the project.

**A.3.i Role of partners.** Each Partner has a specific role in this project. TCRP, the lead organization, will lead project meetings, manage the budget, hire staff, conduct recruitment, administer the professional development to school leaders, and collect qualitative and quantitative data. TCRP will manage the grant process and reporting responsibilities as well as implement the program for professional development.

AIR will be conducting all evaluation activities. In this role, AIR will coordinate with TCRP on collecting the data (some data will be collected by TCRP and some by AIR), analyzing the data, and writing the final evaluation report. AIR will attend all team meetings and provide the group with an update regarding the progress of the evaluation monthly and input on continuous improvement of the program.

BloomBoard will be managing the creation, facilitation, and assessment of micro-credentials. BloomBoard will be creating micro-credentials specific to TCRP's professional development program. On the BloomBoard platform, their team facilitates small groups working on similar micro-credentials and provides support to participants. They also assess the submission for quality and confirm competency on the micro-credential.

Participating CMOs will also play an important role in the success of this project. Their coaches will be the key contacts for each CMO as they support the principal, provide important feedback about the content to TCRP, and facilitate data needed from their CMO.

#### **A.4 Focused on Greatest Need**

**A.4.i Los Angeles.** The Los Angeles area has great educational needs. Sixty-nine percent of students in Los Angeles County qualify for free or reduced price lunch. Although performance

has improved from 2015, students in Los Angeles County still underperformed the state average in both English/language arts and mathematics by 8 percentage points in 2017. The needs in Los Angeles are even more apparent when analyzing the performance of English learners. In Los Angeles, English learners represent 25% of the Los Angeles Unified School District population, but only 4% passed the English/language arts Smarter Balanced Exam and 5% passed the mathematics Smarter Balanced Exam in 2017. The LA School Report reported, in 2017, “English learners in LAUSD posted no growth at all for the second year in a row” and the graduation rate for English learners in LAUSD (57%) is 20 percentage points lower than the average. Taken together, these statistics suggest the need for additional supports for all students, but especially English learners in Los Angeles County (for a list of charter schools in Los Angeles that could participate in this study, see Appendix D).

*A.4.ii Texas. Education Week’s Quality Counts* ranking, “which assesses the performance of a state’s public schools against 18 indicators capturing: current achievement levels, improvements over time, and poverty-based gaps,” lists Texas as 43rd in the nation for educational quality. Similarly, *U.S. News* ranks Texas’s K–12 education as 33rd in the nation based on “enrollment in and quality of pre-K, test scores, and the public high school graduation rate.” Furthermore, while Texas has a very high graduation rate (89% in 2017), only 39% of graduates are prepared for college, according to Texas’s own College-Ready standards, a rate that is among the lowest in the nation. The outlook for English learners in Texas is even more dismal. English learners make up 19% of the student population in the state, yet only 71% graduate and only 9% graduate College-Ready. Furthermore, English learners in Texas underperform in all grade levels and all subjects on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), are less likely to take the SAT or ACT, and enroll in AP/IB or dual-credit courses in 11th or 12th grade at a much lower rate (33% vs. 55%). English learners in Texas are

severely underserved, but with additional supports, could have more success (for a list of charter schools in Texas that could participate, see Appendix D).

**A.4.iii English learners overall.** The percentage of English learners in the United States has been steadily growing in recent years. In 2015, there were 4.6 million non-English-speaking students enrolled in U.S. schools. This represents almost 10% of students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Despite making up such a large portion of the student population, English learners are often overlooked. John King, the U.S. Secretary of State, noted, “In too many places across the country, English learners get less access to quality teachers, less access to advanced coursework, and less access to the resources they need to succeed.” King’s comments are based in the large amount of research finding that English learners have less access to trained teachers (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008; Danmore & Murray, 2009), have poorer instructional materials (Parrish et al., 2002), and are offered easier courses with less technical language (Gottlieb, Alter, Gottlieb, & Wishner, 1994; Skirtic, 1991; Webb & Barrera, 2017). Because they are often underserved, English learners graduate at a rate much lower than their English-speaking counterparts (63% vs. 82%; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016), and of those that do graduate, less than 2% take college entrance exams. Taken together, these findings suggest English learners are not receiving the best education available, and additional support is needed for schools to develop the skills needed to serve this population well. It will take the strong school leadership and deep instructional expertise that will be developed in this project to improve these outcomes.

**A.5 Designed to Address the Needs of Target Population.** The project builds leadership capacity by focusing on English learners, a particularly vulnerable group. As such, the work will be directly impactful for students. It is well documented that one of the most important factors in a high-performing school is the principal (second only to classroom instruction; Louis et al., 2010).

By increasing the effectiveness of current principals and creating a pipeline of school leaders, we will directly impact the lives of students who deserve a better educational experience. Our partners in Los Angeles and Texas are all organizations committed to serving students living in poverty and underserved groups, zeroing in on exactly the students that need the most support.

Additionally, our work can be scaled to other organizations and regions. The process and resources not only will be documented and disseminated freely but also can be contextualized in different organizations and states. This research-based approach brings together the strengths of any school with an easy-to-understand process. The use of micro-credentials provides the structure, supports, and resources virtually.

## **B. Significance**

### **B.1 Magnitude of Results**

**B.1.i Overall.** This project is significant in both its immediate reach and the ability for replication of the model to extend the reach of impact. In this study, we serve 80 schools and approximately 640 school leaders in two geographic regions. This represents over 20,000 students who will directly benefit from improved leadership in their schools. These students will have teachers who are better able to address their needs and create schools that support success. Better achievement of underserved students is the most significant impact of this project. TCRP and its partners are committed to *every* child.

