



## Closeout Report

# Project M<sup>3</sup>: Math, Mindset, and Mastery

[October 2020]

This publication was produced at the request of the Coronado Unified School District. It was prepared independently by Shannon Coulter. For more information contact [scoulter@sdcoe.net](mailto:scoulter@sdcoe.net).



# PROJECT M<sup>3</sup>: MATH, MINDSET, AND MASTERY

IMPROVING THE MATHEMATICS ACHIEVEMENT OF MILITARY STUDENTS IN THE CORONADO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT AND TEACHERS' CAPACITIES IN IMPLEMENTING NEW STATE STANDARDS BY DATA-DRIVEN SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION AND FOCUSED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

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Closeout Report of Activities

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# ACRONYMS

CUSD	Coronado Unified School District
DoDEA	Department of Defense Education Activity
MCASP	Military-Connected Academic and Support Program
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
MFLC	Military Family Life Counselors
PIE	Partnerships in Education
MAP	Measures of Academic Progress
RIT	Rauch Unit
PEP	Personalized Education Plan
LCFF	Local Control Funding Formula
MMARS	Multiple Measures Online Reporting System
CST	California Standards Test
CLO	Compass Learning Odyssey
ALEKS	Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces
SDCOE	San Diego County Office of Education

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

Transitioning from one school to another introduces many stressors into a child's life, and military connected children are no strangers to these stressors. From how courses transfer from one school system to another to the social emotional impact of school transitions, military students' experiences moving frequently from one place to another is an enormous challenge for any school district including Coronado Unified (CUSD). These issues are often compounded in Coronado, where the high expectations for school success may be inconsistent with a student's prior learning experiences. Without effective tiered systems in place that support student needs, these high expectations coupled with the stress of school transitions may further perpetuate gaps in student achievement.

In response to these challenges, CUSD created Project M<sup>3</sup>: Mathematics, Mindset, and Mastery. The overarching goal of the program is to improve the mathematics achievement of military students and teachers' capacities in implementing new state standards by data-driven small group instruction and focused professional development. Project M<sup>3</sup> is driven by a theory of action that hypothesizes if district mathematics teachers grow their knowledge about teaching mathematics conceptually, track and monitor student achievement regularly, and provide supplemental virtual learning opportunities, CUSD will increase the percentage of students meeting or exceeding rigorous mathematics outcomes

## EVALUATION METHODS AND EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Project M<sup>3</sup> is in a mature stage of development. The project addresses the complex problem of supporting military transitioning students at the level of rigor called for by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in mathematics. The primary purpose of this evaluation is *to determine whether the program has led to positive changes for program beneficiaries*. This type of evaluation is appropriate for programs in later stages of development, where inputs, activities, and outputs have been established and agreed upon by stakeholders.

### Questions

1. To what extent have the program activities been delivered to participants with quality?
2. To what extent have the program outcomes been accomplished?

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The following findings emerged after an investigation of the evaluation questions:

1. Program developers and teachers delivered all three major Project M<sup>3</sup> activities to most military connected students in the district.
2. Project M<sup>3</sup> met all its interim goals in each program year, except the last year when state assessment data were unavailable.

Based on these findings, it is the conclusion of the evaluator that CUSD's grant activities have led to improvements in mathematics achievement for military connected students. CUSD has consistently maintained clear criteria for determining which students need support and how to support them. CUSD's Tier II support structure has evolved into a highly effective mechanism for students as they progress toward mastering rigorous state standards. Furthermore, CUSD's emphasis on instructional practice has (a) built the capacity of teachers across the district to implement the CCSS with fidelity, and (b) increased the use of formative data from both High-Quality Math Tasks (HQMTs) and project milestone monitoring. In addition, students across the district have benefited from goal setting activities and the activities they have engaged in to achieve their goals. All these activities have occurred alongside positive longer-term outcomes in mathematics achievement.

