

# Milwaukee Public Schools

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Project Narrative</b>	
<b>A. Quality of Project Design</b>	Page 1
1. Project goals, objectives, and outcomes	Pages 1 - 15
2. Project designed to meet needs of target population	Pages 15 - 17
3. Exceptional approach to meet statutory requirements	Pages 17 - 21
4. Project is supported by promising practices	Pages 21 - 22
5. Feedback and continuous feedback are integral to the design	Pages 22 - 23
<b>B. Quality of Project Personnel</b>	Page 23
1. Project Director and Principal Investigator	Pages 23 - 24
2. Key personnel	Page 24 - 27
<b>C. Quality of Management Plan</b>	Pages 27 -31
1. Feedback and continuous feedback in the operation of project	Pages 31- 32
<b>D. Quality of Project Services</b>	Pages 32 - 35
<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>A. Resumes of Key Personnel</b>	
<b>B. Letters of Support</b>	
<b>C. References</b>	

## Milwaukee Public Schools Project Narrative

### A. Quality of the Project Design

#### 1) Goals, objectives, and outcomes are clearly specified and measurable.

Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) is a diverse district that welcomes all students, preparing them for success in higher education, post-educational opportunities, work and citizenship. MPS is the largest school district in Wisconsin and the 43rd largest school district in the nation, with students from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. MPS's reported enrollment for the 2018-19 school year is 76,893, with a student population that is 52.5% African American, 26.3% Hispanic, 10.9% White, 7% Asian, 2.5% Multi, 0.6% Native American and 0.1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. A total of 20.1% of students are identified with special education needs and 11.2% of students have limited English proficiency. Four out of five students, about 80%, are economically disadvantaged (ED).

The proposed project, **Serving the Underrepresented by Grouping Equitably (SURGE)**, will use Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program (Javits) grant funds to increase the number of students identified for gifted and talented programming and increase academic achievement through implementation of a Response to Intervention (RtI) approach via cluster grouping and differentiated instruction. The project is designed to (a) increase the ability of educators to use culturally effective tools to recognize and serve high-achieving/high-potential (HA/HP) ED students, (b) increase identification rates among underrepresented student populations, (c) increase rates of advanced achievement among underrepresented student populations, and (d) increase access to high-quality STEM programs.

***Building on Promising Practices.*** The *SURGE* project will use refined practices and lessons learned from a 2014 Javits-funded project, *Expanding Excellence* as led by the Wisconsin

Department of Public Instruction (WI DPI), and the 2017 Javits-funded *Scaling Up Expanding Excellence for Underrepresented Students (SEE US!)* grant. Throughout each project, MPS has successfully identified students for advanced learning opportunities who otherwise would have been overlooked. By using a culturally responsive assessment tool, the Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students (TOPS), traditionally underrepresented students received advanced learning opportunities such as inquiry-based lessons, Saturday camps and summer opportunities. With the use of the TOPS tool, teachers have shifted from a deficit mindset to seeing students at potential. Early findings of the *SEE US!* grant indicate a nearly perfect representation of identified students on a representation index that uses a formula to determine over- and underrepresentation of demographic groups within a school's and district's student populations. Overall, implementation of the *Expanding Excellence* and *SEE US!* grants launched MPS's action steps to give equitable access and attention to advanced learners. MPS seeks to use these promising practices to springboard the proposed *SURGE* project, which is designed to have deeper impact on whole-school improvement through cluster grouping to improve student achievement.

***Excellence Gap and Equity.*** Through implementation of the *SURGE* project, student and teacher supports will be refined and put into place as MPS further identifies and understands the excellence gap at each school. The excellence gap is the difference in proportion of students in different demographic groups who attain advanced levels of achievement (Plucker, Burroughs, & Song, 2010). In MPS, efforts have revolved around closing achievement gaps, primarily by bringing students from underperforming groups to a basic level of achievement.

The *SURGE* project will impact both the excellence and achievement gaps.

***Project Concept.*** The *SURGE* project will carry out evidence-based and innovative strategies to build and expand gifted and talented programs in five initial elementary schools. The project

will initially include 30 classroom teachers (kindergarten through third grade), serving approximately 750 students using an RtI approach through a cluster grouping framework, curriculum compacting, differentiation strategies, and Saturday and summer STEM opportunities. In year three, the project will launch three more implementation schools as the strategies are improved and refined. The process of identifying underrepresented students in eight *SURGE* project schools will increase access to gifted and talented programs for students from ED families in kindergarten through third grade. Transforming and enhancing school programs through the cluster grouping framework will lead to improved student performance.

***Response to Intervention.*** RtI is the practice of systematically providing differing levels of intensity of support based on student responsiveness to instruction and intervention in academics. Within MPS, RtI is a three-tiered structure of support designed to maximize student achievement in the general education setting. The RtI system supports students who are not meeting academic proficiency standards, and also includes gifted and talented education for traditionally underrepresented students. The *SURGE* project will redefine the mindset around the RtI model and focus on what students can do, intervening to provide differentiated instruction at the students' readiness levels. The goal is to identify 20% or 150 underrepresented ED students for gifted and talented services to decrease the excellence gap, mitigate underrepresentation, and increase academic achievement in mathematics, reading, and science for all students.

***Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (Priority Two).*** During tier one instruction, teachers will design and implement highly engaging Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) focused learning environments and, using the TOPS tool, observe and identify students. STEM activities will engage students by cultivating curiosity and innovation thus allowing the talents within the TOPS tool domains to emerge. Following student identification

using the TOPS tool during STEM activities, schools will use the cluster grouping to increase effectiveness of teacher instruction in the high-poverty project schools.

***Cluster Grouping (Priority Three).*** Total School Cluster Grouping (TSCG) is a method of reducing the range of student needs present in any one classroom such that teachers can better target instruction as a focused intentional way to ensure that a wider range of learners has access to effective educators. Classroom teachers break students into achievement groups based on reading achievement scores, math achievement scores, or both to group students for differentiated instruction. Teachers then continually monitor student progress and flexibly adjust student placement when needed. Cluster grouping results in classrooms with reduced instruction ranges that allow teachers to better target their instruction efforts. An important requirement with cluster grouping is that (1) all classrooms have above- and below-average students (to prevent any stereotyped “low” and “high” classrooms) and (2) all classrooms must be diverse (to avoid perpetuating classroom segregation). Cluster grouping is a model that allows for a given amount of instruction capacity to go further and challenge a wider range of learning needs within the existing age-based, grade-level system. The instruction delivery method of cluster grouping will not only benefit advanced learners but also positively impact each student in project classrooms due to appropriate and strategic instruction at student-readiness levels.

