

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 07/22/2020 12:14 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: The University of Alabama (S423A200114)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	35	35
Significance		
1. Significance	20	20
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	20
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	25	25
Sub Total	100	100
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Promoting STEM Education/Computer Science		
1. CPP1	3	0
Sub Total	3	0
Competitive Preference Priority		
Fostering Knowledge and Promoting Development		
1. CPP2	2	2
Spurring Opportunity Zone Investment		
1. CPP3	5	5
Sub Total	7	7
Total	110	107

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - SEED - 7: 84.423A

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: The University of Alabama (S423A200114)

Questions

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:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(2) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.

(3) 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.

(4) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant.

Strengths:

1- The applicant's proposed project represented a through and exceptional approach to address Absolute Priority 1. For example, the proposed project will provide elementary educators the ability to deliver appropriate SEL instruction to all early elementary learners including those with or at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders. This approach has not been taken by many in previous research projects. The project's goals are to develop a digitally delivered tier one and Tier 2 SEL curriculum with data-based differentiation and to crack digital an in person professional learning to train teachers and provide ongoing support as they implement the program. The intended goals are of the proposed project are addressed in a unique and exceptional manner (e26).

2- The applicant effectively demonstrated that the proposed project will engage participants in best practices training and professional development that are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration, thus leading to some improvements in practice as school leaders. For example, teachers will be trained in best practices on SEL instruction. There will three cohorts of approximately 160 teachers in each cohort. Teachers will participate in multi-tiered training via a web-based tool. These professional development tools will help teacher learn how to effectively select and apply differentiated evidenced based SEL skills. Topics for the training include, Intro to social and emotional learning, understanding social and emotional strengths and needs, implementing we have skills an skills for social awareness. The proposed project design is sufficient in quality, intensity and duration (e29).

3- The applicant fully provided evidence of how the design of the proposed project is appropriate and will meet the needs of the target population or other identified needs. For example, the applicant submits that by providing professional development support to teachers in the area of SEL instruction will yield greater student achievement. For each course in the proposed project the applicant provided several learning objectives. Each learning objective is directly aligned with improving academic achievement for at-risk students through SEL instruction (e35).

4- The applicant demonstrated some evidence that the proposed project has the potential incorporation the project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant. For example, the

applicant submits that the after the grant period, the digital innovation of the project can be brought to a regional and national scale order to promote teachers Accessibility to high quality SEL professional development and Tier 1 and Tier 2 curriculum (e38).

Weaknesses:

1- No weakness noted.

2- No weaknesses noted.

3- No weakness noted.

4- No weakness noted

Reader's Score: 35

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 factors:

(1) The importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project, especially improvements in teaching and student achievement.

(2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field of study.

(3) The extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies.

Strengths:

1- The applicant demonstrates some evidence that the magnitude of outcomes that are likely to improve teaching and student achievement. For example, the applicant provides ample research that concludes that Students are responsive to effective SEL instruction. As a result of the proposed project student academic motivation and performance will increase, social and emotional skills and attitudes will increase, and overall student behavior will be improved (e36).

2- The applicant clearly demonstrates that the proposed program has the potential to contribute to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field of study. For example, the applicant will provide 24 hours, over six months of the school year, of focused professional learning activities in efforts to deliver SEL instruction. The applicant's approach along with sustained, regular activities, collaboration, and job-embedded learning includes the essential elements for high-quality professional learning combined with evidence-based, data-differentiated SEL instruction will increase the applicant's potential to lead to teacher improvements in SEL instruction and desired student outcomes for SEL competence, behavior, engagement, and academics). This ongoing work could potentially help the applicant to further their purpose thereby reaching their desired outcomes (e53).

3- The applicant clearly demonstrated that the results of the proposed project will be disseminated in to enable others to use the information or strategies. For example, the applicant is committed to making the result of the proposed project of this research available to a wide range of audiences including policymakers, district superintendents, principals and teachers. In addition to the research community. In addition, the applicant research dissemination plan Include a mix of manuscripts submitted to peer reviewed and practitioner journals, presentations at professional conferences, and non-

technical dissemination strategies focused for practitioners and policy makers (e54).

Weaknesses:

1- No weaknesses noted.

2- No weaknesses noted.

