

Boys & Girls Clubs of America  
SPARK Early Literacy Midwest Expansion Initiative

*A. Significance*

**(1) 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**

The Boys & Girls Club of America in partnership with thirteen local Boys & Girls Clubs affiliate organizations will implement the SPARK Early Literacy Program (SPARK) at twenty elementary schools. Attachment E includes signed memoranda of understanding from all the affiliate Boys & Girls Clubs and school districts. SPARK is an innovative program designed to improve the early learning outcomes of high need students by enhancing the quality of kindergarten through third grade (K5-3<sup>rd</sup>) education in public schools who partner with the Boys & Girls Clubs affiliates.

SPARK will tackle the challenge of getting all students on grade level in reading by grade 3. This expanded version of the SPARK program is modeled on the program developed by Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee who implemented the program in response to Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) reading results which showed the district struggling compared to other state districts and a growing gap between the reading achievement of minority students and their peers. The project develops students' social, emotional, and cognitive readiness through support in three spheres, school, community and family. During the school sphere, students will be provided an intensive reading intervention through a one-on-one tutoring relationship that supports students' emotional readiness. Support will continue in the community sphere after school where students will be provided a safe, nurturing experience through project based learning which builds social interactions and cognitive skills. The family sphere will provide parents the tools needed to support their children's education.

BGCGM's Program utilizes the PALS Assessment (Phonological Awareness and Literacy Screening) – a rigorous, nationally recognized assessment tool that provides rich information for the tutors as a basis for their lesson planning. Children are given both a pre- and post-test to assess progress related to two primary objectives, *reading accuracy* and *comprehension*; and two secondary

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objectives, *spelling* and *reading words in isolation*. The pre/post test table below demonstrates the reading gains realized by SPARK participants.

### SPARK Program Results – A Demonstration of Accelerated Growth

Reading Improvement Indicators	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Pre-to-Post
	Fall 2008	Spring 2009	Comparison
% of Children <u>Reading Accurately*</u> at Grade Level	23%	84%	+263%
% of Children <u>Comprehending Grade Level Reading Material</u>	19%	75%	+295%
% Grade Level <u>Words Spelled</u> Correctly	23%	47%	+107%
% of Grade Level <u>Words Read Correctly</u> in Isolation	28%	69%	+144%

\*Accuracy is defined as 90% or more of words in a passage identified correctly

These results closely mirror gains demonstrated during previous program years. This consistency in SPARK performance speaks to the reliability of the measures as well as the efficacy of the program design and implementation.

In 2010 the BGCGM SPARK program was awarded a U.S. Department of Education Investing in Innovation (i3) grant. In this program BGCGM partnered with the University of Wisconsin, Madison to conduct a rigorous evaluation of the program employing a randomized-control design to isolate the impact of the program on student achievement. The Milwaukee Public Schools uses the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment, published by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), three times each year (in the fall, winter, and spring) as its benchmark assessment for all grade levels. Thus, the evaluation is able to use MAP results to track the impact of SPARK on student achievement.

The evaluation of the Winter 2012 program results compares the unadjusted growth on the MAP reading assessment for program participants receiving different numbers of tutoring sessions with control group students randomly selected to not receive tutoring. These numbers show that control group

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students, on average, gained 6.18 scale points on the MAP from the fall administration to the winter.

Comparatively, program participants receiving more than 19 sessions gained, on average, 35% more, showing 8.37 scale points growth. The results show that the overall impact of the program was 1.02 scale points (95% confidence interval of -.27 to 2.33), which approaches statistical significant ( $p = .12$ ).

Further, analysis of specific reading strands embedding within the MAP assessment suggests that the program may be having an impact on Phonics, Concepts of Print, and Vocabulary and Word Structures.

**(2) 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.**

SPARK represents a comprehensive approach to literacy for struggling readers by creating an integrated school, community, and family initiative to substantially improve literacy performance. The program provides a model innovative approach for both literacy activities and book distribution (absolute priority) by wrapping services around the students during school, after school and in the home so they receive the intensive support they need. The activities of each sphere individually have been proven as effective methods for increasing literacy.

Joyce L. Epstein, in a 1995 article and a 2001 book titled *School, Family, and Community Partnerships*, argued that school, family, and community are important "spheres of influence" on children's development and that a child's educational development is enhanced when these three environments work collaboratively toward shared goals. By implementing activities across six types of involvement: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration with the community, educators can help improve student achievement and experiences in school (Epstein, 2001<sup>1</sup>).

