



## Welcome to ICF *Education Connections*

One way that ICF contributes to the evolution of knowledge about what works in education is to participate in gatherings of researchers:

- Forty-eight ICF staff members have presentations accepted for the American Evaluation Association Conference in Washington, D.C., November 6-11.
- ICF researchers discussed their findings at the Virginia Education Research Association conference in Charlottesville, Virginia in September.

From early education to K-12 and postsecondary schooling, ICF gives clients the insights they need to turn research into practice. Visit our [website](#) for more information about ICF's work in education. Want to share *Education Connections*? [Click here](#) to subscribe.

## ICF Presents at AEA Conference This Month

Forty-eight ICF staff members from our practices in education, health, child welfare, housing, and family self-sufficiency have their presentations accepted for the November 6-11 conference of the American Evaluation Association (AEA) at the Marriott Wardman Park hotel in Washington, D.C. From our education practices, 23 staff members are represented. We look forward to visiting with you at the ICF Booth #45-46. Please stop by!

More than 3,500 people are expected to attend the conference, whose theme this year is "Evaluation: From Learning to Action." Notable ICF presentations include a day-long professional development workshop by Michelle Revels and others on her team on focus group research. T.J. Horwood and an expert panel will discuss "Innovative Strategies for Overcoming Methodological Challenges in the Evaluation of College Access and Attainment Program Evaluations."

ICF sessions represent various formats: the panel "Let's Get Real: Evaluation Methodologies in a Virtual World"; the demonstration "Mixing Apples With Oranges--Using Meta-Analysis To Synthesize Evaluations of a Diverse Portfolio: Example from the Social

Innovation Fund”; the formal paper “Reframing Arts Education to Facilitate Lasting Change”; poster sessions “It’s Never Too Early: Engaging Your Evaluator from Model Development to Implementation Fidelity to Outcome Evaluation” and “Measurement Reliability and Statistical Power on Pretest-Post Randomized Control Design Analysis”; and the panel with our MSDE clients “Moving Beyond Accountability: Maryland’s Use of Data to Inform Decisions.”

To see the AEA conference landing page on the ICF website, visit [this link](#). The AEA conference website is at [this link](#). See below for a complete schedule of presentations from ICF’s education practice.

### AEA Presentation Schedule

	Time	Room	Session Number / Session Name	Session Type	ICF Presenters
<b>Wednesday, November 8, 2017</b>					
	8AM-3PM		(21) Focus Group Research: Planning, Implementation and Facilitation	PD Workshops	Michelle Revels Ashani Johnson-Turbes Kisha Ivonne Coa
	4:30PM-6PM		(PREK127) Evaluating the Preparation and Development of Educators	TIG Multipaper	Katelyn Sedelmyer Michael Long
	6:15PM-7:15PM		(2252) Disaster Crisis Counseling: Training, Stress Management, and Job Satisfaction	Panel	Lori Anderson McGee
<b>Thursday, November 9, 2017</b>					
	8AM-9AM		(2567) Collaborative Meaning Making with Primary Intended Users: Leveraging the Personal Factor	Multipaper	Caitlin Howley Jeffrey Taylor Kristen Peterson Usher Ama Takyi-Laryea Kimberly Cowley
	8AM-9AM		(UIE5) Evaluators as Knowledge Brokers: How to Disseminate Information to Promote Use	TIG Multipaper	Miriam Jacobson
	10:30AM-11:15AM		(LGBT11) Improving our Understanding of LGBT Youth	TIG Multipaper	Catherine Lesesne Elizabeth Kroupa
	11:30AM-12:15PM		(PREK122) Challenges With and Advantages of Including Children's Data	TIG Multipaper	Shelly-Ann Bowen
	3:15PM-4:15PM		(PREK123) Strategies for Evaluating Curricula	TIG Multipaper	Colleen Murray Catherine Lesesne India D. Rose
	3:15PM-4:15PM		(2128) Building the Evaluation Capacity of Child-Serving Agencies – Developmental Strategies that Promote Evidence Building in the Field	Panel	Christine Leicht
	4:30PM-5:15PM		(1872) Collecting Program Information from the Ground Up: Strategies for Building Organizational Evidence	Panel	Astrid Hendricks Xiaodong Zhang Miriam Jacobson Michael Long Andrew MacDonald