3- No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

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

(2) 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.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

Strengths:

1- The applicant clearly described the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project and they are measurable and relevant to the project. For example, the applicant aligned each goal with correlating objectives, activities, targets and the aligning measurable results. The plan provides blueprint for implementation of the project, as well as for the project evaluation. This area of the management plan was very detailed and very well-written (e55).

2- The applicant comprehensively detailed a management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project and the plan included clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks. Each tasks and activity indicated who would be responsible for accomplishing the tasks. The applicant indicated that the project will be led by the Principal Investigator and project staff with extensive experience with managing and successfully completing large federally-funded grant projects of this size and scope. A detailed budget narrative was attached indicating how funds will be allocated for each year of the project. Thus, providing some measure of assurance the project can be completed on time and within budget. The management plan was detailed, very well-written and could provide a blueprint for establishing the timeliness of all program activities (e56).

3- The applicant clearly outlined processes and procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement during the implementation of the proposed project. For example, the applicant provided a detailed table that listed all of the stakeholders involved with the project. The applicant aligned the table with the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholder and when and often they will meet and share information and data. The multiple systems of supports will meet regularly and shared information in an effort to engage in a continuous improvement cycle. The sharing of information will offer opportunities to providing insight into necessary modifications to processes or resource allocation, while ensuring the integrity of the original project design and evaluations study (e56).

Weaknesses:

- 1- No weakness noted.
- 2- No weaknesses noted
- 3- No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the WWC standards with or without reservations as described in the WWC Handbook.

(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible

Strengths:

1- The applicant provided a detailed plan aligned with methods of evaluation and potentially will produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that meet the WWC standards with or without reservations. For example, the applicant provided a detailed chart that identifies various measures, data collection tools and frequency. Evaluation measures for the proposed project include, Attendance reports, STAR reading and math assessments, TSBS, electronic data, teacher self-reports and student self-reports(e59).

2- The applicant effectively evidenced methods of evaluation that will detail how the evaluation will provide performance feedback and periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. For example, multiple pivotal points have been placed in the evaluation design for data to shared. The project staff will share data to assess the delivery, quality, and relevance of coaching, trainings, and resources as well as plan for the development of new trainings and resources, improving program. The applicant provided a well-written evaluation plan that is outlined on a table on (e59).

3- The applicant clearly demonstrated how the methods of evaluation included the use of objective performance measures related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data. For example, the applicant indicated that AIR has selected evaluation measures that provide objective assessment of project outcomes. The outcome measures for the impact evaluation are aligned with the intervention and include standardized test scores, state & district administrative records, & reliable, validated survey measures. The online database proposed by the applicant seems to be innovative (E58).

Weaknesses:

- 1- No weaknesses noted.
- 2- No weaknesses noted.

3- No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 25

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting STEM Education/Computer Science

1. **Projects designed to improve student achievement or other educational outcomes in science, technology, engineering, math, or Computer Science. These projects must address increasing the number of educators adequately prepared to deliver rigorous instruction in STEM fields, including Computer Science, through recruitment, Evidence-Based professional development strategies for current STEM educators, or Evidence-Based retraining strategies for current educators seeking to transition from other subjects to STEM fields.**

Strengths:

N/A

Weaknesses:

N/A

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Fostering Knowledge and Promoting Development

1. **Projects that are designed to support projects likely to improve student academic performance and better prepare students for employment, responsible citizenship, and fulfilling lives, including by preparing children or students to:**

- (i) **Develop positive personal relationships with others.**
- (ii) **Develop determination, perseverance, and the ability to overcome obstacles.**
- (iii) **Develop self-esteem through perseverance and earned success.**
- (iv) **Develop problem-solving skills.**
- (v) **Develop self-regulation in order to work toward long-term goals.**

Strengths:

The proposed project is designed to improve student academic performance and better prepare students for employment, responsible citizenship, and fulfilling lives, including by preparing children or students to develop positive personal relationship with others and develop self-regulation in order to work towards long term goals. For example, the proposed project develops training and materials designed to build understanding by school leaders and staff of the social emotional competencies and corresponding skills that directly influence an individual's resilience capacity. Those tools and resources will be built upon throughout the project to develop the Social Emotional Learning curriculum.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority - Spurring Opportunity Zone Investment

1. Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the following:

(a) The area in which the applicant proposes to provide services overlaps with a QOZ, as designated by the Secretary of the Treasury under section 1400Z-1 of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC). An applicant must—

(i) Provide the census tract number of the QOZ(s) in which it proposes to provide services; and

(ii) Describe how the applicant will provide services in the QOZ(s).

