



## Request for Proposals Fall 2018

### Overview:

The Madison Education Partnership (MEP), a research-practice partnership between the Wisconsin Center for Education Research and the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD), requests proposals from UW–Madison faculty, research staff, and advanced graduate students (with a faculty member as principal investigator [PI]) to conduct research on **questions related to school attendance in MMSD**. The proposed study could use attendance as a predictor or outcome. The partnership takes a broad view of the role of attendance in proposed projects and seeks to foster creative research from university colleagues on problems of practice in the Madison Metropolitan School District. Below we describe the partnership, topic of focus for 2018–19 academic year, and details of proposal submission.

### Background: Madison Education Partnership

MEP engages in research that increases educational equity by enhancing opportunities of historically underserved students. MEP creates a space for researchers and practitioners in Madison to engage in high-quality, problem-based collaborative research that contributes to policy, practice, and broader understandings of educational processes. The MEP structure supports researchers with financial and technical expertise, and with expedited access to district data and staff. The partnership's steering committee, advisory group, and directors annually determine the research focus for internally and externally generated research.

### Request for Proposals: Topic Focus—School Attendance

MEP seeks proposals for research related to school attendance from 4-year-old Kindergarten through Grade 12. The district seeks to better understand why students attend or miss school and the impact of absences on student academic, social, and health outcomes. An overarching goal is to identify actions the district could take to improve attendance or reduce the impact of absences on student outcomes.

Chronic absenteeism, or missing more than 18 days of school per year, is an early indicator of school disengagement. A 2018 MEP report suggests that 18 is not a magic number, and that the effects on students of excused and unexcused absences are different (Pyne et al. 2018). Gershenson, Jackowitz, and Brannegan (2017) find unexcused absences are twice as harmful to students as excused absences. Beyond the impacts of missing school on individual students, high absenteeism rates could have negative consequences for all students in the school, including deleterious impacts on the quality of classroom instruction and school climate (Olson, 2014). Studies have shown that in early elementary school, missing 10% or more of school predicts lower levels of numeracy and literacy by the time a student reaches Grade 3, patterns of attendance through high school, and the chances of earning a high school diploma. Students of color and students with disabilities are disproportionately harmed by chronic absenteeism (Chang & Balfanz, 2016).

MEP seeks rigorous and innovative proposals focused on attendance that build on or complement work MEP has already sponsored on this topic. Some areas of interest may include:

- **Understanding the why behind attendance patterns:** Why do students miss school? Do these reasons vary by student or family attributes? What structural and contextual factors (e.g., school, community) affect these patterns?
- **Identifying and/or examining approaches to promote attendance and reduce harmful effects of absences in schools:** Which policies and practices have schools enacted to promote attendance and/or reduce absenteeism? What have they found effective? How can researchers and schools partner to create or implement interventions to promote attendance and/or reduce

absenteeism?

- **Exploring the relationship between attendance and other outcomes:** How does attendance relate to school climate, family engagement, or student achievement? What other outcomes and conditions can attendance patterns help us understand and/or change in schools?

*These areas of interest are only suggestions, and MEP is open to alternative ideas.* The purpose of this RFP is to increase the engagement of university researchers with MMSD and expand research on student absences.

### **Award Details:**

- **Expected funding:** UW–Madison’s Wisconsin Center for Education Research will fund two projects up to \$50,000 each (direct costs). MEP will consider projects with higher budgets and funding more than two projects based on the applicant pool. .
- **Expected term of award:** Award notices will be given in late October with funds available by early November. MEP prefers projects that are one year or less in duration but will consider projects that extend beyond one year based on justification of an 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, based upon approval from MEP directors.

### **Additional benefits to the researcher**

- Expedited MMSD approval to undertake the research; no need for district External Research Committee review of projects. Researchers must still secure approval for research from the UW–Madison Institutional Review Board. Under no circumstances may MMSD or MEP prevent publication or dissemination of research results once researchers have satisfied their disclosure and review obligations.
- Streamlined access to research sites, parents, teachers, and students.
- Quicker access to administrative data and support from MMSD’s Research & Program Evaluation Office and MEP project staff 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.

### **Selected researchers will be required to complete the following**

- Provide the steering committee and directors with two reports: an interim report (one-page brief) on project progress in April 2019 and a final report in November 2019.
- Submit a 1–3 page, non-technical executive summary for MEP to distribute to stakeholders in senior leadership positions inside MMSD by November 2019.
- 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 at the spring MEP research symposium.
- Provide any reports, papers, or presentations to be disseminated outside the research team and MEP to the steering committee for preview at least 30 days in advance of distribution.
- Communicate regularly with the appropriate district lead as research progresses. MEP staff will facilitate primary points of connection with the district.

