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SEE US! Final Summative Evaluation Report

for the Milwaukee Public Schools, Advanced Academic Programs

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About the Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative

The Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (WEC) is housed at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. WEC's team of evaluators supports youth-serving organizations and initiatives through culturally responsive and rigorous program evaluation. Learn more at http://www.wec.wceruw.org.

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Acknowledgements

The evaluation team owes a debt of gratitude to Susan O'Brien, the Javits Grant Coordinator for Milwaukee Public Schools with Advanced Academic Programs in the Office of College and Career Readiness, without whom this program and evaluation would not have been possible. We would like to thank Dorothy Schuller, Dr. Martha Lopez, and Dr. German Diaz, also with Advanced Academic Programs at Milwaukee Public Schools, for their support for both the program and evaluation. Without the programming team's superior organization and assistance, we would not have been able to conduct evaluation activities that involved visits to trainings, school sites, and SEE US! camps. They also provided us data on identified students, which is necessary for understanding SEE US!'s effectiveness. We also acknowledge Dr. Angela Ford, the MPS Advanced Academics Programs Manager, for her support of SEE US!, and the MPS Research and Evaluation Team for providing us with the necessary data for quantitative analysis. Finally, we would like to thank Yasmin Rodriguez-Escutia for her help in conducting focus groups.

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Section 1

Introduction

Introduction

In 2017, Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) applied for and received a grant for *Scaling-up and Expanding Excellence for Underrepresented Students* (SEE US!) from the U.S. Department of Education's Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program. A five-year project, SEE US! built on a previous Javits-funded Expanding Excellence project led by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), in partnership with MPS. The Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (WEC), within the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, was the external evaluator on the SEE US! grant and is pleased to present this final, summative evaluation report.

While MPS has made efforts to close *achievement and opportunity* gaps, the district recently has increased its focus on closing *excellence* gaps among its advanced learners through funding from multiple Javits grants. According to Plucker, Burroughs, & Song (2010), the Excellence Gap is the difference in proportions of advanced students across demographic subgroups.[1] SEE US! endeavored to narrow MPS's Excellence Gap by using a Response to Intervention (RtI) approach to increase the number of students from historically underserved populations identified as high-ability/high-potential. Components of this approach included the use of inquiry-based practices and culturally responsive instruction.

The SEE US! programming team identified 13 schools for inclusion, with the hope that at least ten schools ultimately would implement the grant. However, all 13 schools participated in SEE US! for its full duration. Educators with students in first grade through third grade in these schools were invited to participate in SEE US!, and several schools expanded to include educators in Kindergarten and fourth grade over the course of the grant. Students identified as "high-potential" in participating schools also had the opportunity to attend STEM- and inquiry-focused camps organized by SEE US! on Saturdays and over the summer.

Throughout the grant, the programming team worked closely with classroom teachers and support staff in SEE US! schools, holding monthly meetings at each school and providing several professional development opportunities during each school year, even in the midst of instructional shifts due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participating educators received regular professional development focusing on the grant's priorities: **identifying high-ability/high-potential students from traditionally underrepresented populations; understanding and addressing the Excellence Gap; employing high-quality, hands-on, inquiry-based teaching practices; enhancing engagement with families; and engaging in culturally responsive practices**. Educators then used expertise built through ongoing professional development to provide high-quality lessons to their students and utilized program funds to purchase instructional materials such as books and manipulatives. The program also provided "family packs," inquiry-based activities for students to take home and work on with their families. Thus, all students in SEE US! classrooms received the interventions, not only those identified as advanced learners.

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1   Plucker, J.A., Burroughs, N, & Song, R. (2010). *Mind the (Other) Gap!: The Growing Excellence Gap in K-12 Education*. Center for Evaluation & Education Policy. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED531840.pdf

Evaluation Methodology and Limitations

The guiding evaluation questions for the SEE US! program were as follows:

1.

What are patterns in implementation, and to what extent does SEE US! implement the proposed activities as intended?

2.

What are patterns in outcomes of interest in participating educators and schools, as well as students and families?

3.

To what extent are observed patterns in the outcomes in teachers a result of the SEE US! initiative?

To address the evaluation questions, WEC conducted a mixed-methods evaluation of SEE US!, triangulating data from focus groups, interviews, classroom observations, pre-post surveys of educators, and student-level outcome data.

Qualitative Data Collection

The WEC evaluation team engaged in several qualitative data collection activities. For the project's first two years of programming (2018-19 and 2019-20, following an initial planning year), WEC evaluators visited SEE US! schools each Fall and Spring, observing SEE US! classrooms and monthly meetings held by the programming team at each participating school. In Summer 2019, a WEC evaluator attended a SEE US! summer camp, holding a focus group with families of attendees and observing camp activities. When in-person instruction was interrupted in Spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, WEC conducted its summer focus groups via Google Meet, attended virtual trainings, and observed a virtual classroom. WEC completed its qualitative data collection with in-person focus groups at the Summer 2022 training. The focus group protocols changed slightly throughout the grant due to requested feedback from the programming team and context around the pandemic; the 2022 protocol can be found in Appendix A.

Pre-Post Survey

The evaluation team developed a pre-post survey instrument adapted from the Wisconsin RtI Center's School-Wide Implementation Review (SIR).[2] (See Appendix B.) The survey was programmed into a digital format via the Qualtrics platform, though participants could also complete it on paper if they chose. (After the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, all participants filled it out virtually in Qualtrics.) It was administered at the project's first training in April 2018 and then at each subsequent Summer training. All participants (classroom teachers, support teachers, and administrators) could complete the survey; for the purposes of this report, we include responses from teachers and support staff.

The survey began by asking participants for their definitions of culturally responsive practices, followed by items on participant experience and education. The remainder of the survey included a series of questions across six categories or constructs:

1. Differentiation and Engagement
2. Cultural Responsiveness
3. Identification and Measurement
4. Implementation, Review, and Refinement
5. Family and Community Engagement
6. Implementation of Program Components

Survey respondents had five response options on each question, which were defined within each of the categories themselves:

1. Not Evident
2. Emerging
3. Developing
4. Proficient
5. Optimal

These options allowed the evaluation team to assess the mean survey scores across respondents on a 1-5 scale throughout this report.

Table 1 shows the number of survey participants in each survey administration.

Table 1: Survey Respondents by Administration

YEAR	SURVEY PARTICIPANTS
2017–18	55
2018–19	42
2019–20	44
2020–21	39
2021–22	36

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2   Access to the SIR is password-protected, but more information can be found here: https://www.wisconsinrticenter.org/school-implementation/assess-system/

In the final post-survey administration in Summer 2022, 19 of the 36 respondents had participated in the program for its entirety. Therefore, unless otherwise noted, throughout this report we present the average survey responses for these 19 participants, as they received SEE US!'s full "treatment." However, the survey respondents do not reflect the full breadth of the program's reach – in its entirety, SEE US! reached **101** participants (classroom teachers, resource teachers, school support teachers, and administrators) and an estimated **1,284** students.

Student Outcomes

Although the primary focus of SEE US! programming (and therefore primary outcomes) was educators, we certainly were interested in investigating student level outcomes as well. Analysis of the impact on student outcomes encompassed identification and student performance. With respect to identification, participants in the program were trained on the Teacher Observation of Potential in Students (TOPS), a culturally responsive identification tool that includes 9 domains of advanced learning potential:

1. Learns Easily
2. Shows Advanced Skills
3. Displays Curiosity & Creativity
4. Has Strong Interests
5. Shows Advanced Reasoning & Problem Solving
6. Displays Spatial Abilities
7. Shows Motivation
8. Shows Social Perceptiveness
9. Displays Leadership

WEC utilized the programming team's data on TOPS identification to assess the program's efficacy in closing the Excellence Gap; these data are presented in the Findings section below.

To estimate SEE US!'s impacts on student performance, WEC used a difference-in-differences methodology that compared the outcomes of students in SEE US! schools, before and after SEE US! began, with the outcomes of students in comparable MPS schools that did not implement SEE US!, before and after SEE US! began. If SEE US! had a measurable impact on student outcomes (as measured by the STAR assessment), we would expect that pre/post implementation improvements in outcomes at SEE US! schools would surpass improvements in outcomes at comparable non-SEE US! schools. We used propensity score matching to select a group of comparable MPS schools, based on similar 2015-16 school-level averages of STAR scores and demographic characteristics.[3] We matched at the school-level because SEE US! was implemented at the school level, despite allowing educators to choose whether to participate in SEE US! training. We chose school-level matching because there is ample evidence that SEE US! impacts would extend beyond the classrooms of SEE US!-trained teachers: many non-classroom teaching staff who float across grades received SEE US! training, there is evidence from qualitative data of SEE US! teachers seeking to share their learning with other staff who did not participate in training, and, as students progressed through grades at SEE US! schools, they received instruction both from teachers who participated in SEE US! and from teachers who did not.

The final impact analysis sample included only SEE US! schools and matched comparison schools. All schools include grades 1-3 and appear in all seven years of sample data (2015-16 through 2021-22). The analysis excluded schools that eventually participated in SURGE, an advanced learning program similar to SEE US!, and bilingual and immersion schools that may draw from different student populations than SEE US! schools. After matching comparison schools, we checked for balance in school characteristics and parallel trends in outcomes across the treatment and control groups.

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3   We use 2015-16 as the matching year to examine multiple years of pre-program data trends.

Formative Reporting and Program Improvement Process

WEC's evaluation also provided formative reporting for the programming team. WEC produced several short reports over the course of the grant, including an interim survey report, an interim evaluation report, and briefs on cultural responsiveness and sustainability. The cultural responsiveness and sustainability briefs included questions for co-interpretation for the programming team to utilize both internally and externally with WEC. Early in the project, WEC also reviewed "exit slips" from a parent night and provided feedback on those data to the programming team. The intent of all of those reports and briefs was to provide ongoing, formative support to the programming team to plan professional development, support teachers in designing and delivering engaging lessons and inquiry-based instruction, and engage in positive coaching experiences with stakeholders. The evaluation team also presented findings to MPS audiences in January 2021 (from the interim report) and November 2022 (from this final report) and both gave and received formative feedback to district-level stakeholders.

Limitations

There are several limitations of note related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the data collected, and the evaluation methodology. One primary evaluation activity in the grant's first two years was in-person observation of classrooms, monthly meetings, and professional development trainings. Due to the transition to virtual instruction in Spring 2020 and MPS's visitor policies throughout the course of the pandemic, the evaluation team was unable to conduct observations in the same manner in the second half of the grant period (though still attended trainings, monthly meetings, and even classroom observations virtually).

In terms of quantitative data, we had hoped to examine the impact on students upon their identification as advanced per the TOPS tool. MPS collects data on students identified with TOPS, so we requested and received files with individual student TOPS data. Upon review, however, we noticed that the TOPS designation follows a student throughout their academic career, both in future years but also retrospectively. That is, if a student is identified using TOPS in third grade, they are also listed as identified in prior years' files (second grade, first grade, etc.) Our hypothesis was that identification would lead to improved outcomes, but because it was impossible to know when a student was first identified, we were unable to conduct this analysis. We believe it would be valuable to examine the growth of TOPS-identified students in assessing program impact, if there were a way to isolate when students are identified for the first time.

Additionally, although we believe that the quantitative methodology outlined above is the best possible given the implementation of SEE US! and available data, there are several limitations with it. First, because SEE US! schools were selected according to certain school characteristics (i.e., schools with high proportions of Black students and students who are economically disadvantaged, as shown by Table 4 below), there are few comparable schools in MPS. Second, the transition to virtual instruction occurred less than two years into SEE US! implementation, when the program was ramping up to full strength.

Estimate impacts may confuse COVID and SEE US! impacts if SEE US! and comparison schools were differentially impacted by school shutdowns. There is reason to believe this may be the case, since COVID may have had greater impacts on the communities where SEE US! schools are located, due to availability of resources such as broadband access and quality child care.

Finally, the pre-post survey figures prominently throughout this report, but the small number of participants, as well as teacher turnover within the program, limit our ability to generalize beyond the big-picture findings. We asked participants about their education and experience (both in their schools and MPS) and reviewed responses by participant race/ethnicity in each year of the survey, but due to the small sample sizes of these subgroups, we are not able to draw any meaningful conclusions regarding perceptions of the program by subgroup. As noted above, only 19 participants who began at the start of the program took the final post-survey in 2022. Additionally, it is possible that any decreases in survey responses over time reflect that participants "didn't know what they didn't know" when they first took the survey, and upon learning more about the grant priorities, realized that they should lower their reported level of knowledge or implementation.