Under this award, cluster grouping will be the framework used to provide differentiated instruction in the regular classroom to benefit all students within the project classroom who are on level or below level. By using flexible grouping according to readiness, children receive instruction at differentiated levels. The most advanced students are grouped together within the regular classroom with a well-trained, willing teacher who will provide targeted differentiated instruction commensurate with student abilities. When viewed in the larger context of school

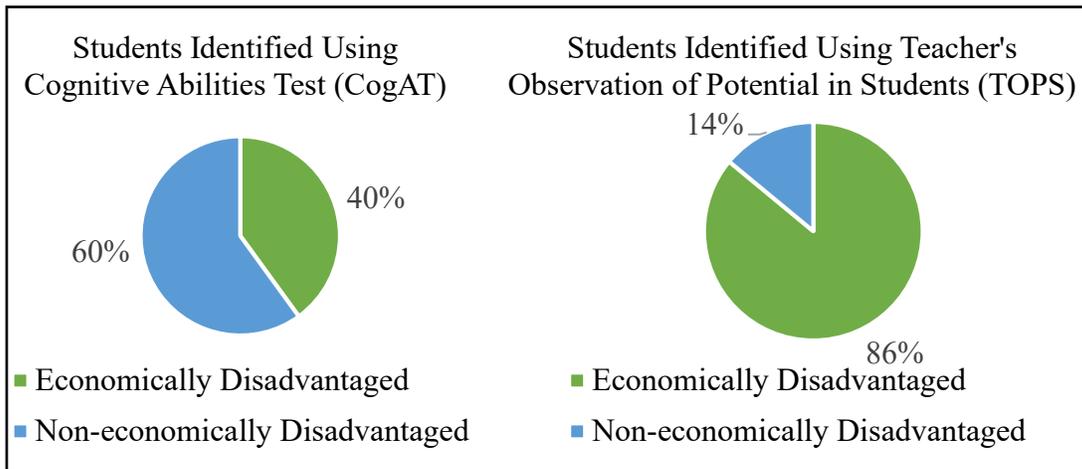
reform and extending gifted education to more students, cluster grouping can benefit teachers and students beyond those in traditional gifted programs (Gentry, 2014). Brulles, Saunders, and Cohn (2010) offer that “the gifted cluster model creates a setting for providing differentiated instruction that is feasible for teachers and increases the likelihood that differentiation will take place resulting in greater academic achievement (Brulles, 2005; Gentry, 1999; Winebrenner & Brulles, 2008b)” (p. 332).

***Growth Mindset.*** The *SURGE* project will also use an ongoing investigation to identify implementation barriers and successes. Quantitative data have shown promising results and significant progress from the *Expanding Excellence* project and current *SEE US!* schools. Lessons learned from these two grants reveal that teachers are determined to find ways to reach their advanced learners who often are forgotten. Moreover, teachers have looked at students through asset-based lenses and now recognize student talents. Deficit thinking regarding student potential has decreased in many classrooms, and teachers are using more engaging, hands-on learning with their students. Many teachers have learned to give students time to use their talents and creative thinking to inquire and engage in tasks at a higher cognitive demand. Although progress is being made, more underrepresented students need to be served in Wisconsin’s largest school district. The foundational work from the previous Javits-funded projects will springboard additional success in serving traditionally underrepresented students in the *SURGE* project.

***TOPS Student Identification (Priority One).*** MPS currently utilizes the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) as a universal screener to identify students for gifted and talented programming for all grade two students. Teachers in the project schools will use the TOPS tool to systematically observe their students in STEM learning environments where various talent domains emerge with frequency and intensity. Specific attention will be given to the recognition

of educationally vulnerable children whose potential has historically been overlooked. After participation in the *Expanding Excellence* and *SEE US!* grants, significant increases in the number of ED students were documented. Teachers identified 37% more ED students with high potential by using the TOPS identification tool than with the CogAT screener as demonstrated in Chart 1. The *SURGE* project will employ this same process and usage of TOPS.

**Chart 1: Students Identified for Gifted and Talented Services by Economic Status (18-19)**



**STEM Enrichment Camps (Priority Two).** The *SURGE* project provides two Saturday camps for advanced learners each semester where students engage in STEM activities. These opportunities bring like-minded children together to develop talents in their “at-potential” domains. Students will engage in design challenges that use their creativity and curiosity, social perceptiveness, leadership, spatial abilities, reasoning and problem solving, strong interests, motivation, and advanced academic reasoning. The *SURGE* project will also structure four weeks of STEM-themed summer camps in four areas of the city to increase accessibility and attendance of ED children. Staff facilitating both the Saturday and summer camps will be trained in recognizing talent domains, talent development, and qualities of giftedness in children.

The proposed *SURGE* project will use MPS’s RtI framework to systematically build school capacity to achieve the goals, objectives, and outcomes summarized below.

**Goal 1: Collaboration: Increase the level and depth of collaboration among school and district personnel, students, and student families to support the academic success of students from ED and culturally diverse families.**

**Objective A:** Increase educator awareness of excellence gaps in disadvantaged student groups.

**Strategy:** SURGE leadership and school teams complete school-level data analysis (data chats), resulting in an annual school summary that details existing excellence gaps.

**Outcome:** Educators have a deeper understanding of the excellence gaps existing in their prospective schools and are better positioned to address those gaps in a more intentional manner.

**Objective B:** Increase educator ability to identify and serve high-ability/high-potential students.

**Strategy:** Train educators and school leaders to implement a comprehensive, culturally responsive, schoolwide RtI system and STEM activities to identify and serve HP/HA students.

**Outcome:** Educators will demonstrate an increased understanding of the components of the RtI system as confirmed by a perception survey. Educators will implement gifted and talented identification practices and interventions as demonstrated by increases in the intention to use, the actual use of, and confidence in using STEM lessons over the life of the project.

**Objective C:** Increase educator ability to strengthen home/school partnerships.

**Strategy:** SURGE schools and the SURGE leadership team will host family/community events.

**Outcome:** There will be increased interest from families seeking gifted and talented opportunities at school and district events as measured by a collection of quantitative and qualitative data (attendance and surveys).

**Objective D:** Build partnerships and networks among multiple stakeholders to plan for district-wide program implementation.

**Strategy:** Create a strategic plan for sustainable implementation beyond the grant period.

**Outcome:** The strategic plan will be finalized for implementation in the final project year.

**Objective E:** Address barriers that could hinder full implementation of collaborative systems.

**Strategy:** Adapt implementation of the *SURGE* project to meet the needs of individual schools based on a thorough needs assessment.

**Outcome:** Schools successfully implement the systems established in the *SURGE* project.

**Goal 2: Assessment: Increase the number of underrepresented, ED students identified for and immersed in advanced services through the evaluation of existing measures and the implementation of culturally responsive identification practices.**

**Objective A:** Increase educator professional expertise in culturally responsive assessment practices and best practices in gifted education.

**Strategy:** Train educators in culturally responsive identification practices (TOPS) and STEM lessons. Educators will participate in the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater (UWW) Gifted and Talented Education Workshop Series and MPS workshops.

**Outcome:** Educators will have increased knowledge/skills in culturally responsive identification practices as measured by an evaluation and assessment tool. Educators will have increased ability to identify ED students for advanced programs as measured by TOPS identifications and pre- and post-training surveys.

**Objective B:** Increase the number of students from underrepresented groups immersed in gifted and talented services.

**Strategy:** Educators complete the UWW professional development and workshop series.

**Outcome:** Increased number of underrepresented ED students identified for gifted and talented services.

**Goal 3: Instruction: Increase the percentages of underrepresented, HA/HP ED students**

**that achieve at “proficient” and “advanced” levels in reading, math, and science.**

**Objective A:** Increase educator professional expertise in culturally responsive instruction practices and best practices in gifted education.

