

Absolute Priorities and Competitive Preference Priority Addressed

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) and its partner, the Florida Department of Education (FDOE), are submitting this application for **Teachers Creating High-impact Opportunities for Innovation, Collaboration and Equity (Teachers CHOICE):**

Transforming Professional Learning from Compliance to Agency as a Local Educational Agency (LEA) partnering with a State Education Agency (SEA), under **Absolute Priority 1 (*Demonstrates a Rationale*)**, **Absolute Priority 3 (*Teacher-Directed Professional Learning*)** and **Competitive Preference Priority 2 (*State Educational Agency (SEA) Partnership*)**.

Overview. In order to enhance instructional practice and improve student achievement and attainment for high need students, **Teachers CHOICE** takes an innovative approach to address the problem of one-size fits all professional development activities by focusing on teacher agency and disrupting how M-DCPS structures, resources, and implements its professional learning program. Professional Learning is defined as sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused activities that are an integral part of school and district strategies for providing educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and to meet challenging academic standards (ESSA, 2015). For this project, the terms professional development and professional learning are used interchangeably. In the context of professional learning, **teacher agency** is defined as the capacity of teachers to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues (Calvert, 2016).

Over the five-year grant period, M-DCPS proposes to develop, implement, and test a high-quality, teacher-directed professional learning program, which empowers and retains a diverse teacher workforce while enhancing instructional practice and increasing student

outcomes. This project will support **1,400 educators** and **23,550 K-12** students in the **18 identified schools**. While the overwhelming majority of participants (94%) will be teachers, the project will serve all certificated personnel including school-site administrators and instructional support personnel (the term “teachers” in this proposal refers to all educators). In this project, **high-need schools** are defined as those with students in need of special assistance and support to attain acceptable academic achievement. The 18 identified schools in the **Teachers CHOICE** initiative have a deep commitment to high-quality professional learning. Like all district schools, each has an active Professional Learning Support Team (PLST). The 18 schools were selected to include those that have a cadre of credentialed teacher leaders or teachers who are in the process of being credentialed, serve students with high needs and reflect diversity in terms of grade levels and student population served. Please refer to **Narrative Appendix C** for detail on selected schools. To be selected to participate in the program, schools had to meet at least three of the following criteria (**Table 1**):

Table 1: School Site Selection Criteria

%	School Site Selection Criteria
>10.1%	English Language Learners
>11.6%	Students with Disabilities
>61.4%	Students Eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
>63.1%	Ethnic Minority Students
<58%	Students on grade level on State Administered English Language Arts Exam
<63%	Students on grade level on State Administered Math Exam
<62%	Students on grade level on Algebra 1 End-of-Course Exam
<86.9%	Graduation Rate
<93.8%	Average Daily Attendance

The impact of the project will be assessed through a rigorous independent evaluation using a quasi-experimental design conducted by RMC Research Corporation (RMC). (Please refer to **Narrative Appendix C** for detail on selected schools).

M-DCPS, comprised of 392 schools and more than 350,000 students, is the fourth largest district in the nation. The school district spans over 2,400 square miles, in a large urban community in which 69% of the student population qualifies for free and reduced-price lunch, 11.6% of students are students with disabilities, and 17.7% are English Language Learners (M-DCPS, Department of Research Services, 2019). These factors coupled with a teaching workforce of over 17,700 teachers pose unique challenges in the alignment and provision of equitable services and resources to both teachers and students. Because only 78% of the teachers and over 90% of the students M-DCPS serves are non-White, the need to recruit and retain a highly qualified diverse instructional workforce, reflective of our student population, as well as effective culturally relevant teaching is of utmost concern. Thus, the need for teacher-directed professional learning opportunities anchored on the district's Framework of Effective Instruction (FEI). The district's strategic plan is built on a singular goal – student achievement. It is M-DCPS' moral imperative to ensure that every student in every school has access to rigorous, relevant, and effective instruction every day, no exceptions, no excuses (Fullan & Quinn, 2016).

M-DCPS seeks to advance programs that have demonstrated effectiveness in supporting the district's goals as outlined within its *Vision 20/20* strategic plan. A key element within *Vision 20/20* is Pillar 3: "Highly Effective Teachers, Leaders, and Staff" with a specific objective to "recruit and hire the most qualified people, develop them deliberately, and retain them strategically" (M-DCPS, 2017). The PLST initiative, a systemic restructuring of the district's professional learning system, supports the development and implementation of high-quality school-based professional learning. PLSTs at each school include an assistant principal and four teacher leaders who lead and facilitate collaborative school-based professional learning that is aligned to school/district improvement goals and tailored to the needs of the teachers at the

school. All PLST members receive ongoing training and support in developing, facilitating, supporting and evaluating high-quality professional learning. The M-DCPS Teacher LEADership Academy (TLA) was developed to formalize the training and support provided to teacher leaders who serve on the PLST. The TLA program of study takes place during the course of a year and includes a foundational elements of teacher leadership course and a role specific course aligned to their role and function within the PLST. Nearly 50% of all district schools have a PLST with credentialed teacher leaders. In comparison, 100% of the participating 18 schools have a PLST with credentialed teacher leaders. **Teachers CHOICE** builds on this school capacity to support teacher professional learning, enabling participating teachers to self-select professional learning that meets their immediate needs.

