
Recruitment and Partnership Strategies—IES CRT Institute

Kylie S. Flynn

Lead Senior Research Scientist

WestEd

Suggested Norms

- Please remain with your group
- Be fully present while caring for yourself
 - stand and stretch or use restroom as needed
 - consider closing laptops
- Actively listen
- Engage in participation
 - ask questions at any time

Agenda

- 1. Getting to know each other (20 mins)**
- 2. Approaches to engaging LEAs in research (20 mins)**
- 3. Recruitment as science—adapting study design based on recruiting process (20 mins)**
 - Discussion—does your design present any potential recruitment challenges?
- 4. Developing a recruitment plan (1 hour)**
 - Group Lab #1—developing a recruitment plan
- 5. Writing and securing letters of support (1 hour)**
- 6. Recruitment strategies after funding (1 hour)**
 - Group Lab #2—drafting a letter of support

Disclosure: Current Federal Landscape

This presentation focuses primarily on federal research grants, but the content can be generalized to other funders

Considerations for the future of educational research

- Implementation studies
- Continuous improvement and improvement science
- Research practice partnerships
- The use of research evidence and evidence-based decision making

*Additional reading recommendation: [Studying the Use of Research Evidence: A Review of Methods](#)

Getting to know each other

About me

Former special education and early childhood teacher

Researcher

Lead the recruitment for

- three EIR projects (two mid-phase and expansion-phase)
- five IES efficacy studies

Including

- over 100 LEAs
- more than 500 schools/sites
- over 750 teachers/classrooms

Have also experienced

- districts pulling out in 3 out of the 5 studies
- teachers pulling out in all 5 of the studies
- experienced temporary school closures due to fires, teacher strikes, and the pandemic

Tell me about
your group
proposals?



Who has done recruitment for a large scale RCT or evaluation?

Have you personally participated in recruiting for a funded project? Did you enjoy it?

Who should be on the recruitment team?

- former or current practitioners
- research staff who reflect the community/target sample racially, culturally, linguistically, etc.
- project leads who understand the study design and the setting context
- the “people-people”

How to engage LEAs

Three approaches to engaging LEAs in research

1. Form a research-practice partnership with an LEA and seek funding jointly—ideal
2. Seek funding based on experiences or prior collaborations with input from LEAs—pretty good
3. Seek funding based on your expertise/interest and beg LEAs to join—most common

The Partnership Approach

Research–Practice Partnerships

- Long-term collaborations
- Work toward educational improvement or equitable transformation
- Feature engagement with research as a leading activity.
- Intentionally organized to bring together a diversity of expertise.
- They employ strategies to shift power relations in research endeavors to ensure that all participants have a say.

Farrell, et al., 2021



Example of partnership: *Creating Equitable Educator Practices and Improved Discipline Outcomes for Black Students in San Francisco Unified School District*

**Funded via Regional Education Lab (REL) West FY 2022—
Kylie Flynn, Partnership Lead, Jason Snipes, Partnership Co-Lead**



WestEd–San Francisco USD Partnership

1. **Long-term collaborations** initiated by the district via a request for a WestEd liaison—not connected to a particular project
 2. focus on **equitable transformation and educational improvement** - disproportionality in suspensions
 3. **research activities centered** based on district need – REL West project
 4. **a diversity of expertise** by securing shareholder buy-in at all levels of district organization
- **strategies to shift power relations in research** by including all voices—students, parents, teachers, school and district leaders



Three Types of RPPs

- 1. Research Alliance**—a long-term partnership between a district and an independent research organization focused on investigating questions of policy and practice that are central to the district
 - **District-focused research alliances** (e.g., [Consortium on Chicago School Research](#), [Regional Education Labs](#))
 - **Cross-sector research alliances** (e.g., [Gardner Center at Stanford](#), [Center to Improve SEL and School Safety at WestEd](#))
- 2. Design Research**—builds and studies solutions at the same time in real world contexts (e.g., UW–Bellevue Schools)
- 3. Networked Improvement Communities (NICs)**—groups engaged in collective pursuits to improve a capability (e.g., [Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching](#))

Coburn, et al., 2013

Recruitment in the partnership approach

Benefits to the approach

- by focusing on a district need, shareholder buy-in is built into the partnership development process (although not guaranteed at all levels)

Challenges to the approach (from a recruitment perspective)

- It takes time!
- How to fund the partnership development without a currently awarded project?

TIP:

Build long-term relationships and partnerships in one project that can be carried through to subsequent proposals and projects!



Are any of you engaged in research—practice partnerships?



The Collaborative Approach

- Researchers leverage their content expertise—as well as *their understanding of the local context*—based on prior experiences or collaborations with a given LEA
- Not necessarily long-term; driven by research tailored to the local context/needs
- In this approach, researchers typically reach out to LEAs for three purposes:
 1. Their input into the content of the proposal and how it aligns to their needs (e.g., district data, district research priorities)
 2. A letter of support during the proposal phase
 3. Participation after funding is secured—hopefully, this is more reliable based on #1 because they have an investment in getting the grant funded

Example project: *Continuous Improvement of a What Works Clearinghouse Rated Early Mathematics Intervention*

**Funded Continuous Improvement Research in Education grant (CFDA 84.305H) FY 2015—
Prentice Starkey, PI, Kylie Flynn, Co-PI, Alice Klein, Co-PI**

Continuous Improvement Project

- **We went back to LEAs that had participated in one of our two prior RCTs—an EIR mid-phase project and an IES efficacy study**
 - All participating teachers had been trained as a treatment teacher or a waitlist-control teacher
- **We asked them to what extent teachers were sustaining their implementation of *Pre-K Mathematics***
 - Reported that implementation varied widely—from those who continued to implement as trained to those who no longer implemented at all
- **We solicited their interest in engaging in a continuous improvement process to sustain and improve upon their ongoing implementation**
 - LEA administrators served as Co-PIs, provided relevant data and information about their local context, letters of agreement, and biographical sketches while receiving a \$5,000 stipend for their time in collecting fidelity data (WestEd led the proposal effort)
- **Important distinction: We weren't just going back to them to recruit them for a different project. We were building on a prior collaboration to engage them in a new way around the same work.**

Have any of you collaborated with the same LEA more than once? How did the nature of the research develop or change?

The Expertise Approach

- **Researchers leverage their content expertise, along with their understanding of the educational landscape to secure grant or contract funding**
- **In this approach, researchers typically reach out to LEAs for two purposes:**
 1. A letter of support during the proposal phase
 2. Participation after funding is secured

The Expertise Approach—Example Projects

1. ***National Replication Study of the Effects of Self-Affirmation on Black and Latinx Students' Academic, Disciplinary, and Socio-Emotional Outcomes in Different School Settings.*** Funded Systematic Replication (84.305R) research grant FY 2022—Jason Snipes, PI, Kylie Flynn, Co-PI, Geoffrey Borman, Co-PI (Beth Tipton)
2. ***Systematic Replication of preK Mathematics Tutorial: The Effect of Variation in the Intervention Delivery Model on Mathematics Achievement of At-Risk Preschool Children.*** Funded Systematic Replication (84.305R) research grant FY 2020—Kylie Flynn, PI, Alice Klein, Co-PI, Prentice Starkey, Co-PI, Marcia Barnes, Co-PI
3. ***The Early Math Initiative: Scaling an Innovative Intervention to Prepare Children for Elementary School Mathematics.*** Funded EIR Expansion Phase research grant FY 2018—Prentice Starkey, PI, Alice Klein, Co-PI, Kylie Flynn, Co-PI, Beth Tipton, Sampling Statistician
4. ***Efficacy Study of Adventures Aboard the S.S. GRIN: Social, Emotional, and Academic Skills.*** Funded Efficacy (R305A) research grant FY 2018—Linlin Li, PI, Kylie Flynn, Co-PI, Melissa DeRosier, Co-PI and developer
5. ***Word Learning Strategies: A Program for Upper-Elementary Readers.*** Funded Efficacy (R205A) research grant FY 2015—Cathy Ringstaff, PI, Linlin Li, Co-PI, Kylie Flynn, Co-PI (Michael Graeves, developer)