**Strategy:** Train educators in culturally responsive instruction practices, including STEM approaches, through the UWW Gifted and Talented Education Workshop Series.

**Outcome:** Fully implemented *SURGE* classroom learning environments. Increased number of students immersed in gifted and talented instruction methods.

**Objective B:** Increase the percentage of students from ED households who score “proficient” or above in reading, math and science, decreasing the excellence gaps.

**Strategy:** Educators implement instruction methods from PD series. Services include use of the cluster grouping framework, differentiation in the classroom, intervention blocks, summer programs, Saturday classes, and after-school math, literacy, and science enrichment.

**Outcome:** Increases in the percentage of ED students who score “proficient” or above on the Star assessment in reading or mathematics, leading to a decrease in the excellence gap. Increase in fourth grade science scores on the Wisconsin Forward Exam.

**Objective C:** Increase educator knowledge and application of the cluster grouping framework.

**Objective D:** Increase educator capacity to differentiate for *all* learners.

**Objective E:** Increase teacher awareness of how TOPS domains can be incorporated into lesson planning and enhance student learning within the cluster groups.

**Strategy:** Educators will participate in UWW Gifted and Talented Education Workshop Series, MPS workshops, job-embedded coaching, and monthly meetings.

**Outcome:** Fully implemented *SURGE* classroom learning environments.

**Goal 4: Sustainability: SURGE schools are positioned to continue full program**

**implementation for a minimum of three additional years after Javits funding.**

**Objective A:** Systematically continue the TOPS identification process in project schools.

**Strategy:** Co-construct sustainability plans with SURGE school staff to include TOPS identification and STEM activities in the school improvement plan.

**Outcome:** Integration of project systems into ongoing district efforts for gifted programs.

**Objective B:** Develop systems and structures for schools to continue to incorporate equitable grouping practices to increase student achievement.

**Strategy:** Align practices with districtwide Ambitious Instruction Plan and equity policy.

**Outcome:** Schools will continue to identify students using the TOPS tool, and instruction will continue to be customized for student readiness.

**Goal 5: Dissemination: Develop and disseminate an online cluster grouping handbook.**

**Objective A:** Create an online handbook/implementation guide for SURGE schools, additional MPS schools, and schools across the United States to reference successful practices, challenges, teacher and student testimonials, and cluster grouping processes and achievement data.

**Strategy:** The SURGE leadership team, UW-Whitewater scholars, and external evaluators from UW-Madison will collaborate to create a readily available online handbook.

**Outcome:** A cluster grouping implementation guide will be published for nationwide access.

*Logic Model.* To articulate the inputs and activities necessary for project goals to be met and greatly improve program design and evaluation, MPS utilizes a visual logic model and expounds through a strong program theory of change. The project logic model below demonstrates how the design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population.

**Program Theory of Change:** Increasing identification of traditionally underrepresented students in Milwaukee Public Schools will increase access to advanced learning opportunities and differentiated instruction practices for advanced learners and all their classmates in project classrooms, resulting in increases in student achievement in reading, mathematics, and science.

**Process Theory:** A SURGE leadership team will establish eight project elementary schools serving students from underrepresented groups to implement and support a transformative framework (cluster grouping) through innovative teaching practices in order to increase student achievement in reading, mathematics, and science.

**Impact Theory:** The implementation of the SURGE project will increase the number of students identified for gifted and talented (GT) programming, increase academic achievement of students from underrepresented groups, modify instruction practices, and disseminate electronic resources to a vast audience of educators locally and nationally.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes (6 months–2 years)	Intermediate Outcomes (3–5 years)	Long-term Outcomes (5 years and beyond)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Javits support for a SURGE project director</li> <li>• Javits support for school program implementation (i.e., training, materials, travel)</li> <li>• Javits support for classroom and family resources</li> <li>• Partner, community, and family involvement</li> <li>• Javits and district support for outreach and communication resources</li> <li>• Teacher willingness to modify instruction practices</li> <li>• Javits support for Saturday and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire SURGE grant project director</li> <li>• Identify local elementary schools for project</li> <li>• Complete local training for school leadership, teachers, and staff in identified schools – analysis of school-based data, GT best teaching practices</li> <li>• Complete developmental evaluation of current student identification practices</li> <li>• Establish districtwide GT school network of grant schools/</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of training sessions (hours)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Number of school leaders, teachers, and staff trained</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Number of schools implementing GT/SURGE programs</li> <li>• Number of students identified and immersed in advanced instruction within a cluster grouping framework and differentiated environment</li> <li>• Number of non-identified students immersed in a cluster grouping framework and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased teachers’ understanding of GT identification among students from underrepresented groups</li> <li>• Increased teachers’ understanding of characteristics of giftedness</li> <li>• Increased number of underrepresented students identified and immersed in GT instruction at elementary level</li> <li>• Increased number that reflect a STEM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased demographic diversity of students identified for GT services</li> <li>• Increased number of students immersed in GT instruction</li> <li>• Increased percentage of students from underrepresented groups who score proficient or above in reading</li> <li>• Increased percentage of students from underrepresented groups who score proficient or above in mathematics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Goal 1:</b> Increased level/depth of collaboration among all stakeholders to support the academic success of students from economically disadvantaged (ED) and culturally different families</li> <li>• <b>Goal 2:</b> Increased number of high-ability/high-potential ED students identified for advanced services</li> <li>• <b>Goal 3:</b> Decreased excellence gap in</li> </ul>

<p>summer STEM camps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong and effective principal leadership</li> <li>• Javits team meetings, planning, and expertise</li> <li>• Javits support for developmental evaluation</li> </ul>	<p>strategic plan/administrative support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement family/student outreach and communication plan</li> <li>• Support teacher curriculum development and implementation of cluster grouping and differentiation practices</li> <li>• Support teacher professional development of STEM lessons</li> <li>• Implement RtI system that includes identification and services for GT students using expanded measures (TOPS)</li> <li>• Develop procedures for electronic documentation of identification and services</li> </ul>	<p>differentiated environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of parent events/activities</li> <li>○ Number of attendees</li> </ul>	<p>learning environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased number of elementary schools successfully implementing <i>SURGE</i> project</li> <li>• Increased access and attendance of underrepresented students attending Saturday and summer STEM camps</li> <li>• Increased access to high-quality GT programming outside of the school day (STEM and STEAM camps)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased percentage of students from underrepresented groups who score proficient in science</li> <li>• Continue to increase schoolteachers' perceptions of GT identification among students from underrepresented groups</li> <li>• Increased number of elementary schools successfully implementing <i>SURGE</i> project</li> <li>• Continue to modify instruction practices through the cluster grouping framework and differentiated instruction for all students</li> <li>• Increased access and attendance of underrepresented students attending Saturday and summer STEM camps</li> </ul>	<p>academic performance between ED students and non-ED students in reading and math</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Goal 4:</b> <i>SURGE</i> schools positioned to continue full program implementation for a minimum of three additional years after federal funding</li> <li>• <b>Goal 5:</b> Dissemination of online electronic cluster grouping implementation handbook</li> </ul>
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***School Selection Criteria.*** The school selection criteria for the *SURGE* project supports a larger district-wide plan to ensure that the demographics of the district are represented in the demographics of gifted and talented program opportunities across the city. Each *SURGE* school will meet the following school selection criteria for participation: 1) The school is in a geographic location of the city where traditionally underrepresented families reside; 2) The school leader and staff are willing and committed to supporting the gifts and talents of the students served by the school; 3) The school student demographic groups are not proportionately reflected in the current student demographics of the district's gifted and talented programs; 4) The school maintains an ED rate greater than 60%; and, 5) The school is in a geographic area with minimal access to high-quality specialty gifted and talented programs.

