

Building Capacity to Support Struggling Adolescent Readers

Request: Mid-Phase

Absolute Priorities 1 and 5: Supporting High-Need Students and Evidence-Driven Practices

Description: The 24% of U.S. 8th graders who score below basic in reading are unprepared to meet college- and career-ready standards, and are at high risk of dropping out of school. We propose to address the needs of this population in four high-needs districts in varied state contexts through implementation of the Strategic Adolescent Reading Intervention (STARI). STARI is uniquely designed to engage adolescents in standards-aligned comprehension tasks that build toward grade level expectations in one year, while strengthening basic reading skills. Tested in a randomized trial in four districts in a single state, STARI showed impacts that are statistically and substantively significant on component reading skills and on deep comprehension.

Few middle grades teachers are prepared to teach reading. We will train 12 coaches to intensively support 84 teachers through institutes, coaching, and monthly PLCs. We will shift capacity from the project team to district staff during the grant period to support sustainability and future expansion.

Eligible students will be randomly assigned, allowing for a rigorous impact evaluation.

Objectives and expected outcomes:

1. Implement STARI effectively in 246 classrooms, improving state test scores, reading skills, and reading engagement;
2. Validate the efficacy of STARI when implemented on a larger scale for subgroups of students in diverse contexts;
3. Build capacity for sustainability and further scaling in partner districts;
4. Build the tools and organizational capacity of SERP to support districts nationwide to successfully implement the program beyond the grant period.

Students served: 3,444 students (grades 6-8)

Partners: NYC Dept. of Education
Mississippi Dept. of Education
Baltimore City Public Schools
DC Public Schools
Wheelock College
MDRC