Recruitment as science—adapting study designs based on the recruiting process

Recruitment as science

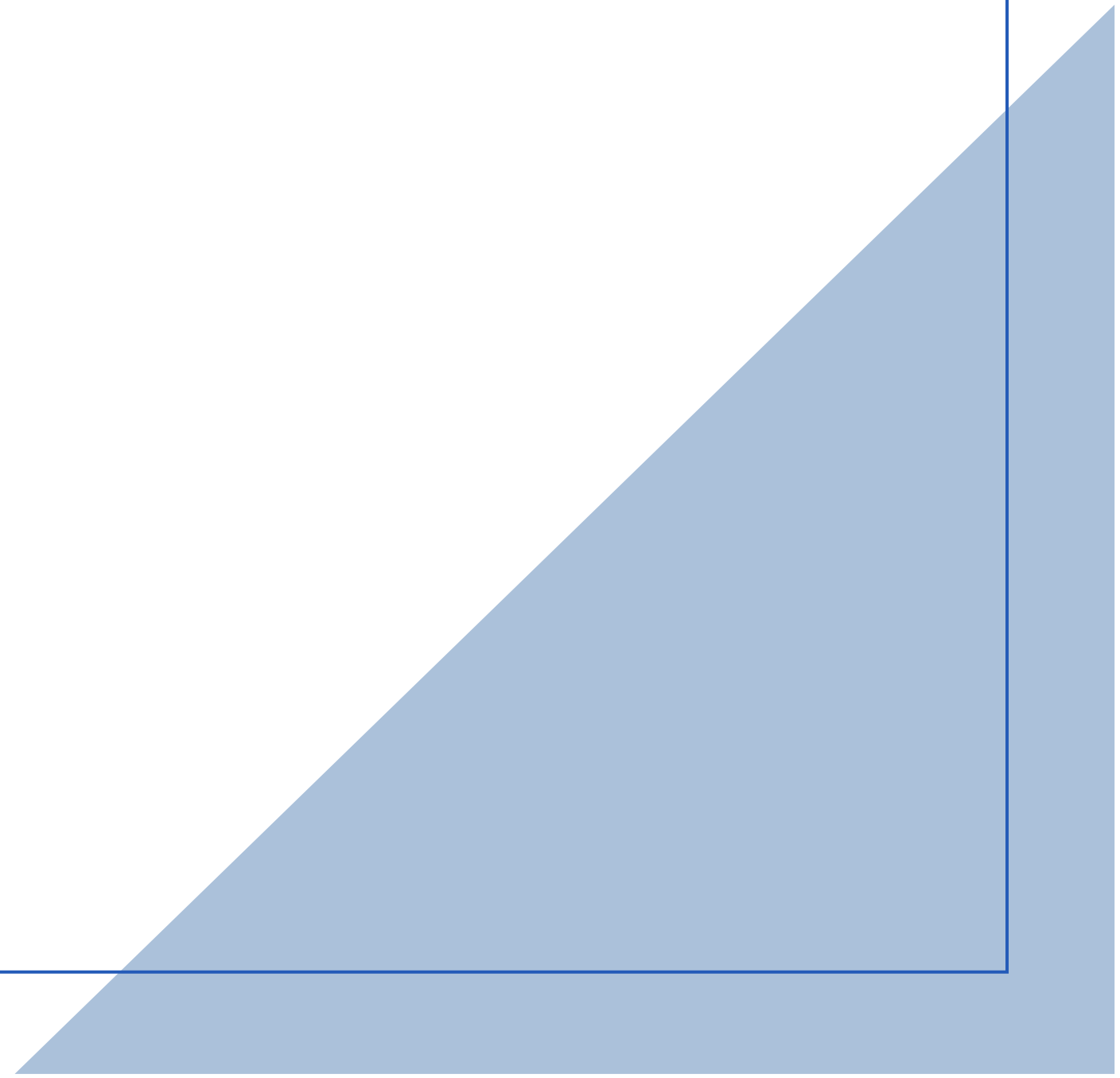
The project begins *during* the recruitment phase, not *after* it.

It's an opportunity to learn from practitioners about what is feasible.

What do we do when LEAs aren't interested in participating?



**Consider how the design
and methods might
impact recruitment.**



Word Learning Strategies: A Program for Upper-Elementary Readers. Funded Efficacy (R205A) research grant FY 2015—
Cathy Ringstaff, PI, Linlin Li, Co-PI, Kylie Flynn, Co-PI

Funded Design was an RCT to determine the efficacy of the *Word Learning Strategies* curriculum at 4th grade:

- **Classrooms were the unit of random assignment and teachers would maintain condition for two years**
- **Second cohort of students would be the analytic sample**
- **Rationale was that teachers would implement better during the second year**



Design change

When we started recruiting, teachers were unwilling to be waitlisted for two years.

- **We switched to a multiple-cohort design with only one year of implementation**
- **This also addressed the new WWC standard related to joiners**

Efficacy Study of Adventures Aboard the S.S. GRIN: Social, Emotional, and Academic Skills. Funded Efficacy (R305A) research grant FY 2018—Linlin Li, PI, Kylie Flynn, Co-PI, Melissa DeRosier, Co-PI

Funded Design was an RCT to determine the efficacy of the *Adventures Aboard the S.S. GRIN* online game at 3rd grade:

- **Schools were the unit of random assignment**
- **Only students who were screened as at-risk for social skills challenges would receive the intervention**
- **Counselors would implement the Tier 2 intervention outside of the classroom**



Design change

When we started recruiting, district administrators indicated that it would be difficult to provide the staffing and space to implement.

- **Requested that we allow the classroom teachers to implement with all students**
- **After piloting both implementation models, we agreed to have teachers implement with the entire class**
- **We also changed the unit of random assignment to the classroom**

Systematic Replication of Pre-K Mathematics Tutorial: The Effect of Variation in the Intervention Delivery Model on Mathematics Achievement of At-Risk Preschool Children. Funded Systematic Replication (84.305R) research grant FY 2020—Kylie Flynn, PI, Alice Klein, Co-PI, Prentice Starkey, Co-PI, Marcia Barnes, Co-PI

Funded Design was an RCT to determine the efficacy of the *Pre-K Mathematics Tutorial* intervention in prekindergarten in two different implementation models:

- 1. The pullout model where WestEd staff provide tutoring outside of the classroom**
- 2. The in-class model where teaching staff provide tutoring in the classroom**



Systematic Replication of Pre-K Mathematics Tutorial: The Effect of Variation in the Intervention Delivery Model on Mathematics Achievement of At-Risk Preschool Children (continued)

In the three-arm design, where classrooms would be randomly assigned to the pullout model, the in-class model, or Business As Usual (BAU)

- teachers in the in-class model would participate in four days of PD workshops and receive 12 coaching visits and**
- teachers and tutors in both groups would implement with pairs of children identified as at-risk in mathematics (up to two pairs per class) every day for 15 minutes per session.**



Design change

We successfully recruited five programs for participation with ~60 teachers consenting to participate in the 2021/22 school year.