Additional significance comes when you consider the expanded reach of these results. Principals who are trained with TCRP's program will serve schools long after the program ends. This allows our impact to go beyond the initial 20,000 students. Additionally, the other school leaders involved in the study may one day become principals either in the participating schools or others, further extending the impact of this program. We will work closely with the participating charter schools to identify ways to sustain the process of continuous improvement

into their system without the reliance on TCRP and this grant. Finally, AIR's efficacy study will allow TCRP to expand its reach and offer its model of professional development to more schools across the nation with confidence.

**B.1.ii Goal 1: Increase principal effectiveness.** Increasing principal effectiveness improves all aspects of the school experience. Effective principals set expectations; mold the school culture; support their staff; focus on instruction; and manage people, data, and processes well. By increasing a principal's ability to do these things, this program will ultimately improve student performance and, with the initial focus, help close the achievement gap between English learners and native English-speaking students. The skills we give principals continue to serve students in other areas as they move to better support instruction for all students by establishing high expectations, creating effective professional development for teachers, and having the skills to teach teachers how to use data, time, and instructional materials. By improving principals, we are improving teachers and instruction, which ultimately better serves students.

Additional impact occurs as a result of the network of principals we will create. These professional relationships will continue beyond the grant period and provide participants with important colleagues, partners, and critical friends as they work to solve more complex challenges. Principals will serve as sounding boards and accountability partners pushing each other to improve instruction. Participants in the network will have earned micro-credentials that prove their competencies in the necessary leadership skills and can repeat the process they've gone through with TCRP but focus on different student groups or a school issue. This continuous improvement expertise makes their schools a better place to learn for all students long after the end of this project.

**B.1.iii Goal 2: Create a well-prepared pipeline for principals.** We are also training other school leaders and teacher-leaders in the school leadership teams. This ensures the skills we are

cultivating are disseminated throughout the school. It allows principals to share the leadership, which frees them to focus on culture and instruction. As school leaders develop in this project, they gain the skills they need to be the next generation of effective principals. This is significant as it allows for the benefits of this program to be sustained for many years no matter where these participants ultimately work.

We will also create a network of school leaders. This will further sustain the benefits of the program as the school leaders work together to solve future problems and serve as accountability partners for each other. Networks allow peers to continue to grow and develop their skills, constantly improving the way they serve students.

**B.1.iv Goal 3: Codify and share a system for principal development.** Perhaps the most significant part of the program is the goal to codify and disseminate the principal training system. The system we use in this program is intended to be used as a model across the nation. Evaluating the efficacy of the system, as well as carefully observing and recording the methods, allows us to disseminate the system to anyone interested in using it. The creation of micro-credentials which reflect the skills required to be an effective principal leverage technology to make this easily shared. The cohesive set of micro-credentials created can be used beyond the scope of this grant. Additionally, all materials will be posted on TCRP's website.

**B.2 Cost-effectiveness.** This program serves 80 schools and approximately 640 school leaders in multiple geographic areas. The total cost of the services (Total cost minus administrative and evaluation costs) is \$6.15 M, which translates to about \$12,800 per participant for three years or \$4,270 per participant per year. Considering that, on average, schools spend about \$18,000 per teacher per year on professional development that is often ineffective (Mader, 2015), this represents a much better “bang for your buck.” Rather than provide a one-time professional development, we are providing sustained support for two cohorts of 17 months each requiring

demonstration of principal and teacher leadership competencies that will both increase principal effectiveness and create a pipeline of future leaders. The results sustain the impact of this program for years.

The program also provides reach beyond the schools involved as many of the mid-level teachers and leaders that are trained will move to other organizations throughout their career. They will take their skills with them to these new schools, CMOs, and districts, and the reach of the program will extend to many more students than just those served during the treatment period. This extension in reach increases the cost efficiency exponentially.

The overall loss of money from students not graduating is about \$4.5 billion in lost wages and lost tax dollars each year (Schneider & Yin, 2011). Studies have shown that each dropout recovered confers a net benefit to taxpayers of \$127,000 (Levin & Rouse, 2012). The graduation rate for English learners is 67% nationally (vs. 79% for English- speakers), making this a population ripe with opportunity for graduation rate improvement (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Improving principals and schools helps reduce the numbers of dropouts, leading to more students attending and graduating from college, and more wages and tax dollars for the student and the nation, a net gain for everyone.

**B.3 Sustainability.** The work of this project aligns with the values and beliefs of all of the charter schools we work with: develop great principals to serve all students, as well as a pipeline of future school leaders that are prepared to serve students well. This project takes a new approach by making it embedded in the schools and using existing talent. Once a charter school, CMO, or district has gone through the program, the process of principals' using their skills, habits of mind, and continuous improvement cycles will continue. Some of the key people in continuing this work will be the principal coaches. They will take an active role in learning the skills, using our replicable materials, continuing the training, and guiding leadership team members in the

development of the evidence needed to earn the micro-credential. Since most of the large charter schools already have a budget for principal professional development, the continuation of this training will only be a repurposing of funds with little additional funding needed. We're also adding resources by providing training to the team of practicing educators on the school team. This program is replicable to anyone with school leadership experience and the ability to convene a network.

