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## **Introduction: Teranga Academy**

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In 2004, a wrong turn led ██████████ a refugee from Jordan by way of Syria, to a group of boys playing a pick-up game of soccer in a ragged Clarkston, GA. parking lot (20 miles east of Atlanta). In seconds, she was transported back to her own soccer-filled childhood, where games popped up in nearly every open space. In asking to join the 11- and 12-year-olds, however, she was met with skepticism. But a new soccer ball from the trunk of her car—from her afternoon coaching gig at the YMCA—soon replaced the players’ half-deflated ball, and her skills on the “field” earned her more than a little respect.

In coming weeks, games continued with these and other refugee youth from Afghanistan, Liberia, and Sudan. ██████████ continued to join, becoming the team’s official coach. White T-shirts, black socks, and Sharpie markers created their first uniforms and part of the needed structure and positive discipline their play and lives needed. The Fugees—the boys’ name for their team based on the commonality of their refugee status—were born.

But the formation of an official team was only the beginning. Early on, ██████████ realized the boys’ limited English mostly included words like goal, pass, and shoot; many of these public-school students were unable to read. Younger boys were often bullied for being different or not speaking English fluently. And sometimes, their parents, who worked at a nearby chicken-processing plant or warehouse, could not provide their children with enough to eat.

Over the next three years, ██████████ **transformed the “Fugees” team into the Fugees Family**, a 501(c)(3) award-winning nonprofit and school network focused on targeted student and family supports through a competency-based and culturally responsive learning model for refugees and immigrants. Fugees Family opened its first standalone, zero-tuition school—Fugees Academy—in Clarkston in 2007, and the second standalone school in Columbus, OH in 2019. The schools, operated by Fugees, combine the healing qualities of organized athletics, the arts, and



family engagement, with a customized and rigorous competency-based academic curriculum delivered by highly trained teachers. And the success over the past 15 years is undeniable. Refugees and immigrant students—all English language learners (ELLs) representing 23 nationalities—not only keep up with their peers at public schools; they show:

- Faster **achievement growth** than the national average within one year of enrollment,
- A **92% high school graduation rate** compared to the non-ELL national average of 86% and the ELL rate of just 67%, and
- A **100% college acceptance rate** for Fugees students.

Fugees Family’s newest effort, **Project Teranga**, will further develop and implement the next phase of the Fugees model in existing public middle and high schools—schools not owned or operated by Fugees. As further described in our Project Design section (p. 8), the pilot **Teranga Academy** will open in August 2022 in Bowling Green, KY, a small city located an hour north of Nashville, TN, where 17% of the population speaks a language other than English. Working with the Bowling Green Independent School District, where 54 languages and dialects are spoken, and a team of evaluators from Bellwether Education Partners, Project Teranga will inform and iteratively improve the model before expanding to a cohort of 4 schools during the 2024-2026 school years and a second cohort of 5 schools during the 2025-2027 school years. Cohort sites will be determined as part of the Teranga selection process and will likely include schools in the Midwest or Texas. Each district partner will implement the Teranga Academy model through a gradual release model over three school years. The tested, codified, and economical district-based model develop through partnerships nationally will help us create 20 Teranga Academies by 2028.

## **Significance**

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Teranga Academy **builds upon the innovation** of the existing Fugees Family schools and the evidence base of proven instructional practices while **providing alternatives** to the historical



strategies used in schools nationwide to address the needs of English language learners. In doing so, the project will iteratively codify the model and deliver it as an efficient, effective, and economical model to dramatically improve the learning of our schools' high-need students.

One in four students in the public-school population will be an English language learner (ELL) by 2025 (NEA, 2020). In all, more than 5 million ELL students will arrive at a local school in fall 2022 where just 14% will likely achieve language proficiency (USDE, nd). Many school-age ELLs will—at some point in the year—stop attending, as ELLs are five times more likely to be out of school than their English-speaking peers. Logically, dropout, graduation, and achievement rates for ELLs are impacted at levels incomparable to other groups. Current rates reported by the U.S. Department of Education and its National Center for Education Statistics report (NCES, nd; USDE, nd)—typically from 2017-18 longitudinal data—indicate, briefly:

- A national dropout rate among ELLs of 40% as compared to 4.7% nationally
- An on-time graduation rate for ELLs of 67% as compared to 86% nationally

Additionally, the Brookings Institution puts the academic achievement gap at 40 percentage points for 4<sup>th</sup>-grade reading and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade mathematics for ELL students and their non-ELL counterparts (Quintero, 2017). The educational system is clearly failing ELLs. Historically, solutions have fallen far short of success.

Herein lies the chicken-or-egg challenge for educators and schools. Should language acquisition be addressed first? And should it be provided in sheltered, small classrooms where academic content is generally prioritized less (Quintero, 2017)?

The answer from the research is “no.” The historical practice of pulling students from content classes to focus on language then sending them back to their content classrooms **limits academic learning**. Rather, as noted by Stanford University professors Hakuta and Pecheone in Hansen, et al. (2017), academic content should be supported holistically alongside and through the learning



of the English language. Academic learning in mathematics, science, social studies, etc., “...does not happen in isolation from language, nor does language development happen in an academic vacuum. Language development and academic learning occur in tandem. Thus, a key challenge in effectively educating ELs involves moving beyond language when defining their educational needs and potential.” (Hakuta, 2017)

The historic approach, which is embedded in decades of educational policy and practice, is now the default position for schools and districts. As noted by Hakuta and Pecheone, both the Elementary & Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) are, “...oriented toward remedying deficits in English, not toward building on student cultural heritage and assets leading to more powerful learning, engaged citizenship, and national enrichment.” (p. 2)

Further, Hakuta and Pecheone advocate for **an asset model** of bilingualism for ELLs that builds upon students’ culture and community. Instead of labeling and stigmatizing ELLs for their inability to speak English, U.S. educational policy should, they say, promote the significant benefits of bilingualism that contribute to local communities and economies.

Unfortunately, and despite known challenges, no **formalized or cohesive approaches** exist for improving policy, practice, and requirements for ELL education. Schools are uniquely under-prepared to serve these students; states prescribe mandates to improve but provide few options in how to do so. Teachers lack explicit preparation to work with ELLs. In fact, fewer than 10% of teachers in the U.S. are qualified to offer instruction to ELL students (NCELA, 2021).

Under current language-first models, ELL students receive what amounts to a “separate and not equal” education—a conclusion drawn after a decade of Arizona’s English immersion directive utilizing the Structured English Immersion (SEI) model (Lillie, 2012). The SEI model uses a daily four-hour English language concentration for ELLs, focused on grammar, vocabulary development, and reading skills at the exclusion of other content courses and does so without a



plan to address students in making up the lost learning in math, science, history, the arts, and more (Cruze, 2019). In fact, Cruze et al. found an “**ease of implementation**” by schools and teachers but **significant challenges** for students, including:

- Limitations to curricula and correlation to the state’s standards for learning
- Limited access to high school graduation; the graduation rate **declined by 60%** during the first 15 years of SEI with just 18% of ELLs graduating high school
- Students addressed through a deficit model
- Lack of teacher preparation for instruction

All agree, there are only so many hours in a school day. It seems logical to first address language.