Strengths:

1- The proposed project will be implemented in designated Qualified Opportunity Zones in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and Florida.

2- The applicant will provide SEL and counseling services in Qualified Opportunity Zones.

Weaknesses:

1- No weaknesses noted.

2- No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: The University of Alabama (S423A200114)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	35	35
Significance		
1. Significance	20	20
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	20
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	25	25
Sub Total	100	100
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Promoting STEM Education/Computer Science		
1. CPP1	3	0
Sub Total	3	0
Competitive Preference Priority		
Fostering Knowledge and Promoting Development		
1. CPP2	2	2
Spurring Opportunity Zone Investment		
1. CPP3	5	5
Sub Total	7	7
Total	110	107

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - SEED - 7: 84.423A

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: The University of Alabama (S423A200114)

Questions

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:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(2) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.

(3) 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.

(4) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant.

Strengths:

- By expanding a proven approach to addressing SEL in early elementary (We Have Skills!) to a larger audience with supports from the applicants in its delivery the program supports factor 2 above.
- The use of a database has promise for helping participating teachers better reach and deliver SEL contents by differentiating for students' needs (based upon feedback to that database). This addresses factors 2 & 3 above.
- The use of SELweb EE helps provide support for the claim that this program will successfully target not just a large group of students but provide baseline data for differentiating the instructions and interventions that those students receive (e30).
- The applicants use multiple methods of evaluating students' social and emotional development—the SELweb EE tool as well as ESBA (e31), thereby improving data collection and the validity of each measure's results. This strengthens the promise of the program for factors 1-3 above.
- The tier II interventions have a strong research base and add to the project's ability to meet the factors noted above.
- The project employs a strong hybrid format by providing digitally-delivered and evidence-based information to teachers but also brings teachers together to discuss, deconstruct, and brainstorm ways of putting these theories into practice. The materials that the program will deliver—especially Skillstreaming—come with videos for modeling to assist teachers with the latter.
- Multiple parts of the program allow not just for differentiation of student interventions (based on the latter's need) but also content differentiation to make the program more feasible for K-3 teachers. Teachers will be able to utilize the program based upon their contexts and needs rather than a one-size-fits-all intervention/program. This makes the program more likely to continue and be useful past the grant period: "After teachers have identified students and sorted them into small groups, they will use SELSG+ to select the skills they will teach to each group or individual. SELSG+ will guide teachers through the process, recommending skills based upon results from SELWeb and other data about the students in a given group" (e33).
- The creation of the online database and interventions will, once established, tested, and adjusted as necessary, be available to teachers beyond those in the study. In other words, the program would create a valuable resource that could reach many teachers post SEED funding (factor 4 above).

- The program can be tailored to teachers' needs, thereby making it more appropriate for given classroom contexts and students' needs (factors 1-4 above). For example, "After teachers have identified students and sorted them into small groups, they will use SELSG+ to select the skills they will teach to each group or individual. SELSG+ will guide teachers through the process, recommending skills based upon results from SELWeb and other data about the students in a given group" (e31).
- E34: Though the current contexts (COVID-19) are not written into the grant application, the use of digital and remote delivery of PD materials ensures that major parts of this program—and conceivably all of the PD part of the program (using digital groups of teachers)—could begin immediately. The applicants also back this approach up with research showing that online modules and groups may, in many cases, allow for greater teacher reflection and honesty: "Two studies noted that online collaborative teacher professional learning groups are better than in-person groups for engaging participants in reflective practice (Hawkes & Good, 2000; Hawkes & Romiszowski, 2001), hence this will be part of the online experience."
- E36: The program is tailored for and easily amenable to grade level teams and can thus be easily employed within PLCs at schools in the future (factor 4 above).
- The program offers individualized coaching to teachers requesting it, thereby further enhancing the program's ability to deal with specific contexts and to provide better (more tailored) interventions to students.
- E38: It is noteworthy that the QOZs in which this grant is focused are also being served by another grant (health-related). This coincides nicely with the SEL theme. As a bevy of research shows, it is difficult to address SEL without also addressing other non-school contexts. The applicants note these connections again on e47.
- The program will be easily disseminated and expanded for availability to others post-grant period, thereby enhancing the benefits of the study and the grant funding. (E44-45): "For each of the sites that pilot the implementation, a natural next step is to expand the program schoolwide to participants' immediate colleagues. In subsequent years, we would bring this digital innovation to scale regionally and nationwide, in order to promote teachers' accessibility to high quality SEL professional development and Tier 1 and Tier 2 curriculum. Large-scale research studies would be conducted to investigate the innovation's efficacy across various settings, and data would be used to inform programmatic enhancements and later iterations."