***Project Implementation.*** The implementation process will involve selecting schools that meet the selection criteria listed above. The project director and members of the *SURGE* leadership team will meet school leaders to present the goals and objectives of the grant. This equitable opportunity, which is aligned to the MPS Ambitious Instruction Plan, will be clearly outlined. A roles and responsibilities chart will be co-constructed to ensure all stakeholders clearly understand the depth of their commitment. Once schools have committed, the *SURGE* leadership team and each school will collaborate to create an implementation plan aligned to the project goals. Although the grant project will focus on kindergarten through third grade, a presentation and informational session will be delivered to the entire school staff at each *SURGE* school so that there is a heightened awareness by all educators in those buildings. This will support expansion beyond third grade.

As schools are identified, project teachers will participate in UWW and MPS PD workshops addressing the characteristics of giftedness, the crisis of underrepresentation and the excellence

gap, and the process of using the TOPS tool. Not only will teachers learn how to recognize talent within the nine domains on the TOPS tool: they will also learn to create observable STEM environments in which to appropriately recognize talent. The *SURGE* project will train teachers to use STEM lessons, aligned to science standards, during the observation windows to identify traditionally underrepresented students with the TOPS tool. The students will be flagged in MPS's student management system (Infinite Campus) for data collection by the project team and the external evaluators.

The next step in implementation will be to train the teachers on cluster grouping through a workshop led by experts from UWW. Intensive PD will focus on modifying existing school structures and using data to determine student readiness groups. The PD model in the *SURGE* project allows for the teachers to work closely with the project leadership team, teacher coaches, and UWW professors to develop their repertoire of instruction strategies to differentiate for all levels of learners. The teacher coaches will provide effective support to project teachers using the transformation coaching framework which includes: building trusted relationships, listening, goal setting, and reflective coaching conversations (Aguilar, 2013). Monthly meetings will take place at each school with SURGE teachers, the school leader, and members of the SURGE leadership team to progress monitor implementation and troubleshoot challenges. At the end of program year two, the *SURGE* leadership team will identify and recruit three additional schools that meet the criteria for participation. The implementation cycle will begin for the new schools with teacher PD at the beginning of year three. The initial schools will continue implementation and strengthen cluster group implementation for the duration of the project period with ongoing support from the SURGE project team, teacher coaches and evaluators. There will be intentional action steps taken in years four and five to operationalize these practices in the project schools to

ensure sustainability beyond the life of the grant, and beyond any transition of school leadership.

## **2) Project is appropriate and will successfully address the needs of the target population.**

Poverty is negatively associated with achievement for MPS students. The district is challenged to improve achievement in reading, language arts, and math for *all* students. The *SURGE* project will strive to increase achievement in these areas as well as science as measured by the Wisconsin Forward exam. On the 2017–18 Forward Exam, only 11.6% of ED students in the district were proficient in mathematics (statewide 22.6%) and 13.2% in English language arts (statewide 22.3%). Forward data for 2017–18 show that 23.4% of fourth grade MPS students achieved “proficient” or “advanced” in science (statewide 50.3%). In looking at data from the 2017–18 district screener (Star 360) in mathematics and reading, there are groups of students not realizing their potential, which causes inequalities and disproportionalities at the highest levels of achievement. In spring 2018, 6% of students from ED households scored “advanced” in reading compared to 21% of non-ED students. The numbers for math were 14% and 31%, respectively. The trend that becomes apparent when analyzing the assessment data is that higher-income groups tend to score at advanced levels in nearly every content area and at every grade level at rates from two to four times higher than those of their low-income peers.

The *SURGE* project will support eight project schools and develop comprehensive systems that include culturally responsive, research-based practices that have been shown to: a) increase the ability of educators to use culturally effective tools to recognize and serve HA/HP ED students; b) increase identification rates among underrepresented student groups; c) increase rates of advanced achievement among underrepresented student groups; and d) increase access to high-quality STEM programs. Strategic planning will broaden project impact and increase the capacity of schools to close opportunity and access gaps to reduce the excellence gap.

*Expanding Educational Excellence: The Power of School* whitepaper (Coleman, Winn & Harradine, June 2013) explores barriers to the academic success of students who are of color and experience poverty face a jeopardy where social and educational inequities at their schools and in their homes and communities intentionally and/or unintentionally undermine their academic success. "When students do not have access to exploratory learning, debates and discussion, and a focus on higher-levels of thought, the classroom environment fails to promote the creativity and curiosity that are needed for students to achieve to their potential and therefore reduce the achievement gap." (Coleman & Shah-Coltrane, 2011; Ford, 2007; Henfield, Washington, & Owens, 2010)" (p. 4).

The *SURGE* project will invest in STEM learning for students and aim to increase science achievement. Youth from ED communities face a variety of challenges to STEM success, including a higher likelihood of attending schools with lower funding levels, resulting in lack of basic educational materials, including science learning materials, and training for teachers (Nasir et al, 2011). Based on data gathered from a preliminary meta-analysis, elementary students yield higher achievement scores in STEM subjects when exposed through an integrative approach (Becker, K., & Park, K. 2011). The *SURGE* project will include STEM as an integrative approach to learning during the TOPS observations and STEM camps.

Cluster grouping is needed to expand equitable practices within MPS classrooms and successfully address the needs of the target population. It is not uncommon for MPS teachers to manage student readiness levels that span six grades in one classroom. The cluster grouping framework will allow the range of learners in a project classroom to be narrowed, resulting in differentiated instruction closely matched with all students' educational needs. Without the use of this framework, students could be over- or under-challenged resulting in little academic

growth. According to Marcia Gentry and Rebecca L. Mann (2018), cluster grouping should be viewed as a total school program not only to be used for gifted students. Cluster grouping offers a means for improving curriculum, instruction, and student achievement throughout the school.

### **3) Project represents an exceptional approach to meet statutory purposes/requirements.**

The proposed *SURGE* project meets and exceeds the requirements of the Javits program.

**Requirement #1:** The proposed identification methods, as well as gifted and talented services, materials, and methods, can be adapted, if appropriate, for use by all students.