# PROJECT BACKGROUND

Through no fault of their own, many military connected students arrive to the Coronado Unified School District (CUSD) with gaps in mathematics content area knowledge and skills due to the transiency inherent in that unique population. Subject to frequent relocations, students often have significant credit deficiencies, low grades and test scores, acute social and emotional challenges, socio-economic disparity, and face higher than normal local expectations. For many, the incongruity of the rigorous new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) versus their previous states of residence standards presents additional difficulties and pressure. Lower scores on pre- and post- mastery assessments, as well as on formative benchmark assessments, are not uncommon for these students. The resulting challenges to differentiate curriculum delivery often results in lower self-esteem for the non-proficient students and frustration with the slower pace for advanced students.

The first factor contributing to low mathematics achievement is the difference in expectations across state standards compared to the reality experienced in CUSD with the CCSS. Differences in expectations create two issues. First, frequent relocations, coupled with stressors unique to military life, often disrupt intrinsic motivation for these students. Military connected students often do not possess the emotional availability necessary for a smooth school transition and focus on learning. Deployed family members have difficulty interacting or remaining highly involved in their children's progress or learning. Second, relocations pose additional difficulties for CUSD teachers to accurately measure where those gaps in understanding exist, as well as how to best provide interventions and monitor student progress. Research on supporting highly mobile military connected students has emphasized the need for schools to understand and respond to the challenges of transferring courses from one system to another, managing the social and emotional impacts of multiple school transitions, and supporting the needs of exceptional children (Military Child Education Coalition, 2017). A real need exists within the CUSD system to address the challenges that emerge in mathematics understanding due to frequent school relocations.

Second, a need is also present at the school systems level. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is an integrated framework that focuses on "instruction, differentiated learning, individualized student needs, and the alignment of systems necessary for all students' academic, behavior, and social success" (California Department of Education, 2020). MTSS identifies the necessary supports for students at different tiers of instruction (Tier I for all students, Tier II for some students, and Tier III for a few students). In addition to identification, MTSS ensures the systems providing these supports are effectively aligned to the students' needs. While MTSS identifies a way in which all students receive the supports they need for success, few students experience a fully implemented MTSS framework in their schools. The California PBIS Coalition's recent study on the implementation of MTSS found varied implementation across 818 school districts in the state. The remaining 324 school districts had no MTSS or Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) system in place (California Technical Assistance Center, 2015). For many students the promise of attending a school with an effective MTSS framework in place has not been fully realized. There is a need to ensure students have a supportive environment in which they can thrive.



Third, a real need exists for all teachers of mathematics to receive sustained professional development in order to deliver instruction that is conceptually-based, that provides opportunities for students to apply concepts and skills to relevant, real-life situations, and that assist students in building strong procedural fluency. Research has questioned the efficacy of teacher professional learning for decades, often suggesting that professional learning events have a minimal impact on an educator's practice, especially in contexts that lack a shared vision, time for implementation, and have dysfunctional school cultures (Tooley & Connally, 2016). In order to be successful, M<sup>3</sup> must leverage the elements of effective professional learning. The content of the professional learning workshops must be highly focused on mathematical concepts and integrated with principles of adult learning. Participants must work in collaborative, job-embedded environments with coaching support sustained over multiple years. Teachers must receive feedback from district and county coaches and be provided opportunities to reflect on their practices. For M<sup>3</sup> to succeed, the project needs to provide high quality professional learning opportunities for adults that have the greatest benefit for its students.

A final need exists around data use. Many of the data and reports housed in the CUSD system are outdated and obsolete. Furthermore, access to data has been limited and is gathered and analyzed by hand or sourced to San Diego County Office of Education for support. As new systems come online and teachers can view military and non-military subgroup data, they will need support in analyzing and planning instruction from the results of this information. Teachers need to be able to proactively address the root cause of low math achievement versus a symptom of it. They (along with school leaders) must be equipped with analytic tools that help them predict and ultimately mitigate the drivers of low math achievement before it has serious long-term consequences.

The needs to focus on mathematics achievement for military connected students are clear in CUSD. First, CUSD has a highly mobile population that transfers into the district with prior learning experiences that are often not congruous with CUSD's expectations. Second, CUSD's multi-tiered system of support is in varying stages of implementation, which creates gaps in support for students. A lack of fidelity to the elements of an effective intervention system produces variation in schools and student level outcomes in mathematics. Third, teachers need high quality professional learning experiences to support students' conceptual understanding of mathematics. And finally, schools and teachers need more actionable data tools and resources to detect, predict, and overcome the challenges of low mathematics achievement.