In August, four of the five programs pulled out due to the Delta variant.

We proceeded with the one program but could only include 15 classrooms due to low enrollment.

Although we completed the year, 14 out of the 15 classrooms closed for one to two weeks due to the Omicron variant.

As we began recruiting for the following year, administrators and teachers were very interested but expressed concerns about staffing shortages and teacher burnout.

Design change (continued)

We met with the NCSEER Commissioner and our Program Officer to propose a new design.

To reduce the burden to teachers for the coming school year, we dropped the three-arm design and changed to two sequential RCTs.

- 2022/23—randomly assign classrooms to the pullout model or BAU
- 2023/24—re-randomize the same classrooms to the in-class model or BAU
- Lose the direct comparison between the pullout and in-class models
- Allow programs to recover from the pandemic while still providing high-quality instruction

To avoid having to make changes to studies based on recruitment challenges, plan your design with recruitment in mind.



Developing a Recruitment Plan

Although a strong recruitment plan won't "make" your proposal, the lack of one could "break" it.

Preparing your proposal

From the “Sample and Setting” section of IES NCER RFA 84.305R

- Detail the procedure used to **recruit** a specific sample of learners, schools, or districts that represents a target population in need of the proposed intervention.
- Describe the sample **recruitment procedure** used to ensure similarity between the sample and target population.
- Discuss how the settings included in the research (as reflected in the **letters of agreement**) are representative of your target population.
- Describe strategies to increase the likelihood that participants (e.g., schools, educators, and/or learners) will join the study and **remain in the study** over the course of the evaluation.

Addressing recruitment in the sample and setting sections

Describe the inference population and sampling plan; consider using the Generalizer Software (Tipton and Miller, 2021)

Describe the sample of schools, teachers, and/or students, including relevant data to justify their selection (i.e., make the case this is the appropriate population)

- Be detailed and specific about the districts providing letters of support. You must demonstrate that you understand the local context.

Include a “Sample Retention” section

- Give concrete examples of how you will retain your sample; include past experiences if possible and relevant

Address recruitment directly

Address recruitment directly

- Note any evidence that the district agrees the project addresses a need for them (e.g., through district data, research priorities) and highlight this in the letters of support
- How many schools/teachers/students do your district letters of support represent? Is this sufficient for your needed power? If so, highlight that. If not, describe your plan for recruiting additional districts/schools.
- Highlight any existing relationships you have with the districts
- Highlight your recruitment track record and/or recruitment strategies that have worked for you in the past (e.g., successful recruitment of previous IES projects, leveraging partnerships with networks, access to large databases of principals or teachers)

Preparing your proposal

From the “Resources” section of RFA 84.324X (NCSEER Pandemic Recovery)

Describe the **nature of the involvement of or partnerships with education agencies** to carry out the proposed work.

Describe your access to the settings in which the research will take place and any necessary data.

From the “Resources” section of RFA 84.305R (NCER Replication)

Describe your access to the settings in which the research will take place. Include letters of agreement documenting their participation and cooperation. **Convincing letters convey that the organizations understand what their participation in the study will involve**, such as random assignment, surveys, assessments, and classroom observations.

Include information about **incentives** for participation, if applicable.

Addressing Recruitment in the Resources Section

- **Note the capacity of the LEA to carry out the research**
- **Provide the amounts of any stipends or honoraria**
- **Note the number of schools/classrooms available from the LEAs that provided letters of support**
- **Describe any additional recruitment that may be needed and strategies that you'll employ to do so**
- **Describe your institution's capacity and track record for successfully recruiting**
 - Demonstrate that you have ample time and resources (staff, budget) for recruiting





Example Recruitment Plans

From Winning Proposals

National Replication Study of the Effects of Self-Affirmation on Black and Latinx Students' Academic, Disciplinary and Socio-emotional Outcomes in Different School Settings. Funded Systematic Replication (84.305R) research grant FY 2022—Jason Snipes, PI, Kylie Flynn, Co-PI, Geoffrey Borman, Co-PI

Recruitment Plan

- We have received nine letters of support representing 13 districts with a total of 159 schools across CA, FL, NC, NV, NY, and VA.
- Based on our power analyses, this is more than enough schools for RCTs 2–4, but we will have to recruit additional districts/schools for RCT #1.
- We should have ample time for this recruitment effort in year 1 of the study.
- WestEd has a long history of working closely with school districts for large-scale studies. Dr. Flynn, the recruitment lead, has done so for seven prior large scale intervention studies.

National Replication Study of the Effects of Self-Affirmation on Black and Latinx Students' Academic, Disciplinary and Socio-emotional Outcomes in Different School Settings. Funded Systematic Replication (84.305R) research grant FY 2022—Jason Snipes, PI, Kylie Flynn, Co-PI, Geoffrey Borman, Co-PI

Resources

- We plan to provide **generous incentives** of \$1,500 per year to each district for data extraction, \$300 in years 2–4 to the school liaisons for collecting and shipping the student writing responses and \$200 in years 2–3 for teachers.
- **Even though the districts have more than 100 schools serving the middle grades**, we will recruit additional schools from districts with more Black students as needed.
- This proposal team has worked directly with hundreds of local and state educational agencies over the past decade on multiple large-scale studies. Due to the nature of these collaborative relationships, WestEd has developed highly successful recruitment strategies that include networking through existing partnerships.
- WestEd also has an expansive communications system to target new partnerships, including databases of thousands of principal contacts and tens of thousands of teacher contacts throughout the country. We are confident in our ability to successfully recruit for this project as we have with all of our prior IES projects.

Systematic Replication of preK Mathematics Tutorial: The Effect of Variation in the Intervention Delivery Model on Mathematics Achievement of At-Risk Preschool Children. Funded Systematic Replication (84.305R) research grant FY 2020—Kylie Flynn, PI, Alice Klein, Co-PI, Prentice Starkey, Co-PI, Marcia Barnes, Co-PI

Sample and Setting

- Comparable with the original study, we have recruited a program of the same setting (i.e., state funded preK), same urbanicity type (i.e., urban) and with similar demographics as the sample children in the original study.
- San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD), our partner for the proposed study, is a large urban state funded preK program with more than 130 preK classrooms.
- Latinx is the largest ethnic group for both the original sample and the proposed sample pool at 70%.
- Although there may be some slight variation in a few of the other racial/ethnic groups, we are confident that our sample will not differ meaningfully from the original sample.

Systematic Replication of preK Mathematics Tutorial: The Effect of Variation in the Intervention Delivery Model on Mathematics Achievement of At-Risk Preschool Children. Funded Systematic Replication (84.305R) research grant FY 2020—Kylie Flynn, PI, Alice Klein, Co-PI, Prentice Starkey, Co-PI, Marcia Barnes, Co-PI

Sample Retention

- To minimize the likelihood of participant attrition, we will work closely with teachers and district administrators **during the recruitment process** to establish a partnership and shared understanding of the project activities.
- We will develop a memorandum of understanding and data-sharing agreement with our participating district.
- Teaching staff will be provided **stipends for their time in participating in research activities**.
- Regular check-ins with district administration and on-site support visits will keep our participants engaged throughout the entire study.