	5:15PM-6:00PM		(TIGBM10) Community Psychology TIG Business Meeting	Topical Interest Group (TIG) Business Meetings	Catherine A. Lesesne
<b>Friday, November 10, 2017</b>					
	8AM-9:30AM		(1877) Mixed-Methods Evaluations of Capacity Building in Child Welfare: Strategies for Addressing Methodological Challenges and Using Collaborative Evaluation Approaches	Panel	Christine Leicht
	1:45PM-3:15PM		(2959) 5th Annual Walking and Talking Evaluation in and of the Community: Tour and discussion with Casa Ruby LGBT Community Center hosted by the Community Psychology Topical Interest Group	Skill-Building Workshop	Catherine Lesesne
	1:45PM-3:15PM		(1195) The Role of Knowledge Brokers: The Importance of Evaluation Use	Multipaper	Michelle Revels Shelly-Ann Bowen Megan Brooks
	5:30PM-6:15PM		(1735) Engaging and Collaborating with Tribes and Tribal Organizations to Support and Implement Evaluation in Health and Human Services	Roundtable	Gretchen Clarke Beth J. Michel (Bahe) Janet Ojeda Thearis A Osuji
	5:30PM-6:15PM		(1135) Making School-Based Evaluations Work: A Roundtable Discussion about Overcoming Obstacles in School-Based Evaluations	Roundtable	India D. Rose Elizabeth Kroupa
	5:30PM-6:15PM		(MVE2) Perspectives on Veteran Community Integration	TIG Multipaper	Jeffrey Taylor Yvette Lamb Aikaterini Passa
	5:30PM-6:15PM		(ACA2) Reframing Arts Education to Facilitate Lasting Change	TIG Multipaper	Yvette Clinton Sharika Bhattacharya
	6:30PM-7:15PM		(HSE2) Human Services in Child Welfare	TIG Multipaper	Kristen Peterson Usher
	6:30PM-7:15PM		(2009) Innovative Strategies for Overcoming Methodological Challenges in the Evaluation of College Access and Attainment Program Evaluations	Panel	TJ Horwood Jing Sun Nate Hixson Samantha Spinney Kazuaki Uekawa Aikaterini Passa Barbara O'Donnel
	6:30PM-7:15PM		(2995) Let's Get Real: Evaluation Methodologies in a Virtual World	Panel	Hung Pho Brooke Shelley Katie Campbell Kristin Zagar Kathleen Korte Wang Erica McCoy
<b>Saturday, November 11, 2017</b>					
	8AM-9AM		(2631) Internal Evaluation: How to Wear Multiple Hats and Not Lose Your Head	Panel	Christine Leicht Yvette Lamb Brooke Shelley Hung Pho
	8AM-9AM		(1284) Setting a Precedent for Violence Prevention Practice: Building Evaluation Infrastructure and Learning from Developmental Evaluation	Panel	Brandy Daniels

	9:15AM-10AM		(1533) Building Culturally-Responsive Evaluation Capacity among Tribal Communities Implementing Type 2 Diabetes Interventions	Panel	Christina M Iyengar
	9:15AM-10AM		(1295) Mixing Apples With Oranges-- Using Meta-analysis To Synthesize Evaluations of a Diverse Portfolio: Example from the Social Innovation Fund	Demonstration	Xiaodong Zhang Jing Sun
	9:15AM-10AM		(2475) Moving Beyond Accountability: Maryland's Use of Data to Inform Decisions	Panel	Katelyn Sedelmyer Kasia Razynska
	10:15AM-11AM		(2045) Evaluation Training and Technical Assistance Best Practices	Demonstration	Lillian Madrial Shelly-Ann Bowen Bhuvana Sukumar Dana Keener Mast Carole Harris
	11:15AM-12PM		(2597) Data Collection and Analysis Strategies: Remembering that Experience Alone is not Evidence	Roundtable	Susan Pietrzyk Lwendo Moonzwe Davis
	11:15AM-12PM		(CMME2) Complex Design Issues in Large Scale Multi-Site Experimental Evaluations	TIG Multipaper	Jeffrey Taylor Yvette Lamb Ama Takyi-Laryea

