

**a) Quality of the Project Design:**

**Introduction:** The Excellence Project, based on a self-funded 18-month pilot in the Bronx, NY, will demonstrate how afterschool programming can be leveraged to help identify, instruct, and nurture gifted children, excluded from gifted programs by traditional screening tools.

**Excellence Project Mission:**

Our mission is to identify underrepresented gifted & talented children in under-resourced schools and provide

**Project Goals:** With a five-year grant from the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program, New York Edge, in partnership with Johns Hopkins University, will implement The Excellence Project in partnership with seven under-resourced elementary, middle and high schools in New York City and evaluate the program's effectiveness. Subsequently, the model will serve as the basis for development of resources to support replication and reduce excellence gaps by afterschool programs in urban and rural communities across the country.

**Background and Context:** Giftedness knows no borders culturally, economically, racially, or geographically. However, levels of achievement and levels of funding for gifted programs clearly do. In a study of more than 10,000 elementary school students, Grissom and Redding (2016) found Black students are 66% less likely and Hispanic students are 47% less likely than White students to be placed in gifted programs.

In New York City, the conversation over equity and access for gifted and talented programs are most apparent in the current debate over entrance exams to its prestigious high schools. For example, this year at Stuyvesant High School, of the 895 spots available to incoming freshmen, only seven African-American students were admitted; compared to the 10 African-American students admitted last year and 13 admitted in 2017. The New York City

Department of Education recognizes the disparity and the Chancellor, professional educators and even politicians are making numerous suggestions for addressing the lack of diversity in elite city schools. Unfortunately, none of the solutions offered will solve the long-term issues of diversity and inequity.

Additionally, in 2019, according to *Chalkbeat*, 32,841 four-year olds took the city’s exam for giftedness and nearly a quarter received a score allowing them to advance to the next phase of the application process. Consistent with previous years, most test takers were represented from the City’s more affluent areas. Enrollment in New York City’s Gifted and Talented program is not reflective of its student population since “only 27% of the incoming gifted and talented students are Black and Hispanic, although they comprise close to 70% of the students citywide.” (*Chalkbeat*, “As New York City makes limited changes to gifted programs, the regular admissions process yields predictable results,” Philissa Cramer, April 16, 2019).

There are 1,605 public schools under the management of the New York City Department of Education, with only 100 offering gifted and talented programs. As we saw from above, those slots are not going to the majority minority students in the system. The Excellence Project seeks to address the lack of inclusion and diversity through a new model for gifted and talented programming. In the section below, we share the conceptual framework behind our model.

**Conceptual Model:** The plan for The Excellence Project was informed by the Excellence Gap Intervention Model (Plucker & Peters, 2016, 2018). They define excellence gaps as the achievement gaps among subgroups of students performing at the highest levels of achievement. After reviewing the available research and model programs, Plucker and Peters (2016) recommend the following research-based approach, which reflects the current thinking for addressing and eventually eliminating excellence gaps. These interventions are the strategies

most likely to shrink excellence gaps. In particular, The Excellence Project focuses on interventions related to (a) universal screening with local norms and (b) frontloading. The overarching goal for this effort is to demonstrate that by adopting a more flexible set of identification methods by frontloading (defined within gifted education as preparing students for advanced programs before they even have the chance to be identified or to enroll and providing new opportunities via cost-effective afterschool and summer programming), we can ensure excellence for children who have historically been left behind primarily due to the lack of opportunity aligned with place (Plucker & Peters, 2018).

**New York Edge and The Excellence Project:**

New York Edge (NYE), the lead applicant, is the largest community-based provider of school-based afterschool education in New York City. NYE operates more than 151 school-based programs, reaching over 36,000 young people in grades K-12 in all five boroughs of New York City and in the adjacent cities of Mount Vernon and Yonkers. NYE's mission is to provide children living in low-income NYC neighborhoods with access to educational, social, cultural, and career opportunities typically available only to young people in affluent neighborhoods.

For this project, NYE will partner with Johns Hopkins University in the design, implementation, and evaluation of an expanded program to identify and nurture underrepresented gifted students. The Excellence Project will address all three Department of Education priorities in its design and implementation. In addition, as the model is designed to be implemented by an afterschool provider working in close partnership with a school, The Excellence Project offers an innovative and cost-effective model that can be replicated for the delivery of gifted and talented programming to under-resourced school districts nationally.

**The Excellence Project Design:** The Excellence Project will screen every child utilizing local testing norms, principal/teacher/project staff observations and student self-identifications. Nominated students, whether self-identified or invited, must agree to participate in the program, and their parents/caretakers are also required to agree to support the student and be available to communicate with project staff as needed.

An Instructor will provide educational guidance for each cohort of 20 students. Instructors will support students in academics learning, while Mentors will be supports for students on social-emotional aspects, as well as helping students identify and address any barriers to success outside of academics (e.g. personal issues). In addition, the mentor will serve as a bridge between the program and the parents/caretakers. Students will participate in The Excellence Project three hours/day and five days/week afterschool throughout the school year as well as attend a summer camp for 10 hours/day, 5 days/week for seven weeks. Students who reach the High School level of The Excellence Project will participate in an all day Saturday Academy run by NYE focused on college readiness, academic advancement, regents examination preparation and advanced placement. All students will be given a laptop to work online with an adaptive curriculum from i-Ready, which integrates with and expands on live instruction provided during the school day. This adaptive program will allow students to proceed at their own pace, which is important given that many of these talented students enter the program working far below their capabilities. The Instructor will examine each student's progress daily and provide additional individual and small-group instruction to help students learn new concepts.

An advantage of this blended learning model, which combines online educational materials and opportunities for interaction online with traditional place-based classroom

methods, is that many of the students also engage with the online curriculum in the evenings and weekends at home. Students will also participate in several project-based STEM (e.g., engineering, coding, robotics) and literacy activities (reader’s workshop, creative writing) each week. Because the program is situated within the framework of NYE’s existing afterschool program in participating schools, the students also have dedicated time to participate in NYE fitness, sports, visual arts, and performing arts programs (i.e., participating in The Excellence Project does not require students to “miss out” on other important, extracurricular activities).

Figure 2 contains a sample elementary school schedule for the academic year activities.

