

Project STELLAR

(Supporting Teachers of English Language Learners Across Rural Settings)

Part V: Abstract

The University of Florida (UF) is submitting an application for funding under Title III, National Professional Development (NPD) programs. Project STELLAR (Supporting Teachers of English Language Learners Across Rural Settings) is being submitted in partnership with Levy County School Board (LCSB), a rural local education agency (LEA) in north central Florida. The number of English language learners (ELLs) throughout the state of Florida continues to increase (FL DOE, 2016), and there is a significant increase in ELLs located in rural, “new destination” settings. The LCSB district is one such setting, and ELLs across all grades are underachieving academically.

The Principal Investigator for this project will be Dr. Maria Coady, an advanced Associate Professor in the College of Education at UF with prior NPD grant experience. The goals and objectives in this project address the **Absolute Priority** to Provide Professional Development to Improve Instruction for ELLs. Project STELLAR will do so by preparing educators (n=24) from three “town-based” teams from grades PreK-12 in Communities of Practice (CoPs). The CoPs will follow a two-year evidence-based, job-embedded, hybrid program *Teacher Leadership for School Improvement* (TLSI), which will be adapted for educators of ELLs (TLSI-ESOL). The 24 participants will subsequently prepare 72 (three each) mainstream educators of ELLs in site-based CoP settings.

Project STELLAR addresses **Competitive Preference Priority 1** that shows Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness. Using the CoP structure, participants will acquire the knowledge and skills to use student achievement data to improve vocabulary development for elementary students ([Carlo et al., 2004](#) in [WWC Practice Guide 2007](#)) and academic language for middle/high school students ([August et al., 2009](#) in [WWC Practice Guide 2014](#)). Both studies show “strong” evidence for success. We will document improved practices using an ELL-modified district teacher evaluation tool (Danielson Group, 2016). In addition, Project STELLAR will address the needs of rural ELLs through the design and implementation of articulation plans that ensure high-quality continuation of services for ELLs across the district. Project STELLAR will meet **Invitational Priority 2** through CoPs that include early childhood educators (ECEs) of ELLs from ages 3-5 in the job-embedded, hybrid program. ECEs will follow a high-impact, evidence-based TLSI-Early Childhood (EC) program (Wang, Warner, Golan, Wechsler, & Park, 2015). Project STELLAR will address **Competitive Preference Priority 2** to Improve Parent, Family, and Community Engagement by building upon an existing homework structure in LCSB in partnership with Rural Women’s Health Project (RWHP, 2016).

This project has **four** overarching goals and **eight** specific and measureable objectives. **Goal 1, Objectives 1 and 2** will build and extend the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of rural educators to work with ELLs in grades PreK-12. Participants will earn a TLSI-ESOL Certificate and 25% will continue in advanced degree ESOL programs at UF. **Goal 2, Objectives 1 through 3** will provide ELLs in rural settings with increased access to high-quality PreK-12 learning environments and pay full day tuition for 15 PreK ELLs. **Goal 3, Objective 1** will strengthen home-school-community partnerships. Educators in the project will work with families and communities to support ELLs’ learning and well-being. **Goal 4, Objectives 1 and 2** will increase ELLs’ achievement on the ACCESS 2.0 (English language) and FSA (state standards) assessments.

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