

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/24/2020 12:34 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: The Johns Hopkins University (S411B200026)

Reader #1: *****

| | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Questions | | |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Significance | | |
| 1. Significance | 10 | 7 |
| Quality of Project Design | | |
| 1. Quality of Project Design | 25 | 18 |
| Sub Total | 35 | 25 |
| Scaling | | |
| Strategy to Scale | | |
| 1. Scaling | 20 | 20 |
| Sub Total | 20 | 20 |
| Resources and Quality of Management Plan | | |
| Resources and Quality of Management Plan | | |
| 1. Resources and Management | 25 | 24 |
| Sub Total | 25 | 24 |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Quality of the Project Evaluation | | |
| 1. Project Evaluation | 20 | 17 |
| Sub Total | 20 | 17 |
| Total | 100 | 86 |

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 1: 84.411B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: The Johns Hopkins University (S411B200026)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 7

Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly stated the importance of developing social-emotional skills at the middle school level so that students entering high school would have developed the necessary SEL skills. These skills (self-management, goal setting, problem-solving, belonging, interpersonal skills, and perseverance (pg.e20)) have not been tested as other contexts such as elementary school and 8-12 grade level students (pg.e19).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not clearly explain the effective strategy and the educational problem to be addressed by the proposed project. It was not clear the purpose of the Skills for Secondary School Success (4S) course to address the self-manage skills.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 18

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Strengths:

The applicant stated three goals, objectives, and outcomes (pg.e25-e26). Goal 1 refers to the refinement of the intervention (Skills for Success in Secondary School course) utilizing learning activities from Mastering the Middle

Sub

Grades (MMG) curriculum, activities aligned with the WWC Dropout Prevention practice guide, and organized using the CCSR conceptual model (pg.e24). Goal 2 related to the external evaluation activities (pg.e25), Goal 3 is the development and pilot testing, and Goal 4 is test alternative professional development model (pg.e27)).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not state the target of the objectives to measure the progress of the proposed project. The timeframe for the goals seems to be reasonable to be met in the time indicated.

Reader's Score: 7

2. (2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly stated the process to develop a new intervention utilizing components from other programs. The process seems to be appropriate to address the needs of middle school teachers (pg.e25-e28). The applicant clearly provided the logic model including inputs, outputs, and outcomes (short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes) (pg.e31).

Weaknesses:

The proposed project indicated the process without stating the activities to be implemented. For example, the applicant indicated selecting lessons; however, it was not indicated the process to select the lessons to create a shorter version of the intervention. The same is with other program steps were components from other interventions would be included without explaining the process of what would be adapted. The connection of outcomes between professional development and students' outcomes were not clearly shown in the outcomes while outcomes in the logic model referred to students.

Reader's Score: 3

3. (3) The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.

Strengths:

The applicant indicated that the Mastering the Middle Grades (MMG) curriculum would be tailored utilizing activities from the WWC Dropout Prevention practice guide. Different approaches to professional development would be utilized such as web-based course, synchronous and asynchronous distance learning (pg.e28)

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not clearly indicate how this new program would be different from those already in existence and with positive evidence of the outcomes; and therefore, the extension of the inquiry in the field.

Reader's Score: 3

4. (4) The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.

Strengths:

The applicant indicated that selected lessons would be utilized as a part of the shorter version of the intervention to reduce time, resources, and teacher training (pg.e25). The applicant indicated utilizing teachers with previous experience so increasing the efficiency of the teachers regarding time and results.

