

Abstract (3)

Florida International University operates the FIU After-School All-Stars (FIU-ASAS) Project PANTHER at Brownsville Middle and Georgia Jones-Ayers Middle School for students in grades 6-8. The Brownsville Middle program, located on site at 4899 NW 24th Avenue, Miami, FL 33142, serves 70 students daily. The Georgia Jones-Ayers Middle Program, located at 1331 NW 46th Street, Miami, FL 33142, serves 65 students daily. At both locations FIU-ASAS provides programming during the school year from 3:55pm to 6:10pm Monday-Friday beginning August 15th, 2024 through May 23rd, 2025 for 172 days and summer from 9am to 5pm, Monday-Friday from June 9th, 2025 to July 25th, 2025 for 33 days.

The general goals of Project PANTHER are providing a safe environment, improving academics, career awareness, and increasing family involvement. Program activities include academic enrichment; science, technology, engineering and math (STEM); cultural programs; drug and violence prevention; and health and active lifestyle programs. Additionally, a minimum of 5 educational opportunities are offered to the adult family members of participants, to include topics on cyberbullying, social media, nutrition, college information and navigating the school system portals. By providing comprehensive activities to both students and parents on a consistent basis and aligning with the specific needs of each local school and community, FIU-ASAS Project PANTHER strives to play a part in helping each student achieve success in school and in life.

Applicant's Experience and Capacity (3 Points)

Florida International University and its program partners have a wealth of prior experience and success providing educational programs that complement and enhance the proposed target students' academic performance, achievement, and development. Since 2014, FIU, in partnership with After-School All-Stars (ASAS) and Miami Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), has been the predominant provider of free out-of-school programs in M-DCPS' middle schools serving over 26,000 students after school. FIU began receiving 21st CCLC funds in 2014 after the College of Arts, Sciences and Education absorbed the program team of the South Florida chapter of After-School All-Stars, who had previously managed 21st CCLC awards since 2003. Additionally, FIU,

being a major public education and research university, has many federal grants and subgrants. The university has all the required policies, procedures and associated systems in place to adhere to the Uniform Guidance required of programs who are managing public funds. Additionally, there is an entire department, the Office of Research and Economic Development, assigned to work with grant managers and internal accounting systems designed to make sure funds are properly managed.

The After-School All-Stars South Florida Board of Directors also provides oversight of the FIU- based program. This volunteer Board does not have any vested financial interest in program operations but is present to provide guidance and, in some cases, funding for operations not able to be covered by 21st CCLC funds.

The leadership for this FIU After-School All-Stars project comes from its team consisting of the Executive Director and Senior Director of Programs who combined have nearly than 40 years of experience in managing afterschool programs including operations, curriculum, lesson plans, monitoring, professional development and public funding. Additionally, the FIU-ASAS has 10 years of experience offering after-school programs funded by The Children's Trust, a dedicated source of revenue derived from Miami-Dade property taxes, established by voter referendum in 2002.

Through M-DCPS' Middle School Enrichment Program, each site has a program manager to collaborate with the FIU-ASAS program. These managers have had extensive experience in working with 21st CCLC requirements as well as with socioeconomically disadvantaged, middle school populations at risk of academic failure or struggling academically or behaviorally. They are well versed in the various instructional approaches and serve as a direct line to enhance communication with the

regular school day staff and the FIU-ASAS 21st CCLC team. This collaboration helps the program obtain various forms of data on students and families, in addition to what is collected in after school, to help adjust programming, drive student outcomes or provide needed resources.

During the 2023-24 school year, FIU-ASAS operated 17 middle school afterschool programs throughout M-DCPS, most of which were 21st CCLC funded. Both identified sites within Project PANTHER are also former FIU-ASAS and 21st CCLC program locations.

In, February 2020, a 21st CCLC Comprehensive Monitoring Visit was conducted, where all documents were reviewed as a site visit conducted. There were no findings and the reviewer shared that it was the best program she had reviewed all year. FIU- After-School All-Stars has consistently demonstrated substantial experience in operating efficient afterschool programs that are highly effective at impacting student academic achievement and personal growth.

Additionally, another 21st CCLC Comprehensive Monitoring Visit was conducted in March 2024 in conjunction with a Program Quality Site Visit. While the Monitoring Report has not been released, the 21st CCLC Team appreciated the organization and accessibility of the documents. The Program Quality Report was released and did not have any items that needed follow up actions.

Needs Assessment Section

From spring of 2024, the multidisciplinary program team which included FIU, South Florida After-School All-Stars, M-DCPS Middle School Enrichment Program, the 2 individual school site principals and their selected administration determined the need for Project PANTHER by gathering and analyzing data from sources including: U.S.

Census Bureau information; Florida educational attainment data; local juvenile crime statistics, student performance data; and a survey of the parents, students and teachers affiliated with each school site. The local private schools that serve middle school students were also contacted through phone calls and certified mail to help determine the need of the program for their populations, to which they declined or did not respond.

Information about service gaps in the area was gathered from feedback solicited from students, parents and community partners. The purpose of the needs assessment process was to identify and prioritize student and family needs (e.g., student achievement, family literacy or support needs, other student needs) and provide the basis for developing a comprehensive, community-driven afterschool program that is responsive to the identified needs and gaps. The program described herein was purposefully and collaboratively developed to address the general and specific gaps and weaknesses identified in the needs assessment process. Additionally, the known parents/guardians of current and potential students of the target sites each received a phone call communicating about the intent to apply for the Nita M. Lowey 21st CCLC Statewide RFP, a program description and a method to ask questions.

Project PANTHER proposes to serve two (2) high-need, high-minority, Title 1 Miami-Dade County schools: Brownsville Middle School and Georgia Jones-Ayers Middle School. During the 2023-24 school year, both locations had an FIU-ASAS after school program in its final year, with Georgia Jones-Ayers being funded by 21st CCLC.