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 35

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 factors:

- (1) The importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project, especially improvements in teaching and student achievement.**
- (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field of study.**
- (3) The extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies.**

Strengths:

- Factor 1: The program is predicated upon evidence that while SEL teaching/skills are critical to student success—and even more so in low SES schools—they are seldom addressed in teacher education programs and, when they are, the training tends to be superficial and delivered without suggestions for context-based applications. This proposal would provide a means of delivering this important information to practicing K-3 teachers and would be

potentially expandable to K-12 teachers (once the program has been tested and adjusted via feedback).

- The program has the potential to also be infused into university-based teacher education programs (in addition to being used as PD for in-service teachers).

- Relating to factor 2 above, the applicants seek to take extant programs related to SEL and merge them for an exponential benefit for teachers and their students through a “smart” database that can then help teachers differentiate the contents for their particular needs. This is a novel way of doing much-needed PD; it is not a catch-all for every SEL need but it tailored to contexts. It can teach all teachers important SEL information, but it goes beyond that to put theory into practice via teachers’ experiences and contexts. This, in turn, makes the program all the more attractive to teachers, school administrators, and university-based teacher educators.

- Factor 3: The PIs for the program have a strong track record of high-quality journal publications, professional presentations, etc. and will have no trouble disseminating the results of their study (and this program) to a wider scholarly audience. They lay out a solid plan for disseminating the findings related to this program on e54-55.

- Factor 3: The PIs also plan to promote this program to other interested districts, schools, etc. beyond academic dissemination. As such, the program has the potential to be useful to myriad school districts nationwide (which is the applicants’ goal).

- Factors 1 & 2: E49: The applicants note that while evidence-based research has shown SEL instruction to have copious positive effects for students (and especially students who have traditionally been underserved by our educational system), the ability to differentiate that instruction has been less seldom examined. Differentiation writ large has been shown to be essential to quality instruction. Merging these two components is the key goal of this project. Doing so will, I trust, exponentially increase the impact of both the SEL instruction provided.

Weaknesses:

No Weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

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

(2) 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.

(3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

Strengths:

- The applicants clearly outline how their plan is manageable, who will manage different aspects of it, how the database will be created, who will provide additional supports to participating teachers, etc.

- The program has a robust analysis and feedback system for creating and tweaking the online database to meet participating teachers’ needs (see for example, e39-e44). The program mixes use of quantifiable data (much of it from the use of the database) with qualitative data to further refine and understand that data. This will includes focus groups and questionnaires (e43).

- The different iterations of the online database program are designed so as to allow for refinement and improvement via formative and summative feedback (the latter following the first year’s implementation).

- The PIs for the program have significant expertise in curriculum development, database development, contracting with other agencies, etc. (as evidenced by the Curriculum vitae attached).
- E44: The feedback mechanism also includes evidence on the useability of the tools the program will be creating (and user feedback/satisfaction measures which are easily quantifiable), thereby allowing the creators to change interface items and language in medias res.
- E55-57: The management plan is clearly laid out in both prose and in tables. These models clearly define what parts of the project will be completed for maximum efficacy. Further, the team is broad, has a great deal of expertise across different domains associated with the plan, and the tasks differentiated to a sufficient degree that meeting the deadlines outlined in the plan manageable. Members of the team each have defined roles and responsibilities that are themselves aligned with these faculty members' skills and expertise (based upon their CVs).
- E58: in addition to the feedback mechanisms discussed above, the applicants note that "ongoing formative teacher feedback will be additionally gained as needed through bi-monthly check-ins conducted by coaches and other members of project staff, online discussions, and analytics from the web-based platform." This further supports factor 3 above

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the WWC standards with or without reservations as described in the WWC Handbook.

