

Narrative

(a) Significance

(i) The extent to which the proposed project is likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, or expand services that address the needs of the target population.

Polk County Public Schools will prepare schools to teach Common Core State Standards by supplying students with up-to-date library materials, expanding family Internet access, extending library hours and outreach, and having certified school librarians help parents engage in fun and developmentally appropriate literacy activities with their children. **Books Bridge** will use mobile libraries to empower children in poverty with tools to become life-long readers and users of information and information technology. The mobile libraries will make year-round, twice-weekly visits to targeted neighborhoods, a literacy bridge between home and school, between teacher and parents, and to the nonfiction that builds background for fiction. We will measure children's improvements in oral language development, reading, and comprehension.

In their 1995 study, *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experience of Young American Children*, Hart and Todd found that children in welfare homes heard an average 600 words per hour, compared to 2,100 in homes of professionals. By age four, this adds up to 13 million words heard by poor children and 48 million words for the affluent. Thus, before they have entered kindergarten, there is a gap in language acquisition that affects school readiness.

To help alleviate this gap, **Books Bridge** will bring high quality, vocabulary learning experiences to students who need a bridge to understanding the meaning of words. It includes helping parents use everyday experiences to engage their children in learning in the home.

One of the best places to find and use words is through books, and the largest storehouse of books available to the public can be found at the library. Since poverty sometimes prevents the poor from traveling to places away from home, the **Books Bridge** will bring books to the

neighborhoods where our students live. Also, educators will tap family strengths and cultural assets to design child-centered reading experiences. Parents will learn with the librarians to engage their children in natural learning, and take home free books for daily reading.

Polk County is in Central Florida between Tampa and Orlando. The countywide, public school district has 96,000 students in and around 17 cities and towns. Our Hispanic population



has grown from the traditionally Mexican agricultural labor force to include significant groups of Cubans, Puerto Ricans and South Americans, now outnumbering the African-American population that swelled with Haitians in

the 1990s. District enrollment has become "majority minority." Our free lunch rate was 70% at the end of 2011-212, compared to 58% in Florida and 66% in the U.S.¹ Almost one-third of Polk's children under age 5 live below the poverty level. Unemployment has exceeded 12% for 19 individual months since mid-2009. In 2010, the Brookings Institution reported Polk County had the fifth-highest rate of *suburban* poverty in the nation.

Only Miami-Dade, among Florida's metropolitan districts, has a lower rate of resident adults with diplomas, but Dade's rate of college graduates is far higher (See Attachments.) Polk parents are less able to help their children with school work, and schools struggle to find literate volunteer tutors.

<i>2006-2010 ACS estimates</i>	Polk	Florida	U.S.
Adults 25+ with no diploma	18.0%	14.3%	15.5%
Median Household Income	██████	██████	██████

Local civic leadership has mobilized to overcome complaisance about Polk's education system. We describe later how they will sustain the *Books Bridge* after federal funding expires.

¹ <http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/pubstudent.asp>; <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/slsummar.htm>

Four of Polk's most challenged elementary schools will participate in **Books Bridge**. Here are some basic statistics about the targeted schools, compared to the district and state.

	Alturas Elem.	Auburndale Central Elem.	Kingsford Elem.	Oscar Pope Elem.	<i>Polk</i>	<i>Florida</i>
Membership	355	461	692	408	96,295	2,667,830
PreK slots	0	36	54	36	4,437	184,972 ²
Number ELL	31	88	303	62	10,187	244,376
Percent ELL	8.7%	19.1%	43.8%	15.2%	10.6%	9.2%
Free/Reduced	87.9%	95.2%	93.8%	92.4%	68.3%	57.7%

In June, 2012, the DOE listed Alturas and Auburndale Central among the 100 elementary schools with the lowest reading performance in Florida. Kingsford was on the list in 2010, and Oscar Pope was an NCLB “Tier I” school for 2009. They range from 88% to 95% free lunch.

These disadvantages accentuate the importance of Polk children starting school ready to learn. While we expect to begin 8,000 kindergartners in August 2012, only one in four will have been afforded slots in public preschool education.

(ii) The extent to which the proposed project involves the development or demonstration of promising new strategies that build on, or are alternatives to, existing strategies.

Books Bridge will maximize interactive and dialogic (shared) reading with preschool and school children to build vocabulary by engaging them in high-interest reading materials and interactive technology. We further propose to have certified school librarians teach dialogic reading to parents before children enter school. In dialogic reading, the child learns to become the storyteller with the assistance of the adult, who functions as an active listener and questioner.

