

PROJECT NARRATIVE

The Camden Board of Education (CBE) School Based Youth Services Program (SBYS) proposes the Helping Everyone Achieve Through Reading Program (HEAR) to develop and improve literacy skills for participating very young children (infants, toddlers, preschoolers) as well as for adolescent parents and other students in grades 9-12 attending Camden High School and Woodrow Wilson High School. HEAR meets the Absolute Priority set forth for the Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) Initiative as described below under *Quality of the Project Services*. The proposed program falls within three of the IAL Initiative Competitive Preference Priorities. One of the targeted high schools (Camden High) is on the list of persistently lowest-achieving schools in the State of New Jersey (and the other, Woodrow Wilson High, is on the list of low-achieving); and Camden High is in the midst of implementing a turnaround School Improvement Grant (SIG) awarded by the state (Priority 1.) The proposed program includes a significant technology component (Priority 2). The proposed program seeks to improve early learning outcomes for very young children (Priority 3).

(a) Significance

CBE serves the City of Camden, New Jersey (population 77,344). The Camden population is 48.1% African American, 47% Latino, 17.6% Euro/Anglo, and 2.1% Asian. Camden is one of the most distressed communities in the country on many levels. With 44% of families with children age 18 and under living in poverty and 29% of all adults over the age of 18 living in poverty, Camden is often referred to as “the poorest city in the country.”¹ The instance of academic failure is high in Camden. As an example, the district graduation rate in 2010 was 56.9% compared to 94.7% statewide. (In the most distressed neighborhoods of

¹ U.S. Census, 2010.

Camden, far less than half of students graduate from high school.)² Additionally, 16.5% of the population over the age of 24 in Camden never reached high school and 38% of adults over the age of 24 never completed high school, thus many residents lack the education and skills necessary to pull themselves and their families out of poverty.³ Camden experiences a high level of drug trafficking, substance abuse, and violent crime, which results in stress and mental health issues for residents who are impacted by the loss of loved ones to death, incarceration, and addiction.⁴ HEAR is designed to not only develop and improve literacy for the children and youth it seeks to serve, but to respond to the specific cultural and environmental challenges and struggles faced by these youngsters in ways that support them in valuing reading and writing, valuing education, and creating better lives for themselves.

Many aspects of the proposed project are likely to build local capacity to provide, improve, and expand services to better meet the needs of participating children and families. Much of this will occur through collaboration with partners as discussed under *Quality of the Project Services*. Here are examples of how HEAR will build local capacity. First, HEAR will add value to the Grief and Loss Groups through a collaboration with the Center for Family Services (CFS) for therapeutic services. The literacy skills development component brought to these groups by HEAR will benefit the adolescent students in these groups by raising academic achievement in language arts and by increasing their toolkit of resources and coping mechanisms as they struggle to deal with their grief and loss. This piece of the proposed project specifically addresses pressing needs of the target population. Second, HEAR will increase the capacity for

² CBE School Report Cards, 2010.

³ U.S. Census, 2010.

⁴ CBE School Counseling Program Data, 2012.

literacy development for babies in utero as well as infants/toddlers by focusing on pregnant and parenting teens and their babies. Third, HEAR will expand the capacity for literacy development programming at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Child Development Center (MLKCDC). HEAR will purchase Hatch technology (hardware and software) for use in two MLKCDC preschool classrooms. Third, HEAR will expand the capacity for literacy development programming in two CBE preschool classrooms in the same ways noted for the MLKCDC. The youth literacy team high-schoolers paired with MLKCDC preschoolers will contribute to improved literacy development. Fourth, HEAR will increase the capacity of Volunteers of America (VOA) to connect reentry fathers on probation with their very young children through a reading program, which will increase literacy skills for both fathers and their children, while supporting family reunification efforts that strengthen relationships between fathers and children.

All the strategies selected for implementation with this program will further demonstrate the effectiveness of proven methods for improving literacy for adults, adolescents, and very young children. Some are more innovative than others, while all are built on evidence-based practices. Examples of key strategies that might be considered promising new strategies, and that offer alternatives to practices already implemented by SBYS and partners are 1) strengthening the parent-child bond while enhancing literacy skills for pregnant and parenting teens and their babies; 2) creating a mechanism by means of which reentry fathers on probation, who are unable to tuck their children into bed at night, can record themselves reading bedtime stories for their little ones and have the recording played to the children before they go to sleep at night (thereby increasing literacy skills for both father and child); 3) utilizing literacy-based strategies that include reading and writing (journaling) to support recovery for adolescents struggling with grief

and loss; and 4) providing preschoolers with cutting edge technology that supports literacy skills development to increase reading-readiness when they enter kindergarten.