#### Accepted Poster Presentations

Time	Room	Session Number / Track Name	Title	Session Type	ICF Presenters
<b>Wednesday, November 8, 2017</b>					
7:00PM-8:30PM		(2542) Organizational Learning & Evaluation Capacity Building	It's Never Too Early: Engaging Your Evaluator from Model Development to Implementation Fidelity to Outcome Evaluation	Poster	Kimberly Cowley Christine Leicht
7:00PM-8:30PM		(1937) Research, Technology & Development Evaluation	Using mixed-methods to evaluate mobile health interventions	Poster	Kisha Ivonne Coa
7:00PM-8:30PM		(2328) Research, Technology & Development Evaluation	Evaluation of innovative technological tools for HIV prevention	Poster	Ichhya Pant
7:00PM-8:30PM		(2800) Design and Analysis of Experiments	Measurement Reliability and Statistical Power on Pretest-Post Randomized Control Design Analysis	Poster	Kazuaki Uekawa

## ICF Researchers Report on Evaluation at VERA

ICF researchers reported on their findings at the 2017 annual meeting of the Virginia Educational Research Association (VERA) in Charlottesville, September 14-15.

Samantha Spinney and Brooke Shelley discussed [“Promoting Postsecondary Access and Readiness: Lessons Learned from an Evaluation of a GEAR UP State Grant Program.”](#) ICF has been conducting a mixed methods evaluation of the Texas Education Agency’s federal GEAR UP grant program, which provides services to students and parents in four school districts (seven middle and six high schools) since 2012. Based on evaluation results, the presenters offered a summary of “what worked” in one district: a school culture that promoted postsecondary awareness and readiness, more face-to-face interactions about postsecondary education between students and GEAR UP staff, and students with more understanding and higher aspirations and expectations for postsecondary education, as a result of individual attention to their needs.

Kimberly Cowley and Nathaniel Hixson presented on [“From Macro to Micro: Addressing Evaluation Challenges Across a Spectrum of Educational Programs Serving the Appalachian Region.”](#) Their analysis considered four evaluations conducted by ICF, including challenges and solutions unique to each study. The Rural Math Innovation Network, managed by Virginia Advanced Study Strategies, has an i3 developmental grant to support a virtual networked improvement community of rural middle and high school teachers. ICF’s quasi-experimental evaluation design is looking at changes in knowledge and practice among teachers, and will focus on math achievement among students. The Collaborative Regional Education program, led by Jacksonville State University, provides teachers in rural middle and high schools with supports designed to increase the college and work readiness of their students. ICF’s i3-funded evaluation includes two distinct two-year randomized control trials looking at effectiveness in achieving these readiness outcomes. West Virginia GEAR UP, led by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, supports 50 middle and high schools in 10 high poverty, predominantly rural districts. In addition to a comprehensive evaluation, ICF is managing a low-cost random control trial study of the impact of mentoring. The Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center seeks to build state education agency capacity and sustain effectiveness over time. ICF’s internal mixed methods evaluation is primarily descriptive, with an iterative evaluation

cycle that includes formative and summative evaluation, meta-evaluation, and evaluation use and continuous improvement.

For more about VERA, visit their [website](#).

## Promoting Postsecondary Access and Readiness: Lessons Learned from an Evaluation of a GEAR UP State Grant Program



### Promoting Postsecondary Access and Readiness

Lessons Learned from an Evaluation of a GEAR UP State Grant Program

9/14/17



Samantha Spinney  
Brooke Shelley

Virginia Educational  
Research Association  
2017 Annual Meeting

Charlottesville, VA



## The Increasing Importance of and Challenges with Postsecondary Education Attainment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

- By 2020, it has been estimated that 65% of all jobs in the U.S. will require postsecondary education.\*
- In 2015, the median earnings of young adults with a bachelor's degree (\$50,000) were 64% higher than those of young adult high school completers (\$30,500).\*\*
- In 2016, just 46% of all young adults in the U.S. had completed an associate's degree or higher and 36% had completed a bachelor's degree or higher.\*\*
- There is a college attainment gap according to race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES):
  - In 2016, only 19% of Hispanic and 23% of African Americans young adults, aged 25-29, held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 43% of Whites and 64% of Asians in the same age group during that same year.\*\*
  - In 2012, the bachelor's degree or higher completion rate of high SES young adults was 60%, compared to 29% for middle SES and 14% for low SES young adults.\*\*\*

\*Carnegie, Smith, & Strohl, 2010; \*\*McFarland et al., 2017; \*\*\*Kena et al., 2015



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## Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) Federal Grant Program