In order to continue the work with micro-credentials, the CMOs will be able to work closely with BloomBoard to determine future uses for micro-credentials including using them as components of an evaluation system, personalizing professional development, and opportunities for career growth. BloomBoard not only provides micro-credentials as measures of competencies but also helps to guide school and charter management organizations in charting the change toward a fully realized competency-based professional learning model (see Attachment H). Additionally, the program combines best practices for professional development and growth. It does not contain any proprietary or copyrightable pieces.

**B.4 Dissemination.** The purpose of TCRP is to support the educational success of all students. Part of this purpose is making all of its materials and methods open source so its reach is extended beyond the schools it immediately touches. To do this, TCRP does two things: shares materials on its website and shares methods on its blog and other social media (i.e., Twitter and Facebook). It is TCRP's policy that any materials created or used with participant schools are available on the website. Similarly, TCRP publishes best practices and methods are discussed in a blog on its website ([www.ensemblelearning.org](http://www.ensemblelearning.org)), allowing anyone to access them.

AIR will publish the findings from the evaluation on its website and in peer-reviewed journals. They will also present their findings at conferences, such as the American Educational Research Association (AERA) annual meeting, the National Charter Schools Conference, or the

National Principals Conference. The peer-reviewed journals and conferences will disseminate findings to the research community, and the website publication allows for broader access.

### C. Quality of the Management Plan

**C.1 Clear and Measurable Outcomes.** In each of the following tables, we outline the objectives and measures used to meet each of our three goals. Because TCRP’s program is so heavily based on data, we collect data for multiple purposes. The first purpose is to provide feedback to TCRP on their implementation, the second purpose is to provide feedback to participants on their schools, and the third is to evaluate the program. These different types of measures will be denoted parenthetically in the tables with the designations: TCRP, Participants, Evaluation.

<b>GOAL 1: INCREASE PRINCIPAL EFFECTIVENESS</b> Provide the research-based training and support to 80 current principals to help them increase their effectiveness with 20,000 students	
Objectives	Measures
Support principals in shaping a vision for their schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff climate survey (see Appendix A; Participants; Evaluation)</li> <li>● Participant surveys (TCRP; Evaluation)</li> <li>● Principal interviews (Evaluation)</li> <li>● Completion of related micro-credentials</li> </ul>
Help principals diagnose and improve their school climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff climate survey (Participants; Evaluation)</li> <li>● Walkthrough observations (see Appendix A; Participants; Evaluation)</li> <li>● Staff retention (Participants; Evaluation)</li> </ul>
Facilitate principals’ skills in building leadership in team members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Number of school leaders that complete training and begin implementation (TCRP; Participants; Evaluation)</li> <li>● School leadership survey (see Appendix A)</li> </ul>
Develop principals with the abilities to improve instruction at their sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Completion of related micro-credentials (Evaluation)</li> <li>● Student achievement data (Evaluation)</li> <li>● Walkthrough observations (Participants; Evaluation)</li> </ul>
Increase effectiveness of principals to manage systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Completion of related micro-credentials (Evaluation)</li> <li>● Coaching logs (Evaluation)</li> </ul>
Provide differentiated support for principals through individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Number of hours coaching provided (Evaluation)</li> <li>● Principal survey (TCRP; Evaluation)</li> </ul>

coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Coaching logs (Evaluation)</li> <li>● Coach interviews (Evaluation)</li> </ul>
Principals build a professional network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participant survey (TCRP; Evaluation)</li> <li>● Network survey (TCRP)</li> </ul>
Increase student learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Analysis of student achievement data (Evaluation)</li> </ul>

GOAL 2: CREATE A WELL-PREPARED PIPELINE FOR PRINCIPALS Along with principal, train 640 additional school leaders on effective leadership	
Objectives	Measures
Train leadership teams to work together to determine the goals for the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participant survey (TCRP; Evaluation)</li> <li>● Staff retention (Evaluation)</li> <li>● Completion of related micro-credentials</li> </ul>
Increase the instructional capacity of school leadership teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participant survey (TCRP)</li> <li>● Student achievement results (Evaluation)</li> <li>● Principal Interviews (Evaluation)</li> <li>● Walkthrough observations (Participants)</li> <li>● Classroom observations (Evaluation)</li> <li>● Completion of related micro-credentials</li> </ul>
School leaders build a professional network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Network survey (TCRP)</li> <li>● Participant survey (TCRP)</li> </ul>

GOAL 3: CODIFY AND SHARE A SYSTEM OF PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENT Monitor, evaluate, refine, and disseminate the research-based system used to develop principals and school teams	
Objectives	Measures
Evaluate the program to provide feedback for ongoing improvement and define essential elements for dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Student achievement (Evaluation)</li> <li>● Walkthrough observations (TCRP; Participants; Evaluation)</li> <li>● Grant period spending (TCRP)</li> <li>● Adoption of practices by CMOs (TCRP; Evaluation)</li> </ul>
Execute an independent study of the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff climate surveys (Participants; Evaluation)</li> <li>● Participant surveys (TCRP; Evaluation)</li> </ul>
Build participating CMO capacity to continue training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Coach Interviews (Evaluation)</li> <li>● Principal Interviews (Evaluation)</li> <li>● Participant survey (TCRP; Evaluation)</li> </ul>

