
**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI**

Education Innovation and Research (EIR) Grant

Freshmen Success: Implementation of Comprehensive Universal Supports for School Engagement

PURPOSE

- a. The EIR grant allows research of a universal ninth-grade intervention that includes three core components:
 - a. Data-based decision making by a leadership team to monitor critical student outcomes (e.g., course performance, attendance)
 - b. Instruction using a prevention-oriented engagement curriculum
 - c. Peer support from upperclassmen
- b. Freshmen Success is built on existing research on both (a) student engagement for retention in high school and (b) schoolwide prevention models to support success and designed to improve ninth-grade student engagement, academic, and behavior outcomes.
- c. Research staff will partner with selected districts to identify eligible high schools to deliver the Freshmen Success intervention during the 2026-27 or 2027-28 school years.
- d. Participating high schools will learn how to provide the manualized, Tier 1 ninth-grade preventative intervention.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION

- Initial training and support, from members of the research team, for use of the Freshmen Success Intervention.
- Assistance and monitoring, from the research team, for correct implementation of the Freshmen Success intervention, which can be continued in the school after the research project ends.
- Potential improvements in student course performance, attendance, motivation, and engagement.
- Financial compensation for district and school personnel.
 - \$500 per year (\$1,000 total) for participating high school
 - \$100 each for the School Coordinator
 - \$100 per high school administrator for training
 - \$100 per ninth-grade educator for training
 - \$10 per upperclassmen student for training
 - \$50 per year district or school for obtaining evaluation data
- Access to study results once they are available and access to the Freshmen Success intervention curriculum after study participation.

AGREEMENT

The university research partner will provide training, technical assistance, on-going support, and needed materials for high school staff to engage in the following activities over the course of the

two project years (2026-27 or 2027-28 school years). Activities all districts will engage in are listed below.

ALL PARTICIPATING DISTRICTS WILL:

- Orient the university research partner on any district approval processes.
- Identify one high school staff member for each school who will serve as a “Freshmen Success Building Coordinator” (e.g., administrator, counselor, social worker etc.) and help coordinate implementation of Freshmen Success and data collection for approximately 90-120 min per week (e.g., support facilitation of the Freshmen Success leadership team, implementation of the curriculum, support of upperclassmen peers).
- Assist with helping school leadership to identify time and space for providing professional development for relevant staff/students that will participate in Freshmen Success in the spring/summer of either 2025-26 or 2026-27.
- Support university research partner in obtaininig student-level outcome data each semester for use in research purposes (to include End of Year 8th grade, 30-Day ID List 9th grade, Semester 1 and Semester 2 9th grade, End of Year 10th grade). Ensure all student level data is linked to student ID (measures, outcome data, demographics) and does not include student names.
- Encourage high schools that are randomized into receiving Freshmen Success in the 2027-28 school year to participate in the high school community of practice events during the 2026-27 school year to build implementation readiness for Freshmen Success implementation.

(Insert name of district here)

District Administrator Name: _____

District Administrator Contact (email & phone): _____

Date: _____

Freshmen Success Participant Agreement

Ninth grade has been shown to be a critical time point at which most students struggle. If freshmen complete a successful transition to high school, the result is students who are engaged in school and have the knowledge and skills to perform successfully in their new school environment. By providing students with engagement-focused content and strategies and building a structure of support that utilizes systems and data-based decision making, we expect an increase in overall school engagement of freshmen, as measured by attendance, course performance, behavior, and student perception of school attachment (e.g., connections with peers, school, and adults), thus leading to longer term outcomes of decreased dropout and delinquency.

I understand Hallsville High School has been selected by the University of Missouri (MU) to enter into a partnership that will help the field understand the implementation and impact of Freshmen Success. Hallsville High School will participate in one of two groups that will be randomly determined after all the selected schools have signed their Participant Agreement.