- The GEAR UP federal grant program is a 7-year initiative designed to increase early college awareness and readiness for traditionally underrepresented groups in postsecondary education.
- The federal GEAR UP program seeks to improve postsecondary enrollment and completion for low-income students by addressing the challenges faced by low-income students in an early and ongoing manner and providing services, activities, and resources to students from Grade 7 through the first year of college.
- The overall goals of the program include the following:
  - Increasing postsecondary awareness and aspirations
  - Strengthening academic preparation and achievement
  - Raising postsecondary participation



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## Texas GEAR UP State Grant (SG)

- In FY2012, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) was awarded a federal GEAR UP grant to provide services to a cohort of students and their parents in four school districts, from Grade 7 (the 2012–13 school year) through their first year of postsecondary education (the 2018–19 school year).
  - The findings included in this presentation are from when the cohort was in Grade 9 (the 2014–2015 school year), during Year 3 of the grant.
  - Participating schools include seven middle schools and six high schools across four districts.
- The project goals of the Texas GEAR UP SG are intended to:
  - Expand advanced academic opportunities and improve the quality of instruction
  - Provide student support services that promote college awareness and readiness
  - Promote college readiness statewide
- A coordinator in each district and 1–2 College Preparation Advisors work with the Texas Education Agency and the UT-Austin Institute for Public School Initiatives (IPSI) to facilitate services across the cohort. Other collaborators, stakeholders, and staff also contribute to implementation.



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## Texas GEAR UP SG Districts

- Districts were selected to participate in the Texas GEAR UP SG based on data from the 2009–10 school year related to poverty and the risk of dropping out of school. At the time of selection, all or most of the seven Texas GEAR UP SG middle schools in the four selected districts:
  - Had greater percentages of students identified as being economically disadvantaged and at risk of dropping out of school compared to the state averages.
  - Had higher-than-state-average enrollments of Hispanic/Latino students (i.e., more than 49%), ranging from 51–98%
  - Three schools also had large African American student populations, ranging from 28–48%.
- Districts experienced several challenges related to postsecondary education attainment and program implementation:
  - Reports among program staff regarding some in the local communities encouraging students to pursue work instead of postsecondary education (thereby making it challenging to demonstrate the long-term benefits of postsecondary education)
  - High rates of turnover among school and district administrators
  - Low levels of parent engagement



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## Overview of the Texas GEAR UP SG Evaluation



- Mixed methods evaluation design to measure implementation and outcomes of the Texas GEAR UP SG. Details on the *implementation* study are as follows:

Evaluation Questions Focused on the Following Topics	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Overall implementation at each school</li> <li>▪ Stakeholders' perceptions of grant implementation</li> <li>▪ Implementation facilitators and barriers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potential best practices</li> <li>▪ Students' and parents' levels of understanding regarding readiness</li> <li>▪ Other topics</li> </ul>
Data Sources	Analytical Methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Annual performance data (e.g., participation in activities, course enrollment, test data)</li> <li>▪ Extant data</li> <li>▪ Student and parent survey data</li> <li>▪ Interview and focus group data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Descriptive statistics</li> <li>▪ Crosstabs and analysis of variance (ANOVA)</li> <li>▪ Qualitative coding (using ATLAS.ti software)</li> <li>▪ Case analysis</li> </ul>



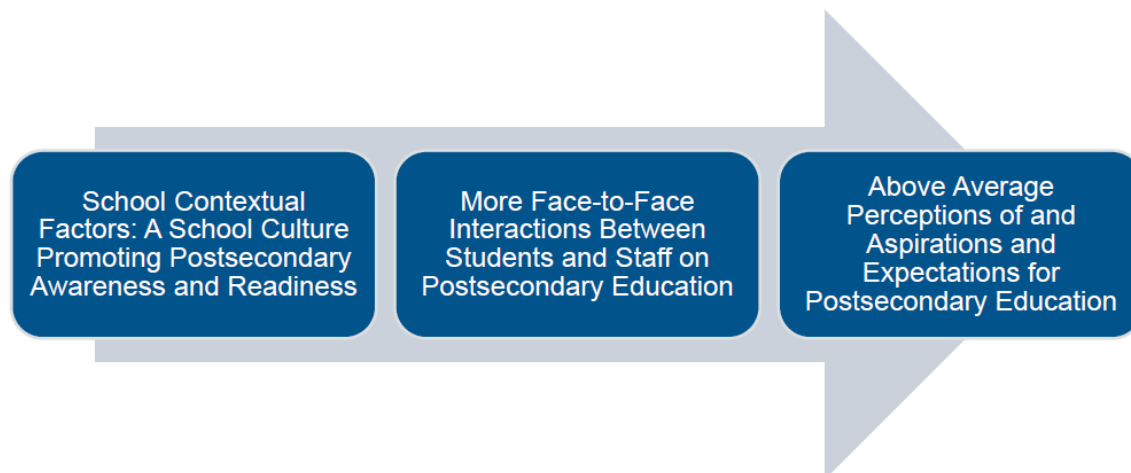
## One Standout School District in the Evaluation Findings: “Riverside ISD”\*