But SEI emphasized the process of English acquisition above all else, leaving little time for academic learning. Rodriguez (2022) notes the challenge; learning technical content while learning to speak English is difficult at best. His study found ELL students, “...spent a great deal of time in the process of reading for understanding...” (p. 12), which limited time for application and discussion of the content itself.

Still, state and federal education law hold schools and districts **accountable** for the language **and** academic performance of ELLs—including “newcomers” such as refugees and immigrants who must meet accountability measures typically within two years of arrival. That is, regardless

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## DEFINITIONS

- The United Nations defines a **refugee** as a person forced to leave their country to escape war, violence, or persecution. Each recipient country, including the U.S., determines who to accept and relocate utilizing its own criteria and its partner networks of refugee centers.
- The U.S. defines an **immigrant** as someone who migrated to the U.S., typically seeking permanent residence (including children who accompany their parents).
- The USDE defines **ELL** students as national-origin-minority students who are limited-English-proficient. That is, students lack English fluency needed to access new content.
- We use the term “**newcomer**” to include all ELL students (e.g., refugees, immigrants)
- **Teranga**—a Senegalese word—means hospitality, respect, community, solidarity, and sharing.
- All Fugees Family students, including future Teranga Academy students, are English language learners: typically, each year, 80% are refugees and 20% are immigrants.



of a student’s age, English prowess, or ability to even hold a pencil, each student must perform proficiently within two years of arrival in public school. This places incredible pressure on teachers and administrators.

Other school requirements from states and federal regulators include the organization of students by age in grade bands. Schools require a 13-year-old to attend a middle-school grade (likely 8<sup>th</sup> grade) regardless of whether they can read beyond a 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade level or count to 100. States, in particular, vary in whether **competency-based instruction** is allowed. Waivers to modify the instructional day for students in public schools are difficult at best, a concrete barrier at worst. Even if a school chooses to teach its students in new and innovative ways, it may not be allowed by state departments of education.

Fugees Family tackles these challenges head-on. As the only school network exclusively dedicated to meeting the educational needs of refugees and ELLs, Fugees has 15+ years of experience operating two academies serving students in grades 6-12. Fugees schools—one charter, one private school—are built for and by refugees and immigrants and offer a model centered on the needs of refugee and immigrant students and their families. Students are supported holistically and intensively in ways that accelerate learning. The model includes:

- Celebrating identity and culture
- Athletics—namely soccer, yoga, and martial arts—as an educational tool
- Holistic English language acquisition and a trauma-informed approach to schooling
- Emphasis on music and arts education
- Strict and nurturing environment
- Comprehensive support of families

For example, Fugees Family worked with Bowling Green school leaders to develop two specific waivers from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE). First, Bowling Green’s Teranga



Academy students will be taught by **expert content teachers** who are certified outside of middle and high school certification requirements. That is, Bowling Green’s academy teachers are all certified in elementary (K-5/6), not secondary (6/7-12). As the stereotype goes, “Elementary educators teach kids; secondary teachers teach content.” (Coke, 2005; p. 392) The saying, rightly so, has its critics. However, the Fugees model uses elementary—especially primary—teachers as a key learning shift to ensure students begin learning where they are on the learning continuum, not based on their age. Elementary teachers are already trained at some level in these competency-based approaches as part of their initial and ongoing teacher preparation programs; looping grades, for example, is a common practice in many elementary schools and gives teachers at least two years to work with each child. In addition, elementary grade teachers are experts in literacy instruction and the development of early math skills. These practices help elementary teachers shift more instinctively to the academy’s individualized three levels of learning and instruction (competency-based instruction, p. 11).

The second waiver from KDE relates to extending the number of years for graduation at Bowling Green High School to allow newcomers additional time for learning. This is a district-level decision for Bowling Green that will negatively impact its four-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate—but BGISD is committed to its current and future newcomers.

Additionally, the Teranga Academy model tackles the barrier of the monetary expense and time commitment of **developing and operating standalone schools**. Creating standalone schools for newcomers is effective but cost prohibitive. Fugees Family utilizes a blended funding model to ensure all students attend the Georgia and Ohio schools at no cost to their families; the operations rely on heavy fundraising efforts and, where available, some limited state support.

The cost of Teranga Academy, while above the “normal” average expense for students, includes many costs that are temporary, making it an economical choice for districts across the





nation given the small (but critical) percentage of students who will attend. The academy model will launch—as it is in Bowling Green in August 2022—with an average of 100 students in Year 1, growing to a maximum of 400 ELL students per district/school in later years (Cohorts 1 and 2). The Teranga Academy model provides schools with an alternative—the creation of a campus-based academy focused entirely on ELLs using the nationally recognized Fugees supports with customized, local community iterations led by the Fugees-District-Community partnership.

In addition, Teranga Academy’s external supports are short-lived. The gradual release model enables districts to assume all responsibility for ongoing academy operation and professional learning within three years of initial implementation.

## **B. Quality of the Project Design**

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Fugees Family schools are standalone schools operated in full by Fugees Family. The staff are employed by Fugees Family. The operation is designed and implemented by Fugees Family.

The **Teranga Academy model is a new and innovative, district-implemented partnership** model that will mirror the structures, practices, and supports of our Georgia and Ohio campuses. For Teranga Academy, school-level staff and leadership belong to the school/district; operation belongs to the school/district; the expense of Academy operation belongs to the school/district. Fugees Family will provide ongoing coaching support, evidence-based methods and practices, and the iterative evaluation and improvements of each Teranga Academy site.

Each of the 10 districts will be both self-selected **and** Fugees Family approved. That is, districts request to be considered as a Teranga Academy site and then go through the Fugees Family multi-criteria “greenlight” process (pp. 15-16). Implementation begins only after an initial needs assessment and a nine-month planning and design process. Site visits by Fugees Family CEO [REDACTED] [REDACTED] are made as part of that selection process and include two days of discussions with school, district, and community members as well as refugee families.



## 1. Extent to which there is a conceptual framework underlying the activities ...

Project Teranga demonstrates a rationale (Absolute Priority 1) based in the successful implementation of two Fugees Family schools for newcomers and its instructional approaches. The project will iteratively refine and codify those approaches as replicated in a public school setting—a scaling effort that began this year in Bowling Green, KY.

Project Teranga uses a three-pillar structure that includes redesigning existing public schools (Pillar 1), retraining teachers in cultural competencies and instructional methods (Pillar 2), and realigning policy to allow different ways of learning in existing schools (Pillar 3).

