



## 2026 Innovation Day Projects

### Scaling High-Impact Tutoring across NYC Public Schools

**ExpandedED Schools** seeks to scale high-impact tutoring while maintaining effective student outcomes as their initiative expands across New York City. Operating in K–2 literacy and grades 6–8 mathematics across more than 100 schools, the project aims to identify the conditions, practices, and support structures necessary to preserve program quality at scale. A major complication is evaluating these programs in a complex urban environment where comparison groups are difficult to isolate, due to students participating in multiple concurrent academic interventions. Internal and external evaluations show that while lower tutoring ratios and consistent student attendance drive stronger growth, particularly in math, detecting statistically significant impacts remains challenging. They also are interested in incorporating implementation, attendance, dosage, and other factors in the analyses. Leadership from ExpandedED Schools and NYC Public Schools will use the research findings to guide future decisions around implementation, evaluation, continuous improvement, and long-term sustainability. To accomplish this, they are seeking an analytical partner to provide guidance on real-world evaluation approaches, strengthen data collection, help leverage their existing datasets, and determine how best to interpret and communicate impact findings.

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### Accelerating Academic Growth in Michigan Charter Schools

The **Central Michigan University (CMU) Center for Charter Schools** is a university authorizer of public charter schools in Michigan. They seek to increase the proportion of students in their charter portfolio meeting grade-level academic benchmarks, with a particular focus on accelerating reading growth and properly translating interim student growth into end-of-year proficiency. Across their 2024–2025 data, only 43% of students met spring national norms in mathematics and 44% met them in reading, falling short of their 50% target. The portfolio serves a high-need student population, with demographic markers for free/reduced lunch, special education, English language learners, and students of color at or above the state average. As an authorizer rather than an operator, CMU intends to use research insights to make evidence-based recommendations to guide schools on whether to prioritize reading improvement, benchmark conversion strategies, or replication of practices from higher-performing schools. More generally, they are interested in research on which academic support systems, reading interventions, or programs are most appropriate for their contexts. They are seeking analytical support to examine correlations between interim and state assessments and identify specific school- and system-level factors driving success.

## Evaluating Educators' Naturalistic Use of Supplementary Instructional Media

**GBH Education's** platform, PBS LearningMedia, provides over 30,000 free, curriculum-aligned media resources, such as videos, media galleries, interactive games, and self-paced lessons, designed for teachers to integrate into their classrooms to supplement existing curricula. . While experimental and quasi-experimental studies have shown that use of specific resources improves student achievement relative to business-as-usual, GBH does not know how naturalistic, everyday classroom usage impacts student learning. They wish to understand the varied ways educators integrate these tools to inform future product design, content development, and implementation, as well as professional development and outreach. To achieve this, GBH is looking for a research partner to design (and potentially conduct) a methodologically rigorous study that measures usage and impact while controlling for other relevant characteristics that vary across settings. To minimize additional data collection, they prefer a design that bridges their extensive platform usage metrics with existing student datasets, such as state standardized tests, MAP testing, or Stanford's Educational Opportunity Project data.

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## Evaluating Strategies to Increase Belonging and Attendance in a Rural Improvement Network

The Rural Professional Learning Network (RPLN) encompasses four county offices and eight rural districts across Northern California, serving over 10,000 students. To reduce chronic absenteeism, **Nicodemus Ford, LLC / Design with Joy** is supporting this networked improvement community to build relationships and restorative practices to strengthen belonging and deepen engagement. While they understand how relational practices function on the ground, they lack a trustworthy measurement approach or the empirical evidence to demonstrate their impact. Network leaders will share findings with county and school leaders to identify practices worth scaling, guide decisions about how to allocate resources for improvement, and build a case for future funding. They would like to establish long-term research-practice partnership to evaluate practices to promote belonging using methodologies that are realistic for improvement work, such as interrupted time series, matched comparisons, or multilevel models. They are also seeking updated research on belonging and attendance in rural schools and guidance in finding a lightweight, teacher-friendly belonging measure.

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## Reducing Chronic Absenteeism in Guilford County Schools, North Carolina

**Guilford County Schools**, serving 64-70k students in North Carolina, is looking for innovative strategies to reduce high levels of chronic absenteeism at its highest-need schools, given their challenges in implementing attendance interventions designed for better-resourced environments. Analyses will guide how the district partners with families and communities to provide wraparound supports, as well as how school-based attendance teams respond to early indicators of absence problems. Outcomes of interest include attendance, disciplinary behavior, and survey-based engagement indicators. The district is seeking a research partner with experience conducting large-scale, mixed-methods projects and studying innovative absenteeism interventions in under-resourced schools serving students living in poverty.

## **Analyzing Causes and Evaluating Solutions to Stabilize the Teacher Workforce in Kentucky**

The **Ohio Valley Educational Cooperative** and **University of Louisville** are partnering to address a severe teacher workforce sustainability crisis in Kentucky, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Challenges include declining interest and enrollment in teacher preparation programs, accelerating teacher attrition due to retirements, and more pronounced shortages in specific domains, communities, and career stages. They know from the research literature that teacher retention depends on working conditions, compensation, professional support, and professional autonomy and respect. Analytical findings will inform decisions regarding teacher recruitment, preparation, retention, resource allocation, compensation and certification policies, and long-term workforce planning. They are seeking collaborators to provide robust quantitative and qualitative evidence about trends across teacher supply-and-demand data, retention analytics, exit surveys, working conditions surveys, and equity or student achievement impacts. Analytical support should also identify root causes, forecast future staffing needs, and evaluate intervention effectiveness to guide decisions for building a sustainable teacher workforce.

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