Section A. Quality of Project Design

Replacing existing mandatory professional development. In the State of Florida, teachers are required to accrue a minimum of 120 Master Plan Points (MPPs) or hours of professional learning every five years through the MPP system in order to be eligible for certification renewal. Teacher participation in **Teachers CHOICE** is optional and there is no limit on the number of MPPs that may be accrued. Those who participate would be expected to complete a minimum of 12 MPPs per year (equivalent to 2 full day sessions) or 60 MPPs every five years through teacher-directed professional learning. This is less than the overall average. Overall, on average, each teacher at the 18 schools participated in eight professional learning sessions (equivalent to 48 MPPs) during the 2019-2020 school year. Through the **grant-funded stipend system**, teachers will be given the flexibility and encouraged to participate in teacher-directed learning through an allowance to pay travel costs and registration fees. The allowance could also be used to incentivize teachers to participate in school-based professional learning. All

professional learning funded through this project must take place outside the regular school day or year in order to maximize instructional time. Such methods will ensure participating teachers can replace **100%** of existing professional development requirements while also meeting the 120 MPPs FDOE certification renewal requirement.

The following may be satisfied by either through **Teachers CHOICE** or through the district's professional learning options:

- 20 MPPs in teaching students with disabilities (SWD) stipulated in Section 1012.585, Florida Statutes, and Chapter 6A-4.0051, Florida Administrative Code; and
- 40 MPPs in the use of explicit, systematic and sequential approaches to reading instruction, developing phonemic awareness, and implementing multisensory intervention strategies stipulated in Florida Rule 6A-4.0051, F.A.C., Renewal and Reinstatement of a Professional Certificate as required by s. 1012.585(3)(f).

Teachers who meet the requirements through the district's pre-vetted list or who are required to attend specific professional learning sessions during the district's mandatory professional learning days would also have the opportunity to be paid a stipend to attend two additional professional learning activities of their choosing.

In addressing **Competitive Preference Priority 2, *State Educational Agency Partnership***, M-DCPS and FDOE would be actively engaged as development partners in creating both of the following that can eventually be applied to the entire state, if approved through all the proper channels and necessary governing bodies:

- 1) a teacher-directed professional development choice model; and
- 2) a Florida Teacher Leadership Endorsement.

The teacher-directed professional development choice model would be an avenue for sustaining grant activities by institutionalizing teacher directed professional learning at the state level.

Through grant activities, M-DCPS plans to highlight four pathways that new and existing teachers can navigate to position themselves as constructive participants in their professional growth. For the purpose of this project, pathways are not restrictive tracks, they are avenues where teachers have the flexibility and autonomy to select options within and across each of the pathways. Pathways are used to guide the stipend system and teachers' self-selection process. One such pathway would be the Teacher Leadership Credentialing Pathway. Through the partnership with the FDOE, the **Teachers CHOICE** initiative will work to develop a Teacher Leadership Endorsement available through state certification. M-DCPS would like for teacher leaders who serve on the PLST to participate in the Teacher Leadership Credentialing Pathway. The Teacher Leadership endorsement would validate their role in leading professional learning from the classroom. Furthermore, it would support teacher retention and development while allowing for teacher agency.

In addressing **Absolute Priority 3, *Teacher-Directed Professional Learning***, M-DCPS plans to update its **policies** through a Letter of Understanding (LOU) with United Teachers of Dade (UTD) and approval from the School Board of Miami-Dade County Public Schools to offer stipends to teachers such that **100%** of existing mandatory professional development is replaced by teacher-directed professional learning.

Adequacy of plans for ensuring appropriate use of stipends. M-DCPS' **stipend structure** includes a series of internal controls and **mechanisms** to ensure that the district follows local, state and federal guidelines and protocols that govern professional learning. The

stipend structure is comprised of the following six (6) elements and incorporates measures to detect, prevent and correct fraud, waste, and abuse:

1. **Compliance with local, state and federal standards and written policies and procedures**, including development and distribution of teacher-directed professional learning LOU and program guidelines that promote the district's commitment to compliance and that address specific areas of potential fraud, waste and abuse
2. **Designation of compliance committee**, including instructional supervisors and curriculum support specialists charged with monitoring compliance with all program requirements and the appropriate use of stipends by collaborating with the PLSTs, district, and external professional learning providers
3. **Designation of a Teacher-Directed Professional Learning Advisory Board** to evaluate programmatic and other data collected to make recommendations to the Office of Professional Development and Evaluation (OPDE) regarding **Teachers CHOICE**. Members will represent all stakeholders including teachers, teacher leaders, school-site administrators, district personnel, UTD members and FDOE partners.
4. **Compliance training for participating schools**, including development and implementation of annual onboarding and compliance training for all teachers who opt-in
5. **Effective lines of communication between the compliance committee and the participating teachers and administrators**, including a system to receive, record and respond to compliance questions, or reports of potential or actual non-compliance
6. **Internal monitoring and auditing procedures**, including check and balances between the PLSTs at each school, OPDE, the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Grants

Administration, and Community Engagement, Labor Relations and Compensation
Administration, and the Payroll Department

The **stipend system will be managed** through a rigorous process managed by program staff in OPDE in order to ensure that the professional learning option selected by a teacher meets the definition of professional learning as stated above and is reasonable. This includes professional learning options not on the district's list of options (**Pathway 4**). The teachers in the **Teachers CHOICE** initiative will be able to select professional learning opportunities from each pathway within the district **Teacher-Directed Professional Learning Pathways**. All pathways are available to all teachers within a school. The **Teacher-Directed Professional Learning Pathways** is located in **Narrative Appendix D**. Following a description of each pathway, the process for ensuring appropriate use of stipends in each pathway is described.