² http://www.fldoe.org/board/meetings/2012_07_16/workshop.pdf

Research has consistently indicated the role of vocabulary in academic achievement (Dickinson & Tabor, 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Sénéchal, Ouelette, & Rodney, 2006; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002). Longitudinal studies of emergent literacy skills in preschoolers reveal concurrent and predictive relationships between vocabulary acquisition, phonological awareness and code-based reading skills in primary grades (Dickinson et. al., 2003; Dickinson & Tabor, 2001; Lonigan, 2007; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002).

National educational reform initiatives over the past decade have stressed early interventions for language and literacy acquisition during preschool and early primary grades (Snow, et al., 1998). Educators are increasing emphasis on improving language and literacy supports within preschool classrooms, particularly those that service children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Dickinson, McCabe, & Clar-Chiarelli, 2004; Stahl & Yaden, 2004).

Hart and Risley hypothesized that "The amount of social language interaction between parents and children in the first years of life is the primary source of early language experience and a major determiner of later language experience." They further deduced that a family can change its micro-culture, with purposeful intent and practice, to improve the child's achievement.

Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998) found statistically significant advantages to combined efforts between home and school to increase preschoolers' oral language development with dialogic reading. They worked with a disadvantaged population similar to our target schools. Participating parents, encouraged to read with their children daily, had only two training sessions and then three books to take home. Together with activities in school, the children whose parents contributed to their engagement in the books showed significantly greater gains in only six weeks than groups with other or no special treatment.

We are working with a variety of "parents:" grandparents, teen parents, single parents,

foster parents, disabled parents, and working parents. They have a variety of neighborhood cultures, from agricultural labor to urban public housing. We assume that parents want to help their children succeed, no matter the parent's own reading abilities. Because *Books Bridge* lacks the scope to help parents learn adult literacy, we will use materials with which they can promote oral language development without literally reading. We will partner with our Farmworker and adult school programs, but this study will not attempt to measure impacts on adult literacy.

It is hard for parents to participate in education when they feel peripheral to the school. Swanson et. al. (2011) showed a remedy in "Strengthening Family Capacity to Provide Young Children Everyday Natural Learning Opportunities." There, parents learned to: "1) identify their children's interests, 2) identify the everyday activities that provide the children interest-based learning opportunities, 3) increase child participation in those activities, and 4) use responsive teaching procedures to reinforce existing child competence and promote new child behavior." (p. 68). *Books Bridge* will follow these steps, emphasizing high-interest, printed and electronic materials. We will help parents build home libraries and provide Internet access to widened varieties of subjects and genres. This way, we will use Swanson's capacity-building practices to "positively influence family functioning and enhance caregivers' abilities to provide their children interest-based, everyday, natural learning opportunities."

(b) Quality of the project design

(i) The extent to which the goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified and measurable.

Books Bridge will reach most of the 1,900 children in the four schools. Librarians will take mobile libraries on routine visits to one or two neighborhoods, identified with the largest numbers of students who have scored below proficient on reading assessments, feeding each of the schools. (See residency pattern maps in the Attachments.) With twice-weekly visits for 30

weeks after school and 8 weeks in the summer, and with 9 Saturday activities at local centers or churches each year, each bus will make 85 visits per year. During 6-7 hours per trip, we will host 20 drop-in preschooler/parent pairs and 40 school-age children each day. Each interaction will be at least 20 minutes. (Three sample lessons appear in the Attachments.) We will measure outcomes for no fewer than 100 students who attend at least 12 sessions in different weeks and bring a parent for at least six. At least 80% of 80 four-year-olds will show gains on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test for receptive and expressive vocabulary.

Goal 1. Increase academic achievement at four low-performing schools.

Objective 1: Improve reading proficiency among third graders. (GPRA Measure)

Objective 2: Improve participant achievement in reading as measured by grade-by-grade Discovery Learning reading assessments (FCAT predictor) three times per year.

Objective 3: Increase student engagement in reading as indicated by library circulation and by online assessments about specific books that students complete each semester.

Goal 2. Create a system of library outreach that helps to shift the school's instructional practice to work with family assets rather than focus on deficits.

Objective 4: Increase the amount and diversity of library materials teachers' use for classroom instruction that is built around local family values, interests and experiences.

Both students and teachers will gain background knowledge.

Objective 5. Create home libraries and early literacy activities in neighborhood settings that stimulate vocabulary development and reading comprehension.