(b) Quality of the Project Design

Goals and Objectives

The goal of HEAR is to improve literacy skills for high-need very young children (infants, toddlers, preschoolers), adolescents in grades 9-12, and adult fathers of young children through the implementation of both proven and innovative approaches to strengthening language development, reading, and writing. HEAR will focus on achieving the following objectives:

- 1) To increase the level of engagement of adolescent pregnant mothers in literacy-related activities proven to impact the unborn child.
- 2) To improve language skills for participating very young children.
- 3) To improve language arts proficiency for participating high school students.
- 4) To improve school-readiness for participating incoming three- and four-year-olds, particularly in the areas of language, literacy, and technology.
- 5) To support attachment, bonding, and communication between participating adolescent parents and their very young children.
- 6) To facilitate the opportunity for fathers on probation living in a VOA halfway house to participate more in the language learning of their very young children.
- 7) To utilize literacy learning activities to address grief and loss experienced by participating adolescents.
- 8) To increase knowledge of early childhood development, including language acquisition, early literacy, and school-readiness, for: (a) adolescent parents, (b) high school students

working with and mentoring very young children, and (c) professional early childhood educators in HEAR classrooms.

A discussion of the specific research-proven strategies, approaches, and activities that we will implement to support the achievement of these objectives appears below under *Quality of the Project Services*. Refer to *Quality of the Project Evaluation* for clearly specified and measureable outcomes.

Coordination with Similar Efforts

HEAR will fit into a full spectrum of related activities, initiatives, and grant-funded projects underway in the Camden schools. Many teen parents at Camden High and Woodrow Wilson High participate in SBYS's state-funded Parent Linking Project-Partners in Parenting (PLP-PIP) Program, funded by the State of New Jersey. The MLKCDC, a community-based program, will collaborate with SBYS on HEAR, which we will implement in two MLKCDC preschool classrooms. Children aging out of the MLKCDC usually enter CBE kindergartens. The proposed program is consistent with the recently developed New Jersey State standards for infant/toddler care and the New Jersey Department of Education's core standards for preschool and high school (level 9-12) classrooms as well as the New Jersey Department of Children and Families' protective factors and prevention standards for strengthening families. CBE SBYS is presently implementing an Integrating Schools and Mental Health Systems (ISMHS) Grant received from the U.S. Department of Education to build capacity, improve cross-systems coordination, and better educate the community about mental health issues and services. Thus, we will leverage local, state, and federal resources to support HEAR.

Part of a Comprehensive Effort to Improve Teaching and Learning

HEAR includes a substantial professional development component, discussed below under *Professional Development*. Those high school students who will participate in HEAR will benefit from the program's coordination with teaching and learning improvement activities taking place through the English Department at the "underperforming" Woodrow Wilson High and at the "persistently underperforming" Camden High (in turnaround mode through a NJ SIG). Efforts to improve teaching practices support an expectation that CBE teachers will increase their ability to fully prepare high school students to meet rigorous academic standards. HEAR also seeks to increase school-readiness for incoming kindergarteners as part of the early childhood component. School-readiness and success in the early grades provides the foundation for later academic achievement. Professional development for early childhood educators and training for high-schoolers working in participating Pre-K classrooms will have a positive impact on the whole learning experience for the high-schoolers, the preschoolers, and their teachers.

Currently, CBE teachers focus intensely on teaching students what they need to know to pass rigorous academic standard tests set forth by the state (in alignment with NCLB). The proposed project will add value to this education process by contributing to the improvement of instruction in language arts and by strengthening students' literacy skills. Some of this will take place through exposure to new technology, such as e-readers for high-schoolers and Hatch computers for very young children. (See below under *Quality of the Project Services* for further discussion of the technology component.)

Performance Feedback for Continuous Improvement

SBYS will form an advisory committee for HEAR. This group will include representation from all key stakeholders, such as SBYS administrators, teachers at participating high schools, early childhood educators, parenting teens in PLP-PIP, and representation from

collaborative partners, including MLKCDC, Volunteers of America (VOA), Center for Family Services (CFS), and the Camden Board of Education Early Childhood Program. SBYS will invite other members to join as appropriate. The two project coordinators and the evaluator will submit quarterly reports to the advisory committee and SBYS management team, who will review the reports and use them for quality control and continuous program adjustment as described below under *Quality of the Project Evaluation*.

