

A. Significance A.1. Pasadena Unified School District's (PUSD) YEES (Youth Educational and Emotional Supports) addresses issues of national significance. YEES, serving high-needs students and schools, is designed to improve student outcomes by reducing disparities in school disciplinary practices, reducing the use of exclusionary discipline, and creating a positive school culture for all. YEES will contribute to increased knowledge of disproportionate discipline and exclusionary discipline practices as well as the efficacy of implementing Behavioral Response to Intervention (RtI), Restorative Practices (RP) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Impact of disproportionate discipline. Young people of color are especially vulnerable to punitive treatment in school. Study after study has shown that they are two to three times more likely to be issued school suspensions than their white peers.ⁱ Racial inequality in discipline fuels racial disparities in long-term outcomes for young people, including graduation rates and disproportionate contact with the justice system.ⁱⁱ New evidence also suggests that the racial discipline gap directly contributes to the racial achievement gap.ⁱⁱⁱ Students with disabilities (SWD) suffer disproportionately from suspensions as well. Recent national data showed that SWD are suspended at more than twice the overall suspension rate in elementary schools and at a rate of 18% compared to 10% overall in secondary schools.^{iv} We also know that students with psychosocial stressors such as homelessness, past trauma, or chaotic home lives also experience punitive discipline at school when what they really require is safety, support, structure, and guidance. Impact of exclusionary discipline. Suspensions often derail the lives of young people. Multivariate and longitudinal studies demonstrate that exclusionary discipline is a risk factor for a host of short- and long-term negative consequences, including academic disengagement, depressed academic achievement, school dropout, and increased involvement with the juvenile justice system.^v A recent meta-analysis of 24 studies found evidence of a link between in-school and out-of-school suspensions and low achievement.^{vi} A study featured in The 2017 Brown Center Report on American Education, released in March 2017, focuses on out-of-school suspensions. For the past several years, state

education leaders in California have encouraged schools to reduce exclusionary punishments. A major reason for doing so is that racial disparities associated with suspensions are glaring: Suspensions of African-American students occur at rates three to four times higher than the state average for all students. In 2015, the statewide African-American suspension rate was 17.8 percent. The figure for Hispanics was 5.2 percent, for Caucasians 4.4 percent, and for Asians 1.2 percent. Evaluations of discipline reform should not be limited to the impact on students who are at risk of being suspended, but also assess the impact of new approaches to school safety and quality of the instructional environment. A recent report from Max Eden of the Manhattan Institute analyzed survey data from New York City and concluded that discipline reform may be contributing to deterioration in school climate. Schools with greater than 90 percent minority enrollment “experienced the worst climate shifts.” The cause of equity will be ill-served if suspensions of African-Americans are reduced, but black students who come to school ready to learn are increasingly exposed to unruly peers. Race and school discipline is a thorny issue. PUSD faces unique challenges in equitably serving its students, who are 82% minorities, with 59% living in poverty, 784 homeless and foster students, and 13% with family members who are incarcerated. See Appendix I: Demographics and Risk Factors for additional information. Recent disciplinary referral rates further highlight the need in PUSD schools. Among elementary schools in PUSD, the average disciplinary referral rate for minority students was 6 times greater than the referral rate for white students. The average middle school minority student is referred for discipline 5 times more often than white students. One middle school referred minority students at a rate of 12 times that of white students.

A.2 One of the fundamental tenets of YEES is the integration of promising new strategies that build on existing strategies for Response to Intervention (RtI), Restorative Practices (RP), and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) with an explicit focus on equity, culture, and bias awareness. YEES encapsulates Behavioral RtI, RP and SEL, which is supported with evidence-based

interventions, including mental health and substance use disorder treatment. The following chart summarizes the existing strategies that will be improved upon and the promising new strategies that will be developed under this project.

| Strategy/Intervention | Description | Existing | New |
|---|--|------------------|--------|
| Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) – Universal Interventions (Tier 1) | 90% implementation according to the last (December 2018) audit using TFI (Tiered Fidelity Inventory). | ✓ | |
| | Evidence-based programs for Tier 1 (universal) interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U-360 Screening Tool • Seeking Safety • Safe School Ambassadors • Parent University | ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ | |
| Tier 2 (targeted) interventions | 30% implementation according to the last (December 2018) audit using TFI. 60% in Pilot Schools. | ✓ | |
| | Evidence-based programs for Tier 2 (targeted) interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in/Check Out • Time Out Passes • Saturday School • Pull Out Student Supports | ✓ ✓ | ✓ ✓ |
| Tier 3 (intensive) interventions | 60% implementation according to the last (December 2018) audit using TFI. 80% in Pilot Schools. | ✓ | |
| | Evidence-based programs for Tier 3 (intensive) interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health • Behavioral interventions • Substance use disorder treatment • Saturday School • Pull Out Student Supports | ✓ ✓ ✓ | ✓ ✓ |
| Behavioral Response to Intervention (RtI) | 40% implementation according to the last (December 2018) audit using TFI. 56% in Pilot Schools. | ✓ | |
| Restorative Practices | Has started in Pilot schools only, beginning in the 2018-19 school year. | ✓ | |
| Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) | Will be implemented in YEES. | | ✓ |

An overview of our interventions is included in Appendix J: Evidence Based Interventions. **Current Efforts to Address Discrepancies in Disciplinary Practices and Create a Positive School Climate:** The proposed approach will be supported and complemented by PUSDs existing framework around a multi-tiered systems of supports (PBIS), Response to Intervention, and Restorative Practices. PUSD began implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) in 2013, with the roll-out of universal interventions (Tier 1) in all PUSD schools by 2014.

