

# Project SEALS: Supporting Early Adolescents' Learning and Social Success

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## Project Investigators

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**A collaboration between The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Virginia Commonwealth University, & The Pennsylvania State University**

## NEED FOR PROJECT SEALS:

As students transition to middle school they face complex class schedules, increased academic demands, less adult supervision, greater personal responsibilities, and also significant developmental changes. Problems experienced by youth as they transition into middle school reflect a convergence of academic, behavioral, and social challenges that put them at risk for developing:

- School difficulties including academic failure, attendance and discipline issues, and school dropout; and
- Disruptive behavior difficulties including chronic bullying, severe aggression, and antisocial patterns.

These vulnerabilities may seriously impede students' educational performance, as well as the achievement of classmates who have regular contact with them.

## GOAL OF SEALS:

To evaluate a professional development intervention program designed to help **6th grade teachers** create classroom instructional contexts and school social communities that promote the adaptation of students during the first years of middle school.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPONENTS:

SEALS is a universal intervention program that effectively helps teachers promote the general academic engagement and productive social behavior of 6th grade students. The SEALS program includes:

- **Academic Engagement Strategies** focused on instructional preparation, organization, and engagement skills
- **Competence Enhancement Behavioral Management Strategies** focused on productive classroom behaviors
- **Classroom Social Dynamics and Bullying Prevention Strategies** focused on engagement in productive and positive social relationships

\*\*\*The SEALS professional development program is complementary to other academic and transition programs being implemented in middle schools (e.g. Common Core) and does not need to be a stand alone program.\*\*\*

## SEALS WORKS!

Results from a randomized control trials study of 36 schools across the U.S. provide evidence that ...

**Students** in SEALS schools have:

- Greater academic achievement (state-level standardized test scores) and more favorable dispositions toward schooling;
- Reductions in bullying experiences; and
- Students from ethnic minority groups have particularly strong academic benefits.

**Teachers** trained in the SEALS program:

- Create a more positive learning environment for students;
- Demonstrate better understanding and management of classroom social dynamics; and
- Maintain greater efficacy for teaching at-risk students.

## SCHOOL TIME COMMITMENT AND COMPENSATION:

Participating middle schools will be involved for two years and will be paid \$500 for their involvement with SEALS.

In the first year, in **intervention schools, 6th grade teachers** will be trained in the program components. This will involve a:

- 1.5 day summer institute (teachers are paid \$300 for attending institute (1 day) and completing the online summer institute training (half day) before the first day of school);
- Self-guided series of 6 web-based instruction on program components; and
- Approximately 6 45-minute video conferencing sessions with an intervention specialist and teacher teams (teachers are paid \$250 for the web-based instruction and video conferencing).

In all participating **intervention and matched control schools:**

- Students will complete paper surveys twice a year (fall, spring) in their 6th (2013-2014) and 7th grade year (2014-2015).
- 6th grade teachers will complete paper surveys and will be observed in their classroom twice a year (2013-2014; fall, spring). Teachers are paid \$75 for their time during each assessment.
- 6th grade teachers will also be asked to complete surveys online three times during the 2013-2014 school year. Teachers are paid an additional \$25 for each survey completed.
- 7th grade teachers will be asked to complete paper surveys twice a year (2014-2015; fall, spring). 7th grade teachers will be paid \$50 for their time during each assessment.

A school liaison will be appointed to assist SEALS staff in data collection activities. This person will receive \$250 per year.

## Have Questions? Contact:

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Please visit our website: <http://seals-ed.org/>