Section 2

Findings

Findings

The findings in this report correspond to the evaluation questions. To address Evaluation Question 1, we begin with a discussion of the primary aspects of implementation, such as inquiry and cultural responsiveness. We then discuss patterns with respect to the participating educators and the program's impacts upon them and their students, as elucidated in Evaluation Questions 2 and 3. Another grant priority, family engagement, is woven throughout the findings. We conclude this section with a discussion of findings on sustainability.

Implementation: Inquiry and Cultural Responsiveness

Inquiry was a major focus of SEE US!

Inquiry is an essential component of SEE US!: it was included in many of the program materials, was the subject of several trainings, and was discussed by speakers brought in by the programming team to present at those trainings. According to *The Curious Classroom*, a book the program utilized frequently, inquiry "means building instruction out of children's curiosity, rather than from a curriculum guide, a standard textbook, or a handed-down unit. It means kids investigating and exploring, instead of just sitting and listening."[4]

Prior to the pandemic, between Fall 2018 and Spring 2020, WEC evaluators visited SEE US! classrooms in each of the 13 participating schools. The purpose of the first set of visits (n=34) was to provide a broad picture of implementation, and subsequent visits (n=26) focused on how specific teachers employed high-quality inquiry-based lessons. Evaluators also attended three monthly meetings. Many relevant lessons are from the U-STARS~PLUS curriculum, developed as part of a previous Javits project and designed to be hands-on and inquiry-based.[5]

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4   Daniels, H. (2017). *The Curious Classroom*. Heinemann.

5   Coleman, M.R. (2016). Recognizing Young Children with High Potential: U-STARS~PLUS. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 1377*(1), 32-43. https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.13161

These lessons showed participating teachers are internalizing training they received and are willing and able to re-structure their normal class time to encompass more inquiry-based practices. Below we highlight a sample of the lessons observed:

· Creating hand sanitizer from common household products just before COVID-19 shut down in-person classes in 2020

· Prior to Thanksgiving, engaging in an activity in which students used construction paper, felt, blocks, and popsicle sticks (but no glue) to "hide a turkey" inside a small structure they were asked to create

· Teaching about the impact of pollution by splitting students in a classroom into three groups and having them experiment with materials they were given. The land pollution group had a bucket of leaves, Styrofoam, and worms; the water pollution group had water, cartons, and plastic; and the air pollution group had pictures and aerosol cans

· Working with live worms and magnifying glasses to study animal communication

· Teaching about friction by having students (whom the teacher referred to as "scientists") trap a pencil in an empty water bottle using grains of rice. The teacher took a picture of the group that succeeded first in having the pencil trapped such that she could pick up the pencil without the rice-filled bottle detaching

· Going through the stages of creating an invention to solve a problem identified in one of the U-STARS texts

· Using toothpicks to simulate the creation of triangles and the required side lengths

· Creating "comic books" with panels showing how seeds turn into plants

· Predicting whether various Halloween candies would sink or float, then testing hypotheses using candies and cups of water

· An animal sorting activity using cut-out pieces of paper in advance of a trip to the zoo

Even during virtual instruction, inquiry lessons were able to continue due to the dedicated efforts of the programming team and program participants. As one participating educator related:

> "During Covid, I went to my students' homes and dropped off materials that I had from this program because I took them home and distributed them to my students. So that even during Covid and virtual learning we were able to continue this work. It was so cool. My kids were sitting at home, I could see them on the computer, trying to put together, strategize how I'm going to build this, how am I going to solve this. The inquiry continued at home. The parents were coming in, and sometimes listening, and would comment, 'that was so neat.' It was really really engaging. A lot of parent involvement."

Aside from the inquiry-based activities occurring in classrooms during the school day, the program provided opportunities for advanced students to extend their learning through inquiry. One such aspect of programming were inquiry- and STEM-focused camps that took place at schools across MPS both on Saturdays during the school year and over the summer. The topics of the camps varied, from architecture to ornithology to activities at Vincent High School's urban farm, among others.

Stakeholders had high praise for the camps. Teachers commented on both student and parent appreciation of the camps:

> "…the opportunity with the camps that the grant provides. That is an essential key component for the students, to expose them to things that they may not get normally."

> "The families really liked the camps. The students would come back from the weekend and be like, 'look what I made,' 'we did this.' That's all they would talk about all morning. The parents were saying how engaging it was for their students, and they were looking forward to other camps in the future."

> "When you explain to parents about the camps, and you include a little information on, not everybody gets invited, but your child is invited. It's special."

For their part, parents also expressed their enthusiasm for the camps. As one parent said, "My daughter didn't get that many opportunities to do nearly as much as what she's doing within these four days in her school year. Her class was too big and they weren't really cooperative. But she's setting her alarm clock, getting here early."

Indeed, inquiry was an essential aspect of the program's focus on family engagement. To that end, another extension activity involved "family packs," activities students could take home and work on with their families. One teacher described the true "family" nature of the family packs:

> "[A parent] said, 'I really want to tell you how big this was because now my other two children want to plant vegetables, too.' So it turned into a whole family project the dad said he was going to do over the summer. The kids will come back in the fall – I want to ask dad how it went. The parents got excited about different things we were doing, so I thought that was really cool."

Implementation of inquiry-based lessons was also measured within the pre-post survey. Response patterns showed a growth in these practices, not only among the teachers who participated in the full program, but also for all teachers who responded to the survey regardless of their experience in the program (aside from a small dip in 2020-21). Figure 1 shows the upward trajectory of participant responses.

Figure 1: Use of Hands-On, Inquiry-Based Science
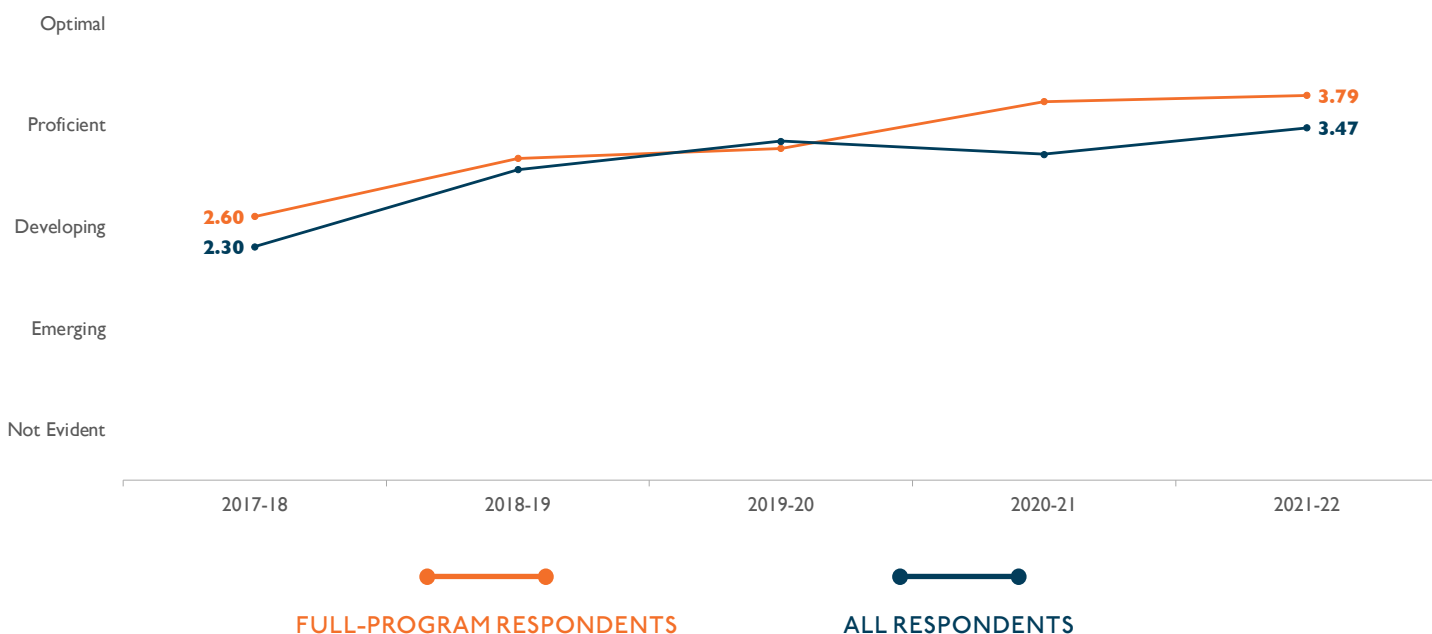
FULL-PROGRAM RESPONDENTS   ALL RESPONDENTS

"One of my students this year I did not recognize as a TOPS student at all at the beginning of the year, whatsoever. Never been recognized prior. Through inquiry, through projects we were doing…All of a sudden she had leadership. She was just going off the chart. I said to [the programming team], 'Can I add this child to TOPS?' She ended up being part of leadership and everything. It brings out things you really don't see in your students once you learn to recognize it, once you know what you're looking for. Prior to this, I might not have even identified those qualities in her, and how all of a sudden, she did really blossom like that."

Finally, SEE US's inquiry focus also assisted in identification – by allowing student potential to surface, it provided teachers with the observable environment to conduct TOPS. As one teacher said,

> "One of my students this year I did not recognize as a TOPS student at all at the beginning of the year, whatsoever. Never been recognized prior. Through inquiry, through projects we were doing…All of a sudden she had leadership. She was just going off the chart. I said to [the programming team], 'Can I add this child to TOPS?' She ended up being part of leadership and everything. It brings out things you really don't see in your students once you learn to recognize it, once you know what you're looking for. Prior to this, I might not have even identified those qualities in her, and how all of a sudden, she did really blossom like that."

Another teacher expressed a similar sentiment: "I've got a little guy, he's so not paper-pencil at all. By incorporating a lot of the different activities that we do – hands-on, building, the Saturday and summer camps – he has just blossomed. He has found a different way to share his knowledge." Further, developing a better understanding of students' learning styles through inquiry-based instruction is not only an inquiry practice, but also can connect to improved cultural responsiveness.

Culturally responsive practices in SEE US! have evolved over the course of the grant

While results vary among subgroups, participants' understanding and implementation of culturally responsive practices generally increased over the life of the grant, as indicated in surveys, focus groups, and participant feedback.

The pre-post survey began by asking participants to provide a definition of cultural responsiveness; after they answered, it provided MPS's definition: **Educational systems, processes, and habits adopted based on the belief that all students should be supported socially, emotionally, intellectually, and civically by leveraging students' lived experiences and learning styles to ensure student achievement.**[6]
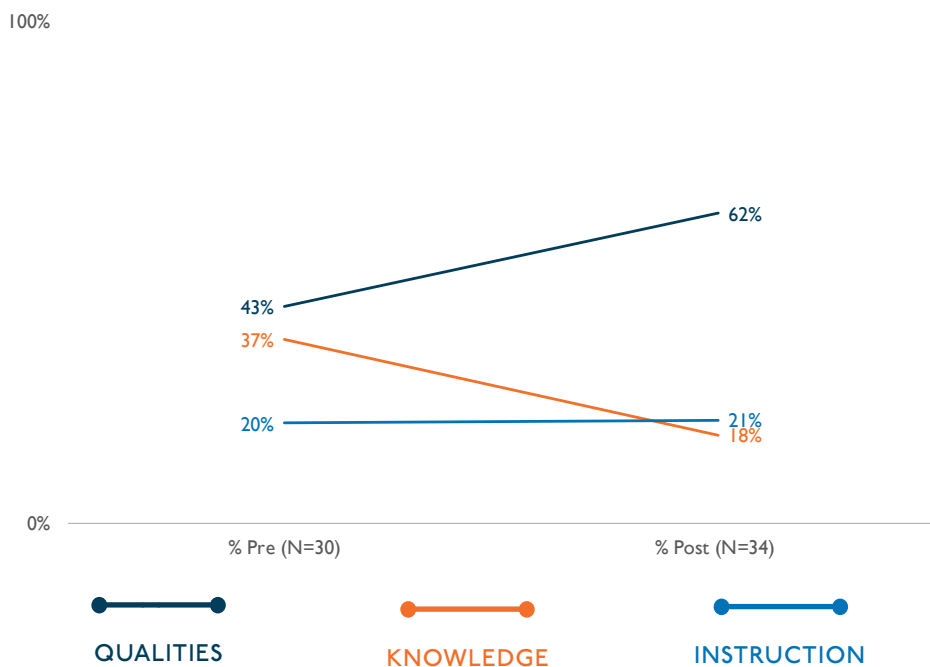
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6   Based on and adapted from Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 465-491. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465

Reviewing these open-ended responses, as well as attitudes about cultural responsiveness in focus groups, revealed that teachers' understanding of cultural responsiveness evolved over time. When participants first answered this question, responses tended to focus on teacher self-reflection, awareness of one's own biases or beliefs, and teacher practices. While these attributes are foundational to culturally responsive teaching, and recent responses often still mentioned awareness or understanding, several began to reference student learning styles, interests, and voice, rather than student needs as defined by the teacher. They also became less vague and more specific over time. This is evident when comparing respondents' initial responses to this item and responses in later years. A sample of such responses follows in Table 2.