**Figure 2. Elementary School Schedule**

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2:30-3:00	Snack/ Mindfulness	Snack/ Mindfulness	Snack/ Mindfulness	Snack/ Mindfulness	Snack/ Mindfulness
3:00-3:35	Online Math	Online/ Facilitated Math Instruction	Online ELA / Writing	Online/Facilitated ELA/Writing Instruction	Mentor/ Advisory
3:35-4:15	Coding	STEM	Chess or Alternative	Coding / Robotics	Yoga / Community Circle
4:15- 5:20	Sports or Arts Activity	Sports or Arts Activity	Sports or Arts Activity	Sports or Arts Activity	Sports or Arts Activity
5:20-5:30	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal	Dismissal

To address the affective issues many low-income students, face (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017), the programming will also include a focus on social and emotional development with ongoing activities including meditation, yoga, and frequent interactions between the Mentor and both students and their parents. We will document student progress in social emotional understanding and competency. We have used research-driven and approved leadership curriculum to teach the five main principles of social emotional learning namely: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making and

relationship skills. The Excellence Project will provide each student 1,020 hours of afterschool and supplemental education, of which 510 hours will be dedicated to The Excellence Project programming.

The Excellence Project students will also participate in a seven-week Summer Excellence Academy that meets five days/week for ten hours/day. We believe such extensive contact time is necessary for several reasons, including the family context of many of the students (e.g., parents/caregivers working multiple shifts across multiple jobs, single parent households). The summer program will follow the academic year framework, with students participating in blended learning activities with STEM and literacy concentrations and an expanded series of electives involving sports, fitness, and the visual and performing arts, along with expanded opportunities for off-site field trips, which will include college tours.

**Online Learning:** New York Edge will use i-Ready, an Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) evidence-based software and online learning curriculum. i-Ready is being used by 15% of all K-8 students across the U.S., including both in gifted education and remedial contexts. In May of this year, the Ohio Department of Education approved the use of i-Ready for five separate assessments, building out its use of i-Ready tools for its educators to include assessments for gifted children and reading assessments (3rd grade). Educators across Ohio already use i-Ready Diagnostic to help raise achievement scores for more than 120,000 students. Using i-Ready Diagnostic data from more than one million students during the 2017–2018 academic year, Curriculum Associates (2019) found that students using i-Ready instruction experienced greater learning gains than students who did not use the program. According to the study, “students receiving i-Ready instruction experienced overall gains of 46% for ELA and

38% for Mathematics relative to students who did not receive i-Ready instruction across Grades K-8.

As used in The Excellence Project, i-Ready will provide students with at least 140 minutes of online/facilitated instruction per subject per week, with diagnostic assessments administered by the software as students' progress through the curriculum. NYE Instructors will review reports after each diagnostic, focusing on student progress, to prioritize and adjust instruction. NYE Instructors will then deliver differentiated, small-group instruction weekly, grouping students based on i-Ready data and using recommended resources, to guide instruction and deepen students' understanding of selected topics. An emphasis will be placed on students setting, reaching, and celebrating individuals' goals for learning and achievement.

Our overarching goals with the proposed expansion of the project are to (1) gather more data on program effectiveness and efficiency, (2) expand services into later grades so students receive services through middle school and into high school, and (3) implement the program at more schools. New York Edge is in a unique position to accomplish these goals, given that its afterschool programs are well-established in 151 schools (35 elementary schools) throughout New York City in many of the most economically distressed areas.

The proposed project is based on a pilot that NYE began in January 2018 at P.S. 189, The Cornerstone Academy for Social Action (CASA) in the Bronx. P.S.189 is a New York City public elementary school with 395 students enrolled in grades K-5. The pilot program site was selected primarily due to its location in one of the city's most economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. For example, 23% of P.S. 189 students are chronically absent, only 35% meet New York State ELA standards and only 34% of the students meet New York State Math

standards. In the surrounding community, nearly 20% of the residents have an income below the New York City poverty threshold and only 23% of the residents possess a bachelor's degree.

Outcome data from the P.S. 189 pilot project are limited but promising. During the pilot, NYE engaged 39 students (20 male, 19 female) into The Excellence Project, spread roughly evenly across the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. All students were from families living at or below the poverty line (several much below), and 64% were African-American, 24% Hispanic, and 12% bi-racial. These data suggest that the universal screening process was able to identify a diverse group of talented students to participate in the pilot intervention.

We did not have access to students' prior state assessment data, making pre-post comparisons difficult. Students entered the program ahead of their peers (i.e., we used previous state testing data as the initial, universal screen), so the fact that participating students ended the year far ahead of their non-participating peers is not surprising. They appear to have learned substantially more than non-participants, but in the absence of a control group, we cannot conclude with confidence that the program led to these gains.

However, diagnostic assessment data provides a more convincing if still incomplete sense of student progress during the pilot. The Excellence Project online curriculum was originally offered in partnership with McGraw-Hill and Stanford University via their Redbird adaptive instruction program. In the past few months, McGraw-Hill discontinued support for the program (hence the switch to i-Ready this spring), but we have the formative assessment data for students up until that point. And the data are promising: Although approximately 75% of the students began the program with performance at or (mostly) below grade level, after one year nearly every student was assessed on or close to grade level, with approximately 20% of the students progressing to the point that they were working one or more grade-levels above (e.g., a 5th



grader working at the 7th grade level). Initial i-Ready diagnostic assessments provide similarly promising data: Only 44% of 3rd graders (i.e., those participating for only a month before the assessments were administered) were at or above grade-level versus 85% of 4th graders (who had participated for just over a year).

Finally, although limited to anecdotal data, teachers, school administrators, parents and caregivers offered frequent feedback about positive changes in their children's behavior, especially during the second year of the program (i.e., the 2018-2019 school year), which they attributed to the increased engagement and social-emotional interventions in the pilot.

Given the limited but promising outcome data from the pilot, a major goal of the proposed project is to collect data that will provide a clearer, more rigorous analysis of the effectiveness of The Excellence Project.

### **Program Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes:**

**Goal 1: Identification:** Demonstrate how the use of universal screening with local norms can increase the number of gifted and talented students in under-resourced settings.

**Objective 1A:** To create identification and acceptance **standards** into Gifted and Talented programs that reflect local norms and engage project staff and teacher observations.

**Outcome 1:** To create **protocols** that are standardized for use in a variety of settings (urban and rural) that will engage under-represented students in gifted and talented programs.

**Goal 2: Standardize and Scale:** To create accessible resources to promote wide-scale adoption of The Excellence Project in under-resourced communities.

**Objective 2A:** To create a quality, effective, scalable, replicable, and cost-efficient model to identify and develop the potential of advanced learners in low-income communities across the

US by creating **resources** that will be available to districts, schools and community-based organizations interested in implementing The Excellence Project.

**Objective 2B:** To create programming for afterschool gifted and talented programming utilizing a blended learning model that incorporates online adaptive software and face-to-face instruction with Instructors.

**Outcome 2:** Under-resourced urban and rural schools in partnership with New York Edge can identify and engage advanced learners by implementing The Excellence Project and **accelerate learning and academic excellence.**

- - Increase in the number of new schools in New York City participating in The Excellence Project (year 2 = 3 schools; year 4 = 3 schools, total new schools = 6, pilot school = 1)
- - Number of students newly identified as gifted and talented under the program, the total number of students over five years (including the pilot program) = 275 students
- - The number of teachers and other educators who received services that enable them to better identify and improve instruction for gifted and talented students, total Instructors and Mentors = 12; total principals = 7

### **Goal 3: Realistic Opportunities**

**Objective 3A:** To demonstrate that students identified in The Excellence Project, when provided with additional support in an afterschool program, will **outperform their peers** on state assessments in Math and English Language Arts.

#### **Outcomes 3:**

- - Excellence Project students exhibit significantly greater learning growth than peers in control groups drawn from similar schools on state Math scores.

- Excellence Project students exhibit significantly greater learning growth than peers in control groups drawn from similar schools on state English Language Arts scores.
- Parents report increased engagement in their child(ren)'s educational journey
- Teachers of participating students report decrease in behavioral incidents

**Addressing Needs of Target Population:** Interventions in our nation's low-income schools are typically designed to help struggling students meet minimum learning standards, e.g., the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This worthy focus on closing educational opportunity gaps for lower-achieving students in underserved communities has too often overlooked excellence gaps at the other end of the academic achievement scale. Imagine how many talented young people are missing out on programs that could spark their abilities in math, science, and other fields that are critical to shaping our economy, culture, and national destiny. Think of the future leaders, inventors, and path-breakers that are waiting to be sparked by the right program. A true commitment to equality of educational opportunity means that all students – including those of exceptional abilities – deserve the same chance to reach their full potential.

Beyond the importance of maximizing educational equity and individual student achievement, this is an issue of national importance. In an increasingly competitive global economy, the United States cannot afford to squander the potential of so many young people with the demonstrated capacity to be leaders in math, science, business, government, and other fields that will shape our national and global destiny.

**Poverty and the Excellence Gap:** There is no doubt that widespread child poverty in the United States contributes to excellence gaps and is correlated with reduced academic performance (Hamilton et al., 2018; Kaya et al., 2016; Plucker & Peters, 2018). One in five children in the United States, about 15 million, live in poverty in the world's richest nation,

with more than 50% considered economically vulnerable. There is no question that preventing child poverty would be helpful in closing gaps in our education system, including excellence gaps. In the meantime, “socioeconomic excellence gaps are pronounced and growing” so in the near term we cannot rely on poverty reduction as our primary strategy (Plucker & Peters, 2016). Stakeholders need to find solutions that will help identify students with exceptional ability and create a sufficiently challenging and stimulating environment in which they can develop their talents.

**Exceptional Approach for Meeting Statutory Purposes and Requirements:** The Excellence Project is aligned with the statutory purposes and requirements of section 4644 of the ESEA (20 U.S.C. 7294) by its evidence-based, applied research approach to identifying and teaching gifted and talented students and increasing opportunities for low-income and at-risk students. By creating an innovative and cost-effective afterschool intervention, NYE will establish a model that can be replicated and scaled in other districts with quality afterschool programming. Finally, New York Edge and Johns Hopkins University will distill the lessons learned from The Excellence Project into a toolkit and make this resource available to urban and rural school districts across the country.

**Extent to Which the Proposed Project is Supported by Promising Evidence:**

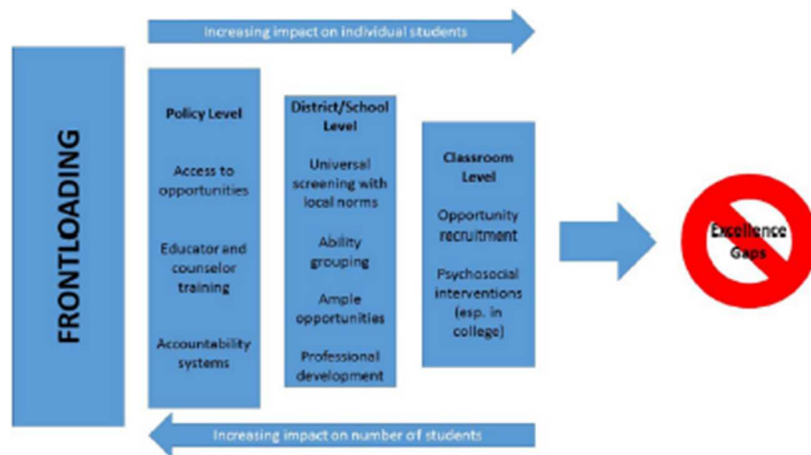
**Universal Screening Using Local Norms:** Identification strategies are a major impediment to closing excellence gaps. Extensive research suggests that several identification strategies - such as the sole use of teacher referrals as a nominating strategy, non-universal screening, and use of national norms - place barriers between low-income, Black, and Latinx students and access to advanced education programming (e.g., Grissom & Redding, 2016; McBee, Peters, & Miller, 2016). Additional research provides evidence that universal screening

(e.g., examining data from every student, not just those who would normally be nominated) with additional teacher and principal nominations after universal screening (i.e., a teacher nomination “safety net” rather than an initial teacher nomination stage) may be a far superior way to identify talented, underserved students for advanced learning opportunities (Card & Giuliano, 2016)

One benefit of universal screening is that it facilitates the use of local norms, given that data is available for all students. Plucker and Peters (2016) note that implementing local norms should increase the number of identified advanced learners in schools with the largest numbers of low-income and minority students; recently published research finds evidence to support that prediction (Peters, Rambo-Hernandez, Makel, Matthews, & Plucker, 2019). Of course, identifying more diverse students won’t close excellence gaps by itself, but if more diverse students are identified and then provided with additional support, excellence gaps would be expected to shrink.

