

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

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/09/2018 10:49 PM

## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Independent School District 625 (U411C180164)

**Reader #1:** \*\*\*\*\*

	<b>Points Possible</b>	<b>Points Scored</b>
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	30	30
<b>Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan</b>		
1. Project Design/Management	50	50
<b>Total</b>	80	80

# Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - EIR Early Phase Tier 1 (Content) - 4: 84.411C

Reader #1: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Independent School District 625 (U411C180164)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

1. In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (1) The national significance of the proposed project.
- (2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in the NIA).
- (4) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

### Strengths:

- 1) This project meets national significance in that the SPPS proposes to evaluate whole school change approach to improve school climate using Restorative Practices (RP), an approach for developing equitable relationships, engaged learning and positive responses to disciplinary concerns. The project proposes to partner with University of Minnesota. The project is a data driven model to improve the outcomes of high needs students.
- 2) SPPS's collaboration with local teacher's union affiliate introduces a new strategy of collaboration that will yield potentially positive outcomes.
- 3) The project demonstrates a rationale in that the RP has shown potentially positive outcomes in improving school climate when implemented as a whole school approach.
- 4) The application's strengths lies in the extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the project in having the school district partner with the teacher's union.

### Weaknesses:

There are no weaknesses.

Reader's Score: 30

### Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

1. In determining the quality of the proposed project design, 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 extent to which performance feedback and continuous improvement are integral to the design of the proposed project.
- (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support

**further development or replication.**

**Strengths:**

1. The application's strength lies in the extent to which the goals, objectives and outcomes to be achieved by the SPSS demonstrate potentially positive effect, as relevant, clearly specified and measurable outcomes are identified. Page 12 table 1 supports this.

2. The management plan is adequate in that as displayed on page 9, the management plan demonstrates the culmination of different knowledge sources to inform practices, and it combines the collaborative expertise of education professionals from existing pilot schools. Page 11 further demonstrates the strategic focus of the plan and Table 1 demonstrates the adequacy of the management plan by presenting the objectives of the proposed project, clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

3. Performance feedback and continuous improvement factor is noted as holding an integral role in the design of the proposal, thus meeting this without exception. The proposal uses a mixed methods design for both implementation and outcomes measures. The RP logic model extends a partnership with SPPSs, Saint Paul Federation of Teachers (SPFT) and the UMN-PRC to capture, integrate and improve the quality and impact of the RP implementation. As demonstrated on pages 16 and 23, the RP leadership team has strategies in place that provide feedback and ensure continuous improvement by using a variety of statistical measures to analyze outcome data.

4. Page 18 and Table 3 demonstrate that the mechanisms, activities and timelines the applicant will use to disseminate information on its project, and broadly share lessons learned related to both fidelity of implementation and outcomes are significantly helpful in further development and replication of this project.

**Weaknesses:**

There are no weaknesses.

**Reader's Score: 50**

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## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Independent School District 625 (U411C180164)

**Reader #2:** \*\*\*\*\*

	Points Possible	Points Scored
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	30	30
<b>Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan</b>		
1. Project Design/Management	50	45
<b>Total</b>	80	75

# Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - EIR Early Phase Tier 1 (Content) - 4: 84.411C

Reader #2: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Independent School District 625 (U411C180164)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

1. In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (1) The national significance of the proposed project.
- (2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in the NIA).
- (4) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