- Riverside ISD emerged as a top performing district during Year 3 based on survey findings, performance data, and qualitative data.

	Riverside ISD	Cohort Total
Number of students in GEAR UP	320	2155
Percentage of students who are Hispanic/Latino	89.1%	79.8%
Percentage of students with limited English proficiency (LEP)	9.4%	10.7%

- \*Riverside ISD is a pseudonym

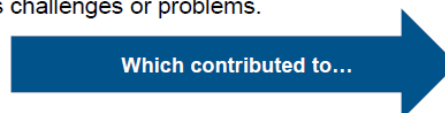
## Riverside ISD: An Overview of What Worked



## School Contextual Factors: A School Culture Promoting Postsecondary Awareness and Readiness



- **Strong administrator support allowed program staff to successfully implement a wide range of activities to serve students.**
  - District and school program staff indicated that there was a high degree of support from high school teachers, exemplified in how teachers allowed program staff to work with students.
- **School mission focused on college and career readiness and civic engagement—which aligned well with the GEAR UP program.**
- **Additional program staff were hired to expand the capacity of the GEAR UP team.**
  - One of the biggest changes was the addition of staff to support Texas GEAR UP SG. Specifically, RISD has worked to create a GEAR UP team that included tutors, a data clerk, and a parent liaison. Each of these new positions provided needed support in areas that were previously identified as challenges or problems.



## More Face-to-Face Interactions Between Students and Program Staff on Postsecondary Education

- Due to the GEAR UP team expansion, the school's College Preparation Advisor had **more opportunities for one-on-one interactions** and was able to devote time to students individually—helping them to feel more comfortable.
- Each student in the cohort received individualized attention during one-on-one meetings**, which typically focused on graduation plans, course selection, and student grades.
- Students were also able to receive **additional personalized support through multiple mentoring opportunities** as well as through events and programs offered through the Texas GEAR UP SG in this district.

Survey and Performance Data on Face-to-Face Interactions	RISD	All Four Districts
Percentage of students who received counseling/advising services	93.8%	68.7%
Average number of hours of counseling/advising received	3.0	1.8
Percentage of students who received mentoring services	20.0%	9.9%

Which contributed to...

## Above Average Perceptions of and Aspirations and Expectations for Postsecondary Education

- Conversations personalized to address individualized student needs resulted in positive perceptions of postsecondary education and increased student understanding of the benefits of postsecondary education.

Student Survey Indicators	RISD	Across All Four Districts
Average student rating of the importance/benefit of college (scale of 1-4)	3.1	2.8
Percentage of students who aspired to a 4-year college degree or higher	75.3%	71.8%
Percentage of students who expected to receive 4-year college degree or higher	63.3%	58.9%
Percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with "Attending College is Important for My Career Goals and Future."	93.0%	90.4%
Percentage of students who reported GEAR UP helped them decide to go to college	65.3%	56.7%



## Implications

- **The findings suggest the importance of having one-on-one conversations with students—in an early and ongoing manner—regarding postsecondary education**
  - Can be done without grant funding (e.g., through a volunteer mentoring program, annual meetings with school counselor)
- **The findings also emphasize the importance of school leadership and culture**
  - Leadership can place a greater priority on college access to shift the school culture accordingly
  - Leadership can rally staff to promote awareness of postsecondary education in the classroom
    - College essays in English class
    - Financial aid worksheets in math classes
    - Field trips that provide exposure to postsecondary campuses/faculty/departments/centers
    - Career research assignments/job site visits—integrated across curricula
    - Research activities before/after college/career fairs (e.g., what students want out of a school, what the school offers)
- **These low-cost and actionable recommendations can be implemented by Virginia educators across a wide range of school contexts, including those without similar grant/program funding in place.**