The Project Teranga Logic Model (attached) reflects the **collective active ingredients** or strategies developed upon these pillars. Once selected to participate, districts and their participating school(s) will work with Project Teranga staff in a site-focused design process to prepare academy teachers and leaders, students, and the community for the new academy. Key components of the logic model include:

- In-depth professional learning for Teranga teachers and leaders—two days bi-monthly plus summer events—and weekly coaching support to support ELLs, including culturally aware, trauma-informed instruction
- Annual district-wide training for non-Academy teachers and leaders to create soft, welcoming landing places for all newcomers, including transitioning Academy students
- School implementation of the Teranga Academy model, including:
  - Full day, sheltered English immersion classroom with content experts
  - Competency-based (leveled) learning; students proceed at their own pace of learning
  - Daily music, art, and sports as instructional tools
  - Family and community engagement

Language immersion in a newcomers-only (small group) environment where identity and culture



are celebrated daily is key and builds upon the conclusions noted earlier in this narrative of Hakuta and Pecheone in Hansen, et al. (2017). Academic content should be supported holistically alongside and through the learning of the English language. Language development and academic learning do not happen in a vacuum. Rather, they support each other. This is a **significant departure** from the historic pattern of schools nationally; pull-out courses provide for English acquisition but create gaps in content learning when ELL students return to general education content classes (Thomas, 2019). Li further notes that English-only acquisition classes typically put interpersonal and conversational skills at the forefront (2018); English learners will eventually learn English, but academic gains are understandably limited. That is, pull-out students miss significant chunks of content each day if they are not actually in the content class. Traditional ELL class, "...consumes an unjustifiably large portion..." of the school day (Rodriguez, 2022; p. 8).

In her literature review for the Texas Education Association, Thomas found, "... the cognitive complexity of English taught through meaningful academic content, as in ESL content-based programs, accelerates EL growth more so than ESL pull-out services where this dimension is missing." (p. 2) Further, she noted little to no long-term achievement gap closure for ELL students in the pull-out model and the largest number of high school dropouts.

In addition, pull-out classes for ELLs create a stigma for students (Li, 2018), adding yet another barrier to newcomers as they arrive in U.S. classrooms. New students everywhere want to blend in, yet ELLs simply cannot without some direct support of schools and teachers.

Teranga Academy takes this last point seriously—an approach clearly seen in our logic model. Newcomers are sheltered in full-day learning with other newcomers who learn English **and** content in an immersive and culturally aware environment. Newcomers celebrate their cultures daily and participate in sports, the arts, and music (in part) as reminders of their



identities. For many of us in the U.S., soccer may not seem like a key learning strategy, but for newcomers, it is a little piece of home that provides healing and a sense of belonging. Similarly, Teranga teachers and staff work closely with families to find ways to work with individual students and ethnicities. Food and events are a big part of the engagement process; Teranga Academies each embed a full-time Cultural Liaison from within the community to ensure families are represented, heard, and helped at every turn.

Another key component, competency-based learning, allows all newcomers to achieve and excel. The Fugees model uses three learning levels—Level 1, Level 2, Level 3—to group students



academically, not by students’ ages, and provides appropriate educational experts (teachers) in each level. Each student will participate in the academy for up to three years and will in that time acquire English fluency and significantly narrow gaps in academic learning. Fugees students **achieve academic growth 2-2.5 times** that of NWEA MAP averages (Zuckerberg, 2020).

Rather than feeling “different” as a non-English speaker in a large middle or high school, Teranga students spend up to three years in the Teranga Academy—celebrating their culture and identity—before transitioning to a culturally prepared middle or high school. Newcomers will exit the academy, transitioning to a soft landing, where they will speak English fluently and participate fully in content classes—a feat achieved by training all district teachers and leaders each summer in cultural responsiveness and trauma-informed instruction. As noted earlier, 92% of Fugees students graduate from high school; 100% are accepted in postsecondary institutions.

## **2. Extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes are clearly specified & measurable**

As demonstrated in Section 4, Evaluation, we align objectives and outcomes to three clear impact areas: students, teachers, and implementation. The nine evaluation questions guide the



specific measurements which include quantitative and qualitative tools.

The overall goal of Fugees Family is to **disrupt refugee and ELL education** as it currently exists. For Project Teranga, we begin that process by replicating, iteratively refining, and ultimately codifying elements found to be most effective for newcomers. Each of the following objectives and outcomes are clearly specified and measurable; additional information, including comparison groups related to our quasi-experimental design and our list of evaluation questions may be found beginning on page 26.

Goal 1 Student success	Table 1
<p><b>Measure</b> We will see <b>improvements</b> in the following key indicators of student learning</p>	
<p><b>Obj. 1.1</b> Increases in student scores on state math, English language arts (ELA), &amp; English language proficiency assessments            - Spring 2025 baseline, spring 2026 outcome</p>	
<p><b>Obj. 1.2</b> Increases in student attendance as an indicator of socio-emotional learning            - Spring 2025 baseline, spring 2026 outcome)</p>	
<p><b>Obj. 1.3</b> Increased socio-emotional learning outcomes compared to non-participating Teranga Academy students (comparison schools)            - Panorama Education Student Survey; spring 2025 baseline, spring 2026 outcome</p>	
<p><b>Analysis</b> <i>The evaluation will also consider to what extent teacher knowledge, teacher skills, and implementation fidelity relate to student outcomes.</i>            - Bellwether-created teacher survey; summer 2025 baseline, spring 2026 outcome            - Implementation fidelity scores, spring 2026            - Student-level achievement and SEL outcomes, spring 2026</p>	
Goal 2 Teacher self-efficacy	
<p><b>Measure</b> We will see <b>improvements</b> in the following key indicators of teacher capacity</p>	
<p><b>Obj. 2.1</b> Improved teacher self-efficacy, pedagogical content knowledge, and attitudes towards teaching ELLs            - Bellwether designed survey; spring 2025 baseline, spring 2026 outcome</p>	
<p><b>Obj. 2.2</b> Participating students’ rate Teranga Academy teachers as highly effective in their ability to provide culturally relevant instruction relative to national benchmarks            - Panorama Equity &amp; Inclusion Survey; summer 2025 baseline; spring 2026 outcome)</p>	



- Obj. 2.3** Mediation Analysis: Increased teacher knowledge, skills, and implementation fidelity relate directly to Teranga Academy student outcomes
- Bellwether created teacher survey; summer 2025 baseline; spring 2026 outcome
  - Implementation fidelity scores, spring 2026
  - Student-level achievement and SEL outcomes, spring 2026
  - Pre/Project assessments and surveys
  - Measurements of resources provided

**Goal 3 Project Teranga Implementation (fidelity)**

**Measure** We will determine whether Teranga Academies are **implemented with fidelity** and relate those findings to overall impacts (Goals/Obj. 1-2)

- Obj. 3.1** Percentage of Teranga Academies implemented as intended
- Fugees Family administrative data; summer 2025, 2026, 2027
  - Teacher, student surveys; spring 2025, 2026
  - Interviews with TA staff and students (spring 2023-2027)

- Obj. 3.2** Percentage of Teranga Academy supports implemented as intended
- Fugees Family administrative data, summer 2023-2027)
  - Teacher survey, spring 2025, 2026
  - Interviews with Teranga Academy staff, spring 2023-2027

- Obj. 3.3** Annual percentage of students, teachers, and school leaders who have a positive perception of their experience with Teranga Academy?
- Interviews with TA staff and students; spring 2023-2027

In addition, our evaluator, (Bellwether) will analyze all data to determine specifically which factors or components support students and teachers and which actually may hinder their work.