(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible

Strengths:

- The use of a database and online delivery system (to be used within classrooms and/or small groups of students) ensures fidelity to the curricular materials. Further, the database will collect information on its useage, thereby providing further data about its efficacy to the applicants. E27-28: "Teachers will share the Tier 1 and Tier 2 curriculum materials with their students via an Internet-enabled computer and a LCD projector or computer monitor. Students will not individually access the course. The teachers will print PDFs of handouts and other materials from the course web site to provide to their students. The web site will collect analytics about teacher use of all program elements."
- Factor 2: In addition to numerous formative feedback loops, the applicants have a robust evaluation plan in place for the project as a whole (as summarized in the chart on e59). The evaluation plan uses multiple evidence-based assessment tools from the WWC in addition to less formal evaluative measures that highlight teachers' voices and experiences. The primary evaluation tools all have strong reliability as evidenced in scholarly research and practice. The project employs experimental design (control groups) for better evaluation comparisons.
- Factor 1: The project applicants have expertise in experimental design and project evaluation (and the methodological approaches required to consider low effect sizes and other issue that may arise (see CVs as well as e39-40). Based in a university setting, the applicants also have access to other scholars with similar expertise and will, if needed, have this resource at their disposal.

Because the applicants have strong research skills (in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods), they need not “farm out” data collection and data analysis to third parties (as is common for many SEED applicants). What this also means, in reality, is lowered costs for data collection and analysis—costs that can be redistributed to the actual grant program.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 25

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting STEM Education/Computer Science

1. **Projects designed to improve student achievement or other educational outcomes in science, technology, engineering, math, or Computer Science. These projects must address increasing the number of educators adequately prepared to deliver rigorous instruction in STEM fields, including Computer Science, through recruitment, Evidence-Based professional development strategies for current STEM educators, or Evidence-Based retraining strategies for current educators seeking to transition from other subjects to STEM fields.**

Strengths:

Not applicable.

Weaknesses:

Not applicable.

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Fostering Knowledge and Promoting Development

1. **Projects that are designed to support projects likely to improve student academic performance and better prepare students for employment, responsible citizenship, and fulfilling lives, including by preparing children or students to:**
 - (i) **Develop positive personal relationships with others.**
 - (ii) **Develop determination, perseverance, and the ability to overcome obstacles.**
 - (iii) **Develop self-esteem through perseverance and earned success.**
 - (iv) **Develop problem-solving skills.**
 - (v) **Develop self-regulation in order to work toward long-term goals.**

Strengths:

- The entire project is focused on improving teaching and improving student learning outcomes (and life outcomes) via the infusion of evidence-based SEL approaches. The project provides differentiated SEL instruction and methods to teachers based upon the latter's contexts. The methods to be employed are solid (research-based) and the plan for disseminating them to teachers is strong.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority - Spurring Opportunity Zone Investment

1. Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the following:

(a) The area in which the applicant proposes to provide services overlaps with a QOZ, as designated by the Secretary of the Treasury under section 1400Z-1 of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC). An applicant must—

(i) Provide the census tract number of the QOZ(s) in which it proposes to provide services; and

(ii) Describe how the applicant will provide services in the QOZ(s).

Strengths:

The applicants clearly define what QOZs their program will target, how the program will operate within the QOZs (services to be offered), and the application includes specific tract numbers allowing for verification of their focus on QOZs.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

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Status: Submitted

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: The University of Alabama (S423A200114)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
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Competitive Preference Priority		
Promoting STEM Education/Computer Science		
1. CPP1	3	0
Sub Total	3	0
Competitive Preference Priority		
Fostering Knowledge and Promoting Development		
1. CPP2	2	2
Spurring Opportunity Zone Investment		
1. CPP3	5	5
Sub Total	7	7
Total	110	107

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - SEED - 7: 84.423A

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: The University of Alabama (S423A200114)

Questions

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:

(1) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

(2) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.

(3) 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.

(4) The potential and planning for the incorporation of project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant.

