

**Chicago Public Schools (CPS)
Start on Success (SoS) Program
Project Narrative**

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Skills for Success Proposal Narrative: Chicago Public Schools Start on Success (SoS)

Absolute Priority 1—Developing Non-Cognitive Skills in Middle-Grades Students

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) recognizes the close relationship between academic success and positive social-emotional wellbeing. On a district level, CPS works diligently to ensure that holistic learning takes place, equipping students to succeed in college and career. The district's Office of Social Emotional Learning (OSEL) provides training to school faculty, programming and counseling options for students and families, and linkages to other support services. This department has implemented successful initiatives aimed at improving individual social-emotional wellbeing and school climate. Literature has shown social and emotional learning is a key component in academic success, improved quality of teacher-student relationships, and decreased problem behavior (Durlak et al, 2011). Furthermore, the greatest returns on education investments are based in nurturing children's non-cognitive skills, giving them social, emotional and behavioral supports to succeed in life (Heckman & Masterov, 2007).

Through the proposed project, *Start on Success*, the OSEL will implement, refine, and improve a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) at eight schools to encourage non-cognitive skill development for 5th-8th graders in high-need areas of the city (where there is a high incidence of s grade retention before 9th grade). All 5th-8th grade students at participating schools will benefit from the implementation of *Developmental Design* practices in their classrooms. This Tier-I curriculum encourages positive relationships, social skill development, and engagement—factors that support teaching and learning, as well as overall student success. Additional supports (Tiers II and III) will be provided to students identified as at-risk of retention, struggling academically, and those exhibiting behavioral /disciplinary issues.

All students at participating schools will experience classroom instruction that builds social-emotional skills and motivation; simultaneously, students in need of additional social-supports will receive small group and individualized interventions to help them get back on-track. Through the proposed program, CPS will implement a system of supports to offer existing social-emotional learning (SEL) tools in a more systematic, prevention-focused approach for this high-need student population. In addition, by strategically and continuously reviewing and improving the effectiveness of the intervention, the proposed project will enable CPS to establish an effective, replicable model that other districts can use to get off-track middle grade students back on-track before retention, and to promote a successful transition to high school.

Absolute Priority 2—Supporting High-Need Students

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) is the nation’s third-largest school district, serving approximately 400,000 students across the city. CPS is a high-need local educational agency, with 32.5% of students from families with incomes below the poverty line (Census Data, 2012). Additionally, 40% of CPS students are African American, 45% are Hispanic, 16% are English Language Learners, and 13% have Individual Education Plans (IEP) in place. Approximately 85% of all CPS students qualify for free- or reduced-price lunch (FoRL), used to identify students from low-income households.

For the purposes of this funding opportunity, CPS will implement the Start on Success (SoS) program at schools located in communities with the highest concentrations of 5th-8th grade students at risk of educational failure (schools with the highest retention rates before 8th grade). The communities with the highest concentration of these students are: 1) West Side in North Lawndale, South Lawndale, East and West Garfield Park, Austin, and Humboldt Park; and 2) South Side in New City, Gage Park, Chicago Lawn and West Englewood. (See the Heat Map

attached as Appendix 1). These communities also have high concentrates of students from low-income households and minority populations.

Each year, approximately 3,000 CPS students are retained between 3rd-8th grades—meaning that they will not transition to high school on time. Research indicates that these students are at highest risk for not completing high school (Allensworth & Easton, 2005; 2007). To address the needs of its students, CPS utilizes a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). MTSS is a process that provides high-quality, research-based instruction. Needs are identified by monitoring students' progress, and adjustments to instruction and interventions are based on students' performance and rate of success. MTSS provides high-quality, standards-based instruction and intervention that is matched to students' academic, social and behavioral needs.

While the District has a MTSS for all students, middle grade students at-risk of failure need specialized and intensive support, remediation, and acceleration in order to be prepared for high school. Although middle grade students who have already been retained receive academic and social-emotional supports to help get them back on track, the district does not have a proven model for specifically targeting middle grade students *at risk* of retention. The proposed SoS Program will therefore allow CPS to create and test a proactive—rather than reactive—model to encourage non-cognitive skills and provide social-emotional supports to middle grade students at-risk of not making a successful, on-time transition to high school.

During Years 1 and 2 of the project, the external evaluator (AIR) will collect a wealth of data on the impact of the program on students, teachers, and school environments. Based on these findings, revisions will be made to the project design. In Year 3, this refined model will be implemented at 4 CPS Schools with high-need middle grade students. Years 1 and 2 focus on a smaller number of schools and rich formative feedback on implementation and outcomes, while

Year 3 will focus a greater number of schools and summatively evaluating implementation and outcomes. In this way, CPS can demonstrate scalability while devoting an identical quality of service to all participants. Through the proposed SoS Program, CPS will serve approximately 3,500 students, as well as 125 teachers, over the three years of the project.

A. Significance

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is the process of developing students' social-emotional competencies—the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that individuals need to make successful choices (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2003). SEL promotes activities that develop children's ability to recognize and manage emotions, build relationships, solve interpersonal problems, and make effective and ethical decisions (Payton et al., 2000). Developing social and emotional skills is critical for students living in under-resourced areas, both urban and rural. Students in areas that are under-resourced are surrounded by added stressors that may increase learning difficulties. When students develop social-emotional competencies, they are more capable of seeking help, managing emotions, and problem-solving in difficult situations (Romasz, Kantor, & Elias, 2004).

According to CASEL, there are five core social-emotional competencies, each addressing multiple skills that students need to be successful in school and their future careers:

- **Self-awareness** is the ability to recognize one's own feelings, interests, and strengths, in addition to maintaining an accurate level of self-efficacy. Students who are self-aware are capable of describing and understanding their own emotions. In addition, they are capable of recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses (Payton et al., 2000). Students' beliefs about their own strengths and weaknesses influence the academic choices they make, how long they will persist on tasks (Zimmerman, 2000), and whether or not they will ask

for help on academic tasks (Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley, 1998).

- **Self-management skills** allow individuals to handle daily stresses and control their emotions under difficult situations. Students' capacities to regulate their emotions impact student memory and the cognitive resources they use on academic tasks (Gross, 2002). Self-management skills include the ability to monitor and reflect on personal and academic goal-setting. Academic self-regulation has important implications for student motivation, as well as their ability to master material (Clearly & Zimmerman, 2004).
- **Social awareness** allows individuals to take others' perspectives into account and to empathize with others. Socially aware students are more likely to recognize and appreciate the similarities and differences of others. Social awareness is particularly important for students as they participate in new instructional shifts.
- **Relationship management** allows students to develop and maintain healthy relationships with others, including the ability to resist negative social pressures, resolve interpersonal conflict, and seek help when needed. Students need to be able to work well with their classmates in order to participate in collaborative groups.
- **Responsible decision making** enables students to keep in mind multiple factors—such as ethics, standards, respect, and safety concerns—when making decisions. This includes students' capacity to identify problems and develop appropriate solutions to those problems, whether social or academic (Payton et al., 2000).

The link between social-emotional health / competency and academic success has been widely established. Indeed, a meta-analysis of 213 studies of universal Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs with more than 270,000 kindergarten through high schools, SEL students (compared to controls) demonstrated improved social and emotional skills attitudes

about the self, others and school; behavior (reduced conduct and internalizing problems); and academic performance, including an average 11-percentile point improvement in achievement (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Effects were robust to grade level (elementary, middle, high school) and setting (urban, suburban, and rural). Analysis made clear that school staff can implement SEL programming but that effectiveness is moderated by implementation practices. Specifically, programs showed better outcomes when using the SAFE practices approach: sequenced step-by-step training, active forms of learning, focus sufficient time on skill development, and explicit learning goals (Bond & Hauf, 2004; Durlak, 1997; Durlak et al., 2011; Dusenbury & Falco, 1995; Gresham, 1995). Findings highlight the importance of improving the educational attainment and opportunities for children from poorer backgrounds for increasing social mobility and provide suggestive evidence that that policies focusing on non-cognitive skills such as self-esteem and application may be effective in achieving these goals. Additionally, despite non-cognitive skills' central roles in education, education analysis and policy more broadly have tended to overlook their importance, resulting in limited strategies to nurture them within the school.

CPS has long recognized the link between non-cognitive skills and academic achievement. Much in the same way as the district created and gradually incorporated a variety of academic supports according to a graduated, tiered system of scholastic supports, CPS has created a tiered model of supports around social-emotional needs. Toward that end, the district created its Office of Social Emotional Learning (OSEL), which promptly set about to resolve gaps in counseling services and address issues around negative school climate through an MTSS. Tier I (or universal approaches) were created aimed at instilling SEL best practices in the general education classroom, providing teachers and other educational staff with the baseline knowledge

required to create more inclusive, emotionally safe learning environments. Small group or Tier II interventions focus on higher need students, while individualized or Tier III is provided by staff that provide therapeutic intervention on an as needed basis.

Despite these advances, CPS is committed to continuing to refine and test its efforts to address the needs of specific student populations. One of these groups is known as Age Cycle 15, a designation applied to any student retained in the crucial benchmark grades (3rd and 6th) who will turn 15 before Sept 1 at the start of their Freshman Year. This cohort is considered among the most at-risk for remaining off-track by the end of the Freshman Year, suffering academic failure, and ultimately dropping out before earning their diploma. Students in grades 5-8 are considered a high-risk group for becoming disengaged from their school and engaging in negative social-emotional behaviors, as the middle grades are a significant time of both academic and social-emotional change for adolescents. This is a critical time for students, both developmentally and academically, and a moment of potential peril. More students get off track academically between eighth and ninth grade than any other grade, and ninth grade failure is a key predictor for students not graduating from high school. A preventative approach refining and coordinating existing supports in all three tiers of service will improve the non-cognitive skills of this underserved population. By reaching all students, including those considered at risk for future academic failure, and students already been retained at least once, CPS is building a proactive and positive pipeline of students who will succeed in high school and beyond.

CPS, working with external evaluator American Institutes for Research (AIR) will provide a replicable model of particular applicability for schools and schools districts serving predominantly minority enrollment, low-income student populations. By implementing and evaluating highly promising non-cognitive curricula, activities, and approaches, the district will

learn what works and establish pathways for continuous improvement. Over the course of three academic years, the district will bolster teacher training and services so that all students will report improved non-cognitive skills development.

B. Project Design

In order to meet the varied social-emotional needs of CPS students, the district has instituted a comprehensive MTSS model, offering a myriad of services and interventions. A new addition to the MTSS framework, CPS proposes *Start on Success* (SoS) Program to improve coordination and implementation of SEL for high-need middle grade students. The proposed project will employ piloting and continuous improvement, and rigorous evaluation across three years. The theory of action informing program design is included as Appendix 2: Logic Model

Based on the goal of promoting a successful, on time transition to high school for high need students, CPS examined metrics and data sets to choose four schools to serve as pilot sites in Years 1 and 2 of the project (2 schools per pilot year). The first selection criteria is the schools' location in one of the high need communities—where there is a high concentration of student retention. Secondly, schools will be selected based on the following criteria:

- a. Schools with a high number/percentage of students participating in Summer Acceleration Programming (students who have been retained before high school);
- b. Schools with the greatest need for additional wrap-around, non-cognitive / social-emotional services (not currently implementing a specific SEL intervention); and
- c. Schools with student populations exhibiting key risk factors such as course failure, low attendance rates, and high incidence of disciplinary actions).

A chart listing proposed schools along with an explanation of specific data sets is listed below.

Table 1. Selected Demographic Data of Year 1 and 2 Pilot Schools

<i>Name of School</i>	<i>Community Area/ Location</i>	<i>% low income</i>	<i>% English language learners</i>	<i># 5-8th graders</i>	<i>% Off-Track *</i>	<i># Behavioral Incidents (Level 3 or higher)**</i>
<i>School 1/Pilot 1</i>	Austin	93.2	39.6	551	41	16
<i>School 2/ Pilot 1</i>	Gage Park	93.0	43.5	489	43	18
<i>School 1/Pilot 2</i>	Chicago Lawn	98.1	16.2	942	44	14
<i>School 2/Pilot 2</i>	New City/ Gage Park	93.4	43.1	577	40	45

*** Percentage Off-Track:* On-track is considered completion of at least 5 course credits with no failures, and a 90%+ attendance rate; off-track students are those not meeting these requirements.
*** Behavioral Incidents (#3 or higher):* CPS tracks behavioral incidents requiring disciplinary action. Behavioral incidents are rated from 1-5, with 5 being the most severe. Level 3 or above represents high level incidents requiring at least an in-school suspension, with likely other consequences. All CPS schools collect and track this data based on standardized metrics.

Following Bryk and colleagues (2015), this project will use a Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) approach for each development cycle. Working with AIR, CPS will plan and deliver implementation of the proposed intervention, study implementation and outcomes by reviewing programmatic data at the end of each cycle and making changes for improvement. Likewise, the district is using a “scale-up” model, increasing the number of schools and students to be served over time (2 schools in Year 1, 2 schools in Year 2, 4 schools in Year 3).

Based on the SEL and academic needs of the targeted population, the SoS Program will integrate, coordinate, and refine the following MTSS strategies at participating schools:

Tier 1: At the Tier 1 Level (Universal), students receive generalized supports that emphasize peer to peer, and teacher to student relationships, creating a more positive school climate. The Tier 1 model to be implemented, *Developmental Design*, practices and actively builds skills and engagement in three key areas of school life: a) social-emotional, b) community,

and c) academic. *Developmental Design* builds on concepts such as creating student designed classroom and school rules, adding the best elements of restorative practices such as classroom circles/councils and the implementation of a mutually agreed upon social contract.

This Tier 1 intervention will be rolled out in phases; All 5th-8th grade teachers at two schools will be trained during Year 1 and Year 2 (Pilot 1 and Pilot 2). The program and evaluation teams will review data collected from these initial pilots annually to measure the impact of the intervention and make revisions/changes to the program as needed. Based on these results and program refinement over the first two years of the project, teachers from four schools will receive training during Year 3, to examine progressive scalability of SoS. Participating instructors will be trained on key concepts and incorporating activities and practices into regular instruction. Once trained, teachers will begin the implementation of theories, practices, and activities. Using this delayed training roll out, teachers will have the opportunity to fully absorb the training, practice its components, reflect on success, and adapt accordingly.

The district envisions an estimated 125 teacher becoming trained over the course of the SoS program, with 35 in Year 1, 50 in Year 2, and 40 in Year 3 (based on schools currently identified for pilot sites). Activities, which are implemented throughout the year and integrated with regular classroom instruction, include:

Table 2. *Developmental Design* Competencies

<i>Goal Setting</i>	Students set long-term and daily academic and social goals for themselves and periodically assess how well they have met those goals, as well as goals set by the teacher.
<i>Social Contract</i>	Brings staff and students together to create a set of behavioral guidelines that they use to tend to the health of the community throughout the year.
<i>Pathways to Self-Control</i>	Gives teachers and students clear responsibilities for responding to and changing misbehavior, and help students get back on track as quickly as possible.

<i>Circle of Power & Respect</i>	Structured daily advisory meetings bring students together in a fun, lively, safe, respectful meeting format that includes a greeting, sharing, activity, and daily news message.
<i>Power of Play</i>	Targeted activities that emphasizes group games provide inclusive fun, allowing teachers to build a repertoire that can be used all day long to bring movement, teamwork, friendly competition, and enjoyment into students' scholarly lives.

In addition to the DD training, SoS will also emphasize additional training and coaching opportunities for teachers. Towards that end, CPS will contract with *Developmental Design* to provide coaches who will observe classroom sessions. These observation sessions will provide a crucial feedback mechanism, allowing teachers to better understand areas of aptitude, and areas for improvement. CPS will also actively work with DD to share outcome and evaluation data, creating a process for continual improvement. The SoS Management team will consider findings and work with DD to adapt training sessions accordingly, tailoring curriculum to better meet the needs of teachers and students within CPS, as well as offering a model for other urban districts.

Tier II: Tier II interventions (typically defined as small group) are another essential component in a well-executed MTSS model such as the SoS program. Using previous school year data (early warning indicator inclusion, course failure(s), attendance below 90%, and high level behavioral infractions), and staff recommendations (from behavioral health teams, school social workers, teachers and principals), CPS will choose Tier II participants who will begin group services during the 1st semester. In a given year, approximately 15% of a school's enrollment qualifies for and is recruited for Tier II services. Within SoS, CPS will continue to offer *existing* Tier II interventions at the selected student's school. These targeted interventions are specifically designed for students to reach proficiency in social-emotional / non-cognitive domains that also negatively impact academic success. In this model, Tier II interventions will be carried out by school social workers / existing community based partners.

Tier II requires the analysis of multiple measures to determine need, provide targeted supports, and frequently monitor, and evaluate progress. Sessions typically occur in small-group pull out sessions, during the regular school day, but not during instructional time. Tier II services are usually provided once per week, but can and may take place more frequently. At the end of the first semester, the intervention used will be assessed, and a student may be recommended for higher intensity, Tier III services. At this time it will be determined whether the identified student will receive both Tier II and Tier III services simultaneously, or solely participate in Tier III. The Targeted schools may use some, if not all of the following Tier II interventions as part of the SoS program:

1. *Cognitive Behavioral Interventions for Trauma in Schools CBITS*: CBITS is an evidence-based cognitive behavioral intervention that targets symptoms of exposure to violence and trauma demonstrated by students. The strategy is designed to be provided by licensed clinical providers to small groups of students.
2. *Anger Coping & Think First*: Anger Coping and Think First prepares elementary and high school clinicians to provide small group cognitive behavioral interventions to students demonstrating difficulties managing their anger in appropriate ways.
3. *Behavior Education Program (BEP) Check-in/Check-out*: The BEP is a school-based program for providing daily support and monitoring for students who are at risk for developing serious or chronic problem behaviors. It is based on a daily check-in/check-out system that provides each student with immediate feedback on his or her behavior (via a teacher rating on a Daily Progress Report) and increased positive adult attention.

Tier III: Tier III represents an increased intensity intervention, a measure reserved for students at imminent risk of retention, course failure(s), and/or demonstrating problematic social-

emotional behaviors that have not noticeably improved during the first semester. Approximately 5% of 5th-8th grade students typically use Tier III services in a given year. Going through the standard district referral process, students will be identified for inclusion by teachers, social workers (coordinating Tier II), and by the school's principal. Participating schools will host an orientation meeting, inviting parents / guardians to attend as well. Depending on population size, a varying numbers of Youth Advisor Programs (YAP) Advocates will be embedded within the school, working a maximum of 20 hours per week serving a total caseload of between 10-15 students, serving youth in grades 5-8. Advocates will begin working in the school *before* starting services to familiarize themselves with school climate, staff, and students.

During the first meeting, Advocates, under the supervision of a Program Director will provide student in-take and begin working with their clients interviewing them and drafting a series of short-term and intermediate goals to inform future sessions. YAP maintains a flexible model, offering longer formal meetings, but also utilizing 10-15 minute check-in sessions to meet more pressing needs as they arise. Sessions may cover, but are not limited to the following: anger management, impulse control, mediation and calmly resolving conflicts, interest inventories and career exploration, and transitioning (in the special case of 8th graders).

The YAP Advocate or Program Director can and may also conduct "family sessions" before or after the regular school day, bringing together their student and the student's parent/guardian to assess potential out of school barriers to academic and social-emotional well-being. Where needs are identified, the Advocate will work with the school to help connect families to CPS and community resources such as no or low cost medical options, food and clothing pantries. The Advocate will also conduct a follow up session to determine whether progress has been made, and where needed, if linkages to support services have been made.

During the summer following each academic year, CPS will work closely with YAP and AIR to rate quantitative and qualitative changes from start of services to close of service of the 25 weeks of intervention. Findings will inform areas for improvement, including (potentially) additional training modules for Advocates, changes to caseload size, session scheduling, in-take procedures, and/or staffing models.

Finally, YAP Advocates will maintain regular communication with students for up to one year following post intervention. Check-up phone calls / interviews with Advocates will provide a qualitative way to compare with quantitative data sets for the following year from baseline. Students requesting or requiring Tier III services at participating schools during the first semester will not be denied treatment, and may continue to receive counseling during the semester in addition to YAP. A programmatic timeline, listing all Tier I-III activities and evaluation has been included in the table below.

Table 3. Project Timeline

SoS Program Timeframe	Description
<i>Year 1</i>	
October 2015	School selection for Pilot 1; management team meets, including AIR, <i>Developmental Design</i> , and Youth Advocate Programs
November- December 2015	Program manager meets with/provides outreach and education to schools, principals, and network chiefs to build buy-in
November- January 2015	YAP Advisors hired and trained for Pilot 1 schools
November 2015 – May 2016	Tier II student identification, intake and service provision using existing group programming in Pilot 1 schools delivered by school social workers and psychologists
December 2015 – February 2016	Tier III referral, YAP orientation session / parent meetings at Pilot 1 schools
January- May 2016	5 th to 8 th grade teachers at Pilot 1 schools receive training in <i>Developmental Design I</i> , with one day of training per month
January – May 2016	<i>Developmental Design</i> concepts, competencies and activities used in 5 th -8 th grade classrooms at Pilot 1 schools
January – May 2016	Tier III services provided by YAP Advisors at Pilot 1 schools
February – April 2016	Development Design Coaching and Observation Sessions

June- July 2016	Year-end data reviewed; management team and partners discuss results and implement continuous improvement plan (for additional detail on the evaluation timeline, see Section D).
Year 2	
August 2016	School selection for Pilot 2; management team meets, including AIR, <i>Developmental Design</i> , and Youth Advocate Programs
September 2016 – May 2017	Tier II student identification, intake and service provision using existing group programming in Pilot 2 schools delivered by school social workers and psychologists
October – November 2016	Additional YAP Advisors hired and trained for Pilot 2 schools
October 2016 – February 2017	5 th to 8 th grade teachers at Pilot 2 schools receive training in <i>Developmental Design I</i> , with one day of training per month
October 2016 – May 2017	<i>Developmental Design</i> concepts, competencies and activities used in 5 th -8 th grade classrooms at Pilot 2 schools
November 2015 - January 2016	Tier III referral, YAP orientation session / parent meetings at Pilot 2 schools
January – May 2017	Tier III services provided by YAP Advisors
March – April 2017	Development Design Coaching and Observation Sessions
July 2017	Year-end data reviewed; management team and partners discuss results and implement continuous improvement plan
Year 3	
August 2017	School selection for Year 3 schools; management team meets, including AIR, <i>Developmental Design</i> , and Youth Advocate Programs
September 2017 – May 2018	Tier II student identification, intake and service provision using existing group programming at Year 3 schools delivered by school social workers and psychologists
October 2017 – February 2018	5 th to 8 th grade teachers receive training in <i>Developmental Design I</i> , with one day of training per month
October 2017 – May 2018	<i>Developmental Design</i> concepts, competencies and activities used in classrooms
October 2017 – May 2018	Tier II intake, and service provision using existing group programming in schools delivered by school social workers and psychologists
December 2017	Tier III referral, YAP orientation session / parent meeting
January – May 2018	Tier III services provided by YAP Advisors
March – April 2018	Development Design Coaching and Observation Sessions
August 2018	Final report, submission to research journals, packaging or intervention program for replication

C. Management Plan

CPS has a wealth of experience working with university partners to develop and test impactful programs through research and evaluation. CPS has conducted program research

through large federal grants both alone and in partnership with leading research universities, including the University of Chicago Urban Education Lab, the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research, the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC), DePaul University, Northwestern University, and the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT). Grant-funded research involving CPS has led to the development of innovative program models that support student achievement and teacher effectiveness, while simultaneously seeking innovative education-based solutions to challenges facing the U.S. in the coming decades.

The SoS Program will be overseen by the **Project Manager**, Ms. Clair Schu, an SEL Specialist, housed in the OSEL. As manager, Ms. Schu will coordinate with school teams, training staff, and community partners to lead continuous improvement and program implementation activities. As part of the OSEL team, Ms. Schu has experience organizing district-wide trainings, as well as ongoing coaching and support for schools implementing SEL classroom strategies. She has also presented at teacher professional development sessions for schools implementing SEL curriculum. Ms. Schu has a wealth of experience working in the nonprofit sector related to the design and implementation of SEL curriculum and programming.