The framework of the *School Sphere* of SPARK is based on the Reading Recovery program. Reading Recovery focuses on in-school tutoring with lesson plans written, and assessments analyzed,

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by the tutors themselves. In a comparison of early literacy intervention programs, Pinnell et al found that Reading Recovery subjects performed significantly better than any other treatment and comparison group on all measures (Pinnell, Lyons, DeFord, Bryk, & Seltzer, 1994<sup>2</sup>).

The *Community Sphere* provides opportunities for students to explore reading books that are of interest to them through thematic group literature projects; literacy games and small group activities; small group read aloud and independent reading time. Research on motivation shows most students have a high self-concept about reading and when they read books of their own choosing they are likely to be more motivated, independent readers. According to Mohr (2006<sup>3</sup>) when given an opportunity to self-select, the majority of students chose books that served as windows to the world around them rather than texts with characters reflecting their gender, ethnicity, or cultural backgrounds. Students who were given a book as a reward and students who received no reward were more motivated to read than the students who received a token such as a sticker or pencil. Providing reading-related rewards such as books, more time for silent reading, and choosing books from the library sends the message that reading is valued (Marinak & Gambrel, 2008<sup>4</sup>). The ultimate goal is to create motivated, skilled readers who choose to read widely and who develop lifelong reading habits.

Research on the effects of parental involvement such as those in the *Family Sphere* has shown a consistent, positive relationship between parents' engagement in their children's education and student outcomes. Senechal's (2006<sup>5</sup>) meta-analysis of family reading activities showed that brief "skills" instruction after reading was six times more powerful than simply reading to a child.

Evaluations of family involvement in a variety of school-based programs suggest that engaging with families through home visitation is an integral aspect of early childhood development (Azzi-Lessing, 2011<sup>6</sup>). Responding to the need to increase literacy skills for young children in low-income areas, home visits are increasingly included to convey information to the families about a child's

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achievement or to share literacy practices that can be done at home. The intention is to have the families supporting the literacy practices at school and intervention programs. Developing an approach to home visitation that ensures pertinent information is shared and also empowers families to become involved in the program necessitates strategic, pragmatic and continuous refinement.

***B. Quality of the project design***

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

SPARK is an innovative program for improving early learning outcomes of students in kindergarten – 3rd grade. By improving the literacy levels of non-proficient readers the project will turn around low performing elementary schools in the identified partner districts. The project will reach these goals and objectives as documented through the performance measures by expanding the implementation of and investment in, literacy for underserved youth. The resources that will go into reaching the goals and objectives are demonstrated in the program logic model (attachment F).

***Goal:*** Demonstrate an impact on improving student growth in reading for high-need students by expanding the implementation of the SPARK Early Literacy Program.

***Objective:*** Significantly improve reading performance of participants through literacy work in 3 spheres

***Performance Measure 1:*** Teacher ratings of participating students will exhibit higher reading levels than the students in comparison groups

***Performance Measure 2:*** Students will demonstrate a greater growth than comparison group participants on the district's universal screening assessment in reading

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***Performance Measure 3:*** Participating students will be reading at grade level as determined by fourth grade standardized assessments.

***Performance Measure 4:*** The percent of students proficient and advanced at the participating schools will be greater than the district average on the reading subtest of fourth grade standardized assessments.

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

By infusing literacy education into all phases of the child's day, SPARK promotes learning through collaboration and interaction between all the involved participants. By creating and building partnerships, the SPARK program involves students, peers, teachers, tutors, and parents in the learning process. It is through these partnerships that schools, families, community-based organizations and the individuals themselves are able to increase the capacity for literacy improvement and the development of effective and meaningful literacy programming.

*Schools and school districts*-SPARK utilizes a framework for instruction using curriculum guides for school district selected curricula that document the direct connections to state standards, descriptors and district learning targets. SPARK will use each school district's Comprehensive Literacy Plan in order to delineate alignment with grade levels specific to reading and writing.

*21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers (CLC)*-BGCA has carefully selected the affiliate partners based on their participation in the U.S. Department of Education's CLC program. CLCs provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program helps students meet

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state and local student standards in core academic subjects. Community Sphere SPARK activities will be conducted within each school's CLC providing an ideal infrastructure for implementation.

Local Colleges and Universities-Local affiliates will partner with the Schools of Education at colleges and universities in their communities to recruit students working toward degrees in education to serve as SPARK tutors. This arrangement serves a dual purpose. It provides SPARK program sites with tutors whose education has prepared them for participating in the education of young people and provides experience to those college students in working with underserved youth.