Strengths:

(1) The applicant's proposed project represents an adequate approach to address Absolute Priority 2. The proposed project will increase educator effectiveness and foster knowledge and promote the development of skills that will improve student academic engagement and performance through the acquisition of specific social and emotional skills (pg. e27). The program will engage teachers via a platform-independent, secure website including interactive content built to support both teachers and students (pg. e27). Teachers will access the professional individually via the website where they will view content, reflect, and access TSG protocols (pg. e27). In-person professional training will also be available to give the teachers an opportunity to discuss the pd content, practice teaching routines, and work together to review assessment materials and develop appropriate Tier 2 grouping and lesson plans for students requiring extra support (pg. e27). The goal of the proposed program has the potential to develop highly effective teachers who engage students in SEL improvement efforts that lead to increases in student learning (pg. e29).

(2) The applicant adequately demonstrated that the proposed project will effectively engage participants in best practices training and professional development that are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration, thus leading to improvements in practice as teachers. For example, participants will engage in a professional learning course that will guide teachers through a two-week twelve modules' approach which will provide them with the support needed to build capacity to sustain effective classroom practices (pg. e36). The implementation will last over the course of the academic year. During this time teachers will form study groups at the beginning of the fall semester (pg. e37). Personal coaching will also be made available for teachers who request it (pg. e36).

(3) The applicant fully addressed how the design of the proposed project is appropriate and will meet the needs of the target population or other identified needs. For example, the applicant provided ample data regarding the need for highly qualified teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to deliver differentiated SEL instruction in high need and schools within QOZs (pg. e25). Therefore, the proposed project will give elementary educators the ability to deliver appropriate SEL instruction to all early elementary learners (grades K-3) including those with or at risk for EBD in partnership with the University of Alabama (UA) and xSEL Labs, Oregon Research Institute, Trifolia, Research Press, and school partners

(see letters of Support in Appendix A) (pg. e25). The applicant's process will ensure that the program meets the needs of the targeted populations, both K-3 students who will receive the curriculum and educators implementing the program (pg. e37). There will be three iterations of the intervention during Years 1 and 2 with a final iteration taking place during Year 3 prior to the evaluation study (pg. e38). Sixty-six general education teachers who work with elementary students with or at risk for EBD will participate in the design and development of the plan (pg. 38). Teachers will be recruited from Schools that are in QOZs in the region (pg. e38). This initiative will help to build on teacher capacity and positively impact the schools in the consortium (pg. 38).

(4) The applicant has demonstrated a limited proposed project has the potential for the incorporation of the project purposes, activities, or benefits into the ongoing work of the applicant beyond the end of the grant. For example, the applicant provided a comprehensive discussion regarding expanding the program from schoolwide to nationwide by bringing this digital innovation to scale. The applicant will continue to investigate the innovation's efficacy across various settings and use the data to enhance later iterations of the program (pg. e45). This reiterates the applicant's potential to continue the project beyond the grant term.

Weaknesses:

- (1) N/A
- (2) N/A
- (3) N/A
- (4) N/A

Reader's Score: 35

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 factors:

- (1) The importance or magnitude of the results or outcomes likely to be attained by the proposed project, especially improvements in teaching and student achievement.**
- (2) The potential contribution of the proposed project to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field of study.**
- (3) The extent to which the results of the proposed project are to be disseminated in ways that will enable others to use the information or strategies.**

Strengths:

(1) The applicant ensures the magnitude of outcomes that are likely to improve teaching and student achievement. For example, the applicant indicated that building educator capacity to implement SEL instruction will significantly affect student outcomes, specifically those who are at risk for EBD (pg. e46). The applicant notes that this program has the potential to improve teacher knowledge, instruction, and self-efficacy for elementary-aged students that are at risk for EBD (pg. e46). The applicant will use a tiered approach to meet specific needs of certain populations. The program will include activities that will help educators develop a clear understanding of research-based practices by providing them with a platform to learn about research-based SEL instructional and assessment practices, change existing instructional approaches to align with research, and opportunities to implement practices in their classrooms (pg. e51). Additionally, all

instructional practices will be easily applicable (pg. e51). This user-friendly approach will provide teachers with unlimited access to tools and resources needed to adequately implement the program.