## C.2 Management Plan

**C.2.i College-Ready Promise team.** TCRP and its partners have put together a strong team to support the management and execution of our plan. The project will be overseen by **Elise Darwish**, CEO of TCRP/Ensemble Learning (for all team CVs, see Appendix B). Previously Ms. Darwish was the founding Chief Academic Officer of Aspire Public Schools. In this role, she was responsible for principal professional development, the academic program, and the effective running of all schools as well as working on two federal grants (Teacher Incentive Fund and i3). Ms. Darwish will manage the TCRP employees and consultants, oversee all instructional professional development, manage the Regional Directors, and participate in accountability events for participants. **Dr. Leigh Mingle**, Program Director of TCRP, has a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology and a decade of experience in educational research and program evaluation. She will coordinate evaluation and continuous improvement activities, collect data from schools, serve as a liaison between participating CMOs and AIR, support instructional professional development, and participate in accountability events. **Farah Charania**, Director of Finance at TCRP, leads the finance and administration functions at TCRP. She has overseen grant funds or worked on the evaluation for several previous federal (GEAR UP) and state grants, including a \$3 million grant which brought together three leading human capital organizations in the field of education to create a joint knowledge management platform. She will manage the grant funds and financial reporting requirements. **Magda Ruz Gonzalez** works as a contractor with TCRP as an expert in English learners. Ms. Gonzalez has extensive experience in supporting schools in teaching English learners, as well as coaching principals. She most recently led the Multilingual Academic Support project at the Los Angeles County Office of Education. Ms. Gonzalez will present the instructional professional development to participants as well as oversee the accountability events.

**C.2.ii BloomBoard team.** BloomBoard’s team includes educators committed to meaningful professional learning experiences. **Kelly Montes De Oca**, Chief Learning Officer of BloomBoard, will lead the implementation of the micro-credential support. In addition, each BloomBoard client is assigned a Program Manager and Senior Learning Strategist to guide the implementation efforts. BloomBoard will provide reports on program activity including status of micro-credential completion and engagement in the BloomBoard discussion groups.

**C.2.iii AIR team.** The AIR evaluation team will include researchers who have extensive experience working on teacher and school leadership. **Matthew Clifford, Ph.D.**, a principal researcher at AIR, will serve as Principal Investigator of the proposed project. In this role, he will oversee all of AIR’s activities, ensuring that tasks are carried out with rigor and at high levels. **Ryan Eisner** is a researcher at AIR, and he will serve as the project director for the external evaluation of Learning While Leading. The quantitative team responsible for carrying out the impact study of the project will be led by senior researcher **Eric Larsen, Ph.D.**, with the support of researchers and research associates. **Ryan Williams, Ph.D.**, a principal researcher at AIR, will advise on random assignment procedure and will consult on analysis decisions throughout the project. **Bo Zhu**, a senior researcher at AIR, will lead the design, administration, and analysis of all survey data. **Zena Rudo, Ph.D.**, will lead a team responsible for qualitative data collection and analysis. She will be supported by researchers and research associates in collecting and analyzing data. Research assistants will support this team in scheduling interviews with participants and coaches. The AIR project team will leverage the technical expertise of **Dean Gerdeman, Ph.D.**, who will serve as a senior quality assurance advisor. Additionally, the project team will enlist the support of senior AIR researchers who have experience in leadership development and charter school contexts, **Jenny DeMonte, Ph.D.**, and **Tammie Knights**.

**C.2.iv Project plan and timeline.** The Project Plan has three phases:

**Phase One:** October–December 2018—These first months will be used to build the infrastructure, hire, and onboard all of the teams (project and school teams).

**Phase Two:** January 2019–April 2020—Cohort 1 (C1) begins with 40 schools (the treatment schools). These will be grouped into five different networks of eight schools apiece.

**Phase Three:** May 2020–September 2021—Cohort 2 (C2) will be 40 new schools (previously the control schools). These will also be grouped into five different networks of eight schools.

**C.2.v. Milestones.** TCRP and partners will meet the project goals through the following milestones.

GOAL 1: INCREASE PRINCIPAL EFFECTIVENESS			
Objectives	Staff Roles and Responsibilities	Milestones	Timeline
Support principals in shaping a vision for their schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principals recruited</li> <li>TCRP holds pre-engagement call with all participants</li> <li>CMO partners identify coaches</li> <li>TCRP provides a tool for creating/revising vision</li> <li>BloomBoard shares aligned micro-credentials</li> <li>Principal shares vision with school leadership team</li> <li>Coaches provide feedback on vision</li> </ul>	Principals identified	C1: Dec 2018 C2: May 2020
		Calls held	C1: Dec 2018 C2: May 2020
		Coaches hired	C1: Dec 2018 C2: May 2020
		Draft visions created	C1: Feb 2019 C2: Jul 2020
		Feedback given to vision	C1: Mar 2019 C2: Aug 2020
Help principals diagnose and improve their school climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TCRP provides school culture walkthrough tools</li> <li>BloomBoard shares aligned micro-credentials</li> <li>School leadership teams collect qualitative data</li> <li>TCRP analyzes quantitative data</li> <li>TCRP facilitates gap analysis done on climate</li> <li>TCRP facilitates goals for</li> </ul>	Tools and micro-credential disseminated	C1: Dec 2018 C2: May 2020
		Data collected	C1: Jan 2019 C2: Jun 2020
		Analysis shared	C1: Feb 2019 C2: Jun 2020
		Gap analysis complete	C1: Feb 2019 C2: Jun 2020