Many students from these schools are in high-need, resource-poor communities. They also are similar in that they serve communities characterized by elevated levels of under employment, while providing far too few opportunities for low-income youth to access structured academic and enrichment programming with positive adult role models. The need for after-school programming in these communities is great. According to the Afterschool Alliance (2024) unmet demand for afterschool programs

among parents of students in middle school (6th, 7th and 8th grades) has risen sharply, even as satisfaction with programs has reached a new high. For every middle schooler in an afterschool program today, three more are waiting to get in, according to the *America After 3PM* 2020 survey they commissioned. One of the primary barriers for families is cost. Florida Department of Education Accountability Reports in 2023 share that 100% of students at Brownsville as well as 100% of students at Georgia Jones-Ayers are classified as economically disadvantaged. Furthermore, the 2022 City-Data.com Zip Code report for the community they are both located in (33142) shows that 36.1% of adults in this community have less than a high school education, with the state rate currently at 11.5%. The reports also state that while Florida's rates for residents that live below poverty level and below 50% of the poverty level are 12.7% and 6.6% respectively, the rates of this community are 27.1% and 16.9%, respectively.

Both Title I schools demonstrate the critical need for academic and enrichment support activities. The 2023 Proficiency rates based on assessment results from Brownsville and Georgia Jones-Ayers are:

-29% and 27% in English Language Arts (ELA)

-35 and 31% in Mathematics

-33% and 41% in Science

Brownsville has been identified by the Florida Department of Education as Targeted for Support and Improvement (TS&I) based on the subgroups of English Language Learners (ELL) and Hispanic Students (HIS) having overall proficiency ratings below the federal achievement level. The ELL subgroup shows only 18% proficiency in ELA, 31% proficiency in math. The report also states 0% proficiency in science but needs to be verified. The HIS subgroup shows only 26% proficiency in ELA, 19.2% proficiency in math and 24% proficiency in science.

Georgia Jones-Ayers Middle has also been identified by the Florida Department of Education as Targeted for Support and Improvement (TS&I) based on the subgroup of Students with Disabilities (SD) having an overall proficiency rating below the federal achievement level. The SD subgroup shows only 15% proficiency in ELA, 15%

proficiency in math and 17% proficiency in science. These data sets show that students at the targeted schools are struggling academically and currently fall far short of the goal of having 90% of students grade level proficient as the Florida Strategic Initiatives indicate.

The targeted schools for both centers are in minority-based communities.

Brownsville, which has 23 teachers, has a 450-student population that is 51.1% Black, 47.6% Hispanic and 1.3% other. Georgia Jones-Ayers's 473 student population, being served by 31 teachers, is 33.2% Black, 65.1% Hispanic and 1.7% other. Additionally, Brownsville and Georgia Jones-Ayers have 17.3% and 20.9% students with disabilities as well as 24.9% and 43.3% students classified as current English Language Learners (ELL).

The locations have had some success in middle school acceleration with 15 students and 43 students achieving high school credits at Brownsville and Georgia Jones-Ayers, respectfully. 83.3% of the eligible students for accelerated courses passed their end of course examinations at Brownsville, and 82.7% at Georgia Jones-Ayers. The passing rate of eligible students was consistent among all subgroups.

For students to gain access to education, teachers and school resources, they need to be in school. The administration from both locations have asked for engaging activities after school to encourage more students to attend the regular school day, since the schools are also the learning centers. Brownsville had 313 students and Georgia Jones-Ayers had 344 students who were chronically absent, missing over 10% of school days, during the 2022-2023 school year. The numbers represent an extremely large portion of their populations. There 46 suspensions at Brownsville, 9 instances

where law enforcement was called and 4 school related arrests. Georgia Jones-Ayers had 70 suspensions, 11 calls and 8 arrests last year. The need for additional character education support is evident.

The program development team also conducted interviews and a survey of stakeholders and school faculty in Spring 2024 about the specific wants and needs of the identified schools and students. They were asked to identify and rank their specific needs of the after school program in order of importance.

The Georgia Jones-Ayers stakeholders specifically reported:

1. Administration – Math and Reading, Career and Technical Education exposure, Culinary Arts, STEM (Drones & Robotics), Character Education and Typing.
2. Students – Homework Assistance (Math, Science and Language Arts Tutoring), Music, Fitness and Dance.
3. Teachers – Homework, Hands on Learning, STEM, Art, Dance and Cooking
4. Parents (for students) – Homework, Academic tutoring, Fitness, Music, Cooking and College and Career readiness.
5. Parents (for themselves) – Fitness, Health & Nutrition and College Information

Brownsville stakeholders specifically reported:

1. Administration – Reading Support, STEM activities, Enrichment services to include culinary and gardening, and Debate.
2. Students – Academic Tutoring, Fitness, Art, Cooking, Dance and Homework Assistance.
3. Teachers – Hands-on Learning, Theatre/Drama, Homework, Cooking and Social skills.

4. Parents (for students) – Hands-on Learning, Homework, Theatre/Drama, Sports and Leadership
5. Parents (for themselves) – Social Media, Bullying, and School Parent Portal support.

In FIU-ASAS' meetings with the school principals, specific needs based upon the individual School Improvement Plans, were discussed. The administration at Brownsville and Gerogia Jones-Ayers, similarly, both wanted support for their priorities of developing positive school cultures and environments as well programs that enhance academic growth and feel that a comprehensive, on-campus afterschool program will help further advance this initiatives.