Table 2: Evolution of Understanding of Culturally Responsive Practices

THEME	INITIAL RESPONSE	RESPONSE IN SUBSEQUENT SURVEY
Learning Styles	Taking to account differences among students and being sensitive to their backgrounds and cultures. Accepting them for who they are and their beliefs. Helping all students to learn to respect each other in the classroom and outside of the classroom.	I think Inquiry based learning really lends itself to culturally responsive practices. It allows students at all levels to be part of the learning process. Students can explore learning in different modalities. Assessing students through more project based assessments also allows students to access their strengths.
Student voice and choice	CRP is creating instruction designed around relevance and connection to a student's background and interests.	Culturally Responsive Practices involve taking a student centered approach that lifts up student voice and choice and takes into account their unique identities, backgrounds, and learning styles.
	Culturally responsive practices are practices that are based on the needs of the culture in your classroom. This could change from year to year. This includes books, language, activities, and your responses to student's needs.	Culturally responsive practices take each individual student's needs into consideration. CRP also focuses on the interests of the students. It allows them voice in what they are learning. CRP is done whole group, small group, and one on one. It allows for differing end products as long as the student can provide evidence of learning the skill/concept/standard at hand.
	Students are able to learn and grow while also sharing their culture and home experience.	Allowing students choice in learning - not teaching/expecting same lesson to work for all learners - honoring all the background knowledge that students bring to the lessons.
Inquiry	Making sure to reach all the children in my class. Being aware of all the cultures in my class.	Student centered instruction and inquiry. Having a positive response to my students and their families, no matter the culture or circumstance. Making sure my lessons are relevant to all learners in my class. Recognizing everyone has different strengths and talents. There is no one way to teach or learn.

Figure 2: Codes of Open-Ended Responses in Cultural Responsiveness Training

100%

62%

43%

37%

20%

21%
18%

0%

% Pre (N=30)   % Post (N=34)

QUALITIES   KNOWLEDGE   INSTRUCTION

Table 3: Sample of Responses from 2019 Cultural Responsiveness Training

KNOWLEDGE (BEGINNING OF SESSION)

Know your students' backgrounds and communities

Know your students and their families, backgrounds, and community

Understanding student background by building relationships

Understanding and being respectful of students' cultures

QUALITIES (END OF SESSION)

Willing to become aware when you're not aware

Willingness, courage, compassion, understanding, vulnerability

A culturally relevant teacher does not assume; they continue to learn new things

Culturally relevant teachers are open minded

Be a good listener to students' needs

LISTEN to your students and their families

Another series of responses resulted from the programming team's training on cultural responsiveness in May 2019. As part of that training, participants were asked to provide their conceptions of cultural responsiveness in an interactive forum at the beginning of the exercise and then again at its completion. Evaluators reviewed these responses in the cultural responsiveness brief presented to MPS in Summer 2021, classifying each response as one of three types, as shown in Figure 2:

· Qualities: Teachers' desired qualities or values

· Knowledge: Teachers should increase their knowledge or understanding of students' backgrounds

· Instruction: Teachers alter their instructional practices

Here, there is *decrease* in the perceived importance of "knowledge" and a corresponding *increase* in "qualities." As with the open-ended survey responses, this finding signals a mindset change in which the perceived importance of "knowing" one's students based on their culture or background is replaced by traits that allow teachers to become more culturally responsive (such as listening, empathy, and open-mindedness). This trend could also indicate that participants "didn't know what they didn't know" – that is, they believed they knew about culturally responsive practices before the training, but as it went on, they realized they knew less than they had thought. Table 3 presents examples of responses from the beginning to the end of the exercise.

Shifting to SEE US! programming, the TOPS tool cannot be overlooked as an instrument of cultural responsiveness and equity, as it seeks to identify aspects of student potential that may be missed by more traditional assessments. It helped teachers shift their focus to learning styles, inquiry, and student voice, the themes identified within the open-ended survey responses above. Many teachers felt the training they received allowed them to better identify "non-teacher-pleasing" behaviors that can be a hallmark of giftedness, but instead are often dismissed as disruptive. As one survey participant stated, "To be a culturally responsive teacher, you need to look at your students through the TOPS tool lens. Many times, students who portray non-teacher pleasing behaviors are those who need to be challenged more, or those that are leaders but struggling. I define culturally responsive practices as teaching students while acknowledging your own learned biases and not allowing those to be roadblocks to your students' success." The following focus group quotes also illustrate the importance of the TOPS tool as an instrument of equity, even in the ways it could be used to engage with families.

"In identification, traditionally you would just look at academic achievement. This forced you not to, which was amazing. Nobody ever said that to us that before. Wait, this kid's an amazing artist. This kid might look like he's not paying attention, but he can verbatim tell you everything you just said. The tool forces your hand with equity, which is good. And look at every kid. Everybody would just be stuck on those top couple academic kids. It really forces you to look at every kid."

"It makes you re-think that all the kids have potential. Sometimes we might have a thought or feeling about someone who's 'got behavior problems.' A lot of times, those are the kids that may shine in other areas."

"When I've recommended a student for TOPS, I've pulled that tool out and I've showed parents what that tool looks like, so that they understand. They're thinking of it narrow too – they're only thinking about it as one perspective. Whereas when I show them that tool, 'I didn't think about that. Oh yeah, you're right.' That helps them have an even better understanding of their child as well."

"Just the model you have to look at each student and not at [all] the students. This is a huge equitable bonus to this program."

Relatedly, it is key to remember that all students in SEE US! classrooms, regardless of whether they were identified using TOPS, receive programming. As teachers stated in focus groups, this aspect of the program also allowed it to be equitable and culturally responsive.
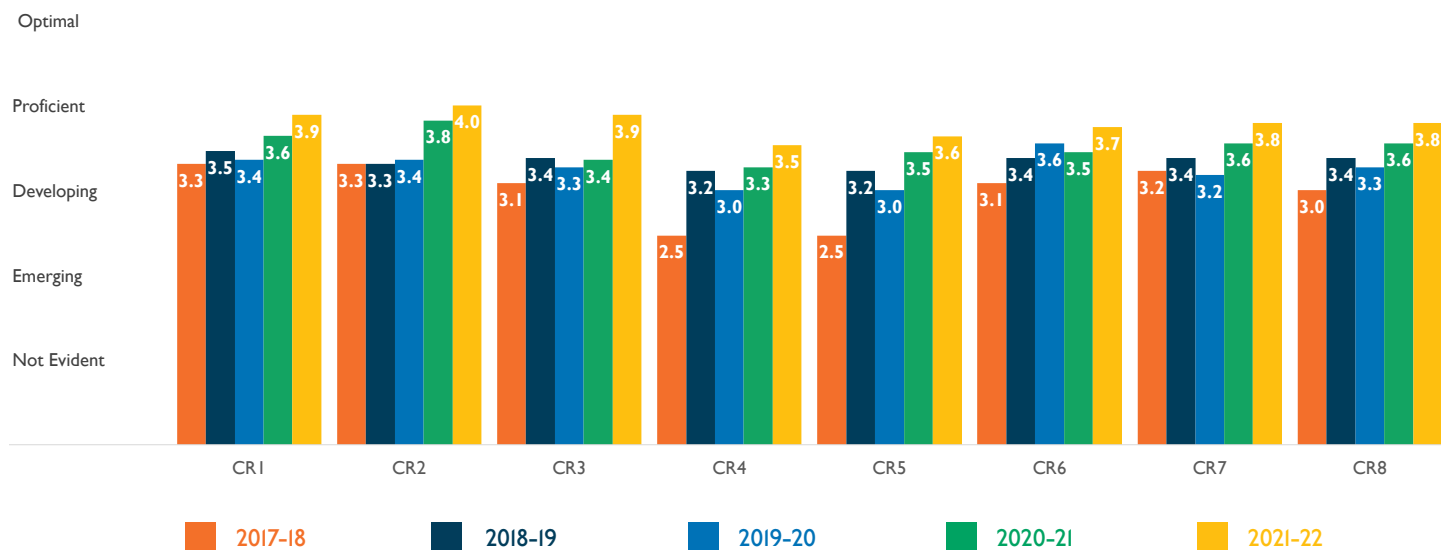
"One aspect of that is, what we do, we do with all of our students, even the students that haven't been identified. That's something significant to this program, because all of our students are getting the exposure, and the opportunity to be able to meet that bar or exceed the bar. That's something that's authentic and encourages that excellence in our students."

"One of the things in terms of equity is having that lens – even though you're teaching all, you're teaching each. Individualizing. Really working on universal design learning. Personalizing it for the scholar. Making the scholar a part of their learning, versus being at the learning."

"It's looking at their interests, what they bring to the table, who they are, how they're valued, their voice. It's equal and equitable because it's meeting every child at their potential and their needs."

Finally, survey responses show increased understanding of culturally responsive practices among program participants. Figure 3 shows that, on average, the 19 participants who started in 2017-18 and took the final program survey showed increased knowledge across all eight pre/post survey items. Participants showed the greatest growth on item CR4, "Provide additional challenges relevant to the cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences of our students exceeding benchmarks," and item CR5, "Use a screening process that is relevant to our students' cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences." Item CR5 directly speaks to the use of the TOPS tool as a culturally responsive instrument.

Figure 3: Participant Growth on Cultural Responsiveness Survey Items

Optimal
Proficient
Developing
Emerging
Not Evident

	CR1	CR2	CR3	CR4	CR5	CR6	CR7	CR8
2017-18	3.3	3.3	3.1	2.5	2.5	3.1	3.2	3.0
2018-19	3.5	3.3	3.4	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.4	3.4
2019-20	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.0	3.0	3.6	3.2	3.3
2020-21	3.6	3.8	3.4	3.3	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.6
2021-22	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.8

CRI: Use research-based practices and/or programs within our universal curriculum and instruction

CR2: Provide universal curriculum and instruction that engages students

CR3: Provide universal curriculum and instruction that uses the cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences of our students

CR4: Provide additional challenges relevant to the cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences of our students exceeding benchmarks

CR5: Use a screening process that is relevant to our students' cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences

CR6: Demonstrate cultural competence when collaborating in grade level/content area teams about universal student data and instructional practices

CR7: Demonstrate cultural competence when collaborating in grade level/content area teams about the appropriate nature of support at the selected level

CR8: Use a culturally competent process when collaborating in our building-level problem-solving team

Patterns in Outcomes of Interest

Program participants found SEE US! valuable and exhibited a growth mindset

In annual focus groups, a consistent refrain from teachers and other participating school staff was a sense of appreciation and gratitude for the opportunity to participate in SEE US! This appreciation falls into several themes:

- Praise for programming staff
- Quality of professional development
- Materials
- Rediscovering a love for teaching

Praise for Programming Staff

At all stages of the grant, participants had overwhelmingly positive reactions to the programming team's work. They found the programming team accessible and responsive to

their needs. The programming team was also able to adjust to external events – for instance, during virtual instruction, the programming team created an online version of the TOPS tool for participants.

> "I would love for higher-ups to know what a good job they do, how accessible they are when we need them. It's not like we have to go through the ropes, and ask this person and this person. We just email and call, and boom, we got our supplies, we got our, come into my classroom and help me with this."

> "Susan [the programming lead] is obviously a great resource…She's the ultimate champion."

> "Everyone's just super supportive. Right before school shut down, I was struggling with the U-STARS, so [programming staff] came to our school and they helped me plan out a unit."

Quality of Professional Development

On several occasions, participants expressed highly positive impressions of the professional development SEE US! provided. Professional development took many forms (workshops, national speakers, book studies, conferences) and covered a multitude of topics, such as lesson design, inquiry-based instruction, alignment to ambitious instruction, identification, and general STEM topics.

> "A lot of kudos to the people who staff the program and made presentations. Very professional, very supportive. Exceptional."