	climate and plan for improvement created <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coaches monitor school culture goals and problem solve with principal</li> </ul>	Goals complete	C1: Feb 2019 C2: Jun 2020
		Monthly walkthroughs on culture begin	C1: Mar 2019 C2: Aug 2020
Facilitate principals' skills in building leadership in team members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TCRP provides the criteria for a successful leadership team</li> <li>BloomBoard shares aligned micro-credentials</li> <li>TCRP creates surveys to assess team dynamics and success</li> <li>Principals pick their teams</li> <li>Teams build capacity through strength-finder</li> <li>Coaches observe team meetings and coach principals</li> </ul>	Criteria/micro-credential shared	C1: Dec 2018 C2: May 2020
		Surveys created and administered	C1: Jan 2019 C2: Jun 2020
		Selection complete	C1: Jan 2019 C2: Jun 2020
		Strength-finder results shared	C1: Apr 2019 C2: Sep 2020
		Coaches begin to observe and debrief team meetings	C1: Apr 2019 C2: Sep 2020
Develop principals with the abilities to improve instruction at their sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership teams walk through classrooms to assess current instruction for English learners</li> <li>Leadership teams set goals for English learners based on current data</li> <li>TCRP expert provides training</li> <li>BloomBoard introduces aligned micro-credentials</li> <li>Leadership teams set milestone goals for improving instruction</li> <li>Principals walk through classrooms with coaches monthly</li> </ul>	Observation walkthrough forms	C1: Mar 2019 C2: Aug 2020
		Set goals published	C1: Aug 2019 C2: Jan 2021
		Training complete	C1: Nov 2019 C2: Apr 2021
		Process goals published	C1: Aug 2019 C2: Jan 2021
		Observation walkthroughs begin	C1: Aug 2019 C2: Jan 2021
Increase effectiveness of principals to manage systems for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School teams analyze data to set goals</li> <li>Using goals, school teams determine benchmark measures for the school plan</li> </ul>	School goals	C1: Feb 2019 C2: Jul 2020
		3-4 benchmark measures determined	C1: Aug 2019 C2: Jan 2021

people, data, and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BloomBoard introduces aligned micro-credentials</li> <li>• School teams analyze benchmark data results and determine next steps</li> <li>• Coaches observe data conversations and provide feedback to the principal monthly</li> </ul>	Data analysis on benchmark assessments	C1: Oct 2019, Jan 2020, Apr 2020 C2: Mar 2021, Jun 2021, Sep 2021
		Feedback from coaches	C1: Apr 2019 C2: Sep 2020
Provide differentiated support for principals through individual coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TCRP trains coaches in effective coaching</li> <li>• Principals provide feedback on coaching experience</li> <li>• CMOs and TCRP provide feedback to individual coaches</li> </ul>	Criteria and training provided	C1: Jan 2019 C2: Jun 2020
		Quarterly survey or check-in	C1: Apr 2019, Sep 2019, Jan 2020 C2: Sep 2020, Feb 2021, Jun 2021
		Feedback conversations	C1: Apr 2019, Sep 2019, Jan 2020 C2: Sep 2020, Feb 2021, Jun 2021
Principals build a professional network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TCRP builds relationship activities into every cohort meeting</li> <li>• School leadership teams work together in accountability events</li> <li>• TCRP holds celebration event</li> </ul>	Cohort meetings	C1: Feb 2019, Apr 2019, Aug 2019, Nov 2019 C2: Jul 2020, Sep 2020, Jan 2021, Apr 2021
		3–4 events each cohort	Begin Sept 2019 and Feb 2021
		1 event each cohort	C1: Apr 2020 C2: Sep 2021

GOAL 2: CREATE A WELL-PREPARED PIPELINE FOR PRINCIPALS			
Objectives	Staff Roles and Responsibilities	Milestones	Timeline
Train leadership teams to work together to determine the goals for the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TCRP provides training in team dynamics</li> <li>• TCRP facilitates school leadership teams as they determine goals for schools</li> </ul>	Training complete	C1: Apr 2019 C2: Sep 2020
		Goals determined	C1: Feb 2019 C2: Jun 2020

Increase the instructional capacity of school leadership teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership teams walk through classrooms to assess current state of instruction for English learners</li> <li>• Leadership teams set goals for English learners based on current data</li> <li>• Training on English learners</li> <li>• Leadership teams set milestone goals for improving instruction</li> </ul>	Observation walkthrough forms	C1: Mar 2019 C2: Aug 2020
		Set goals published	C1: Aug 2019 C2: Jan 2021
		Training complete	C1: Nov 2019 C2: Apr 2021
		Milestone goals published	C1: Aug 2019 C2: Jan 2021
School leaders build a professional network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TCRP builds relationship activities into every cohort meeting</li> <li>• School leadership teams work together in accountability events</li> <li>• TCRP holds celebration event</li> </ul>	Cohort meetings	C1: Feb 2019, Apr 2019, Aug 2019, Nov 2019 C2: Jul 2020, Sep 2020, Jan 2021, Apr 2021
		3–4 events each cohort	C1: Begin Sep 2019 C2: Feb 2021

GOAL 3: CODIFY AND SHARE A SYSTEM OF PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENT			
Objectives	Staff Roles and Responsibilities	Milestones	Timeline
Evaluate the program to provide feedback for ongoing improvement and define essential elements for dissemination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AIR conducts a formative and summative evaluation of Learning While Leading</li> <li>• AIR will randomly assign schools to begin implementation in Cohort 1, or wait until Cohort 2</li> <li>• AIR staff will collect data from participants, schools, and CMOs throughout Cohort 1</li> <li>• AIR will analyze qualitative and quantitative data</li> </ul>	Collect baseline school data	Dec 2018
		Conduct random assignment	Jan 2019
		Collect coaching logs	Monthly; Jan 2019 through Jun 2020
		Administer school climate survey	Feb 2019 and Apr 2020
		Collect participant surveys	Following network and accountability events
		Conduct CLASS observations	Mar 2019 and Mar 2020