The school themselves are a huge asset in terms of providing a safe space, a familiar place and nurturing environment where the program can take place, at no charge. There are many teachers who do not have the opportunity to teach the electives during the school day that are vital to building character and expanding the minds of our youth that can be assets to the program. Social-emotional learning programs are needed to make an impact on these students and their achievement. A study published in the Journal of Child Development explains that SEL programs increase prosocial behaviors, reduce conduct issues, reduce internalizing problems and improve academic performance on tests and grades (Durlak et al., 2011). The need for SEL is evident for this program based upon the age bracket the program serves, achievement levels, and stakeholder feedback. Miami-Dade County Public Schools has mandated SEL programs in schools and training of all teaching staff. However, the schools and stakeholders are still requesting help in this area. Their focus has been on instructing positive decision making. To avoid duplication, it was decided that the after-school

approach for this adolescent age group would be centered on students finding meaning and purpose while sharing their own stories. Additionally, practical application of skills being learned would be ingrained within the elective components, especially in sports and the arts. Any gaps in services can be contracted to community non-profits that FIU-ASAS has had a history of working with programs in the arts, STEM, cooking, nutrition and various parent workshops.

In surveying the teachers about the individual schools as well as community, the need for food was quite evident. The free after school meals the program will provide can go a long way in providing food for hungry students, especially those who are economically disadvantaged.

The last vital need reported by school administration and families is student transportation to their homes, as most parents will not be available to pick up their children.

Along with the statistical data, utilizing this direct feedback from the school administration and population has been a vital tool in establishing the specific needs to frame the program.

Dissemination of Info

The identified community to be served by Project PANTHER was informed of the intention to apply in a variety of ways. From spring of 2024, the multidisciplinary program team which included FIU, South Florida After-School All-Stars, M-DCPS Middle School Enrichment Program, the 2 individual school site principals and their selected administration developed the dissemination plan.

The local private schools that serve middle school students were also contacted through phone calls and certified mail to communicate intent as well as see if they wanted to be involved. Follow up communications will be conducted again, if awarded.

Additionally, the known parents/guardians of current and potential students of the target sites each received a survey, which contained information about the intent to apply for 21st CCLC funding. Information was also disseminated through the Talking Points, a text message service and app that translates into the preferred language of the recipient, as well as a phone calls utilizing the school's Ed Connect system that contained a program description and a method to ask questions.

Upon notification of an award, *Project PANTHER* flyers and letters, in multiple languages, will be disseminated throughout each school and to the community to communicate the importance and promise of the federally funded FIU-ASAS 21st CCLC program. Program information will be sent through FIU media outlets and presentations will be made at school open houses to acquaint parents, students and community members with the program and its benefits. The 21st CCLC logo will be used on all media and displayed throughout each site. In addition, the current 21st CCLC FIU-ASAS webpage will be updated monthly by the FIU CASE IT department under direction from the Project Director. Also, as required, a section of the website will list all scheduled services and provide links to the narrative as well as products created by students.

The FIU-ASAS website will be updated to reflect the award within 30 days of notification. To further inform and engage community stakeholders, appropriate announcements including project progress as well as key challenges and successes, will also be made on our Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts which will also be communicated to stakeholders. Utilizing technology, we will establish a regular schedule of email blasts to parents and/or guardians to disseminate program information. Because of the strength of our M-DCPS partnership, we are able to utilize their ConnectEd call system to inform family members of important events. For family members

who do not have regular internet access, printed information will be distributed at family events and sent home, as needed, with students. These multiple methods of distribution ensure that the material is reaching the appropriate audience.

PARTNERS

Project PANTHER includes four vital partners for program operation who have provided support letters for this initiative. The ASAS National Office will commit to provide operational support, professional development, peer-to-peer trainings between program cities, staff trainings, curriculum development, marketing, quality assurance tools, management assistance, and infrastructure support. This partnership is an integral component needed to develop, implement, sustain, and evaluate the operation of the 21st CCLC program. They will also assist FIU in meeting professional development and general operation needs for the after-school program initiative. The partner will provide FIU-ASAS with in-kind reports to track and maintain documentation of contributions. The partnership will be maintained by monthly calls with the National administrative team as well as participation in professional development activities.

The partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) and especially its Middle School Enrichment Program (MSE) is essential to successful operation. This partnership is used in developing, implementing, sustaining, and evaluating the 21st CCLC program. The M-DCPS Superintendent grants access for the program to occur within the school system. M-DCPS site principals grant FIU-ASAS free use of facilities including secure and suitably equipped classroom space. Our District partners have also committed the availability of individual student records to monitor objectives and

provide statewide evaluation data. MSE provides administrative support, program audits and program managers at each site to be the primary school representative during the afterschool hours. Another benefit provided by this partnership is the USDA after-school and summer food service from which meals will be provided to our students at no cost. Contributions will be documented with in-kind letters. The partnership with M-DCPS will be maintained through a district liaison, 21st CCLC Program Team Meetings and monthly site meetings.

South Florida After-School All-Stars provides support for expenses not able to be covered by 21st CCLC and for supporting a Youth Advisory Board among all FIU-ASAS program schools. They will fund monthly meetings for this group, outside of program hours, for leadership development and program feedback, making sure students have a continuous voice in what is happening in the program while preparing their successors as they advance out of middle school. They will also meet with the Board Members of the organization. This partnership will be maintained by scheduled monthly calls and meetings.

The final major partner, the Miami HEAT, provides programs to the individual school sites ranging from anti-bullying to career exploration in sports. These programs have been implemented in the past by on-site program visits by their Jr. HEAT division as well as live virtual career exploration webinars. The partnership will be maintained by scheduled monthly calls and meetings.

During the development of *Project PANTHER*, FIU-ASAS consulted, through meetings, phone calls and surveys, target school administrators, teaching staff and a private school.

These communications reviewed the School Improvement Plans, outlined specific needs and had the private school decline participation.