Objective 6: Sustain best practices in neighborhood library outreach through alignment of community resources and transition to increased mobile technology. We will have free book sponsorships in place that sustain *Books Bridge* services when the seed grant expires.

Goal 3. Demonstrate parent assets that can be mobilized for natural learning.

Objective 7: Demonstrate gains in oral language development among participating four-year-olds, as measured by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. (GPRA Measure)

Objective 8: Create an outreach system for school libraries in which parents decide what types of media and materials to stock and parents recruit peer participation. Over time we will measure stakeholder movement through levels of the engagement pyramid (observe, follow, endorse, contribute, own, lead).

(ii) The extent to which the proposed project will be coordinated with similar or related efforts, and with other appropriate community, State, and Federal resources

Books Bridge is aligned to communitywide priorities established by diverse constituencies that remain active in Polk Vision, a civic initiative with a paid coordinator and prominent board of directors. Exhaustive public meetings led to the 2004 communitywide plan for increasing the local quality of life, with education among its top strategies. Since then, the School Board, United Way, County Commission, and Health Department have joined forces to focus together on the same strategies. Partner initiatives are the following. (See attached letters.)

Partner	Key Initiative	Purpose
United Way of Central Florida	Success by 6	Founded by Publix Super Markets Charities, a partnership of private businesses, government, religious groups, educators, and health organizations. Volunteers represent over 85 organizations working to give all children a healthy launch.
Polk County Library Cooperative	Library service unincorporated Polk County	The Cooperative enables the 13 city-owned libraries to open their doors to all residents of the county, including those in the unincorporated area.

Early Learning Coalition	Early childhood development fiscal services	All children enter school healthy, ready and eager for life-long learning with the collaborative support of parents, families, educators, and the community.
Head Start	Parent Engagement	Promote school readiness by enhancing development of children through educational, health, nutritional, and social services. Engage parents in their children's learning.
Polk Education Foundation	Fundraising and cultivation of philanthropy	Proactive partnership between the community schools to link resources with the educational needs of students through reading mentoring programs, scholarships, and school grants
Polk Vision	Education Priorities	To increase the graduation rate, increase the percentage of children who enter Kindergarten ready to learn.

All four schools receive federal Title I funds for high-need schools and Title II funds for professional development, which will help them purchase supplies, augment site licenses, bring in trainers, and send librarians to professional conferences. The district ESOL department provides tutors for qualifying students through Title III. Exceptional Student Education provides tutoring, and counseling that can include parents, for students who qualify through IDEA funds.

(iii) The extent to which the proposed project is part of a comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students.

Superintendent Dr. Sherrie Nickell has moved district focus from FCAT tests to graduation and college readiness. This shift in focus emphasizes that all have contributing roles. The theme of PreK Services this year is “Preparing the Class of 2026.” Third grade reading proficiency is a state requirement to go to fourth grade, and we know only about 7% of students who are retained more than once make it to graduation. ***Books Bridge*** is part of the effort to

promote students each year toward graduation by helping them read to learn.

School librarians will participate in two years of professional development about conversion to Common Core standards, and the adjustment in pedagogy. They participate on school literacy teams to coordinate speaking, reading and writing instruction schoolwide.

(iv) The extent to which performance feedback and continuous improvement are integral to the design of the proposed project.

School librarians serve on School Literacy Teams that write the reading portion of School Improvement Plans. Low-performing schools participate in three, annual, data review sessions with a cadre of district-based curriculum and student support specialists for reflection on school progress and to trigger rapid troubleshooting. Literacy teams will deploy **Books Bridge** activities for the greatest impact on school improvement based on these studies in trends among their students. Meanwhile, the district cadre, on which the Project Director sits, will function as the project Advisory Committee. At each convening it will see the Project Manager reports and evaluator feedback. A smaller group, with the four principals and representatives of various demographic constituencies, will convene as advisors each summer to plan for the coming year.

The **Books Bridge** Parent Council will be a small but active group that makes book purchase selections after briefings from the librarians, and helps recruit peer participation.

Classroom teachers and school librarians will share computerized STAR Assessment reports for each student's reading level placement, expressed as zone of proximal development. This will help the adults recommend and order appropriately leveled books for the children.

CELLA, the Comprehensive English Language Learning Assessment, is a test for Florida students classified as English Language Learners (ELLs). Administered annually, CELLA measures ELLs' progress in listening, speaking, reading, and writing English language skills. This guides practices for teachers and parents as children's skills progress.