Sub

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Scaling - Strategy to Scale

- 1. The Secretary considers the applicant's strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly explained the strategies to address three barriers (1) 45 minutes of activities per week was too large a commitment of school time, (2) short-term accountability, and (3) the continued training of the MMG materials (pg.e34). The strategies consisted of repackaging the MMG materials by selecting lessons, reduce the length of the intervention, develop instructional materials, and test/validate the new professional development (pg. e35-e36).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

- 2. (2) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly stated the different mechanisms to be used to disseminate information such a distributing materials through the applicant's existing network (narrative-pg.e36), webinar series, in-house communication (e.g., social media), conferences, and journal articles (pg.e37).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources and the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 24

Sub

- 1. (1) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly demonstrated the capacity to implement and manage the proposed project due to the experiences with other large grants with IES and i-3 including partnerships (pg.e37-e38). The applicant also explained the scope of other programs such as program development, implementation support, and teacher training components to show their capacity to implement the proposed program (pg.e38). The applicant also provided CVs of the key personnel (pg.e64-e104).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 10

- 2. (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.**

Strengths:

The applicant indicated the cost of the proposed project would be \$ 5,879,943 of federal funds. The applicant provided a budget narrative (pg.e155-e160) to demonstrate the cost of the project is reasonable in relation to goals and objectives to produce potential professional development for middle school teachers. It is was clear the funds are reasonable to develop the professional development needed to eliminate or diminish the limited time that teachers have as well as the different activities to be implemented (pg.e158).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

- 3. (3) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly indicated that in the future a fee-for-service arrangement would be implemented for school and district to have access to the 4s course and PD refined (pg.e38). The applicant demonstrated success of raising money to support project in the past so it is expected to continue in the future.

Weaknesses:

It was unclear how school and school districts with the greatest needs and limited resources would have access to the intervention and the PD refined due to the fee-for-service arrangement.

Reader's Score: 4

Sub

4. (4) **The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

Strengths:

The applicant clearly provided the position and function of the key personnel (pg.e40) and timeline including goals, milestones, organization/key personnel responsible, and timeline to implement the proposed project on time and within budget (pg.e41). The applicant provided the FTE for the key personnel committed to working on the proposed project. For example, the PI would dedicate 0.25 FTE in year 1 and 0.30 FTE years 2-5.

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

Reader's Score: 17

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant clearly explained the independent evaluation would be conducted by an agency with the necessary experience to collect and assess the project utilizing a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to evaluate the impact, implementation fidelity, and costs of the 4S program (pg.e41). The applicant address issues of the multi-site, individual-level randomized controlled trial (RCT) such as attrition (e.g., school-level data) and equivalence at baseline (differences not larger than 0.25 standard deviation). It was indicated that an Intent-to-treatment (ITT) to estimate the outcomes of the 4s based on original student assignment would be performed (pg.e43). Power analysis was also presented to estimate the minimum detectable effect size of outcomes (e.g., 0.17 standard deviations for teacher ratings of student socioemotional competence, 0.14 for SEL outcomes based on student surveys, and 0.14 for student attendance rate) (pg.e44) and dichotomous outcomes (pg.e148)

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not clearly indicate how joiners to the intervention would be handled. The applicant did not indicate what the desired reduction in time of the weekly meetings and the desired reduction of the length of the intervention would be compared to the current intervention. The applicant did not clearly provide a timeline to comply with IRB requirements to collect signed forms from students and parents to participate in the proposed project.

Reader's Score: 8

2. (2) **The extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates the key project**

Sub

components, mediators, and outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly presented the outcomes of the proposed project in the Theory of Change (pg.e30). The key components (professional development and 4S curriculum implementation) and the threshold for program implementation (75% of teachers meet teacher-level fidelity threshold) were also provided (pg.e46).

Weaknesses:

None noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The applicant provided a timeline for data collection for two years (pg.e149). The applicant clearly demonstrated the collection of valid and reliable data by presenting a table including the student outcome by domain, outcome measure, baseline measure, and data source (pg.e47-e49).

Weaknesses:

Although the applicant indicated that Mastering the Middle Grades (MMG) curriculum (pg.e23) would be modified utilizing activities from the WWC Dropout Prevention practice resulting in a shorter version of the intervention, the applicant did not indicate how the validity and reliability of the activities that originally provided strong evidence would report the same findings (pg.e23).