## References

- Briggs, A., O'Donnel, B., Horwood, T., Sun, J., McKinney, M., Sanderson, A., Shelley, B., Alexander, A. (2016). Year 3 Annual Implementation Report: Texas GEAR UP State Grant Evaluation. Report prepared for the Texas Education Agency. Report prepared for the Texas Education Agency by ICF International. Available at [http://tea.texas.gov/Reports\\_and\\_Data/Program\\_Evaluations/Middle\\_School\\_High\\_School\\_and\\_College\\_Preparation/Program\\_Evaluation\\_Middle\\_School\\_High\\_School\\_and\\_College\\_Preparation\\_Initiatives/](http://tea.texas.gov/Reports_and_Data/Program_Evaluations/Middle_School_High_School_and_College_Preparation/Program_Evaluation_Middle_School_High_School_and_College_Preparation_Initiatives/)
- Carnevale, A., Smith, N., and Strohl, J. (2013). Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020. Retrieved from Georgetown University, Center on Education and the Workforce website: [https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Recovery2020.SR\\_Web\\_.pdf](https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Recovery2020.SR_Web_.pdf)
- Kena, G., Musu-Gillette, L., Robinson, J., Wang, X., Rathbun, A., Zhang, J., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Barmer, A., Velez, E. D., Nachazel, T., Dziuba, A., Smith, W., Nelson, V., Robles-Villalba, V., Soo, W., (2015). *The Condition of Education 2015* (NCES 2015-144). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2015144.pdf>
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## From Macro to Micro: Addressing Evaluation Challenges Across a Spectrum of Educational Programs Serving the Appalachian Region

### From Macro to Micro: Addressing Evaluation Challenges Across a Spectrum of Educational Programs Serving the Appalachian Region

September 14, 2017



<https://www.arc.gov>

## What is ICF?

- Fairfax-based consulting firm with over 65 offices and 5,000 employees around the globe
- Founded in 1969 by individuals committed to making a difference in their communities
- Maintain that commitment today by partnering with clients in a variety of markets to conceive and implement solutions and services that protect and improve the quality of life



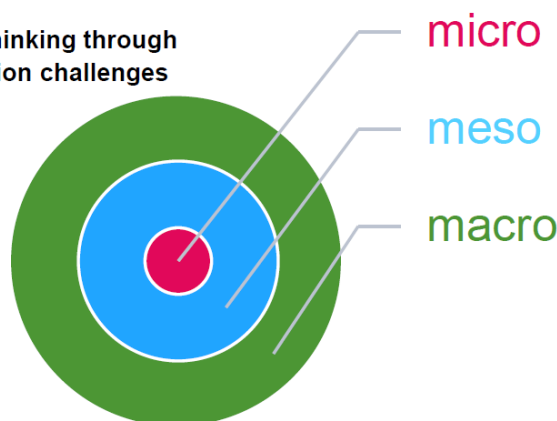
We make **BIG** things possible



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## Presentation Overview

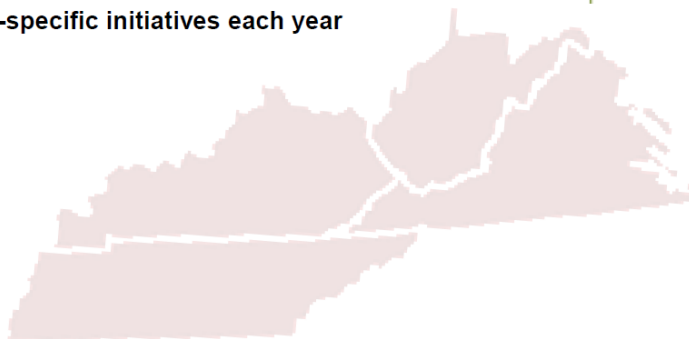
- Purpose
- Evaluation challenges and solutions at the macro, meso, and micro project levels
- Similarities and differences in challenges across projects
- A process tool for use in thinking through your own potential evaluation challenges



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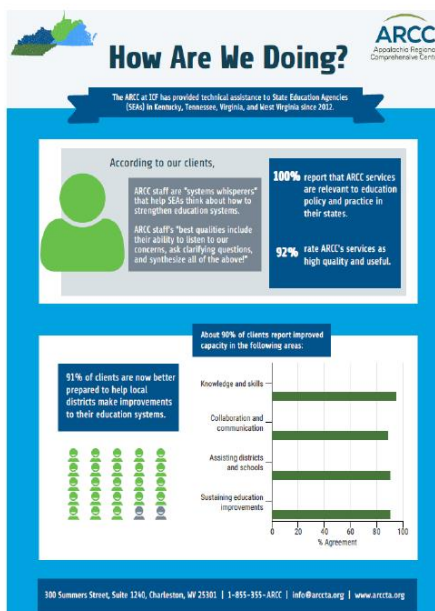
## ARCC Project Overview