**3. Extent to which the design of the project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs**

Project Teranga will serve young newcomers to the United States—public school students who have found refuge in 10 separate communities. And, to provide resources to the neediest, we focus on students in grades 6-12 (middle, high school). Frankly, we have found younger children to be more resilient and able to acquire English faster, have therefore designed all Fugees Family programs to meet the educational and socio-emotional needs of pre-teens and teens.

Each of our newcomers is different from the one before, but they each have things in common.



All are English language learners as determined by school-based assessments of fluency. Most bear the scars of war and many may never have lived in an actual house or apartment. The majority will be from households in poverty having arrived in the U.S. with little more than a backpack or single suitcase. And, based on our work in Georgia and Ohio, nearly all of these students (85%) will be the first in their families not just to go to college, not just to graduate from high school, but even **to complete middle school**.

Therefore, success for us is about setting students on paths that were not previously accessible to them and ideally preventing the generational cycle of poverty from the beginning.

Bowling Green Independent School District (BGISD)—our pilot Teranga Academy district—is representative of the types of districts and students to be served in our project.

BGISD is located in Bowling Green, KY, a small city of 72,000 people located 1 hour north of Nashville, TN. It is the unlikely home of the International Center, a refugee resettlement agency created through a volunteer movement in 1981. The center works closely with the U.S.

Department of State and the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants to ensure newcomers have a support structure to help them fully integrate and thrive in the U.S.

The center has—almost single-handedly—changed Bowling Green’s dynamic. As a whole, Kentucky residents are white (87%) and only 6% statewide speak a language other than English at home (U.S. Census, 2021). But in Bowling Green, the state’s 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city, only 73%

identify as white and 17% speak a language other than English at home. In fact, in Bowling Green’s eight K-12 schools, **54 languages and dialects** are spoken. By contrast, in the city’s six neighboring counties, 93% of residents are white and less than 4% speak a language other than English at home.

U.S. Census, 2021	White	Other Language
United States	76%	22%
Kentucky	87%	6%
<b>Bowling Green</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>17%</b>
Neighbors	96%	4%

Table 2



On August 16, 2022, Bowling Green will open the first ever (pilot) Teranga Academy to 96 identified and registered newcomers—a process that began nearly one year ago. BGISD was one of a dozen school districts in the U.S. considered for the pilot and was chosen through the Fugees greenlighting process that focuses on the need of students **and** the capacity and commitment of districts to support the model. These newcomers will be joined next year (fall 2023) and annually thereafter by new Bowling Green newcomers.

In addition, these 96 students represent the diverse needs of future cohorts of students in Project Teranga (Cohort 1, 2023; Cohort 2, 2024) and beyond. Our pilot students are:

- 56% male and 44% female
- From many places, including Africa (44%; Democratic Republic of Congo); Central America (43%; El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala); Afghanistan (2%); and multi-nationalities (11%).
- None are students with disabilities
- 100% are English language learners
- All have been in the U.S. for less than 3 years
- Few—just 3.6%—**are reading on grade level.**

In fall 2022, as these Bowling Green Junior High and Bowling Green High School students begin their three-year Teranga Academy journeys, **another dozen school districts** across the country will be vetted to be included as one of the four Cohort 1 districts. Site visits by Fugees staff will commence in November and December with final district selection in late January 2023. Cohort 1 districts will likely be clustered geographically, that is, within a half-day's drive of each other to keep costs and time commitments to a minimum. Fugees has relationships with refugee centers throughout the U.S. and is already at work determining the next academy region. At this writing, the state of Texas or the Midwest U.S. (Indiana/Ohio) are likely regions.

Specific selection criteria for districts (greenlighting) ensures that Teranga Academies will be established in school districts with the determination and capacity to serve these neediest





students. The process includes four non-negotiables related to district commitment and ability as well as eight prioritization criteria related to the number and concentration of students, diversity of the student population, staff engagement, stage of any existing programs, and more. A summary of the criteria is found in Table 3.

Extrapolated out to the 9 additional districts in Cohorts 1 and 2 with similar profiles over the next two years, this project will serve an estimated 2,000 refugee and ELL students by 2024—high-need students who desperately need a better educational experience. A full implementation timeline is found on page 25; a graphic representation of the BGISD and cohort implementation is found attached (appendix). To be clear, all Project Teranga students will be high need middle and high school students, newcomers to the U.S., and identified as English language learners.

<b>Step 1: Non-Negotiables</b>		<b>Table 3</b>
<b>Authentic Commitment &amp; Ability to Act</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ There is a leader (e.g., superintendent) who is <b>mission-aligned and committed</b></li> <li>✓ The leader is willing to <b>prioritize time and resources</b> to supporting newcomers and ELLs</li> <li>✓ The leader has sufficient <b>flexibility</b> to implement change across a district/network/school</li> <li>✓ The district is <b>stable</b>, with <b>high readiness</b> to implement Fugees’ model</li> </ul>		
<b>Step 2: Prioritization Criteria</b>		
<b>Reach &amp; Objective Criteria</b>		
Number	How many English language learners (ELLs) does this partner serve?	
Concentration	What percentage of the student population are ELLs?	
Diversity	How linguistically and ethnically diverse is the student population?	
<b>Feasibility &amp; Readiness Conditions</b>		
Stage of Program	Is this partner starting or redesigning an ELL program?	
Staff engagement	Are teachers and staff engaged, mission-aligned, and bought in?	
Proximity	Is the partner location close to existing academies?	
Community	Is the community welcoming and supportive?	
Economics	Can the partner dedicate sufficient resources and budget to support ELLs?	



In addition, Project Teranga will meet *Absolute Priority 4, Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs*. In Table 4, we briefly **align the specific Teranga Academy strategies** that address Priority 4 components, strategies that include sheltered, small class size; competency-based (leveled) learning; trained teachers and ongoing teacher development; an embedded community liaison; expert content teachers (elementary certified); celebrating identity; district-wide professional learning to create new mindsets and a soft landing place for transitioning students; and athletics, music, and art as tools for learning and healing.

Project Teranga also addresses both *Competitive Preference Priority 1 and 2*, specifically:

- **CPP1, Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources & Opportunities**

The Fugees Family model, which will be replicated through Project Teranga, utilizes competency-based instruction (CPP1[a]) with leveled transition bands rather than grades. Each student, regardless of age, (likely) begins the three-year Teranga Academy at Level 1 and will proceed to Level 2 and Level 3 as content and English fluency—including reading ability—are deemed appropriate. There are no set time periods for learning within a specific level or instructional pacing guides that must be honored; rather, students demonstrate their learning (mastery) related to required concepts and benchmarks (Shubilla, 2012), which are typically confirmed via curricula and normed assessments.