Reader's Score: 4

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: The Johns Hopkins University (S411B200026)

Reader #2: *****

| | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Questions | | |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Significance | | |
| 1. Significance | 10 | 8 |
| Quality of Project Design | | |
| 1. Quality of Project Design | 25 | 19 |
| Sub Total | 35 | 27 |
| Scaling | | |
| Strategy to Scale | | |
| 1. Scaling | 20 | 20 |
| Sub Total | 20 | 20 |
| Resources and Quality of Management Plan | | |
| Resources and Quality of Management Plan | | |
| 1. Resources and Management | 25 | 23 |
| Sub Total | 25 | 23 |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Quality of the Project Evaluation | | |
| 1. Project Evaluation | 20 | 19 |
| Sub Total | 20 | 19 |
| Total | 100 | 89 |

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 1: 84.411B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: The Johns Hopkins University (S411B200026)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Strengths:

Applicant presents adequate and compelling research to support efforts to develop social-emotional and cognitive development to influence academic outcomes (page 2,e18-3,e19).

Applicant indicates that while this research exists, it is not reflective of existing curricula for middle school that impacts both social emotional development and academic outcomes (page 3,e19). The studies that do exist were not RCT design or were limited to targeting one particular skill (page 4,e20). With the focus of this project on the middle school, specifically 8th grade, additional knowledge and understanding of students' SEL skills for transitioning to high school will be examined potentially leading to implementation across schools.

The applicant recognizes that to implement and scale curricula needs to work within the parameters of school structures, not require large amounts of funding, and have an ease of implementation that teachers can incorporate into current practices (page 5,e21).

Weaknesses:

Additional details on other curricula that address transition/success in high school and career choices (page 14,e30) should be included. Details to support having SEL as a separate course as opposed to integrated into a content area are needed.

Additional details on the middle school curriculum that is being modified is needed in terms of adoption, fidelity to implementation, and outcomes to justify the proposed approach.

Details on the population that will be involved in this study are needed to understand the generalizability of the strategies.

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 19

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Strengths:

The applicant clearly defines the intervention is being developed for an existing curriculum that has been researched, but is being modified to be integrated into the school day with a more intense dosage (page 6, e22).

The applicant clearly lays out the four interconnected goals associated with this project (page 9, e25).

Weaknesses:

The goals presented may be overambitious in the timeframe. The development of the new curriculum is expected to result in improvement in the SEL skills of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, goal-directed behavior, personal responsibility, decision-making, and optimistic thinking (page 14, e30). Creating a curriculum in a short amount of time to address all of these areas, then testing and refining it, then adding in different PD approaches may not all be able to be reasonably completed in the grant period.

Outcomes presented in the chart on page 9, e26 are more process oriented (i.e. collect teacher and student feedback, recruit 10 schools) than outcome based. In addition, outcomes are not clearly specified or measureable.

Reader's Score: 8

2. (2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.

Strengths:

The applicant provides an appropriate and reasonable argument for focusing on SEL skills that are associated with improved academic outcomes in attendance and course outcomes (page 15, e31), which are essential skills for the transition to 8th grade.

Weaknesses:

Because this intervention requires one period dedicated to it for a semester, additional details on the schools that will be implementing the 4S curriculum is needed. Information including their ability to add this curriculum into their existing schedule would be helpful.

The applicant does not provide specific details about the target population and how this approach will address their needs. Very general information about middle school students and the need for social-emotional learning is provided (page 14, e30). Additional information to support why 8th grade is the appropriate time for this intervention is needed.

The applicant provides a letter of support from the state of Alabama to support this work, but cites that project

Sub

schools will be across three states (page 8, e24). Additional information on other state partners is needed.

Reader's Score: 3

- 3. (3) The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.**

Strengths:

Applicant identifies a specific focus for ongoing inquiry – middle school transition and the SEL skills needed for success (page 16, e32).