PUSD incorporated the universal screening tool (U-360) across the district in 2014, with annual assessment conducted for high-needs populations in all schools. In 2014, we also implemented the evidence-based character education and violence prevention curriculum, *Seeking Safety*, in all K-8 classrooms, as well as the evidence-based *Safe Schools Ambassadors* in all K-8 schools. These steps have provided the necessary tools to identify the intervention(s) needed for our students to increase academic achievement and improve school climate throughout the district. But we’ve struggled with Tier 2 and 3 interventions – primarily due to a lack of funding and staffing resources. Since 2014 we use the PBIS Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) to measure fidelity and implementation. TFI provides a valid, reliable, and efficient measure of the extent to which school personnel are applying the core features of school-wide positive behavioral interventions and support. The TFI is intended to guide both initial implementation and sustained use of PBIS. The spring 2016 results from TFI indicated that Tier 1 interventions have slipped to 68%. PUSD refocused efforts for PBIS back to Tier 1 and were successful in reaching 90% on the TFI scale in December 2018. During the 2017-18 school year, we piloted our YEES program, which emphasizes Tier 2 and 3 interventions at two high-risk middle schools in the district. The results from the students who participated in and received Tier 2/3 interventions are promising and lay the foundation for our EIR grant initiative.

| School | Academics | Attendance (absences) | Tardy | Behavioral Referrals | Suspensions |
|---------------------|---------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Eliot Middle School | 2% increase | 37% decrease | 65% decrease | 63% decrease | 8% decrease |
| Blair Middle School | 2.7% increase | 59% decrease | 66% decrease | 68% decrease | 6% decrease |

Chart 1: Change in Outcomes for High-Needs Students Participating in YEES over a two-year period (2017-18). See Appendix M for additional data on this pilot program.

While the preliminary results are promising, we believe that with enhanced services and a more rigorous approach we can create system change for the students and schools throughout PUSD. This model of YEES did not include a full-time School Mental Health Counselor or access to a dedicated Substance Abuse Counselor. It also didn’t include the SEL component that will be included in YEES.

The EIR grant program will provide us with the resources needed to enhance the intervention (increase supports and add SEL), as well as study and refine the implementation plan (fidelity, dosage, management plan) and support roll-out throughout the district. Furthermore, PUSD has endeavored to reduce exclusionary discipline practices throughout the district by adopting new policies (2017) on disparities in school disciplinary practice, which included requiring all schools to have a program for In-School Suspensions (ISS). The EIR grant will provide an opportunity to study and identify professional development and coaching needed to embed SEL and RP throughout each school's culture. We've created good policies, but we have no road map for implementation and identification of necessary changes needed to reach desired outcomes. YEES addresses these shortcomings and provides an opportunity to positively address PUSD's commitment to reducing suspensions and disparities in discipline through systemic implementation of RP, increasing intervention based on U-360 screenings, and SEL immersion throughout our school environments. The RtI/RP/SEL model we're proposing addresses root causes of suspensions and the disproportionate use of suspensions that have been identified by a diverse body of research.

YEES Activities. A comprehensive professional development program will be provided to participating school sites: 1) The Superintendent and Principals will receive training in SEL and RP on an annual basis. Principals will receive additional training in order to become Trainer-of-Trainers and coaches within their building. Teachers will receive bi-annual training in SEL and RP, as well as monthly coaching sessions. All school staff will receive training in SEL and RP, including cultural fluency and implicit bias, on a quarterly basis. This comprehensive professional development program will be in addition to current training in PBIS (all tiers), RtI, and RP. Students will receive SEL interventions and students identified as needing Tier 2/3 interventions will be referred to POSS, which includes academic support, therapeutic mental health counseling, substance use disorder treatment, character education, and anger management skills training. Parents will participate in the

Parent University, which includes supporting ELA in the home, homework strategies, effective discipline, development milestones/mental health, attendance, and parent leadership training.

Root Causes: Our proposed model will address root causes of exclusionary disciplinary practices and disproportionate use of these practices in PUSD, while also promoting alternative practices that address the disparities and their causes. *Causes of Exclusionary Discipline:* Students and adults often lack the social and emotional skills, such as active listening and empathy, that could prevent misunderstandings and deescalate conflicts that sometimes lead to disciplinary actions.^{vii} A school climate characterized by distrust and alienation can lead both students and adults to feel a lack of connection and belonging.^{viii} In contrast, when young people feel they are part of a caring community, they feel accountable to that community and discipline incidents decline.^{ix} *Causes of Disproportionate Use of Suspension:* Many adults lack cultural competency. Teachers using culturally responsive pedagogy can prevent discipline problems. SEL pedagogy provides many tools for adults to develop cultural competency.^x Teacher training and curricula aimed at helping students develop skills such as empathy, bias awareness, and appreciating differences offer adults a chance to hone these skills as well. SEL curricula provide an opportunity for teachers and students to have conversations about issues related to cultural identity and bias that help widen everyone's understanding and reduce conflicts.^{xi} *Causes of Suspension:* In general, schools don't offer students many opportunities to develop and practice their social and emotional skills. There is evidence that fostering SEL helps promote a positive school climate.^{xii} Adults and students lack the knowledge, skills, and support they need to use restorative alternatives to punitive discipline, ranging from peer mediation to restorative conferences. When restorative practices are supported, suspensions decline.^{xiii} We suspect that when school leaders are unable to ensure that all members of the school community understand and support the use of restorative practices there is inconsistency in their use. We hope to understand the impact of this barrier by the end of our project and develop strategies to