Pathway 1 allows teachers to participate in professional learning that supports and develops their leadership skills and knowledge. The purpose of the pathway is the credentialing and endorsement of career lattice teacher leaders. The professional learning opportunities in this category will focus on the development of teacher leaders who lead from the classroom. In addition to participating in this pathway, teacher leaders will be able to identify and choose other professional learning options from **Pathways 2, 3 and 4**.

Pathway 2 identifies options and providers vetted by the district. These providers currently partner with the district to offer research-based professional learning opportunities to teachers. One of the approved learning options under **Pathway 2** is National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). All M-DCPS teachers who have not previously received a stipend for obtaining NBPTS certificate are eligible to receive a one-time [REDACTED] stipend, upon obtaining NBPTS certification. Teachers at the 18 participating schools could use

their professional learning allowance to cover the total cost of certification which is [REDACTED] by submitting a partial payment each year or to cover the renewal fee of [REDACTED]

Teachers may also choose from **Pathway 3** which provides options that meet the needs of each unique school culture and community. The five options that qualify are lesson study, action research, Critical Friends Group, teacher-driven observations, and professional learning communities. These options support teachers who identify shared needs and work together to 1) develop their own intentional practice as lifelong learners; 2) develop practical tools for their classroom work with students, and 3) build a professional community of trust and authenticity with colleagues at their schools.

Teachers interested in participating in **Pathway 4** will research and select high-quality professional learning options that align with their annual **Deliberate Practice Growth Target** (DPGT). There are no restrictions for **Pathway 4** provided options meet the definition of professional learning and are reasonable as determined by OPDE. Options:

- Must be instructionally relevant and connected to the achievement of high-need students
- Must be job-embedded or classroom focused, collaborative, data-driven, part of a sustained and intensive program, and related to the achievement of high-need students
- May include innovative activities such as online modules, conferences, seminars, or micro credentials

The DPGT process will be incorporated into the **Teachers CHOICE** initiative to guide program participants in making appropriate unique professional learning selections. This two-phase, reflective process is completed annually **by all M-DCPS teachers** at the end of the first grading period or within the first forty-five days of being hired. Teachers may collaborate with their colleagues to complete the process and may revise their DPGT during the school year as

needed. The DPGT process has been developed to meet Florida Statute 1012.98 and the Student Success Act (formerly (SB 736). The DPGT allows teachers to determine areas for professional growth that will improve instructional practice and have a positive impact on student learning.

The district’s **Framework of Effective Professional Learning** will be utilized by OPDE as a verification rubric to confirm that the teacher-selected professional learning opportunity meets the pre-established criteria. The **Framework of Effective Professional Learning** is supported by research regarding the components of high-quality professional learning which indicates that effective professional learning should incorporate no less than three of the components identified (see **Narrative Appendix E**) (Archibald, Cogshall, Croft, & Goe, 2011; Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Labone, & Long, 2016; Scherff, 2018).

Through **Teachers CHOICE** the district is proposing a two-tier structure to manage the stipend system. All professional learning activities will be supported and monitored by OPDE and the PLSTs as detailed in **Narrative Appendix E**.

Table 2: Stipend System Management

Pathway 1: Teacher Leadership Credentialing
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers submit Teacher-Directed Professional Learning Request form 2. OPDE proposes course on the Professional Development Management System (PDMS) 3. Teacher leaders register and complete course requirements 4. OPDE team reviews submission and forwards request to Data Center to award MPPs 5. Data Center awards final credit and tracks professional development records
Pathway 2 & Pathway 4: District Identified Professional Learning Options and Providers & Independently Selected High-quality Professional Learning
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers research and select high-quality professional learning options and submit Teacher-Directed Professional Learning Request form 2. OPDE reviews form and proposes course on PDMS 3. OPDE team processes registration fees and makes travel arrangements as needed 4. Teachers register for course, completes course requirements, and submits proof of course completion to OPDE team 5. OPDE team reviews submission and forwards request to Data Center to award MPPs 6. Data Center awards final credit and tracks professional development records

Pathway 3: School-based Professional Learning Options that Qualify for a Stipend

1. Teachers submit Teacher-Directed Professional Learning Request form
2. PLST proposes activity on the PDMS
3. Proposal is reviewed by OPDE team
4. Teachers register for course and complete course requirements
5. PLST reviews submission and forwards request to Data Center to award MPPs
6. Data Center awards final credit and tracks professional development records
7. Teachers submit Professional Learning Stipend Request Form to OPDE team
8. OPDE team confirms course completion and processes stipend

PLSTs will assist teachers as they track the implementation of their DPGT throughout the school year. This includes teachers' reflection on their plan of action, what information was utilized to determine the impact of the professional learning on student growth, whether or not adjustments were made to the implementation, and the final impact of the professional growth on student learning. PLSTs at each school will support teachers' implementation of changes in instructional practice as a result of their professional learning.