The development of the curriculum will serve as a substantial addition to the ongoing inquiry around SEL and academic outcomes (page 15, e31).

Weaknesses:

Applicant does not include implementation or PD strategies as an ongoing line of inquiry. These two aspects are major pieces of this study; thoughts about the impact this work will have directly on these areas should be included.

Reader's Score: 4

- 4. (4) The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.**

Strengths:

The applicant identifies an implementation support partner to oversee teacher training and in-classroom coaching (page 11, e26). This in-person coaching will be compared to tele-coaching and other PD approaches to gauge efficiency and effectiveness.

The proposed project attempts to complete what was once laid out over three years and a number of teachers into one quarter to increase staff efficiency (page 16, e32).

Weaknesses:

While this intervention is presented as utilizing one-tenth of teachers from the previous three-year curriculum (page 16, e32) there may be contractual issues that need to be addressed for the addition of teaching a different course of study. Additional details on how contractual issues were considered in the development of this intervention are needed.

Reader's Score: 4

Scaling - Strategy to Scale

- 1. The Secretary considers the applicant's strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.**

Strengths:

Applicant identifies three specific barriers with specific strategies to address them (page 18,e34), including focusing on the lessons and experiences that have been shown in research to impact student academic outcomes. This connection to student outcomes may help teachers see the value in implementation.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

- 2. (2) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Strengths:

The applicant provides a clear information of dissemination activities that include a variety of existing networks to target audiences (page 19,e35). Dissemination efforts are connected to the overall education sector as well as the specific areas of high school transition and the SEL field.

Dissemination is identified as a goal of the project. A timeline related to dissemination efforts (Goal 3) is included on page25, e41.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources and the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 23

Sub

- 1. (1) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.**

Sub

Strengths:

The key personnel have extensive skills and knowledge in PD, training, and grant management for large, federal grants (page 21,e37). The independent evaluator has substantial experience with RCTs and previous EIR funded experiments.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

Strengths:

Appropriate FTE allocations are reflected in the budget for JHU project management efforts (budget narrative).

Evaluation costs are reasonable and within the industry standard range (budget narrative).

Substantial incentives and honorariums are included for teachers (budget narrative).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.

Strengths:

The applicant has access and relationships with national philanthropy leaders and has been successful in securing ongoing funding in the past (page 22,e38).

Weaknesses:

Additional details on districts wanting to purchase this curriculum is needed. Particularly, details on cost and the current practice of purchasing a curriculum for one grade would be helpful.

Reader's Score: 4

4. (4) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Strengths:

The chart on page 24, e40 clearly presents the functions of the key personnel.

A clear timeline is included in Table 3 (page 25, e41).

Sub

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not clearly define the role of the implementation partner, Talent Development Secondary. Additional details on how this partner interacts with the key personnel is needed.

Reader's Score: 4

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

Reader's Score: 19

Sub

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

Strengths:

The applicant provides appropriate exploratory research questions (page 26, e42) that are connected to the theory of action.

The applicant is proposing a student-level randomized controlled trial with conditions identified (page 27, e43).

The applicant provides substantial information on ensuring equivalence at baseline, attrition, random assignment, and power (page 27, e43).

Applicant includes a comprehensive data collection timeline outlining activities by goal and timeframe (e149).

Weaknesses:

Because this is a student-level study there could be challenges with obtaining appropriate parent consent in a timely manner.

The applicant did not include the process for IRB approval in the timeline. Details on the anticipated timeline are needed.

Reader's Score: 9

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

Strengths:

The applicant adequately describes key components as professional development and curriculum implementation (page 29, e45), with appropriate measures identified for fidelity of implementation. Short and long term evaluation outcome measures are appropriately identified.

Sub

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The applicant presents the use of a variety of appropriate valid and reliable measures. For example, the DESSA, to gauge student SEL outcomes (page 32,e48).