		Collect staff retention data	Jan 2019, Jun 2019, Jan 2020, Jun 2020
		Conduct principal interviews	May/Jun 2019 and May/Jun 2020
		Conduct coach interviews	Jun 2019 and Jun 2020
		Collect administrative data from CMOs	Summer 2019 and Summer 2020
Execute an independent study of the project that codifies critical aspects and measures the effects on current and future principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AIR to conduct study and write-up methods</li> </ul>	Conduct random assignment	Jan 2019
		Conduct impact analyses	Nov 2020–Mar 2021
		Conduct implementation analyses	Summer 2019 and Summer 2020
		Report on implementation	Aug 2019, Aug 2020, and Jan 2021
		Report on impact	Mar 2021
Disseminate findings from the project evaluation to reach a broad audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AIR staff share findings with TCRP partners</li> <li>AIR staff share findings with CMO and school staff</li> <li>AIR staff present findings at national research conferences (e.g., AERA, Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, National Charter Schools Conference)</li> <li>AIR staff submit research</li> </ul>	Presentation of findings with TCRP, BloomBoard, and other partners	Aug 2019, Aug 2020, Aug 2021
		Webinar for CMO and school staff	Aug 2021
		Present at research conferences	Spring 2021
		Submit	Summer 2021

	articles for publication	manuscripts to journals	
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We are confident that the proposed management plan includes the resources necessary to effectively carry out the proposed project. All partners, including the charter schools, have agreed to the budget and its adequacy to meet the goals and milestones.

**C.3 Continuous Improvement.** All of TCRP’s work is continuously reviewed and refined based on data and compelling research. In an explicit continuous improvement cycle, TCRP, under the name Ensemble Learning, created three different prototypes of how to best increase the achievement of underserved students, such as English learners. The pilots are near the end, and we are codifying our learning for our own future projects, including this one, and sharing our lessons in our blog. For this project, we will have both quantitative data such as principal and teacher retention rates, student test performance, and surveys as well as informal conversations that will inform the current cohort and following cohorts.

**D. Quality of the Project Evaluation**

AIR will conduct an independent, mixed-methods evaluation of Learning While Leading that will provide TCRP with formative feedback and generate rigorous new evidence about whether the program had an impact on key school- and student-level outcomes. This evaluation will be eligible to meet WWC standards without reservations. The evaluation will be guided by a series of evaluation questions designed to ascertain the program’s impact on a number of student- and school-level outcomes and another set of questions designed to address implementation and inform TCRP’s continuous improvement efforts.

The evaluation will occur in two phases. The first phase will last from January 2019 through summer 2020 and will consist of collecting all data required for the study while providing TCRP with formative data. The second phase will begin in June 2020 and last through the end of the

grant, during which AIR will analyze all of the data associated with the impact analyses and report on findings to TCRP, project stakeholders, and the field at large.

**D.1 Rigorous Evidence.** The impact of Learning While Leading will be assessed using a school-level cluster randomized controlled design. The randomized controlled trial will take advantage of Learning While Leading’s cohort design—half of the 80 participating elementary, middle, and high schools will be randomly assigned to receive program services in January 2019, while the other half will be assigned to receive programming in the summer of 2020, after the first cohort has fully implemented. This design allows us to observe the impact of Learning While Leading after a year and a half 18 months of implementation on student- and school-level outcomes, compared to business as usual in control schools. A cluster randomized design has a number of advantages—the study will be eligible to meet WWC evidence standards without reservations for student achievement outcomes, and it will produce rigorous impact estimates for school-level staff outcomes (What Works Clearinghouse, 2017). There is minimal risk of contamination because leaders in control schools will not have access to Learning While Leading programming. Finally, staff attrition during the study period will not result in schools being dropped from the final impact analysis. The study’s proposed delayed treatment design mitigates the risk that control schools will participate in a program similar to Learning While Leading during the 18-month implementation period because they have been promised the program beginning in summer of 2020.

The evaluation team will use an innovative randomization procedure that minimizes treatment and control differences on key covariates that are related to student and school outcomes to further increase statistical precision. This procedure (rerandomization) entails using an algorithm that repetitively randomizes schools to treatment or control until a specified balance is achieved on the covariates of interest. Previous research has shown that rerandomization can

dramatically increase the effective sample size for a given set and retain all the benefits of unbiased causal inference that conventional random assignment provides (Morgan & Rubin, 2015). The covariates of interest that will be used to conduct randomization and optimize balance will include prior levels of student achievement, student demographics, school size, school type, the number of building-level administrators, the number of years the current principal has been in place, and the principal's overall number of years of experience as an administrator, among others. Schools will be blocked within state (California and Texas).

**D.2 Quantitative and Qualitative Data.** The evaluation team will collect and analyze a variety of qualitative and quantitative data sources over the course of the evaluation. These data sources include surveys, interviews, classroom observations, administrative data, coaching logs, and program documents.