In response to these needs, CUSD created Project M<sup>3</sup>: Mathematics, Mindset, and Mastery. The overarching goal of the program is to improve the mathematics achievement of military students and teachers' capacities in implementing new state standards by data-driven small group instruction and focused professional development. To accomplish this goal, CUSD focused on several short and long-term outcomes including (1) increasing small group instruction for military connected students, (2) providing virtual learning and assessment opportunities, and (3) increasing the percentage of students meeting and exceeding standards on the California State mathematics assessment.

Project M<sup>3</sup> is driven by a theory of action that hypothesizes if district mathematics teachers grow their knowledge about teaching mathematics conceptually, track and monitor student achievement regularly, and provide supplemental virtual learning opportunities, CUSD will increase the percentage of students meeting or exceeding rigorous mathematics outcomes (see APPENDIX II).

# EVALUATION METHODS & EVALUATION QUESTIONS

## EVALUATION PURPOSE AND METHODS

Traditional program evaluation efforts focus on the processes and outcomes of a program in order to determine whether the program has led to positive change for program beneficiaries. These types of evaluations are appropriate for programs in mature stages of development, where inputs, activities, and outputs have been established and agreed upon by stakeholders.

The M<sup>3</sup> evaluation was designed to ensure that: a) implementation will be monitored systematically and on an on-going basis; b) specific progress measures will be used to assess the quality and completeness of project activities; and c) specific progress measures will be aligned with the goals, targets and expected outcomes so that progress towards achieving these outcomes can be accurately assessed.

The evaluator designed the evaluation to provide both summative and formative activities including monitoring, fidelity checks, development of summative evaluation reports, development of progress reports, and the establishment of the formative evaluation system. The evaluator collected and analyzed all project data on a quarterly basis. Each quarter the evaluator and project director met to make formative recommendations to project stakeholders including teachers, school principals, and district administrators on any modifications that were necessary.

The evaluation included formative (process) and summative (impact) performance measures. The evaluator supported the project partners to collect the required data regarding program measures. Formative evaluation methods related to the effectiveness of the project's procedures, practices and activities in implementing the project and in meeting project milestones based on proposed timelines. A key purpose of the formative evaluation process was to collect, analyze, and disseminate data over the course of the project to help the project partners and staff to stay "on track" in implementing project activities and to promote ongoing project improvement. Summative evaluation activities examined the impact of the project on academic achievement, including analysis of grades and performance on state and local assessments and behavioral factors related to the Personalized Education Plan (PEP).

This Closeout Report focuses on all the two major evaluation questions and the evidence gathered to answer these questions

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

For the first question, “To what extent have the program activities been delivered to participants with quality?” we examined a number of milestone accomplishments including the percentages of teachers trained, number of after school tutoring events, the extent to which all students were assessed, and others. We also examined teachers’ perceptions of satisfaction with the activities of the program including the trainings and the PEP. We observed mathematics instruction to determine the extent to which teachers delivered High Quality Mathematics Tasks (HQMTs) and conferenced with students around their goals. Finally, we examined MAP assessment data and student placement several times annually to determine the extent to which students were receiving appropriate supports.

The second question was, “To what extent have the program outcomes been accomplished?” To answer this question, we examined mathematics data from the Smarter Balanced assessment. Students in grades 3-8 and 11 take these assessments annually, and they inform teachers, schools and students about their progress mastering the CCSS. Each year, we disaggregated the data for both military and non-military students and gauged the progress of military-connected students to the expectations established in the grant application.

These evaluation questions serve to provide formative feedback for program developers so they could improve and scale the program throughout the district as well as to provide summative reports to key stakeholders around longer-term outcomes.

# FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

## FINDINGS

The Closeout Report findings covers the 2015-2016 through 2019-2020 calendar years. These program findings emerged from the two questions investigated and are arrayed below.