Teacher flexibility and autonomy regarding extent of choice. **Teachers CHOICE** will offer teachers increased flexibility and autonomy regarding their professional learning. Through onboarding and informational sessions, teachers at the 18 schools will be encouraged to participate in professional learning options not previously available to them. The list includes innovative options, qualified providers and mechanisms for teachers to independently select high-quality, instructionally relevant professional learning activities connected to the achievement and attainment of their high-need students based on teacher-identified needs on their DPGT. Additionally, information about **Teachers CHOICE** will be shared every summer at a learning showcase hosted at one of the participating schools where professional learning providers will offer teachers the opportunity to explore courses, workshops, conferences, seminars, and other professional learning opportunities. These activities will foster dialogue among **Teachers CHOICE** participants and providers and will deepen the conversation surrounding the power of teacher agency in support of teacher-directed professional learning.

Findings from a recent study from The New Teacher Project (TNTP; 2015) of three large public-school districts and one midsize charter school network including more than 10,000 teachers, 500 school leaders, and 100 staff members involved in teacher development were used to help to establish the teacher centered focus of **Teachers CHOICE**. In the TNTP study many teachers reported that the professional learning they received was not aligned with their needs or those of the students or subject they taught. **Teachers CHOICE** will offer teachers autonomy and choice to select relevant professional learning that supports positive student achievement and teacher performance.

Procedures and resources for selecting professional learning. **Teachers CHOICE** incorporates a minimal burden payment structure. It includes a clearly defined process for teachers to select and request options based on their DPGT which includes identifying professional learning opportunities aligned to their professional learning needs and those identified needs of high-need students. For all pathways, the process for selecting professional learning always begins with teachers researching and selecting professional learning options that meet their needs and those of their students. Teachers then submit a request to the PLST for **Pathway 3** or to OPDE for **Pathways 1, 2, and 4** for review, approval and processing. This process will be ongoing over the 5-year grant period.

[REDACTED]

Thus, it is anticipated that all teachers at the 18 schools will participate and take full advantage of the **Teachers CHOICE** initiative. The **Framework of Effective Professional Learning** was

developed based on research findings of and in consultation with the Learning Policy Institute and affirmed by several additional studies (Archibald, Coggshall, Croft, & Goe, 2011; Calvert, 2016; Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Darling-Hammond, & McLaughlin, 1995; Hirsh, 2009; Labone, & Long, 2016; Scherff, 2018). The research suggests that effective, high-impact professional learning opportunities should exhibit three or more of the components listed in the framework (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). As part of the initial onboarding sessions, teachers will be instructed on how to use the framework to identify high-quality professional learning opportunities.

Teachers have been involved in the planning of **Teachers CHOICE**. A survey administered in September 2020 to all 1,400 teachers at the 18 schools requested that they specify the professional learning opportunities that would best meet their needs and those of their students. Identified needs were used in the development of the **Teacher-Directed Professional Learning Pathways**. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Forty-nine percent are interested in participating in professional learning that may lead to earning a Teacher Leader Endorsement on their instructional certificate (**Pathway 1**). Thirty-five percent are likely to participate in school-based, collaborative, job-embedded professional learning opportunities if they were paid a stipend (**Pathway 3**). Eighty-nine percent are likely to participate in a conference if all expenses were paid by the district (**Pathways 2 & 4**). Upon being awarded the grant, the district will incorporate a planning/implementation period to refine the understanding of teacher needs by conducting focus groups at the 18 schools.

The Teachers CHOICE initiative includes a planned outreach strategy to communicate the stipend opportunity to eligible teachers. Actions include:

- Creating a detailed communications plan outlining key messages, activities, responsible party, and how they would evaluate the success of the communication;
- Building a landing page on the district’s HR website with information featuring each of the stipend options;
- Creating a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document which is kept up to date;
- Keeping an internal tracking document of all the questions posed to the district to ensure all teachers receive an individual response that is both consistent and thorough;
- Presenting at onboarding and informational meetings on how teacher-directed professional learning can transform professional learning in M-DCPS;
- Hosting information sessions and posting the recorded sessions on the district’s HR website; and
- Engaging teachers by inviting them to participate in the process along the way and holding meetings specifically to address their needs.

Specific and measurable goals, objectives, outcomes. In addressing **Absolute Priority 1, *Demonstrates a Rationale***, the present project is anchored on high-quality research findings and a logic model. An impressive **body of research** on teacher-directed professional learning and the role of teacher agency suggests that having teachers as agents of their own learning leads to improved outcomes (Calvert, 2016). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2015), “an education system is only as good as its teachers” (p. 1). As demands for an increased number of teachers becomes more complex, opportunities are needed for teachers to learn and refine their practice (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). To achieve equity and excellence in adult learning, “participation of the learners in naming what is to be learned” (p. 4), a learning design that communicates to adult learners “this experience will

work for them” (p 8), and “respect for learners as decision makers of their own learning” (p. 15) are essential (Vella, 2002). Moreover, Mezirow (1997) argues that ideal conditions of adult learning require that participants be free to engage in various roles of discourse “free from coercion” (p. 10).