(c) Quality of the Project Services

CBE meets the Absolute Priority as a high-need LEA (and all program activities will take place within the attendance boundaries of CBE); plus the proposed program will utilize approaches to literacy learning that include book distribution, childhood literacy activities, and evidence-based strategies that are supported by scientifically valid research. Talking to, reading to, and singing to the unborn child to positively impact later language development is an innovative practice and we will utilize this evidence-based strategy to improve literacy skills for very young children and their parents.⁵ The high school level component of HEAR will take place at Woodrow Wilson High, which is a low-achieving school, and Camden High, which is a persistently low-achieving school in turnaround mode. (Priority 1.) HEAR includes a substantial technology component. (Priority 2.) The early childhood component is designed to improve early learning outcomes (for children 0-5), and will be conducted in the PLP-PIP centers for infants/toddlers at each of the two high schools and in four Pre-K classrooms in the CBE service area (i.e., two CBE Pre-K classrooms and two operated by the MLKCDC in the community). (Priority 3.) HEAR will include the following evidence-based strategies to improve literacy.

⁵ Sovilj, Mirjana, *Prenatal Bases of Development of Speech and Language and Prenatal Stimulation*, 2011.

Teaching Pregnant Teen Moms about Communicating with Their Unborn Child

Prenatal stimulation of the unborn child is a growing field of study. Teaching all mothers, but especially mothers of babies who are at risk (such as occurs with teen pregnancy) about the impact of their communication with their baby in utero is of critical importance, and is often overlooked by prenatal programs. This is unfortunate since research shows that when parents sing and talk to their child in utero, the child has a significant head start in developing strong language and communication skills early in childhood that last throughout life.⁶ We feel that this is so important to the language development of very young children that we have selected this feature of HEAR as our innovative component that is supported by scientifically-based research. We have attached Mirjana Sovilj's *Prenatal Bases of Development of Speech and Language and Prenatal Stimulation* (2011). Sovilj provides evidence from a body of research confirming the impact of prenatal literacy-related activities on the language skills and communication skills development of the unborn child; activities such as singing to, talking to, and reading aloud to the fetus have a measurable impact. Sovilj writes: "comprehensive researches in the area of assessment of the influence of prenatal stimulation of the development of a child indicate that in stimulated children, compared to those who were not stimulated, the following develop faster and in greater scope: language 38%, memory 47%, social intelligence 51%, reasoning 82%."

As part of HEAR, teachers in PLP-PIP will educate pregnant teens (and the expectant fathers) about the importance of communicating with their baby even before s/he is born. This will prepare these parents to build healthy relationships with their children and start them in the

⁶*Alliance for Excellent Education*, "Reading for the 21st Century: Adolescent Literacy Teaching and Learning Strategies," Issue Brief, January 2004.

habit of reading and singing to their children from before birth. When teen parents read to their unborn children, it improves the literacy and language skills of the parents as well.

Book Distribution

Family literacy activities (described below under Childhood Literacy Activities) will include book giveaways that will take place when groups meet during regularly scheduled times. Groups will include parents and their very young children and they will meet at the two PLP-PIP infant/toddler centers and in the four participating preschool classrooms. High school students in the program will participate in field trips to the local bookstore and library, where they will have the opportunity to peruse both picture books for very young children as well as books of interest to young adults. Book-buying advisory groups that include students will compile lists of suggested books in both age-ranges (Pre-K and 9-12) for HEAR to purchase for the giveaways. Families will select books (from those purchased) at the book distributions. Teachers and school librarians will participate on the book-buying advisory groups and will attend the field trips to provide guidance and assistance to students suggesting giveaway books. These teachers and librarians will make the final choices about books to buy. Additionally, students participating in the two Grief and Loss Groups will receive their own personal copy (to keep) of a selected book and a blank journal (to write in). This selection will be made by the Grief and Loss therapist facilitating the group. The 60 preschoolers in the program will each receive eight books to keep during the course of the program implementation. Children with fathers in the VOA reentry fathers read-aloud program will receive five books during the course of the year to go along with the CD of their father reading the book aloud.