The applicant also indicates the reliability of easy to measure administrative data such as attendance, suspensions, and GPA (page 32, e48).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/24/2020 02:16 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/24/2020 05:17 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: The Johns Hopkins University (S411B200026)

Reader #3: *****

| | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Questions | | |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Significance | | |
| 1. Significance | 10 | 7 |
| Quality of Project Design | | |
| 1. Quality of Project Design | 25 | 24 |
| Sub Total | 35 | 31 |
| Scaling | | |
| Strategy to Scale | | |
| 1. Scaling | 20 | 20 |
| Sub Total | 20 | 20 |
| Resources and Quality of Management Plan | | |
| Resources and Quality of Management Plan | | |
| 1. Resources and Management | 25 | 25 |
| Sub Total | 25 | 25 |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Quality of the Project Evaluation | | |
| 1. Project Evaluation | 20 | 19 |
| Sub Total | 20 | 19 |
| Total | 100 | 95 |

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 1: 84.411B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: The Johns Hopkins University (S411B200026)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 7

Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Strengths:

The proposal makes a strong case that preparing students for 9th grade is critical, that existing interventions showing impacts for this population is minimal or requires substantial disruptions to school routines, and that some existing interventions concentrate on a too-narrow set of SEL capabilities. The proposed project seeks to identify the most impactful parts of an evidence-informed strategy that currently demands, in many instances, too much time of teachers and schools to be sustainable.

Creating an impactful intervention that addresses the needs of this population with a much smaller footprint would be a substantial gain for the field. The proposal argues convincingly that existing interventions that have demonstrated effects are either too demanding (i.e., Building Assets-Reducing Risk, e20) or do not demonstrate impacts for the target population (i.e., middle school students). The proposed intervention aligns with findings from recent specific research that directly informs this work.

Weaknesses:

Because the proposed work is based upon an existing curriculum (MMG), with the expectation that the most powerful parts can be drawn from it, direct evidence of MMG's effectiveness would have bolstered the potential of this project. None is provided here.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 24

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Strengths:

This proposal provides an extensive narrative describing the goals, objectives and outcomes and their rationale and the importance of their contributions. The table listing these are detailed and logically link goals, objectives, and outcomes.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.

Strengths:

The proposal identifies a theory of action setting out how the intervention is expected to impact the target population. This includes an orientation toward more "authentic and engaging" (e30) content for obtaining SEL skills for students at this developmental age. The impacts of an efficacious intervention would likely benefit students who need the most support.

Weaknesses:

Concern that program is likely to address the needs – not proven.

Reader's Score: 4

3. (3) The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.

Strengths:

The proposal identifies key challenges to broader successful implementation of SEL programs in high-needs schools (namely time, capacity, and resources) and the value of identifying less burdensome approaches that retain the most important elements of an existing successful approach. The proposal draws deeply and frequently upon leading research in this area for conceptual and practical guidance. The project includes different phases intended to build learning within the project period itself.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 5

4. (4) The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.

Strengths:

The project is fundamentally oriented toward reducing the specific demands upon schools that have imperiled implementation of the MMG program. The proposal includes specific tests of the effectiveness of alternative ways to organize professional development in support of this curriculum (i.e., micro-credentialing, distance learning, and

Sub

peer coaching, e26).

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 5

Scaling - Strategy to Scale

- 1. The Secretary considers the applicant's strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.**

Strengths:

The proposal identifies three concrete challenges to the current curriculum (which is says is aligned with other research on school and student success) and proposes four specific changes to ameliorate these challenges: 1) reducing the number of teachers who need to be trained and the overall length of the intervention; 2) retain only the most powerful elements of the existing curriculum; 3) incorporate validated measures of social emotional skills to meet school interest in measurable outcomes; and 4) pilot and assess less burdensome PD approaches.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 10

- 2. (2) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Strengths:

The applicant has the institutional capabilities to disseminate findings, a track record of producing materials, and individuals with active roles in the SEL field, increasing the likelihood of broad interest in results. The proposal identifies a full range of outreach efforts for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 10

Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources and the quality of the management plan for**

the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 25

Sub

1. (1) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.

