

The Rise School of Austin Quantifying Impact Initiative

PROJECT SUMMARY

Data and analytics are key to innovation and to ensuring that we serve our students, families, and community in the most impactful ways possible. The Rise School is seeking to develop a robust research platform to guide our programming and expand our mission and reach in the Austin community. We want to fund associated costs including an on-staff Research Analyst, equipment and assessment tools.

An on-staff Research Analyst will perform a literature review to fully understand the mission and scope of our organization and assess performance, opportunities, and demand. Review will include, but not be limited to:

- Research on evaluation tools and measurable outcomes currently used for similar programs (if any)
- Identifying evaluation tools and measurable outcomes specific to Rise's program, accounting for the varying abilities of our students and non-standardized programs across elementary schools
- Interviews, focus groups, and surveys of stakeholders to determine the perception of Rise and the demand for/understanding of inclusive education in the Austin community (i.e. Rise parents, alumni, community, other schools, Vela, etc.)
- Presentation of quantitative and qualitative findings
- Use of results to direct strategic planning, marketing, and other efforts

WHY

As an organization that adheres to best practices supported by research, Rise fully recognizes the need for a comprehensive data and analytics platform to measure our progress and success. This initiative will help us to enhance our services and further our reach. Having a staff member dedicated to this project will help us determine data collection tools, measurable outcomes, and how to define success, while taking into consideration our data collection challenges, including:

- Rise students enter with a wide range of abilities and individual developmental delays that differ between each child, including some who are unable to walk or communicate for themselves.
- Rise Austin currently serves students from 29 zip codes across multiple counties, so students enter many different elementary schools. Special education programs are not standardized across schools, from therapy services offered to the level of inclusion with typically developing peers.

WHY NOW

We have seen incredible growth in 15 years, from 8 to now 85 students, and a continuously expanding interest list. We have also seen an increase in requests for services beyond our program (elementary and on) as well as for guidance on how to create inclusive programs. Additionally, we have witnessed our Rise alumni excel in their next learning environments both academically and socially. With this growth, and the positive outcomes we see from our Rise alumni, it is evident to us that there is a demand now, more than ever, for inclusive education in Austin. We need a research platform to support this finding and to further guide Rise's vision and impact in the Austin community, as well as to develop a data-driven 5-year strategic plan for our school. Information derived from this initiative will guide decisions made and have tremendous impact on the future vision, mission, and scope of The Rise School.