**Frontloading Using Blended Learning:** The foundation of the entire excellence gap intervention model is frontloading. (see figure

1, right) Briggs, Reis, and Sullivan (2008) define frontloading within gifted education as preparing students for



advanced programs before they even have the chance to be identified or to enroll. Even though the goal is to close the excellence gap for underprivileged students, just placing more underprivileged students into gifted programs will not work. For example, placing students into

an accelerated middle or high school math class without first preparing them for the challenge of rigorous courses is unlikely to be successful. The goal for closing the excellence gap is to address the foundational framework that goes into the creation of the gap in the first place. As a result, an intervention to increase the performance of low-income students in an advanced middle or high school math course should *not* begin when students start the course. Rather, the students should be exposed to more rigorous curriculum *leading up to that course*, helping ensure that they have the intellectual skills and academic habits that will allow them to thrive when they enter those courses.

The Excellence Project is designed to provide a frontloading experience for talented students in underserved communities. The frontloaded instructional program combines synchronous and asynchronous components to maximize student learning, based on the Alammery et al. (2014) definition of blended learning as “thoughtfully integrate[d] different instructional methods ... contain[ing] both face-to-face and computer-mediated portions” (p. 443). Of the three types of blended learning, NYE chose the high-impact blend model as the foundation for The Excellence Project (Alammery et al., 2014). Research provides evidence that blended learning is an effective approach to increasing student learning, both in general and for low-income students (e.g., Prescott et al., 2018).

The Excellence Project has adapted the blending learning concept by providing live and direct instruction with the ability to support self-motivated learners in conjunction with AI-driven (i.e., adaptive) online instruction. This addition allows The Excellence Project students to accelerate their learning whenever they have access to a computer, making self-learning practical, convenient, while instilling self-discipline as students must set time aside out of school to learn on their own. Additional curricula including, robotics and coding, which also promote

higher level thinking that engages students, challenging them while promoting independent thinking. The program's combination of frontloading and enhanced opportunities (another facet of the Excellence Gap Intervention Model) are most likely to shrink excellence gaps and prepare participating students for advanced educational opportunities in middle and high school.

**Social Emotional Learning:** Based on existing literature and best practices (e.g., Siegle et. al., 2016), The Excellence Project model includes (a) the identification of giftedness in children from diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds as early as possible; (b) nurturing, guiding, and supporting the development of exceptional potential through a longitudinal, cohort approach so that students will be prepared for increasingly higher levels of challenge as they progress in grade levels; (c) a system of support and mentorship that includes supporting students' academic, psychological and social-emotional development, and (d) building close partnerships with parent(s)/guardian(s). This approach aligns with findings from a recent report issued by the Aspen Institute's National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development confirms the need to focus on social emotional learning and mindset. The report, issued in 2018, notes: "It is a mistake to view social and emotional learning as a "soft" approach to education. Quite the opposite. An emphasis on these capacities is not the sacrifice of rigor; it is a source of rigor. While many elements of a child's life improve along with the cultivation of these skills, one of the main outcomes is better academic performance." (*From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope*, Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development, 2018). The consensus of research is clear: "All students, regardless of their background, benefit from positive social and emotional development. At the same time, building, nurturing, and integrating social, emotional, and academic development in pre-K-12 can be a part of achieving a more equitable society" (Jones &

Kahn, 2017). Research on mindset development of gifted students is still uncommon, but an emerging literature suggests growth mindsets are similar in importance for students of all ability levels (Esparza, 2014; Mofield & Parker Peters, 2018).

**Performance Feedback and Continuous Improvement:** NYE's Project Director will meet weekly with The Excellence Project staff on (1) program design, student enrollment/retention, scheduling, and professional development; (2) establishing quarterly goals and a process to meet those goals, introducing educational, social & emotional learning curricula, managing budgets, (3) providing site based coaching to address daily operational issues while framing methods of self-evaluation utilizing organizational tools (4) as needed, providing crisis management and interventions ensuring continuous program and participant health and safety; (5) working with principals on space, staffing, in-kind contributions, activities, and (6) speaking with families about their child's experience in the program; (7) ensuring continuous program improvement addressing general concerns; (8) communicate with the federal program officer.

The Project Director will conduct both announced and unannounced visits at least once a week to monitor program quality as well as contractual and regulatory compliance. During these visits the Project Director will provide onsite support, mentoring and coaching to teachers and Mentors providing key strategies to develop a high quality program. Principals, teachers, students, families, and NYE staff will be surveyed to gather data on program quality and to support the continued improvement of the program.

Quality assurance is a priority focus and NYE is committed to data collection, data analysis, and implementing systems to track program compliance, staffing patterns, and parental outreach. Quarterly reviews will be formative to determine to what extent the site implements all program components, provides required academic, social, and emotional learning, and



enrichment activities, meets mandated safety/security regulations, fulfills staffing and professional development requirements. Reviews will also be summative to determine to what extent the site is achieving its goals and objectives.

The project will also convene an advisory board of national experts to guide the project. Members of the advisory board include Dr. James Moore, Vice Provost for Diversity & Inclusion, Distinguished Professor of Urban Education, Director of the Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male at Ohio State University, and former member of the NAGC Board of Directors; April Wells, Gifted Education Coordinator for District U-46 (IL) and 2018 recipient of the NAGC Gifted Coordinator Award; Myles Mendoza, President of Empower Illinois, President of One Chance Illinois Action, and a long-time advocate and policy expert on education equity; and Principal James Bellon from P.S. 189.