Head Start children from a home where a second language is spoken will be assessed with the IPT Oral Test to determine if services are needed from the ESOL Program when the child enters kindergarten. We expect to see a decrease in the number of children scoring NES (Non English Speaking) on the test for those children participating in ***Books Bridge***.

(c) Quality of the project services

(i) The quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

The ***Books Bridge*** Parent Council will draw upon the Head Start model of parent activism to set policy, and from our ESOL Parent Leadership Council (description attached), a peer-to-peer mechanism that accomplishes communications where schools sometimes struggle. We will recruit council members via classroom teachers, school-based volunteer coordinators, local churches, and the Farmworkers program, and invite all who wish to sit in. The Project Manager will arm the group with information such as the county library cooperative, district Diversity Management office, and Community Foundation. The Grants Director will use stories from this group to solicit donations to the Polk Education Foundation to continue buying books.

Books Bridge will help every child find the treasure in his or her own household. Luis Moll and associates at the Univ. of Arizona demonstrated a "sociocultural" approach to lesson design by which teachers tap into the "hidden" home and community resources of their students.

The home investigations revealed that many families had abundant knowledge that the schools did not know about--and therefore did not use in order to teach academic skills. In general, the barrio families knew about agriculture and mining, economics, household management, materials and science, medicine, and religion.

Moll's work, endorsed by the Southern Poverty Law Center, led to repeated

demonstrations of student achievement stemming from teachers adjusting their content. When the teachers focused on parent assets and strengths, parents became the experts, and lessons became central rather than peripheral to the lives of the families. This is the pattern **Books Bridge** will instill with help from its families and Parent Council.

For non-English-speaking families, the mobile libraries will stock bilingual books.

(ii) The extent to which the services to be provided by the proposed project are appropriate to the needs of the intended recipients or beneficiaries of those services.

Our research led to five key groups of strategies to achieve the project objectives.

Strategy 1: Enriched school libraries. The librarians assigned to **Books Bridge** will help teachers choose new library materials that correspond with their curriculum maps to enhance classroom lessons as we transition to a constructivist rather than behaviorist model of teaching. **Books Bridge** will buy books for school libraries, with Parent Council corroboration, and challenge teachers to use more learner-centered materials.

Strategy 2: Reading beyond school hours and school walls. We will refurbish two school buses as mobile libraries, taking reading materials to the neighborhoods where our most economically challenged families live. Librarians will visit twice weekly, year-round, to engage children in fun literacy activities. They will welcome patrons by parking the mobile library at scheduled locations such as church parking lots or playgrounds. For at least four hours, they will both entertain drop-in users and engage patrons in 20-minute lessons for successive groups of children and parents. The targeted children will have frequent access to quality literacy activities near their homes after school, and take home a book each month they participate. Each mobile library will come with a paraprofessional who is also qualified with a commercial driver's license to drive the bus. Paras will log participation, help stock materials, and help with reading.

The **School Literacy Teams** will work with the librarians on lessons that afford

background knowledge for upcoming units in the curriculum maps. The librarian will employ interactive and dialogic reading directly with the students. The librarian and para will also help children choose leisure reading materials, and play interactive games that help them practice with language and written text. At least two hours daily will be devoted to parents of infants, toddlers and preschoolers. This table shows a likely schedule.

	Neighborhood Visits by Bookmobile				Librarians:	Neighborhood-Based Lessons and Forums
	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
School A	Bus 1		Bus 1		Plan with schools, restock , train, Parent Councils	Community setting once/month
School B		Bus 1		Bus 1		Community setting once/month
School C	Bus 2		Bus 2			Community setting once/month
School D		Bus 2		Bus 2		Community setting once/month

Two of the schools currently have no librarian. *Books Bridge* will add temporary staff to launch the outreach activities with a certified school librarian serving each school and mobile.

This table shows the staffing plan.

School	Locally Funded		Grant-Funded		Temporary Totals	
	Librarians	Paras	Librarians	Paras	Librarians	Paras
Alturas	1	0	.5	.5	1.5	.5
Auburndale Central	0	1	1	.5	1	1.5
Kingsford	1	0	.5	.5	1.5	.5
Oscar Pope	0	1	1	.5	1	1.5
<i>Books Bridge</i> Total	2	2	3	2	5	4

Books Bridge will give students unlimited electronic access to high quality reading materials keyed to personal interests, via laptops and/or tablets on the bus and existing school site licenses. (See samples, “Guys Read,” and “Get Ready to Read” literacy checklist for parents in the Attachments.) The librarians will have Internet access via air cards. Control will be put into place regarding access for students and parents to comply with required filtering. The Attachments show sample sites, including “Guys Read” and “Get Ready to Read” checklist.

