

Madison Education Partnership - Request for Proposals 2017

Overview

The Madison Education Partnership, a research-practice partnership between Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) and Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD), requests proposals from University faculty, research staff and advanced graduate students to conduct research under this partnership on questions related to the MMSD Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (4K) program. Advanced graduate students may apply only with a faculty member as Principal Investigator. Below we describe the partnership, topic of focus for 2017-18, and details of proposal submission.

Background - Madison Education Partnership

The Madison Education Partnership (MEP) formalizes and extends the existing relationship between UW-Madison and MMSD, building off previous success by creating structures for sustainable collaboration. Through this partnership, researchers and practitioners will work together to generate high-quality research, develop evidence-based interventions and disseminate new knowledge in the district and beyond in order to improve students' educational opportunities and outcomes. Through the MEP structure, supported researchers are provided with financial and technical support and expedited access to the district. Through the coordination of the MEP Steering Committee, Advisory Group, and Directors, the research focus for both internally and externally generated research is determined. For more information about MEP's organization and structure please visit www.mep.wceruw.org.

Request for Proposals: Topic Focus - 4 year old Kindergarten

The MEP Steering Committee has chosen to build upon MEP supported and directed research generated during the 2016-2017 school year, continuing in 2017-2018 to focus on investigating problems of practice and policy for the MMSD 4K program. MEP is seeking proposals to help improve MMSD 4K programming and the understanding of program impacts. The academic research literature in education and the social sciences points to the potentially transformative power of well-designed and implemented 4K programs. The MMSD 4K program has been active for five years and, given the maturity of the program, it is in a prime position to participate in high-quality research programs which could provide the district with a critical understanding of MMSD program design and impact, as well as contribute to a broader knowledge base of 4K programs at-large.

MEP is committed to supporting research that will improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the children the district serves. The MEP team generates research internally through MEP directed work and externally through MEP supported work.

MEP directed work has resulted in research briefs on patterns of student enrollment, and association of 4K participation and Kindergarten literacy and socioemotional skills.

MEP supported work during the 2016-2017 school year has touched on three separate topics. Alejandra Pilarz, School of Social Work, is exploring promising strategies to increase family engagement in 4K and improve student readiness for the transition to Kindergarten. Travis Wright, Counseling Psychology, is investigating the support mechanisms for students experiencing homelessness during the 4K year. Finally, Chuck Kalish and Kristin Shutts, Psychology, are working to develop high quality measurement instruments for use in the assessment of 4K student's interpersonal skills and readiness for transition to 5 year old kindergarten.

This call for proposals is intentionally, broadly focused on 4K problems of policy and practice. We are seeking rigorous and innovative proposals that build on or complement work MEP has already sponsored on this topic. Though this RFP does not limit proposals to specific research concepts, some areas of interest may be:

- *The transition from 4K to 5K* - How do students' experiences with this transition vary across and within schools, 4K sites, and families in MMSD? What variety of practices do early childhood education centers and/or schools engage in to improve the transition? What information, if any, do 5K teachers receive from 4K teachers and how might cross-level communication be improved between schools and early childhood education centers?
- *Family engagement* - How effective is the current family outreach conducted by MMSD? How well does it align with the [family engagement framework](#) outlined by the district? How do parents experience this outreach and do experiences vary by parent race/ethnicity, income or education? Do family engagement practices contribute to enrollment or moderate the impact of program participation on school readiness? Are there avenues of communication the district could pursue to increase parent knowledge, participation and buy in?
- *4K instruction* - What does 4K instruction look like? How does instruction resemble or depart from what the literature suggests are effective practices? How does instruction vary across sites in MMSD schools and in early childhood education centers? In what ways, if any, are teachers experimenting with different approaches to instruction and how do those approaches impact children's experiences and levels of school readiness?
- *Variation of programming across sites* - How, if at all, do the above processes vary across sites? Is variation systematically related to characteristics of students, staff or organizations?

Background on the MMSD 4K Program

The MMSD Board of Education approved the creation of a 4K program in 2010 and the district began serving students under that program in the 2011-12 school year. The program has served approximately 10,000 students since it began. Today, the program serves approximately 1,800 students across 57 sites—25 elementary schools and 32 community organizations including Head Start, YMCA and the Waisman Center. Around 80% of students who enter five-year-old kindergarten (5K) in Madison participated in 4K. Students who participate in 4K are slightly more likely to be eligible for free or reduced price lunch, to be Hispanic, and slightly less likely to be white or to have a parent who completed college than students who do not participate in 4K. School-based 4K sites in MMSD employ a play-based curriculum (the Creative Curriculum) and serve students in A.M. or P.M. programs. Students attend 4K for about three hours per day for around 140 days per year. Transportation options vary based on the 4K site chosen by families. Students attending their assigned school site receive transportation and in some instances, can designate a different pick up/drop off than their primary address (such as a daycare site). Families who choose to enroll their children in care settings other than their assigned school site or community site do not receive transportation from MMSD. For more information on the 4K program in MMSD, visit the [Department of Early & Extended Learning's 4K website](#); for previous research on 4K, see the [Research & Program Evaluation Office's reports website](#).

Award Details

Expected funding: Two projects will be funded up to \$50,000 each. We will consider projects with higher budgets and will also consider funding more than two projects based on the applicant pool. These projects will be funded by WCER. The full award is for direct costs.

Expected term of award: Award notices will be given in early July. MEP prefers projects that are one year or less in duration, but will consider projects that extend beyond one year based on justification of extended timeline.

Allowable expenses: Funds may be used to pay for PI time, research assistance, tuition remission, materials or travel. Other expenses directly related to research may be permissible as well based upon approval from the MEP Directors.