Group #1: Training and Implementation of Freshmen Success during 2026-2027 SY

TASK	
1. Provide approval for research study	• Sign a provided letter that addresses protection of human subjects
2. Identify key staff	• Identify a Freshmen Success Building Coordinator with approximately 90 min per week to partner with MU contact and help coordinate implementation of Freshmen Success (e.g., support facilitation of Freshman Leadership Team, collection of data, implementation of the curriculum, support of upperclassmen peers)
3. Implement Freshmen Leadership Team to facilitate implementation of Freshmen Success	• Identify approximately 3-5 teachers and staff who work with freshmen and one administrator to serve on the FLT • Provide teachers/staff on FLT time to meet at least monthly for 90 min, and, if a new team, a half day of training • Use student level outcome data on a monthly basis for ongoing planning and decision making • Support FLT to identify and design interventions to support freshmen success, including the removal of barriers (e.g., scheduling, competing priorities) • Provide a mechanism for the FLT to update the school-wide team (e.g., Tier 1) at least quarterly on work, implementation status, and freshmen data.
4. Recruit and select upperclassmen to be Peer Navigators to at least 80% of freshmen	• Establish consensus as to roles and routines for Peer Navigators and teachers • Assist in obtaining consent/assent from Peer Navigators as needed for protection of human subjects • Provide training to Peer Navigators • Monitor and provide ongoing support to Peer Navigators across the year • Collect data from Peer Navigators

5. For all teachers of freshmen Establish and train all teachers of freshmen on freshmen-wide teacher agreements that are linked to the specific engagement-related content being taught to freshmen and that support the attendance, behavior and course performance goals established by the FLT.
6. Provide approximately 7 hours of professional development time for relevant staff/students 2 hours for all teachers and staff who work with freshmen: MTSS, rationale for focus on freshmen, Teacher Agreements 3 hours for teachers/educators who will be teaching the curriculum: lessons, activities, utilizing a Peer Navigator 1.5 – 2 hours for teachers/educators who will be teaching the curriculum and Peer Navigators to plan classroom tasks, communication and systems - Conduct trainings in partnership with school leadership and MU
7. Receive ongoing coaching and support related to the implementation of Freshmen Success - Participate in monthly meetings to plan and coordinate implementation - Remain in ongoing phone/email contact to plan and problem solve as needed
8. Implement Curriculum with at least 80% of freshmen - Guide and support teachers/educators implementing the FS curriculum (coordinate across teachers, communicate with teachers, prepare materials) - Teach all FS Lessons at approximately 30 minutes each (the first semester.)
9. Support administering and gathering new data - Collect feedback and implementation of fidelity, feasibility and usability data from teachers, Peer Navigators, and FLT - Ensure all student level data is linked to student ID (measures, outcome data, demographics) - Conduct Freshmen Success Implementation Checklist at 3 points in time (beginning, middle, end of school year) - Administer school engagement survey at 2 points in time (early in the school year, approximately 4 weeks after completion of curriculum) - Utilize student-level outcome data monthly for data-based decision making by FLT - Provide student-level outcome data, in accordance with Human Subjects agreement, at end of year for analyses (EOY 8th grade, EOY 9th grade, EOY 10th grade). - Ensure all student level data is linked to student ID (measures, outcome data, demographics) and does not include student names

Group #2: Business as usual in 2026-2027; training on Freshmen Success in spring of 2027 and two consults in Fall 2027

TASK	
1. Provide approval for research study	• Sign a provided letter that addresses protection of human subjects
2. Identify key staff	• Identify a person to serve as a liaison with MU especially related to data collection and potential training in the Spring 2026
3. During 2026-2027 the school and staff will	• Refrain from implementing the Freshmen Success components • Freshmen Leadership Team • Peer Navigators • Freshmen Success Curriculum • Continue current practices in their support of students • Complete Treatment Contrast Tool with MU at end of school year
4. Support administering and gathering new data	• Provide student-level outcome data, in accordance with Human Subjects agreement, at end of year for analyses (EOY 8th grade, EOY 9th grade, EOY 10th grade). • Ensure all student level data is linked to student ID (measures, outcome data, demographics) and does not include student names • Administer school engagement survey at 2 points in time (early in the school year, approximately 4 weeks after completion of curriculum)
5. Following the waitlist year, the school has the option to receive the Freshmen Success training in Spring 2027 for their school and consult twice in fall 2027	

I understand that Hallsville High School will be randomly assigned to one of these groups. We are willing to participate in either of these groups during 2026-2027. If we are assigned to group #2, we will NOT implement any of the features of Freshmen Success during the 2026-2027 school year.

Hallsville High School, HS School Principal

Principal Investigator, Freshmen Success

Date

Date