In this project, M-DCPS proposes to cultivate an environment of continuous learning that engages teachers in their professional learning. The project includes four main goals. To ensure these goals are achieved, M-DCPS will assess the implementation of the teacher-directed professional learning program with specific objectives, performance measures and proximal outcomes. Detailed information is included in **Table 3: Objectives, Performance Measures and Proximal Outcomes**, found in **Narrative Appendix F**.

By reaching these goals, M-DCPS aims to achieve the following six long-term outcomes: 1) FDOE approved Teacher Leadership Endorsement; 2) Increase diverse teacher retention that matches the M-DCPS student population; 3) Increase capacity of teacher leaders to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues; 4) Increase district capacity to scale and sustain teacher-directed professional learning program; 5) Enhance instructional practice and 6) Improve achievement and attainment for high-need students. The **logic model** for this project can be found in **Narrative Appendix G**.

B. Adequacy of Resources and Quality of Management Plan

Sufficiency of stipend amount. While the **Teachers CHOICE** initiative will allow teachers the freedom to choose professional learning activities that meet self-selected individualized professional growth needs, it will also allow the participants to continue to take part in the district’s professional learning opportunities as well. The **Teachers CHOICE**

initiative will provide a [REDACTED] professional learning allowance per year per teacher to be spent through any combination of the following:

- Stipends to participate in approved school, district-based or outside professional learning sessions estimated at [REDACTED] (Year 1) and [REDACTED] (Years 2-4)
- Travel to approved conferences and seminars estimated at [REDACTED]
- Registration fees for approved conferences and seminars estimated at [REDACTED]

Teachers will be allowed to “bank” funds from year to year to allocate additional funds to higher-cost activities in subsequent years. All “banked” funds must be spent by the beginning of Year 5. The **Teachers CHOICE** initiative will provide teachers a stipend equivalent to the district’s current professional learning expenses to enable professional learning funded through the stipend to replace **100%** of existing mandatory professional development for participating teachers. The professional learning allowance, the initial onboarding, and the ongoing communication and support systems will ensure access to professional learning activities that are comparable and likely exceed the quality, frequency, and duration of the professional development that other non-participating teachers will receive in a given year.

Costs in relation to objectives, design, and potential significance of project. Increased expectations for student achievement, newly developed state assessments, along with recently adopted state content standards present teachers with a wide variety of possible individualized professional learning areas of focus. The **Teacher CHOICE** initiative will provide increased autonomy aimed at improving ownership, relevance, and engagement in professional learning. The purpose is to change the culture of professional development from directed compliance to active pursuit of highly effective professional learning.

The **Teachers CHOICE** initiative cost of [REDACTED] over five years will enable the previously mentioned goals to be realized. The M-DCPS 2019-2020 expenses related to stipends paid to support professional learning was [REDACTED]. The average per teacher was [REDACTED]. **Teachers CHOICE** has the potential to be replicated across the state of Florida. The Florida Legislature has been very interested in taking a critical look at state requirements for professional learning and this could be a model for statewide replication, if proven effective in recruiting and retaining a highly effective diverse teacher workforce. Thereby, making the cost even more worth the effort for M-DCPS and our partner, the state educational agency, the FDOE.

FDOE adoption of teacher-directed professional learning offers the possibility of future cost savings. Cost savings result when teachers are more engaged in their professional development as they are empowered to have input in their professional growth. Contributions from this project have the potential to inform policy and practice at the district, state and national level.

Minimal burden payment structure. The processes for teachers to submit their requests to participate in the **Teachers CHOICE** initiative is designed to enable teachers to have an opportunity to apply for and use the stipend with minimal burden. There are two methods for receiving stipends. Teachers will receive stipends after participating in **Pathway 3** in which they will be leading and participating in job-embedded professional learning at their school-site (e.g. lesson study, professional learning communities, etc.). Teachers will also receive stipends in the form of paid expenses for participating in **Pathway 2 & Pathway 4**. These three options simply require teachers to (1) research, select, and participate in an effective professional learning experience, (2) complete a **Teachers CHOICE** Professional Learning Stipend Request form, and (3) evaluate and reflect on the learning. The stipend process for **Pathway 1** is initiated by the

Office of Professional Development and Evaluation. **Pathways 2 and 4** are initiated by the teachers at the 18 schools. **Pathway 3** is initiated by the PLST at each school. The proposed payment structure enables teachers to have the opportunity to apply for and use the stipend with minimal burden. Timely reimbursement for each option will be processed according to Miami-Dade School Board Policy and the Office of Management and Budget Uniform Guidance.