remedy the problem. YEES will build upon district leaders' commitment to address the root causes of exclusionary and disproportionate discipline. At the beginning of the 2018-19 school year, the Superintendent proposed a ban on suspensions in PK-2nd grade, which is expected to be adopted by the Board of Education in April 2019. It is aimed not only at ensuring students who would have been removed from classrooms receive academic instruction and counseling, but also to address the district's disparities in suspensions. Part of YEES includes school staff engaging in root cause analysis, during which they dig into the site-specific data, get at the roots about why certain disparities persistently occur, and create an action plan to reduce – and eventually eliminate disparities. A Response to Intervention (RtI) approach will be used to respond to skill deficits and provide the tools and strategies necessary to ensure academic success. Through counseling and guidance, RtI will provide tools and strategies to assist students with improving self-esteem, building self-control, learning to self-monitor, and enabling them to take responsibility for their behavior and academic success. Behavior RtI is a systemic approach to teaching and managing behavior in schools. The foundation of a Behavior RtI model has four integrated elements: (1) Data drives the decisions regarding behavioral needs in the educational setting; (2) Evidence-based practices provide staff and students with the tools to achieve desired behavioral outcomes; (3) Systems provide the structure and resources required by the chosen practices; (4) And finally, pairing the integrated elements with a system of training, coaching, and evaluation through a cultural and contextual lens improves implementation fidelity to maximize student outcomes. Restorative Practices (RP), inspired by the philosophy of restorative justice, are a framework for community-building and for responding to challenging behavior through authentic dialogue, coming to understanding, and making things right.^{xiv} RP include: building healthy relationships between educators and students; reducing, preventing, and improving harmful behavior; repairing harm and restoring positive relationships; resolving conflict, holding individuals and groups accountable; and addressing and discussing the

needs of the school community. Behavior RtI and RP are whole-school models that will be used hand in hand to increase positive outcomes for student achievement. Both Behavior RtI and RP place high value on youth and staff engagement and involvement. They support social-emotional learning for youth and staff and are seen as effective strategies to lower racially disproportionate discipline referrals by offering adults alternative responses to student misbehavior.

B. Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan YEES is designed as a multi-tiered program to reach high-needs students at a variety of stages, including school-wide interventions (Tier 1), therapeutic mental health services and substance abuse counseling services (Tiers 2 & 3), Saturday School (Tier 3), Pull Out Student Supports (Tier 3) and also Parent University. Students are identified through the U-360 screening tool, office referrals/discipline, academic failure, and excessive absences. High-needs students will be referred to the 10-week Pull Out Student Support (POSS) program, where they will receive individualized intervention and instruction designed to support their academic and social/emotional needs in one-on-one sessions or as small group activities. The evidence-based Check-In/Check-Out system will be used daily during the 10-week program and students will receive an average of 90-120 minutes per week of additional academic support in small group or one-on-one instruction, depending on the need. After the successful completion of the POSS program, students will continue to report via Check-in/Check-out on a weekly basis throughout the remainder of the school year. YEES will fundamentally integrate RtI, RP, and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) – the process by which we develop our capacity to understand and manage feelings, relate well to others, handle conflicts and other life challenges, and take responsibility for improving our communities. Based on evidence that building community and fostering SEL in students and adults creates the foundation for effective restorative practices and for equity, SEL programs create positive classroom and school communities in part by helping people develop skills in areas such as handling anger, active listening, empathy, bias

awareness, and deescalating conflict – skills that help prevent conflicts and reduce bias.

B.1 Goals, Objectives and Outcomes. The primary goals of YEES are to reduce disparities in exclusionary discipline, improve academic performance, increase social emotional skills and improve pro-social school climate by employing RtI and RP within an SEL framework. To reach this overarching goal, we must guide and support teachers as they adopt RtI, RP, and SEL, create a sustainable school-wide culture of these practices, and ensure replicability to elementary and middle schools in various communities. As shown in the attached logic model, we will assess our progress toward these larger goals through short and long-term objectives of student and school-site level academic and behavioral outcomes as well as changes in teacher practice. The project will leverage existing annual PUSD student, staff and parent surveys: California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), California School Staff Survey, and California School Parent Survey, that measure perceptions of campus culture and acquisition of competencies related to RtI, RP, and SEL. All surveys have high reliability estimates and are appropriate for students in elementary and middle schools. The project will assess teacher change in practice (i.e., decreased use of exclusionary disciplinary practices) and use existing classroom observation tools (*Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation Checklist*, *Survey on Perspectives on Culture and Race*, and *Tiered Fidelity Index*), with a particular focus on classroom climate and procedural components of the observational protocols.