### **Proposal Review Criteria:**

MEP directors and steering committee will review and score proposals with the attached rubric to weigh how well they follow these criteria:

- **Relevance:** Will the results be of use to policy makers and/or practitioners seeking to enhance the quality and/or equity of education in MMSD? Does the proposal clearly address a problem of practice and outcome(s) relevant to attendance in the district?
- **Methodological rigor:** Does the proposal clearly outline an empirical strategy and does that strategy serve to address the research questions? Will the empirical strategy produce valid,

replicable results? *Given the quantitative focus of our prior work on student attendance we have a slight preference for research that includes qualitative methodology or components.*

- **Personnel/Feasibility:** Does the PI have relevant substantive and methodological expertise and experience to do this research? Has the PI committed adequate time to carry out high-quality research program? Are requests reasonable for data and/or participation of MMSD personnel, students, or families?
- **Project Potential:** Does the proposed work seem likely to contribute to publications and/or funding? Does it fit into a program of research for the PI as an emergent trajectory of part of an established line of inquiry?

### Proposal Guidelines:

**Deadline to submit:** Friday, October 5, 2018. Submit proposals in PDF format to Amanda Kruger, project manager, [amkruger2@wisc.edu](mailto:amkruger2@wisc.edu). All proposals must include the following elements:

- **Format:** All documents must be in single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman with 1-inch margins.
- **Cover page:** Project title, PI name and title, and names and title of supporting researchers.
- **Project description:** Outline significance of problem to be addressed, project goals, research questions, and research design/methodology, not to exceed three pages of text without references.
- **Project budget:** Completed budget detail form (attached), and a brief justification of expenses. Entire project budget is not to exceed one page.
- **Timeline for study:** Timeline for all research activities, including project preparation and dissemination of results. Specify which activities will occur in schools or require contact with school staff. All direct research activities must occur within 12 months.
- **Personnel:** One-paragraph bio for each PI and support staff; curriculum vita for each PI.

If necessary, MEP directors will reach out to PIs for clarification. All applicants will be notified by October 19, 2018. For information, contact Amanda Kruger at [amkruger2@wisc.edu](mailto:amkruger2@wisc.edu) or (608) 265-5366.

### References

- Chang, H., & Balfanz, R. (2016). *Preventing missed opportunity: Taking collective action to confront chronic absence* (Research brief). Attendance Works and Everyone Graduates Center Research Brief, Johns Hopkins University. Retrieved from: [http://attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/PreventingMissedOpportunityFull\\_FINAL9.8.16\\_2.pdf](http://attendanceworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/PreventingMissedOpportunityFull_FINAL9.8.16_2.pdf)
- Pyne, Jaymes, Eric Grodsky, Elizabeth Vaade, Eric Camburn, and Dominique Bradley. 2018. "What Happens When Children Miss School? Unpacking Elementary School Absences in MMSD." Madison: Madison Education Partnership.  
. Retrieved from: <http://mep.wceruw.org/documents/Attendance-Research-Brief.pdf>

## Budget Detail

Salaries and Wages:	
Fringe Benefits:	
<b>Total Salaries and Wages:</b>	
Equipment and Supplies:	
Travel:	
Other Direct Costs:	
<b>Total Budget Request:</b>	

## Budget Justification

## Scoring Rubric

Points Possible	Score Description
<b>Relevance</b>	
1	Relevance of research question to research literature and policy is <b>not</b> explained.
2	Relevance of question to literature established, but relevance of how results will <b>inform</b> to district policy or research literature is unclear.
3	Relevance of question established to research literature and/or district policy.
4	Relevance and utility of question to research literature and district policy are <b>strong</b> .
<b>Methodological Rigor</b>	
1	Methodology <b>poorly</b> articulated, unclear, and/or partially missing.
2	Methodology well-articulated <b>but lacks</b> necessary details to fully connect methodological design to research questions.
3	Methodology and research question are <b>clear</b> and reasonably aligned, but lack sufficient support for underlying assumptions connected with research design.
4	Methodology is clear and aligned with project goals; supporting assumptions are explicitly addressed.
<b>Personnel</b>	
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 <b>either</b> research literature in the topic area through previous publications <b>or</b> professional connection to educational practitioners or policy makers.
3	Evidence of <b>both</b> prior publication in the research literature in the topic area <b>and</b> connection to educational practitioners or policy makers.
4	Strong evidence of prior publication in the research literature in the topic area <b>and</b> to educational practitioners or policy makers.
<b>Project Feasibility</b>	
1	Research design includes <b>both</b> requests for new administrative data collection <b>and</b> survey or qualitative data collection that would impose a significant burden on MMSD personnel, students, or families
2	Research design includes <b>either</b> request for new administrative data collection <b>or</b> 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 <b>moderate</b> 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 <b>minimal</b> imposition on MMSD personnel, students, or families through survey or qualitative data collection
<b>Qualitative Design</b>	
0	No
1	Yes
<b>Total Score</b>	
<b>Total Score</b>	out of 17 possible points