Strengths:

The principal investigator and evaluation partner have extensive backgrounds with research projects of exactly the kind proposed.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

Strengths:

This project includes four different goals, and each is positioned to make important contributions to the field: developing a new curriculum, assessing its impact on relevant outcomes, developing and piloting alternate and lower-demand professional development approaches, and testing these alternative PD models as part of an effectiveness study. Costs are typical and reasonable with a substantial potential impact.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 5

3. (3) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.

Strengths:

The applicant has a successful record of raising private funding to support projects after federal funding ends. The applicant also has access to the fee-for-service marketplace.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 5

4. (4) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Sub

Strengths:

The proposal identifies individual responsibilities and processes for collaboration and project management for each of the goals and subgoals. The timeline for subgoal completion is reasonable.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

Reader's Score: 19

Sub

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

Strengths:

The proposal explicitly identifies several potential pitfalls in obtaining WWC approval without reservations and identifies solutions for each (e.g., teachers rating students using the DESSA-mini, avoiding overspecification e48). Clustering standard errors within an OLS analysis is an appropriate alternative to typical hierarchical analytical approaches.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

The proposed evaluation has appropriate measures associated to the key components, mediators, and moderators. The key outcome of interest, SEL, is measured by both teachers and students, providing some opportunity for triangulation of findings.

Weaknesses:

None observed

Reader's Score: 5

3. **(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide valid and reliable**

Sub

performance data on relevant outcomes.

Strengths:

Each of the relevant outcomes has valid and reliable measures, closely aligned with the conceptual issues being assessed.

Weaknesses:

Goal one includes measure of the novel curriculum's "ease of use, clarity, engagement" (e25) and it would also be useful to obtain initial assessments of its perceived value prior to the Goal 2 RCT.

Reader's Score: 4

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/24/2020 05:17 PM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/25/2020 10:56 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: The Johns Hopkins University (S411B200026)

Reader #4: *****

| | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Questions | | |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Significance | | |
| 1. Significance | 10 | 8 |
| Quality of Project Design | | |
| 1. Quality of Project Design | 25 | 22 |
| Sub Total | 35 | 30 |
| Scaling | | |
| Strategy to Scale | | |
| 1. Scaling | 20 | 19 |
| Sub Total | 20 | 19 |
| Resources and Quality of Management Plan | | |
| Resources and Quality of Management Plan | | |
| 1. Resources and Management | 25 | 19 |
| Sub Total | 25 | 19 |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Quality of the Project Evaluation | | |
| 1. Project Evaluation | 20 | 20 |
| Sub Total | 20 | 20 |
| Total | 100 | 88 |

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 1: 84.411B

Reader #4: *****

Applicant: The Johns Hopkins University (S411B200026)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 8

Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Strengths:

The project is designed to intervene with students at the 8th grade level, which is a critical growth period for children. This intervention may improve the participant's social and emotional growth and development as well as, put them on a stronger path for academic success as they transition to high school (pg. e20). The 8th graders will be chosen from historically underserved youth who are categorized as black, Hispanic, low income, homeless, and those receiving special education services (pg. e18). The project will fill the research gap for these students (pg. e20) .

Weaknesses:

There is not a significant amount of research to show whether the intervention at this stage of growth will be successful (pg. e20).

Reader's Score: 8

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 22

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Sub

Strengths:

The project proposal provides clear alignment with the goals, objectives, and outcomes (pg. e25) The applicant gives details on the implementation plan using the Skills for Secondary School Success program which includes a measured curriculum and appropriate, measurable learning activities (pg. e21).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

- 2. (2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

Strengths:

The project design is supported by research that suggests that an intervention for the target population is needed and the intervention model as described in their theory of action, as implemented will likely improve student outcomes (pgs. e29 – e30).