| Goals | Objectives | Outcomes |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Goal 1: Build the capacity of 4 high-needs elementary and middle schools in PUSD to implement YEES. Build overall district capacity and buy-in for these programs, which include RtI, RP, SEL.</p> | <p>1.1 Administrators, support staff and educators at each participating school will be trained in RtI, RP and SEL approaches and philosophy, with ongoing coaching throughout each grant year. 1.2 District-level staff and community service providers will be trained in RtI, RP, and SEL. 1.3 Track fidelity of implementation via an active feedback loop to ensure teachers, administrators, and community service providers are implementing RtI, RP, and SEL at a high level with high levels of student engagement.</p> | <p>1.A Maintain 100% from the TFI Assessment for Tier 1 (Universal) interventions. 1.B. Increase the TFI Assessment for Tier 2 (Targeted) interventions by 200% (30% to 90%). 1.C. Increase the TFI Assessment for Tier 3 (Intensive) interventions by 125% (40% to 90%).</p> |
| <p>Goal 2: Improve student academic, behavior, and pro-social outcomes as a result of YEES implementation.</p> | <p>2.1 Reduce achievement gaps in core content areas between groups of students in YEES schools. 2.2 Increase in students' ability to engage in respectful communication with adults and classmates. 2.3 Increase in students' decision making skills. 2.4 Increase in students feeling of safety at school.</p> | <p>2.A To decrease disparities in school disciplinary practices for high-needs students enrolled in YEES schools by 15% annually, for a total decrease of 60% by September 30, 2023, as measured by student discipline records (discipline reports, suspensions, expulsions). 2.B To increase the percentage of student who report a positive school climate/developmental assets by 90% by September 30, 2023, as measured by the results from the California School Climate, Health and Learning Survey, which includes questions on: ease of respecting classmate opinion during a disagreement, ease of talking with an adult when having issues at school, ease of getting along with classmates, and ease of thinking through decisions and consequences.. 2.C Increase the percent of students enrolled in YEES schools who increase SEL skills by 20% annually, for a total of 80%, as measured by the <i>Resilience and Youth Development Module</i>, CHKS. 2.D To increase the number of students enrolled in YEES schools who report that they feel safe at school by 50% by September 30, 2023, as measured by the annual CHKS survey. 2.E To increase the number of students enrolled in YEES schools who improve their academic performance (40% increase in ELA nad 32% in Match) by September 30, 2023, as measured by the Smarter Balanced Assessments (CAASPP) system.</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | 2.F Decrease the number of students in YEES schools who report feelings of implicit bias in disciplinary practices at school by 10% annually, for a total decrease of 40%, as measured by the Implicit Assessment Test (IAT). |
| Goal 3: Improve school-level outcomes (academic, behavior, and pro-social) as a result of YEES implementation. | <p>3.1 Decrease in the number of disciplinary removals and/or emergency placements.</p> <p>3.2 Decrease racial disparities in school suspensions, bullying and victimization.</p> <p>3.3 Increase in staffs' perception of attending a safe, respectful, and supportive school.</p> <p>3.4 Increase parents' perceptions that their children attend a supportive and safe school.</p> | <p>3.A To decrease the number of YEES schools who have reduced disciplinary disparities by 2 as of September 30, 2020 and 4 as of September 30, 2023, as measured by discipline records (discipline reports, suspension, and expulsions).</p> <p>3.B To increase the number of schools who report a positive school climate (90% of staff population surveyed) to 4 schools by September 30, 2023, as measured by the School Climate Staff Survey.</p> <p>3.C To increase the number of staff employed in YEES schools who report that they feel their school is safe by 50% by September 30, 2023, as measured by the annual School Climate Staff Survey.</p> <p>3.D To increase the number of YEES schools who improve academic performance in ELA and Match to 2 by September 30, 2021 and 4 by September 30, 2023.</p> <p>3.E To increase bias awareness and cultural fluency among staff members employed in YEES schools, by 100%, by September 30, 2023, as measured by the <i>Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation Checklist</i>, and <i>Survey on Perspectives on Culture and Race</i></p> <p>3.F To increase the number of parents (90% of parents surveyed) who report that their child's school provides a safe learning environment, rules and enforced equitably, and everyone is treated with respect by September 30, 2023 as measured by the California School Parent Survey.</p> |
| Goal 4: Improve teacher attitudes and perception of student misbehavior and working conditions as a result of YEES implementation. | 4.1 Increase teachers' perception of their school as a supportive and positive environment for them, as well as their students. | <p>4.A To increase the number of staff members (90% of adults surveyed) enrolled in YEES schools who agree with the following pro-social survey questions (School staff clearly understand policies and procedures about student conduct, the school's discipline practices promote SEL (e.g. developmentally appropriate consequences, restorative justice, etc.), Overall, the school is a good place to work and learn, All school staff interactions with one another model social and emotional competence, and Their principal models social and emotional competence in how she/he deals with students and faculty on an everyday basis) by September 30, 2023 as measured by the California School Staff Survey.</p> <p>4.B To increase the number of staff members working in YEES schools who increase SEL skills by 20% annually, for a total of 80% by September 30, 2023, as measured by the Resilience and Youth Development Module, adults survey (CHKS).</p> |

B.2 Our Conceptual Framework contributes to our proposed research through a summative/impact study that links the problem statement to our research questions.

The rationale for YEES is based on high-quality research findings noted in sections A 1 and 2, as well as the positive results that PUSD has identified from two pilot schools that indicate the proposed activities, strategies and interventions are likely to improve student outcomes. Growing evidence shows that RP is a promising strategy for reducing suspensions.^{xv} Two recent correlational studies with statistical controls for selection bias found that discipline-referred students who participated in a restorative conference had a lower likelihood of suspensions than referred peers who experienced other consequences.^{xvi} Both studies accounted for school demographics (e.g., % low income) and student characteristics (e.g., referral reason, number of referrals, disability status, gender, race/ethnicity). RtI, RP, and SEL each show promise in addressing the enormous challenges related to school discipline and academic underperformance in high-needs schools. Each approach by itself has been shown to reliably overcome these challenges; however, none by themselves have succeeded in closing the wide discipline gap between black students and other students, including Latinos or students with disabilities. YEES is designed to develop, implement, and replicate entrepreneurial, evidence-based, field-initiated innovations to improve student achievement and attainment for high-need students. Our project focuses on high-need students who are at risk for educational failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, who attend high-minority schools, who are far below grade level, who are at risk of not graduating with a diploma on time, who are homeless or in foster care, who have been incarcerated, who have disabilities, or who are English Language Learners. The evaluation of YEES will answer these research questions: 1) was the program implemented with high fidelity, acceptability and feasibility? 2) What is the two-year impact of YEES on high needs students' perception of school climate, SEL competencies, and progression in school (toward graduation and away from drop out)? and 3) What is the two-year impact of YEES on exclusionary

discipline rates and disparities, and staff's SEL competencies and bias awareness/cultural fluency? The logic model and drafted objectives will be used to guide planning, implementation, communication and evaluation to ensure results-based performance. Depicting the logical relationships between proposed resources, activities, outputs and outcomes, these tools will offer timely and authentic feedback and information, charting actual progress versus targets, so the evaluators and stakeholders can make informed decisions related to program delivery for continuous improvement.

B.3 To ensure feedback and continuous improvement, information regarding the grant will be aggregated and presented to different stakeholder groups throughout the grant implementation process. The YEES logic model and evaluation plan were originally developed from stakeholder meetings held during Fall 2018. The principles of developmental evaluation have informed the evaluation plan, stressing that evaluations should “illuminate, inform and support what is being developed” and “time feedback to inform ongoing adaptation as needs, findings and insights emerge” (Patton, 2016). Throughout both Phase-I and Phase-II, the evaluator will iteratively upgrade the implementation best practices by conducting regular formative assessments at all implementation sites to adapt practices based on site performance. The EIR Coordinating and Advisory Council (CAC), consisting of program staff, stakeholders, community and parent groups, will be used to garner additional feedback and identify areas needing improvement. Stakeholder feedback will be gathered informally through on-going communication, as well as the monthly CAC meetings. Formal feedback from stakeholders will be collected annually. Both informal and formal feedback will be incorporated into project refinement. Quantitative and qualitative data will be reported to the implementation team on a monthly basis to provide performance feedback and permit assessment of progress in meeting programmatic goals. Planned data collection will assess implementation fidelity and identify barriers and facilitators to scaling up the intervention. Data for the implementation study will be based on surveys, focus groups, interviews, and observations. Quantitative and qualitative data will be reported to the implementation