Childhood Literacy Activities (Including Technology)

HEAR will include many activities that improve literacy skills for very young children while at the same time improving family communication and the connection between parents and children. Teen parents of infants/toddlers in PLP-PIP will participate with their youngsters in singing, lap games, read-alouds, rhymes, finger-playing, and other evidence-based activities that strengthen cognitive development and language acquisition skills for very young children. Parents and early childhood educators will discuss the importance of self-talk, which refers to the way in which caregivers and parents narrate to infants/toddlers about what they're experiencing, for instance, "Now we're going to change your diaper, here we go, up on the table, look at this duck...." Self-talk is a fundamental building block of literacy skills development for very young children.⁷ Parents and early childhood educators will focus on fostering comprehensive communication and language development skills, including listening and speaking, recognizing facial cues, and verbalizing needs, as well as reading and writing. All these evidence-based strategies support efforts to improve early learning outcomes. (Priority 3.)

SBYS will use technology to increase school-readiness and literacy skills. (Priority 2.) E-readers will be introduced to preschoolers (age 3-5), who will use them to become familiar with accessing books electronically. SBYS will purchase a library of classic age-appropriate e-books for the e-readers so that the preschoolers have a variety of choices.⁸ Many of these e-books will also be made available in print book form in the libraries in the classrooms. Each of the four participating preschool classrooms will receive one Hatch computer system. Research shows the

⁷ Marleke van Heugten and Elizabeth K. Johnson, "Infants Exposed to Fluent Natural Speech Succeed at Cross-Gender Word Recognition," *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, Vol. 55, 554-560, April 2012.

⁸ Michael Cohen Group & USDOE, *Young Children, Apps & iPad*, 2011.

benefits of using touch-screen interactive technology (e.g., the Hatch mobile system) to strengthen literacy skills for young children. These new technologies provide customization and differentiated instruction to meet children's unique needs at all learning levels, including Pre-K,⁹ and are particularly effective in improving education outcomes for socio-economically disadvantaged children,¹⁰ such as most of those served by CBE. A recent study of use of iPod Touch devices by young children found that young children gained in vocabulary and phonological awareness after accessing educational content on mobile devices.¹¹

We will provide a summer reading program for our teen parents and their children that includes two family nights and four field trips to the public library to check out books. The family nights will encourage our young parents to read aloud to their children over the summer. The field trips to the library will reinforce and support reading aloud by providing an opportunity for children and their teen parents to check books out of the library.

Motivating Students in Grades 9-12 to Read (Including Technology)

High school students at Camden High and Woodrow Wilson High who will participate in HEAR include teen parents (both girls and boys) in PLP-PIP, pregnant teens, and teens who will serve as youth literacy team members. These youth literacy team members will learn how to provide literacy-based activities (primarily reading aloud) to preschool partners with whom they

⁹ Shuler, C., *Pockets of potential: Using mobile technologies to promote children's learning*, The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop, 2009.

¹⁰ Arnold, D. H., & Doctoroff, G. L., The early education of socioeconomically disadvantaged children, *Annual Review of Psychology* (54, 517-545), 2003.

¹¹ Chiong, C., & Shuler, C., *Learning: Is there an app for that?* The Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop, 2010.

will be paired. HEAR will include teens from two selected English classrooms, one at each of the two high schools. Early childhood educators teaching in HEAR classrooms will train youth literacy team members and will develop activities for them to engage in with their preschool partners that support language acquisition, literacy, and kindergarten-readiness. Each youth assistant will be paired with an individual assigned preschool partner. Parenting teens will also engage in developmentally appropriate literacy activities with their own children. These literacy activities will strengthen language arts skills and motivation to read for both the teen participants and the very young children.¹²

HEAR will include a book distribution to the high school students. Books on early childhood development will be among those available for the distribution to teen parents. The book distributions, which will offer both books and gift certificates for the purchase of books (of the individual's choice) at a local bookstore, will further increase motivation to read. HEAR will establish forums for "booktalking" so that participating students share books they liked with their peers and make recommendations to one another. This will build excitement about books and encourage students to read books together and to discuss them. Field trips to the bookstore and the public library will help students identify books they want to read and books they wish to recommend for the book distributions and for purchase by the high school libraries. Twice a year, older students will go to the bookstore or library with their preschool partners.

CBE will utilize the district's TV station to afford youth literacy team members the opportunity to describe and show the literacy skills development activities they are doing with their preschool partners. They will demonstrate literacy activities, such as read-alouds. We will

¹² Colorado Department of Education Center for At-Risk Education, *The Family Literacy Program Model*, 2005.

televise booktalks as well so that adolescents can recommend books they have read to their peers and give descriptions of what they like (or don't like) about these books.