*To what extent have the program activities been delivered to participants with quality?*

Finding: Program developers and teachers delivered all three major M<sup>3</sup> activities to most military connected students in the district.

For the purposes of program fidelity, we report on three major activities: Personalized Education Plans (PEPs), High Quality Mathematics Tasks (HQMTs), and Tier II support. First, CUSD designed common PEPs for military connected students and held conferences with them. On average, more than 60% of military connected students in elementary and 50% of military connected students in secondary schools developed a PEP with his or her teacher and participated in a conference. Only students performing below expectations in mathematics developed a PEP because these documents served as a critical milestone for students as they set goals to close the gap between their past and present performance. Secondly, teachers designed and delivered HQMTs in every math class from grades 3-11. On average, every military connected student engaged in about 18 HQMTs annually. These conceptually based tasks

prepare students for the rigor of the CCSS assessments and allow teachers to determine the extent to which their instruction is influencing students' conceptual understanding. Finally, many military connected students participated in Tier II mathematics support. Tier II support classes range from before-and-after-school tutoring, small group instruction, virtual learning experiences, and actual double-dose math classes. Military connected students, who participated in these Tier II activities, received on average 180 hours of additional support, each hour aligned to a need the student had in mastering the CCSS. In summary, over five years, the M<sup>3</sup> program delivered quality support in the form of (a) PEPs to most military connected students, (b) multiple HQMTs in each math class across most grade levels, and (c) hundreds of hours of additional Tier II support for any students struggling to meet the rigor of the mathematics standards.

*To what extent have the program outcomes been accomplished?*

Finding: Project M<sup>3</sup> met all its interim goals in each program year, except the last year when state assessment data were unavailable.

M<sup>3</sup> established the following goals during the planning year of the grant.

#### Goal 1 Annual Summative Measures

- By June 2020, 74% of military dependent students in grades 3-5 will meet proficiency on the Smarter Balanced Assessment in mathematics.

#### Goal 2 Annual Summative Measures

- By June 2020, 70% of military dependent students in grades 6-8 will meet proficiency on the Smarter Balanced Assessment in mathematics.
- By June 2020, 60% of military dependent students in grade 11 will meet proficiency on the Smarter Balanced Assessment in mathematics.

The outcome data for each grant year is arrayed in Table 1 (APPENDIX I). Across all three measures, CUSD achieved at least 100% of the outcome every year. As implementation of all grant activities deepened over time, military connected students continued to grow in their understanding of the CCSS, which was demonstrated on these assessments. The goals and timelines established by Project M<sup>3</sup> have proven realistic, relevant, and achievable. Program monitoring methods have provided timely feedback to ensure continuous project improvement. Additionally, the necessary resources to carry out M<sup>3</sup> services and actions have been consistently sufficient.

In summary, M<sup>3</sup> accomplished each of its interim goals from 2015-2016 to 2018-2019. The final year of the grant, M<sup>3</sup> was unable to determine the extent to which it met the summative grant outcomes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The state of California paused state testing and accountability due to the school shutdowns that resulted from the virus. If it were not for these events, Project M<sup>3</sup> was on track to accomplish its ambitious, long-term outcomes of increasing mathematics achievement across every year of the grant in each of the grade spans targeted.

# LESSONS LEARNED

The following lessons learned reflect program successes. The M<sup>3</sup> approach has led to the following strengths:

- CUSD has learned the importance of identification. M<sup>3</sup> has clear entrance and exit criteria, which targets its supports specifically to those students who have needs in mathematics and frees those from the support if it is unnecessary. Often interventions are too general or restrictive in nature and fail to provide the individualized support students need.
- CUSD has learned how to provide an effective personalized Tier II support. An effective MTSS implementation creates an integrated support experience for all students. M<sup>3</sup>'s design has undergone multiple iterations to create this integrated experience.
- CUSD has learned about the change process and that sometimes it requires going slow to go fast. CUSD invested several years into the implementation of new standards, new curriculum, new assessments and in professional development for its teachers. These changes take time to make and the district established a timeline that has allowed the system to evolve.
- CUSD has learned that teachers need diagnostic tools to understand explicit areas of weakness for each student, and they need to use this information to personalize their Tier II support. Additionally, CUSD has learned how to progress monitor effectively. For example, Stacy Morrissey, the project director, keeps detailed records of student progress in the program. She provides regular feedback to teachers and administrators about program successes and areas of improvement, creating a cycle of continuous improvement for the work.
- Finally, CUSD has learned how important staff are when it is delivering instruction to low achieving students or to students with exceptional needs. M<sup>3</sup> has dedicated specialist to deliver Tier II supports to M<sup>3</sup> students because the match between the right teacher and the student is critical. Having a dedicated intervention specialist with the experience and understanding of supporting struggling students may be a luxury in terms of resources, but it is a necessity in getting outcomes at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