team on an on-going basis to provide performance feedback and permit assessment of progress in meeting programmatic goals. For qualitative interview and focus group data, brief formative memos will be provided to the implementation team. In-depth descriptions of implementation successes and challenges will be documented, and common themes will be distilled, triangulated, and summarized in an overarching report at the mid-point and final year of the project. A critical aim of the formative evaluation is to document the key elements of implementation to facilitate replication in other settings. Continuous improvement will be incorporated into the processes we use in schools, among schools, and on our own staff, as described below. Our process is informed by the “improvement science” approach developed by Anthony Bryk (2015) in *Learning to Improve*. Our close partnerships with evaluators will strengthen these efforts; they will share data and insights at every phase of the project, including monthly updates. In particular, we will use evaluators’ findings from the Implementation Pilot program (Phase-1) to amend the models and materials we use for the project’s QED (Phase-2).

Feedback Loops. PUSD Schools: Each school’s SEL/RP team will use an improvement science approach. The team will meet twice a month to identify challenges, analyze root causes, and test hypotheses about drivers for positive change through ongoing examination of data. Data will include discipline incidents, disciplinary interventions, and suspensions. Teams will categorize incidents, noting when and where they occur, and who is involved. Teams will also receive and analyze data from evaluators as it becomes available. **School Cohorts:** Principals and team members from all participating schools will engage in continuous learning through a professional learning community that meets monthly. They will share best practices, and we will continually adjust our approaches based on their feedback. **Project Staff:** The staff developers supporting the participating schools will receive additional training in improvement science processes and will participate in a continuous learning process as part of YEES. The team will meet twice a month to set goals and objectives; review data; discuss key challenges; test adjustments to the model and materials; and report back on results. The

model and materials will be revised based on experience and data, and these revisions will be incorporated into staff training.

C.1/C.2 PUSD has the organizational experience, qualified key personnel, appropriate staff and the demonstrated infrastructure and expertise to achieve the objectives of our proposed project, on time and within budget.

PUSD has an annual operating budget of \$180,000,000. Current staff at PUSD have a proven track record of managing and evaluating local, private, state, and federal grants successfully that are similar in size and scope to our proposed EIR program, such as the Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Grant for \$1,200,000; the High School Graduation Initiative for \$2,493,300; the School Community Violence Prevention Grant for \$2,000,000; the S3 Grant (Safe and Secure Schools) for \$1,200,000; and the School Climate Transformation Grant for \$3,500,000. PUSD is deeply rooted in the City of Pasadena and surrounding communities. **Roles and Responsibilities**

PUSD will oversee all aspects of the project including: recruiting and retaining school and student participants; training and coaching staff; supervising trainers and staff developers; monitoring project fidelity; overseeing a continuous improvement process; and working with our evaluation team. **Dr.**

Brian McDonald, Superintendent, will provide executive oversight for YEES and liaise with the school board. Dr. McDonald received his Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Sam Houston State University and his Masters in Education Administration from Texas Southern University. He has over 25 years of experience in education. **Eric Sahakian**, Project Director, will oversee the project, and supervise program staff and the Local Evaluator. Dr. Sahakian will lead the EIR Coordinating and Advisory Council (CAC). Dr. Sahakian received his Doctorate in Education Degree from Brandman/Chapman University System and his Masters of Science from California State University, Los Angeles. Dr. Sahakian is a certified trainer in several evidence-based interventions (Behavior RTI, Focus on Results: Instructional Leadership Strategies to Improve Student Achievement; and 40 Developmental Assets). **Lara Choulikian**, Project Coordinator, will be responsible for the day-to-day

operations of the grant, which includes professional development, in-school suspension, Check-In/Check-Out, and Saturday School. Ms. Choulikian received her Masters in Social Work from the University of Southern California. She has been with PUSD for 10 years, acting as the project coordinator on 4 grants. **New hires include:** Academic Intervention Teachers, Clinical Social Workers, Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist, and clerical support. Strategic Partner Schools Group (SPSG), an independent evaluation firm, will conduct the evaluation. SPSG has successfully provided evaluation services on PUSD grant initiatives for the past 8 years. SPSG is closely familiar with What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards and has successfully conducted evaluations using a variety of designs and methodologies and published the results of these studies. SPSG has experience managing data records and protecting student privacy — including extensive experience in protecting the privacy of PUSD students. **Dr. Angela James**, Principal Investigator, brings demonstrated experience in research, data collection, and the analysis of complex studies, including evaluating implicit bias and racial disparities. Dr. James will conduct two independent studies: An implementation study during Phase-1 and a quasi-experimental design (QED) study during Phase-2. She will also be responsible for obtaining IRB approvals and parent consent, and dissemination of findings. Dr. James will serve as the team’s subject matter expert on race, social inequalities, restorative justice, family studies, and social behavior. Dr. James will focus on the qualitative components of the evaluation and research project. **Dr. Kirk Lesh**, Research Associate, will work directly with the project intervention team to ensure research fidelity. He will also oversee data collection processes. Dr. Lesh is an economist and has produced economic impact assessments as well as economic outlooks for a number of organizations and government entities. He will use his extensive experience in economics to lead the evaluation of cost/benefit analysis of YEES. **Stacey Newton**, Researcher, will use her subject matter expertise on finalizing and administering surveys; collecting student record data; analyzing all data; providing information for iterative improvement of the model; conducting focus groups and interviews; and

submitting progress reports. *Resumes and job descriptions, including roles and responsibilities of each individual assigned to YEES, are included in Appendix B.*

A timeline that clearly defines responsibilities and milestones for accomplishing project tasks is included in Appendix N.