Qualifications and relevant training of key project personnel. The **Teachers CHOICE** initiative will build on existing expertise and capacity to improve the educational outcomes of students in the targeted schools through innovation, choice, and equity. This program will bring together the state educational agency and the local education agency, professional learning providers, classroom teachers, and external evaluators as members of the **Teacher-Directed Professional Learning Advisory Board** that will meet to ensure that a full range of experience and expertise are available to address the needs of the students and teachers. In addition, this Advisory Board will, through data collection and analysis ensure that the program achieves its objectives on time and within budget.

Teachers CHOICE will be organizationally situated in the M-DCPS Office of Human Capital Management (HCM) under the direction of the district's Chief Human Capital Officer. The project will reside within HCM, under the supervision of the Assistant Superintendent for Talent Management and Development. The reporting Administrative Director, for the Office of Professional Development and Evaluation (OPDE) will lead grant initiatives and staff. The District Director will facilitate the implementation of grant initiatives. Day-to-day management of the project will be coordinated by the **Teachers CHOICE** Executive Director for OPDE. The Executive Director will have fiscal and implementation oversight, providing vision and leadership for the project; ensuring communication across district departments, region offices

and school sites; participating in Advisory Board meetings, and managing project support staff. Resumes for key personnel within OPDE as well as the supervisors to which they report can be found in **Appendix B of the overall application**. Additionally, **Table 4 in Narrative Appendix H** lists the role, experience and qualifications of key program personnel.

The **Teachers CHOICE** program specific staff will include an instructional supervisor and two curriculum support specialists. Staff members are expected to have multiple years of experience leading large-scale district-wide professional learning initiatives as well as experience working one on one with teachers, teacher leaders, administrators, district personnel, and personnel within other educational institutions. The instructional supervisor will manage the clearly defined responsibilities of all participants, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. The curriculum support specialists will support PLSTs at the 18 targeted schools as they support teachers in developing professional learning plans through the implementation of a continuous cycle of improvement that addresses teachers' needs, student achievement, and school-wide goals through teacher agency. Project staff will also ensure auditory compliance by processing the stipends in a timely manner and ensure that internal controls and **mechanisms** are in place to protect against fraud, waste, and abuse.

Adequacy of Management Plan to achieve objectives on time and within budget. The responsibilities, timelines and milestones included in **Table 5 (Narrative Appendix I)** will be met during each of the fiscal years of the grant.

Adequacy of procedures for leveraging stipend program to inform continuous improvement and systematic changes in professional learning.

The **Teachers CHOICE** initiative will use a 5-step **continuous improvement model**:

(a) identify needs, (b) evaluate and select, (c) plan for implementation, (d) implement, and (e) evaluate and reflect. Through the 5-step continuous improvement model the **Teachers CHOICE** initiative will ensure the project funds are used for instructionally relevant professional learning activities. This model will also allow for a variety of self-identified professional learning options for teachers thus eliminating overly restrictive set of choices. Additionally, the project and evaluation teams will meet monthly to review progress. Regular communication with RMC and using interim evaluation findings for continuous improvement will also help ensure relevant, actionable feedback from the evaluation team.

The annual **Teacher CHOICE learning showcase** will be one **mechanism for incorporating effective practices** discovered through teacher-directed professional learning into the professional development curriculum for all teachers. The teachers at the 18 targeted schools will be invited to lead professional learning sessions to highlight discovered best practices and effective professional learning opportunities. Through teacher feedback and data, highly effective professional learning partners will be identified and provided a space to present their curriculum for all teachers attending the learning showcase. In addition, the PLST members will be invited to present effective practices to the PLST members in the non-participating schools at the fall and spring PLST conference. Provided that the final program evaluation indicates a positive impact on student achievement and teacher outcomes, and provided continued funding, an expanded district-wide **Teacher CHOICE** model would be the next step. The proposed strategy to expand the use of professional learning stipends and teacher choice is to build the capacity of the PLST members and school site administrators to lead, monitor, and support a **Teacher CHOICE** model at each school-site with the guidance of an extended OPDE staff.

The **Teachers CHOICE** website will be an additional mechanism for **incorporating effective practices** discovered. Once the professional learning activity or event is completed, teachers will affirm what they should keep and what they should discard, in terms of their future pedagogic practice. At the conclusion of the implementation of the newly acquired pedagogical practice, teachers will document impact data, and reflect on the efficacy of the practice. Teachers will be asked to make one of the following four recommendations on a feedback survey available on the website and accessible to **Teachers CHOICE** Project Director:

- Reject (not successful or worth repeating);
- Repeat (try again, perhaps with the same class for a longer period, or another class for purposes of comparison);
- Refer (share the information with another member of staff to continue to validate effectiveness);
- Retain (use the method again on an ongoing basis).

Implementation results (successes and failures) will be shared with at least one other member of staff, in person, to foster ongoing professional conversation. In addition, effective professional learning results will be available on the **Teachers CHOICE website**, which will allow easy access and retrieval for district-wide instructional staff.

An additional expectation would be that a teacher will share with at least one other teacher. The process will involve having the teacher share information with the PLST and the PLST in turn compiling responses to be shared regularly with all educators at the school site. **Teachers CHOICE** project leaders would also collect this school-level information to guide continuous improvement of the project as a whole.