All program centers hire teachers who are regular-day teachers at the school, thus simplifying the communication process between the program and the school. For further collaboration with the regular school day, each site's principal has to approve the afterschool program personnel and they are assigned to communicate afterschool progress as well as ask about day school needs during each school's team/department meetings. **Scheduled monthly meetings** at each school with the Site Coordinator, Project Director, program staff and school administrators will be used as mechanism for formal communication about all program operations. Teachers and administrators also informally meet with one another throughout the school day to share student progress and discuss specific recruitment and effective teaching strategies. Lastly, the after-school team is involved in, or at minimum informed of, teacher-parent conferences about academics or conduct when the student involved is an FIU-ASAS participant. Each program site is also required to complete a collaboration log to document the communication and items to follow up on. This combination ensures continuing, timely and meaningful collaboration to support the program.

Target Population, Recruitment and Retention

Project PANTHER will target approximately 135 middle school students (grades 6-8) who are struggling academically or at risk of academic failure as determined by performance on standardized assessments. All students in need of academic support and interventions—including those with special needs or disabilities—will be invited to participate in *Project PANTHER*. The community learning center facilities that will be used to provide 21st CCLC services are the host school sites. The schools are safe and easily accessible as the children would already be on site during the regular school day.

The student populations at Brownsville and Georgia Jones-Ayers Middle schools are some of the highest risk youths in Miami-Dade County and are generally between 11-15 years old. Over

99% are Title I students and nearly all represent a minority group.

Project PANTHER will be available students at the site, especially ELL and students with disabilities who are: 1) in need of remediation (scoring below proficiency in standardized tests) in Reading and/or Math as determined by teachers and counselors; 2) at-risk of academic failure (currently scoring below proficiency); and 3) exhibiting behavioral, disciplinary and/or attendance issues (as determined by disciplinary/attendance records).

To help these students, programming will be delivered in an “environment of high expectations.” Academic-focused activities and supports, coupled with structured enrichment activities will promote classroom and personal success for students to assist them in breaking the cycle of unemployment, underemployment, and intergenerational poverty. Families will be supported and be provided with services that improve literacy and support a ‘whole family’ approach to child education and positive youth development.

Project PANTHER will be promoted to students via: 1) each school’s website; 2) take-home bulletin; 3) during homeroom and school assemblies; 4) phone calls to parents; 5) social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter); 6) teacher referrals; 7) open houses; 8); student-to-student recruitment; and 9) QR coded videos around school campus. Outreach will begin immediately upon notification of award and carried out monthly throughout the project period, as needed. Parents and community partners will receive quarterly project updates that provide general information about the program that will be distributed via: 1) take-home reports; 2) email; 3) Talking Points multi-language text messaging and 3) social media. Teachers and counselors will recommend students for participation based on test results, report cards, behavioral records and parental request.

Retaining students: To ensure that students remain engaged long term and fully participate, *Project PANTHER* is founded upon evidence-based approaches and best practices. The US Department of Education states that successful afterschool programs (<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/SafeSmart/>) should:

- **Ensure that academic-linked activities are fun and engaging:** Academic-linked activities will utilize student-centered teaching methods that shift the focus of activity from the teacher to the learners. These methods include active learning, in which students solve problems, answer questions, formulate questions of their own, discuss, explain, debate, or brainstorm during class; cooperative learning, in which students work in teams on problems and projects under conditions that assure both positive interdependence and individual accountability; and inductive teaching and learning, in which students are first presented with challenges (questions or problems) and learn the course material in the context of addressing the challenges.
- **Provide a range of activities that students enjoy:** All activities have been selected based in part on student input. Academic enrichment and support activities have been designed to be not only educational and engaging, but enjoyable too. Career-focused programs and electives will include hands-on, real-world activities that students enjoy.
- **Reflect a commitment to promote knowledge, skills, and understanding through enriching learning opportunities that complement the school day:** Regularly scheduled collaborative meetings between *Project PANTHER* teachers and regular daytime classroom teachers will ensure effective linkage between the afterschool curriculum and regular classroom curriculum.
- **Reach out to the families of children in the program, keeping them informed of their children's activities and providing opportunities to volunteer:** Parents will be invited to serve as program volunteers, serving as mentors or facilitating Career Day activities. Parents will receive quarterly updates about their children's progress. In addition, *Project PANTHER* includes parental involvement activities as well as services that support parents and positive development of their children.

Lastly, since this project serves older youth, program participants have a voice and choice in regard to what enrichment activities they participate in, outside of the core programs. This will

greatly help with retention as students will not feel forced into classes but rather feel empowered to make choices for their program.

PROGRAM EVALUATION (10 POINTS)

This 21st CCLC proposal is firmly rooted in a commitment to continuous improvement of operations, services, and outcomes. The cornerstone is a logical process of planning, data collection, analysis, reporting, and refining. As such, evaluation will include three connected elements to help ensure the 21st CCLC model is effective, efficient, and sustainable: continuous improvement, mid-year assessment and summative evaluation. Ongoing evaluation will be conducted using the Continuous Improvement Model (CIM), a quality-based approach used within educational settings and particularly effective for reducing achievement gaps between student subgroups. The model focuses upon individualized assessment using both formal (e.g., surveys and progress monitoring) and informal (e.g., meetings) techniques to guide incremental changes within ongoing services, adopt new ways to improve and measure outcomes, discontinue or adapt activities that have no value, and increase emphasis on program objectives and outcomes. With the support of the evaluation team, which includes the site coordinator, program director, M-DCPS partners and the Executive Director, FIU –ASAS will collect and analyze a limited amount of data at least quarterly and compare the obtained data using within-subjects methods to determine individual changes within students. To ensure that accurate data is collected, maintained and reported, the school-based data will be obtained directly from the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Office of Assessment, Research and Data Analysis in a secure format and sent directly to the Executive Director, as part of an on-going data sharing agreement. For pre/mid/post assessments, the original forms and group scoresheets will be compared at the site and program office level to ensure accuracy. The immediate and individualized feedback provided through CIM is particularly important for implementation of this 21st CCLC model to help guide and ensure the highest impact for each student. The program will also utilize CIM to help guide any immediate

operational changes necessary to provide a high-quality program, including staffing changes, learning plan adjustments, or increased resources to specific projects or subject areas.