Systematic Replication of preK Mathematics Tutorial: The Effect of Variation in the Intervention Delivery Model on Mathematics Achievement of At-Risk Preschool Children. Funded Systematic Replication (84.305R) research grant FY 2020—Kylie Flynn, PI, Alice Klein, Co-PI, Prentice Starkey, Co-PI, Marcia Barnes, Co-PI

Resources

- SDUSD, our district partner, is a large urban school district with an ambitious research and evaluation department.
- Both SDUSD and WestEd recently participated in an **IES-funded Continuous Improvement** grants. This bodes well for our combined capacity to carry out the proposed activities in this project.
- We plan to provide incentives of **\$1,000** for teachers participating in the in-class condition and **\$800** for teachers.
- Even though the district has **more than 120 classrooms**, we will recruit more classrooms from a similar program if need be.

The Early Math Initiative: Scaling an Innovative Intervention to Prepare Children for Elementary School Mathematics. Funded EIR Expansion Phase research grant FY 2018—Prentice Starkey, PI, Alice Klein, Co-PI, Kylie Flynn

Participant retention

- To address LEA and teacher retention, the WestEd team will draw on experience from our IES Continuous Improvement Education Grant (Starkey et al., 2015) to keep LEAs engaged over multiple years of the study and to help them develop and use a sustainable model of implementation based on their respective local needs.
- Through classroom coaching visits and use of a continuous improvement process, which will include **monthly check-ins** with program directors, biannual site visits by senior researchers, and reviewing of progress monitoring data, LEAs will be assisted with scaling in their implementation and, in doing so, will usually develop a sense of ownership of the intervention.
- Since we have successfully implemented the *preK Mathematics* intervention in multiple projects, it has a **highly developed and feasible implementation model**, including teacher workshops, in-class coaching, and trainers' institutes, and easily used instruments for measuring implementation. This planning and experience will facilitate retention of teacher participants, ensure high-quality implementation, and facilitate sustainability.

The Early Math Initiative: Scaling an Innovative Intervention to Prepare Children for Elementary School Mathematics. Funded EIR Expansion Phase research grant FY 2018—Prentice Starkey, PI, Alice Klein, Co-PI, Kylie Flynn

Shareholder Support

- Within a short one-month timeframe, we have obtained **letters of support from 16 agencies that represent nearly 200,000 high needs preschool children.**
- We were able to establish support in our targeted regional locales at the regional, state, and local levels from both Head Start and state preschool programs.
- This bodes extremely well for our capacity to establish regional training centers in these targeted areas. [Included summary of the number of programs and preschoolers that these agencies represented by region.]
- **This demonstrates broad recognition of the need for expansion of this project and our ability to recruit within the parameters of our sampling plan.**

Group Lab #1—Develop a Recruitment Plan for your Group Proposal

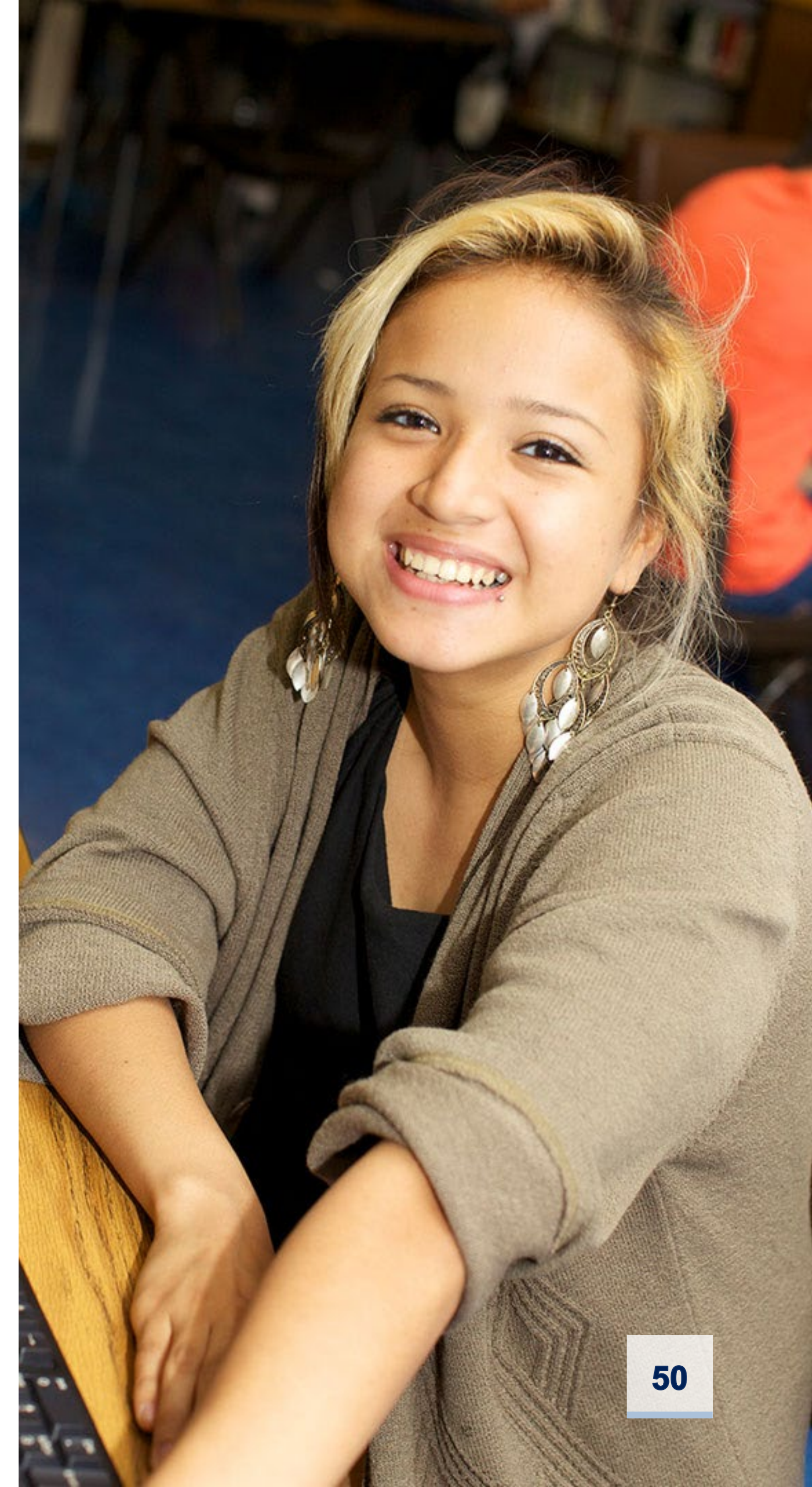
Create 3 slides for your proposal presentation:

1. **sample and setting**—describe the local context and address your recruitment plan
2. **sample retention**—describe incentives and how to keep partners engaged
3. **resources**—describe the LEAs' capacity and your ability to recruit as needed

Writing and securing letters of support

From the “Resources” section of RFA 84.305R (NCER Replication)

Convincing letters convey that the organizations understand what their participation in the study will involve, such as random assignment, surveys, assessments, and classroom observations.