- Funded by U.S. Department of Education
- Purpose is to help State Education Agencies (SEAs) build capacity
- Serves a four state-region
- State-specific initiatives each year



## ARCC Evaluation Design

- Evaluation cycle
- Mixed methods
  - Annual client survey
  - Annual client interview
  - Feedback forms
  - Extant documents
  - ARCC staff feedback





## ARCC Evaluation Challenges and Solutions



- Small sample size (limited number of SEA clients)
- Low participation rates in data collection efforts
- How to minimize response burden
- Attrition/churn (turnover of SEA staff)
- Evolving landscape for initiatives
- Long-term education reform vs. annual evaluation requirements
- Trying to keep as many original clients engaged as possible, so limit key data collection efforts to 2 per year
- Follow up with clients who have departed, invite them to participate
- Keep stated outcomes at a high level to allow flexibility in activities
- Build in mechanism to capture results across years



## RMIN i3 Project Overview

- Investing in Innovation (i3) development grant
- Funded by U.S. Department of Education
- Awarded to Virginia Advanced Study Strategies
- Focus on Networked Improvement Community of math teachers in rural middle/high schools in southern and southwest Virginia
- Incorporate academic self-efficacy and growth mindset strategies into math lesson plans relevant for STEM-H technician occupations



## RMIN i3 Evaluation Design

- **Quasi-experimental impact design**
  - Treatment cohort up to 40 Pre-Algebra and Algebra 1 teachers (and their students)
  - Comparison group of math teachers (and their students)
- **Mixed methods**
  - Training institute feedback form
  - Annual teacher survey
  - Annual group interviews with teachers
  - State math assessment data
  - Student survey (GM, SE)
- **Results**
  - Teacher: knowledge/skill, instructional practices
  - Students: math achievement, self-efficacy, growth mindset



$$y = mx + b$$

## RMIN i3 Evaluation Challenges and Solutions



- Small sample size (teachers)
  - Attrition over four years
  - How to minimize response burden
  - Comparison groups
  - Securing student data
  - Parental consent requirements
- 
- Try to keep as many cohort members engaged as possible; limit key data collection efforts to 2 per year
  - Access extant data when possible
  - Use small incentives for comparison group teachers; limit involvement to 2 years
  - Work with other agencies to secure de-identified achievement data
  - Limit data requiring consent to less critical outcome measures
  - Leverage collaborator role of i3 grantee



## CORE i3 Project Overview



- The Collaborative Regional Education (CORE) program is an Alabama-led P-20 partnership among six regional colleges/universities and more than 100 public schools in seven U.S. states.

- The program provides middle and high school teachers in rural schools with **five supports** designed to accelerate students' mastery of key college and career readiness (CCR) skills:

1. Professional development in project-based and active learning methods
2. Instructional technology resources, and expert support for successful integration into classroom instruction
3. Facilitation of resource/strategy sharing among teacher and administrator networks
4. CCR assessment support
5. Change management

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## CORE i3 Research Design



**cwra+**



- The i3-funded evaluation includes two separate two-year randomized control trials to validate CORE.

- **Unit of assignment:** A single teacher per school is nominated and assigned to either the treatment or control condition for two-year duration.

- **Outcomes:** Students' CCR skills are measured using CWRA+ assessment in a pretest/posttest design.