C.3 Potential for Continued Support. As part of our demonstrated commitment to support this project after the period of federal funding has ended a formal Sustainability Plan will be created within the first six months of our grant award and will be reviewed on a continual basis throughout the grant period by PUSD personnel and our Advisory Council. The cost/benefit analysis will be updated on an annual basis to impact future funding decisions of the district's operating budget. Information on early project results will be provided to the school board prior to each budget cycle to inform decisions regarding internal resources and budget allocations that will support sustainability. SPSG will provide data and support to PUSD to establish buy-in from pilot and roll-out schools using: evidence of effectiveness; storytelling (including first-person impact stories, to help make information about the interventions and project easy to understand); and communication that fosters relationship building at all levels within schools and throughout PUSD – including opportunities for feedback on what works and doesn't work by participating schools. PUSD will begin planning for sustainability on day one and create financial models that integrate YEES with predictable and reliable funding streams; diversify funding sources; and seek new sources of funding for sustaining our program.

D. Quality of Project Evaluation D.1 Our evaluation will produce evidence about Project YEES' effectiveness that meets the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations. The proposed evaluation involves two phases: 1) a formative evaluation focused on measuring FOI and providing timely feedback to further program development and implementation and 2) a summative QED of the program's efficacy using propensity score matching (PSM) to identify an appropriate comparison group of teachers and students. The evaluation is guided by the

following research questions and aligns with the project goals listed in Section B.

| Research Questions | | Project Goal |
|----------------------------------|--|---------------|
| Fidelity of Implementation (FOI) | To what extent was the YEES intervention implemented with fidelity in treatment classrooms and schools over time? | Goal 1 |
| | How do school factors related to the implementation of fidelity differ across YEES and comparison schools over time? | |
| | Is there significant variation in implementation fidelity across YEES schools and teachers over time? | |
| Impact Student (Confirmatory) | How does the YEES impact students' academic (CSAAP scores), and social-behavioral (e.g., social competence, disciplinary referrals) outcomes relative to comparison students? | Goals 2, 3 |
| | What is the impact of YEES on students' academic, and social-behavioral outcomes during the transition into middle school? | |
| | What is the impact of YEES on academic and social-behavioral student outcomes over time? | |
| Teacher (Exploratory) | How does the implementation of YEES impact teachers' instructional quality, classroom climate and disciplinary referrals? | Goal 4 |
| | What is the impact of YEES on teachers' practices and social-behavior outcomes over time? | |
| Subgroup Impacts | How are the effects of YEES moderated or mediated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student factors (i.e.: grade, gender, race/ethnicity, free or reduced-price lunch status, English language learner (ELL) status, percentage low income, parent perception of school climate, and level of implementation)? • School factors (i.e.: size, percentage ELL, percentage low income, parent perception of school climate, and level of implementation)? • Teacher factors (i.e., teaching experience, grade, gender, and race/ethnicity)? | Goals 2, 3, 4 |
| Mediator Impacts | Is there a significant relationship among teacher (i.e., fidelity of implementation) and student outcomes (i.e., student academic achievement, and SEL skills)? | Goals 2, 4 |

Phase-I: Implement Pilot program in Years 1 and 2 to determine factors essential for a successful implementation of YEES. A pilot will be conducted in two schools to examine the acceptability, feasibility, and fidelity of implementation by both quantitative and qualitative measures. For each school and class, the evaluator will measure RtI/RP/SEL implementation and fidelity by monitoring training attendance records, staff performance, and student participation rates (Pull Out Student Support, Saturday School, mental health and substance abuse counseling, and Parent University, etc.). The acceptability/feasibility of the training/interventions/practices will be indexed by surveying

administrators and school staff on the implementation. We will use the Tiered Fidelity Index (TFI) to quantify fidelity for the implementation and adherence to YEES. During Phase I, SPSG will finalize measures of implementation in collaboration with PUSD and determine the expectations for thresholds based on measures of dosage and fidelity indicators. For the FOI evaluation, indicators and thresholds of program fidelity will be analyzed using a mixed methods approach, with variation across schools explored based on level of fidelity (i.e., observed and reported by teachers and administrators). SPSG will triangulate data sources (classroom observations/checklists, teacher/principal, TFI, focus groups, and student/teacher surveys) to assess how well critical components of the intervention were implemented. Exploratory analyses using implementation levels as mediators also will be conducted. We will use commonly accepted benchmarks for acceptable fidelity (e.g., a score of > 80%). The analysis of treatment implementation fidelity will allow us to gauge the probability of correct implementation in the Phase-2 QED.

Impact evaluation: The impact evaluation will occur during Implementation Years 1-4 and will use PSM to match students within YEES schools to students in similar, non-YEES schools. The use of a PSM design will allow SPSG to compare students across multiple grade levels (third through eighth grade) in four cohorts (Cohort 1 in 2019-20, Cohort 2 in 2020-21, Cohort 3 in 2021-22, and cohort 4 in 2022-23). Although scientifically preferable, random assignment is not always practical or feasible, as in this case, for example, a preexisting feeder pattern for students that determines which middle school they will attend or program requirements limiting the number of schools in which an intervention can be effectively implemented and schools to be randomized. PSM attenuates some of the bias associated with nonrandom assignment, allowing researchers to more closely estimate the casual effect of interventions (the difference between students in YEES schools and those students who are not). Students in each cohort will be matched at baseline on multiple academic and social-behavioral outcomes, such as performance on CASSP assessments, social-behavioral indications