The proposed gifted and talented identification methods, as well as the services, materials, and methods, can be adapted for use by all students. This requirement is met by using the TOPS tool to help teachers recognize children (ages 5-9) who may be gifted. The TOPS tool is organized around nine domains with examples of behaviors that can be used as indicators of potential. These behaviors capture both "teacher pleasing" and "non-teacher pleasing" behaviors because gifted children are not always the teacher's favorite. Non-teacher pleasing behaviors can sometimes impede recognition of student potential. The tool is designed to be used in multiple settings over time to best see a student's potential (Coleman, Shah-Coltrane, & Harrison, 2010).

The cluster grouping method will directly impact all students in project classrooms, not just those who were identified with the TOPS tool or through the CogAT. Research demonstrates that the academic achievement of all students can be accelerated through the cluster grouping framework (Gentry, 2014). Materials used for the STEM challenges and activities will be accessible and used by all children in SURGE classrooms. Differentiated materials used for the cluster groups will be available to all students and customized for student readiness.

**Requirement #2:** The proposed program can be evaluated.

The proposed program will be evaluated through a mixed-methods evaluation featuring both

quantitative and qualitative analyses conducted by evaluators from the Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (WEC) in the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. The evaluation will be led by Dr. Annalee Good with assistance from a team of evaluators with specific expertise in evaluating advanced learning initiatives. The team will provide both formative and summative feedback to the programming team, with the ultimate priority of improving the implementation and impact of the initiative.

The evaluation is organized around three guiding questions, framed around three initiative goals: 1. [Evaluation of *process*] What are patterns in implementation, and to what extent does *SURGE* implement the proposed activities as intended?; 2. [Evaluation of *outcomes*] What are patterns in outcomes of interest in participating students, educators, schools, and families?; [Evaluation of *impact*] To what extent are observed patterns in outcome a result of the *SURGE* initiative?

**Requirement #3:** The proposed project will provide for the equitable participation of students and teachers in private nonprofit elementary schools and secondary schools.

MPS has a list of potential private, nonprofit local schools for partnering. When appropriate, nonprofit schools will be invited to PD on increased identification of ED students, cluster grouping framework, and differentiation. Those that wish to partner can attend PD at the participation rate determined by the cost of attendance for each *SURGE* teacher.

**Requirement #4 (a):** The project will use funds to conduct evidence-based research on methods and techniques for identifying and teaching gifted and talented students and for using gifted and talented programs and methods to identify and provide the opportunity for all students.

WEC’s external evaluation will satisfy this requirement. WEC will review whether the program’s mechanisms of identifying gifted and talented students (TOPS) are implemented and

used as intended. To address the three evaluation questions, the evaluators will collect and analyze indicators as well the following qualitative data to inform questions one through three: one focus group per project year with teachers and administrators in each of the participating schools; one focus group in years two and four with participating youths and families; personal interviews with district-level staff in years one, three, and five; and, site visits to each participating school in each of the project years. Evaluators will collect and analyze the following quantitative data to examine patterns related to questions one and two:

- Participation (via attendance rates) of teachers in PD programming at project schools.
- STEM and TOPS self-assessment taken by teachers at project schools before the *SURGE* intervention as a baseline and taken each project year following to examine growth patterns.
- Survey of teacher knowledge and implementation of culturally responsive practices taken
- prior to the first PD intervention and again each project year.
- Rates of underrepresented students identified for advanced learning programming in
- Participating schools, with changes measured over the life of the project. Evaluators will also explore comparisons of identification rates to schools not participating in *SURGE*.
  - To discern whether the population of identified students is representative of the school population, the Representation Index (Kitano & DiJiosia, 2002) will be used, showing how closely the proportions of the gifted and talented students in a grade or school match the population makeup of the entire grade or school. More specifically, if a school contains a high historically underrepresented student population, the subgroup identified as gifted and talented should also contain high proportions of underrepresented students.

$$\textit{Representation Index} = \frac{\% \textit{Advanced Learners}}{\% \textit{Overall Population}}$$

- A score of one on the representation Index indicates perfect representation. If the representation Index for a subgroup is less than one, it is underrepresented.
- Performance of students in participating schools on the Star test.
- Performance of students in participating schools on the Wisconsin state examination for fourth grade science (in the year after they participate in SURGE as third graders).

To estimate impact of the initiative (Question #3) on student academic achievement, the evaluators will conduct a quantitative data analysis of student-level data (Star test). Evaluators will use a quasi-experimental research design. Selection biases will be addressed when evaluating the impact of *SURGE* through the research design. The choice and use of method will depend on a thorough understanding of the selection processes of the treated schools and students to establish a valid comparison group.

**Requirement #4 (b):** The project will use funds to establish programs for identifying and serving gifted and talented students, including innovative methods and strategies.

The *SURGE* project innovative methods and strategies to identify and serve gifted and talented students include PD for teachers on the characteristics of giftedness; training on the use of the TOPS tool to effectively identify students; teacher PD and classroom support on the theory, research, and practices of cluster grouping; intensive time for mentoring and coaching teachers on the task of matching instruction to student readiness levels through differentiation practices such as curriculum compacting; Saturday camps for advanced learners each semester where students engage in STEM activities; and, four weeks of STEM-themed summer camps to increase accessibility and attendance of ED children.

**Requirement #4 (c):** The proposed project will use funds to provide technical assistance and disseminate information.

In project years four and five, an online handbook will be developed to disseminate the following: processes of successful grant implementation, teacher training, principal, teacher and student testimonies, and data relative to cluster grouping classrooms and student achievement data. Initial planning considers hosting the online handbook on the MPS webpage.

The MPS Department of Research, Assessment, and Data will also co-present with the external evaluators at the conclusion of the project as part of the district's Research Review Series. The presentation is intended to inform internal and external stakeholders and community members about project outcomes and promising strategies.

**Requirement #4 (d):** The project train personnel in the identification and education of gifted students and in the use of gifted and talented services, materials, and methods for all students.

The *SURGE* project will train teachers in K- 3 grades in the characteristics of giftedness and the use of the culturally responsive TOPS tool. Training will include mastering an understanding of each domain, and teachers will engage in simulations of real classrooms to practice identifying students through observations. *SURGE* is also designed for teacher coaches to support identification practices within the classrooms. According to Susan Winebrenner and Dina Brulles (2008), as teachers build their capacity to recognize giftedness, more students are nominated during yearly observation periods. The TOPS tool allows teachers to recognize students at potential in nine domains of giftedness, leading to the appropriate cluster groupings and STEM camp services. Teacher capacity to use gifted and talented services, materials, and methods for all students will be expanded through the *SURGE* project.

#### **4) The extent to which the proposed project is supported by promising evidence.**

The components of the *SURGE* project including increased identification of underrepresented students; modification of instruction practices through cluster grouping; and, exposure to

advanced learning STEM opportunities are all supported by evidence.

***Promising Evidence—Raising Achievement.*** In the study, “Project Promise: A Long-Term Follow-Up of Low-Income Gifted Students Who Participated in a Summer Enrichment Program”, researchers Kaul, Johnsen, Saxon, and Witte (2016) reported that students (academically talented, low-income Hispanic and Black) who participated in summer programs, Saturday classes, and after-school math and science enrichment programs met or exceeded the reading and math achievement of White students’ scores in the same district. A key component of the MPS RtI system consists of services for gifted and talented students such as differentiation in the classroom, additional challenge intervention blocks, academic specialty opportunities, summer programs, Saturday classes, and after-school math, literacy, and science enrichment.