Additional Benefits to the Researcher:

- Expedited district approval to undertake the proposed research; no need for MMSD External Research Committee review of projects. *Researchers are still responsible for securing approval for research from the UW IRB.
- Streamlined access to research sites, parents, teachers and students.
- Access to administrative data and support from MMSD's [Research & Program Evaluation Office](#) to facilitate understanding of the data.
- Direct access to district policy makers to disseminate research results, increasing the likelihood that research will be used to drive decision-making at the district level.

Additional Obligations of Selected Researchers:

- Provide the Steering Committee and Directors with an interim report on project progress in early spring in the form of a one-page research brief. A final report will also be furnished to the Steering Committee and Directors at the end of the grant period. The final report may take the form of a draft of a paper intended for publication in combination with an oral presentation of findings.
- Submit a 1-3 page, non-technical executive summary to be distributed to stakeholders in the district.
- Present at least twice on this work; once to the Steering Committee and Advisory Group and once to a broader community of stakeholders and practitioners (to be coordinated with MEP Directors).
- Providing any reports or presentations disseminated outside the research team and MEP to the Steering Committee for preview at least thirty days in advance of presentation.

**Under no circumstances may MMSD or MEP prevent publication or dissemination of research results once researchers have satisfied their disclosure and review obligations.*

Proposal Priorities

The MEP Directors and Steering Committee will review submitted proposals.

Proposal Q & A: The MEP Directors will host a question and answer session on April 24th from 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm in the Education Sciences building (1025 W. Johnson St.). All potential applicants are welcome to attend. Please email Project Manager Dominique Bradley (dust@wisc.edu) to RSVP.

Proposals will be scored on:

- *Relevance:* Will the results be of use to policy makers and/or practitioners seeking to enhance the quality and/or equity of 4K services? Does the proposal clearly seek to address a problem of practice and outcome(s) relevant to MMSD's 4K programs?

- *Methodological Rigor*: Does the proposal clearly outline an empirical strategy and does that strategy serve to address the research questions? Will the empirical strategy serve to produce valid, replicable results? Given the quantitative focus of MEP-directed work there is a slight preference for research that includes qualitative methodology or components.
- *Personnel/Feasibility*: Does the PI have the relevant substantive and methodological expertise and experience to do this research? Has the PI committed adequate time to carry out a high-quality research program? Are the requests for administrative data and/or participation of MMSD personnel, students or families reasonable?
- *Potential*: Does the proposed work seem likely to contribute to future publications and/or funding? Does the proposed work fit into a program of research for the PI—either as an emergent trajectory of part of an established line of inquiry?

Proposal Guidelines

Deadline for Submission of Proposals: May 26, 2017

Contents of Proposal: Please limit project descriptions to no more than 3 pages of text. Not included in this page limit are a cover page, CV, and references. Please submit proposals in PDF format.

All proposals must include the following elements:

- Cover Page: Project title, PI name and title, and names and title of any supporting researchers
- Project Description: Including a brief review of the significance of the problem you will address, research questions, and research design/methodology.
- Project Budget: Total requested amount, budget detail, and a brief justification of expenses
Timeline for Study: Include all research activities including project preparation and dissemination of results. Please specify which activities will occur directly in schools or with school staff. Preferably all *direct* research activities will occur within a 12 month timeframe.
- Personnel: Brief one paragraph bios for each PI and supporting staff, and Primary Investigator(s) Curriculum Vita

If necessary, MEP Directors will reach out to the PIs for further clarification as the proposals are reviewed. All PIs will be notified of the awards by July 3, 2017.

Submission

Proposals should be submitted in PDF format to Dominique Bradley, Project Manager, at dust@wisc.edu. Please direct any questions about the proposal to Dominique at dust@wisc.edu or call (608) 265-9438.

Spring 2017 Scoring Rubric- MEP Supported Work

Points Possible	Score Description
Relevance	
1	Relevance of question(s) to both research literature and policy is not explained
2	Connection of research question to research literature established, yet relevance of question to add to district policy or research literature unclear
3	Relevance of question established to either research literature and/or district policy
4	Strong case presented for relevance and utility of research question(s) to research literature and district policy
Methodological Rigor	
1	Methodology poorly articulated, unclear, and/or partially missing
2	Methodology well-articulated but lacks necessary details to fully connect methodological design to research questions
3	Research questions and methodology are clear and reasonably aligned; but there is insufficient support provided for some underlying assumptions connected with research design
4	Methodology is clear and aligned with project goals; supporting assumptions are explicitly addressed
Personnel	
1	No evidence of previous publications in the research topic area and/or professional connection to educational practitioners or policy makers
2	Evidence of prior contributions to either research literature in the topic area through previous publications or professional connection to educational practitioners or policy makers
3	Evidence of both prior publication in the research literature in the topic area and connection to educational practitioners or policy makers
4	Strong evidence of prior publication in the research literature in the topic area and to educational practitioners or policy makers

Project Feasibility	
1	Research design includes both requests for new administrative data collection and survey or qualitative data collection that would impose a significant burden on MMSD personnel, students, or families
2	Research design includes either request for new administrative data collection or survey or qualitative data collection that would impose significant time burdens on MMSD personnel, students, or families
3	Requests for administrative data are reasonable and currently exist within the district and/or would require <i>moderate</i> imposition on MMSD personnel, students, or families through survey or qualitative data collection
4	Data requests are reasonable and/or currently exist within the district's data systems and would require <i>minimal</i> imposition on MMSD personnel, students, or families through survey or qualitative data collection
Qualitative Design	
0	No
1	Yes
TOTAL SCORE	
SELECT SCORE	/17 points possible

Comments:
