



Press Release

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Date: October 18, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Center for Supportive Schools Selected by U.S. Department of Education for 2017 Education Innovation and Research (EIR) Program Grant

Five-year federal grant will replicate and evaluate a school-based, middle school transition and cross-age peer mentoring program

Princeton, NJ – The Center for Supportive Schools (CSS) was selected as one of 16 grantees, out of more than 375 applications, for the U.S. Department of Education’s \$95 million Education Innovation and Research (EIR) 2017 competition.

With this funding, CSS will expand its school-based, middle school transition and cross-age peer mentoring program for 6th grade students, known as Peer Group Connection-Middle School (PGC-MS), into 10 middle schools serving high need communities across four states: Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and North Carolina. CSS will partner with The Policy & Research Group to conduct a large-scale rigorous evaluation, including a randomized control trial, of PGC-MS to measure the program's positive impact on students’ social and emotional skills and behaviors that support academic and other important school-related outcomes. PGC-MS is the middle grades version of CSS’s flagship program, Peer Group Connection-High School (PGC-HS), an evidence-based program that supports and eases students’ transition into high school. PGC-HS has empirical evidence demonstrating its effectiveness and PGC-MS demonstrates promise of proving itself to be equally impactful.

“This award is particularly meaningful in that it represents the first significant investment by a federal agency into implementing and studying our student leadership and peer mentoring program for middle schools,” said Daniel F. Oscar, CEO of CSS. “The importance of the middle grades cannot be overstated, and the consequences of a poor transition into middle school can be devastating. This project will enable us to help middle schools develop all their students into leaders who make their schools safer, more supportive, engaging, and inspiring.”

PGC-MS trains select school faculty to prepare older students, specifically 8th graders, to serve as peer leaders and mentor and educate younger students, specifically 6th graders. Peer leaders are trained through a daily, credit-bearing leadership course taught by school faculty during regular school hours. CSS builds the capacity of schools to implement PGC-MS by providing training, curriculum, and on-site technical assistance to stakeholders and school faculty. The direct implementation of CSS is carried out by faculty employed by and peer leaders enrolled in participating schools.

The proposed project will reach approximately 1,500 students in low-income rural and urban communities in Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and North Carolina. Each of these communities has a high percentage of students who are from families with incomes below the poverty line.

About CSS

The Center for Supportive Schools (CSS) advances the efforts of schools across the country to develop all students into leaders who help make their schools safer and more supportive, engaging, and inspiring. CSS has a 38-year history of changing life trajectories for students and effecting cultural transformations within schools. Our impact can be seen in the experiences of 425,000 students across 500 schools. Please visit www.supportiveschools.org.

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