Weaknesses:

More information is needed to understand how the pool of 8th grade students were chosen as the target and for how the program design will change to shorten the program (pg. e29).

Reader's Score: 4

- 3. (3) The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.**

Strengths:

The proposal is well developed and will add an additional category for research that is presently not well-known. The desired outcome of preventing secondary school dropouts is clearly supported.

Weaknesses:

This project is not an extension of a line of inquiry; it is an alternative to the usual research for middle school students (pg. e23).

Reader's Score: 4

- 4. (4) The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.**

Strengths:

The program implementation redesign, going from a three-year program to a quarter-length program, delivered as an elective course, will allow students to receive the information in a more focused manner and deepen the knowledge. This will improve students' ability to apply the skills learned through the activities (pg. e32).

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not provide details on the improvement of the efficiency of teachers except for receiving additional professional development (pg. e32).

Sub

Reader's Score: 4

Scaling - Strategy to Scale

1. The Secretary considers the applicant's strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 19

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.

Strengths:

Previous barriers noted – difficulty in implementing and sustaining a similar program. Mastering the Middle Grades included the length of the program, a lack of evidence in linking SEL with academic improvements; and the continued professional development of staff was too costly. This project addresses each barrier with strategies to overcome with the implementation – shortening the length of time and the group of students (8th grade only); an easier validation process and providing alternative training measures for staff (pgs. e34 – e35).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

2. (2) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.

Strengths:

The applicant has noted several pathways for the dissemination of information about the project and has collaborative partners to support their efforts (pg. e35).

Weaknesses:

The applicant noted that there were several partners and ways to disseminate information but did not list them with the exception of the use of their in-house communications (pg. e36).

Reader's Score: 9

Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources and the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 19

Sub

- 1. (1) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.**

Strengths:

The applicant has provided a list of key personnel along with the roles and responsibilities, in addition to the use of external evaluators to support the project.

Weaknesses:

Key personnel seems to be from policy and psychology backgrounds and not education, with none specifically from K-12.

Reader's Score: 8

- 2. (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.**

Strengths:

The application submitted cost rate agreements and a budget narrative for each year of implementation (pgs. e157 – e159).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

- 3. (3) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.**

Strengths:

The applicant has strong partnerships which have supported similar projects in the past and have indicated the promise to assist with evaluations (pg. e37) .

Weaknesses:

Details for future fiscal support for the project not noted.

Reader's Score: 3

- 4. (4) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.**

Sub

Strengths:

The project's timeline and management chart for accomplishing milestones is clearly stated in Table 3 (pg. e41).

Weaknesses:

Time specific and measurable objectives required.

Reader's Score: 3

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

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

Strengths:

The project's evaluation plan is comprehensive and includes various methods for collecting and aggregating data for future research (pgs. e41 – e46). WWC standards alignment found on page e48.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

The evaluation plan aligns with the objectives and includes formative assessments opportunities (pg. e46).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The applicant notes a focus of demonstrating validity and show reliability of data as a consequential component of their evaluation plan. They also noted the use of various assessments including behavioral and socio-emotional

Sub

tools (pg. e48).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/25/2020 10:56 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/25/2020 10:42 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: The Johns Hopkins University (S411B200026)

Reader #5: *****

| | Points Possible | Points Scored |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Questions | | |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Significance | | |
| 1. Significance | 10 | 7 |
| Quality of Project Design | | |
| 1. Quality of Project Design | 25 | 18 |
| Sub Total | 35 | 25 |
| Scaling | | |
| Strategy to Scale | | |
| 1. Scaling | 20 | 20 |
| Sub Total | 20 | 20 |
| Resources and Quality of Management Plan | | |
| Resources and Quality of Management Plan | | |
| 1. Resources and Management | 25 | 20 |
| Sub Total | 25 | 20 |
| Selection Criteria | | |
| Quality of the Project Evaluation | | |
| 1. Project Evaluation | 20 | 20 |
| Sub Total | 20 | 20 |
| Total | 100 | 85 |

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY20 EIR Mid Phase - 1: 84.411B

Reader #5: *****

Applicant: The Johns Hopkins University (S411B200026)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Significance

1. The Secretary considers the significance of the proposed project. In determining the significance of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factor:

Reader's Score: 7

Sub

1. (1) The potential contribution of the proposed project to increased knowledge or understanding of educational problems, issues, or effective strategies.