Mid-year assessments will be completed and include a review of operational accomplishments and challenges (e.g., staff, student recruitment/retention, partner board, etc.), on-site visits by the evaluation team, actual versus proposed operation, objective progress, and recommendations for addressing any challenges from the 21st CCLC Technical Assistance Team.

Comprehensive Summative Evaluation Reports will have additional information on overall program outcomes and more detailed information about those activities and operations with the greatest impact and success. Summative evaluations will be completed in accordance with the requirements of the FLDOE. Summative evaluations will include all elements of program operation; activities; enrollment and attendance; measures of academic performance; federal teacher impact surveys; feeder schools; staff information; and partnerships. Recommendations for program refinement will be based on quantitative and qualitative data collected to assess objective progress. Focus groups with providers, staff, students and parents may be conducted to collect additional data. The evaluation plans to scrutinize demographic and operational factors to understand performance, such as (1) Do teacher-student ratios correlate to success in objectives?; (2) Was success in objectives different among demographic subgroups?; and (3) Did factors such as ELL or lunch status correlate with student achievement?

Evaluation Rubric: The proposed 21st CCLC grant proposes to use an Evaluation Rubric and Questionnaire for Formative Evaluation. The rubric is an evaluation tool that describes and assesses criteria for performance at various levels. It is the performance-based assessment process that is directly linked to *Project PANTHER*'s objectives and accurately reflects the progress toward established goals. The analytic rubric will be utilized to assess specific criteria at each performance level, provide a score for each criterion, and include a composite score for overall performance. The rubric serves several purposes in the assessment process, including: (1) Creating a common framework and language for evaluation; (2) Providing staff with clear

expectations about what will be assessed, as well as standards that should be met; (3) Increasing the consistency and objectivity of evaluating (especially scoring or rating) performances; (4) Providing staff with information about where they are in relation to where they need to be for success; and (5) Giving staff guidance in evaluating and improving their school site program and indicating the degree to which resources deliver on intended grant objectives. The Assessment Rubric for Mid-Year Site Program Evaluation report will be assessed according to ten criteria at four levels of performance. Rubric criteria were adapted from the American Evaluation Association *Program Evaluation Standards*. This evaluation rubric is designed to assist FIU-ASAS to better serve the short and long-term needs of its constituents.

Data Collection Methods: The objectives identified in the RFP's online system are an integral part of the evaluation plan since data collection and analysis are founded upon those proposed objectives for successful progression.

The 21st CCLC project team, led by the Project Director, will ensure that accurate data is recorded. This is done by establishing standardized data collection and recording procedures. Individual student data related to each deliverable will be collected monthly in accordance with 21st CCLC requirements. Quarterly data on program outcomes will be analyzed by the Project Director, with significant trends highlighted for review by the evaluation team.

Feedback and Debriefings: The process for sharing and distributing information is an integral part of the evaluation plan. Distribution will occur at three levels: (1) administrators, (2) staff members, and (3) stakeholders. As part of continuous improvement, monthly conferences will be held with the program director, principals, site coordinator and any staff wishing to participate. During these meetings, data trends and operations will be reviewed with a focus on program improvement and immediate refinement. The site coordinator and teachers will also utilize data during meetings to help tailor program offerings to the needs and progress of individual students. For the summative evaluation, the reports will help guide FIU-ASAS in refining and addressing any identified concerns or recommendations. In addition, an on-site debriefing will be

provided to 21st CCLC staff to: (1) engage staff in addressing challenges; (2) promote “buy-in” into evaluation as a “living” process; and (3) promote discussion, cross-training, and support. Finally, evaluations and findings will be shared electronically through email and websites with all stakeholders (e.g., school administrators, parents, and partners), in multiple languages, to share information about the program and encourage feedback.

Reporting Outcomes: As detailed above, the evaluation process will include all elements of the required Reporting Outcomes detailed in the Request for Proposal and conducted by the Project Director.

Program Activities

FIU-ASAS programs have been historically comprehensive in nature, using resources to help youth academically as well as in life. Recognizing that all students come to learning with unique needs, *Florida Certified Teachers* administer *academic enrichment* components, which provide homework help and utilizes the i-Ready Program. This program is specifically designed with different age groups and ability levels in mind. Through the partnership with M-DCPS, the FIU-ASAS program will have free access to the electronic software, with all progress automatically reported to the school day teachers of the participants. All of the students have an out of school i-Ready requirement but since the program is only accessible electronically, there are barriers for certain students once the school day ends. As the schools have agreed to provide FIU-ASAS access to their labs, this will provide the opportunity for all children to participate. i-Ready supports diverse populations and its adaptive diagnostic tools pinpoints students' needs down to the sub-skill level which will specifically help the underperforming children identified in the needs assessment. Supporting academic

based objectives, *i-Ready* provides a personalized instructional path supported by an interactive and fun approach to learning with comprehensive lessons being standards-based. Each lesson addresses the Content and Skills Standards for the core subjects of English language arts and math. Supported with certified teacher-led instruction, this program addresses different learning styles and extends learning time to help support the academic goals of the project and the school. The Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) and Century Analytics conducted a research study to examine the impact of i-Ready Personalized Instruction on reading and mathematics achievement for striving learners (i.e., students who placed Two or More Grade Levels Below in the fall). Using a quasi-experimental design study and data from the 2018–2019 school year, HumRRO and Century Analytics demonstrated that striving learners who used i-Ready as recommended performed better than striving learners who did not use i-Ready. In addition, the research shows that Black and Latino students who used i-Ready as recommended experienced significantly greater gains in student achievement compared to Black and Latino students who did not use i-Ready. The design of this research study meets the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Level/Tier 2 criteria for Moderate Evidence. The results from this study demonstrate that i-Ready instruction is effective in improving striving learners' reading and mathematics achievement, which provides evidence that i-Ready can be used as effective instruction with students who have unfinished learning (Curriculum Associates Research Brief 2021). Academic Enrichment will be offered daily for a minimum of 55 minutes as well as 90 minutes in the summer. Additionally, opportunities for further assistance each day will be provided, if needed. FIU-ASAS will also recruit college students to assist teachers in providing homework assistance to increase the percentage of students performing on grade level