When a level's content is mastered, students move to the next and ultimately transition to an age-appropriate school (i.e., middle or high school). All teachers in the 10 Teranga Academy districts will receive summer training in culturally responsive and trauma-informed instruction to ensure any teacher receiving or interacting with students and families is prepared. Teachers working directly with academy students will receive 12 professional learning days throughout the school year and summer. In addition, Teranga will receive weekly coaching visits (1 in-person/month and 3 virtual per month). Academy training



<b>Table 4 Absolute Priority 4 Social, emotional, and academic needs</b>	<b>Sheltered, small class size</b>	<b>Competency-based</b>	<b>Trained teachers</b>	<b>Community liaison</b>	<b>Ongoing prof. learning</b>	<b>Expert teachers (elem.)</b>	<b>Celebrating identify</b>	<b>District-wide PD</b>	<b>Soft landing space</b>	<b>Athletics, music, art</b>
<b>AP 4.1: Developing/Supporting educator and school capacity ...</b>										
AP 4.1.1 Fostering skills and behaviors that enable academic progress	X	X	X			X				
AP 4.1.2 Identifies, addresses conditions in the learning environment				X	X		X	X	X	X
AP 4.1.3 Is trauma-informed	X		X	X	X					
<b>AP 4.2: Creating education settings that are supportive, positive, identity safe ...</b>										
AP 4.2.1 Developing trusting relationships w/students, educators, families, community partners	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X
AP 4.2.2 High-quality professional development to increase engagement, belonging, build asset-based mindsets of educators	X	X	X	X	X	X				
AP 4.2.3 Engaging students, educators, families, community partners from diverse backgrounds and representative of the community	X		X	X		X	X	X		X
AP 4.2.5 Equitable access that is inclusive...	X			X			X			
AP 4.2.7 Frameworks to support consistent student-teacher relationships	X	X				X				
AP 4.2.8 Fostering partnerships to provide comprehensive services				X				X		



events and coaching include ongoing work on effective competency-based instructional strategies that respond to individual teacher/student needs in real time.

As previously noted, Project Teranga will target students in middle and high schools. The reason is simple: elementary-aged newcomers tend to grasp the English language more quickly and do not tend to fall as far behind their peers in reading and math. Older students benefit the most from competency-based instruction.

- **CPP2, Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Students, Educators, and Faculty**

Canadian researchers Edmonds and Flahault (2021) provide one of the few peer-reviewed reports on the educational impacts of COVID-19 on refugee populations. While all school-age children were impacted by the lack of school-based learning, Edmonds and Flahault note the compounding factor of school closures on refugee children, who typically arrive at school within days of entering a new home country. They often arrive directly from a camp settlement, where they have spent 5-10 years or from a country embattled in war. “Refugees are thus already working to overcome learning gaps resulting from interrupted access to education. Unfortunately, the shift to distance learning will likely further compound the difficulty refugees face in catching up to their peers...” (Edmonds, 2021; p. 8)

Fugees Family staff in our Georgia and Ohio schools certainly witnessed this firsthand. Refugees who could no longer engage with others at the school were not eager to adopt online learning. Additional tutoring and—when it became possible—face-to-face support helped some. But in very real terms, refugees in the U.S. fell further behind during the nearly 18-month closure of public schools.

As a matter of course, a needs assessment will be conducted as part of each Teranga Academy implementation (CP2[a]) as part of the individual site plan development. The assessment is a normal part of implementation, helping the district determine which students



are to be targeted in the first year. High on the list of concerns during this assessment is the level of learning loss our newcomers may have suffered during the pandemic. Asset mapping of partners is also a best practice of Fugees Family and will be completed by each site during Year 1 based on needed partnerships for refugee families. BGISD has completed that process as part of its own ongoing work in the community and works frequently with the International Center to create cross-agency connections for all newcomers and has for nearly four decades.

Finally, as noted above, Project Teranga includes evidence-based approaches and supports (CPP2[b]) including professional development for teachers and leaders in dosages based on their roles with students; competency-based instruction in a sheltered classroom setting and English language immersion to create fluency and provide sufficient time for content that accelerates learning; athletics, music, and art as the norm to keep students engaged; celebrating culture and diversity every day; and more. The replication of the Fugees model in 10 Project Teranga school districts will close learning gaps for these high-need students, helping them keep pace with their American-born peers and achieve faster academic growth than the national average within only one year of enrollment (p. 11).

### **C. Quality of Project Personnel**

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**Applicant encourages employment applications employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability**

Fugees Family was founded on the belief that access—to equitable education and jobs, to a safe and nurturing environment, and to the opportunities that both bring—should never be beyond the reach of any student or employee. This founding principle is the lens through which we design all our work, ensuring that any obstacles to access are named, understood, and systematically dismantled. To that end, Fugees intentionally seeks out teachers and leaders reflecting the



community we serve, resulting in a racially and socioeconomically diverse team:

- 79.5% of Fugees employees identify as a person of color
- 38.5% are foreign-born
- 64% are women
- 56% have spent one or more years living abroad
- Half of our Board members are black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

As the daughter and granddaughter of Syrian refugees, Fugees' founder and CEO [REDACTED] [REDACTED] journey to America included a years-long political asylum petition prompted by the threats to her life as a gay Muslim woman. Having learned to embrace her many identities, [REDACTED] life's work is to ease the burden of belonging for young survivors of war by empowering them to overcome cultural and language barriers. A profile of her journey is in the appendix.

Fugees practices grassroots organizing and participatory planning, engaging a diverse set of stakeholders in communities where we work. Critical to our model's success is prioritizing the perspectives of those with different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds as well as socio-economic and first-generation immigrant status. Teranga schools will be more than just institutions of learning. They will be a vital presence for communities, complementing a broader network of refugee support organizations.

In Teranga Academy communities where teachers and leaders may not represent our own organizational diversity, we will take a more active role in helping leaders identify and hire leaders, teachers, and classroom assistants who come from refugee and immigrant backgrounds and have a shared lived experience to help students be successful. BGISD has already implemented a program to upskill black staff in their district by providing teacher training and credentialing to get more representation in the classroom; this can be a model to do the same for refugee and immigrant staff moving forward.



## Qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.

■■■■ Chief Impact Officer at Fugees Family will serve as **Project Director (100% FTE)** for Project Teranga. ■■■■ has been at the forefront of developing the replication model, including the launch of the pilot Teranga Academy in Bowling Green, KY (Aug. 16, 2022). Her resume is attached.

Born and raised in Chicago, ■■■■ is the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor. She served as the Chief Academic Officer at Fugees Family for four years before moving into her current role as Chief Impact Officer leading Fugees' district partnership efforts. Prior to joining Fugees Family, ■■■■ helped found the Upper School at the Mary McDowell Friends School in Brooklyn, New York where she taught students with language-based learning disabilities. ■■■■ holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Government from Smith College and a Master of Education degree in General and Special Education from Bank Street College of Education.