(2) The applicant clearly demonstrates that the proposed program has the potential to contribute to the development and advancement of theory, knowledge, and practices in the field of study. For example, the applicant will provide 24 hours, over six months of the school year, of focused professional learning activities in efforts to deliver SEL instruction (pg. e52). The applicant's approach along with sustained, regular activities, collaboration, and job-embedded learning includes the essential elements for high-quality professional learning combined with evidence-based, data-differentiated SEL instruction will increase the applicant's potential to lead to teacher improvements in SEL instruction and desired student outcomes for SEL competence, behavior, engagement, and academics (pg. e53). This ongoing work could potentially help the applicant to further their purpose thereby reaching their desired outcomes.

(3) The applicant results of the proposed project will be disseminated to enable others to use the information or strategies. For example, the applicant indicated that they will disseminate program results to policymakers, district superintendents, principals, teachers and the research community (pg. e54). The research dissemination plan includes a mix of manuscripts submitted to peer-reviewed and practitioner journals, presentations at professional conferences, and nontechnical dissemination strategies focused for stakeholders and policymakers (pg. e54). Topics may include the iterative process used to develop the program and the impact the program has had on educator practice and student development of social and emotional learning competencies (pg. e55). The applicant also plans to disseminate to nontechnical audiences and directly to educators and service providers (pg. e55). The applicant's plan for dissemination is strong and will provide substantial information about the positive outcomes of the program nationwide.

Weaknesses:

- (1) N/A
- (2) N/A
- (3) N/A

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

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

- (1) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.**
- (2) 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.**
- (3) The adequacy of procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.**

Strengths:

(1) The applicant clearly described the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project and they are measurable and relevant to the project. For example, the project is structured with two phases (program implementation and design/research and the project evaluation (pg. 56). The plan provides the framework for the

implementation of the project and project evaluation (pg. 57). The applicant broadly yet clearly provides an adequate, well-outlined, management plan.

(2) The applicant adequately provides a detailed management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project and clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing tasks. The applicant provides the names of persons and the tasks for which they are responsible (pg. e57). The applicant will utilize a team of Principal Investigators, Co-Principal Investigators, Data Specialists, a Research Coordinator, a Development and Implementation Coordinator, Research Professor Graduate Research Assistant, Benefits' team, and consultants that have been identified and discussed in the detailed Budget Justification and Detailed Budget (pg. e242). The management plan is very detailed, well written, and provides the framework for ensuring that milestones will be met in a timely manner within budget.

(3) The applicant clearly outlined processes and procedures for ensuring feedback and continuous improvement during the implementation of the proposed project. For example, in addition to the formalized evaluation procedures shared in the evaluation plan, the applicant will use additional types of formative assessments to monitor project activities and teacher levels of participation, in efforts to obtain user and student feedback to ensure continuous improvement (pg. e58). The goal of the applicant's plan for feedback is to provide the project leadership team with accurate information and allow opportunities for subsequent programmatic changes and improvements that will be made in response to this feedback (pg. e58). This is a strong plan that specifies the applicant's goal to seek innovative ways to improve the program which will yield and possibly exceed intended outcomes.

Weaknesses:

(1) N/A

(2) N/A

(3) N/A

Reader's Score: 20

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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

(1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that would meet the WWC standards with or without reservations as described in the WWC Handbook.

(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

(3) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible

Strengths:

(1) The applicant provided a detailed plan aligned with methods of evaluation and potentially will produce evidence about the project's effectiveness that meet the WWC standards with or without reservations. The applicant indicated that they conducted an evaluation in a randomized control trial with early elementary (grades k-3) teachers and students in four demographically diverse groups, including 70 teachers who had varying levels of experience. This student met the WWC standards without reservations' standard (pg. e28). In addition, the applicant plans to enroll 144 educators to allow for

20% attrition, to end with 120 educators (60 per condition) (pg. e59). The applicant will enroll 4 students, from designated QOZs in Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and Florida, per teacher to end with 240 per condition (pg. e59). The applicant indicated that they would create six grade level study groups of 10 elementary educators each and will randomly assign at the study group level (pg. e59). Assessments will be collected at pretest, 25 weeks later, and a follow-up 10 weeks after the posttest (pg. e60). The applicant will measure both teacher and students who participate in the program. Overall, the impact evaluation produces evidence of effectiveness that meets the WWC evidence standards without reservations.