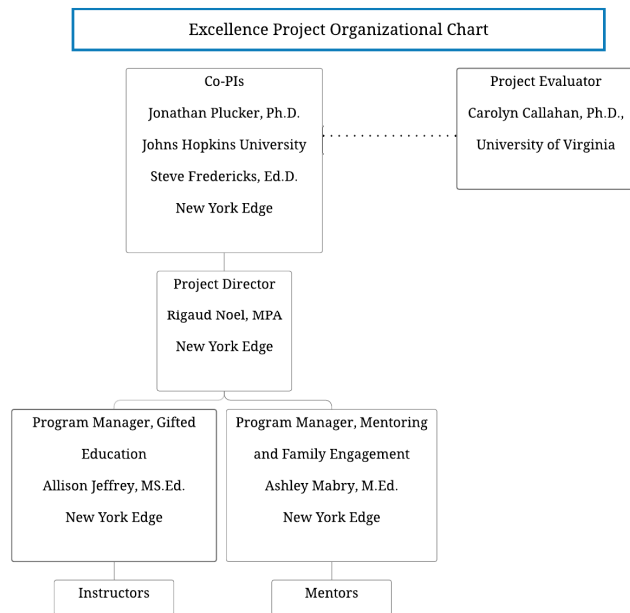
#### **b) Quality of Project Personnel**

**Key Personnel:** New York Edge is the lead agency and the project will be co-led by Dr. Steve Fredericks, New York Edge, and Dr. Jonathan Plucker, Johns Hopkins University. (See Figure 3, Organizational Chart, for role assignments of staff on the project, following page). Note that both Program Managers and Project Director are African-American. Additionally, please see Addendum 2 regarding staff diversity at New York Edge.

**Steve Fredericks, Ed.D.,** the Executive Director of New York Edge, has been leading the organization since 2008, where he conceived, and currently manages, The Excellence Project. As Co-PI, he will provide daily project leadership and management. Dr. Fredericks is an educator and business professional with over 30 years of management and education experience in several countries. His education career began as an elementary school teacher in the South Bronx, and then went on to co-lead the Urban Education program at Indiana University and serve

as Department Chair of the History, Principles and Philosophy Department at the Bank Street College of Education.

Dr. Fredericks has consulted with educators and academic researchers at several universities. He holds a B.A. in Sociology and Mathematics from Indiana University, an M.A. in Political Science from the New School for Social Research, an Ed.D. in Curriculum Theory and Educational Philosophy from Indiana University, and an M.B.A. in Finance from New York University.



**Jonathan Plucker, Ph.D.**, is the Julian C. Stanley Endowed Professor of Talent Development at Johns Hopkins University. As co-PI, he will oversee data collection efforts, liaise with the project evaluator, and monitor implementation of the project activities. Prof. Plucker is the incoming President of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC). His research examines education policy and talent development, with over 200 publications and \$40 million in external funding. Prof. Plucker has received several honors for his work, including the NAGC Distinguished Scholar Award (2013) and two NAGC book awards. He received a B.S. in chemistry education and M.A. in educational psychology from the University of Connecticut and his Ph.D. in educational psychology from the University of Virginia.

**Rigaud Noel, MPA** is the NYE Project Director. Rigaud has more than 12 years of professional experience in the youth development field, with extensive management experience

overseeing city and state contracts. He joined New York Edge in 2010 as a Site Director, eventually moving on to the role of Deputy Director of Middle Schools and later to his current position. Rigaud holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Syracuse University and a Master of Public Administration, with a Certificate in Non-Profit Management from Villanova University.

**Allison Jeffrey** is the NYE Program Manager for Gifted Education and STEM Educator for The Excellence Project. She will be responsible for overseeing and managing the instructional design and curriculum. From 2011 to 2016, she was a special education teacher for the NYC Dept. of Education. In January 2017, she became the first STEM master teacher at NYE. Ms. Jeffrey has a B.S. in Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania and M.S. in Education from Long Island University.

**Ashley Mabry** is the Program Manager for Mentoring and Family Engagement and Mentor at The Excellence Project. She will be responsible for supervising the Mentors. A certified school psychologist, she has experience working in school psychology for the NYC Department of Education and as a paraprofessional and ABA specialist in special education. Ms. Mabry has a B.S. in Psychology from SUNY Buffalo and an M.A. in Education from CUNY Brooklyn College.

c) **Quality of the Management Plan:** See Table 1, directly after the Management Plan for on-boarding of sites and students by year and cohort.

Management Plan Year 1	Responsibility	2019			2020									
		10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
<b>GOAL 1: Create Framework and protocols for norms, evaluation, and scale/replication of The Excellence Project (TEP)</b>														
Objective: To create acceptance standards, establish Framework for norms, determine the Framework for identifying schools, and establish evaluation protocols.														
Task 1: Attain IRB approval	Co-PIs	X	X											
Task 2: Order assessment instruments	Co-PIs	X												
Task 3: Order laptops	Project staff	X												
Task 3: Establish local norms Framework for identifying Gifted and Talented children in under-resourced environments	Co-PIs	X	X											
Task 4: Test norms Framework on pilot cohort	Project staff			X										
Task 5: Establish evaluation protocols with third party evaluator	Co-PIs and evaluator			X										
Task 6: Convene National advisory board in New York City (1 trip to NYC once a year)	Co-PIs and Advisory Board				X									
<b>GOAL 2: Recruit new schools for participation in The Excellence Project (TEP)</b>														
Objective: Of the 151 schools NYE currently works with providing after school programming – all schools are in low-income NYC neighborhoods, serving large minority (Hispanic and African-American) populations, select those elementary schools co-located with middle schools														
Task 1: NYE reviews demographic data on prospective elementary schools to ensure fidelity to the project framework	Project Staff	X												
Task 2: NYE makes outreach to two elementary schools to engage in TEP	Project Staff	X												
Task 3: Principals at the 2 identified schools sign agreements to participate in TEP	Principals and Project Staff			X										
<b>GOAL 3: Prepare Schools for The Excellence Project</b>														