and completing their homework. These teacher assistants will receive an overview and instruction from certified teachers, site coordinators and the Project Director before working with students. If students have completed their homework early, or it is verified they do not have any, more time will be allocated to i-Ready or individual instruction.

FIU will also implement a hands-on STEM component with a specific emphasis on the ClassVR program. ClassVR is a versatile platform using the power of virtual and augmented reality for education and training from the classroom to the boardroom. The education portal has over 500 lessons in various science subjects and topics to help enhance student engagement and knowledge. Devon Allcoat and Adrian von Mühlennen conducted a research study, "Learning in virtual reality: Effects on performance emotion and engagement, where 99 participants were assigned to either textbook learning, passive video learning or virtual reality learning. This randomized, experimental study had no attrition, and therefore meets the criteria of Tier -1 Strong Evidence standards. As indicated in the 2018 journal Research in Learning Technology - Volume 26, the learning materials used the same text and 3D model for all conditions. Each participant was given a knowledge test before and after learning. Participants in the traditional and VR conditions had improved overall performance compared to those in the video condition. Participants in the VR condition also showed better performance for 'remembering' than those in the traditional and the video conditions.

Emotion self-ratings before and after the learning phase showed an increase in positive emotions and a decrease in negative emotions for the VR condition. Conversely, there was a decrease in positive emotions in both the traditional and video conditions. The web-based learning tools evaluation scale also found that participants in the VR condition reported higher engagement than those in the other conditions. Overall, VR displayed an improved learning experience when compared to traditional and video learning methods.

ClassVR brings affordable, innovative Virtual Reality lessons and experiences to students of all ages. It comes complete with hardware, software, curriculum-linked activities and lesson plans, equipping teachers with everything they need to introduce this cutting-edge technology straight into the classroom. Each lesson will leave pupils with memories and experiences which help to visualize and understand even the most complex of school subjects. Additionally, creative hands-on STEM activities will be used to supplement the virtual experiences and lessons. This component will be offered 60 minutes a session, twice per week for 18 weeks to address the hands-on STEM and science education needs. STEM courses will also be offered for 90 minutes a day during the summer program.

To address the character education needs of the program population without duplicating the existing programs already being offered in the schools, FIU ASAS will provide the Stanford University developed Wayfinder Purpose Curriculum, which focuses on a method of character education proven to be most relevant to adolescent students. This is done by engaging students in deep reflection about self and community, and scaffolds students' as they take purposeful action to make a positive contribution in the world.

In a randomized study conducted for a Wayfinder evaluation, Wayfinder program students scored higher than the control group on all 7 constructs: Purpose, Identity Expression, Social Awareness, Cultural Awareness, Belonging, Engagement and Emotional Regulation. The first four improvement categories were statistically significant and had less than a 1.5% attrition rate in this experimental study which would qualify it for Tier 1- Strong Evidence status (Heather Malin, 2022). This SEL component is to be offered an hour each week for 18 weeks during the school year.

Allowing students to have a voice and a choice in their education empowers learning and creates a sense of ownership and responsibility. As part of incorporating student voice and choice within programming, students can elect to participate in Fit Club and Arts Club enrichment activities each 9 weeks. Fit Club is a recreational-based component that is comprised of inclusive activities to promote participation from all students, intrinsic practical application of character education, as well as to help students become more fit and healthy. Activities include dancing, aerobics, Zumba, yoga, martial arts, nutrition, hygiene, adaptive sports, and conventional sports skill

building. Fit Club activities are centered on building respect, self-control, cardiovascular fitness and discipline.

Arts Club, based upon specific activities identified in the needs survey, includes skill building activities that link academics to interests. The activities vary by center and include theatre, media arts, music, dance, visual art, gardening and culinary arts.

The Arts Club enrichment activities are offered for 60 minutes a day, and a minimum of 2 days a week in afterschool. Fit Club is offered for the same time and duration. Students are required to participate in at least 2 sessions from each club every week when not in a STEM course. These sessions are also scheduled for 90 minutes a day during summer camp. Each enrichment activity is also infused with career exploration initiatives so students can relate their skills and talents to potential careers, especially those they are not aware of in their industries of choice.

One day each week during summer camp is FIU Explore Day. Students will go to the community to learn about various careers, college programs and innovative projects.

During the summer, transportation will be provided between the feeder pattern elementary schools and the host school sites. ***Travel to the site*** is not necessary for afterschool, as each school is the actual site of programming ensuring safe accessibility to the program's services. All *Bus transportation* will be provided by M-DCPS Department of Transportation or approved M-DCPS Transportation vendor including from the proposed school sites to the closest corner of the participants' homes for after school.

During the first month of programming, the centers will gather the information from parent acknowledgement forms to review the best times to provide parent literacy workshops. It is recognized most parents and family members are not available during

the afterschool hours and many have other conflicts in the evenings, which is why finding the best available time and method to provide services is paramount. The plan to promote further parent involvement will be aligned with student activities, school, and community needs. The parent courses will be offered at least 5 times per year and be aligned with the subjects reported in the needs assessment. The activities will last approximately an hour with a preference of in-person meetings rather than virtual, pending additional parent feedback.