Relevance and demonstrated commitment of Florida Department of Education. The Florida Department of Education is committed to serving as an actively engaged partner in creating both of the following products that can eventually be replicated throughout the entire State of Florida, if approved through all the proper channels and necessary governing bodies -

- **A teacher-directed professional development choice model; and**
- **A Florida Teacher Leadership Endorsement.**

At least one representative from each of the following FDOE offices will participate in the **Teacher-Directed Professional Learning Advisory Board:**

- Bureau of Educator Recruitment, Development and Retention
- Educator Certification

A draft **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** that has been tentatively discussed by M-DCPS and the FDOE can be found in **Appendix C of the general application**. This MOU will be finalized and dually executed upon notification of grant funding. Additionally, a **letter of support** demonstrating the FDOE's commitment to **Teachers CHOICE** can also be found in **Appendix C**.

C. Quality of the Project Evaluation

RMC Research Corporation (RMC) will conduct the evaluation with a team led by two certified What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) reviewers, Drs. Stephen Meyer and Emma Espel Villarreal. Dr. Jennifer Weston-Sementelli and Ms. Stephany Brown will lead quantitative and qualitative data collection and analyses, respectively. RMC is well qualified bringing nearly 50 years of experience conducting rigorous evaluations funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, the National Science Foundation, and others and currently serves as an FY19 EIR Early Phase grant evaluator. A quasi-experimental design study will examine impact on teachers

and students to provide evidence that meets WWC standards with reservations. The evaluation also includes a mixed-methods component focused on measuring implementation fidelity and informing continuous improvement, and on documenting strategies that may be suitable for scale-up or replication in other settings. **Table 6** presents evaluation questions.

Table 6: Evaluation questions

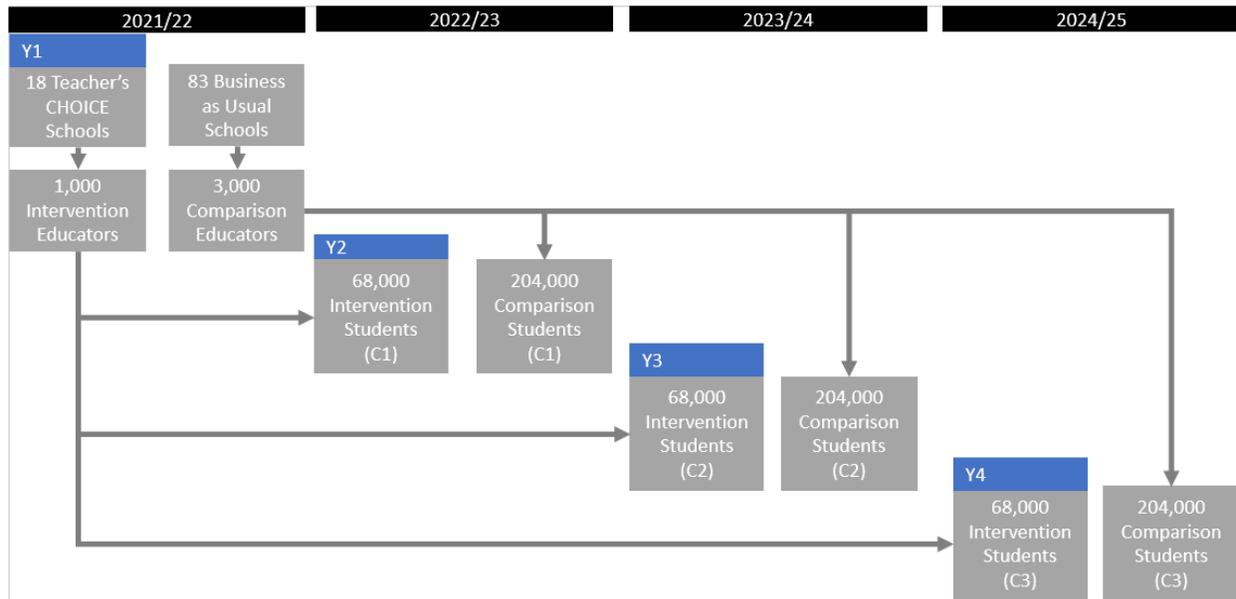
Fidelity	(1) To what extent is Teachers CHOICE implemented with fidelity across sites and over time?
	(2) How does implementation fidelity vary according to teacher and school characteristics?
	(3) What factors serve to facilitate or impede development, implementation, sustainability, and scalability of an effective teacher-directed professional learning program?
Confirmatory Impact	(4) How does teacher participation in Teachers CHOICE affect teacher effectiveness?
	(5) How does school implementation of Teachers CHOICE affect diverse teacher retention?
	(6) How does school implementation of Teachers CHOICE affect student one-year growth for reading and math academic outcomes?
Exploratory Impact	(7) How does school implementation of Teachers CHOICE affect student attendance and disciplinary referrals?
	(8) How does participation in Teachers CHOICE affect: (a) teacher agency in professional learning, (b) professional growth, including acquisition of course credit and progress towards certificates, and (c) instructional practice?
	(9) How does participation in Teachers CHOICE affect the capacity of school leaders to support teacher agency and professional growth?
Subgroup Impact	(10) How are the effects of participation in Teachers CHOICE on teacher and student outcomes mediated by the nature and extent of implementation?
	(11) How does the impact of Teachers CHOICE on teacher and student outcomes vary according to professional learning content, subject area, and characteristics of teachers and students?