Convincing letters

- **Include district information about their needs**
 - local data that demonstrates the district's need for participation
 - description of related research priorities that the district is initiating
- **Describe the district's capacity**
 - research and evaluation department
 - experience providing data
 - grant coordinator

Sample Language from Letters of Support

From winning proposals

National Replication Study of the Effects of Self-Affirmation on Black and Latinx Students' Academic, Disciplinary and Socio-Emotional Outcomes in Different School Settings

Example of demonstrating understanding:

- Hillsborough County Public Schools understands, in each participating school, you will **randomly assign students** to either participate in the self-affirmation writing exercises or a similar set of exercises that do not address self-affirmation. Neither students nor their teachers will be aware of their treatment status.
- Though the intervention involves minimal training and almost no cost, we believe that the **\$200 stipend provided to teachers** will be helpful in securing their participation in the study.
- We appreciate the **\$4,000 stipend to the district** for our time in providing student data.

National Replication Study of the Effects of Self-Affirmation on Black and Latinx Students' Academic, Disciplinary and Socio-Emotional Outcomes in Different School Settings

Example of demonstrating benefits to the district:

- We believe your study will provide valuable information regarding the types of schools that could benefit most from the self-affirmation intervention.
- We appreciate that your study will identify the effects of self-affirmation on Black and Latinx middle school students' academic, socioemotional, and behavioral outcomes in the context of schools with varying racial composition.
- This is useful and actionable information, and this project is highly aligned with HCPS' goals around equity and the reduction of racial achievement gaps.

Systematic Replication of preK Mathematics Tutorial: The Effect of Variation in the Intervention Delivery Model on Mathematics Achievement of At-Risk Preschool Children

Example of demonstrating understanding:

- We understand that you will use **random assignment** to determine which classrooms will use the “pullout” model, the “in-class” model, or conduct business-as-usual (BAU).
- We also know that our teaching staff assigned to the “in-class” model **will receive PD and coaching support** throughout the randomized controlled trial (RCT).
- The **incentives** that you will provide **to the teaching staff in the “in-class” group (\$1,000), the BAU and pullout groups (\$300), as well as the teaching staff who participate in the continuous improvement process (\$700)** will be helpful in securing their commitment.

Systematic Replication of preK Mathematics Tutorial: The Effect of Variation in the Intervention Delivery Model on Mathematics Achievement of At-Risk Preschool Children

Example of demonstrating benefits to the district:

- This [project] is highly important to us as we are currently unable to consistently implement Tier 2 interventions in our prekindergarten classrooms due to staffing and scheduling challenges.
- We appreciate that you will invite the teaching staff from all three groups to participate in a continuous improvement process following the RCT.
- This will give us the opportunity to adapt the delivery model to improve and sustain our practices for effective Tier 2 implementation.

Efficacy Study of Adventures Aboard the S.S. GRIN: Social, Emotional, and Academic Skills

Example of demonstrating understanding:

- If funded, **we are committed** to recruit 3rd grade students, teachers, and school counselors or another appropriate staff member (e.g., interventionist, resource specialist) in our district; establish memorandums of understanding, provide student demographic and state standardized test data, and collaborate with researchers to fulfill the study requirements.
- **We understand that participating students** will be pulled out of the regular education classroom to work with their school counselors (or other staff member) for 35–45 minutes each week for 9 weeks.
- The “Adventures Aboard the SS Grin” intervention and **any related teacher professional development will be provided free to the classrooms in the treatment group during the study and to the control group at the end of the study.**

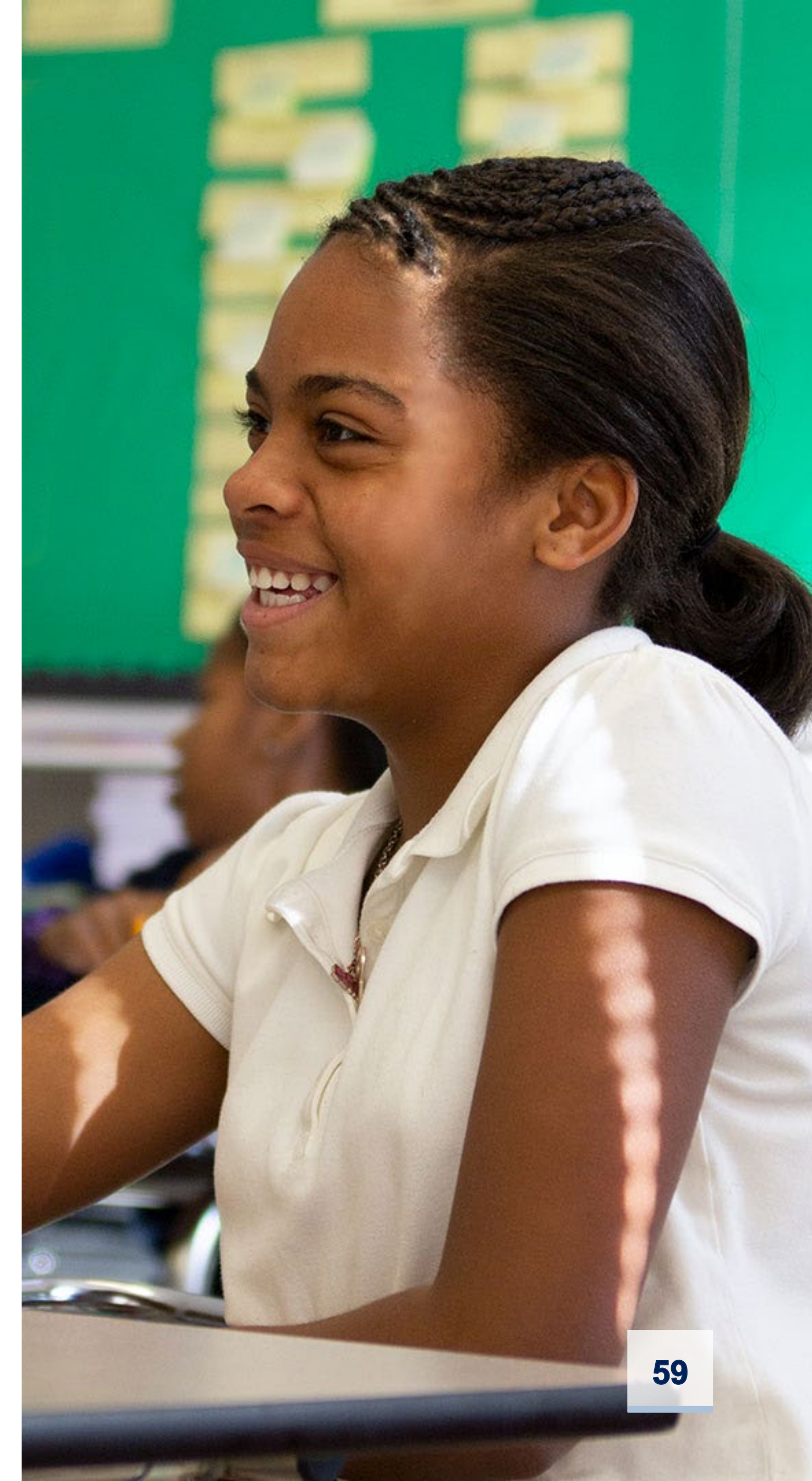
Efficacy Study of Adventures Aboard the S.S. GRIN: Social, Emotional, and Academic Skills

Example of demonstrating benefits to the district and describing relevant initiatives:

- The “Adventures Aboard the SS Grin” intervention truly compliments our work, and we are excited for the opportunity to participate in this proposed IES study.
- Rialto School District is in its fourth year of implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) and is one of two districts in San Bernardino County with 100% of our schools implementing the framework.
- In addition, RUSD is moving forward with implementation of Restorative Practices/Justice.
- We believe the study that you are proposing is right in line with our vision of better supporting the social/emotional/behavioral needs of our students.