AmeriCorps-The SPARK program initiated by Boys & Girls Clubs of Milwaukee relies heavily on funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service's AmeriCorps program to provide a stipend and education award to college students serving as SPARK tutors. After successful implementation of a SPARK program, local affiliates will be encouraged to apply for AmeriCorps funding for the SPARK program as a means to sustain it after Innovative Approaches to literacy funding has expired.

**(3) 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.**

The project will provide a "wrap-around" approach to early literacy instruction with school-community-family partnerships that create an environment conducive to collaboration.

The three spheres of wrap-around support are described below.

The *School Sphere*: Each child in kindergarten through grade 3 will participate in an early literacy benchmark assessment in the fall. The benchmark assessment is a standardized assessment that will be administered three times per year and will serve as the district's universal

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screening measure to identify children in need of intervention. The assessment will serve as the tool for identification of students targeted for SPARK. Since the assessment is administered multiple times throughout the year it will also be used to inform instruction; to measure students' responses to school-based interventions; and to provide information to monitor and evaluate program performance.

There will be an average of 45 students identified for participation each year in each participating school. Identified students will receive individual tutoring sessions three times each week thereby providing an additional literacy intervention for struggling students during the day school. About eight tutors will be provided at each site. A licensed teacher will serve as a site coordinator at each school and will oversee the tutoring, provide tutor training, model lessons and provide tutor support as needed. Each tutoring session will be arranged around a lesson plan that includes the following six activities:

1a. Familiar Activity/ Word Play (1 minute) – The lesson begins with a warm-up where the student and tutor review a concept that is familiar to the student.

1b. Running Record (replaces 1a. every 6 sessions for ~5 minutes) – In the running record exercise the student reads a passage to the instructor who notes the miscues the student makes. The record is then scored to determine student progress.

2. Vocabulary Instruction (5 minutes) - Vocabulary development is highly correlated to successful reading comprehension (Pressley, 2000<sup>7</sup>; Stanovich, 1986<sup>8</sup>). Explicit and direct vocabulary instruction will allow students to see and use words multiple times in multiple contexts.

3. Writing (~9 minutes) – Writing exercises are used to further develop students' language skills and enrich their vocabularies.

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4. Guided Instruction (10 minutes) – As students use RAZ-Kids, an on-line supplemental reading program, in the classroom, tutors will select books from Reading A to Z (the parent program for RAZ-Kids) and other sources which align to the current reading level of the student. These books will serve as the context for guided instruction which helps the students acquire reading strategies, such as the use of context clues, letter and sound knowledge, and syntax or word structure. Books from Reading A to Z can and will be duplicated for students to use at home.

5. Tutor Read Aloud (1 minute) – Each session ends with the tutors reading aloud a passage or poem to model fluency, placing special emphasis on inflection, character voice and proper cadence.

The ***Community Sphere***: Students participating in tutoring during the school day will also participate in a one hour after-school literacy sessions 3 times per week provided by the site coordinator and tutors. The sessions will be conducted within each school's after school Community Learning Center (CLC) providing an ideal infrastructure for implementation. After-school literacy sessions provide a less formal setting than in-school sessions and include:

1. Student interest surveys to select book and activities based on students' interests
2. Group projects that involve comprehension and vocabulary of literature, exploration of ideas presented in literature, extension of literature, integration of the arts and writing, presentations
3. Literacy games and small group activities that increase phonemic awareness
4. A print-rich environment conducive to early literacy
5. Individual and small group read-alouds structured around themes
6. Independent reading time

The ***Family Sphere***: The family outreach component emphasizes keeping families engaged and involved in their children's reading progress. Project staff will engage the families

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of participants and provide convenient opportunities for parental involvement. Specific strategies for family involvement include:

1. A parent from the school will be hired to serve as a Family Literacy Partner who will be a liaison to the families. One volunteer parent from each grade level K5 – 3rd grade will work with the Family Literacy Partner in connecting with parents. The Family Literacy Partner will work with teachers, site coordinators, and tutors to ensure that parents receive information on their child's progress and how best to support their child's achievement.
2. Twice monthly contact with parents regarding student progress. Contact will be made in a variety of ways and with an emphasis on supporting the parent in helping their child's literacy growth. More frequent contact will take place as needed for students that are lacking attendance in the school or community sphere or parents that request more support.
3. Parent/family literacy books, print materials and activities that actively engage parents and their child in literacy will be provided to families at family events, home visits or during other family contacts.
4. My Home Library Program will provide SPARK participants with books each month that they keep at home. Activity sheets are also sent home with students and they are encouraged to read the books and complete the activity sheets with their families.
5. Monthly family events, designed to engage families in improving student achievement, will be developed collaboratively at each site with a team of parents led by the Family Literacy Partner. Three times per year students will present projects developed during the community sphere.