■■■■ will lead Project Teranga and Fugees' support staff through the ongoing implementation process outlined on page 25 (timeline), including district recruitment, selection, and the four-phase implementation process. The Teranga cycle is both overlapping and iterative; that is, each fall as a new Teranga Academy opens, new districts are being selected and prepared for the next school year. In her role with Fugees, ■■■■ led the team of Teranga Coaches as Bowling Green teachers and leaders prepared for opening day. She will do the same for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 districts, selected in January 2023 and 2024, respectively.

■■■■ reports to **Fugees CEO** ■■■■ who is also considered key to Project Teranga. ■■■■ will dedicate 10% of her full-time equivalent (FTE) to the project. She will provide the ongoing vision and business oversight of Fugees Family and Project Teranga and remains the face of the organization. A dynamic speaker and author, ■■■■ is critical to the overall marketing to districts as well as the recruitment, vetting, and selection processes. She has



established the cultural norms of the organization and brings her authentic self to communities across the nation. As founder and CEO, [REDACTED] is chiefly responsible for the organization's growth, which is on pace to include up to 20 Teranga Academy sites by 2028. Additional positions important to the project include:

- Instructional Designer to support the research and development of curricula and classroom strategies as well as the codification of the Teranga model
- Coaches to work weekly with Teranga Academy on classroom strategies
- Project Manager to provide administrative support to Project Teranga staff

#### **D. Quality of the Management Plan**

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##### **Adequacy of the management plan to achieve project objectives on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones**

For 15 years, Fugees Family has developed and implemented learning models for high-need students, establishing standalone schools in Atlanta, GA (2007) and Columbus, OH (2019).

Initially, Fugees Family's intention was to establish similar schools in other communities where refugees live and work. However, that proved to be a bigger and more expensive challenge than realized. Simply put, Fugees could not easily replicate the staffing, facilities, funding streams, or state-by-state policies to make standalone schools a practical solution.

**Replicating the key components** of Fugees ongoing work with districts, however, was certainly a possibility—a possibility funded through philanthropic efforts as well as grant support from a variety of national foundations. A business plan, developed with the support of Bellwether Education Partners, continues to guide implementation of a system of Teranga Academies that will be located throughout the U.S. The overall goal is a minimum of 20 academies by 2028.

Project Teranga—an early phase EIR project—provides Fugees the **robust and iterative** evaluation of the replication and implementation processes, allowing us a better view of the





impact of various student and teacher approaches, types of sites, new methods brought forth by partner districts, and more. The codification of the processes is also key to our future academies. Our implementation timeline follows. A graphic of cohort progression is attached. And an evaluation timeline is also included (p. 26).

While Fugees is a relatively young non-profit, we boast a highly professional staff of educators, finance, and management specialists; we operate on an annual budget of \$8 million. All projects are operated on time and within their individual budgets. Financial policies are in place that comply with federal purchasing guidelines, specifically 2 CFR 200.320, as well as other portions of the Uniform Guidance.

The Project Teranga timeline follows the overall implementation schedule for each district and cohort **based in the Teranga Academy model**, including partner recruitment and selection followed by our **four phases** of local implementation and support.

At this writing, Bowling Green Independent School District is completing Phase 3 and will open the doors on Fugees' pilot Teranga Academy on August 16, 2022. We have included information about the Bowling Green academy in our appendix (BGISD's Teranga Academy webpage).



Table 5 18-month Project Teranga Timeline	Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall • SY	Tech. Asst.	Responsibility ••• Milestones
<p><b><u>Recruitment</u></b> Research and target school districts with significant numbers of newcomers in regions with established refugee centers. Market to targeted districts via print and web resources as well as personal site visits. Invited select districts to continue.</p>	→	→						<p><b>Responsible:</b> CEO, Impact Director</p> <p><b>Milestones:</b> 40 districts identified; 25 interested</p>
<p><b><u>Selection</u></b> Site visits to “short-listed” districts following the process shared on pages 15-16. Final selection occurs in Jan.; districts not selected will be considered in later years based on location and local, ongoing work of districts w/refugees, including recommendations made by Fugees.</p>			→					<p><b>Responsible:</b> CEO, Impact Director (PD)</p> <p><b>Milestones:</b> Districts selected (4, Jan. 2023; 5, Jan. 2024)</p>
<p><b><u>Phase 1: Needs Assessment</u></b> Additional site visits, interviews, and analysis conducted to identify district-level needs &amp; propose preliminary solutions. Initial report created to share with district to outline next steps and the resources needed to be successful.</p>				→				<p><b>Responsible:</b> Impact Director, Instructional Designer</p> <p><b>Milestones:</b> Site visits, data, reports</p>
<p><b><u>Phase 2: Design &amp; Planning</u></b> Fugees coaches meet monthly with districts to design the school year, create communications and engagement plans, support local district hiring as needed.</p> <p><b><u>Phase 3: Capacity Building &amp; Implementation</u></b> Fugees supports implementation via monthly in-person and virtual coaching and support, summer seminars, and comprehensive access to Fugees-designed academic lessons and cultural resources. The Teranga Academy open its doors in August of that year.</p>				→		→		<p><b>Responsible:</b> Impact Dir., Instr. Des., Coaches, Teachers, Leaders</p> <p><b>Milestones:</b> Plan designed, curriculum developed, weekly coaching, ongoing professional learning, <b>academy opens and operates on time</b></p>
<p><b><u>Phase Four: Ongoing Support &amp; Technical Assistance</u></b> For fully executed programs, Fugees will sustain access to quarterly coaching opportunities, technical assistance, other resources.</p>					→	→		<p><b>Responsible:</b> Impact Dir., Instr. Designer, Coaches, Districts</p> <p><b>Milestones:</b> Academies operational</p>



## E. Quality of the Project Evaluation

### 1. Extent to which the methods of evaluation will, if well implemented, produce evidence on the project’s effectiveness that would meet WWC standards with or without reservations

Bellwether will lead an independent implementation and impact evaluation of student enrollment in Teranga Academies (TA). The implementation study (Years 1-5) will inform continuous Academy improvement, drawing on program data, interviews, and surveys. The impact study (Years 3-4) will measure the impact of Academy enrollment on academic and SEL outcomes and is designed to meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence criteria, with reservations.<sup>1</sup>

Table 6 provides an overview of the 5-year evaluation.

Table 6	Y1 (2023)				Y2 (2024)				Y3 (2025)				Y4 (2026)				Y5 (2027)			
	W	S	Su	F	W	S	Su	F	W	S	Su	F	W	S	Su	F	W	S	Su	F
<b>Implementation Study</b>																				
Interviews		X				X				X				X				X		
Pilot Surveys			X			X														
Student, Staff surveys										X				X						
Project Data			X			X				X				X				X		
<b>Impact Study</b>																				
QED											B								O	
Student, Staff surveys												B							O	

W (winter): Jan-Mar; S (spring): Apr-June; Su (summer): July-Sept; F (fall): Oct-Dec; B: Baseline; O: Outcome

The evaluation is guided by research questions aligned with the logic model (appendix) and project goals (p. 12), and will incorporate multiple sources of data and established, psychometrically sound measures.