***Promising Evidence—Increased Number of Students.*** A study by Harradine, Coleman, and Winn (2013), *Recognizing Academic Potential in Students of Color: Findings of U-STARS-PLUS* “explored the impact of the [TOPS] tool on teachers’ ability to systematically observe and document the academic strengths of five- to nine-year-old students across nine domains” (abstract). According to the study, teachers indicated that without the TOPS, they would have overlooked the academic potential of 22% of children of color and 53% of African American boys in particular. Promising evidence from the *Expanding Excellence* and *SEE US!* project schools have identified 300 ED students in K – 3 grades using the TOPS tool, while only 38 ED students have been identified using the CogAT. The *SURGE* project will use STEM lessons rather than U-STARS~PLUS materials for the observable environment for identification, however, it is projected that the results with the TOPS tool will replicate the findings above.

##### **5) Performance feedback and continuous improvement are integral to the design.**

Reporting of evaluation findings will occur throughout the life of the project through regular

phone and in-person communication with the leadership team, UWW scholars, school staff, and external evaluators about data collection and analysis. In-person and written briefings will be provided by the evaluators for MPS educators and administrators on an annual basis to review emerging findings from both qualitative and quantitative inquiries. The intent of these briefings will be to discuss patterns in findings, as well as how the evaluation might inform program implementation and future evaluation design.

*SURGE* program staff will use the findings and feedback provided by the external evaluator for continuous improvement throughout the life of the grant. Such feedback is integral to the project's purpose of training educators to better identify and instruct gifted and talented students by gleaning areas of potential improvement from evaluation activities. Accounting for stakeholder perceptions or gaps in knowledge will be crucial for achieving the goals of improved collaboration, instruction, and capacity outlined herein; these goals cannot be accomplished without the buy-in of teachers, families, and students. Additionally, participants will be surveyed after each PD and results will be used to adjust practices and revisit concepts.

## **B. Quality of Project Personnel**

### **1) The qualifications of the project director or principal investigator.**

MPS realizes the imperative need for expanding gifted and talented identification and programs to address the socioeconomic and educational disparities in Milwaukee. The quality of the personnel is instrumental in the development and successful implementation of the *SURGE* project. The project director and key personnel for this project are among, and have been advised by, some of the nation's leading experts on underrepresentation in gifted and talented education.

**Susan O'Brien** currently serves as the project director for and manages full implementation of the MPS *SEE US!* grant. Ms. O'Brien has been a dedicated educator and leader in MPS for 26

years and maintains the experience and dedication to build relationships with all gifted and talented stakeholders. Ms. O'Brien holds a director of instruction administrative licensure from Alverno College, a master's degree from Cardinal Stritch University and a bachelor's degree in secondary education from the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee (UWM). Upon award, Ms. O'Brien will be the project director (0.5 FTE) of the *SURGE* project.

**Annalee Good, Ph.D.** will serve as principal investigator on the project. As a researcher at the WCER, co-director of the WEC, and director of the WCER Evaluation Clinic, her current projects include studies of digital tools in K–12 supplemental education, evaluation of academic tutoring partnerships, and the challenges of instruction and assessment for advanced learners. Dr. Good has published and presented numerous papers on topics, that include public contracting for digital instruction tools, the nature of the instruction landscape in out-of-schooltime tutoring, the role of tutoring in school reform, and the role of K–12 teachers in the creation of public policy. She was a classroom teacher before earning her master's and doctoral degrees in educational policy studies from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

## **2) The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel.**

MPS has a commitment to cross-departmental collaboration, such that members of several district offices will be involved in planning and support for this project.

**Vickie Brown-Gurley** serves as the interim senior director of Curriculum and Instruction. For the last seven years, she has served as a director of leadership development, regional operational manager, and school principal. Ms. Brown-Gurley is a doctoral candidate in curriculum and instruction at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Advanced academics is one area within the Curriculum and Instruction under her leadership. Ms. Brown-Gurley will work towards strategic alignment between the project and the district's Ambitious Instruction Plan.

**Dr. Patricia Ellis** currently serves as the advanced academic curriculum specialist (underfill). Dr. Ellis manages the area of advanced academics within Curriculum & Instruction and oversees Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and gifted and talented programs. Dr. Ellis earned her Doctor of Education in Leadership, Learning, and Service and her Master of Science in Educational Leadership, her Master of Education in Professional Development, from Cardinal Stritch University. She received her Bachelor of Science, Elementary Education and Communication from Carroll College. Upon award, she will be part of the SURGE leadership team and work to meld the project goals and district priorities. Dr. Ellis will communicate project activities, including achievement data, to all stakeholders.

**Dorothy Schuller** is an advanced academic coach within the advanced academics team in MPS. She provides gifted services for K-12 students districtwide, coordinates monthly Supporting Emotional Needs of the Gifted parent discussion groups and trains school districts statewide on implementation of the TOPS identification tool. Ms. Schuller worked extensively with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WI DPI) to analyze the identification of underrepresented gifted students as a member of the *Expanding Excellence* leadership team. Ms. Schuller received her Wisconsin professional educator subject gifted and talented licensure as well as the gifted and talented coordinator licensure. She earned a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from the UWM and a bachelor's degree in elementary education from University of Wisconsin-Madison. Upon award, Ms. Schuller will assist with teacher training on identification and support of classroom instruction practices.

**Melanie Stewart, Ph.D.**, serves as the director of the Department of Research, Assessment, and Data. She oversees research, assessment, student information services related to academics, the data warehouse, RtI, and the district and school improvement plans in MPS. Dr. Stewart will

oversee data collection and collaborate with the external evaluator. Dr. Stewart received a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Kent State University and a master of science and doctor of philosophy in education from the University of Akron. Dr. Stewart is a thrice-certified National Board Teacher, and she serves on the WI DPI State Superintendent's Education Data Advisory Committee.

**Other additional key personnel within MPS** who will support project implementation include the science curriculum specialist (Rochelle Sandrin), literacy and English language arts curriculum specialist (Nuntiata Buck) Achievement Gap Reduction program coordinator (Krissy Washington), and gifted and talented program support teacher (Martha Lopez). These experts have extensive education accomplishments in their respective content areas and are responsible for aligning instruction guides and disseminating expectations through PD. These individuals will develop and identify age-appropriate curriculum resources to as part of the *SURGE* project.

**Mary Ruth Coleman, Ph.D.**, is a senior scientist emerita at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She directs U-STARS~PLUS (Using Science, Talents, and Abilities to Recognize Students—Promoting Learning in Under-Represented Students). Her projects have included ACCESS (Achievement in Content and Curriculum for Every Student's Success), a "Project of National Significance" funded by the Office of Special Education Programs. Dr. Coleman will act as a consultant in SURGE implementation; in the use of the TOPS tool and the different domains of talent. Dr. Coleman has worked closely with MPS with the *Expanding Excellence* and *SEE US!* grants.