(social competence, attendance, disciplinary referrals) and key demographic indicators. In addition, PSM will also be used to match teachers in YEES schools to teachers in similar non-YEES schools. Teachers will be matched on multiple characteristics (i.e. teaching experience, gender, grade level) and social-behavioral outcomes (i.e., classroom climate and job satisfaction). PSM is a nonparametric approach that helps reduce potential selection bias by matching treated and control participants across a spectrum of pretreatment and exogenous characteristics that could theoretically confound the impacts of the treatment. PSM provides relatively unbiased comparisons of difference in outcomes across the two groups. This methodology will enable SPSG to establish equivalence of the analytic sample on baseline measures for academic and non-social behavioral outcomes of students and **meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards with reservations.** In Years 3 and 4, SPSG will follow each student cohort across grade levels (and schools) to determine if the YEES intervention has longitudinal impacts on students' academic and social-behavioral outcomes at the student and school level. Students will be tracked, along with their matched comparison group, in targeted academic and social-behavioral outcomes. In addition, the transition of students will be tracked from elementary to middle school. SPSG will follow teachers across the study to determine if the YEES intervention has longitudinal impacts on their classroom practices and non-cognitive outcomes. In addition, teachers' fidelity of implementation will be measured each year of the study and tracked longitudinally to examine if teachers improve, maintain, or decrease their level of fidelity. Finally, focus groups with teachers and principals will be conducted throughout the study to not only help address challenges that should be addressed as the project scales up, but to also identify best practices to be used in the development of a manual of operating procedures to be used by other school districts wishing to implement a similar intervention. **Sampling Plan** Students enrolled in participating schools (4) will be matched across the district with students enrolled in similar non-implementing schools (16). Students will be matched on multiple baseline indicators, including but not limited to:

grade, gender, ethnicity, poverty, CSAAP scores and social-behavioral factors. PUSD will share student demographics, survey results and CSAAP scores for students enrolled in third through eighth grade across the district, which will serve as the basis for matching. Assuming 2,000 students annually will be matched (N=1000 YEES and 1000 non-YEES students; number to be determined by the most robust PSM) across 20 schools yields a Minimum Detectable Effect Size (MDES) of 0.12 ($\alpha = 0.05$; ICC = 0.05; $R^2 = 0.05$). This MDES is sufficient to detect both academic and social-behavior impacts of YEES overall. The MDES for subgroup analyses is 0.17 (50 percent of sample). Teachers will be matched on multiple indicators including, but not limited to grade taught, teaching experience, gender, race/ethnicity, classroom climate, job satisfaction, and self-efficacy. Assuming 240 teachers will be matched (N= 120 YEES and 120 non-YEES teachers; number to be determined by the most robust PSM) across 20 schools yields an MDES of .38 ($\alpha = 0.05$; ICC = 0.05; $R^2 = 0.35$). This MDES may not allow us to detect educationally significant effects in both classroom practice and non-cognitive impacts of YEES on teachers. For that reason, our teacher analyses will be considered exploratory. The longitudinal sample will be students who have remained in the YEES conditions across the course of the impact study. The transition sample is a subset of the longitudinal student sample and will be limited to students who remain with PUSD across fifth and sixth grade. SPSG anticipates tracking the transition sample across middle school conditions (YEES or Non-YEES) as students move from elementary to middle school. The longitudinal sample for teachers will focus on elementary and middle school staff who are delivering classroom instruction in YEES schools across the impact study. PUSD will be gathering data as part of ongoing district initiatives, and SPSG will conduct additional classroom observations to capture the implementation of YEES and teacher-student interactions. **Measures and Data Collection Schedules.** Appendix C provides an overview of the time points at which outcomes will be collected and the measures used to assess the proximal and distal outcomes of the YEES intervention as shown in the logic model. Most data will be

supported by PUSD using district-administered measures currently in place for both students and teachers. PUSD will provide data to SPSG for analysis. SPSG will be responsible for collecting the FOI data. **D.2 The evaluation will provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication in other settings.** PUSD's project will draw upon a range of dissemination mechanisms and partnership strategies to maximize the impact of the project, contributing to the knowledge base of practitioners and policymakers about which practices are effective, for which types of students and in what contexts. Project milestones and findings will be shared broadly over the course of the project period, with the final six months of the grant focusing on dissemination and sustainability activities. During the project period, we will codify and manualize the new components we have developed so that they can be replicated with fidelity. We will prepare four accompanying videos that will provide hands-on guidance for educators on essential components of RtI/RP/SEL, including principals' leadership, RtI, restorative interventions, and equity. We will share these resources through the on-line resource center at PUSD, as well as with the Los Angeles County Office of Education and California Department of Education. PUSD will also provide educators with insights and learning from the project through blogs, how-to-guides, social media, and articles. We will collaborate with evaluators to share findings, the model, and lessons learned in peer-reviewed journals and at professional conferences, webinars, and institutes for principals on restorative leadership and institutes for educators on the RtI/RP/SEL model. PUSD's Superintendent and Project Director have been panelists at regional, state and national conferences, such as the National PBIS conference and the California Association of School Administrators. We will continue to share the results of YEES with these organizations, as well as provide presentations, bulletins, and web series with the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), and the National Association of Community and Restorative Justice, which serves as the home base for RP in education and has a website where we will disseminate findings. SPSG will carry out the independent

evaluation of the project, producing reports that are useful to both practitioners (implementation study and manual) and researchers (QED). These reports will allow for larger replication of our program nationally by illuminating the lessons learned from implementing the YEES model, including adaptations for elementary and middle school, whether the professional development model used was effective and why, and the extent to which a school-site staff person is integral to success. SPSG, well-versed in measurement and research methods, including psychometrics, statistics, study design, logic modeling and survey design, will present project findings at professional conferences such as the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and American Evaluation Association (AEA). We will make our final evaluation report public using the avenues described above, as well as submit final studies to the Educational Resources Information Center (<http://eric.ed.gov>).

D.3 YEES's methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable performance data on relevant outcomes.

Measures. The evaluation will use instruments that have demonstrated reliability and validity with diverse populations. Evaluation of the following DVs will entail the use of multivariate analysis of variance and post-hoc analysis (as indicated); assuming statistical assumptions of the tests are met. We will also conduct descriptive analysis and interpret effect sizes and confidence intervals for each outcome measure. Change from baseline will be categorized into 3 groups: decrease, stable, increase. Students and school staff will complete subscales from the *Authoritative School Climate Survey* (ASCS). The disciplinary structure subscales have shown good construct validity, internal consistency, and test-retest reliability (Cornell, 2015) with a range of grade levels using both student and teacher versions (Cornell et al., 2015). ASCS subscales predict racial disparities in school suspensions, bullying and victimization, teacher safety, and achievement. Teachers will rate student interpersonal behavior/skills using the *Teacher Observation of Classroom Adaptation Checklist*, Disruptive behavior ($\alpha=.87$) and Prosocial behavior subscales ($\alpha=.88$, Koth, Bradshaw, & Leaf, 2009).