- **Confirmatory research question:** *Do two school years of the CORE program have an effect on the mean teacher-level college/career-readiness of Grade 8-12 students in the treatment group compared to the mean readiness of Grade 8-12 students in the business-as-usual condition?*

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## CORE i3 Evaluation Challenges and Solutions



**Intervention cost:** Instructional technology resources and intensive professional development = expensive and logistically challenging to implement in 100 schools

**Data collection:** Measurement of CCR skills requires external assessment; PII is needed to control for important covariates

**Attrition:** Intervention is two-years in duration; In rural districts teacher turnover is high; Cannot replace teachers



**Randomization design:** Single teacher per school design

**Reduce burden:** A 30-minute assessment of CCR skills; student sampling; templates, secure transfer, and Plan B

**Incentives & assurances:** Resources for treatment teachers & funding for control teachers; pre-randomization RSVP & the importance of relationships

## WV GEAR UP Project Overview

- A 7-year federal GEAR UP grant was awarded to WV Higher Education Policy Commission in 2014. The grant serves 50 middle and high schools in 10 county school districts in WV.
- The program provides seven years of intensive supports to class of 2020 (cohort group) from grade 7 through first year of college; and just in time support to a new cohort of seniors each year (priority group).
- The goal is to improve preparation for and participation in college; one relevant support is **student mentoring**.



## WV GEAR UP Research Design – Mentoring RCT



- **Evaluation includes a short-term, low-cost RCT study of mentoring component**
- **Unit of assignment:** Three schools identified, Cohort students in each school randomly selected to receive the offer of mentoring (treatment) or not (control)
- **Outcomes:** Students' attitudes about college-going, behavioral engagement in school, and academic achievement in English/language arts/mathematics
- **Confirmatory research question:** *What is the impact of offering intensive student mentoring upon students' college-going self-efficacy and outcomes-expectations? Behavioral engagement? Academic achievement?*

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## WV GEAR UP Evaluation Challenges and Solutions

### Challenges

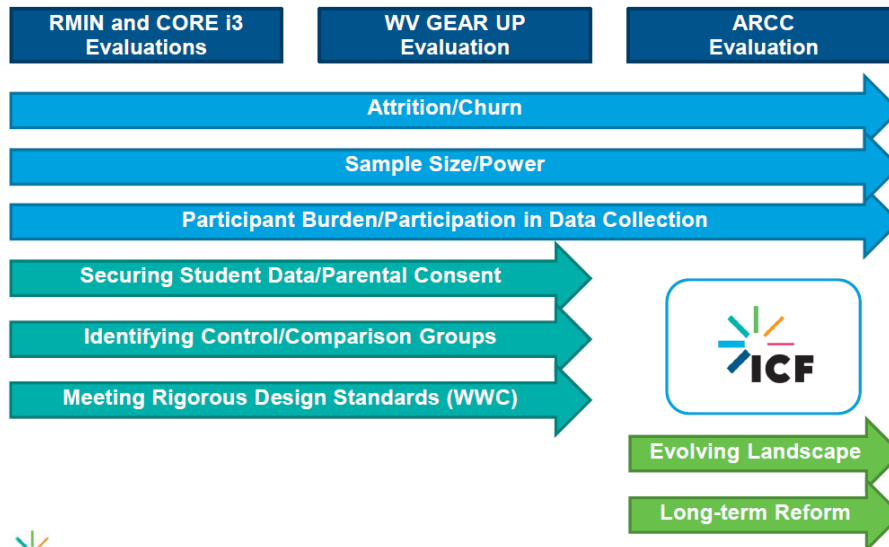
- **Identifying a control group:** Denial of service to some students is not palatable.
- **Cost and burden:** Budget is tight, respondents are overburdened and uninterested in studies.
- **Reducing attrition:** Data loss = attrition in RCTs. Low attrition is necessary to maintain causal inference.
- **Statistical power:** Intervention is expensive, and a one-to-one control group would not yield strong power.

### Solutions

- **Flexibility/innovation in assignment:** GEAR UP services made available to ALL students, and delayed services to control students. RCT occurs in just three schools.
- **Controlling cost/burden:** We limited the "ask" to essential tasks, and used existing administrative data and surveys.
- **Reducing attrition:** We used an opt-out permission process, and monitor data collection. We also focus on highly available data sources.
- **Oversampling:** Including more control group students increases power, but does not increase cost/burden.

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## Comparing/Contrasting Evaluation Challenges Across Projects



## A Process Tool for Your Evaluation Projects

1. Begin by selecting a program to focus on for the assessment.
  - Choose a program that, given the opportunity, you would like to evaluate. **Write down one question you would pose** about this program, focusing on a single program component to be investigated and **at least one outcome**.
2. For each evaluation challenge in the matrix, **provide a self-assessment** to indicate the extent to which the challenge presents a difficulty for evaluating your program.
3. Provide a brief note indicating why you provided each rating.
4. In the last column, **list at least one action** you think you can take toward addressing each challenge. Consider the solutions discussed today.