**Scott Peters, Ph.D. and Pamela Clinkenbeard, Ph.D.** are professors of Educational Foundations and co-directors of challenging advanced learners programs at UWW. Dr. Peters and Dr. Clinkenbeard are founding co-directors of Wisconsin's state education licensure

programs for "gifted teacher" and "gifted coordinator" as well as founders of UWW's master's degree emphasis in "challenging advanced learners." Both have published numerous articles and chapters on gifted student topics. Upon award of the *SURGE* project, Dr. Peters and Dr. Clinkenbeard will develop and deliver the gifted and talented PD workshop series for all demonstration site educators for the life of the grant.

**C. Quality of the Management Plan**

**1) Management plan will achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing tasks.**

The *SURGE* project has outlined goals, objectives, and activities to achieve increased collaboration, assessment, instruction, sustainability and dissemination in the management plan.

**Goal 1: Collaboration:** Increase the level and depth of collaboration among school and district personnel, students, and families to support the academic success of students from ED and culturally diverse families.

**Objectives:** A) Increase educator awareness of excellence gaps in disadvantaged student groups. B) Increase educator ability to identify and serve HA/HP students. C) Increase educator ability to strengthen home/school partnerships. D) Build partnerships and networks within participating stakeholders; school leaders, teachers, district personnel. E) Address barriers that could hinder full implementation of collaborative systems.

Activities	Timeline	Person(s) Responsible	Milestones/Outcomes/Measurements
Meet with district regional superintendents and school leaders for an information session detailing the <i>SURGE</i> project to get a commitment from five schools for project participation	November 2019	Project director and <i>SURGE</i> leadership team	Commitment from five MPS schools.  An additional three schools added in program year three.

Build partnerships and networks within participating stakeholders; school leaders, teachers, district personnel	December 2019	Project director and SURGE leadership team	Increased understanding, demonstrated by educators, of the components of an RtI system that includes gifted identification and interventions. (pre- and post-training survey)
Host family community night event featuring parent information and investigation stations for students	February 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023	Project director and SURGE leadership team	Increased attendance from families seeking information and opportunities for identified students (attendance, surveys)
Create gifted and talented parent email distribution list	January 2020	Project director and SURGE leadership team	Increased number of participants on email distribution list
Host monthly parent workshops	March 2020 and each year of grant	Project director and SURGE leadership team	Increased attendance from families seeking information and opportunities for identified students (attendance, surveys)
Facilitate monthly school-based SURGE meetings	October 2019 - September 2023	Project director and SURGE leadership team	Frequency of meetings and school-based meeting attendance data

**Goal 2: Assessment:** Increase the number of underrepresented students identified for advanced services through the evaluation of existing measures and the implementation of culturally responsive identification practices.

**Objectives:** A) Increase educator professional expertise in culturally responsive assessment practices and best practices in gifted education. B) Increase the number of students from underrepresented (ED) groups who are immersed in gifted and talented programs.

Activities	Timeline	Person(s) Responsible	Milestones/Outcomes/Measurements
Educator PD series offered in rounds of 2 one-day workshops and 1 summer workshop each grant cycle	January, March, and June 2020 for year one; year two and beyond will	Project director and SURGE leadership team, Dr. Peters, Dr. Clinkenbeard, gifted and	Increased access to gifted and talented identification methods and services for students. Increased awareness of the disproportionality of underrepresented groups (pre- and post-training survey)

	be October, January, and June 2020–2023	talented education professors	
PD on the design cycle use of STEM	June 2020 and each year	Project director and SURGE leadership team	Increased use of STEM projects created for TOPS observation windows. Alignment of STEM lessons to existing curriculum demands.
Educator PD in STEM and TOPS identification tool	Spring 2020 full one-day training and recurring quick-start trainings for new staff	Dr. Coleman, project director, and SURGE leadership team	Increased educator knowledge of non-traditional and alternative identification methods (post-training survey). Increased number of classrooms that reflect STEM-based learning environment (classroom observations – checklist). Increased numbers of ED students identified through the TOPS tool (20%).
Universal screener window for alternative identification – Teacher’s Observation of Potential in Students	Fall every year	School-based demonstration teachers, project director in collaboration with assessment team	Increased demographic diversity of students identified for gifted and talented services (student information system data collection).
Individualized gifted and talented programing options at demonstration schools in demonstration classrooms	Starting fall 2020 and available every year after	Project director and SURGE leadership team	Increased demographic diversity of students receiving RtI tier 2 and tier 3 gifted and talented education services (student participation numbers).

**Goal 3: Instruction:** Increase the percentages of high-ability/high-potential ED students that achieve at advanced levels in reading, math, and science.

**Objectives:** A) Increase educator professional expertise in culturally responsive instruction practices and best practices in gifted education. B) Increase the percentage of students from ED households who score “proficient” or above in reading, math, and science, decreasing the excellence gaps. C) Increase educator knowledge and application of the cluster grouping framework. D) Increase educator capacity to differentiate for *all* learners. E) Increase teacher

awareness of how TOPS domains can be incorporated into lesson planning and enhance student learning within the cluster groups.

Activity	Timeline	Person(s) Responsible	Milestones/Outcomes/Measurements
UW-Whitewater workshops: characteristics of giftedness, best practices in gifted education, cluster grouping differentiation practices	January 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023	Project director, SURGE leadership team, Dr. Peters, Dr. Clinkenbeard	Increased educator knowledge of equitable instruction methods (pre- and post-training survey). Increase in academic achievement in reading, math, and science (in fourth grade year following participation in third grade)
Teacher mentor support in class	Ongoing after January 2020	SURGE teacher mentors	Quantitative data on mentoring sessions. Teacher survey on mentoring experience.
Educator workshop on connecting TOPS domain to cluster groups	January 2020, June 2020, and every year after	Project director, SURGE leadership team, Dr. Coleman	Increased knowledge of how students “at potential” domains can be incorporated to increase academic achievement and engagement (pre- and post-training survey).
Analysis of student data (TOPS, CogAT, and all students in demonstration classrooms)	January 2020 and after	Project director and SURGE leadership team, teacher mentor, Dr. Peters, teachers	Evidence of Star 360, PALS, and TOPS data used to create cluster groups.
Cluster grouping and small-group instruction	Spring 2021 and every year after	SURGE classroom teachers	Increased number of students immersed in gifted and talented instruction methods (participation data). Increases in average Star math and reading scores for ED students compared to previous school years (Star assessment data). Improvements in average science scores on the Wisconsin state test in fourth grade (the year after participating in SURGE in third grade).

**Goal 4: Sustainability:** Increase schools’ capacities to sustain grant activities for a minimum of three years after Javits funding.

**Objectives:** A) Systematically continue to use the TOPS identification process in project schools. B) Develop systems and structures for schools to continue to incorporate equitable grouping practices to increase student achievement.