Impact Evaluation. Confirmatory analyses will examine the one-year impact of teacher participation on teacher effectiveness after each year, and one-year impacts of school implementation of Teachers CHOICE on teacher retention, and on student achievement, attendance, and disciplinary referrals after two, three, and four years. Exploratory analyses will examine impact on other outcomes (e.g., teacher agency), the extent to which implementation mediates impact, and how impact varies for subsamples of participants. Propensity score matching will be used to identify matched teachers and students in nonparticipating district schools in fall 2022, after baseline measures have been administered and prior to outcome data collection. Teachers will begin participating in Teachers CHOICE in 2021/22 and their outcomes

and those of their students in three successive cohorts will be examined (**Figure 1**). Although over 1,400 teachers in 18 schools are expected to participate each year, a conservative estimate of 1,000 teachers was used for computation of design parameters. Power analyses indicate that the sample has sufficient power to detect effects on confirmatory outcomes (see **Narrative Appendix J**).

All outcome measures included in confirmatory impact analyses meet WWC standards for reliability and validity with the exception of value-added model (VAM) scores used to measure teacher effectiveness. The research team will explore establishing reliability of VAM scores during the pilot year; should this not be possible, these analyses will be treated as exploratory. VAM scores, retention data, and student achievement, attendance, and disciplinary referral data will be collected from the district for all study participants and their students. Surveys of all participating teachers and school leaders and samples in comparison schools will be administered annually. Qualitative data, including interviews, focus groups, classroom observation, and document review, will be collected in a sample of six case study schools each year. These data will provide detailed information about implementation; triangulate findings from quantitative data; collect perceptions of teachers, school leaders, district leaders, and project leaders and staff; and provide vignettes of classroom practice.

Figure 1. Impact Evaluation Design



A series of two-level hierarchical linear models (HLMs) will be used to assess impact on teacher outcomes with teachers nested within schools. The models will account for school-level condition (intervention or comparison), baseline measures, and any characteristics that were not equivalent at baseline. Two-level HLMs will be also used to assess impact on student attendance and disciplinary referrals with students nested within schools. A series of three-level HLMs will be used to assess impact on student achievement with students nested within teachers nested within schools. These models will account for school level condition, and any characteristics not equivalent at baseline. Impact on other teacher outcome measures (e.g., teacher agency), variation in outcomes based on implementation measures, and subgroup analyses will be examined in supplemental exploratory models. **Narrative Appendix J** includes additional information about power analyses, matching procedures, data sources, and planned analyses.

Key project components, mediators, and outcomes. Key project components include: support from professional learning (PL) support teams and teacher leaders, monitoring of the PL system by instructional supervisors, guidance for teachers and administrators from curriculum

support specialists, engagement of teacher in high-quality PL aligned to needs, and use of a PL management system. Aspects of implementation (e.g., the nature and extent of teacher participation) and teacher agency will be examined as mediators of outcomes for teachers and students (see **Narrative Appendix J**). Primary outcomes to be examined include teacher retention and effectiveness, and student achievement, attendance, and disciplinary referrals. Project- and district-level outcomes also include establishment of an effective teacher directed PL system and increased capacity to scale and sustain effective project components. The Teachers CHOICE logic model (see **Narrative Appendix G**) specifies all key project components (reflected as resources/activities), mediators (reflected as outputs), and short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes.

School fidelity of implementation to the Teachers CHOICE model will be assessed twice annually using a project-specific checklist to be completed by project leaders to assess school progress based on interviews with school leaders. District documentation of teacher participation along with an annual spring teacher survey will be used to assess teacher-level implementation fidelity. Across measures, schools and teachers will be expected to demonstrate adherence to a minimum threshold of 80 percent of composite implementation components and each sub-component for acceptable implementation. During Year 1, reliability and validity of the school checklist and teacher survey measures will be established through expert review and analyses of inter-observer agreement and internal consistency. RMC will work with project staff and adapt existing strategies (e.g., Fixsen et al, 2005; Hulleman & Cordray, 2009) to ensure that fidelity thresholds are meaningful and reflect key project components. A composite index will be used to identify sites that do not meet the threshold; provide initial evidence of the relationship between

fidelity and outcomes to reinforce the empirical basis for the threshold, examine the mediating role of implementation fidelity, and inform continuous program improvement.

Provision of Performance Feedback and Assessment of Progress. The project and evaluation teams will meet at least monthly to review progress, consult with EIR technical assistance providers, and discuss interim feedback to guide continuous improvement. RMC will provide formative evaluation reports annually to project leadership, with a focus on preliminary student outcome data, implementation fidelity and adherence to minimum thresholds, challenges to be addressed, areas for improvement, and emerging best practices. RMC and project staff will share selected findings with district stakeholders to facilitate continuous improvement and will document best practice implementation strategies for replication or testing in other settings. RMC and project staff will also develop at least three brief reports of findings for external audiences to share information about project implementation and outcomes and increase the potential for Teachers CHOICE strategies to be scaled, replicated, and tested in multiple settings.