Staffing and PD

Each program center will be continually staffed by skilled, qualified and well-trained professionals. All Project PANTHER teachers must be current M-DCPS employees in good standing and have written approval from the school Principal or designee in order to work in the afterschool program. The principals promote the FIU-ASAS positions within the host sites which provides the program with a number of Certified teachers in various subjects. As a condition of FIU-ASAS employment, all grant-funded workers, including contractors, subcontractors, college students and regular volunteers (adults who have contact with centers more than one time) will be required to undergo a comprehensive local, state and national criminal background and sexual offender registry check (including fingerprints). FIU will also verify qualifications and conduct an extensive interview process in accordance with university procedures for the Project Director position if a recommendation of funding notification is given, in order to have someone able to fill the position by the award date.

Qualified personnel for Project PANTHER will be trained by the FIU ASAS Senior Program Director, Executive Director and an M-DCPS Middle School Enrichment Leader. The Project Director will have a minimum of a bachelor's degree with 4 years of experience working with children. They will be responsible for ensuring that Project PANTHER activities are carried out on time, as specified and within the approved budget. Additionally, the Project Director will be responsible for managing and implementing the educational program described in the approved application to ensure that FIU meets its responsibilities to FDOE under the grant agreement in a timely manner.

The Program Coordinator is a vital position within FIU that is necessary for processing hires, screenings, purchases, invoicing, budget access and all other grant related human resources, monetary transactions and systems. They must have participated and passed specific internal FIU trainings for their role. Approximately, 20% of their time is needed for this project.

The staffing plan for the sites are as follows:

- 2 Site Coordinators (1 per center), who coordinate 21st CCLC implementation at site and ensures safety of students, designated activities, as well as ensures effective communication between 21st CCLC afterschool staff and regular classroom teachers. They serve as the primary collaborative liaison and report to the Project Director. The position holder will work with an afterschool Program Manager recommended by the School Principal and paid for by MSE. The position holder will have a minimum of a bachelor's degree.

-2 Community Involvement Specialists (1 per center) must be school district employees in good standing and usually serve as the community involvement specialist in the regular day school.

-4 Security Monitors (2 per center), who monitor FIU-ASAS areas of the school site, parent verification and program sign-outs. Each center has 1 monitor each for afterschool and one additional for each summer camp. The position holder must be a school district staff member in good standing with facility keys. They usually serve as security in the regular day school.

-8 Component Leaders (4 for Brownsville, 4 for Georgia Jones-Ayers), who provide quality instruction and supervision to afterschool participants for all program activities. Positions may be job shared and those teaching academics must be a school district teacher in good standing.

Additionally, the Executive Director will also serve as a collaboration liaison, by hosting meetings with school administration and site coordinators to continuously review needs, share updates, and review evolving community and program trends. He has approximately 20 years of experience managing 21st CCLC programs and will be responsible for managing the internal processes required for grant administration with Florida International University, committing no more than 8% of his time.

Professional development will be ongoing for all 21st CCLC staff, and will include: *ASAS National Trainings, MSE/FIUASAS After-school Operational Trainings, SEL*

Trainings, ClassVR Trainings, Fit Club Trainings, Summer Program Trainings, CPR trainings, Leadership trainings and a variety of workshops focused on best practices in promoting parental involvement, improving outcomes for high-risk youth, mentoring through coaching and building academic skills in the afterschool environment. The trainers will include FIU-ASAS administrative staff, university professors in their specific specialties as related to selected elective components, family and youth development scholars as well as certified instructors from any additional program curriculum, as needed. Each year, all 21st CCLC personnel will be required to attend at minimum two 6-hour trainings and safety sessions for the school year and 1 additional session for the summer program staff. Monthly meetings during non-program hours will occur at each center to make sure all staff are up to date on policies and procedures at the site level as well as serving as a conduit for training. The Project Director, Site Coordinators and Executive Director will attend one of two 3-day ASAS National professional development trainings (in-kind). Overall, 21st CCLC personnel will participate in at least 20 hours of professional development each year in addition to the mandatory 21st CCLC Conference and regional meeting to be attended by the Project Director, at minimum.

If knowledge is not transferred into practice, the information is useless. The mark of a successful after school program is consistent quality and services for students and families. To obtain this level of implementation fidelity, it starts with getting the team on the same page, with clear expectations, processes, periodic checks, and a process for change if needed. If funded, the first stage will be a pre-training with meeting with School Principals, MSE Program Manager, Project Director and Site Coordinators. The entire grant, site profile worksheet and schedule would be reviewed for clarity. The beginning of

year staff training, the first 6-hour required session, would occur a week later and the same messaging would also be communicated to all program staff.

Throughout the year the fidelity of operations would be checked through a variety of systems. The first is the FIU-ASAS site visit assessment tool which is filled out weekly by the Site Coordinator and separately by the Project Director during his weekly visit for comparison. The MSE Program Manager will also take part in the review. The purpose is not to micromanage staff but to provide support, assistance and guidance when needed. Any contracted service providers for arts enrichment services will also have component leaders in the classroom for classroom management and fidelity overview. Once per quarter a school district based MSE employee visits all sites to review the snack invoices as they commit to pay for any overages.

Monthly meetings outside of program time take place including all site staff to recap the month and discuss possible programmatic changes to revise programming as well as provide professional development, as needed.