# CHALLENGES

Current areas of challenge include the following:

- Interrupted schooling, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, increases the burden on this project by creating additional issues related to learning loss, social-emotional learning, economic inequities, and others. COVID-19 presents an unprecedented set of challenges, including the potential amplification of disproportionality outcomes. COVID-19 also paused California's statewide testing and accountability system, which prevented the M<sup>3</sup> program evaluation of determining the extent to which the program reached its summative outcome targets.

# SUSTAINABILITY

Project M<sup>3</sup> strategies that will be sustained for elementary and secondary students are in-class supports and virtual learning. In-class supports, such as baseline math assessments, data collection tools, and targeted small group instruction, are sustainable due to the on-going professional development provided for teachers related to these in-class curriculum and instruction resources. Virtual learning resources, such as IXL, APEX, and Illuminate, are being sustained by on-going DoDEA grants and other funding sources. Another valuable resource that will continue to play a key role in supporting military-connected students' academic achievement in mathematics is the Project Director/Math TOSA. The position of Math TOSA is partially funded by Project STEM READ-i (DoDEA grant/2018), as well as Coronado Unified School District general funds.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are for DoDEA personnel and future grantees.

- Since schools and districts that have a military-connected population will continually need to support students transitioning from various states and academic standards, grantees must invest time and energy into instruction and instructional support. Additionally, DoDEA should prioritize grants that focus on classroom instruction versus supplemental supports and tools.
- Grant directors must have an active role in the project communicating and coordinating professional development, data collection and management, and supporting teachers, administrators, and students. Furthermore, grant directors must have the autonomy to make decisions that are in the best interest of the program so that it continues to grow and mature and reap long term benefits for students.
- DoDEA should require sustainability plans as part of the grant process to ensure effective strategies and resources developed during the grant cycle will continue after grant funding has ended.

# APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: TABLES

Table 1. District-wide performance on interim measures over time.

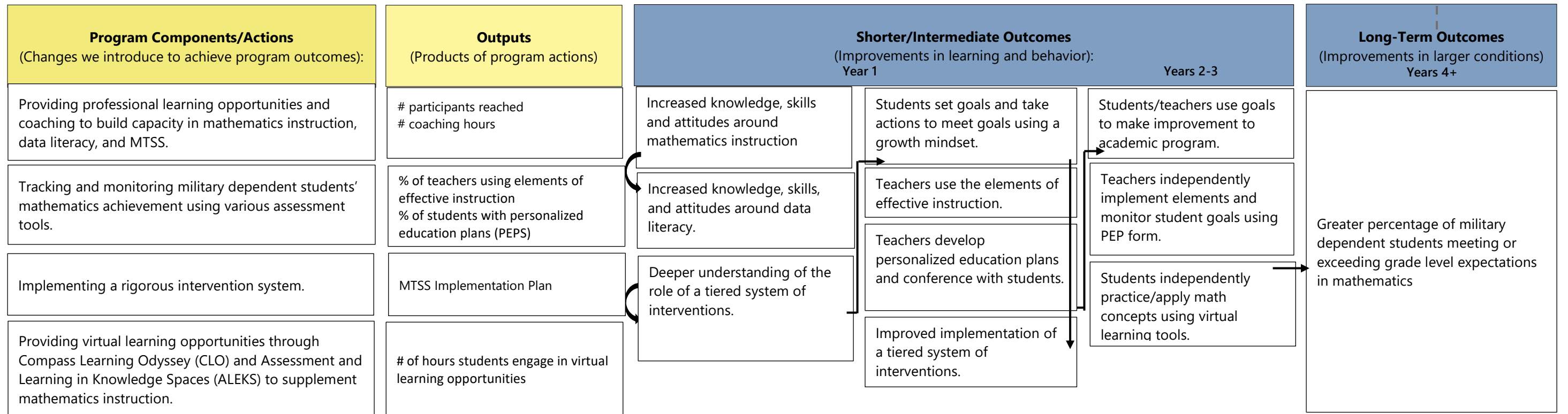
	2015-2016			2016-2017			2017-2018			2018-2019		
	Result	Goal	% Achieved	Result	Goal	% Achieved	Result	Goal	% Achieved	Result	Goal	% Achieved
Military-connected student in grades 3-5 meet standards	69%	68%	102%	72%	72%	100%	67%	70%	95%	74%	74%	100%
Military-connected students in grades 6-8 meet standards	65%	64%	102%	70%	68%	103%	75%	66%	114%	70%	70%	100%
Military connected students in grade 11 meet standards	62%	60%	103%	58%	57%	101%	59%	54%	109%	60%	60%	100%



