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

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Putnam County School District (U411C190013)
Reader #1:   **********

		Points Possible	**Points Scored**
Questions			
Selection Criteria			
Quality of the Project Evaluation			
1. Project Evaluation		20	13
	Sub Total	20	13
	Total	20	13

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - EIR Early Phase Tier 2 - 1: 84.411C

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

Applicant: Putnam County School District (U411C190013)

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:

   The proposed external evaluator for the project has extensive expertise and experience to be able to conduct an evaluation for a project of this scope and magnitude (Appendix H). In addition, the dedicated resources in the proposed budget (p. 5 of budget narrative) would be sufficient to complete the proposed evaluation tasks.

   The stated intention to account for the nested structure of the data using a two-level hierarchical linear modeling nested within teachers is appropriate for this design. The proposed evaluation also includes an appropriate assumption of teacher attrition and power analysis with inclusion of appropriate estimates of minimum detectable effect sizes for measured effects (p. 21-22). The use of these models, assumptions, and power analysis strengthen the evaluation's capacity to produce evidence of the project's effectiveness.

   The proposed data sources outlined in the narrative and Table 10 (p. 23-24) could provide valid and reliable performance data on some key performance measures relevant to the stated goals of the project. For example, the proposed measures (p.23) have been established as valid and reliable for the sample population (e.g., Teacher and Student Motivational Climate Assessments, Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale, Student Literacy Self-Efficacy).

   The proposed evaluation includes a detailed stated intention to disseminate the results of the evaluation through extensive publications and presentations that could provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing to additional teachers (p. 20).

   The evaluation provides clear articulation of key components and mediators of the proposed study (Table 10, p. 24) which includes a detailed logic model detailing inputs, activities, and short-term, mid-term, and long-term outputs (Appendix G).

Weaknesses:

The ability of the proposed evaluation plan to provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication and scaling could be strengthened by adding a formalized implementation fidelity study that also adds to the proposed goals and objectives relative to implementation effects for different schools, locations, and student body demographics as well as including analysis of teacher attrition.

The proposed data sources outlined in the narrative and Table 10 (p. 23-34) are identified with measurable targets (p. 12-13); however, there is no justification given as to the appropriateness of those targets as measurable thresholds for implementation or that they were not simply arbitrarily designated.

The proposed cluster-level quasi-experimental design (p. 20) with teachers matched through propensity score matching at baseline utilizing matched pretest measures of outcomes based on teachers and student demographics through clustering student-level outcomes could potentially produce evidence of the project's effectiveness that would meet the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations; however, the narrative is lacking in details as to the proposed independent variables from this cluster-level quasi-experimental design model and exactly how they would be measured (e.g., how many times, duration). In addition, the inclusion of more details regarding the selection and sampling procedures and clarification of class- or school-level analyses could add needed justification of the proposed evaluation's ability to produce evidence of project effectiveness.

Reader's Score: 13

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 07/18/2019 10:54 AM

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Putnam County School District (U411C190013)
Reader #2: **********

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	12
Sub Total	20	12
Total	20	12

Technical Review Form

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

Applicant: Putnam County School District (U411C190013)

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:

   This project proposes a cluster level quasi-experimental design using propensity score matching (pp. 20-21) to measure project impact combined with a mixed-methods design to investigate project implementation (p. 22) which together, if well implemented, could address the WWC criteria for meeting standards with reservations about the project's effectiveness and is a strength of this proposal. The proposal includes a reasonable power analysis (p. 22) which estimates the effect sizes of the student and teacher outcomes the study will be able to reasonably and reliably detect. Another strength of the proposal is the elucidation of the various evaluation instruments (p. 23) the project will use along with the associated psychometrics of them which provides confidence the project will be able to collect valid and reliable data.

   The evaluation design of this application includes numerous opportunities to share formative feedback to participating stakeholders through quarterly feedback meetings (pp. 15-16) between the project and evaluation teams which is a strength of this application as this will likely allow for assessing interim progress as well as provide useful feedback to project participants which would also be useful in replicating the project in other settings. The proposal includes a logic model and theory of action (p. 14, Appendix G) which will likely help frame the evaluation which is important for articulating the key project components and outcomes. Finally, the project intends to hire an external evaluator (CIC Planning Group) which will contribute external objectivity and will likely provide confidence for the evaluation work as well as any potential findings to project stakeholders (p. 18) and is important for the perceived validity of project outcomes.

   Weaknesses:

   The application articulates several quantitative targets as part of its intended goals (pp. 12-13) such as "3 percentage point increase in years 2-5", and "85% per year in years 2-3, 90% in years 4-5", but fails to explain how the target numbers were derived. For instance, without some additional baseline information about current or previous rates or background knowledge, it is difficult to determine how reasonable they might be, and the values appear arbitrary.

   While the application includes a logic model (Appendix G), the application could be strengthened by refining it to show

more specifically the hypothesized linkages between individual program activities, outputs, and program outcomes, rather than one bulleted block list of each, and how the evaluation design will test these causal hypotheses. This would be especially helpful for potential replication or testing in other settings.

The application would also be improved if it contained an evaluation plan which included more details about the data collection strands and methodologies. For example, the application mentions "classroom observations; video-recorded lessons; and coaching reflections" (p. 15), but provides few details as to what quantitative or qualitative methods will be used to analyze them. It is not clear how many of each of these will be conducted, when they'll be conducted, or their duration. For the on-site observations, the proposal would be strengthened by including a discussion of how the validity and reliability, including interrater reliability, of the protocol(s) will be established and what the unit of analysis (e.g., classroom or school) of the on-site observations will be. For focus groups (p.22), a discussion of how members will be selected or sampled would improve the proposal as it would potentially provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings.

The proposal would also be strengthened if more details about the cluster QED or comparative interrupted time series designed were elucidated. For each analysis, it would be helpful to discuss how the independent or dependent variables will be measured or constructed, including if they are dichotomous or interval or continuous scales (for instance the Florida Standards Assessment data), and the proposed equations for the levels of the HLM analysis (p. 25) as well as whether the parameters will be treated as fixed or random effects, whether they use random slopes or random intercepts, and how attrition of students and teachers might be handled in the analysis. While the application mentions a difference-in-difference analysis (p. 25), it would be strengthened by providing more methodological details about the variables included and how program implementation variables will be constructed and incorporated into the analysis.

It would also be helpful if the program evaluation budget narrative section (p. 5 of the Budget Narrative) was broken down by hours or percent time and activity (hypothetically for instance, x hours or y% of the consultant's time at a base rate of $x/hr. for analyzing student outcomes) in order to allow for the determination of the adequacy of the evaluation resources.

Reader's Score: **12**

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