Program activities for participating high school students will include a technology component with the purchase of e-readers and CD players. (Priority 2.) All teen participants will have access to an e-reader and a library of e-books to choose from. This will increase motivation since today's adolescents frequently feel more at home reading on an electronic device than from a physical book.¹³ Program participants will experience both styles of reading. Additionally, HEAR will make books available in audiobook format. Many teachers use the audiobook format in conjunction with the actual book to make it possible for students with below-grade literacy levels and/or reading/learning disabilities to keep pace with their peers as a group reads a book together. Furthermore, students with young adult reading interests who lack reading skills can utilize the audiobook format to tackle books that meet their interest level but exceed their literacy level. By following an audiobook along in the actual book, students improve literacy skills such as visual-auditory coordination (with recognition of visual and auditory likenesses and differences), reading comprehension, left-to-right progression skills, and other skills that contribute to literacy proficiency. Furthermore, the excitement of participating in listening to an audiobook with classmates increases the motivation to read.

Grief and Loss Groups

In collaboration with CFS, SBYS has formed Grief and Loss Groups (for students attending the two targeted high schools) who have experienced the loss of a loved one to community violence. During the first half of 2012 alone, more than a dozen violent deaths of CBE students have occurred. High crime rates (for both violent and nonviolent crimes) in

¹³ Project Tomorrow, *Speak Up National Research Project*, 2011.

Camden also disrupt families through the incarceration of family members, which causes the offender to be absent from the family. Through HEAR, we will form a specific Grief and Loss Group at each of the two participating high schools for students who have recently lost a family member, friend, or other loved one to community violence. A grief and loss therapeutic services specialist, who will incorporate reading and journaling into the group, will facilitate these two groups. The proposed program will add another dimension to these groups by providing literacy-rich activities that support the healing process in conjunction with language arts learning. HEAR will establish a library of books about coping with loss, and the therapist will encourage group participants to check books out of this library. Each member of a Grief and Loss Group will receive a book on coping with grief and loss (selected by the therapist) and a journal as part of the HEAR book distribution component. Group members will read the book together and discuss it. They will write in the journal about their journey through the process of coping with their loss. Group participants will discover the value of reading and writing in helping individuals to cope with grief and recover from loss. This real-life application of language arts skills reinforces the concept that reading and writing can make a difference in the quality of our lives and that books are tools we can use to help us through difficult times.

Dads on Probation Read-Aloud Program in Collaboration with VOA

In collaboration with Volunteers of America (VOA), SBYS will create a program that offers fathers on probation, who are living in VOA halfway houses and are in the process of reentry from prison, the opportunity to record themselves reading aloud from developmentally appropriate picture books for their children. HEAR will work with VOA to provide these recordings to the very young children so that they can listen to their absent father read to them before bed at night. HEAR will purchase a traveling preschool library to facilitate this

component of the program. Many of these fathers have a low literacy level and will receive adult literacy education to assist them with their participation in the program so that they can successfully read the books to their children. The children will receive the book and the recording of their father reading it aloud. The mothers (or co-parent) will receive assistance from HEAR staff to help them establish bedtime reading routines and to play the recordings to their children while following in the books. Fathers will make reading aloud a part of their visitation with their children. To qualify for the program, fathers must have a three- or four-year-old child and the mother (or co-parent) must agree to participation. This piece of the program will not only improve literacy skills for parents and children, but will also support family reunification activities with reentry fathers and increase motivation for fathers to meet the requirements of their probation and return to their family. This aspect of HEAR will support efforts at improving early learning outcomes (Priority 3).

Training for ECE Professionals and Youth Literacy Team

HEAR will offer professional development opportunities to early childhood educators working in the PLP-PIP infant/toddler centers and the participating Pre-K classrooms. The professional development plan is discussed below under *Professional Development*. HEAR will also provide training to the youth literacy team, i.e., the teens who partner with preschoolers to read aloud and engage in other literacy-related activities.

Equal Access for Traditionally Underrepresented Groups

The demographics of Camden, and consequently the populations served in the schools included in the proposed project, will automatically ensure equal access and treatment for a number of traditionally underrepresented groups. Some of these groups that will be heavily represented among participants in the program are African Americans, Latinos, pregnant and

parenting teens, socio-economically disadvantaged children and youth, adolescent students with learning disabilities that impact their ability to read, and fathers on probation who are transitioning from prison back into the world outside. HEAR will serve all of these groups, which are particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of low literacy.