APPENDIX II: EVALUATION LOGIC MODEL

Problem Statement (Situation): Military dependent students transfer to Coronado Unified School District with gaps in their mathematical understandings and fall further behind their peers as the year progresses because these gaps are not addressed.

Project Goal: To improve academic achievement for military-connected students in mathematics.



### APPENDIX III: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Instrument	Description
Attendance Log	A list of participants from each workshop session.
M <sup>3</sup> End of Workshop Survey	Survey completed by participants at end of workshop sessions.
Personalized Education Plan (PEP) Review	A checklist of items expected in a personalized education plan used to evaluate the use of PEPs across the district.
Tier II Review	An observation tool for examining Tier II interventions for mathematics emphasizing explicit instruction, instructional design, concepts, practice, review, and student motivation.
High Quality Mathematics Task (HQMT)	An observational tool used in a classroom where a high-quality mathematics task is delivered by a teacher to ensure it meets the rigor of a HQMT.
Student Outcomes	M <sup>3</sup> 's long-term outcomes include (1) increasing the percentage of students meeting and exceeding standards in mathematics in grades 3-5 and 6-11.


#### APPENDIX IV: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Source of Evaluation Information	Date Accessed
M <sup>3</sup> Grant Documents (Application, Metrics, Theory of Action)	7/9/2020
M <sup>3</sup> Evaluation Contract	7/9/2020
M <sup>3</sup> Marketing Materials	7/9/2020
M <sup>3</sup> Training Materials	8/11/2020
M <sup>3</sup> Training Archives	8/11/2020
M <sup>3</sup> Prior Evaluations (2016-2019)	8/12/2020
M <sup>3</sup> Leadership Meeting Notes	8/12/2020
M <sup>3</sup> Project Director Interviews	9/15/2020
M <sup>3</sup> Fidelity Tools	9/15/2020
M <sup>3</sup> Field Observations	9/16/2020
M <sup>3</sup> Field Notes and Interviews	9/16/2020
M <sup>3</sup> Email Archives	9/21/2020
M <sup>3</sup> Data Archives	10/14/2020
CUSD Board Meeting Minutes	10/14/2020
DoDEA Professional Learning Sessions/Materials	10/14/2020

APPENDIX V: DISCLOSURE OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Name	Shannon Coulter
Title	Director Research and Evaluation
Organization	San Diego County Office of Education
Evaluation Position?	Team Leader
Project(s) Evaluated ( <i>Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable</i> )	M <sup>3</sup> : Mathematics, Mindset, and Mastery
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	No
<p>If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts:  <i>Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>1. Close family member who is an employee of the CUSD operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</i></li> <li><i>2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation.</i></li> <li><i>3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project.</i></li> <li><i>4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the CUSD operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</i></li> <li><i>5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated.</i></li> <li><i>6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.</i></li> </ol>	

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	09/30/2020

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