"This is one of the most solid programs we've been a part of in regards to offering us professional development, opportunities to collaborate, resources that we need, support."

> "It's just really nice being able to see units in action, being used in the classroom."

Materials

SEE US! provided several types of materials to participants. For example, the U-STARS curriculum includes many inquiry- and STEM-related texts, and the program provided take-home family packs. Additionally, teachers had access to funds they could use to purchase inquiry materials for their classrooms.

> "…we're supported with resources, with ideas, with materials. It's whatever the kids wonder about. There's no limit to what we can do."

> "One of the students was interested in insects, so I brought in a bunch of books on insects, and different materials. Then they saw a planet or something on one of the pages, and then they were interested in the solar system, so then all the solar system books came in. It kept leading to more things."

> [During virtual instruction] "Obviously it wasn't an ideal year, but having the grant made the virtual school year much better, because it really gave us a lot of materials that a lot of other people didn't have. We were very lucky to have those supplies for the kids and for the families."

Access to funding and materials going forward is a concern for many participants. We expand upon this issue in our discussion of sustainability.

Rediscovering a Love for Teaching

Participants often expressed that the type of teaching and learning they did as part of SEE US! reflected why they entered the teaching profession to begin with. They appreciated being treated as professionals and given flexibility in their instruction. They also described the joy the felt when seeing students learn.

> "There's a level of respect, recognition, appreciation that this work is valued."

> "I appreciate the way we weren't just told to do xyz. We were shown over the course of several years

what to do. We were also given support anytime we needed it with just a phone call or an email."

"It has been a beautiful thing that as teachers come up with even greater ideas and expand on it, to have that resource in that grant to say, hey, I really want to do this, that they've been able to have the freedom to do an activity and think big."

"Getting kids to engage, getting them to question, do some more of the heavy lifting, it's been huge for me, it's made me more inspired, more excited."

"I really enjoy watching and seeing the joy on the students' faces…They have the freedom to explore and to really get into what it was they were doing. They understood there was no right and wrong. For me, it was just looking at that pure joy on their face, the excitement, that's what really lit it up for me."

In addition to these themes, participants demonstrated growth over the course of the grant on several survey items relating to their practice. We examined growth on inquiry and cultural responsiveness in prior sections; another illustrative example of growth is participant responses to the series of questions on Differentiation and Engagement (Figure 4).

- DEI: Differentiate universal curriculum and instruction based on student needs

- DE2: Provide evidence-based advanced learning opportunities for students exceeding benchmarks

- DE3: Regularly review the overall effectiveness of advanced learning opportunities for students receiving selected and intensive support

- DE4: Regularly review the effectiveness of advanced learning opportunities for demographic groups of students receiving selected and intensive support

- DE5: Use a process to analyze disaggregated universal screening results (i.e., by student demographic groups)

Here, the average response mean again increased for each of the items (among the 19 participants who both started at the beginning of the program and took the 2022 post-survey).

Figure 4: Participant Growth on Differentiation and Engagement Survey Items

	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
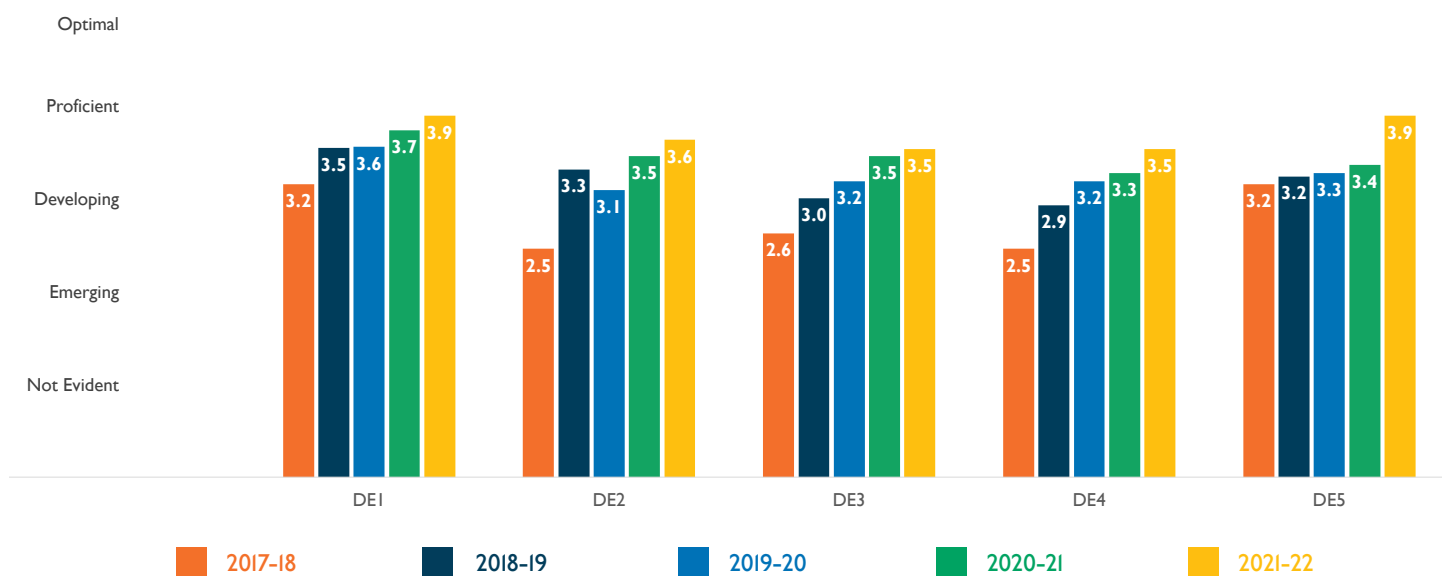
Figure 5: TOPS Identifications in SEE US! Schools by Year
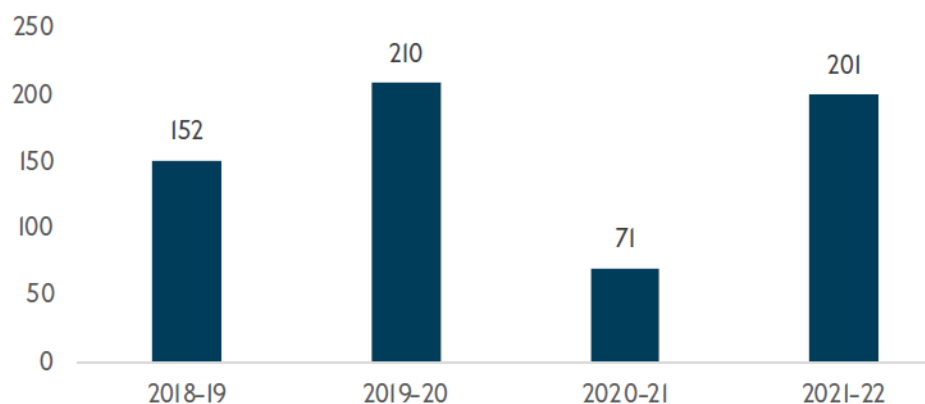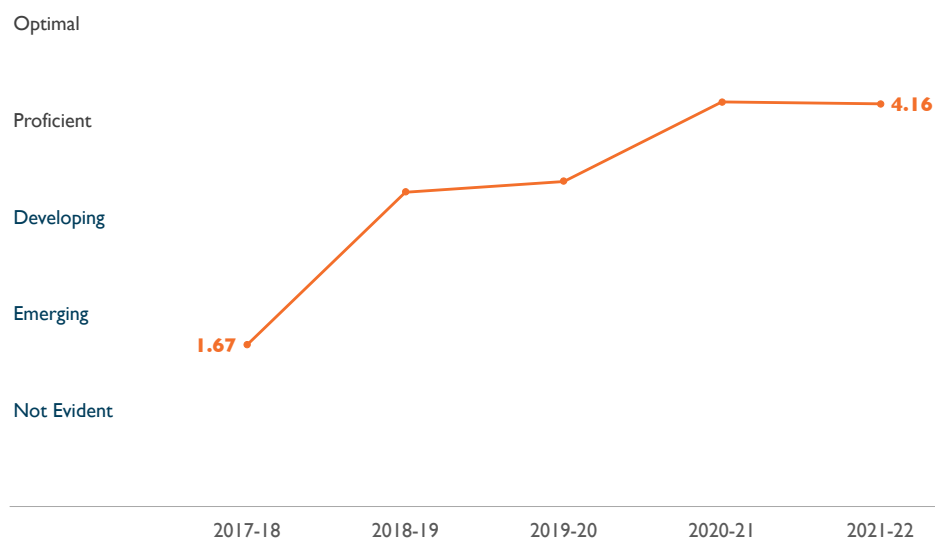

Identification of traditionally underrepresented students has increased

Continuing with patterns of growth, participants especially grew in their use and understanding of the TOPS tool. TOPS served many functions in SEE US!, both as a tool with which to identify high potential and ability and as a culturally responsive instrument (as described above). Both programming staff and the WEC evaluators found that identification using TOPS increased greatly in SEE US! schools over the course of the grant, and much more at SEE US! schools than at non-SEE US! schools. Figure 5 shows the counts of students nominated using the TOPS tool in SEE US! schools in each year of the grant, which would have been at zero prior to implementation. (The first identifications occurred in the 2018-19 school year, as 2017-18 was a planning year.) There was a drop in identifications during the 2020-21 school year when most instruction was virtual, but identifications rebounded in 2021-22.

Similarly, the pre-post survey showed substantial improvement in participants' use and understanding of the TOPS tool (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Participant Growth in TOPS Use

The pre-post survey also inquired as to participant perceptions of Identification and Measurement. The four questions on Identification and Measurement were as follows:

- IMI: Use multiple measures to review the effectiveness of our universal curriculum and instruction for demographic groups of students and adjust accordingly

- IM2: Use multiple measures in our universal screening process

- IM3: Use valid and reliable tools to monitor the progress of students receiving advanced learning opportunities

- IM4: Frequently review progress-monitoring data to gauge whether students are making adequate progress in advanced learning opportunities and adjust accordingly

Figure 7 shows a general trend of improvement over time on all four items.

Figure 7: Participant Growth on Identification and Measurement Survey Responses
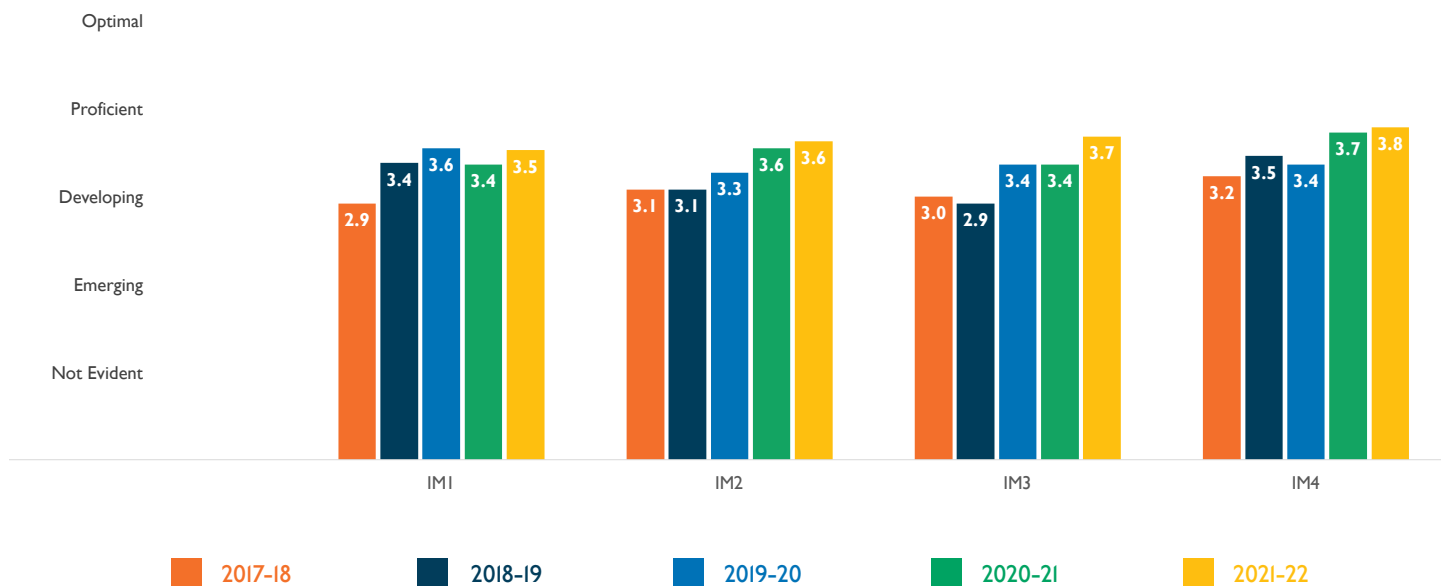
Given that SEE US! schools were selected based on their demographic characteristics (i.e., high concentrations of Black students and students who are economically disadvantaged), the dramatic increase in identification in these schools has a clear impact on addressing the Excellence Gap in the district, one of the grant's stated goals. Table 4 shows the proportions of subgroups across participating SEE US! schools in the final year of the grant (2021-22).

