



Request for Proposals Fall 2019

Overview:

The Madison Education Partnership (MEP), a research-practice partnership between the Wisconsin Center for Education Research and the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD), requests proposals from UW–Madison faculty, research staff, and advanced graduate students (with a faculty member as principal investigator) to conduct research on **questions related to school climate in the MMSD**. The proposed study could use aspects of school climate as a predictor or outcome. The partnership takes a broad view of the role of school climate in proposed projects and seeks to foster creative research from university colleagues on problems of practice in MMSD. Below we describe the partnership, topic of focus for 2019–20 academic year, and details of proposal submission.

Background: Madison Education Partnership

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

Topic Focus for Proposals: School Climate

MEP seeks proposals for research related to school climate in pre-K through Grade 12. MMSD seeks to better understand the processes that shape school climate and the impact of school climate on student academic, behavioral, social emotional, and health outcomes. An overarching goal is to identify actions the district could take to improve school climate.

We define school climate as the “quality and character of school life,” which is based on “patterns of people’s experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures” (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009, p. 182). Theoretical and measurement models of school climate also include opportunities for belonging and connectedness, school safety, social support, physical school resources, and discipline practices (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2013; Zullig, Koopman, Patton, & Ubbes, 2010). Students who learn in positive learning environments are more likely to participate more fully in the classroom, improve academically, and develop skills that will help them to be successful in school and in life. Although many states and districts have moved to include school climate metrics into school accountability efforts, there are few evidence-based policy and practice guidelines. More research is needed to explore components of school climate that have the potential to improve practice. This may include aspects such as social and emotional learning, school improvement practice guidelines, teacher education, scaling up research-based guidelines around safe and supportive schools, and cultural differences related to school climate.

MEP seeks rigorous and innovative proposals focused on school climate. Some areas of interest may include:

- **How is school climate associated with student and educator outcomes?** What structural and contextual factors of school climate are most predictive of positive student outcomes (e.g., academic achievement, students' healthy development, violence prevention efforts, and teacher retention efforts)? What experiences or opportunities moderate the effects of climate on outcomes?
- **Identifying and/or examining approaches to promote positive school climate:** What policies and practices have schools enacted to promote positive school climate? What have they found to be effective? How can researchers and schools partner to create or implement interventions to bolster beneficial aspects of school climate in K-12 settings?

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

Award Details:

- **Expected funding:** UW–Madison's Wisconsin Center for Education Research will fund two projects up to \$50,000 each (direct costs). MEP will consider projects with higher budgets and funding more than two projects based on the applicant pool.
- **Expected term of award:** Award notices will be given in early October with funds available by mid-October. MEP prefers projects that are one year or less in duration but will consider projects that extend beyond one year based on justification of an extended timeline.
- **Allowable expenses:** Funds may be used to pay for PI time, research assistance, tuition remission, materials, or travel. Other expenses directly related to research may be permissible, based upon approval from MEP directors.

Additional benefits to the researcher

- Expedited MMSD approval to undertake the research; no need for district External Research Committee review of projects. Researchers must still secure approval for research from the UW–Madison Institutional Review Board. Under no circumstances may MMSD or MEP prevent publication or dissemination of research results once researchers have satisfied their disclosure and review obligations.
- Streamlined access to research sites, parents, teachers, and students.
- Quicker access to administrative data and support from MMSD's Research & Program Evaluation Office and MEP project staff to facilitate understanding of the data.
- Direct access to district policy makers to disseminate research results, increasing the likelihood that research will be used to drive decision-making at the district level.

Selected researchers will be required to complete the following

- Provide the steering committee and directors with two reports: an interim report (one-page brief) on project progress in June 2020 and a final report in December 2020.
- Submit a 1–3 page, non-technical executive summary for MEP to distribute to stakeholders in senior leadership positions inside MMSD by December 2020.
- Present at least twice on this work: once to the steering committee and advisory group

and once to a broader community of stakeholders and practitioners who may potentially benefit from this work.

- Provide any reports, papers, or presentations to be disseminated outside the research team and MEP to the steering committee for preview at least 30 days in advance of distribution.
- Communicate regularly with the appropriate district lead as research progresses. MEP staff will facilitate primary points of connection with the district.

Proposal Review Criteria:

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

- **Relevance:** Will the results be of use to policy makers and/or practitioners seeking to enhance the quality and/or equity of education in MMSD? Does the proposal clearly address a problem of practice and outcome(s) relevant to school climate in the district?
- **Methodological rigor:** Does the proposal clearly outline an empirical strategy and does that strategy serve to address the research questions? Will the empirical strategy produce valid, replicable results?
- **Personnel/Feasibility:** Does the PI have relevant substantive and methodological expertise and experience to do this research? Has the PI committed adequate time to carry out high-quality research program? Are requests reasonable for data and/or participation of MMSD personnel, students, or families?
- **Project Potential:** Does the proposed work seem likely to contribute to publications and/or funding? Does it fit into a program of research for the PI as an emergent trajectory of part of an established line of inquiry?

Proposal Guidelines:

Deadline to submit: Monday, September 23, 2019. Submit proposals in PDF format to Amanda Kruger, project manager, amkruger2@wisc.edu. All proposals must include the following elements:

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

If necessary, MEP directors will reach out to PIs for clarification. All applicants will be notified by October 18th, 2019. For information, contact Amanda Kruger at amkruger2@wisc.edu or (608) 265-5366.

References

Cohen, J., McCabe, L., Michelli, N. M., & Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research, policy, practice, and teacher education. *Teachers College Record, 111*, 180-213.

Thapa, A., Cohen, J., Guffey, S., & Higgins-D'Alessandro, A. (2013). A review of school climate research. *Review of Educational Research, 83*, 357-385.

Zullig, K. J., Koopman, T. M., Patton, J. M., & Ubbes, V. A. (2010). School climate: Historical review, instrument development, and school assessment. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment, 28*(2), 139-152.

Budget Detail

Salaries and Wages:	
Fringe Benefits:	
Total Salaries and Wages:	
Equipment and Supplies:	
Travel:	
Other Direct Costs:	
Total Budget Request:	

Budget Justification

Scoring Rubric

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

4	Data requests are reasonable and/or currently exist within the district's data systems and would require <i>minimal</i> imposition on MMSD personnel, students, or families through survey or qualitative data collection
Qualitative Design	
0	No
1	Yes
Total Score	
Total Score	out of 17 possible points