Applicant Name: Mineola Public Schools

Project Title: Second Step to Enhance Rural Students' Achievement and Wellbeing

Type of Grant Requested: (select one) ☒ Early-Phase ☐ Mid-Phase ☐ Expansion

Absolute Priorities the Project Addresses: (select all that apply)

☒ Absolute Priority 1-- Demonstrate a Rationale (Early), Moderate (Mid), Strong (Expansion)

☐ Absolute Priority 2-- Field-Initiated Innovations—General

☐ Absolute Priority 3-- Promoting STEM Education

☒ Absolute Priority 4-- Meeting Student Social, Emotional, and Academic Needs

☐ Absolute Priority 5-- Educator Recruitment and Retention

Competitive Preference Priorities the Project Addresses: (select all that apply)

☒ Competitive Preference Priority 1— Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities: Implementers and Partners

☐ Competitive Preference Priority 2—Supporting a Diverse Educator Workforce and Professional Growth to Strengthen Student Learning* (FOR EARLY-PHASE AP5 APPLICANTS ONLY)

Total number of students to be served by the project: 1200

Grade level(s) to be served by the project: K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Definition of high-need students: Students attending geographically isolated rural schools with 50-80% free and reduced lunch

Brief description of project activities: We will develop a multi-tiered coaching program that leverages rural strengths and takes into account rural context to support implementation of a social-emotional learning curriculum (Second Step® digital curriculum) in 5 high-need rural school districts.

Summary of project objectives and expected outcomes: I. Objective 1: Explore potential barriers to the adoption and implementation of the Second Step® Elementary digital curriculum in high-needs rural districts. Outcomes for Objective 1: (a) Process1: Iterative analysis of program implementation, (b) Project 1: Number and type of barriers identified, (c) Project 2: Number and type of changes to the Second Step® Elementary digital curriculum initial training based on identification of barriers, (d) Program 1: Number of students served, (e) Program 2: Updates to the project design based on external evaluation, (f) Program 3: Annual evaluation with student academic and social outcome measures. II. Objective 2: Identify and pilot training and coaching that are needed to support teachers implementing the Second Step® Elementary digital curriculum with fidelity. Outcomes for Objective 2: (a) Process: Iterative analysis of program implementation. III. Objective 3: Evaluate the effects of a professional development program including ongoing coaching and feedback on the fidelity of implementation of the Second Step® Elementary digital curriculum by teachers working in high-needs rural schools. Outcomes for Objective 3: (a) Program 1: Updates to the project design based on the external evaluation, (b) Annual evaluation that includes sufficient detail for replication. IV. Objective 4: Evaluate the effects of the implementation of the Second Step® Elementary digital curriculum on high-needs rural students' academic achievement (e.g., reading and mathematics), attendance, social-emotional competency, classroom behavior, perceptions of school climate, and disciplinary referrals and suspensions. Outcomes for Objective 4: (a) Program 1: Number of students served, (b) Program 2: Updates to project design based on external evaluation, (c) Program 4: Annual evaluation with student academic and social outcome measures, (d) Program 5: Annual evaluation that includes sufficient detail for replication, (e) Program 6: cost per student.

Summary of how the project is innovative: Few studies address the social-emotional needs of rural students in under-resourced, geographically isolated schools. A metanalysis of over 400 studies pertaining to the implementation of social-emotional learning curricula included only 19 studies with rural student participants (Cipriano et al., 2023). However, researchers have clearly established the high needs of rural students pertaining to social-emotional competencies. Additionally, researchers have also identified unique challenges pertaining to the implementation of programs such as social emotional learning (SEL) curricula in rural schools given a variety of logistical, economic, and cultural factors unique to rural areas (Fitzgerald et al., 2014). We propose to implement an innovative project to develop and evaluate an SEL curriculum tailored to the specific strengths and needs of students and educators in rural schools. Often research is directly applied or replicated in rural schools; rather than developed with and for rural schools from the beginning. We will develop an evaluate a professional development program with our partners that centers our rural schools, teachers, and students' needs.

Other studies related to the proposed project: This project is based on previous research on the implementation of school- and district-wide teacher coaching to improve fidelity of implementation of both academic and social-emotional learning curricula, including the following high-quality studies (i.e., meets standards without reservations) identified by WWC as showing promising evidence of effectiveness in the area of teacher professional development and coaching: (a) Bradshaw, C. P., Pas, E. T., Bottiani, J. H., Debnam, K. J., Reinke, W. M., Herman, K. C., & Rosenberg, M. S. (2018). Promoting cultural responsivity and student engagement through double check coaching of classroom teachers: An efficacy study. School Psychology Review, 47(2), 118-134.; (b) Parkinson, J., Salinger, T., Meakin, J., & Smith, D. (2015). Results from a three-year i3impact evaluation of the Children's Literacy Initiative (CLI): Implementation and impact findings of an intensive professional development and coaching program. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.; (c) Vernon-Feagans, L., Kainz, K., Hedrick, A., Ginsberg, M., & Amendum, S. (2013). Live webcam coaching to help early elementary classroom teachers provide effective literacy instruction for struggling readers: The Targeted Reading Intervention. Journal of Educational Psychology, 105(4), 1175-1187.

Proposed implementation sites: 5 Local Education Agencies in Rural Texas (Alba Golden Independent School District, Hawkins Independent School District, Mineola Independent School District, Quitman Independent School District, Yantis Independent School District); 1 comparison district- Grand Saline Independent School District

Organizations partnering with this project: The Committee for Children, University of Oklahoma, Texas