FACILITIES (5 POINTS)

The program centers are the actual host school sites and principals have allotted a vast amount space to accommodate the population. All school sites provide access to large cafeterias, outdoor play fields, numerous basketball courts, auditoriums, media centers with computers, separate computer labs, classrooms space as needed, office space for the site coordinators, parking for adult family members and sufficient access to restroom facilities. Brownsville Middle has a cooking room and specific areas where students can conduct landscaping and gardening. Georgia Jones-Ayers Middle has a career and technical education room they would like to use as part of the arts components in the after-school program. The centers are safe, as the program hires school security during the afterschool hours who have access to the necessary keys to

ensure safety in case of emergencies. Lastly, with the program being at the host school sites, and in proximity to their homes, both students and parents are comfortable in their surroundings, which enables them to have a better capacity to learn. Thanks to the partnership with M-DCPS, the students can access the program through the regular school day staff and parents can check in through the main office. As this is a program providing services to middle school students on school property, the program does not require DCF licensing.

SAFETY AND STUDENT TRANSPORTATION (5 POINTS)

The safety of students and their families participating in the 21st CCLC program is of the highest priority to FIU-ASAS and M-DCPS. To address safety, FIU proposes to uphold all of the policies and procedures enforced during the regular school day and as outlined in the proposed agreement with MSE, assuring *complete collaboration with the school*. Documentation of fire drills, emergency drills, and behavioral issues during the afterschool hours will be kept onsite and in accordance to M-DCPS policy. As mentioned previously, all staff will participate in a **level 2 background check** complying with all aspects of the Jessica Lunsford Act, consisting of fingerprinting prior to commencing employment. All 21st CCLC personnel will also be required to attend two mandatory 6-hour trainings that include safety sessions, with and additional training for those employed for summer camp.

Student safety will be supported during on and offsite activities through student applications that are on file at the program site as well as the central office. These applications contain information about each student's parent/guardian, indicate all parties available to withdraw the child from the program, their contact information with identification, and permission for the selected mode(s) of student dismissal. Parents choosing to withdraw their children early or at the end of the day must provide identification prior to signing the student out. Persons not indicated as a designated alternate pickup will not be allowed to withdraw a student under any circumstance. During the summer, transportation will be provided between the feeder pattern elementary schools and the host school sites. **Travel to the site** is not necessary for afterschool,

as each school is the actual site of programming ensuring safe accessibility to the program's services. Once the end of school bell rings, participants go to a designated homeroom area and are checked in. Program participants will be supervised by FIU-ASAS staff at all times during the duration of the program.

To provide an extra layer of security outside of the classroom, each proposed site will have at least one security monitor during program hours. *Bus transportation provided* by M-DCPS Department of Transportation or approved M-DCPS Transportation vendor will be offered from the proposed school sites to the closest corner of the participants' homes. Adaptable buses will also be provided for special needs students, assuring that all students travel safely from the site. **Student safety will be maintained during all off-site activities** by meeting the M-DCPS field trip ratio criteria of 15:1 students to teachers; requiring parent permission; completing head counts before, during, and after trips; and including the proposed center's security monitor.

Sustainability

FIU has a long history of collaborating with school districts in South Florida and seeks to create stronger links with other institutions and partners. An important function is to continually seek external funding opportunities to sustain all FIU School of Education and Human Development programs, including After-School All-Stars. Miami-Dade County Public Schools' Middle School Enrichment Program (MSE) has continued to provide funding for the partnership program since its inception. FIU also provides a bridge between the 21st CCLC students and FIU faculty, staff and students. The South Florida After-School All-Stars (SFASAS) Board of Directors has also pledged significant support to help ensure the sustainability of this 21st CCLC project through a full-time resource development officer housed at FIU. As possibilities are explored, both entities will prioritize the sustainability of this initiative during and after the funding ends.

The 21st CCLC Advisory Board is a key part of the sustainability plan and will formally meet in the Fall and Spring of each year at minimum. The proposed members will include, an M-DCPS MSE member, School Administration, Site coordinators, a SFASAS Board Member, 2 parents and 2 students from each site, FIU faculty, the FIU-ASAS administration team and community partners. The collaboration of this group will continuously seek physical and networking resources that will play an integral role in the sustainability of Project PANTHER. Additionally, as FIU-ASAS has practiced continuously over the years, the advisory students will meet on a monthly basis to share their perspectives on the status of each program as well as communicate needs and concerns of their peers.

Works Cited

“33142 Zip Code (Miami, FL) Detailed Profile.” *City-Data*, <http://www.city-data.com/zips/33142.html>. Web. 1 May, 2024.

Allcoat, Devon, and Adrian von Muhlenen. *View of Learning in Virtual Reality: Effects on Performance, Emotion and Engagement*. Research In Learning Technology, Vol 26, 2018, https://journal.alt.ac.uk/index.php/rlt/article/view/2140/pdf_1. Web. 19 May, 2024.

Durlak, Joseph A., et al. “The Impact of Enhancing Students ... - Wiley Online Library.” *Society for Research in Child Development, Journal of Child Development*, Vol 82, Issue 1, 2011, <https://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x>. Web. 19 May, 2024.

Malin, Heather. “Wayfinder Purpose Curriculum Evaluation Report.” Wayfinder, 17 May. 2024.

Randel, Bruce, et al. “Impact Evaluation of Mathematics I-Ready for Striving Learners.” *Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO)*, 1 Dec. 2020, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED610444.pdf>. Web. 2 May, 2024.

Randel, Bruce, et al. *Impact Evaluation of Reading "I-Ready" for Striving Learners Using 2018-19 Data. Final Report. No. 053*. Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO), 10 Dec. 2020, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED610441>. Web. 2 May, 2024.

Research in the Use of Virtual Reality Learning. ClassVR, 9 Feb. 2022,
<https://www.classvr.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/a-pedagogical-view-of-using-virtual-reality-v4.pdf>. Web. 3 May, 2024.

“Research Support and ESSA Evidence to Support I-Ready.” *Research Support and ESSA Evidence to Support i-Ready*, Curriculum Associates,
<https://www.curriculumassociates.com/research-and-efficacy/i-ready-evidence-impact>.
Web. 2 May, 2024.