### Strengths:

(1) The applicant cites relevant research and provides supporting data which describe the national significance of the proposed project. In the US, 5.2 million children ages 6-11 live in poverty. There is an achievement gap between children who live in low-income households and those who do not. The 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress showed that 75% of US 4th graders eligible for the National School Lunch Program scored below proficient in math and 78% scored below proficient in reading compared to 60% below proficient in math and 63% below proficient in reading among all US 4th graders. Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation (EVSC), in partnership with C8 Sciences with support from Yale experts in Executive Function (EF) and school change, is proposing to implement and evaluate the effectiveness of Activate. Activate is a cognitive training program that uses computer-based activities and specially designed physical exercises to improve Executive Function (EF) in students in grades K-5. The expected outcome of this initiative is to improve student performance in math and English and help close the achievement gap of high needs students. Executive Function (EF) is a set of cognitive operations including focused attention, self-control and working memory. Activate has the demonstrated ability to improve engagement, academic outcomes, and closing the achievement gap by incorporating Executive Function and utilizing built-in, classroom administered measures. Based on data from over 10,000 students, C8 Sciences and Yale scientists developed innovative Executive Function (EF) proficiency standards. Executive Function (EF) proficiency was defined as students who scored at or above the 33rd percentile of students in schools with less than 10% of students eligible for free or reduced lunch. In high and mid poverty schools (with at least 50% of children eligible for free or reduced lunch), 86% of children failed to meet proficiency in one or more of the three aspects of Executive Function (EF) shown to predict academic outcomes. The proposed study features a randomized controlled trial to evaluate the impact of Activate on student Executive Function (EF) and academic performance and its impact on closing the achievement gap for low-income students.

(2) The applicant describes how the proposed project involves the demonstration of promising new strategies that build on existing strategies. The project seeks to assess the effectiveness of Activate in improving Executive Function (EF) and academic outcomes of students in grades K-3. Efforts to improve EF as a means to improving academic performance are promising new strategies that supplement and can improve the effectiveness of existing strategies to close the achievement gap. Because EF is not grade or subject specific, improving student EF will enhance student ability to understand information provided through other instructional methods to be received more effectively. Extensive research has shown that EF is a more accurate predictor of academic success than IQ for high-needs students. Activate is a cognitive neuroscience and evidence-based program that can improve EF and academic achievement; thereby, addressing the national issue of closing achievement gaps.

(3) The applicant provides a well- developed logic model (Appendix G) which demonstrates a rationale (as defined in the NIA) for the proposed project. The logic model includes key components such as inputs, activities, objectives and outcomes which are clearly linked to project goals. EVSC's rationale to implement Activate as a means to improve EF and student academic performance is based on the outcomes of past evaluations and on decades of research on neurocognitive training to improve EF. Project partner C8 Sciences has conducted studies of Activate that demonstrate the program's ability to improve EF and early learning outcomes.

(4) The applicant describes how the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priorities established for the competition. The project focuses on Absolute Priorities 1 and 2, as well as Invitational Priorities 1 and 2. The project will implement Activate, a neuroscience-based and scientifically validated intervention to improve early-learning and cognitive development (Invitational Priority 2) that moves each student through personalized learning modules using real-time data to provide ongoing feedback on student progress and adjust learning strategies in real-time (Invitational Priority 1). Activate improves Executive Function (EF) and academic performance, and is based on decades of high quality research on neurocognitive training (Absolute Priority 1). Prior evaluations of Activate indicate that the intervention is likely to improve student outcomes. Research in a sample of 583 second-graders found that those who used Activate showed greater gains in math and English achievement than controls Effect size on math (.49) exceeded that reported for one-on-one tutoring; and for reading (.18) exceeded that reported with extended instruction after school or in the summer (Appendix H). Additional research shows significant improvements in EFs in samples of over 500 children and carryover of effects from kindergarten to first grade. The proposed project will implement this evidence-based innovation to improve student achievement and attainment at 10 low performing schools serving high-need students (Absolute Priority 2).

**Weaknesses:**

- (1)None noted
- (2) None noted
- (3) None noted
- (4) None noted

**Reader's Score: 30**

**Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan**

**1. In determining the quality of the proposed project design, 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 extent to which performance feedback and continuous improvement are integral to the design of the proposed project.**
- (4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

**Strengths:**

- (1) The applicant presents goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project. The applicant describes each goal and links them to objectives and outcomes.
- (2) The applicant provides an adequate management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project. The applicant provides a list of key project personnel and clearly defines their responsibilities. The applicant provides a detailed RP

program communication and dissemination timeline which describes activities for accomplishing project tasks (p.19).

(3) The applicant describes how performance feedback and continuous improvement are integral to the design of the proposed project. Feedback will be provided through reflective assessments, observations, and student and teacher surveys which will be analyzed in a timely manner and shared with project leadership to inform the iterative process of continuous improvement. Appropriate protocols are in place to foster continuous improvement.