The Pew Research Poll (Smith, 2001) says that 51% of Hispanics and 46% of African Americans use their cell phones as their primary device to access the Internet compared to 33% of whites. The *Books Bridge* will provide another bridge to information in these communities. The district's Library Media Services gives students access to digital books that are purchased from:

- Gale/Cengage Learning gives students unlimited access to non-fiction titles selected to compliment science and social studies. Gale/Cengage features literature from the Doris Kingsley Collection, a New York Times best-selling publisher known for distinctive graphics and attraction for readers of all ages.
- I-Save A Tree Books is a collection in both English and Spanish. The books are audible and readers can switch between the languages. Students have unlimited access to these titles.
- TumbleBook Library, an online collection of animated, talking picture books provided by the Lakeland Public Library which teach young children the joys of reading in a fun format
- Mackinvia.com gives easy access to students and staff for all books that are part of their individual school’s collection through one e-resource site, accessed at home and school.
- The Early World of Learning subscription gives parents and educators stimulating activities to reinforce concepts learned in the classroom and for preschool-age children.

- Learn 360 is a portal available to provide background knowledge in the form of video, lesson plans, and other activities to support learning on various topics. Students have access through their school library accounts.
- Parent Internet Viewer is the district's parent portal so that parents can tune in to school communications about their own children. *Books Bridge* will help parents access credentials and look up student grades, follow school calendars, receive classroom updates, and email teachers from the mobile library.

Strategy 3: Summer Reading. Children will self-select books to gain rather than deplete literacy skills over the summer. *Books Bridge* will ensure each participating child selects and takes home at least a dozen books from a pool that parents identify. Librarians will continue neighborhood-based literacy activities through the summer, including electronic books access.

The *Books Bridge* planning group was enthused to find the Allington et. al. (2010) study concluding that "ensuring easy and continuing access to self-selected books for summer reading is one potential strategy for addressing summer reading setback and, therefore, addressing the reading achievement gap that exists between students from more and less economically advantaged families." Elementary school children were given 12 books each on the last day of school each spring, and outperformed the control group on reading tests by a statistically significant margin. They conclude this is a cost-effective means of "closing summer setback."

Strategy 4: Funds of Knowledge. Traditionally underrepresented parents will learn to choose books that build on family assets. This project will give voice to parents. *Books Bridge* will bring in active members of the district's ESOL Parent Leadership Council, the Head Start Policy Council, and a local branch of the NAACP to offer starting points for parents who might be reticent to get involved and express themselves. The ESOL group has worked with the Florida

League of United Latin American Citizens, which teaches advocacy. The *Books Bridge* project manager and librarians will help schools learn about "Funds of Knowledge" research and to build on assets their families can bring to their children's learning.

By drawing on family interests and gearing resources accordingly, the librarians will help parents become subject experts and role models, and help teachers promote that role. In one example offered by Gonzalez et. al. (2005), a teacher found several students with families familiar with equine work, and used a horse theme that featured parents as guest speakers. Another teacher left her comfort zone for a theme around building construction, featuring neighborhoods trades like brick laying and carpentry. Children learned about tools, accuracy in measurements, weatherization, inspections, and commerce. We want to do the same, so parents with limited literacy do not feel peripheral to their children's learning.

Strategy 5: Parents as Teachers. Parents will teach their infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school children. The *Books Bridge* will provide free books and guided child/parent literacy activities for infants and preschoolers during the day while their older children are in school. The instruction for parents will be intentional, explicit, and direct, using best practices to engage young children in language-rich activities using both printed and electronic books. The bookmobile will provide a relaxed atmosphere that is friendly and welcoming for the parent and child. It will be equipped with electronic language learning toys and computer programs that parents can use to work with their children to enhance language development.

Partnering agencies and volunteers will use *Books Bridge* to advance their own early childhood development objectives. This win-win arrangement will increase the materials *Books Bridge* can share with families, and help sustain *Books Bridge* in future years. The United Way of Central Florida will enhance this project by co-locating these early literacy activities:

- Born Learning - Corporate and individual sponsors send books home from the hospital with parents of newborns.
- Let's Grow Word Play - Training for parents to understand how their habits affect language development in their children comes with tips and toys to practice daily.
- Dolly Parton Imagination Libraries – Each child is mailed one new book each month.
- Master Teachers – seasoned trainers model language development activities for child care providers, including how to help parents read productively with their children, concluding with the award of a lending library for each participating center.