<sup>1</sup> During proposal development, Bellwether and Fugees Family discussed the feasibility of a school-level random assignment study that, if successfully executed, would meet WWC standards without reservations. Given the intensive screening process for selecting potential partner districts or schools, we decided a quasi-experimental design would be more feasible, based on its prior research-related activities across the county



**Summative Evaluation Research Questions**

**Table 7**

Impact of Project Teranga Supports on Students	Data Source
1. <u>Confirmatory</u> : Do students enrolled in TA have higher <b>academic achievement</b> , relative to a matched comparison group of ELLs enrolled in non-PT academy schools across the state?	Student-level scores from state math, ELA, and English language proficiency assmts. (spring 2025 baseline, spring 2026 outcome)
2. <u>Confirmatory</u> : Do students enrolled in TA have higher <b>social-emotional learning outcomes (i.e., attendance)</b> , relative to a matched comparison group of ELLs enrolled in non-PT academy schools across the state?	Student-level proportion of days student attended school from state/district administrative data (spring 2025 baseline, spring 2026 outcome)
3. <u>Descriptive</u> : Do students enrolled in TA have higher <b>social-emotional learning outcomes (i.e., sense of belonging)</b> , relative to a matched comparison group of ELLs enrolled in non-PT academy schools across the state?	Panorama Education Student Survey (Baseline: summer 2025; Outcome, spring 2026)
4. <u>Mediation</u> : To what extent are teacher knowledge and skills and implementation fidelity related to TA student outcomes?	Bellwether created teacher survey (Baseline: summer 2025; Outcome, spring 2026); imp. fidelity scores (Spring 2026); student-level achievement & SEL outcomes (spring 2026)
Impact of Project Teranga Support on Teachers	Data Source
5. <u>Descriptive</u> : Do educators who receive TA supports report improved <b>self-efficacy, pedagogical content knowledge, and attitudes towards teaching ELLs</b> ?	Bellwether created teacher survey (Baseline: summer 2025; Outcome, spring 2026)
6. <u>Descriptive</u> : To what extent do students rate educators who receive TA supports as highly effective in their ability to provide <b>culturally relevant instruction</b> relative to nat'l benchmarks?	Panorama Equity and Inclusion Survey (Baseline: summer 2025; Outcome, spring 2026)
Implementation of Project Teranga Supports	Data Source
7. Are TAs implemented as intended? What factors facilitate or hinder implementation?	Fugees Family admin. data (Summer, 2025, 2026, 2027); Teacher, Student surveys (spring 2025, 2026); Interviews w/TA staff & students (spring 2023-2027)
8. Are Fugees Family supports implemented as intended? What factors facilitate or hinder implementation?	Fugees Family admin. data (Summer, 2023-2027); Teacher survey (spring 2025, 2026); Interviews with TA staff (spring 2023-2027)
9. How do students, teachers, and school leaders perceive their experience with TA?	Interviews with TA staff and students (spring 2023-2027)



**Impact Study Measures. *Student Academic Achievement (RQ1)*.** Bellwether staff will collect student-level state-administered standardized ELA and math (grades 3-8) and English language proficiency<sup>2</sup> (ELP; grades K-12) test score data in spring 2025 (baseline) and spring 2026 (outcome), for all treatment and comparison students. Standardized ELA, math, and ELP assessments data typically include the student's scale scores, which are measured as continuous variables. Bellwether will standardize these scores using the state means and standard deviations (where available) or the sample mean and standard deviation (if state values are not available). This approach will allow evaluators to combine achievement scores across states whose assessments are on a different scale from one another. Bellwether staff will also work with each state/district to obtain student-level demographic data (e.g., race/ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender) for treatment and comparison students. ***Student SEL (RQ2)*.** Bellwether will collect student-level attendance data to measure student SEL.<sup>3</sup> Attendance will be measured as censored continuous variables representing the proportion of school days the student attended school. Using this commonly available measure will allow Bellwether to collect baseline and outcome data from both treatment and comparison students in the matched sample (matching procedure described below). ***Student Belonging, Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching Quality, and School Climate (RQ3, RQ5)*.** Bellwether will also administer scales from two validated surveys (i.e., Panorama Education Student Survey/Equity and Inclusion Survey) to TA students in the summer 2025 and spring 2026. The Student Survey is a validated instrument (Panorama Education, 2020) that measures 19 key topics related to classroom and school belonging. The Equity and Inclusion survey includes validated scales that measure students'

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<sup>2</sup> All states collect ELs' English language proficiency (ELP) when they first enroll in a public school district and each subsequent year using a standardized and validated screener and assessment (grades K-12).

<sup>3</sup> Attendance is listed as eligible outcome in the WWC Review Protocol for Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Interventions, version 4.1 (2021).



perceptions of teachers' effectiveness in using culturally relevant pedagogies (Panorama Education, 2019)<sup>4</sup> and student perceptions of the schools' diversity and inclusion. Bellwether will analyze survey data using descriptive methods (means and standard deviations, chi-squares) to describe survey responses and evaluate differences among relevant sub-groups. ***Teacher Attitudes and Knowledge (RQ4)***. Bellwether will develop and administer a survey to all TA teachers in summer 2025 and spring 2026. The teacher survey will assess self-efficacy using the validated and widely used self-efficacy scale (Bandura, 2006), adapted to be specific to teaching ELLs. To measure pedagogical content knowledge and attitudes towards teaching ELLs, Bellwether will also embed study-created scales piloted and validated during the formative implementation study phase (see below). Pilot activities will include conducting cognitive interviews with teachers to refine wording and conducting factor analysis to assess the construct validity of the scale items. Bellwether will analyze survey data descriptively, as described above.

**Designed to Meet WWC Standards with Reservations.** To estimate impact on student academic and SEL outcomes (RQ1-RQ2), Bellwether will use a quasi-experimental design (i.e., two-stage propensity-score matching) designed to meet WWC standards, with reservations. In the first matching stage, Bellwether will use state-wide administrative records from each state with a participating Academy school to create a matched sample of 40 comparison schools that are not offering the model but are otherwise similar on key characteristics. We will exact match on schools who have high ELL enrollment (i.e., who are in the top 25% of schools statewide in terms of ELL enrollment). Additional matching characteristics may include school size, the proportion of low-income students and students of color, and school urbanicity. In the second matching stage,

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<sup>4</sup> Research shows that student ratings of teachers are related to teacher's value-added scores, a measure of the effect a teacher has on student achievement growth (Kane & Cantrell, 2010).