Objective: Establish first cohort for Project - Cohort 1: 1 Middle School = 15 students, 1 Elementary School = 40 students = 55 students. Note: 15 middle school students participated in the pilot at PS 189 - CASA and are advancing to the middle school, in the same school building – CASA Middle School													
Task 1: Develop professional development surrounding project model and Framework	Project staff				X								
Task 2: Schedule professional development for all teachers— treatment and control	Project staff					X							
Task 3: Deliver professional development on Framework to treatment and control teachers	Project staff						X						
GOAL 4: Recruit and Hire Instructors and Mentors for The Excellence Project													
Objective: NYE recruits and hires staff to implement the afterschool component of The Excellence Project													
Task 1: Job descriptions written, and positions posted by NYE Human Resources	Project staff and NYE HR	X											
Task 2: Interviewing process by NYE Human Resources begins	NYE HR		X										
Task 3: Final Candidates interviewed by Co-PIs and Project Director	PD and Co-PIs			X									
Task 4: Offers made and candidates hired	NYE HR				X								
Task 5: New staff onboarded and trained by NYE TEP staff	Project Director					X							
GOAL 5: Administer Norms Framework and Identify participants													
Objective: Teachers administer Norms Framework, children identified for participation in The Excellence Project													
Task 1: Teachers administer the Norms Framework to all children	Project staff					X							
Task 2: Co-PIs analyze results and present to committee of teachers, Excellence Committee staff, and school administrators	Project staff and teachers						X						
Task 3: Committee creates preliminary list of students to select for participation.	Project Staff							X					
Task 4: TEP engages parents of each student, and explains the program, opportunity, IRB approvals and permissions.	Project Staff							X					
Task 5: With parental/guardian approval, 40 elementary students are enrolled in TEP, renew parental/guardian approval for 15 middle school students advancing from PS 189 – CASA to CASA Middle School	Project Staff								X				
GOAL 6: Implement The Excellence Project at 2 schools													

Objective: Enroll students, establish baseline academic and SEL, engage in program, assess progress													
Task 1: Administer i-Ready and Dweck assessments on students enrolled in TEP	Project staff											X	
Task 2: Students attend afterschool component of The Excellent Project (540 hours during the school year, Monday through Friday, 3 PM – 5 PM) at CASA Middle School and new Elementary School after school program currently administered by NYE	Project staff	X										X	
Task 3: Administer i-Ready and Dweck assessments on students enrolled in TEP at mid-year, collect teacher feedback and school grades	Project staff						X						X
Task 4: Assess instructor and mentor performance using NYE performance standards	Project staff												X
Task 5: Administer i-Ready and Dweck assessments on students enrolled in TEP at year-end, collect teacher feedback and school grades	Project staff												X
<b>GOAL 7: Implement Summer Program for Cohort 1</b>													
Objective: Offer summer learning opportunities for TEP students													
Task 1: Leveraging NYE’s city-wide summer camp program, offer TEP students’ opportunities to participate in blended learning activities with STEM and literacy concentrations and an expanded series of electives involving sports, fitness, and the visual and performing arts, along with expanded opportunities for off-site field trips, which will include college tours. (6 weeks)	Project staff												X
<b>Management Plan Year 2</b>		<b>2021</b>			<b>2022</b>								
Responsibility		10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>GOAL 1: Prepare Next Cohort of Schools for The Excellence Project</b>													
Objective: NYE will engage in the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to support enrollment of schools													
<b>GOAL 2: Recruit and Hire Instructors and Mentors for The Excellence Project</b>													
Objective: NYE will engage in all the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to support onboarding new staff													
<b>GOAL 3: Administer Norms Framework and Identify participants</b>													
Objective: NYE will engage in all the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to identify TEP students													

GOAL 4: Implement The Excellence Project at 2 new schools and continue implementation at Cohort 1 schools (2)															
Objective: NYE will engage in all the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to implement TEP															
<b>Management Plan Year 3</b>				<b>2021</b>			<b>2022</b>								
Responsibility				10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
GOAL 1: Prepare Next Cohort of Schools for The Excellence Project															
Objective: NYE will engage in the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to support enrollment of schools															
GOAL 2: Recruit and Hire Instructors and Mentors for The Excellence Project															
Objective: NYE will engage in all the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to support onboarding new staff															
GOAL 3: Administer Norms Framework and Identify participants															
Objective: NYE will engage in all the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to identify TEP students															
GOAL 4: Implement The Excellence Project at 2 new schools and continue implementation at Cohort 1 schools (2)															
Objective: NYE will engage in all the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to implement TEP															
GOAL 5: Implement Summer Program for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2															
Objective: NYE will implement the Summer program as outlined in Year 1 for TEP students															
GOAL 6: Implement Formative Evaluation															
Objective: Begin data collection on pre and post tests on TEP and control group students															
Task 1: Collect data to share with evaluator				Evaluator and Co-PIs						X					
Task 2: Convene Advisory Board in NYC				Project Staff and Advisory Board							X				
<b>Management Plan Year 4</b>				<b>2022</b>			<b>2023</b>								
Responsibility				10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
GOAL 1: Prepare Next Cohort of Schools for The Excellence Project															
Objective: NYE will engage in the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to support enrollment of schools															
GOAL 2: Recruit and Hire Instructors and Mentors for The Excellence Project															
Objective: NYE will engage in all the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to support onboarding new staff															
GOAL 3: Administer Norms Framework and Identify participants															
Objective: NYE will engage in all the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to identify TEP students															

GOAL 4: Implement The Excellence Project at 2 new schools and continue implementation at Cohort 1 schools (2)													
Objective: NYE will engage in all the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to implement TEP													
GOAL 5: Implement Summer Program for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2													
Objective: NYE will implement the Summer program as outlined in Year 1 for TEP students													
GOAL 6: Implement Formative Evaluation													
Objective: Begin data collection on pre and post tests on TEP and control group students													
Task 1: Collect data to share with evaluator	Evaluator and Co-PIs					X							
Task 2: Convene Advisory Board in NYC	Project Staff and Advisory Board						X						
<b>Management Plan Year 5</b>		<b>2024</b>			<b>2025</b>								
Responsibility		10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
GOAL 1: Prepare Next Cohort of Schools for The Excellence Project													
Objective: NYE will engage in the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to support enrollment of schools													
GOAL 2: Recruit and Hire Instructors and Mentors for The Excellence Project													
Objective: NYE will engage in all the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to support onboarding new staff													
GOAL 3: Administer Norms Framework and Identify participants													
Objective: NYE will engage in all the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to identify TEP students													
GOAL 4: Implement The Excellence Project at 2 new schools and continue implementation at Cohort 1 schools (2)													
Objective: NYE will engage in all the Tasks as outlined in year 1 to implement TEP													
GOAL 5: Implement Summer Program for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2													
Objective: NYE will implement the Summer program as outlined in Year 1 for TEP students													
GOAL 6: Complete data analysis, write articles and present findings	Evaluator and Co-PIs										X	X	X
GOAL 7: Disseminate findings to school districts and CBOs operating after school programs	Co-PIs										X	X	X
Task 1: Convene Advisory Board in NYC for final meeting	Project Staff and Advisory Board						X						
GOAL 8: Implement Summer Program for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2													
Objective: NYE will implement the Summer program as outlined in Year 1 for TEP students													
GOAL 9: Implement Formative Evaluation													
Objective: Begin data collection on pre and post tests on TEP and control group students													