Table 4: Characteristics of Students in SEE US! Schools, 2021-22

	AMERICAN INDIAN/ ALASKA NATIVE	ASIAN	BLACK	HISPANIC	PACIFIC ISLANDER	TWO OR MORE RACES	WHITE	STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED
Bethune	0.0%	37.4%	58.4%	1.7%	0.0%	2.2%	0.3%	17.4%	92.5%
Clarke Street	0.0%	0.0%	94.7%	2.2%	0.0%	3.1%	0.0%	24.9%	94.7%
Clemens	0.3%	0.0%	91.4%	5.3%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	15.5%	97.0%
Congress	0.4%	1.1%	92.4%	3.7%	0.0%	1.8%	0.6%	18.2%	89.4%
Jackson	0.0%	1.6%	92.7%	4.5%	0.0%	0.8%	0.4%	21.2%	93.5%
Keefe Avenue	0.6%	0.0%	94.5%	3.1%	0.0%	1.2%	0.6%	13.5%	94.5%
Kilbourn	0.0%	3.5%	90.5%	3.0%	0.0%	1.3%	1.7%	22.1%	90.0%
Parkview	0.3%	37.3%	49.1%	4.1%	0.3%	5.4%	3.5%	14.6%	77.2%
Sherman	0.4%	0.4%	91.2%	4.2%	0.0%	2.5%	1.4%	16.8%	93.0%
Siefert	1.5%	0.8%	90.0%	3.8%	0.4%	3.1%	0.4%	14.6%	94.3%
Story	0.8%	16.3%	74.4%	4.5%	0.0%	2.0%	2.0%	11.5%	92.0%
Stuart	0.0%	25.6%	60.7%	3.1%	0.0%	9.2%	1.5%	19.8%	90.8%
Thoreau	0.3%	2.4%	85.3%	7.1%	0.0%	2.9%	2.1%	17.1%	93.5%
TOTAL	0.3%	11.6%	80.3%	3.8%	0.0%	2.8%	1.1%	17.3%	91.4%

Source: DPI 2021-22 enrollment files

SEE US! was able to attack the Excellence Gap through its selection of these schools and professional development on the TOPS identification tool. Figure 8–Figure II show the demographic characteristics of identified students in SEE US! schools.

Figure 8: TOPS Identification by Race/Ethnicity

Black or African American students make up nearly three-quarters of TOPS identifications in SEE US! schools.

9, 4.5%
8, 4.0%
1, 0.5%
34, 16.9%
149, 74.1%

- 🟧 ASIAN
- 🟦 BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN
- 🟦 LATINO OR HISPANIC
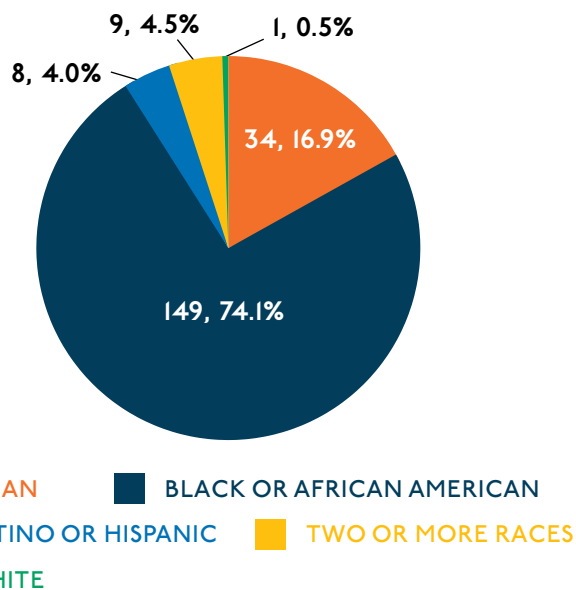- 🟨 TWO OR MORE RACES
- 🟩 WHITE

Figure 9: TOPS Identification by Twice Exceptionality

Approximately 6 percent of students identified by TOPS are twice exceptional (students receiving special education services who are also identified as advanced learners).
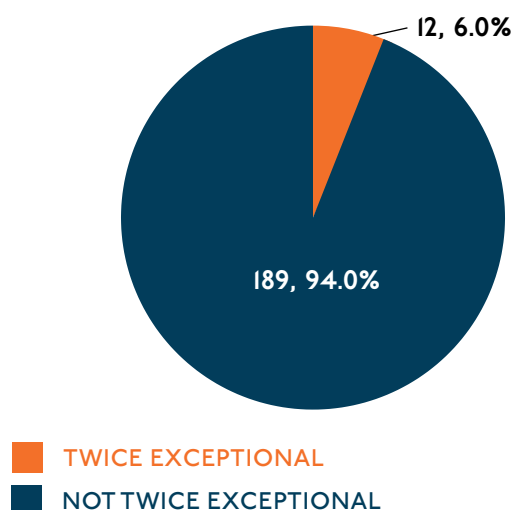
12, 6.0%
189, 94.0%

- 🟧 TWICE EXCEPTIONAL
- 🟦 NOT TWICE EXCEPTIONAL

Figure 10: TOPS Identification by Economic Status.

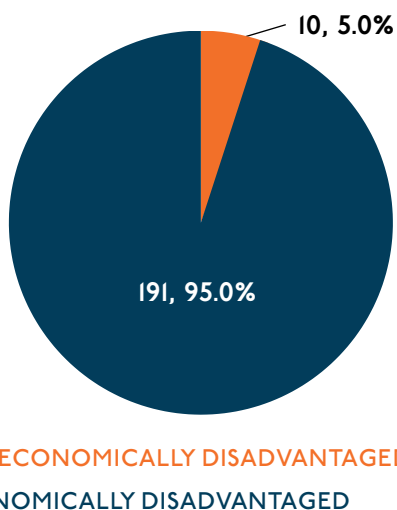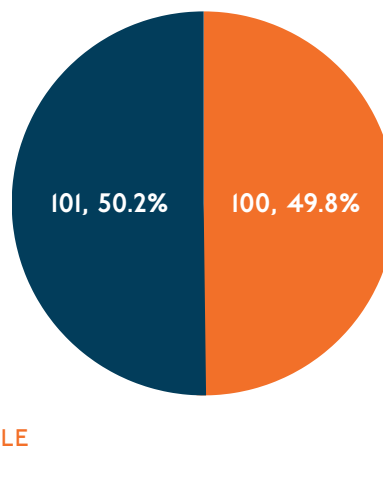Almost all identified students in SEE US! schools are economically disadvantaged.

10, 5.0%
191, 95.0%

- 🟧 NOT ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED
- 🟦 ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED

Figure II: TOPS Identification by Gender Identity

TOPS identifications are split almost evenly by gender identity in SEE US! schools.

101, 50.2%
100, 49.8%

- 🟧 FEMALE
- 🟦 MALE

One way to assess equitable access of advanced learning opportunities and make meaning of these demographic statistics is by utilizing a Representation Index (RI).[7] The Representation Index is calculated by taking the percentage of identified students within a subgroup and dividing it by the percentage of that subgroup population within a school:

$$(\%\text{gifted in subgroup})/(\%\text{total of subgroup})$$

An RI of exactly one indicates perfect representation, while an RI below one indicates that a group is underrepresented, and an RI greater than one indicates overrepresentation. Nationally, students from Black, Hispanic, Native, and/or low-income families are significantly underrepresented within gifted education programs, while Asian and White students are overrepresented.[8] Twice Exceptional (2e) students (advanced learners also identified for Special Education services) are also underrepresented.[9] These inequities at the national scale represent a persistent policy concern,[10] and MPS is not immune – this is the root of the Excellence Gap MPS has desired to rectify in its successful applications for Javits funding over the last several years.

Using demographic data from the schools in Table 4 and comparing that to the SEE US! program's TOPS data, representation indices for subgroups are calculated in Table 5. Asian students remain overrepresented, but Table 5 shows a **RI close to one for Black, Hispanic, and Economically Disadvantaged students**, which is an impressive achievement of the program compared to national trends. One area of future improvement is with Twice Exceptional students, who show an RI of only 0.35; MPS has received another Javits grant for work with this population in the coming years.

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7   Yoon, S. Y., & Gentry, M. (2009). Racial and ethnic representation in gifted programs: Current status of and implications for gifted Asian American students. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 53*(2), 121-136. https://doi.org/10.1177/0016986208330564

8   Hodges, J., Tay, J., Maeda, Y., & Gentry, M. (2018). A Meta-Analysis of Gifted and Talented Identification Practices. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 62*(2), 147-174. https://doi.org/10.1177/0016986217752107

9   Walrod, D.P. (2022). Equity through the Participation of Twice-Exceptional Students in Gifted Programming. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 66*(2), 142-143. https://doi.org/10.1177/00169862211037717

10   Peters, S.J., Gentry, M., & McBee, M.T. (2019). Who Gets Served in Gifted Education? Demographic Representation and a Call for Action. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 63*(4), 273-287. https://doi.org/10.1177/0016986219833738

Table 5: Representation Index for Subgroups

SUBGROUP	RI
Asian	1.45
Black	0.92
Hispanic	1.05
Two or More Races	1.59
White	0.46
Students with Disabilities	0.35
Students who are Economically Disadvantaged	1.04

As the primary route of identification in MPS is the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAt), TOPS identification does not capture all students identified as advanced learners. However, SEE US!'s data show that through training on the TOPS tool and identification, the program made great strides toward closing the Excellence Gap in participating schools.

In addition to identification data, we also reviewed student outcomes such as growth on the STAR assessment and attendance. Overall, it appears that students in SEE US! schools *were not harmed* by their school's participation in the program. However, while the interim evaluation report using data from the first half of the 2019-20 school year found small gains in STAR math and fewer absences in SEE US! schools, we did not see any meaningful differences in student outcomes between SEE US! and similar non-SEE US! schools over the course of the full program. There are a few potential explanations for this finding (in addition to the data constraints and methodological challenges described above in the Limitations section). First, we suspect this might be a result of the pandemic – that is, it is possible that SEE US! schools were showing improvements relative to non-SEE US! schools prior to COVID, but those improvements understandably waned as schools worked through COVID-related challenges and have yet to rebound. Second, STAR might be an improper tool for measuring growth, as SEE US! does not have a direct Reading or Math focus. Third, it might simply be too soon to see growth, as in other interventions that have shown impacts later on in students' careers. For instance, being identified as advanced in elementary school could manifest itself in greater self-efficacy, which could be measured by outcomes such as AP/IB course-taking in high school or college attendance.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a common concern with grant-funded programs such as SEE US! – how can schools continue the program's momentum once funding expires? The programming team intentionally worked on sustainability with participants during trainings and monthly meetings over the final years of the grant. In the final training in 2022, participants discussed sustainability measures within their school teams and presented those ideas to the other participants. Examples included:

- Involving and training all staff, not just teachers

- After-school activities and clubs

- School or community service project opportunities

- School-wide family packs

- Communication
  - Informing parents about TOPS
  - Parent/family orientation, open house
  - Community partnerships
  - District-wide communication

- Transportation for camps

Many of these examples echo the evaluation's findings on sustainability, as examined in focus groups and on the 2022 post-survey. These data sources allow us to identify common themes and concerns regarding sustainability. In 2021 and 2022, participants were asked the following two questions in focus groups:

- What would you need from your school to sustain SEE US! practices following the end of the program?

- If somebody from MPS asked you what you needed from the district to sustain SEE US! in your school or your classroom, what would you say?

Additionally, participants answered the following two questions on the post-survey in 2022, the second of which allowed for open-ended responses:

- To what extent are you prepared to sustain SEE US! practices going forward?

- Feel free to elaborate on the previous question. Do you feel you are prepared to sustain this work? What might you need from your school or MPS to do so?

The first of these survey items shows that the majority of the respondents at the Summer 2022 training felt "very prepared" to sustain SEE US! practices (Figure 12).