Students' SEL skills will be measured through the *Resilience and Youth Development Module* (RYDM) of the California Healthy Kids Survey, which includes subscales for self-efficacy, empathy, problem-solving, and self-awareness ($\alpha=.73-.82$, Hanson, & Kim, 2007). Adults' bias awareness and cultural fluency will be measured by subscales from Dr. Skiba's *Survey on Perspectives on Culture and Race* including cultural responsibility ($\alpha=.84$), colorblindness ($\alpha=.78$), and cultural awareness and knowledge ($\alpha=.68$; Fergus, 2016). The *Implicit Assessment Test* (IAT) developed by Harvard University will be given to students who receive formal disciplinary actions (in-school suspension, Saturday School, out-of-school suspension). Staff SEL competency will be measured by the *Teacher Emotional Intelligence Measure*, on which teachers respond in writing to a discipline vignette. Codes reflect teachers' awareness, understanding and management of emotions and have demonstrated reliability (Intraclass correlations, ICCs =.87 to .96) and validity. According to WWC's evidence review protocol (2014), acceptable face valid outcome measures for "progressing in school" include administrative records of credit accumulation, grade promotion, and grade completion. Records will also include student race/ethnicity, gender, disability status, FRPM eligibility, attendance, and discipline incidents/actions. **Data Analysis.** All study data will first be screened for accuracy. Outliers will be identified and addressed. Validity screening will be used to determine whether some protocols are invalid and need to be removed. The team will also screen for suspicious response patterns (e.g., always marking the same column in responses) and determine whether the data should be excluded from analysis. Missing data percentages will be calculated and assessed for patterns of missingness (e.g., missing completely at random {MCAR}, missing at random {MAR}, non-random). If missing data exceed 5% and are determined to be MCAR or MAR, multiple imputation (MI) procedures will be used following standard procedures.^{xviii} Prior to testing for difference in variable of interest, the variable distributions of study variables will be assessed. If they are found to deviate significantly from normal, data transformation may be applied to improve accuracy, or, non-parametric analyses

that are robust to violations of normality may be used in lieu of parametric tests. For statistical analysis, modeling, and data management, SPSS will be used on a secure terminal with access limited to the research team. The data will be collected in accordance with required IRB protocols. Collected data will be de-identified for purposes of blinded study and privacy reasons. Evaluators will also use a difference-in-difference (DiD) approach to assess the effect of the intervention with the absence of random assignment.^{xviii} Students will complete a pre- and post- intervention survey, which enables calculation of differences in scores between the two groups based on time and treatment status. Baseline equivalency of students in the experimental and control schools will be investigated using *t*-tests and χ^2 tests. In addition, PSA matching will be used to match students on predicative pretreatment variables (the predicative pretreatment variables for the PSA model will include gender, race/ethnicity, grade level, FRPM status, truancy rate, suspensions, special needs students, and below grade level: ELA/Math).^{xix} Matching will be done using PSM. (See Appendix D for HLM equation). To avoid assumptions about the distributional properties of DVs, standard errors will be based on a nonparametric cluster bootstrap procedures using 1,000 replications. For binary outcomes (e.g., suspensions), a linear probability model will be used. To account for multiple outcomes tested and control for Type 1 errors, a Benjamini-Hochberg (1995) false discovery rate (FDR) procedure will be used which has shown to be more powerful than traditional Bonferonni corrections. Although selectivity may be an issue in DiD estimation, the use of PSM together with DiD may help in making more robust inferences.^{xx} Finally, to analyze qualitative data, SPSG will use a grounded theory approach^{xxi} and conduct thematic coding of transcribed focus groups and interview data following Miles and Huberman's (1994) stages of analyses (e.g., data reduction/display). To increase the validity of the evaluation findings, we will use Hierarchical Linear Modeling to control for nesting effects.^{xxii} Students operate within classrooms and schools (i.e., they are nested), and it is likely any behavioral change will be the result of the introduced IV and unique variance exerted from students

residing in individual classrooms and schools (i.e., shared variance). To control for these nesting effects, we will employ a three-level HLM model: students (Level 3), classrooms (Level 2), and nested within schools (Level 1). Behavioral change will be measured at the student level and at the school level. Student-level data will be statistically modeled, whereas school-level data will be summarized (e.g., means, percentiles) and reviewed descriptively.

D.4 Our Evaluation Plan and Logic Model clearly articulate the key components, mediators, and outcomes of the grant-supported interventions, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation. The attached Logic Model is a visual representation of the assumptions and theory of action that underlie the structure of our program. The Logic Model provides a framework for charting the links between the programs' activities, and outputs and intended outcomes. The goals, outcomes and targets for each objective are delineated in the *Project Objectives and Performance Measures* form. Key components of YEES are outlined in Sections A and B and the related study design is outlined in D.1. The measurable threshold for acceptable implementation is also described in D.1: FOI. **Exploratory Analyses of Mediators of the Impacts:** Exploratory mediator analyses will be specified for select student, school and teacher proximal outcomes to assess the potential impact of YEES. SPSG will use PUSD's logic model to determine proximal variables that should be considered for mediational analyses and will follow the appropriate model to establish mediation where estimated treatment effects and the mediator effect are nonzero and in the expected direction.^{xxiii} **Cost-Benefit Analysis:** The evaluation team will also conduct an economic impact assessment that measures cost savings and revenue generation. An analysis of the current expenditures that can be minimized if program objectives are met will be conducted. Examples include cost to society for physical and mental health services, the cost of incarceration, etc. An analysis of potential revenue generated (reduction in truancy) for the school district will also be included.

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