**D.2.i. Impact Analyses.** AIR's evaluation questions have been developed with Learning While Leading's goals in mind, using objective measures to assess the program's impact on student- and school-level outcomes (Table 1). These measures include school climate scores (as ascertained through an annual staff survey), ratings of teachers' instruction (as measured through observations of teaching), and changes in students' standardized test scores. These measures are aligned to the proposed project's theory of action that in improving principal effectiveness, the school's instruction and culture will improve, as will student performance.

The study will not create a single measure of principal effectiveness. Rather, the analyses of the program's impact on student achievement, instruction, and school culture will be interpreted as the result of improvements in participants' effectiveness.

**Table 1. Evaluation Impact Questions, Outcome Measures, and Program Goals**

Evaluation Question	Outcome Measures	Project Objectives
EQ1. What is the impact of Learning While Leading on school culture, staff retention, and staff perceptions of climate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School climate scores (as measured through staff survey)</li> <li>▪ Staff retention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve school culture</li> </ul>
EQ2. What is the impact of Learning While Leading on teachers' instructional practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ratings of teachers' instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve classroom instruction</li> </ul>
EQ3. What is the impact of Learning While Leading on student achievement in mathematics and English language arts? Are there different impacts for different subgroups of students (e.g., English language learners)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Changes in students' standardized test scores in mathematics and English language arts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase student performance</li> </ul>

AIR will administer the **U.S. Department of Education's *ED School Climate Surveys (EDSCLS)*** to school staff in both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 schools. The EDSCLS is a suite of survey instruments that have been validated to create school-level constructs of engagement, safety, and environment. The EDSCLS will provide the team with a consistent measure across schools. This survey will be administered online to school staff (including educators and administrators) in both treatment and control schools in January 2019 (to serve as a baseline) and in March 2020. To analyze survey data, AIR will create scale scores for each of the constructs using the Rasch model for ordered categories (Andrich, 1978; Rasch, 1980; Wright & Masters, 1982; Wright & Stone, 1979). Scale scores will provide a quantitative measure of frequency and intensity of an individual's responses. We will average these scale scores within each school-by-year combination to create aggregate measures of school culture.

The evaluation team will request **staffing data** from each participating CMO to measure staff retention, requesting rosters, position titles, and length-in-position for each teacher and administrator in participating schools. We will also request exit codes and reasons for staff who

leave their schools (i.e., retirement, promotion, termination, resignation, etc.). To account for any staffing changes that occur during the school year, records will be collected twice annually.

In order to measure instructional practice, AIR will **observe video recorded lessons** from four teachers, randomly sampled by grade and subject taught, in each Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 school. Observers will observe videos of teachers using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS<sup>®</sup>), a validated observation protocol used to assess teacher performance/effectiveness in a range of classrooms and which AIR has experience using for a number of large-scale evaluation studies.<sup>1</sup> Classroom observations will occur in March 2020.

The evaluation team will collect administrative data about students directly from CMOs representing all schools participating in both cohorts of Learning While Leading. These data will include **student demographic data** (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, English language proficiency, special education status) as well as **standardized test scores**—the Smarter Balanced Exam in California and the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) in Texas. To make scale scores comparable across grades, subjects, and years, the scores will be normalized within each grade, subject, and year. The normalized score will represent the extent to which the student scores higher or lower than the average student in that grade, subject, and year, relative to the statewide distribution of student achievement in that grade, subject, and year. Data will be requested for the 2017–18 through 2019–20 school years. These data will be used in estimating the impact on student achievement (as described below).

**D.2.ii Implementation analyses.** AIR will track measures associated with the evaluation’s key implementation questions in order to provide TCRP with information about the progress of

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<sup>1</sup> AIR will identify and train contractors local to each implementing school to videorecord teachers’ lessons, which will then be transmitted to AIR’s certified CLASS reviewers. This approach reduces the need for AIR staff to travel to each participating school and allows for flexibility if the teacher selected to be observed is absent on the day the observer is on-site. In addition, creating a video of the teachers’ lessons allows for instruction to be coded using multiple observation frameworks, if desired.

implementation (Table 2). These measures will be in place to provide TCRP with information to improve the program. For instance, these measures will show the degree to which the program has been implemented with fidelity and the barriers and facilitators experienced during implementation. These measures will be collected, analyzed, and reported on during the course of Cohort 1 to inform TCRP’s improvement efforts.

**Table 2. Evaluation Implementation Measures**

Evaluation Question	Implementation Measures
EQ4. Has Learning While Leading been implemented with fidelity across schools?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Participation rates in Learning While Leading events</li> <li>▪ Satisfaction with Learning While Leading events</li> <li>▪ Number of interactions with program coaches</li> </ul>
EQ5. How has implementation varied across different types of schools and school contexts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Content covered in coaching logs</li> <li>▪ Completion of micro-credentials</li> <li>▪ Interactions with Professional Learning Communities</li> </ul>
EQ6. What have school staff cited as the successes and challenges associated with implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Self-reported challenges from participant interviews, coach interviews, surveys, and coaching logs</li> <li>▪ Self-reported successes from participant interviews, coach interviews, surveys, and coaching logs</li> </ul>

AIR and TCRP will administer **postevent surveys** to Cohort 1 participants after each network and accountability event. These surveys will be a mix of closed- and open-ended items intended for participants to provide feedback about the event they just experienced, as well as their perceptions about successes and challenges of the program to this point. AIR will develop a system to report these results promptly to TCRP staff to facilitate changes in programming.