Donors pledge support to the United Way for these initiatives by zip code. In two years, we will have all zip codes covered that may not be covered at the start.

(iii) The extent to which the training or professional development services to be provided by the proposed project are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration to lead to improvements in practice among the recipients of those services.

Polk's librarians are participating in district training in Common Core State Standards.

Books Bridge librarians will participate in quarterly, joint sessions with the district's 96 librarians. These meetings provide expert speakers, updates on resources, upcoming community activities, partnerships and opportunities such as through the Polk County Library Cooperative, and sharing best practices.

Books Bridge will send librarians to attend workshops, network with job-alike colleagues, stay abreast of the best in their field, and inspire additional research. Our project manager will assign each attendee, upon return, to make a presentation, write newsletter articles, or report on resulting projects to ensure the information is shared with colleagues. Pre-approved plans for this manner of sharing is a district requirement for each school to draw down its Title II professional development allocation, which school literacy teams may use to compliment or

expand *Books Bridge* training.

Books Bridge will pull together district experts from the Community Involvement office, Polk Education Foundation AmeriCorps, ESOL, Title I, Diversity Management, and partnering agencies to draw up a mandatory, two-hour training in user-friendly, high impact strategies for its librarians, teachers and parents before going into the community. Built upon our volunteer training for listening and nonthreatening communications, the home-grown aspect of this training design is intended to internalize it for sustainability.

Professional development for teachers will not stand alone, but will be blended into Response to Intervention and Lesson Study by each faculty. These focus on the student. In Lesson Study, teachers specifically observe student engagement, and then collaborate to get better. 1) The teachers create a team that agrees on intended outcomes and then jointly designs a lesson with the best contributions of each team member. 2) The team randomly selects one member to deliver the lesson in the classroom of another, while the balance observes student responses with a list of indicators. 3) The group debriefs and analyzes its quantified and anecdotal observations and discusses resulting implications for the level of learning in the classroom. 4) They hone the lesson through a reteaching session for another class and subsequent reflection and followup. Our teachers say this program inspires change that they like.

(d) Adequacy of resources

(i) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the objectives, design, and potential significance of the proposed project.

The district will spend [REDACTED] in grant funds over two years, and at least another [REDACTED] in donations from the community for books, a fund we will work to continue in the future. A detailed budget narrative in the Attachments includes three librarians and two paras to augment existing staff long enough to cement *Books Bridge* in place, and two mobile libraries.

By focusing on four, high-need schools, we are confident of careful implementation and maximum impact. Parents will become the constituency that prompts continuation.

We have book and cash pledges in place (see attached letters) from five partners so far.

(ii) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of persons to be served and to the anticipated results and benefits.

Under the staffing and scheduling detailed on pages 12-13, and the participation estimates on page 6, each mobile library will see 60 children per neighborhood visit, four times per week, plus nine Saturday events. Community Involvement has already lined up places to park with our generator running, and buildings to use on Saturdays, and community partners have flocked to assist with a project this visible. The planned activities add up to 10,000 contacts between the two bookmobiles over the two-year project. The Polk district is lining up resources behind this effort because we believe it will improve the state-imposed school grades determined by standardized test scores, which is the centerpiece of the School Board's strategic plan.

(e) Quality of the management plan

(i) The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones.

Books Bridge will operate under the Polk County school district's K-12 Curriculum and Instruction Department, whose senior director, Dr. Paula Leftwich, reports to the Associate Superintendent for Learning, David Lewis. Dr. Leftwich supervises subject-area coordinators, including the district's reading specialists, and also the Media Services Department, which will oversee daily operations for ***Books Bridge***. Dr. Leftwich has weekly Cabinet meetings with senior directors who supervise school principals, with various student support services directors, and with services such as Finance and Facilities. This will keep logistical communications open.

Books Bridge will capitalize on the "funds of knowledge" concept to promote interest in

school library collections, and will replicate, to the extent possible, building family capacities through natural learning, as demonstrated by Swanson et. al. (2011). The selection of books for *Books Bridge* will be a collaborative partnership between parent groups specific to each of the four schools. We are confident in the influence of this group. The ESOL Parent Leadership Council and the Head Start Policy Council have improved district practices, such as instituting a hot line by which parents can bypass confusing bureaucracy.

A detailed timeline with monthly activities appears in the Attachments. It shows when we will produce training schedules, parent and advisory group meetings, procurement and deployment plans, progress monitoring assessment forms and scheduling, library materials planning with teachers and school literacy teams, sessions for reflection and feedback, and support activities such as bilingual newsletter publication.