Services Appropriate to the Needs

SBYS and partners designed the program to address the specific needs of the population served by the Camden schools and community partners. With a high teen pregnancy rate in Camden (nearly 10% of all births are to girls age 10-19),¹⁴ SBYS seeks to meet the needs of teen parents and their very young children to promote positive academic outcomes. For this reason, HEAR will focus on PLP-PIP participants at the two large comprehensive high schools, where academic failure rates are the highest in the district. PLP-PIP is a SBYS program.

The inclusion of programming specifically designed to support adolescent students participating in Grief and Loss Groups recognizes the negative impact of the high level of community violence in Camden's most distressed neighborhoods, including the high incidence of youth murdered and family members absent as a result of arrest. This aspect of HEAR responds to the real needs of the recipients of program services. Another example of how the program responds to the needs of participants is the use of audiobooks in conjunction with print books to address learning needs of youth struggling with learning disabilities and low literacy.

HEAR seeks to apply creative approaches in response to the real-life situations of the very young children and adolescents it will serve. With this in mind, we have designed HEAR to achieve multiple outcomes, many of which are broader than the literacy skills improvement so fundamental to the proposed program. SBYS anticipates that the program will not only result in a

¹⁴ *Kids Count New Jersey*, 2008 (most recent data available).

host of positive learning outcomes, but will also result in emotional wellbeing outcomes through such desired ancillary results as 1) improvement in parent-child relationships (bonding/attachment), school-home relationships, and caregiver-child-family relationships; 2) improvement in self-esteem and positive parenting skills for teens; and 3) increased resiliency for adolescents suffering from grief and loss.

Professional Development

SBYS recognizes the importance of sustained, ongoing professional development to the success of HEAR. Professional development for teachers at the high school level, early childhood educators, and the youth literacy team will continue throughout the life of the grant-funded program. Professional development topics and areas of study will be integrated with one another so that no content is learned in isolation and all professional development activities are tied to one another. SBYS will develop a complete professional development plan and schedule during the first two months of program implementation with input from the program's advisory committee. The HEAR professional development component will include the following topics:

- HEAR literacy learning strategies and innovations overview.
- Improving literacy learning and language acquisition for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers (for early childhood educators and teen parents).
- The impact of language-related activities on the development of the unborn child.
- Use of the e-reader as a teaching tool with both preschoolers and high-schoolers.
- Use of the Hatch mobile unit technology to teach literacy skills to preschoolers.
- New Jersey Core Standards for language arts proficiency.
- New Jersey Department of Children and Families' prevention standards and protective factors for strengthening families.

- Improving literacy education practices for adolescents (for PLP-PIP teachers and other high school teachers working with program participants).
- Teaching adult literacy (for VOA partner staff) to facilitate reentry fathers with low literacy levels reading aloud on recordings for their children.
- Basics of literacy learning for very young children provided to the youth literacy team.

To provide comprehensive training on the topics offered through the program, SBYS will partner with trainers and facilitators drawn from the local early childhood development community as well as experts in adolescent development, in order to design and deliver professional development that is of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration. In-service training for the youth literacy team will take place in the context of their English classes as well as during afterschool groups. For reentry fathers participating in the VOA read-aloud component, we will offer training (for them and whomever is co-parenting their child with them) twice a month onsite at the VOA halfway houses where they live. Training will continue for the duration of the grant-funded program (including throughout the summer).

(d) Adequacy of Resources

Program costs include salaries for adequate staff to support the program for two years, books for distribution (and journals for the Grief and Loss Groups), technology (e-readers and Hatch mobile systems), e-books, audiobooks, CD players for the audiobooks and the reentry fathers read-aloud component, the therapist/facilitator for grief and loss groups, field trip expenses, evaluation costs, and the cost to subcontract to VOA to manage the fathers reading program. All expenditures directly correspond to the implementation plan for the program. Refer to the *Budget Justification Narrative* for a detailed breakdown of costs.

The budget adequately supports the program as designed. HEAR seeks to serve 10 pregnant teens as well as 30 teen parents and their infants/toddlers (30 children) in PLP-PIP during each year of the program. Additionally, the program will serve one classroom of high school English students at each of the two schools (a total of 60 students). The program will include children in four preschool classrooms (two at CBE and two at MLKCDC), for a total of approximately 60 preschoolers. Two Grief and Loss Groups (one at each high school) will be conducted each year, with 12 students in each group, for a total of 24. Each year, the program will serve 15 reentry fathers living in a VOA halfway house and their preschool child (15 three- and four-year-olds). Thus, each year the program will directly serve an estimated 244 participants and will indirectly serve their families, broadening the reach of beneficial program activities. This represents an excellent return on investment.