Securing Letters of Support

- **Even before the RFA comes out, prime some existing district partners to gauge their willingness to provide a letter**
- **Once the RFA is released, prioritize getting a template letter drafted:**
 - It should really be one of the first things you do
 - This means making decisions about the study design and stipends quickly





Securing Letters of Support

- **For districts that you don't know, use colleagues that have connections:**
 - colleagues internal to your institution
 - colleagues from a collaborating institution
- **Consider other organizations with direct connections to LEAs for introductions:**
 - Head Start associations
 - research networks or consortium

Securing Letters of Support

Make things as easy as possible for the LEA:

- **Let them know that the letter does not obligate them to participate**
- **Provide a template letter with highlighted sections for them to complete**
 - Consider gathering vital information from them via email and putting it in the letter for them
- **Let them know when you need the letter by giving yourself a buffer**
- **Assign someone to continue to follow up with them**
- **If you must provide updated letters, make the changes for them and ask them to approve via email**



Recruitment strategies after funding is received



Recruiting steps

1. **Notify districts that provided letters of support to determine those that are willing to move forward**
2. **Develop and secure IRB approval of recruitment materials (e.g., email language, handouts, MOUs)**
3. **Expand outreach to additional districts as needed**
4. **Recruit and consent teachers**

1. Notify districts

- **Notify districts that provided a letter of support as soon as funding is secure**
- **Schedule meetings with appropriate administrators to gauge their interest in moving forward**
 - Let them know MOU will be forthcoming
- **Determine how many additional districts may be needed**

2. Develop recruiting materials

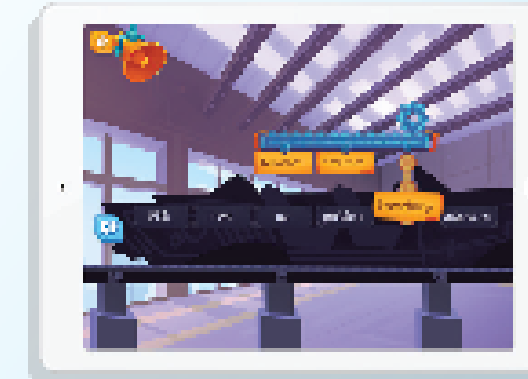


Draft and secure IRB approval for the following materials:

- MOU
- outreach email language for administrators and teachers
- recruitment flyer(s) for district administrators and teachers
- an intake survey for teacher
- teacher consent form

Guidelines for recruitment materials

- engaging and visually appealing
- minimize text
- include need-to-know information
 - who
 - what
 - where/when
- benefits to participation
- call to action
 - link to project page or intake survey
 - relevant contact information



Research Study 2019–2020

Scholastic W.O.R.D. (Words Open Reading Doors) is a personalized digital learning program that helps students build knowledge and vocabulary through learning the 2,500 morphological word families that make up 90% of all texts. Grounded in Dr. Elfrieda (Freddy) Hiebert's research, the program uses engaging activities and thematic reading passages across subject matters to expose students to high-utility words and their meanings in multiple contexts, while encouraging deep comprehension.

RESEARCH DETAILS

Who:

3rd grade classrooms

When:

November 2019–May 2020

Benefits:

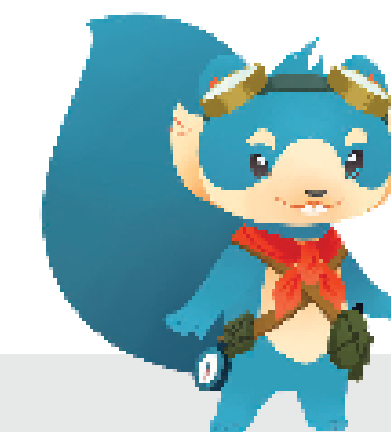
- There's no cost to participate.
- Participating teachers will receive \$250 (control group) or \$500 (treatment group) stipends for completing all study activities.
- Participating schools will receive free access to *W.O.R.D.* during the 2020–2021 academic year.

What:

- Half of the participating classes will be randomly selected to use *Scholastic W.O.R.D.* during the study (treatment group).
 - 12–15 weeks of implementation
 - 20-minute sessions, 3 sessions/week
- The other half of the participating classrooms will be randomly selected to continue business as usual and receive access to *W.O.R.D.* later (control group).
- All participating students will take one online assessment administered by the teacher at the beginning and end of the study.
- All participating teachers will be asked to participate in a brief online project orientation, complete surveys, and support a few research related tasks (e.g., send home parent opt-out letters, etc.).
- All teachers in the treatment group will participate in professional learning and classroom observations. A subgroup will also participate in interviews or focus groups to share feedback.
- Teachers in the control group will receive the same resources and supports teachers in the treatment group received during 2020–2021.

For more information, contact:

- Drs. Dennis Ciancio and Kylie Flynn at WestEd at wordscholastic@wested.org
- Yelee Jo at Scholastic at 212-343-7523 or yjo@scholastic.com



WestEd's Social Skills Training Study

WestEd is studying a personalized digital learning program that helps students build social emotional learning skills and confidence. Developed from prior evidence by Dr. Melissa DeRosier of 3C Institute, students are guided by characters that represent critical social and emotional skills, including exhibiting respect, thinking ahead, stopping to think, communicating well, checking out assumptions, building friendship, and cooperating. Students get in-the-moment feedback during practice activities and achievements, and mini-goals keep kids engaged and motivated.



1. Respect



2. Thinking Ahead



3. Stop & Think



4. Communication



5. Check It Out



6. Building Friendship



7. Cooperation



8. Common Regulation

Research Study Details

Who

3rd Grade Classrooms

When

November 2020 – May 2021

Benefits

- No cost to participate
- Participating treatment and control teachers will receive \$1,000 and \$710 respectively.
- Participating schools will receive the program during the 2021-2022 academic year
- Students will receive evidence-based instruction in critical SEL skills
- Teachers will have access to data and resources to support students' SEL development

What

- Half of the participating classes will be randomly selected to use the social skills program during the study (treatment group).
 - Implement 9 episodes over 11 weeks
 - One 40-minute session per week or two 20-minute sessions per week
- The other half of the participating classrooms will be randomly selected to continue teaching as usual and receive access to the program later (control group).
- All participating students will take an online assessment administered by the teacher at the beginning and end of the study.
- All participating teachers will be asked to participate in a brief online project orientation, complete surveys, and support a few research related tasks (e.g., send home parent opt-out letters).
- All teachers in the treatment group will participate in professional learning (1 hour webinar), classroom observations (one time during the study), and interviews to share feedback (one time at end of study).
- Teachers in the control group will receive the same resources and supports teachers as the treatment group received during 2021–2022.