Amy Mart in the CPS OSEL will serve as the **Project Director/PI for the SoS Program**. She will provide support to the Project Manager, and brings a wealth of expertise related to SEL, curricula implementation, and grant administration to the project team. Ms. Mart has served as the Manager of Universal Supports in the OSEL since 2013. In this role, Ms. Mart oversees implementation of evidence-based strategies for SEL skills instruction and classroom management, and has led the integration of SEL with numerous, district-wide initiatives. She has also served as project director for two successful Investing in Innovation (i3) grants.

Karen Van Ausdal, **Executive Director of the OSEL**, will serve in advisory role as part of the SoS Management Team. Ms. Van Ausdal will help monitor its implementation, directly supervising the Project Manager and Project Director. As Executive Director of OSEL, Ms. Van Ausdal has led implementation of an MTSS model throughout CPS, and has overseen improved school climate measures, a 17% drop in out-of-school suspensions, the institution of 20 expulsion-alternative pilot sites, and adoption of evidence-based SEL strategies.

School social workers and psychologists, who provide the Tier II services to students at the school level, are housed within the CPS Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services (ODLSS). As such, members of the ODLSS team will serve as part of the SoS Program management team (time provided in-kind) to help inform the program's design, implementation, and continuous improvement. The **Deputy Chief Officer of the ODLSS**, Kate Anderson Foley, Ph.D. will serve as a member of the SoS Program management team. In her role as Chief Officer, Dr. Foley provides oversight of citywide assessment teams, as well as over 1,200 services providers related to instructional supports and services for all diverse learners across the district. Also from the ODLSS, Sarah Dentz, **Executive Director of Pupil Personnel Services**, and Noemi Ramos, **Social Worker**, Anthony Adamowski, **Senior School Psychology Manager**, will provide support to schools, social workers, and psychologists related to the SoS Program.

Tier III provider **Youth Advocate Programs (YAP)** will work closely with CPS to deliver programming and serve on the program management team. YAP has a reputation for offering quality services, garnering special recognition from The New York Times, MSNBC, and the book, *How Children Succeed*, for their work in Chicago with gang-involved youth on the South and West Sides. YAP has worked with CPS since 2009, and currently provides services to youth preparing to re-enter school, and at-risk youth attending Network 11 high schools.

YAP maintains a hierarchical structure with SoS activities ultimately led and directed by **Regional Director**, David Ryan Williams. Mr. Williams will directly manage and supervise the YAP Program Directors (below), coordinating the day to day management of community based programs such as SoS. Mr. Williams will also assist the Program Directors in an advisory role, helping to review data collected and redefining the program model in future yearly cycles.

The Program Directors are responsible for the overall administration of the SoS YAP component including the provision of client services, personnel management (Advocates), and budget management. These individuals will assist with the identification, recruitment, hiring, training, monitoring and supervision of all Advocates. The Program Directors will work closely with school principals to ensure that the Advocates are working well with students and supportive of general school staff's efforts. The Program Directors will also work closely with AIR and CPS to ensure that all programmatic reports, in-take, and evaluation is streamlined and consistent.

The **Advocate** will initiate, organize, plan, develop and implement direct services to assigned clients. Advocates work closely with clients to create plans based on a strength-based approach. The Advocate will develop objectives to be achieved during the client's participation in the program and ensure that activities coincide with the needs, interests and wants of the student. Related to evaluation and quality of service provision, it is essential that the Advocate accurately complete the weekly reports, vouchers, and other required documents. One unique hallmark of the YAP model is the commitment to hiring culturally competent staff. In Chicago, the cultural competence of staff is especially important because of the unique localized neighborhood challenges. Skilled advocates who live in the same communities as the student population are in the best position to understand what challenges the youth face in their communities.

American Institutes for Research (AIR) will lead the evaluation component. AIR is an independent, nonpartisan, not-for-profit organization that conducts behavioral and social science research. The Education program at AIR is committed to applying the best research evidence available to ensure that all students—particularly those facing the greatest disadvantages—have access to a high-quality, effective education. Additional information on the AIR team who will work on the SoS Program is included in Appendix 5 of this application.

D. Project Evaluation

AIR’s two-phase evaluation begins with a **formative evaluation** featuring a continuous improvement approach with iterative development cycles followed by a **summative evaluation** employing a rigorous quasi-experimental design (QED) that meets What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Evidence Standards with reservations. As outlined in Table 4 below, the formative evaluation begins in Project Year 1 with the first development cycle (implementation and formative data collection) at two schools and program revision and improvement (using evaluation findings). The development cycle is then repeated in two new schools in Project Year 2. The summative evaluation begins in Project Year 2 with preparation (e.g., baseline data collection, matching) and the full summative evaluation study being implemented at 16 schools (four SoS schools and 12 schools with comparison students) through Project Year 3.