Task 1: Create methods to collect data for evaluation	Project Staff and Evaluator	X												
Task 2: Begin data preliminary analysis of data sets	Evaluator and Co-PIs					X								
Task 3: Convene Advisory Board in NYC	Project Staff and Advisory Board						X							

**Onboarding of Schools and Students Chart:**

Year	Site	Cohort 1 pilot site	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4	Cohort5
1	Elementary (1)	40				
	Middle School (1)	15				
2	Elementary (3)		40			
	Middle School (1)		15			
3	Elementary (3)			40		
	Middle School (1)			15		
4	Elementary (3)				40	
	Middle School (1)				15	
5	Elementary (3)					40
	Middle School (3)					15
	Saturday High School Academy					
Total Students		55	55	55	55	55
Total Sites (including pilot)		7				

**d) Quality of Project Services:**

**Ensuring equal access and treatment for traditionally underrepresented**

**participants:** Due to the nature of the project design and target student population, 100% of participants in The Excellence Project will be drawn from traditionally underrepresented groups, including very low-income, Black and Latinx, ELL, single- or no-parent, and from families below the poverty line. The New York City Department of Education has struggled to provide equity for gifted services to its students. Much of the national media's attention has focused on the shockingly low admissions rates for Black, Latinx, and low-income students to the city's selective high schools, but the issues clearly start much earlier. We could share many statistics to illustrate this point, but the following should suffice: A data set compiled by *Chalkbeat* provides evidence that kindergarten-age children living in districts with 90% poverty rates have .50% of the share of gifted program applicants. In school districts where the poverty rate is less than 50%; 13.1% of the gifted program applicants are represented. As a result, until very recently, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens did not have any public gifted education programs.

The Excellence Project was created by Dr. Fredericks and his colleagues, with Prof. Plucker's guidance, to address these incredible inequities directly. With the vast majority (over 70%) of NYC's 1,126,501 preK-12 students being Hispanic (40%), Black (25%), and/or low-income (73%), the city's lack of opportunity for advanced education for those students is inexcusable and limits both the student's and their community's opportunity to develop and thrive. Under the mayor Bill de Blasio administration, and most recently under his new Chancellor, Richard Carranza, the issues of school segregation and equity have become top of mind for many parents and educators. The lack of diversity in New York City public schools may simply reflect a lack of options for low-income people, especially given the decline in high-achieving minority and low-income students as the City schools eliminated elementary school gifted programs in low-income neighborhoods and removed advanced courses in many middle schools.

In addition, of the entire student body, 20% are students with disabilities, 13% are English Language Learners, and 73% are living in poverty. Furthermore, of the 1,605 schools in 2018-2019, 1,404 had enrollment where at least 50% of the student population was living in poverty and of that 1,394 schools, 433 had student populations who were living at 90-100% in poverty. A goal of The Excellence Project is to deliver high-quality, cost-effective programs to advanced learners in these high-poverty, low-economic-security communities, thus shrinking excellence gaps across the city, state, and country.

**Likely impact on recipients of those services:** What NYE has noticed in afterschool funding is attention being paid on closing the achievement gap. There is an assumption that students in underserved schools have fallen behind their counterparts in well-resourced and well-public funded schools and need extra help to catch up. For those students who have displayed

mastery during the school day, an afterschool program focused on remediation leaves them behind. This focus results in creating and exacerbating an excellence gap where achieving, and possibly intellectually gifted and talented students, are ignored. NYE has designed a model intervention to identify and engage students historically underserved because of the focus on closing minimum competency achievement gaps and not closing excellence gaps across subgroups of students. Please refer to page 22, for additional information on The Excellence Project pilot.

If 3% of students K-12 from low-income families across the United States who have the capacity to be advanced learners, these gifted students could realize their potential and later fill 750,000 unfilled, highly skilled positions nationwide (Levy and Plucker, “Brains, not brawn: America’s lack of STEM students is bad news for national security,” *U.S. News and World Report*, June 2015). Afterschool education can play a central role in this endeavor since it can independently pursue the closing of the excellence gap while leaving the closing of the achievement gap to school day activities.

In addition to the economic impacts of the opportunity gap, there are individual impacts on children whose talents and gifts are not realized. Children with academic talent who are living in resource poor environments are set up to fail. Studies demonstrate their persistent academic slippage throughout grade school into high school and onto college. Gifted students from the bottom socioeconomic quartile are more likely to drop out of high school than those from the top quartile. Additionally, large numbers of low-income students qualified to attend the most competitive universities never even apply” (Wyner, Bridgeland, & Diulio, 2009).

**Open Licensing Requirements:** NYE understands that unless an exception applies, it will be

required to openly license to the public grant deliverables created in whole, or in part, with Department grant funds.

**Reporting:** NYE has the processes and systems in place to comply with the reporting requirements as detailed in 2 CFR part 170. New York Edge will submit annual performance reports (APR) and financial expenditures per 34 CFR 75.118 and a final performance report, including financial information.

**Performance Measures:** NYE and its evaluator have organized the goals, objectives, and outcomes to reflect the performance measures as noted in the request for proposals. In addition, for performance measure number 5, the evaluator will collect evidence that is obtained through surveys of teachers and other educators to demonstrate that the services provided are of high quality and contribute to improved efforts to both identify and improve outcomes for gifted and talented students. NYE will submit APRs that include data addressing the required performance measures and targets on an annual basis for each of the five years of the project. The team has selected Carolyn Callahan, Ph.D. from the University of Virginia, as its evaluator.

**Dr. Carolyn Callahan**, Commonwealth Professor of Education at the University of Virginia, will serve as the project evaluator. Dr. Callahan has been a site director of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented and National Research Center on Gifted Education, directing research and evaluation studies in this role for more than 25 years. These projects have ranged from the study of strategies for evaluating programs for the gifted, to the assessment of student outcomes, to the development and assessment of curriculum for gifted students. She has been PI on several Javits Act-funded projects and has more than 250 publications, many focusing on program evaluation and the results of such work. Dr. Callahan has been recognized as a

Distinguished Scholar by the National Association for Gifted Children. She is considered among the field's most knowledgeable and experienced evaluators.