(4) The applicant describes viable mechanisms to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication. The district RP coordinator has been a panelist at national conferences and will use this network to disseminate project information and to share and learn from other RP practitioners. UMN-PRC will continue to create annual reports for district and school stakeholders. In Year 1, the RP team will finalize a communications and dissemination plan (Table 3), to prepare for sharing knowledge and experiences with both peer-reviewed and practice audiences locally, regionally and nationally

**Weaknesses:**

(1) Some of the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project do not include performance measures. For example, Goal 3 states, "Integrate Dr. Winn's pedagogical stances into content and community building circle practices" (p. 12); and the objective states, " 3.1. In Year 1, developmentally tailored strategies for integrating pedagogical stances into content and community-building circles will be developed and added to implementation guidance" (p.12). The attainability of this goal and objective cannot be determined without performance measures.

(2) None noted

(3) None noted

(4) More information is needed to describe plans to support further development or replication.

**Reader's Score: 45**

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## Technical Review Coversheet

**Applicant:** Independent School District 625 (U411C180164)

**Reader #3:** \*\*\*\*\*

	<b>Points Possible</b>	<b>Points Scored</b>
<b>Questions</b>		
<b>Selection Criteria</b>		
<b>Significance</b>		
1. Significance	30	30
<b>Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan</b>		
1. Project Design/Management	50	50
<b>Total</b>	80	80

# Technical Review Form

Panel #4 - EIR Early Phase Tier 1 (Content) - 4: 84.411C

Reader #3: \*\*\*\*\*

Applicant: Independent School District 625 (U411C180164)

## Questions

### Selection Criteria - Significance

1. In determining the significance of the project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

- (1) The national significance of the proposed project.
- (2) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.
- (3) The extent to which the proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in the NIA).
- (4) The extent to which the proposed project represents an exceptional approach to the priority or priorities established for the competition.

### Strengths:

1. The proposed project acknowledges that building strong comprehensive systems are important to effective teaching. Research cited demonstrates that achievement gaps exist between students of color and white students; where students of color have disproportionately high levels of disengagement from school, chronic absenteeism, and suspension. The proposed intervention of restorative practices as a means to address the academic struggles will be effective in creating racial equity in reference to discipline issues.
2. The proposed project involves promising new strategies that build on theoretical basis and practical skills to create greater school connectedness and an opportunity to transform the relationship that educational systems have with students of color and of low socioeconomic status.
3. The proposed project demonstrates a rationale (as defined in the NIA) through the actions that support key operational goals of the project outlined in the logic model and in the activities and outcomes are clearly linked to goals. The positive impact on primary objectives begins to appear after the second year of implementation.
4. The proposed project presents an exceptional approach to the priorities established in that the applicant has piloted the restorative practice at two school sites with a 30 – 60% reduction in suspensions. The applicant is also collaborating with other projects that have provided data and supports for additional equity-focused strategies.

### Weaknesses:

No weakness found

Reader's Score: 30

### Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Design and Management Plan

1. In determining the quality of the proposed project design, 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 extent to which performance feedback and continuous improvement are integral to the design of the proposed project.**

**(4) The mechanisms the applicant will use to broadly disseminate information on its project so as to support further development or replication.**

**Strengths:**

1. The goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the applicant are clearly specified and are found on page 12. The activities allow for more rigorous assessment of outcomes achieved for the current pilot sites and funding would support the additional data collection. Key factors related to the implementation of the intervention follow a measurable path.
2. The applicant's management plan to achieve the objectives on time is described in detail on page 15 – 17 and identifies an implementation plan that provides multiple practices implemented.
3. The performance feedback and continuous improvement are operationalized by ensuring that all data are quickly assessed and returned to primary stakeholders for interpretation and action as needed. Monthly meetings, regular communication, reflective assessments, student and teacher surveys will all inform the process of continuous improvement.
4. The applicant will broadly disseminate information on its project through annual reports, and sharing knowledge and experiences with both peer-reviewed and practice audiences locally, regionally, and nationally. The applicant also demonstrated a communications and dissemination plan on page 19, Table 3 that outlined other activities.

**Weaknesses:**

No weakness found

**Reader's Score: 50**

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