Figure 12: To what extent are you prepared to sustain SEE US! practices going forward?
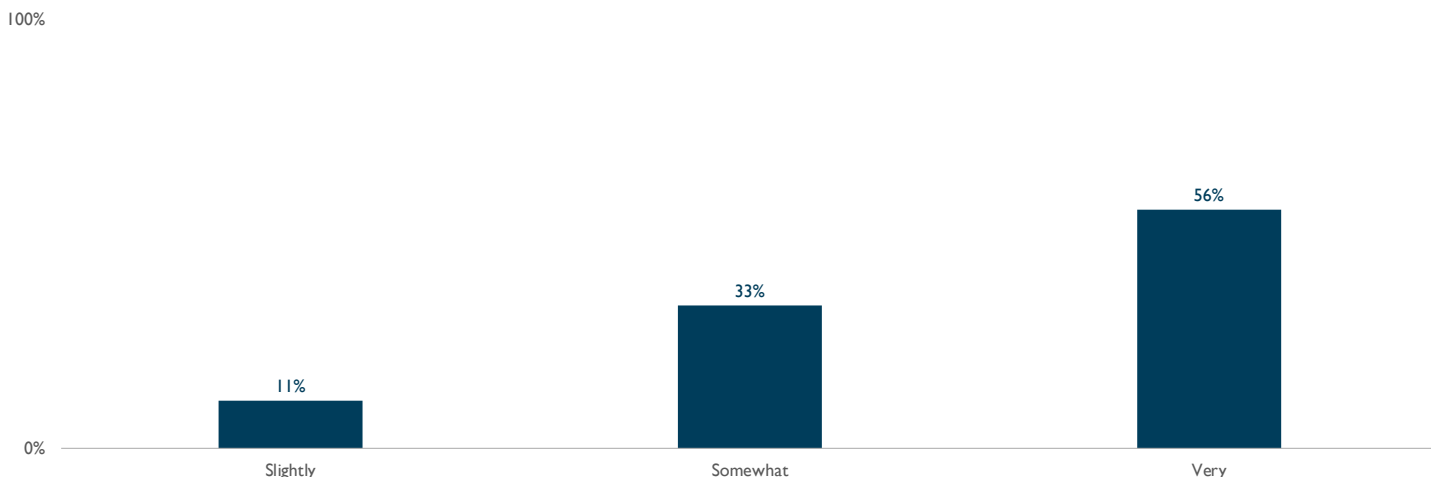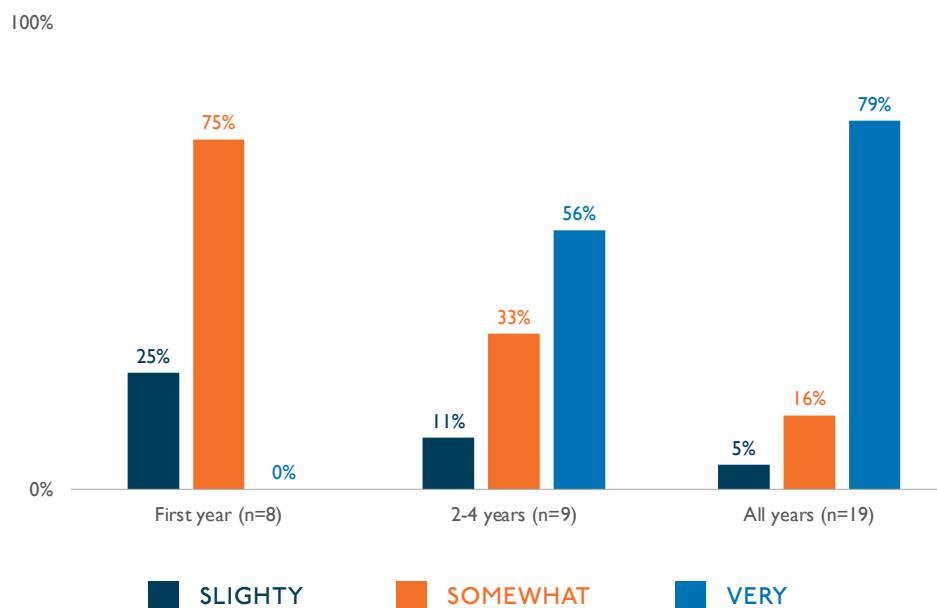(n=36)

Figure 13: Sustainability preparedness by Experience in Program

However, separating teachers who had been in the program all five years (n=19) from those with between two and four years in the program (n=9) and those who just began (n=8) shows a substantial gulf in perceived preparedness, as shown in Figure 13. Nearly 80 percent of participants who had participated in the program since its inception said they were "very prepared." The middle-experience group was roughly split between "very" and "somewhat"/"slightly" prepared. Meanwhile, none of the participants in their first year in SEE US! said they were "very prepared." **This finding suggests that newer participants may need a good deal of assistance and resources to allow them to sustain the program in their schools.**

Table 6: Themes on Sustainability in 2021 Focus Groups

THEME	EXAMPLES
Tangible Resources	· Funding for materials and supplies
	· Training, coaching, and professional learning
	· Time and opportunities for collaboration
Intangible Resources	· Flexibility in instruction and student engagement
	· Regular support and encouragement
Suggestions	· Modeling lessons, sharing knowledge with other staff
	· Need for future resources and training
Potential Challenges	· Administrative buy-in at both district- and school-level
	· Institutional memory when SEE US! teachers leave their schools

Using focus group data, the evaluation team prepared a brief on sustainability to the programming team in fall 2021 for formative program improvement. Participants' responses as reported in that brief revealed four broad themes, shown in Table 6.

Upon analyzing the open-ended 2022 survey question, evaluators saw similar themes emerge; namely, funding, materials, collaboration, and support from schools and the district (Figure 14). With respect to district support in particular, respondents had the following asks of MPS:
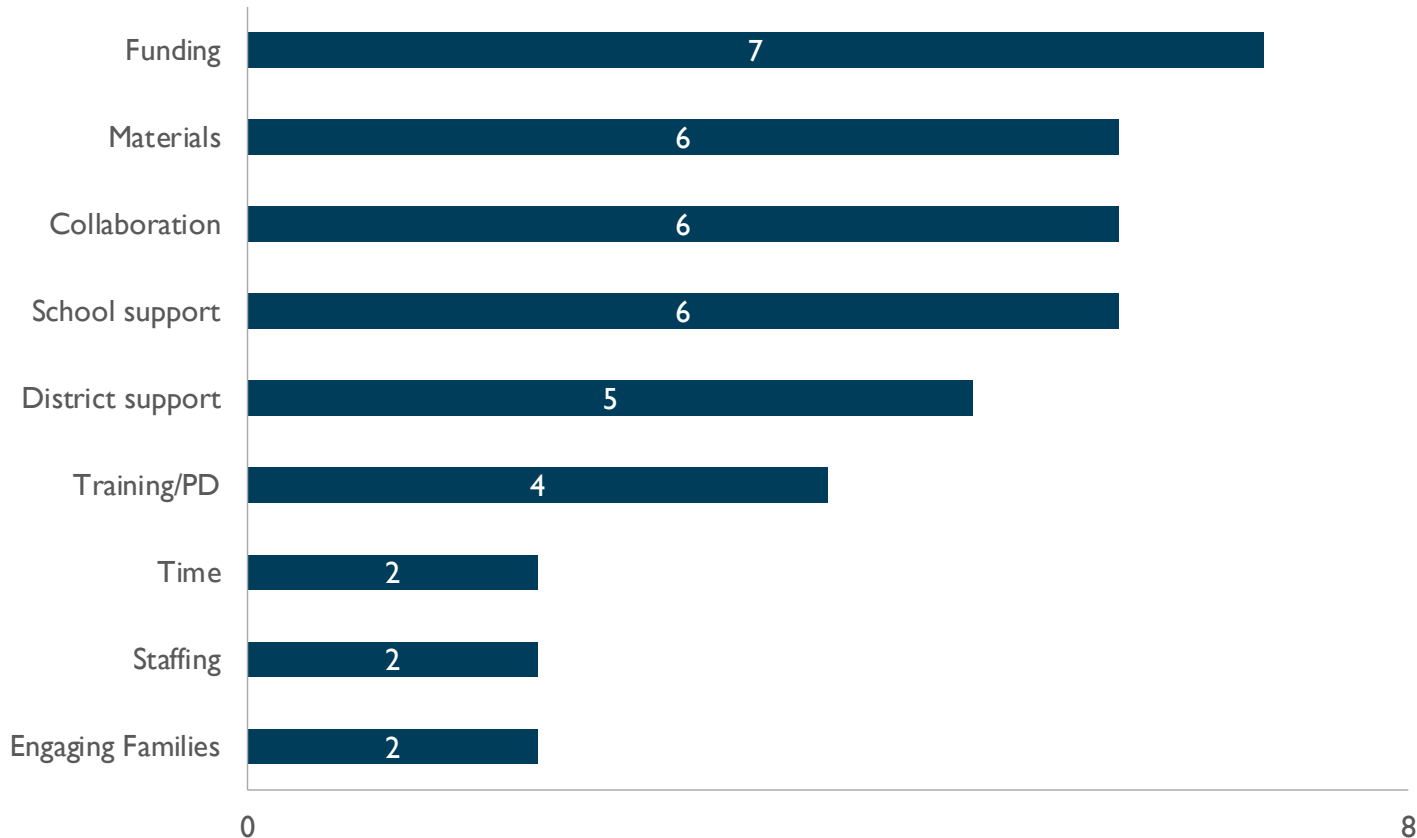
> "I would need MPS to make sure that all key roles are staffed so that implementation can be done with fidelity."

> "…From my school and MPS we need time to continue planning and PD to train other teachers and to inform families."

> "I need the district to provide materials to continue the work."

Figure 14: Themes from Open-Ended Survey Item on Sustainability

(n=32)

Theme	Count
Funding	7
Materials	6
Collaboration	6
School support	6
District support	5
Training/PD	4
Time	2
Staffing	2
Engaging Families	2

The 2022 focus groups revealed similar themes, as shown in Table 7. One additional theme that surfaced was concern about the buy-in of teachers who teach in SEE US! schools but have not participated in the grant. This need to extend the program to additional staff was also evident when schools discussed their future plans at the 2022 training.

Table 7: Sustainability Themes from 2022 Focus Groups

THEME	REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES
Collaboration	"…the time to plan across. You do your personal planning, or with the teacher you teach with, but if we're trying to do this as a school, there's got to be time to do planning across grade levels." "…the time to collaborate, the time to actually do the planning." "I like how we're being able to collaborate with other SEE US schools. I get a lot of value out of these [trainings]."
Materials and Resources	"We'll need those resources going forward to keep going with the activities. The down and dirty is they're expensive, it's expensive for all the materials, even once a month." "The biggest thing is going to be the materials, continue doing the projects. Or the family packs."
School and district support	"Maybe administrators in general might need to know a little bit more about the tool to know and understand. I'm not saying we're being questioned, but they may need a little bit more knowledge of the tool to understand the direction we're going in. It may look very different than a typical classroom or a typical learning activity." "…getting our principal on board is huge." "Keep it in our schools, don't pull it. We have the momentum going."
Staffing	"Turnover of staff has a great impact. We have to figure out one way to sustain. When one person leaves, go back to square one." "Making sure you have coaches and positions that need to be staffed."
Teacher buy-in	"We plan to educate more of the staff members about what SEE US is and how they can incorporate it. We've added a couple new members to our team. If we have representation in each grade or most of the grades, that helps spread the message as well." "How can we get together as a school independently once funding runs out? How do we get staff members who aren't here, or are hesitant, to buy in?" "…the 8th grade teachers are like, what's SEE US? It's our fault that they don't know what SEE US is. Just that communication and getting other grade levels involved." "Having professional development for all staff, even if they're not part of SEE US. Understand what is TOPS, purpose of SEE US. Look at students with a different lens. I think it should be the entire school."

Finally, while nearly all of the survey items showed growth over the course of the grant, there were a handful of exceptions. In particular, three of the pre-post survey items where response means initially increased for full-program participants, but then decreased, align to these same sustainability themes and concerns. Figure 15 shows trends in responses to those three survey items:

· **Collaboration** around student data and instruction is built into staff expectations, schedules, and the school calendar

· We commit adequate **time and resources** to support professional learning for all staff needed for full RtI implementation

· We use a process to regularly **communicate** our school-wide RtI actions and results to multiple stakeholder audiences, including all staff, families, school board members, and the community

Triangulating all of these data sources – observations, focus group responses, and survey responses – allows us to draw conclusions as to the greatest needs for sustainability:

· Time for collaboration and professional development

· Funding, resources, and materials

· Assistance with communication with teachers in non-SEE US! classrooms, families, and other stakeholders.