Bellwether will use propensity score matching to identify one matched comparison student enrolled in the matched comparison schools for each student enrolled in the Academy in an eligible grade.<sup>5</sup> Students will be matched on prior measures of the outcome and on student-level demographics<sup>6</sup> (e.g., home language, newcomer status, enrollment year,<sup>7</sup> student race/ethnicity, gender, grade level, special education status, and eligibility for free or reduced-price meals). Students will be matched separately for each outcome, allowing the largest possible analytic sample. **Baseline Equivalence.** After each stage of matching, Bellwether will examine the quality of the matching by examining whether the matched treatment and comparison group means for each measure included in the matching process are within 0.25 standard deviation of each other (the baseline equivalence threshold to meet WWC standards, with reservations). If the differences are greater than 0.25 standard deviation, Bellwether will refine the matching approach to achieve baseline equivalence acceptable to meet WWC standards, with reservations. **Analysis.** Bellwether will estimate impacts of TA enrollment on math, ELA, and ELP outcomes (RQ1) using HLM models to adjust standard errors associated with the clustering of observations within schools (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) and including all matching variables to increase precision. We will estimate a similar model to address RQ2 (attendance),<sup>8</sup> with the exception that the functional form will be a tobit model with two limits for attendance. Teranga Academies are estimated to enroll up to 2,000 newcomers in grades 6-12 in at least 10 schools in 10 districts in up

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<sup>5</sup> For student math and ELA achievement outcomes, eligible grades are grades 6 – 8 in reading, mathematics, or self-contained classrooms. For ELP and attendance outcomes, eligible grades are grades 6 – 12.

<sup>6</sup> Under ESSA, newcomer immigrant students can be exempted from taking the ELA, but not math, portion of their states' standardized achievement test in their first year of enrollment in a US school. We will only include students who have baseline outcome measures, and so may exclude some students who were exempted from the ELA exam in the baseline year.

<sup>7</sup> A potential limitation of using state-administrative data is that we may not be able to distinguish whether an EL is new to the country or new to the state.

<sup>8</sup> All domains include only one measure; thus, they will not require multiple comparisons corrections.



to 10 states. The MDES for math and ELA achievement outcomes is .25.<sup>9</sup> The MDES for ELP and attendance outcomes is .17.<sup>10</sup>

## **2. Extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.**

To contextualize impact study findings and provide performance feedback and periodic assessment of progress to Fugees Family leaders and Teranga Academy staff, Bellwether will conduct a two-phased implementation study: an initial formative phase (Winter 2023-Summer 2024; 5 sites) and a subsequent summative phase (Fall 2024-Spring 2027; 10 sites). In both phases, the implementation study will assess the fidelity of program implementation across sites; explore teacher, leader, and student experiences in the academy; and identify strengths and challenges in sites' efforts to support newcomer students and their teachers (RQ6-RQ-8; RQs and data sources listed in Table 7, p. 27). During the formative phase, Bellwether will work with Fugees Family to develop implementation fidelity standards and thresholds for the major components of the model, described below; pilot implementation fidelity measures; pilot teacher and student surveys and interview protocols; and finalize the QED after exploring variables available in each participating state's administrative data. During the summative phase, Bellwether will collect data across all sites to address implementation questions.

**Implementation Measures. *Project administrative data.*** Fugees Family will collect program participation data from each TA site, including participation in professional development (i.e.,

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<sup>9</sup> This estimate assumes approximately 50 percent of study schools will include tested grades. Power calculations assume 5 treatment schools/1,000 treatment students and 20 control schools/1,000 comparison students (1:4 match for schools and 1:1 match for students);  $R^2 = 0.5$  for level 1 (students), 0.7 for level 2 (schools); ICC = .10.

<sup>10</sup> This estimate assumes all study schools will provide attendance and ELP data. Power calculations assume 10 treatment schools/2,000 treatment students and 40 control schools/2,000 control students (1:4 match for schools and 1:1 match for students);  $R^2 = 0.5$  for level 1 (students), 0.7 for level 2 (schools); ICC = .10.





weekly coaching calls, monthly teacher PD sessions, summer sessions) as well as whether sites are on-track for implementation. ***Student and Teacher surveys.*** Bellwether will develop academy staff and student surveys to assess participation in core components, perceptions of the program, challenges to implementation, supports sought, and satisfaction with the supports received. Bellwether will administer implementation surveys at the end of each study year and analyze survey data descriptively (means and standard deviation) for themes. Implementation and outcomes survey data will be collected in the same survey instrument when relevant. ***Interviews and Focus Groups.*** Each spring, Bellwether will interview a purposeful sample of program participants including students, teachers, and staff, to understand implementation and participant experiences. Bellwether will collaborate with Project Teranga staff to identify the interview sample each year based on findings from prior year evaluation activities and current questions of interest. Bellwether will develop semi-structured protocols for each type of interview and analyze data using a coding system to identify themes.

**Reporting.** Bellwether will use multiple modes of communication to share findings about implementation and impact with FF and TA stakeholders throughout the year. Bellwether will meet with Fugees Family staff bi-weekly or monthly, depending on the current evaluation activities, to discuss progress. Findings from each year's data collection and analysis will be summarized in an annual evaluation report (Years 1-4) and a final summative evaluation report (Year 5), which will address the research questions and include lessons learned and recommendations for continuous improvement. To inform these reports, Bellwether will facilitate one stakeholder engagement session each spring to 1) gather feedback on draft reports, and 2) co-create a draft set of recommendations. Participants may include additional Fugees staff with relevant expertise, selected district or school leaders involved in the Teranga Academy,



Academy teachers, Academy students or parents, and researchers or practitioners with expertise in supporting newcomer students. Inviting feedback from these additional stakeholders will ensure that the final recommendations are inclusive and responsive to the local context.

**3. Extent to which the evaluation plan clearly articulates key project components, mediators, & outcomes, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation**

Bellwether’s evaluation is designed to collect data on key project components and their relationship with the student and teacher outcomes described in the logic model, including how teacher knowledge and skills and implementation fidelity (mediators) are related to treatment student outcomes (logic model, attached; Table 7 and description, above).

**Mediation Analysis.** We hypothesize that the impact of TA enrollment on student SEL (attendance, sense of belonging) and academic outcomes (ELA, ELP, math) will be mediated by: site implementation fidelity scores; teacher attitudes and knowledge (as measured through teacher and student surveys, and including teacher self-efficacy for teaching ELs; teacher pedagogical content knowledge for teaching ELs, and teacher effectiveness in providing culturally relevant instruction); and school climate (as measured through student surveys). Bellwether will use descriptive analysis (means, standard deviations, ANOVA) to describe how mediators vary by site and use OLS regression to understand how mediators are related to TA student outcomes (treatment students only), controlling for student and school characteristics.

**Implementation Fidelity Thresholds.** Bellwether will work with Fugees Family during the formative implementation study period to translate the logic model into a detailed implementation fidelity framework that articulates the key components and annual thresholds of the model, including expectations around participation (e.g. how many teachers will attend summer programs?), dose (e.g., how many hours of training will teachers receive?), adherence



(e.g., did school leaders follow the guidance they received from Fugees Families?), and quality (what does high quality instruction for newcomers look like?). Bellwether will create an implementation fidelity score for each site based on the extent to which each site reaches implementation fidelity thresholds. To be implemented with fidelity, the site must meet thresholds for all components of the model each year. A preliminary implementation table is included in the appendix.