Table 4. Study Timeline

PROJECT YEAR	Year 1				Year 2				Year 3			
CALENDAR YEAR	2015	2016			2017			2018				
QUARTER	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
FORMATIVE EVALUATION												
Baseline Data Collection	X											
Development Cycle 1 (Cohort 1: 2 Schools)		X	X									
Revise/Improve (July)				X								
Development Cycle 2 (Cohort 2: 2 Schools)				X	X	X	X					
Revise/Improve (July)								X				
SUMMATIVE EVALUATION												

Baseline Data Collection							X					
Propensity-Matched Study (Cohort 3: 4 Treatment, 12 Comparison Schools*)								X	X	X	X	
Analysis/Reporting												X

Note: *Students in 4 participating schools will receive the intervention but will be propensity-matched with similar students in 12 “business as usual” comparisons schools.

As detailed earlier, the demographics of CPS mirrors other American urban districts, allowing us to provide guidance about effective strategies suitable for replication or testing in other settings. Further, AIR will increase the generalizability of findings by including an array of schools, teachers, and students in the evaluations: 8 treatment schools (N=4 formative evaluation; N=4 summative evaluation) and 12 “business as usual” comparisons schools in the summative evaluation; 96 teachers (N=48 formative; N=48 summative), based on a assumption of 12 teachers per school, which will depend on schools selected; and 4,320 students (N=1,440 formative evaluation; N=2,880 [1,440 treatment and 1,440 comparison] summative).

Formative Evaluation (Years 1 and 2). AIR will examine SoS implementation in four development schools (two in Year 1 and two in Year 2) through two Developmental Cycles. In each Developmental Cycle, AIR will formatively assess the training and implementation (on usability, feasibility, and fidelity) to guide revisions to DD training and support and YAP programming. By including different sets of schools in the Developmental Cycles, lessons learned build upon each other, with lessons learned in Cycle 1 implemented in Cycle 2 and 3 in a the new set of schools, reducing unintended carry-over effects. A range of data will be collected from a variety of participants at the beginning and/or end of the each developmental cycle to (1) examine implementation, (2) assess school-level change in student outcomes, and (3) inform program revisions and improvements. Data sources are detailed below.

Implementation Fidelity Data: **Teacher focus groups:** all participating teachers immediately following *Developmental Design* PD at the beginning of the cycle; topics include perceptions of the training (e.g., effectiveness, quality) and feasibility of implementing *Developmental Design* strategies. **YAP mentor focus groups:** all YAP mentors at the end of the semester; topics include experiences in the role and facilitators and barriers to their work with Tier II and Tier III students and families (if applicable). **Teacher interviews:** two teachers (randomly selected) per grade at the end of the semester; topics include how often and in what ways they implemented *Developmental Design* (e.g., community-building advisory, goal setting), perceptions of changes in the classroom, and facilitators and barriers to implementing the approach. **Mentor logs:** completed throughout the semester; measures dosage of programming for students receiving Tier II and III services (e.g., dates the mentors met with the students, structure of the meeting—small group, individual, family session). **Classroom observations:** all participating teachers will be observed twice (once pre-PD and once at the end of the development cycle) using the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System – Upper Elementary (CLASS)*. Measures examine student-teacher interactions within three broad domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. **Student survey (Tier II and Tier III students):** brief, online surveys of Tier II and Tier III students, once at the end of the semester. Topics include: participation in Tier II and III services, perceptions of the supports, and perceptions of impact on the student.

Student Outcome Data: **Student Survey (all students).** Brief, online student surveys of all students in Grades 5-8, twice each semester (prior to teacher participation in PD and end of semester). Measures include: social and emotional skills (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible-decision making skills), interpretation of difficulty (how they interpret difficulty on school-related tasks); disruptive behavior (how often

leave classrooms due to misbehavior); initiative-taking behavior (efforts in taking initiative).

Administrative data: Multiple years (at least three) of student demographic, achievement, discipline, attendance, and other Early Warning indicator data used to identify students at-risk for retention; collected for all students at the beginning and end of each Developmental Cycle. Measures will include: age, race/ethnicity, gender, grade, enrollment status, leave codes, core GPA, attendance rates, grade retention, standardized test scores (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)), suspensions, and expulsions.

Analysis. Interview and focus group transcripts will be analyzed qualitatively, identifying key themes with examples and quotations. Survey data will be analyzed psychometrically to examine statistical validity and reliability using the Rasch rating scale model (Wright & Masters, 1982), and the resulting scale scores can be used in parametric inferential models exploring the relationship between implementation and outcomes. Quantitative data (e.g., survey scale scores, CLASS ratings, administrative data) will be summarized using descriptive statistics (multiple measures of central tendency and distribution information). These analyses are intended to be used for formative assessment to guide revisions to materials and so will be delivered at the end of each Development Cycle to allow time for such revisions to take place before the next cycle.

Summative Evaluation (Year 3). AIR will employ a quasi-experimental propensity-matched study to examine outcomes of SoS implementation. The processes for selecting schools and identifying students are outlined below, followed by data sources and analysis plans.

