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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Iredell-Statesville Schools (U411C190007)
Reader #1: **********

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	16
Sub Total	20	16
Total	20	16

Technical Review Form

Reader #1:   **********

Applicant: Iredell-Statesville Schools (U411C190007)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

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

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

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

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

   Strengths:

   1. The applicant (p.22) cited conducting a power analysis which indicated its sample size was sufficient for its statistical analysis.
   2. The applicant (p.22) will utilize statewide tests in math and English as the basis for calculating academic improvement which will address What Works Clearinghouse reliability and validity requirements.
   3. The applicant (p.22) will utilize 60 schools within the state to serve as the comparison group. This large comparison group dramatically eliminates analysis questions regarding inappropriate comparison school sites.
   4. The applicant's (p.22) statistical procedures (quasi- experimental regression analysis) will meet What Works Clearinghouse standards to obtain a moderate level of evidence.
   5. The applicant (p.23) provided a Fidelity Index to assess the fidelity of implementation of the program at the different school sites which is important to meet What Works Clearinghouse standards.
   6. The applicant (p.23) will have comparison school principals surveyed to eliminate schools utilizing similar interventions to improve comparison groups not utilizing similar interventions which addresses What Works Clearinghouse standards.
   7. The applicant (p.24) provided information regarding the reliability coefficients for the Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey and the Panorama Teacher Survey which meet the What Works Clearinghouse standards.
   8. The applicant (p.24) will utilize statewide test results for math and English which provide a strong rationale for high reliability and validity within intervention and comparison school sites.
   9. The applicant (pp. 24-25) provided a good rational approach to determining reliability and validity estimates for the focus groups, coaching logs, and other student and teacher surveys which met What Works Clearinghouse standards
   10. The applicant (p.25) and in the attachments utilized a well-conceived logic model which defines the key interventions, improving school climate, reduced referrals, and academic achievement.
   11. The applicant (p. 25) described several formative and summative reporting data elements and timelines to track and evaluate program activities which will address meeting the measurable threshold for acceptable implementation,

Weaknesses:

1.   The applicant (p.23) in its "propensity score matching covariates" for its regression analysis did not include any covariates dealing with any of the "trauma-informed practices" which constitute the major emphasis of the program – e.g. Culturally Responsive Teaching Survey, Panorama Teacher Survey, School Climate Staff Survey, lost instructional days, discipline referrals (pp.5-6). It was unclear how the applicant will make definitive casual connections of the intervention to increases in math and English scores on statewide tests without conducting these surveys in the comparison schools to eliminate other possible interventions at the comparison school sites.

2.   The applicant (p.23) did not present any rationale for the statement that little to no school attrition is anticipated. It is unclear if attrition over a lengthy longitudinal study will be a factor.

3.   The applicant (p.23) indicated it will conduct a regression analysis to determine predictors for exclusionary discipline actions. It is unclear what are the specific items to be analyzed and if these items are readily available at the comparison school sites.

4.   It was unclear how the applicant (pp..23-24) will incorporate the surveys and statistical analyses to formulate the applicant's effective strategies for replication.

5.   The applicant's evaluation plan (p.25) did not detail measurable threshold outcomes for acceptable implementation. It was unclear how the applicant will determine program progress (e.g. level of increases in survey findings) sufficient to recommend implementation in a replication report.

Reader's Score: 16

Status: Submitted
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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Iredell-Statesville Schools (U411C190007)
Reader #2:   **********

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	16
Sub Total	20	16
Total	20	16

Technical Review Form

Reader #2: **********

Applicant: Iredell-Statesville Schools (U411C190007)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

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

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

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

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

   Strengths:

   Method: The evaluation is designed to answer one clear RQ (p. 22). The evaluation plan proposed a CSITS design as better suited than RCT for whole school initiative that, if well-implemented, will achieve WWC with reservations. All schools in the treatment group are within one large district (p 22). The control group will be created via propensity score matching model without replacement using a 3:1 model to identify 60 control schools with the closest baseline profile as the treatment schools (p 22). Baseline equivalence will be included addressed in analyses if needed. Control schools will be evaluated on their use of an intervention that could confound the results and will be replaced by another school to best control for opportunity to identify RIPPLE as a causal component (p 24). If well-matched, this design should lead to analytic results that should meet WWC standards with reservations.
   A power analysis (p22; Appendix I) was conducted to determine the number of students and schools needed to detect the predicted difference and this lead the decision to select all schools within this one district to ensure the sample is sufficient. If attrition is minimal as predicted (p 23), data on an adequate sample to answer research questions should be obtained, and the results should meet WWC standards with reservations. The summative evaluation focuses on one confirmatory research questions that is clearly stated and aligned with the proposed activities (p22). The evaluation is designed to investigate longitudinal impacts of RIPPLE on student academic achievement and teacher level, using teacher outcomes as mediators in student outcomes (p20). The proposed data to be collected includes treatment and control student scores on state-mandated standardized testing in math and English (p 22) which should lead to reliable analyses.

   Replication: The evaluation plan includes an exploratory analysis designed to identify the results for sub-groups of students (ethnicity, grade level, gender…) to determine if RIPPLE impacts all students equally (p23). The evaluation team will investigate implementation fidelity across the key components of RIPPLE and has already proposed a threshold for implementation fidelity that is needed to achieve the intended results (p 5 & 24). Appendix I presents a multi-dimensional Fidelity Index that has already been developed to track degree to which students experience intervention as intended (p23). Each component of the fidelity index will also be investigated to analyze the individual impact of each component on student outcomes (p24). This should provide a clear picture of which components are critical and further clarify the thresholds for implementation to promote quality replication. In-depth interview data from key stakeholders will enable

evaluators to triangulate the results and uncover barriers to implementation that could be useful for future projects (p24). The proposed exploratory evaluation should also result in identifying and improving the critical elements of RIPPLE for use beyond the study period via a formative evaluation and continuous improvement loop via monthly evaluation-development team discussions (p24).

Reliable data: A capable independent evaluation team (The Evaluation Group) has been tasked with ensuring the data are collected and analyzed with academic rigor (p25). The primary outcomes—changes in student behavior, social emotional skills, and achievement—are measured by tools that are considered valid and reliable (attendance, suspensions, Panorama SEL, NC standardized assessments; p5). If collected and analyzed reliably, the resulting analyses should meet WWC standards.

Key components/outcomes: The key objectives, research questions, data to be collected, and method of analysis are presented in the text and in the evaluation section (p5-6, & p 23-24). The evaluation plan is aligned with the Logic Model that delineates key goals, outcomes, and measures. Potential mediators and moderators are noted in the LM and in the evaluation plan and will be monitored for potential impact (23-25).

Weaknesses:

The primary analyses will use "school-level mean standard scores" (p. 22). The sample includes 2 high schools, 5 middles schools, and 12 elementary schools. School type is not noted in the analysis plan and could be a moderating factor that should be included in the analytical model. In addition, the evaluation plan does not include a process for including only those students who experience the RIPPLE program for multiple years in this aggregated score. As a result, the mean standard score by school could mask the true impact of the program.

Utilizing schools from only one large school district may not support generalization to a broader context and/or replication in other districts, one to the key goals of the funder.

The Fidelity Index will be based on "qualitative indicators of Adherence, Exposure, Quality, Responsiveness" per Nelson, Cordray…2012. This reference is not in the bibliography for the reader to better understand the proposed use of these indicators. In addition, it is unclear how the items on the Fidelity Index will be distilled into these factors and/or how an overall rating for fidelity will be generated—an identified potentially critical moderator of overall impact. A plan for factor analysis or to calculate the measure's reliability within the study group would be helpful.

Reader's Score: 16

Status: Submitted
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