Overall, administrative buy-in at both the school and district level will be essential to SEE US!'s viability going forward. An environment in which this buy-in exists, and in which encouragement and flexibility are provided to teachers and support staff, could allow SEE US! to be sustained – and possibly expanded – even in the absence of dedicated funding for programming.

Figure 15: Survey Items Related to Sustainability Concerns
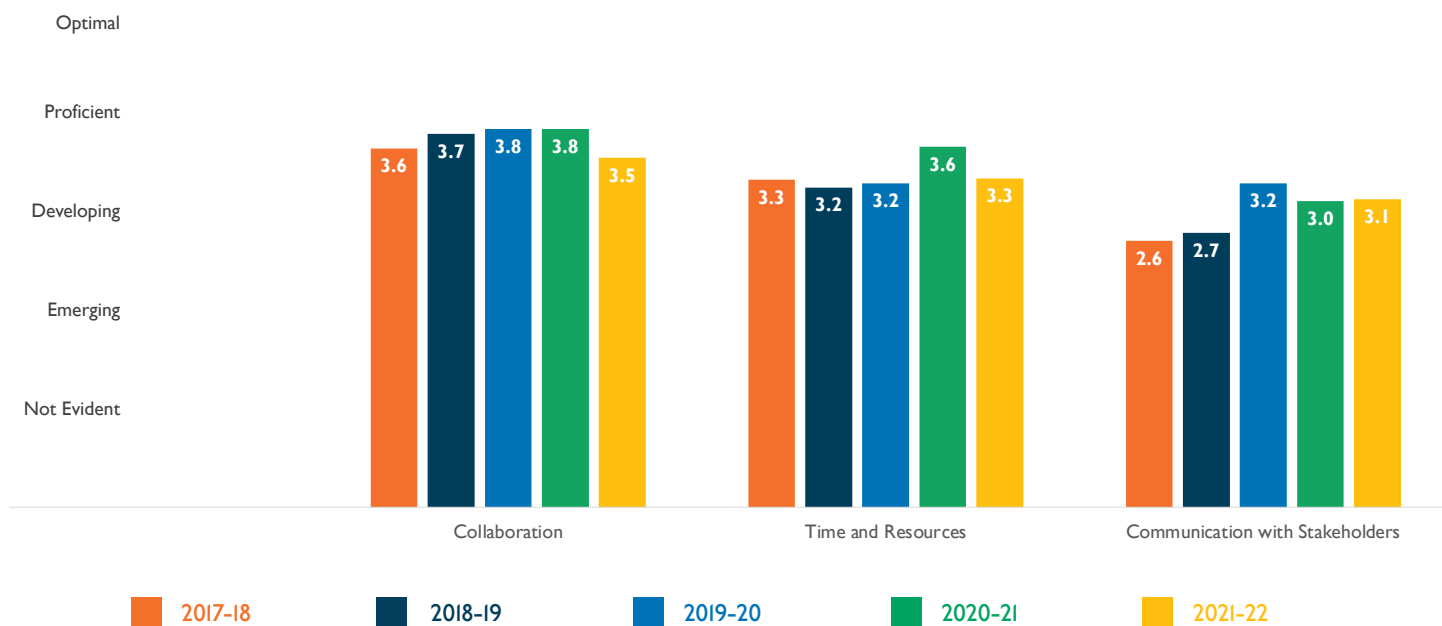
Section 3

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion and Recommendations

The SEE US! grant listed several priorities:

- Identifying high-ability/high-potential students from traditionally underrepresented populations

- Understanding and addressing the Excellence Gap

- Employing high-quality, hands-on, inquiry-based teaching practices

- Enhancing engagement with families

- Engaging in culturally responsive practices

This evaluation report shows the ways in which SEE US! effectively addressed all of these items. The programming team deliberately selected schools with high populations of students traditionally underrepresented in advanced learning. By training teachers on how to use the TOPS identification tool and facilitating its use over time, even during virtual instruction, the program enhanced understanding of MPS's Excellence Gap and took steps to address it. The resulting identification data show that students who identify as Black, Hispanic, and economically disadvantaged at SEE US! schools are represented proportionally within their schools, a meaningful and welcome departure from national trends in disproportionality. SEE US! then extended the learning of advanced students through its activities and camps. The program successfully trained teachers on how to implement hands-on, inquiry practices within their classrooms. Crucially, it provided participants the funding, resources, and collaboration and planning time needed to do so with fidelity. The program both directly and indirectly addressed cultural responsiveness through training and the materials, such as the TOPS tool itself. And woven throughout the classroom practices was engagement with families, through parent information sessions, explanations of TOPS and identification, and the inquiry-based activities offered with family packs.

All of these successes make SEE US! worthy of continuation, and perhaps even scaling to additional grades and schools. The programming team worked with participants on sustainability, and the evaluation team took several steps to capture participants' concerns about the program going forward. In that spirit, we present the following recommendations for MPS to consider, both for continuing SEE US! practices and for future similar initiatives.

Recommendation: Provide programming support for SEE US!-related work

Much as a school's administrative team is responsible for its performance, so was the SEE US! programming team responsible for the program's success. We recognize that staffing and funding are persistent issues throughout school systems, especially as they continue to make their way out of the pandemic. But without the programming team's strong leadership, commitment, and consistency – holding meetings at every school every month, bringing in speakers with relevant expertise, providing support during virtual instruction – there would not have been nearly as much participant buy-in and willingness to advance the grant's priorities. Dedicating staff toward supporting schools with inquiry-based instruction, culturally responsive practices, and family engagement could help SEE US! schools maintain their momentum.

Recommendation: Assist participating schools with their sustainability needs

In focus groups and surveys, participants were consistent in describing their needs for sustainability. They want more time to collaborate and plan, funding for inquiry- and STEM-related materials, and support and flexibility from school and district administrators. They also recognize the need for adequate staffing and buy-in from other teachers who did not participate in SEE US! within their schools. Moreover, teachers who are newer to the program indicate that they need more support in sustaining SEE US!-related activities than do teachers who have participated in the program since its inception.

Recommendation: Continue to review longitudinal data

At the school level, the trajectory of the Representation Index for subgroups in participating schools will be an indicator of whether they are continuing to utilize the TOPS tool with fidelity to address the Excellence Gap. At the student level, we hypothesize that many impacts of SEE US! may emerge later in students' careers, now that the program has helped them develop an identity as high-potential/high-achieving. For example, impacts may appear in outcomes such as AP/IB course-taking in high school, graduation, or college-going. We also recommend collecting TOPS data differently such that it shows the year in which the student was identified and not just that they were identified using TOPS at some point in their schooling.

Overall, teachers have grown in their use and understanding of TOPS, inquiry, and culturally responsive practices, and report that their students have grown as a result of their schools' participation in the program. As such, participants feel the program should be sustained and extended. In that vein, we conclude with one SEE US! teacher's impressions (emphasis ours):

> "In the time that we're in now, **I wish it could be district-wide**. With students coming back in the class, collective trauma in your classroom, and teachers with their own trauma, bringing that back to the classroom. **They need something positive**. 'I've been away from school for so long, and now I'm back, I'm not quite sure how I'm going to fit. I didn't know if I was going to be able to talk to my friends again. School is hard.' So for someone that you look up to and is helping to **build that resilience** to see potential in you, that's **building school capacity, community capacity, and building up the child all at the same time**. Identifying them as, 'You're music-smart. You're math-smart.' They're constantly hearing that. Looking up to their teachers. That's huge."

Section 4

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Section 5

Appendices

Appendix A:
2022 Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Introductions and thank you

1. Introduce yourself as working with WEC on the SEE US! evaluation. The evaluation is a partnership between MPS and WEC to take a close look at both the successes and potential challenges of gifted programming in the district.

2. Any questions or concerns about the evaluation can be directed to the project director, Annalee Good, annalee.good@wisc.edu, (608) 262-2063.

3. Thank you for taking part in the focus group. It is a very important way for us to get a full picture of SEE US!

4. A summary of this evaluation will be available at the conclusion of the project.

Format of focus group

- Your participation is totally voluntary. Nothing you say will be connected to your name or any identifiable information in evaluation reports. Please respect others' confidentiality and not share specific comments made outside of this group.

- This focus group is a structured, but informal conversation about your experiences with SEE US! We have a list of guiding questions or topics, but there may be other, related topics that come up.

- Please do not feel like you need to raise hands to speak, but also be aware that there are many here who may want a chance to talk. If you do not get the chance to speak, please feel free to email responses to either myself or the project director, Annalee Good.

- With your consent, we would like to audio record the focus group to help us accurately collect what you all say. There will not be a transcript made of the recording and it will be destroyed after we write up the summary report.

- We expect this focus group to last about 20 minutes. Are there any questions?

Ask for school, grade, and length of participation in program

1. What are your overall impressions of SEE US!?

For the next series of questions, think about how your and your colleagues' understanding of SEE US! grant priorities have evolved.

2. To what extent have you grown as an educator and/or changed your practices as a result of your participation in SEE US!?

3. To what extent has participating in SEE US! led you and your colleagues to engage in more culturally responsive practices in instruction and identification?

4. Think about how you identify advanced learners.

    · What are the strengths and weaknesses of TOPS in identifying advanced learners?

    · One of the grant's priorities is to narrow the "excellence gap"; how do you understand what that means? To what extent has the representativeness of advanced learners in your classroom, grade level, and school improved?

5. To what extent has participating in SEE US! led you and your colleagues to engage in inquiry-based practices?

6. Think about your interactions with families. What has gone well? What could be improved in the future based on your experiences with SEE US!?

7. Think about the growth of your advanced learners since the start of the program.

    · Have they experienced academic growth? Personal growth? Has their engagement improved? How do you know?

    · Have students in your classroom not identified as advanced learners grown as a result of the program? How do you know?

8. What would you still need from your school or MPS to sustain SEE US! practices?

    · Do you feel you have the support of your colleagues and administrators?

Appendix B: 2022 Post Survey

Introduction

The Wisconsin Evaluation Collaborative (WEC) at UW-Madison's Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) is conducting the evaluation of the SEE US! program. In part, the evaluation will assess your and your school's understanding and implementation of Culturally Responsive Practices throughout the lifespan of the project. This survey should take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

Please provide your own brief definition of Culturally Responsive Practices based on your current understanding of them. Consider your response carefully; you will not be able to edit after you advance to the next page.

There are many definitions of Culturally Responsive Practices. You defined it as:

_____

MPS defines Culturally Responsive Practices as "educational systems, processes, and habits adopted based on the belief that all students should be supported socially, emotionally, intellectually, and civically by leveraging students' lived experiences and learning styles to ensure student achievement" (based on and adapted from "Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy." American educational research journal 32.3 (1995): 465- 491. By Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Please select the name of your school or site.

When did your participation in SEE US begin? If you do not remember exactly, make your best guess.

○ Spring 2018

○ Summer 2018

○ During the 2018-19 school year

○ Summer 2019

○ During the 2019-20 school year

○ Summer 2020

○ During the 2020-21 school year

○ Summer 2021

○ During the 2021-22 school year

Differentiation and Engagement

For how many years have you been at your current school or site? (If you have been at your current school or site for more than 30 years, please check the 30+ box.)

Years at current school or site

| 0 | 6 | 12 | 18 | 24 | 30 | 30+ |

For how many years have you been in Milwaukee Public Schools? (If you have been with the district for more than 30 years, please check the 30+ box.)

Years in district

| 0 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 20 | 25 | 30 | 30+ |

What is the highest degree you have received?

○ Bachelor's
○ Master's
○ Doctorate

Please list all licenses you currently hold.

To what extent are you prepared to sustain SEE US! practices going forward?

○ Not Prepared
○ Slightly Prepared
○ Somewhat Prepared
○ Very Prepared

Feel free to elaborate on the previous question. Do you feel you are prepared to sustain this work? What might you need from your school or MPS to do so?

There are two parts to this assessment. The first part includes questions drawn from the Wisconsin RtI Center's School-Wide Implementation Review (SIR) tool, and the second part includes questions on U-STARS~PLUS implementation.

A glossary of terms from the Wisconsin RtI Center can be found here. You may want to refer to the glossary as you consider your responses.

This first set of questions relates to your practices with respect to **Differentiation and Engagement**. Please describe the degree to which you engage in these practices using the following rubric:

Not Evident

·   Not being used.