Activities	Timeline	Person(s) Responsible	Milestones/Outcomes/Measurements
Continued administrative support of program implementation	2022 and 2023	Project director, principals, SURGE leadership team	Fully implemented SURGE classroom learning environments (classroom observations – checklist).
Development of strategic plan for expanded district implementation	2022 and 2023	Project director, evaluation team, school-based teams	Strategic plan for sustainable independent implementation beyond the life of the Javits funding (completed strategic plan).
Process for onboarding yearly new educators	2020 and each following grant year	Project director, school teams, principals	School-based initial educator PD plan.

**Goal 5: Dissemination:** Develop and disseminate an online cluster grouping handbook.

**Objective:** A) Create an online handbook/implementation guide for implementing cluster grouping to be available to SURGE schools, MPS, and schools across the U.S. to reference successful practices, challenges, teacher and student testimonials, and cluster grouping processes and achievement data.

Activities	Timeline	Person(s) Responsible	Milestones/Outcomes/Measurements
Development of online handbook/implementation guide for dissemination purposes	October 2023	Project director and SURGE leadership team, teacher mentors, classroom teachers, school leaders	Publication of online handbook/implementation guide for educators from Milwaukee and other communities to access and reference.

**2) Feedback and continuous improvement are in the operation of the proposed project.**

The management plan is structured to ensure that goals and objectives are achieved, and that data is collected and used for ongoing project support and continuous improvement. SURGE project staff will gather feedback from participants at UWW and MPS workshops. The external

evaluators will conduct pre- and post - surveys assessing teacher understanding of STEM practices, culturally responsive teaching and student identification of potential in students. Teacher coaches will use feedback from project teachers to create implementation plans, set goals, support instruction and ensure continuous improvement. Teacher coaches will complete weekly logs of classroom visits and coaching sessions along with documentation of next steps.

During workshops, project teachers will have the opportunity to network with teachers from other project schools and discuss implementation successes and challenges. These critical conversations will build capacity for teachers to collaborate between schools. School-based monthly SURGE meetings will serve as a follow-up to PD and implementation progress monitoring. Lessons learned from previous Javits grants shows that monthly meetings ensure significant progress in implementation.

#### **D. Quality of Project Services**

The school selection process as designed in the *SURGE* project will ensure equal access and treatment for students that are members of groups that have been underrepresented. Every participating school will have an ED rate greater than 60% and will be located in a geographic area of the city where traditionally underrepresented families reside. Furthermore, schools participating must have student populations who are not proportionately reflected in the current student demographics of the district's gifted and talented programs.

To ensure equal access at each *SURGE* school, teachers will be intensely trained to recognize student talent using the culturally responsive TOPS tool. PD on creating suitable environments for student talent to emanate will be integral to project success and is articulated in the management plan. Furthermore, deficit mindsets will be challenged as teachers are trained to look at students at potential in the nine domains on the TOPS tool and avoid focusing on non-

teacher pleasing behaviors. Teacher capacity to understand and recognize the characteristics of giftedness will be met during UWW facilitated workshops. In order to positively impact student performance, intensive training will include: recognizing and nurturing “gifted” behaviors, understanding the social-emotional needs of gifted children, learning how to allow students to demonstrate mastery of concepts as to avoid under-challenging students, understanding and applying practices of how to pace the learning of new materials, planning how to incorporate student passions and interests into learning, facilitating research, and designing how to structure and provide flexible grouping opportunities for the entire class (Winebrenner & Delvin, 2001)

***Quality of Services.*** Drs. Peters and Clinkenbeard have collaborated with MPS to design workshops that include understanding giftedness, disproportionality, instruction strategies, differentiation and an overview of cluster grouping. This collaboration allows for customized professional learning to meet the measurable objectives of the *SURGE* project. As described in the quality of project personnel, Drs. Peters and Clinkenbeard are experts in gifted and talented education in the national and state-level landscape. Ongoing consultation with Drs. Peters and Clinkenbeard will ensure a high quality of services throughout the *SURGE* project.

To further ensure quality and fidelity of implementation, the *SURGE* project will add two teacher coaches who will mentor teachers in the identification process, implementation of the cluster grouping framework, and differentiated instruction. The district leadership team will use their expertise to build teacher capacity to use differentiation strategies to match instruction to student readiness. This will not only increase the academic achievement of the identified students, but all children in project classrooms will receive respectful and appropriately leveled work. The *SURGE* project will provide critical, equitable instruction for all students.

***Impact of Services.*** Services provided through the *SURGE* project will positively impact

math, reading, and science achievement of traditionally underrepresented groups and teacher quality in schools that are geographic located where traditionally underrepresented children reside. The Milwaukee community will be positively impacted as students who have opportunities to develop their talents will contribute to the job force and the local economy. Through STEM activities in project classrooms and enrichment camps, all students will realize their creative potential and develop innovative ideas as they engage in the design process.

Impact on Students. There are many gaps in the current MPS assessment process for gifted and talented identification that this project seeks to inform and rectify. There are currently 22,244 MPS students in enrolled in kindergarten through grade three, of which 98 are identified as gifted and talented through the CogAT. As of 2019, only 39% of that group are ED students. Additionally, students in kindergarten and grade one are not assessed for identification, nor are late entry second graders and new third grade students.

The *SURGE* project's goal is to identify 20% of the total school population in kindergarten through third grade or approximately 150 students in program year one. Each following year, it is expected that there will be 5% growth in identified students as new kindergarten students and new first through third grade student enter project classrooms due to mobility. Additionally, students will have the opportunity to be identified during the annual TOPS observation window as they enter a new grade level and have a new teacher. By project year three, the *SURGE* project will reach approximately 1,050 students across the eight project schools. Without the *SURGE* project's use of the TOPS tool, underrepresented children will be overlooked, resulting in lost potential and lost achievement. The project will realize a perfect representation of identified students on the Representation Index for ED students. The student impact of increased identification of traditionally underrepresented students will be life-changing. Those identified

will have the opportunity to develop their talents and increase their academic achievement.

These identified students will receive advanced learning opportunities through cluster grouping, differentiated instruction, STEM academies, and summer STEM camps.

Impact on Teachers. The PD and workshop model will help all teachers grow personally and professionally by self-reflecting on their instruction methods. Teachers will also see students through an at-potential lens and use those recognized talents to enhance instructions. Teachers will also use their new learning about the characteristics of giftedness and the nine domains of the TOPS tool in their instruction planning. This will further allow students' talents to be cultivated in a culturally responsive classroom. According to Winnebrenner & Brulles (2008) when teachers experience the positive impact of differentiation strategies, they are likely to continue to use best practices in their classrooms.

The *SURGE* project will stimulate teacher recognition of the impact of differentiation by examining student data and receiving feedback from teacher coaches. The *SURGE* project will continually assess progress via projected milestones and evaluator feedback. Teachers will engage in pre- and post-surveys to assess their understanding of student giftedness, identification, cluster grouping, and differentiation. Indicators of success are improvement of teacher practices and improved student academic achievement as described in the logic model.

MPS recognizes that urban districts must employ projects like *SURGE* that focus on identifying children's talents to better serve children in and support the achievement of their potential. The evidence-based strategies described in the proposal, collaboration with experts in gifted and talented education, history of success with previous Javits funding, and concrete evaluation methods demonstrate the project's quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of underrepresented groups.