Some aspects of the project, designed for sustainability, will not reach full capacity until the end of the initial two years. We estimate these important milestones as follows.

	Fall 2012	Spring 2013	Fall 2013	Spring 2014
Parent Council membership	8	10	12	16
Titles added to school collections	70	140	210	280
Accumulated partnership donations	██████	██████	██████	██████
Accumulated free books per child	6	12	18	24

(ii) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate.

Dr. Paula Leftwich, senior director for K-12 Curriculum and Instruction for Polk County schools, holds a Ph.D. in reading from the University of South Florida. She has served as chair of the Florida Education Standards Commission; as adjunct instructor for Southeastern College and

Florida Southern College; as guest lecturer at USF and the University of Central Florida; and on the Community Investment Board for the United Way of Central Florida. About 3% of Dr. Leftwich's time will be devoted to *Books Bridge*. Her extensive grants management experience is listed on her resume. The Attachments have resumes for all key personnel mentioned here.

Jacqueline Rose, library media services senior coordinator for Library Media Services for Polk County schools, will be the day-to-day project manager. Her M.Ed. in Library Science is from the University of South Florida in Tampa. Mrs. Rose will oversee all grant-supported functions, including operation and supervision of the mobile libraries and community partnerships. About 10% of her time will be devoted to *Books Bridge*, during which she will convene advisors, supervise staff to detail plans with the schools, manage the evaluator contract, and help Dr. Leftwich with reports to the district administration and the U.S. Education Dept.

Matti Friedt is the Director of Preschool Services who launched the LEA Head Start program three years ago. Under her guidance, Polk's state-monitored readiness rates among Voluntary PreKindergarten programs leaped from nearly last among Florida's 67 districts to above the state average for kindergarten readiness; outperforming local, private VPK centers.

Margaret Anne Wheeler is Senior Coordinator for Community Involvement. Under her guidance, 5,000 new community and parent volunteers are placed in Polk County public schools each year. She coordinates volunteer recruitment through a network of coordinators at each school who are trained to recognize and deploy skills from people with differing backgrounds.

Credentials for Dr. Paul Redulic, independent evaluator, and United Way childhood experts Penny Borgia and Jodi Miller, appear in the Attachments.

Marcia Ford, Grants Director and LEA Race to the Top manager, will continue to write *Books Bridge* into special funding projects, and to solicit support (grant opportunities attached).

(iii) The adequacy of mechanisms for ensuring high-quality products and services.

The Parent Council, Advisory Committee, interdepartmental communications, and evaluation plan all assume ***Books Bridge*** will be flexible and responsive to what works. Scheduling, book distribution, translators, locations, and content of materials all depend on stakeholder input from parents, children, principals, teachers, and librarians. In light of today's plethora of educational mandates, the schools welcome this opportunity to learn as we go.

The Parent Information Resource Center at the University of South Florida consulted with our planning committee and will remain a valuable resource for the project manager and the Parent Council. (See the attached letter.) Dr. Mari Fernandez at PIRC, and Dr. Paul Redulic of PerforMetrics, work with Polk's Head Start program and already know our constituency. They will keep ***Books Bridge*** in line with latest research about how children learn to read and strategies that are especially helpful to our economically disadvantaged families.

The district's electronic student records system is locally designed and recently won recognition for excellence from the Florida School Boards Association. (See the Attachment about IDEAS.) This gives our educators fingertip access to ongoing assessment results to adjust practices as warranted. Staff will register even casual users of the mobile libraries and track all attendance. We will flag them in electronic records so schools can correlate ***Books Bridge*** attendees and activities with achievement, school attendance, demographics, and teachers.

(f) Quality of the project evaluation

(i) The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.

The district will contract with PerforMetrics president Dr. Paul Rendulic as external evaluator for ***Books Bridge***. He holds a Ph.D. in education research and his company is

currently engaged in evaluations of LEA projects such as Race to the Top and Teacher Incentive Fund. Dr. Redulic was our choice because has produced needs assessments for our Head Start program accompanied by clear, succinct, useful, timely reports containing rich information.

The evaluation plan has three purposes: 1) to monitor and document implementation of the grant activities; 2) to collect valid and reliable data to assess the outcomes and determine the extent to which **Books Bridge’s** specific objectives are attained; and 3) to use evaluation results for continuously improving the program. These are detailed below.