(2) The applicant effectively evidenced methods of evaluation that will detail how the evaluation will provide performance feedback and periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. For example, the applicant will collect student attendance from weekly attendance before, during, and after the intervention (pg. e61). Academic performance will be measured in a series of pre/post using STAR reading and math online assessments to evaluate student achievement (pg. e61). Engagement, Behavior, and Academic ratings will be measured by pre/post using the Academic Competence Evaluation Scale (pg. e61). Acceptability will be measured using age-appropriate Likert-like questions read by the teacher to students so that students at any reading level will be able to participate (pg. e61). Additionally, teachers will be measured on their knowledge of SEL using the Teacher SEL Beliefs Scale (pg. e61). Self-efficacy will be assessed via the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (pg. e61). Teacher wellness will be measured on the Teacher Burnout Scale (pg. e62). Usage and Engagement will capture both quantitative and qualitative data (pg. e62). Feasibility, acceptability, satisfaction will be measured using a modified subset of likert-like questions and open-ended questions (pg. e62). These methods of feedback will adequately provide the applicant with details needed to assess the applicant's progress towards achieving intended outcomes.

(3) The applicant clearly demonstrates how the methods of evaluation included the use of objective measures related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce both qualitative and quantitative data. For example, the applicant will use a mixed-model (ANCOVA) (pg. e63) which will provide objective assessment of project outcomes. The applicant will also examine fidelity data across two methods (checklist and online data usage) to evaluate any challenges to participation during the earlier stages of the project in efforts to adjust as needed (pg. e64). The methods of evaluation are designed to guide the applicant in the consideration of what changes need to be made in efforts of improving fidelity of implementation.

Weaknesses:

- (1) N/A
- (2) N/A
- (3) N/A

Reader's Score: 25

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Promoting STEM Education/Computer Science

- 1. Projects designed to improve student achievement or other educational outcomes in science, technology, engineering, math, or Computer Science. These projects must address increasing the number of educators adequately prepared to deliver rigorous instruction in STEM fields, including Computer Science, through recruitment, Evidence-Based professional development strategies for current STEM educators, or Evidence-Based retraining strategies for current educators seeking to transition from other subjects to STEM fields.**

Strengths:

(N/A)

Weaknesses:

(N/A)

Reader's Score: 0

Competitive Preference Priority - Fostering Knowledge and Promoting Development

1. **Projects that are designed to support projects likely to improve student academic performance and better prepare students for employment, responsible citizenship, and fulfilling lives, including by preparing children or students to:**

- (i) Develop positive personal relationships with others.**
- (ii) Develop determination, perseverance, and the ability to overcome obstacles.**
- (iii) Develop self-esteem through perseverance and earned success.**
- (iv) Develop problem-solving skills.**
- (v) Develop self-regulation in order to work toward long-term goals.**

Strengths:

The proposed project will increase the likelihood of the students' positive personal relationships with others, equip them with the determination, perseverance, and the ability to overcome obstacles, build their self esteem by building perseverance and earned success, enhance their problem-solving skills, and to improve their self-regulation in order to work towards long-term goals (pg. e27). This ensures that the applicant will design projects that will support the improvement of student academic performance and better prepare students for employment, responsible citizenship, and fulfilling lives.

Weaknesses:

(N/A)

Reader's Score: 2

Competitive Preference Priority - Spurring Opportunity Zone Investment

1. **Under this priority, an applicant must demonstrate the following:**

- (a) The area in which the applicant proposes to provide services overlaps with a QOZ, as designated by the Secretary of the Treasury under section 1400Z-1 of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC). An applicant must—**
 - (i) Provide the census tract number of the QOZ(s) in which it proposes to provide services; and**
 - (ii) Describe how the applicant will provide services in the QOZ(s).**

Strengths:

The applicant indicated that the proposed project would use the user-centered, iterative process to design, build, and assess the digitally delivered program including all student curricula and teacher professional learning resources in traditionally underserved LEAs. The project will prioritize training a diverse pool of candidates for schools in Qualifying Opportunity Zones (QOZ). The Opportunity Zones have been identified by census tracts and the neighborhoods (pg. e38).

Weaknesses:

(N/A)

Reader's Score: 5

Status: Submitted

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