AIR will request that coaches submit monthly **coaching logs** (from January 2019 through June 2020), documenting their work with each school in their caseload. This online log will include fields for coaches to report how many times they interacted with each school’s leadership team and the topics covered in those interactions. The log will also have a space for coaches to insert notes about their schools. The evaluation team will analyze closed-ended items to assess school teams’ overall progress, while the open-ended items will be analyzed to examine the

content of coach-team interactions. Data from these logs will be used to document the progression of implementation, as well as any reported facilitators or barriers.

AIR will receive and review **program documents** from TCRP on an ongoing basis. These documents will include participant sign-in sheets, meeting agendas, presentations, school vision documents, coach résumés, micro-credential completion data, and other artifacts that program and school staff create as a result of their participation. The evaluation team will conduct reviews of these data to assess the status of implementation and identify areas in which teams appear to be excelling or lagging.

The evaluation team will conduct 45-minute **interviews with principals and other participating staff** from each Cohort 1 school at the conclusion of the 2018–19 and 2019–20 school years. The goal of the first interview will be to solicit feedback about successes and challenges of the first half-year of implementation, perceived progress on the program’s outcomes, and improvements that could be made for Year 2. The second interview will be used to capture participants’ experiences in the Learning While Leading program, perceived successes and challenges, and the specific aspects of the program that participants believed had the biggest impacts for their schools. The evaluation team will conduct 30- to 45-minute **interviews with each of the program coaches** in June 2019 and June 2020 to solicit their feedback about the progress of the schools they support and the quality of the supports provided by TCRP.

**D.3 Valid and Reliable Data.** AIR will evaluate the impact of Learning While Leading using a delayed-treatment randomized controlled design. As a randomized controlled trial, the study will produce unbiased, valid, and reliable estimates of program impact. AIR has worked with TCRP to identify a sufficiently powered sample size for the impact analysis. A total of 80 charter schools, serving elementary, middle, and high school students, in two states will participate in Learning While Leading, with 40 schools assigned to treatment and 40 schools assigned to

control. Details of power analyses can be found in Appendix I. If no schools exit from the study, the minimum detectable effect size (MDES) for student-level analyses is 0.15.<sup>2</sup> The MDES for outcomes measured through staff responses concerning school culture and staff retention is 0.25, while the MDES for instructional practice is 0.28 (as measured through observations of four teachers per school). Even with attrition of up to 15%, we anticipate having reasonable power to detect student- and school-level outcomes (MDES of 0.17, 0.28, and 0.30).

All impact models will be estimated using multilevel regressions, in which students (or staff members) are clustered within schools, with a fixed effect for state. The models will estimate mean differences between treatment and control on the key outcomes—student achievement, teacher retention, school climate—while controlling for student- and school-level characteristics. Even though these characteristics will have been balanced during the randomization process, the inclusion of covariates will increase the precision of the program effect estimates (Raudenbush, 1997). More detail can be found in Appendix J.

In addition to estimating the overall program impact, we will also conduct analyses to examine the extent to which the impact of Learning While Leading varies across different types of students and schools. Specifically, we will examine whether there were differential effects for English language learners, students with disabilities, and students with low baseline test scores. We will also examine whether there were differential effects in outcomes based on school-level characteristics, such as school level, state, region, grades served, and percentages of student demographic groups. Finally, we will conduct correlational analyses to assess whether levels of implementation among Cohort 1 schools were associated with any student- or school-level outcomes within the cohort.

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<sup>2</sup> We assume that approximately 20,000 students in tested grades and subjects will enroll in the 80 schools participating in Learning while Leading.

**D. 4 Performance Feedback.** As described above, ongoing data collection efforts (coaching logs, document reviews, postevent surveys) will be used to track each school team’s progress over time and to provide ongoing feedback to TCRP. Postevent surveys and coaching logs will be collected through online platforms, which will facilitate the aggregation of responses and generation of descriptive statistics. Although individual respondents and schools will not be shared with the program team, responses will be disaggregated (when appropriate) by state, region, and network to identify variations in implementation as well as common facilitators or challenges. These results will be discussed with TCRP staff to consider how results impact the direction of implementation.

AIR will create implementation reports after the conclusion of the 2018–19 and 2019–20 school years. These reports will document the progress of implementation and synthesize areas in which the program could improve heading into the subsequent school year. Reports will draw on analyses of principal and coach interviews,<sup>3</sup> participant surveys, document reviews, and coaching logs with the goal of identifying areas for improvement.

An implementation matrix will be used at the end of Cohort 1 to assess each school team’s overall level of implementation. The implementation matrix will contain a priori definitions of high, moderate, and low on a number of program implementation indicators and measures. These ratings will be created in consultation with TCRP staff and senior AIR staff with expertise in school leadership development and the charter school context. The study team will then analyze data from a number of data sources to provide each school with individual indicator and overall ratings of implementation. The report will continue to draw on these data sources to identify key successes and challenges to implementation.

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<sup>3</sup> All interviews will be conducted and analyzed using Nvivo qualitative research software. Analysts will code the transcripts along key analytical categories.

## E. Conclusion

TCRP's research-based program will be implemented to help improve principals and other school leaders in 80 schools in multiple geographic regions. The reach of this project extends far beyond the project itself, preparing current and future leaders to better serve students for the duration of their careers. AIR's randomized controlled trial of the program will allow us to know exactly how well it works and which pieces are most effective, providing the information TCRP needs to further expand their reach and the number of students positively impacted. Ultimately, we will improve the education of students across the nation and make a significant dent in closing the achievement gap.

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