1) The evaluator will collect *Formative* evaluation data through the two seed years of **Books Bridge**. He will meet at least quarterly with the Project Manager to discuss the status of project implementation, review her logs and records, and cite any areas of concern. They will develop action plans to include in succeeding reviews and reports to the Advisory Group. The evaluator will make periodic site visits to observe the project and include insights in reports.

2) PerforMetrics will conduct multi-faceted *Formative* and *Summative* evaluations using quantitative and qualitative data, according to the following methodology by project objective:

Goal 1. Increase academic achievement at four low-performing schools.				
Objective 1: Improve reading proficiency among third graders (GPRA Measure)				
<u>Data Type</u>	<u>When Collected</u>	<u>Methodology</u>	<u>Instrumentation</u>	<u>Analysis</u>
Reading achievement	Spring of each year	District provided	FCAT Reading	Variance and Paired t-Tests of significance
Objective 2: Improve participant student achievement in reading (other grade levels)				
<u>Data Type</u>	<u>When Collected</u>	<u>Methodology</u>	<u>Instrumentation</u>	<u>Analysis</u>
Reading Assessment	3 times each school year	District provided	Discovery Learning Reading Assessment	Variance and Repeated Measures ANOVA
Objective 3: Increase student engagement in reading				

<u>Data Type</u>	<u>When</u>	<u>Methodology</u>	<u>Instrumentation</u>	<u>Analysis</u>
# of books read by students and their related levels of comprehension	<u>Collected</u> Semi-annually	Library circulation documentation and results of online assessment of reading comprehension	Library records and online assessment reports	Descriptive statistics and Analysis of Variance

Goal 2. Create a system of library outreach that helps to shift the school's instructional practice to work with family assets rather than focus on deficits.

Objective 4: Increase the amount and diversity of library materials that teachers use for classroom instruction that is built around local family values, interests and experiences.

<u>Data Type</u>	<u>When Collected</u>	<u>Methodology</u>	<u>Instrumentation</u>	<u>Analysis</u>
Teachers use of library materials	Each grading period	Library documentation and teacher survey	Library circulation records and evaluator developed teacher survey	Descriptive statistics, including chi-square analysis

Objective 5. Create home libraries and early literacy activities in neighborhood settings that stimulate vocabulary development and reading comprehension.

<u>Data Type</u>	<u>When Collected</u>	<u>Methodology</u>	<u>Instrumentation</u>	<u>Analysis</u>
Number of books placed in homes	Quarterly	Review of mobile library documentation	Circulation data maintained by mobile library team	Descriptive statistics

Objective 6: Sustain best practices in neighborhood library outreach through alignment of community resources and transition to increased mobile technology.

<u>Data Type</u>	<u>When</u>	<u>Methodology</u>	<u>Instrumentation</u>	<u>Analysis</u>
Availability of community resources	<u>Collected</u> 4 th quarter of year of grant	Survey of community partners/resources	Evaluator developed survey/interviews with community partners	Qualitative analysis

Goal 3. Demonstrate parent assets that can be mobilized for natural learning.				
<u>Objective 7</u> Demonstrate statistically significant gains in oral language development among participating four-year-olds (GPR A Measure)				
<u>Data Type</u>	<u>When Collected</u>	<u>Methodology</u>	<u>Instrumentation</u>	<u>Analysis</u>
Oral language developmental scores	Fall and Spring of each program year	District provided	Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	Paired t-Tests of significance
<u>Objective 8:</u> Create an outreach system for school libraries in which parents decide what types of media and materials to stock and parents recruit peer participation.				
<u>Data Type</u>	<u>When Collected</u>	<u>Methodology</u>	<u>Instrumentation</u>	<u>Analysis</u>
Parents level of engagement	Semi-annually	Parent survey Parent focus group Librarial interviews	Survey for level of Engagement Pyramid and Theory of Change	Descriptive statistics and qualitative analysis of comments

When feasible, the evaluator will use comparison groups based on based on demographics, free lunch status and baseline reading, such as for comparison of 3rd grade reading achievement. In other cases, within subject comparisons may be appropriately made, such as pre and posttest scores of 4-year olds oral language ability.

(ii) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.

For the continuous improvement of **Books Bridge**, PerforMetrics will meet at least quarterly with the Program Manager to review the status of the implementation and to share the *Formative* / on-going evaluation findings. Dr. Redulic will offer *Summative* “Utilization-Focused” Evaluation Reports within 45 to 60 days of the end of each project. These will report, for an audience of stakeholders, on how well the project is operating and meeting its purpose.