Strengths:

Compressing a year-long course to a quarter-long course could increase fidelity.

Weaknesses:

This project is focused on reducing the year-long course to a quarter-based course in 8th grade and does not add significant knowledge.

Reader's Score: 7

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 18

Sub

1. (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Strengths:

There goals of developing SEL skills are clear and many of the objectives are measured.

Sub

Weaknesses:

The objectives of improved grades (p. 7) and attendance are not measured. Measured outcomes only expect one paper and one conference proposal (p. 10).

Reader's Score: 6

2. **(2) The extent to which the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

Strengths:

The learning activities are being culled from another successful program.

Weaknesses:

The quarter-based course is new and not proven in either effectiveness or implementation.

Reader's Score: 4

3. **(3) The extent to which the proposed activities constitute a coherent, sustained program of research and development in the field, including, as appropriate, a substantial addition to an ongoing line of inquiry.**

Strengths:

This project continues a similar year-long course.

Weaknesses:

The main addition to the line of inquiry is the compression of a year-long course to a quarter and is not a significant addition.

Reader's Score: 4

4. **(4) The extent to which the proposed project will increase efficiency in the use of time, staff, money, or other resources in order to improve results and increase productivity.**

Strengths:

Reduction of the materials to a quarter will allow teachers to focus on the content.

Weaknesses:

The course will still require a quarter of a teacher's time.

Reader's Score: 4

Scaling - Strategy to Scale

1. **The Secretary considers the applicant's strategy to scale the proposed project. In determining the applicant's capacity to scale the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

- 1. (1) The extent to which the applicant identifies a specific strategy or strategies that address a particular barrier or barriers that prevented the applicant, in the past, from reaching the level of scale that is proposed in the application.**

Strengths:

Barriers of teacher in class time, teacher turnover and PD time are addressed with a shortened course in a quarter that can be given by 1/5 of the teachers.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 10

- 2. (2) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

Strengths:

Johns Hopkins CSOS network is excellent.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 10

Resources and Quality of Management Plan - Resources and Quality of Management Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the adequacy of resources and the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the adequacy of resources and quality of the management plan for the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

- 1. (1) The applicant's capacity (e.g., in terms of qualified personnel, financial resources, or management capacity) to bring the proposed project to scale on a national or regional level (as defined in 34 CFR 77.1(c)) working directly, or through partners, during the grant period.**

Strengths:

JHU research team leaders have been PI's on multiple projects. The key personnel have experience with larger grants.

Sub

Weaknesses:

There is a lack of clarity concerning who is doing the training and ensuring fidelity.

Reader's Score: 8

2. (2) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

Strengths:

The costs do not include a training stipend.

Weaknesses:

A breakdown of expenses by personnel would have been helpful.

Reader's Score: 3

3. (3) The potential for continued support of the project after Federal funding ends, including, as appropriate, the demonstrated commitment of appropriate entities to such support.

Strengths:

JHU has shown the ability in the past to obtain private funding.

Weaknesses:

Fee-for-service will make up for any private funding shortfall.

Reader's Score: 4

4. (4) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Strengths:

Timeline is adequate.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 5

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

Reader's Score: 20

Sub

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

Strengths:

The project meets the WWC requirements.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 10

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

Strengths:

Seven research questions and methods to collect and analyze data are given.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 5

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

Strengths:

The methods include using the SESSA-mini (p. 32) and the CORE Survey.

Weaknesses:

None noted

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/25/2020 10:42 AM