Emerging

·   Beginning evidence of understanding of theoretical background and practical application of differentiation.

·   Few activities support appropriate challenge and interest for students at different levels.

Developing

·   Better understanding of the theoretical background.

·   Some application in the classroom on a regular basis.

·   Experimenting with ideas in a variety of ways and settings.

Proficient

·   Consistent integration of high-end learning opportunities in the classroom.

·   Evident in student work, curriculum planning, and classroom instruction.

·   Used to create an optimal learning environment, which nurtures and responds to potential.

Optimal

·   Used to create an optimal learning environment, which nurtures and responds to potential.

·   Clearly evident in assessment, student work, planning, and instruction.

·   Challenging and meaningful work consistently facilitated for all students, seamlessly.

Questions

1. Differentiate universal curriculum and instruction based on student needs

2. Provide evidence-based advanced learning opportunities for students <u>exceeding</u> benchmarks

3. Regularly review the overall effectiveness of advanced learning opportunities for students receiving selected and intensive support

4. Regularly review the effectiveness of advanced learning opportunities for demographic groups of students receiving selected and intensive support

5. Use a process to analyze disaggregated universal screening results (i.e. by student demographic groups)

Cultural Responsiveness

The next set of questions relates to your practices with respect to **Cultural Responsiveness**. Please describe the degree to which you engage in the these practices using the following rubric. (Note that this rubric is different from the rubric from the previous set of questions.)

Not Evident

- Not being used.

Emerging

- Beginning evidence of understanding of theoretical background and practical application of culturally responsive teaching.

- Few activities support appropriate challenge and interest for students of different cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences.

Developing

- Better understanding of the theoretical background.

- Some application in the classroom/school on a regular basis.

- Experimenting with ideas in a variety of ways

and settings.

Proficient

- Consistent integration of high-end learning opportunities in the classroom.

- Evident in student work, curriculum planning, and classroom instruction.

- Used to create an optimal learning environment, which nurtures and responds to potential.

Optimal

- Used to create an optimal learning environment, which nurtures and responds to potential.

- Clearly evident in assessment, student work, planning, and instruction.

- Challenging and meaningful work consistently facilitated for all students, seamlessly.

Questions

1. Use research-based practices and/or programs within our universal curriculum and instruction

2. Provide universal curriculum and instruction that engages students

3. Provide universal curriculum and instruction that uses the cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences of our students

4. Provide additional challenges relevant to the cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences of our students <u>exceeding</u> benchmarks

5. Use a screening process that is relevant to our students' cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences

6. Demonstrate cultural competence when collaborating in grade level/content area teams about universal student data and instructional practices

7. Demonstrate cultural competence when collaborating in grade level/content area teams about the appropriate nature of support at the selected level

8. Use a culturally competent process when collaborating in our building-level problem-solving team

Identification and Measurement

The next set of questions relates to your practices with respect to **Identification and Measurement**. Please describe the degree to which you engage in these practices using the following rubric.

Not Evident

- Not being used.

Emerging

- Used for a few students, sporadically.

- Completed in one sitting or in retrospect.

Developing

- Used on a regular basis.

- Experimenting with guiding classroom instruction and sharing students' strengths and needs.

Proficient

- Consistently integrated.

- Information used to plan appropriate responses for students' strengths and needs.

Optimal

- Significant and intentional use, including for students from educationally vulnerable populations.

- Seamless use to guide classroom instruction, share student strengths and needs with other teachers, and communicate with families.

- Use as a base for creating a body of evidence to document the child's strengths and needs.

Questions

I. Use multiple measures to review the effectiveness of our universal curriculum and instruction for demographic groups of students and adjust accordingly

2. Use multiple measures in our universal screening process

3. Use valid and reliable tools to monitor the progress of students receiving advanced learning opportunities

4. Frequently review progress-monitoring data to gauge whether students are making adequate progress in advanced learning opportunities and adjust accordingly

Strategies and Processes -- Implementation, Review, and Refinement

The next set of questions relates to your practices with respect to **Strategies and Processes** related to **Implementation, Review, and Refinement**. Please describe the degree to which you engage in these practices using the following rubric.

Not Evident

- Not established.

Emerging

- Planning has started, beginning conversations are occurring.

- Ideas around systems, system reviews, collaboration, and professional development are being discussed.

Developing

- Experimenting with facilitating implementation of systems, system reviews, collaboration, and professional development.

- Experimenting with incorporation of fidelity of implementation as a guide for implementation.

Proficient

- Framework and guidelines in place for consistent use of systems, system reviews, collaboration, and professional development.

- Integration of fidelity of implementation review.

Optimal

- Full integration of systems, system reviews, collaboration, and professional development into all school policies and procedures.

- Long-range goals are clearly evident.

- Fidelity of implementation intentionally guides progress.

Questions

1. Use a process to ensure that our universal curriculum and instruction are delivered with fidelity (i.e. as intended)

2. Use a system to document universal screening results and instructional decisions

3. Regularly review the effectiveness and efficiency of our universal screening processes

4. Our school embraces an RtI vision centered on achieving high levels of academic and behavioral success for all students

5. Collaboration around student data and instruction is built into staff expectations, schedules, and the school calendar

6. We commit adequate time and resources to support professional learning for all staff needed for full RtI implementation

Strategies and Processes -- Family and Community Engagement

The next set of questions relates to your practices with respect to **Strategies and Processes** related to **Family and Community Engagement**. Please describe the degree to which you engage in these practices using the following rubric.

Not Evident

- Not occurring.

Emerging

- Beginning evidence of understanding of theoretical background and practical application of family/community involvement.

- Beginning to learn about families and backgrounds.

- Participation of families is minimal.

Developing

- Some family/community involvement activities take place on a regular basis.

- Involvement concentrates on student and family needs.

- Experimenting with new ways to address the needs of diverse families.

Proficient

- Consistent effort is given to integrate families into school and classroom.

- Family needs are considered.

- Regular and varied communication with families/community.

- Variety of family/community involvement opportunities are available; some family-centered.

Optimal

- Initiatives are established to intentionally and meaningfully involve all families.

- Seamless integration of family involvement in meaningful aspects of the classroom/school.

- Family/community involvement activities are well supported and attended.

- Family involvement leads to better understanding of families and students.

Questions

1. Use formal strategies to share our grade-level/course benchmarks with all parents/guardians

2. Use formal strategies that ensure parents/guardians know and understand universal screening results

3. Use a process to regularly inform parents/guardians of ongoing student progress in advanced learning opportunities

4. We use a process to regularly communicate our school-wide RtI actions and results to multiple stakeholder audiences, including all staff, families, school board members, and the community

U-STARS Rubrics

The remaining questions are based on the U-STARS~PLUS Fidelity of Implementation Classroom Rubrics. According to the Council for Exceptional Children's website, U-STARS is "designed to support teachers in the early recognition and nurturing of potential in children from economically disadvantaged and/or culturally/linguistically different families and in children with disabilities."

The four sets of classroom rubrics follow. You will be asked to use the rubrics to guide your assessment of the levels of implementation for four areas: TOPS tool; classroom differentiation; hands-on, inquiry-based science; and family involvement. Below the description of each of the critical components are considerations for whether a practice is "not evident," "emerging," "developing," "proficient," or "optimal."

Critical Component: Teacher's Observation of Potential in Students (TOPS)

- Supports "at-potential" view of all students.

- Recognized students with outstanding potential, in particularly those from educationally vulnerable populations.

- Informs teachers about student strengths and needs.

- Informs classroom instruction and academic service options.

- Provides information from a variety of settings, over time.

- Supports conferencing with teachers, parents, and students.

- Informs services and supports for students for the following year.

- Informs a body of evidence.

- Leads to referrals for Gifted and Talented program services.

- Integrates with school policies and Gifted and Talented program practices.

Not Evident

- TOPS is not being used.

Emerging

- Beginning evidence of understanding of theoretical background and practical application of TOPS.

- Used for a few students, sporadically.

- Completed in one sitting or in retrospect.

Developing

- Use of TOPS on a regular basis, beginning with the whole-class observation which leads to some individual observations.

- Experimenting with guiding classroom instruction and sharing students' strengths and needs.

Proficient

- Consistent integration of of TOPS for student observations.

- Entire observation process followed; students with outstanding potential are recognized.

- Information from observations are used to plan appropriate response for students' strengths and needs.

Optimal

- Significant and intentional use in classroom to see high potential in students, including those from educationally vulnerable populations.

- Seamless use to guide classroom instruction, share student strengths and needs with other teachers, and communicate with families.

- Use as a base for creating a body of evidence to document the child's strengths and needs.

- Helps to guide Gifted and Talented referrals, placement and services in and out of the general education classroom, and policy issues.

Critical Component: Classroom Differentiation

- Responds to strengths and needs of students.

- Relies on dynamic assessment to inform instruction, including progress monitoring and self-assessment. Includes differentiation strategies: compacting, tiering, centers, independent studies/small group contracts, effective questioning.

- Varies based on readiness, interest, strengths, and needs.

- Uses student-centered, open-ended, product choice.

- Uses a variety of materials and resources for student use.

- Leads to flexible grouping.

- Uses U-STARS~PLUS materials.

Not Evident

- Classroom differentiation is not being used.

Emerging

- Beginning evidence of understanding of theoretical background and practical application of differentiation.

- Few activities support appropriate challenge and interest for students at different levels.

Developing

- Better understanding of the theoretical background.

- Some application in the classroom on a regular basis.

- Experimenting with ideas in a variety of ways and settings.

Proficient

- Consistent integration of high-end learning opportunities in the classroom.

- Evident in student work, curriculum planning, and classroom instruction.

- Used to create an optimal learning environment, which nurtures and responds to potential.

Optimal

- Used to create an optimal learning environment, which nurtures and responds to potential.

- Clearly evident in assessment, student work, planning, and instruction.

- Challenging and meaningful work consistently facilitated for all students, seamlessly.

Critical Component: Hands-On, Inquiry-Based Science

- Provides hands-on activities and explorations.

- Supports inquiry-rich learning; students follow own questions and experiment. Integrates with other subject areas.

- Fosters authentic learning, using natural environments.

- Uses a variety of materials and resources.

- Responds to students' curiosity and interests.

- Leads to scientific understanding and realities.

- Includes long-term projects, data collection, and analysis.

- Incorporates student-centered/teacher guided learning.

Not Evident

- Hands-on, inquiry-based science is not being facilitated.

Emerging

- Beginning evidence of understanding of theoretical background and practical application of hands-on, inquiry-based science.

- Few activities done in isolation; more hands-on than inquiry; does involve students.

Developing

- Some integration of hands-on activities on a regular basis in the classroom.

- Experimenting with inquiry-based explorations in a variety of ways and settings.

- Better understanding of the theoretical background.

Proficient

- Consistent integration of hands-on, inquiry-based science opportunities in the classroom.

- Student interest and curiosity are considered.

- Evident in student work, curriculum planning, and classroom instruction.

- Used to nurture and respond to outstanding potential.

Optimal

- Significant and intentional integration of hands-on, inquiry-based science, where appropriate.

- Classroom environment clearly supports inquiry-based learning leading to scientific understanding.

- Clearly evident in assessment, student work, planning, and curriculum and instruction.

- Leads to better understanding of students' potential.

Critical Component: Family Involvement

- Considers diversity of family backgrounds (race/ethnicity, socioeconomic, cultural/linguistic) in all aspects, including communication, events, and academic issues.

- Uses regular and varied forms of communication.

- Includes a variety of ways to involve families in the classroom, including academic, policy, social/emotional-focused.

- Provides opportunities for family-led initiatives.

Not Evident

- Family involvement specific to U-STARS~PLUS is not occurring.

Emerging

- Beginning evidence of understanding of theoretical background and practical application of family involvement.

- Occasional family involvement activities take place.

- Beginning to learn about families and backgrounds.

Developing

- Some family/community involvement activities take place on a regular basis.

- Involvement concentrates on student and family needs.

- Experimenting with family involvement in new ways to incorporate science.

Proficient

- Consistent effort is given to integrate families into school and classroom.

- Family needs are considered.

- Regular and varied communication with families.

- Variety of family involvement opportunities are available; some family-centered.

Optimal

- All families are intentionally involved in meaningful aspects of the classroom.

- Integration of family involvement into the academic areas of their children.

- Family-led initiatives are intentionally encouraged and take place in the classroom.

- Family involvement leads to better understanding of families and students.

WEC