(e) Quality of the Management Plan

SBYS Project Manager Andrea Aumaitre will oversee the program, providing grant administration with support from the CBE fiscal department for oversight of fiscal accountability. Ms. Aumaitre reports directly to the Camden Board of Education, which meets monthly. Ms. Aumaitre will dedicate 10% of her time to HEAR. HEAR will employ one fulltime project coordinator for activities with high school students and one fulltime project coordinator for activities with very young children. These two 100% positions will be adequate to carry the implementation of the program. HEAR will hire a fulltime clerk to provide administrative support to the two coordinators. Refer to Ms. Aumaitre's attached resume as well as the attached job descriptions for details about adequacy of staff qualifications to meet the requirements of the program. The SBYS management team and the advisory committee to the program will play key roles in monitoring the progress of the program and providing direction. SBYS has an existing

presence at each of the program high schools where it provides an array of health services (including mental health). PLP-PIP is a SBYS program. SBYS has well-established collaborative relationships with CFS and VOA, who already partner with SBYS on other initiatives.

SBYS is required to go out to bid for subcontracts, but we hope to be able to subcontract with Rutgers University Education Institute (RUEI) to monitor and evaluate the program. RUEI will bid on the project and hopes to serve as the principal investigator and in this capacity will provide key evaluation functions for the program as described under *Quality of the Evaluation*. SBYS will subcontract with VOA, which administers the reentry halfway houses for men on probation, to manage the reentry fathers read-aloud component of the program.

TIMELINE

Timeframe	Tasks/Milestones	Responsibility
Month 1	CBE accepts grant. SBYS recruits advisory committee.	Ms. Aumaitre
Month 2	Job positions posted. A bid is announced for the evaluation. Advisory committee convened. Purchase technology. Begin developing detailed professional development plan.	Ms. Aumaitre
Month 3	Staff hired. Contract with evaluator. Professional development begins (continues throughout). Training for Youth Literacy Team. Hatch computers arrive and training begins. E-books purchased. Book-buying advisory group begins meeting. Recruitment for parent workshops in literacy development for children begins. Training for VOA reentry dads begins. Grief and Loss Groups convened. Pregnant high school students recruited and literacy activities begin for them.	Project Coords.

Timeframe	Tasks/Milestones	Responsibility
Month 4	First book distribution (continue monthly for the rest of the program during school months). First field trip to bookstore. Training in Hatch computers and Hatch implementation in classrooms. VOA reentry dads begin recording read-alouds for children. Parent workshops for PLP-PIP participants begin (in literacy development for infants and toddlers). First quarterly report submitted to advisory committee and Ms. Aumaitre by project coordinators. Baseline data collected/established.	Project Coords.
2 nd Quarter	Youth Literacy Teams begin meeting with their preschool partners. Family meetings held with VOA program fathers and their families. Ongoing literacy activities with pregnant and parenting teens and their children. Ongoing Grief and Loss Groups at the high schools. Ongoing programming for preschoolers with technology component. Ongoing monthly reports continue going forward from here.	Project Coords.
3 rd Quarter	Ongoing programming continues going forward from here. Field trip to bookstore. Youth Literacy Team records segments on their activities and booktalks for district TV channel.	Project Coords.
4 th Quarter	Summer programming for families occurs, including field trips and family literacy nights. Data collection for year one completed. First annual evaluation report completed.	Project Coords. Evaluator
Year 2 –	All HEAR activities continue. Books and e-books purchased.	Project Coords.

Timeframe	Tasks/Milestones	Responsibility
1-6 months	Youth Literacy Team recorded segments aired.	
Year 2 – 7-12 months	All HEAR activities continue. Data collection for qualitative measures conducted (focus groups, surveys, etc.) Final annual evaluation report completed.	Project Coords. Evaluator

Mechanisms for ensuring high-quality products and services from HEAR appear below under *Performance Feedback for Program Adjustment*.

(f) Quality of the Project Evaluation

Evaluation Methodology

As noted above, SBYS expects to subcontract with Rutgers University Education Institute (RUEI) to monitor and evaluate HEAR. The evaluation will include both quantifiable outcome measures and qualitative measures as outlined below.