Contact us to learn more:

Dr. Kylie Flynn, Co-Investigator
Senior Research Associate at WestEd
Kflynn2@wested.org C: 850-445-0073

This important research study is funded by the U.S. Department of Education

Developing a project page

prekmath.wested.org/current-projects/the-early-math-initiative/

New Tab

What is EMI?

Pre-K Mathematics

The Early Math Initiative

02:45

WestEd

A national training network and instructional support system for federal or state-funded preschool programs with additional enhancements for learning in the home.

There are two primary goals of the EMI: 1) to scale the implementation of the *Pre-K Mathematics Curriculum* nationally and 2) to develop regional training networks to assist programs with their implementation through a sustainable continuous improvement plan.

Read the research



Want these results in your district?

The math achievement gap narrowed at the end of pre-K and persisting at the end of kindergarten.

Participating students scoring at the national average on mathematics achievement tests at the end of kindergarten.

Pre-K teachers improving their instruction and student performance in mathematics as a result of their participation.

Kindergarten teachers reporting that children mastered 70% of the cluster of the common core math standards for K and partly mastered the remaining clusters.

[Get involved](#)



3. Reach out to additional districts as needed based on your sampling plan

Roschelle, et al., 2014

Top down —direct outreach to decision makers

Pros:

- Build buy-in and secure support from those who can remove barriers to implementation
- Improve sample retention

Cons:

- Time consuming
- Administrators can serve as gatekeepers and prevent access to principals/teachers

Tips:

- To optimize your time, be sure to speak with decision-makers if possible
 - If not, work with a strong district advocate
- To avoid miscommunications, try to get direct access to other shareholders (principals, teachers)

Bottom up — direct outreach to participants

Pros:

- Gives you a better sense of the number of likely participants in each LEA
- Participants can help facilitate communications with decision-makers

Cons:

- District administrators may decline participation (or get upset by outreach to participants)

Tips:

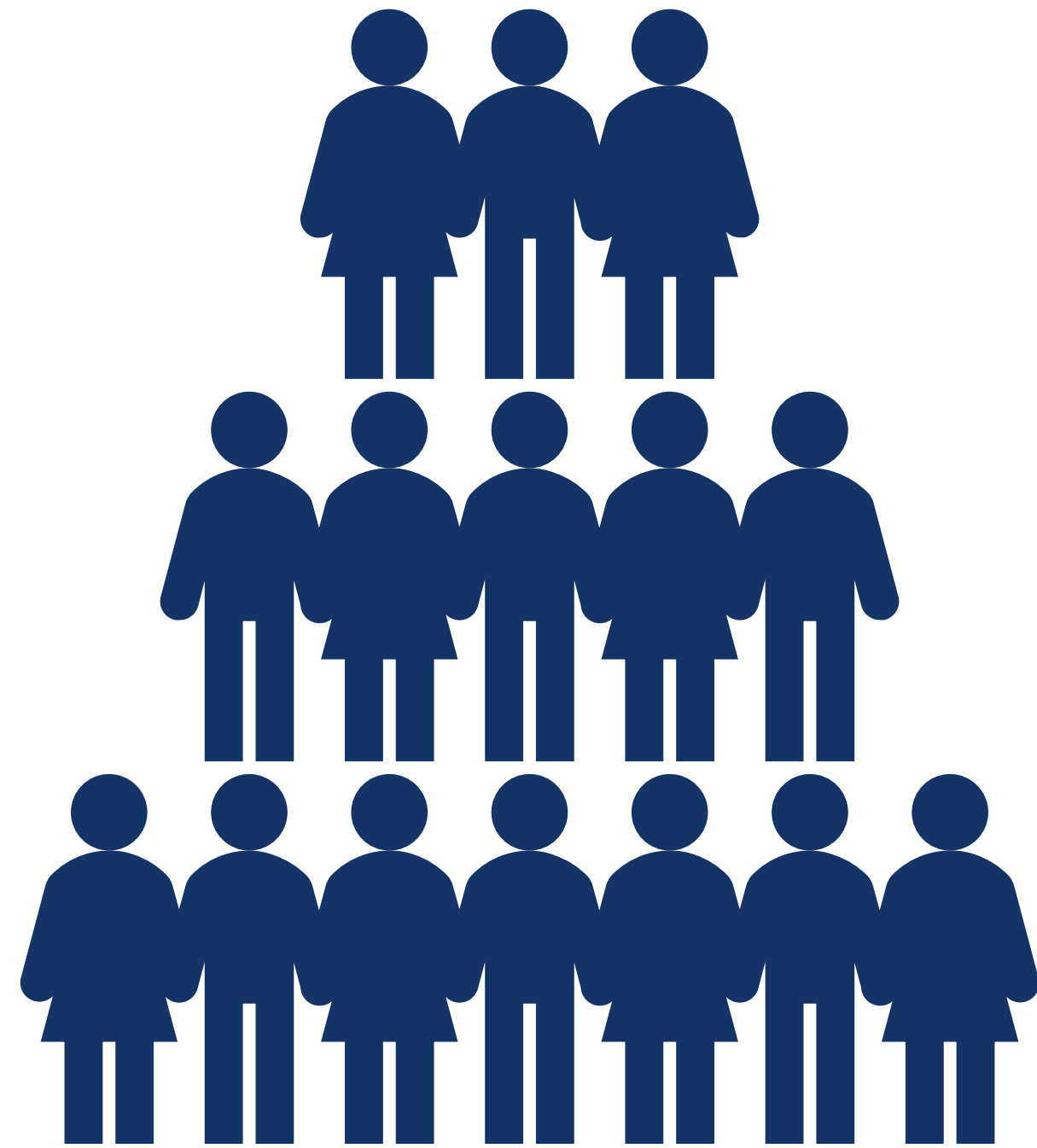
- Mine principal and teacher email addresses from district websites or purchase email databases
- Be clear that you are only gauging interest, and participation must be approved by district

