

Building Lakewood's Academic Success Together:
Request for Bass Connections Research Team Proposals

Introduction

The Education and Human Development Incubator (EHDI) in the Social Science Research Institute is pleased to announce this request for proposals for **projects that will be implemented at Lakewood Elementary School (LES) in Durham**. We seek research/intervention proposals from researchers with ideas for Bass Connections project teams (see <https://bassconnections.duke.edu/>) related to one of three priority areas that emerged from a needs assessment conducted at LES in 2015: building strong teamwork; strengthening outreach to English-language learners; and engaging parents. Project teams will be eligible for a maximum of \$50,000 for one year with funding available beginning in the spring of 2016. We expect project work will begin in the summer or fall of 2016. A letter of intent is due by **Friday, January 15, 2016**, and full applications will be due February 22.

Background

Building Lakewood's Academic Success Together (BLAST) emerged in the fall of 2014 as a partnership between Lakewood Elementary School (LES) and three Duke entities: EHDI, the Office of Durham and Regional Affairs, and the Program in Education. **The partnership seeks to address priorities identified by LES stakeholders, and the aim of this RFP is to invite research/intervention projects that are directly responsive to those priorities.**

LES, a Title I school (i.e., the school serves a high proportion of children from low-income families) only five minutes from Duke's West Campus, faces challenges in its desire to provide a high-quality education to its students. LES offers pre-kindergarten through Grade 5 to approximately 460 students, 99% of whom receive free/reduced price lunch. In 2014, most students were Hispanic (52%), African American (37%), or Asian (5%). In 2012-13, reading proficiency at LES was 16%, well below the district average of 33%. End-of-grade tests scores for third, fourth, and fifth graders indicated that 30% to 33% of students were at or above grade level. LES employed 36 teachers, and teacher turnover was 24% (the district average was 18%). Although Duke has been engaged in several ways with Lakewood Elementary—the Office of Durham and Regional Affairs, in particular, has been working with the school for some time—BLAST is a different approach that focuses Duke research and intervention approaches on issues specifically identified by the LES community.

Researchers in the BLAST partnership conducted the needs assessment in the spring of 2015, gathering data on LES strengths, challenges, and opportunities in interviews and focus groups with LES stakeholders. Participants included 24 instructional personnel (teachers and teacher assistants), 11 parents, 3 LES administrators, and 4 community partners. Data were transcribed, coded and analyzed, and the Duke research team shared findings with the LES principal and School Improvement Team in the fall of 2015. The report identified areas that can be addressed through this RFP process.

We seek research ideas for Bass Connections project teams that target one of three priority areas at LES.

1. **Build Strong Teamwork.** Needs assessment data suggested that building strong teamwork among instructional personnel, administrators, and non-teaching staff would help support LES students and families. We seek proposals for approaches to helping LES achieve lasting, sustainable change in teamwork. Areas of focus might include creating vertical teams (across grade levels) among instructional personnel to support curriculum alignment, encourage team-building, and enhance academic outcomes; developing a shared understanding of teaching practices that emphasize a holistic view of students and developmentally appropriate practice; enhancing lines of communication and team-building among administrators and staff.

2. **Strengthen outreach to and support for English-language learners and recent immigrants to the United States.** A range of approaches could be helpful to enhance how LES works with ESL children and families from several cultures and languages. We request proposals for research designed to explore ways to create and strengthen ties between LES and ELL/immigrant families.
3. **Engage parents through outreach, involvement, and support.** Evidence on how parents can most effectively support their children's achievement and social development suggests there is not a single, successful approach. Research might explore approaches that are best for the unique population of families at LES.

Proposal Guidelines

The proposed research/intervention must be implemented at LES. Research designs or interventions may be newly developed or existing models. A BLAST partnership advisory group that includes members from Duke and LES will provide ongoing oversight for the project. **Interested applicants must contact Carol Ripple to discuss the fit of the project with the RFP before submitting a letter of intent.**

Composition of Project Teams – Teams must include lead researchers representing two or more fields and must incorporate undergraduates. Teams may include members from other institutions.

Amount of Support – Project teams will be eligible for a maximum of \$50,000 for one year. Funding beyond one year will be conditional upon review and available funding.

Application and Selection Process – Before submitting an application, interested applicants must submit a letter of intent (LOI) that describes the fit between the project and the priority area it addresses, provides a brief synopsis of the project, explains the demands the research will place on LES teachers and staff, and lists any questions the applicants have of LES related to the feasibility of the proposed project. Only LOI's from researchers who have already contacted Carol Ripple to discuss the fit of the project with the RFP will be considered. An advisory group including members from LES and Duke will review LOI's, meet with applicants, and invite full proposals for selected projects. For the full proposal review, ad hoc reviewers will be consulted as needed to provide particular expertise. The full review will consider the following.

- Fit with the priority area the proposal intends to address.
- Fit with LES priorities and feasibility of implementation at the school.
- Robustness of the research method and the potential to provide sustainable approaches to address the chosen priority area.
- Experience of team leaders in school-based research.
- Commitment of team leaders to working with undergraduate team members.

Full funding will be contingent on successful IRB and Durham Public Schools Research Review Committee approvals. Information about the DPS review process is available at http://www.dpsnc.net/pages/Durham_Public_Schools/District/About_DPS/Research.

The number of awards is not guaranteed. If the proposals lack sufficient quality and merit, EHDi reserves the right to withhold awards. Notification of awards will be announced on or before March 15, 2016.

Application Instructions – The deadline for submitting a letter of intent is **January 15, 2016** and full proposals will be due February 22, 2016. The full proposal should contain the following:

1. Face Page: Project title; names, affiliations, and contact information for all researchers; main contact.
2. Abstract: Maximum 250 words.
3. Project Team Justification: (a) Team leader bios and project roles; and (b) Learning objectives for student team members.
4. Research Proposal: (1) Specific Aims; (2) Background and Significance; (3) Approach; (4) Anticipated outcomes; and (d) Relevance to the priority area. This section is **limited to 5 pages** including figures and legends. Use 11 point Arial or larger and 1-inch margins. References not included in the page limit.

5. Implementation Plan: (1) Project timeline; (2) Description of experience working in schools; (3) Plans for working with LES staff and administrators; and (4) Plans to disseminate findings.
6. Appendices: Not allowed.
7. Budget: Funds may not ordinarily be used for faculty salary support, but may be used for staff, postdoc, and student support (for other than teaching), and for project-related expenses. Please use the budget form provided.

We look forward to discussing your proposal. Please direct all inquiries to Carol Ripple (carol.ripple@duke.edu; 919.613.9229).

**BLAST Bass Connections Team Proposal
Budget Form**

Cost Category	Funding Request	Notes (e.g., name of personnel, activities supported)
Personnel	\$	
Supplies & Materials	\$	
Travel	\$	
General Operating & Other Costs	\$	
TOTAL Project Request	\$	