HEAR Quantitative Measurable Outcomes

- 1) Each year of the program, 75% of four-year-olds participating in HEAR will show achievement of significant gains in oral language skills as measured on pre- and post-tests. Evaluation instruments will include the language arts/literacy section of the Teaching Strategies Assessment, which is a research-based assessment tool.
- 2) Each year of the program, 75% of all very young children (infants, toddlers, and preschoolers) participating in the program will show achievement of significant gains in language skills as measured on pre- and post-tests that are developmentally appropriate for the age group to which they are administered.
- 3) In year one 55% of participating eleventh-graders will meet or exceed proficiency on the language arts portion of the New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA)

and in year two 65% will meet or exceed. (Note that the average percentage of eleventh-graders meeting or exceeding proficiency on the HSPA language arts test at the two participating schools was 40% in 2011. Thus our outcome target is above the norm.)

- 4) Each year the program will facilitate the opportunity for 15 reentry fathers on probation living in a VOA halfway house to provide at least 5 recorded stories (during the course of the year) to their preschool children to listen to before bed.
- 5) To give away at least 8 age-appropriate books per year to 40 pregnant and parenting teens; to give away at least 8 age-appropriate picture books per year to 30 infants and toddlers in PLP-PIP; to give away at least 8 age-appropriate picture books per year to 60 preschoolers; to give away at least 5 age-appropriate picture books each year to 15 preschoolers with dads in the read-aloud VOA program; and to give away one relevant self-help book and a journal to 24 high school students in the two Grief and Loss Groups.

Qualitative Measures

SBYS will utilize simple surveys, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups to gather information on key qualitative measures for the evaluation. These methods will provide insight into the ability of the program to make progress toward the following objectives:

- To increase the level of engagement of adolescent pregnant mothers in literacy-related activities proven to impact the unborn child.
- To improve communication and connection between participating pregnant and parenting adolescents and their children.
- To utilize literacy learning activities to address grief and loss experienced by participating adolescents.

PLP-PIP staff will have opportunities to provide input on their observations of teen parents in the program to help inform conclusions regarding teen parent bonding and attachment with infants as well as teen parent communication and attachment with their toddlers. We will ask participating PLP-PIP teen parents to share what literacy skill-building activities they are doing with their children when they attend their weekly group meetings; and they will keep logs of what books they've read to their children. The project coordinators will conduct focus groups with the pregnant and parenting teens in PLP-PIP to determine ways in which HEAR has impacted them and their infants/toddlers. Members of the Grief and Loss Groups will have an opportunity to give feedback regarding the impact, if any, that sharing self-help books about coping with grief and loss and journaling have had on their ability to deal with their loss. The project coordinators will interview the pregnant mothers to determine whether or not they have increased literacy-based activities, such as talking to, reading to, and singing to their unborn child, as a result of participation in HEAR.

SBYS will track and measure the number of professional development activities included in the project, who participated in each of these, and how the participants rate the quality of the training received on evaluations upon completion of the professional development offering. SBYS will measure knowledge gained from participation using pre- and post-questionnaires. SBYS will conduct follow-up by facilitating focus groups to learn how high school teachers and early childhood educators utilized the information gained from professional development in the classroom. SBYS will similarly track and measure the efficacy of training in literacy activities delivery provided to pregnant and parenting teens and to the youth literacy team members who partner with preschoolers. SBYS will report these output measures to REUI so they can include them in the evaluation reports and assessments of program progress.

Performance Feedback for Program Adjustment

The advisory committee for HEAR will meet monthly for the duration of the grant-funded program period and will serve as a mechanism for ongoing performance feedback, assessment, and program improvement. This advisory committee will include representation from all key stakeholders, including program participants. SBYS Project Director Andrea Aumaitre will convene advisory committee meetings. The two project coordinators for HEAR will meet every other week with Ms. Aumaitre for the first quarter and monthly thereafter to review program implementation status and to ensure the quality of HEAR products and services. The project coordinators will submit monthly written reports on program progress to Ms. Aumaitre and they will submit quarterly written reports to the program's advisory committee. Ms. Aumaitre will ensure that RUEI receives summaries of the project coordinators' monthly reports as well as the data necessary to produce accurate and timely quarterly and annual written reports. The SBYS management team and advisory committee will review these quarterly and annual evaluation reports provided by RUEI and will make recommendations to Ms. Aumaitre for program improvement if necessary.

Should the program experience challenges in a given component of this literacy initiative, then Ms. Aumaitre will work with the project coordinators and appropriate program partners to develop an action plan for program improvement and will submit this to the advisory committee for their review. In this way, the advisory committee will monitor progress of the project; evaluation efforts will be utilized in order to enable more data-driven decision-making; and adjustments may be made to the program to maintain quality and to improve service delivery to children and families.