Use both bottom-up and top-down approach



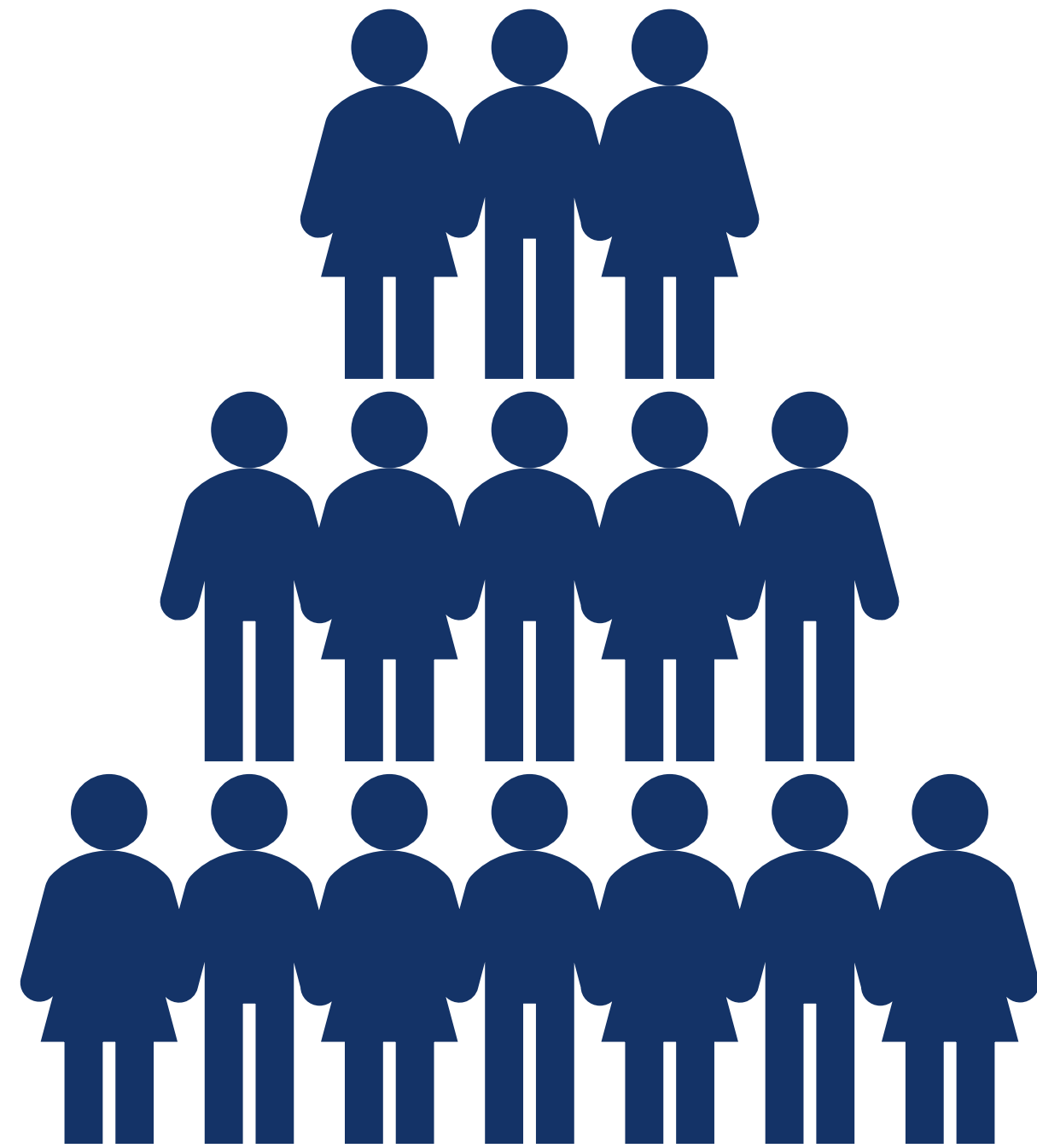
- **Simultaneous outreach to district administration and teaching staff**
- **Look for synergy—teacher response can guide district outreach and vice versa**

Outreach tips



- **Consider recruiting within existing sample pools**
 - Control teachers may be eligible to be randomized (again) into an additional cohort
- **Hold informational webinars**
 - Open invitations for principals/teachers to attend
 - Allows for more personal Q and A
- **Offer incentives to teachers for their help in recruiting their colleagues**
 - May reach out to individual colleagues
 - May attend informational webinars to share their experience (in a multi-cohort design)

Outreach tips



- **If appropriate, go back to districts that participated in prior projects**
- **Leverage existing networks**
 - Eastside Alliance (local)
 - Head Start associations (state, regional)
 - National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships (national)
- **Consider using social media**
 - Might be best for participant-based research (user testing, feasibility studies)

Common Recruitment Challenges

- **Cumbersome district requirements (e.g., research application, active consent)**
 - Before you reach out to a district, make sure you understand what their requirements are and determine if there is sufficient time for the process
 - Document district requirements as part of your sampling/recruitment plan and note districts that you will not reach out to due to their processes
 - Try to get a meeting with a district representative before completing the research application
 - Note: not all districts will agree to this
- **General lack of interest in participating in research, especially RCTs**
 - Be sure to get the appropriate district administrator when scheduling a meeting
 - You can try to build enthusiasm from the content folks
 - Focus on other benefits for participating (e.g., free PD for teachers, free classroom materials)

Common Recruitment Challenges cont...

- **Lack of interest in your intervention**
 - You must make a strong argument that it could be particularly beneficial to a given a district
 - This requires doing some homework on the district to understand their landscape
 - Having an internal connection can really help with this one
- **District barriers around implementation (e.g., releasing teachers for PD, not enough time)**
 - Consider creative problem solving (e.g., use early release days for PD if there are sub shortages; help teachers develop feasible implementation schedules)
- **Others?**

Tracking recruitment progress



Track your outreach to potential districts across sampling strata
Plan to reach out to more districts/sites than you need



Clearly designate who will be or has followed up with particular leads
("Primary Staff Contact" or "Contact Log" or "Sent Initial Email?")



Prioritize specific leads based on your sampling plan
(Tipton & Matlen, 2019)

Tracking recruitment progress

- Track how many times and how often potential leads have been contacted
- Collect phone numbers and **both** school (professional) and summer (personal) emails
 - This is important if your study spans over the summer months or other long breaks.
 - It is best to have their phone but consider leaving this field optional or qualifying with, *“We will only reach you by phone if we cannot reach you over email.”*

Tracking recruitment across sampling strata

- **Within each stratum, prioritize outreach to districts based on the following considerations**
 - locations where we might be able to leverage existing contacts;
 - geographic spread (i.e., proximity to another participating program);
 - accessibility (e.g., within an hour or two of a major airport); and
 - infrastructure—is there a university where we might be able to hire research assistants?
- **Outreach**
 - based on my priorities within each stratum, research assistants send emails (from a project email) and follow up with phone calls
 - tap existing contacts for introductions (colleagues)
 - leverage associations/networks (e.g., Head Start associations)

(Tipton & Matlen, 2019)

[illegible]

4. Recruit and consent teachers

Your recruitment plan should identify the key eligibility requirements, such as

- grade band (6th–8th grade),
- subjects taught (science or engineering),
- technology requirements (must have iPads), geographic region (be in the Bay Area),
- timing of intervention (must use product in the fall), and
- or data-sharing requirements (require NWEA data).

Be thoughtful about your intake questions, both in length and in making sure you are screening correctly for all eligibility requirements.

Securing eligible participants



Distinguish “must have” from “nice-to-have” requirements
(Rank order these requirements and make sure the entire study team is on the same page.)



Put the eligibility requirements into a checklist for easy reference



Include a representative from each phase of the project (e.g., recruitment team member, data team member) when formulating a recruitment plan to ensure the criteria and milestones are aligned and feasible.

Clear communication leads to better retention

Be **upfront** about eligibility requirements with your potential participants.

Glossing over required activities can lead to attrition if participants are surprised by project activities.

You might ask participants to check off a list of study requirements on the consent form before they sign.

Consider a project orientation to provide teachers with opportunities to ask questions before they consent.

Ensure districts will want to work with you again

Build a *partnership*

- within the study and beyond
- think of this as building long-term partnerships

Respond to district *needs*

- become familiar with district priorities and how those align with gaps in the research (*the marriage between what districts need and what the research field needs to know*)
- be aware of district/school processes and potential constraints

Establish *trust*

- follow through on deadlines
- create a practice for sharing project progress, as well as *reporting final findings*

Group Lab #2—Draft a Template Letter of Support for Your Group Proposal

Be sure to include:

1. summary of study details to demonstrate district's understanding
2. benefits to district (e.g., relevant data, incentives)
3. relevant district information (e.g., research priorities, similar initiatives, data that demonstrates needs)



Tell me about your recruitment challenges and successes

Reach out in the future!
kflynn2@wested.org