**Evaluation Data Collection:** Dr. Callahan will provide independent summative and formative evaluation services for the grant program. Services will include observations, fidelity audits, formation of evaluation reports, development of quarterly progress reports, and creation of a formative evaluation system. As the External Evaluator, Dr. Callahan will conduct an analysis of all project data on a semi-annual basis.

The findings will be reported to the Advisory Board at their semi-annual meetings to monitor project success and make recommendations on any necessary program modifications. The evaluation plan for the project will be comprised of both formative (process) and summative (impact) performance measures. A formative evaluation will determine if project services have been implemented in accordance with the proposed timeline, identify any barriers encountered, determine best practices, and identify any areas in need of improvement. The summative evaluation will address intended youth outcomes related to academic achievement, student behavior and social emotional learning each year of the program.

The proposed project will systematically explore key research questions related to deeper questions of how, when, for whom and why The Excellence Project works, and examine the learning processes and intervention mechanisms that support (or hinder) the identification and development of exceptional student potential within under-resourced schools that serve predominantly lower income and disadvantaged minority communities. Of key importance in the evaluation will be two research models: (1) the *Synergistic Partnership-Based Fully Integrated Mixed Methods Design Model* (the Design Model) and (2) the *Comprehensive Mixed-Methods Participatory Evaluation Model* (CMMPE, an evaluation model) (Nastasi & Hitchcock, 2016) to

guide ongoing improvement to The Excellence Project. These models have been identified by the *National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities* (part of NIH) as offering exemplary approaches to evaluation. In short, these models rely on strong participatory approaches and collaboration with project stakeholders and advanced application of highly integrated mixed methods that are predicated on strong but flexible research methodologies. The team thus brings a unique blend of content, research, and logistical expertise to address the proposed research questions.

The Design Model and CMMPE work in concert to use broad and in-depth data collection and analysis procedures across a systematic set of sub-studies. Initial steps pertaining to literature reviews, developing relationships with local stakeholders, review of curricula and student work products, and conducting pilot interviews with parents and school staff have already been completed to develop The Excellence Project. We plan to refine the program further and evaluate its effectiveness by examining the baseline performance and trajectories of target students relative to subsequent performance across multifaceted indicators of their school success (and difficulties) by examining at individual and aggregate levels student school attendance, academic achievement, school engagement, disciplinary records, and plans. We will triangulate the findings with parental and administrative interviews and will seek to develop the evidence needed to address the research questions below included in the Evaluation Workplan.

**Evaluation Workplan:** Evaluation questions are framed to reflect the major components of the program and both formative and summative data analysis. The evaluator will modify this plan to reflect evolving program direction and modifications based on formative findings. The evaluator will meet with project staff and the advisory board semi-annually to report formative data, make recommendations, and review the evaluation plan.

Evaluation Question	Data Source	Instruments	Data Analysis/Person Responsible and Dates
<p>How, and in what ways, does The Excellence Project model successfully identify exceptional student potential within under resourced schools that serve predominantly lower income and disadvantaged minority communities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Project Staff</li> <li>• Principal</li> <li>• Students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student academic records</li> <li>• Surveys of principals, staff, teachers and mentor</li> <li>• Rubric to be used by experts in gifted education on the theoretical and practical soundness of identification process</li> <li>• Student attendance data</li> </ul>	<p>Project staff will collect share data with the evaluator to analyze as indicated in the Management Plan</p>
<p>How, and why, does The Excellence Project model develop and support the talent development and academic success of culturally, linguistically, and/or economically disadvantaged students? Are the impacts greater for some subgroups of students <b>compared with others</b>, and if so why? Are there specific project components, processes or mechanisms that contribute to (or detract from) the successful development of high-potential students?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Project Staff</li> <li>• Principal</li> <li>• Advisory Board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student demographic data</li> <li>• Observations of teachers</li> <li>• Survey data from teachers, parents and staff observations</li> <li>• Standardized Math &amp; ELA assessments</li> <li>• i-Ready assessment results</li> <li>• Student academic grade</li> <li>• Parent/Project Staff/Teacher/ Student Interviews</li> </ul>	<p>Project staff will collect share data with the evaluator to analyze as indicated in the Management Plan</p>



<p>To what extent, and in what ways, do psychological and/or social-emotional factors influence the success and effectiveness of The Excellence Project model? Are there project components (e.g., mentoring) or attention to certain constructs within the program (e.g. cultural responsiveness) that might increase the success and effectiveness of the project?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Project Staff</li> <li>• Principal</li> <li>• Guidance Counselors</li> <li>• Parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys of staff, teachers, parents and students on Mindfulness activities and their impact, the effectiveness of the Mentorship intervention degree of cultural relevance of the program components</li> <li>• Student academic records</li> <li>• Student attendance records</li> <li>• Dweck’s assessment of fixed/malleable ability</li> <li>• Parent/Project Staff/Teacher/ Student Interviews</li> </ul>	<p>Project staff will collect share data with the evaluator to analyze as indicated in the Management Plan</p>
<p>In what ways, and how, does the implementation of The Excellence Project model within under-resourced schools that serve predominantly lower income and disadvantaged minority communities impact the broader school environment and culture?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers</li> <li>• Project Staff</li> <li>• Principal</li> <li>• Guidance Counselors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School climate survey data</li> <li>• Parent, staff, teacher, student, principal, and Guidance Counselor surveys</li> <li>• Parent/Project Staff/Teacher/ Student Interviews</li> </ul>	<p>Project staff will collect share data with the evaluator to analyze as indicated in the Management Plan.</p>
<p>How do the processes, mechanisms, conditions, and outcomes of a talent development/gifted education in an under-resourced school serving predominantly lower income and disadvantaged minority communities compared to more traditional approaches to decreasing the excellence gap that provide teaching and learning within predominantly white environments?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Staff</li> <li>• Advisory Board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• i-Ready student growth reports</li> <li>• i-Ready national assessments</li> <li>• Student academic records</li> <li>• Student demographic data</li> <li>• State standardized assessments</li> </ul>	<p>Project staff will collect share data with the evaluator to analyze as indicated in the Management Plan</p>

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