Selecting Treatment Schools. First, AIR and CPS will identify a sample of 16 consenting high-need schools across Chicago to be invited to participate in the summative evaluation, based key school characteristics (e.g., percent of CY15 students, school climate survey data). The identified set of schools will include 4 subsets of 4 schools dispersed geographically across the

city and serving different student populations (African American, Hispanic/ELL), thus increasing generalizability of findings to similar schools within Chicago and other urban districts. Four schools, 1 within each subset of 4 schools, will be randomly selected to serve as treatment school, with the remaining schools used to identify comparison students (see below).

Propensity Matched-Comparison Sample. AIR will develop a matched comparison sample in two stages. First, it will develop a selection model that uses school and student characteristics to predict whether students enroll in treatment schools. This model generates a predicted value (a propensity score) for each student's likelihood of enrolling in a treatment school given background characteristics and prior achievement. In the second stage, the propensity scores will create a matched comparison sample of students who did and did not enroll in the treatment schools but share similar propensities to do so—minimizing self-selection bias and maximizing internal validity. Matching students in treatment schools with similar counterparts in comparison schools (from subset of schools from which the treatment school was randomly selected) will allow for efficient analysis of student-level treatment vs. comparison in outcomes as a proxy for school-level intervention, given that a school-level QED or experiment meeting evidence standards would be inadequately powered and cost-prohibitive. AIR will use nearest-neighbor matching techniques (Rubin, 1973) to identify matches within cohorts and impose calipers to ensure that propensity differences between matches are capped at values that produce baseline-equivalence and maximize internal validity. Matching will be conducted within subset samples and within grade, prior achievement information available for different grades.

Given the complex interplay between internal and external validity in PSM designs, AIR will conduct sensitivity analyses to examine trade-offs between (1) allowing greater propensity differences between matches in order to produce a larger matched sample, with potentially less

overlap in the covariate distributions of students who do and do not enroll in treatment schools (higher external, lower internal validity) and (2) maintaining a smaller matched sample, with students whose propensity scores are more closely matched (lower external, higher internal validity). Given the expectation to conduct an evaluation that meets WWC with reservations, AIR will also assess baseline equivalence of these different samples and select the approach that optimizes this internal vs. external validity tradeoff. AIR has conducted similar PSM studies (e.g., R305A150403) with CPS and produced comparison samples matching more than 95 percent of treatment students, using calipers of 0.10, and that produced no differences in baseline characteristics exceeding 0.25 standard deviations per WWC.

Data Sources. The summative evaluation will examine both implementation and outcomes of SoS programming. Implementation data will include several sources also collected in the Formative Evaluation (treatment schools only): teacher focus groups, mentor focus groups, classroom observations, mentor logs, and surveys of Tier II and Tier III students. Student surveys of all matched students (treatment and comparison) and administrative data (treatment and comparison students) will be collected to examine student outcomes. In addition to these data sources, an online **teacher survey** will be administered to treatment teachers to examine implementation fidelity (extent to which they use *Developmental Design* teaching practices and support the development of student social and emotional skills) and potential outcomes (teacher self-efficacy, perceptions of student behavior, commitment, attitudes).

Analyses. Survey data will be analyzed psychometrically to examine statistical validity and reliability and calculate scale scores using the Rasch rating scale model (Wright & Masters, 1982). Quantitative measures (CLASS ratings, survey scale scores, administrative data and mentor log data) will be summarized using descriptive statistics, including multiple measures of

central tendency and distribution, and will assess pre-post school-level change. Focus group transcripts will be assessed qualitatively for key themes as well as examples and quotations.

Using the full matched comparison samples, AIR will compare treatment vs. comparison students on each outcome of interest, including on-track and early warning (course failures) indicators, self-regulatory behaviors (attendance), academic achievement (test scores, course performance) and grade promotion. Using an intent-to-treat approach, a regression model will estimate the relationship between treatment status and each outcome while controlling school and student characteristics to allow for residual covariate adjustment (beyond matching procedures). Sensitivity analyses will test if findings are robust to modeling approach (multi-level modeling, clustered standard errors) and missing data approach (listwise deletion, multiple imputation, inverse probability weighting). Across-grade (5-8) analyses are powered for a minimal detectable effect size (MDES) of 0.06 for continuous and 0.13 (Cox Index) for binary outcomes (within grade analyses MDES=0.11 for continuous; 0.27 for binary).

Conclusion

Through the SoS Program, CPS will provide proactive and comprehensive social-emotional supports to high-need middle grade students at risk of not making a successful, on-time transition to high school. By providing these services during the middle grades, CPS hopes to increase the number of students who are on-track to graduate high school by the beginning of 9th grade. In addition, the project's continuous improvement strategy will allow the district to test the effectiveness of these interventions—individually, and as part of a multi-tiered system, in order to refine the model. Through this process, CPS will enhance the impact of these interventions, as well as provide a replicable model for other high-need districts to utilize.