Research has proven that reading scores of disadvantaged students decline more over the summer months than those of their more affluent peers. While continuous instruction would be ideal, it is not feasible given current school calendars. It is imperative; therefore, that some form

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of instruction continues June-August and Boys & Girls Clubs summer programming is uniquely situated to provide such enrichment.

The model for Summer SPARK is, by necessity, different from the school-year model. For example, during the summer months SPARK trained staff and tutors will provide appropriate academic content before, during and after field trips. A selection of appropriate reading material will be chosen to augment the knowledge gained from field trips, including appropriate vocabulary, and will be read in advance so children have the richest experiences possible. Additionally, new vocabulary words will be selected weekly and integrated into all aspects of programming.

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

Because SPARK combines empirically-validated literacy strategies in a novel way, it will be important to document the implementation of the program and feed this information back into program administrators so that course-corrections can be made to the program, to determine the most successful implementation strategy. Multiple areas will be included in a formative assessments related to the appropriateness of staff selection and training, school-context factors related to the fidelity of implementation, and the adequacy of staff training in the implementation of the research protocol.

The primary tools of the assessment will be attendance tracking, the assessments built into the A to Z on-line curriculum, notes and records maintained by parent liaisons, direct observations of program components, and a series of parent, teacher, instructor, and principal surveys. The experience of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee has shown that student attendance is the primary factor program effectiveness. This is further evidenced by the winter

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2012 program evaluation described in section A.1. The program coordinator will review affiliate attendance records on a weekly basis. If a site demonstrates that participant attendance is negatively affecting a program the coordinator will provide emergency assistance up to and including a site visit in order to resolve issues causing poor attendance.

*C. Quality of the project services*

**(1) The quality and sufficiency of strategies for ensuring equal access and treatment for eligible project participants who are staff of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. (10 points)**

The mechanism that SPARK uses to recruit students and families into the program is the same that has been successfully used in the program by BGCGM. This includes a Program Director and a Site Coordinator at each school who alert school administration the opportunity. They in turn build consensus for the program within the ranks of classroom teachers. Students are selected based on the results of school district administered formative assessments. Students scoring below grade level proficiency on those assessments are deemed eligible to participate in the program. Thus personal perception and bias are eliminated from the participant selection process.

BGCA carefully selected the partner organizations to ensure that underserved youth are the primary population to receive treatment through SPARK. Through the IAL eligibility criteria, all participating affiliates represent school districts that are considered high need (no less than 25% poverty). A deeper look into the demographic data of the communities to be served by the SPARK program indicate that that the 13 school districts served have a combined average poverty rate of 38% with only two districts (Rockford, IL and South Bend, IN) having a poverty

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rate below 30%. The average percentage of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch is 76.1% with four districts (Ford Heights, IL, Laraway, IL, Duquesne, PA, Brooklyn, IL) having free and reduced rates above 90%. The districts are also overwhelmingly minority with an average rate of non-white students at 78.4%. Two districts are 100% minority (Ford Heights, IL and Brooklyn, IL). The percent of 4th graders scoring proficient or above in reading according to state-defined proficiency standards in fourth grade is below state averages for all but two districts in the partnership. Two districts have reading proficiency rates below 20% (Duquesne, PA, Brooklyn, IL).

**(2) 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.**

A student that is not reading on grade level by grade 3 has less chance of graduating from high school. Law enforcement is beginning to realize that 78% of juvenile crime is committed by high school dropouts. But these dropouts can be predicted with 70% accuracy by third grade, based on reading ability, and prior retention (The Children's Reading Foundation<sup>9</sup>; National Research Council, 1998<sup>10</sup>; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985<sup>11</sup>; Francis, Shaywitz, Stuebing, Shaywitz, & Fletcher, 1996<sup>12</sup>). The activities of the SPARK program are designed to mitigate these circumstances by addressing four barriers to literacy:

Lack of time spent on literacy – on average, each SPARK participant will receive over 30 hours of individual or small group reading instruction from SPARK tutors. Each participant can also benefit from reading time with a family member through the SPARK Home Library Program.

Lack of a print rich environment – SPARK participants will be surrounded by print in the SPARK rooms, dedicated spaces designed just for this program. The rooms feature colorful literacy-focused posters, lots of books, fun literacy manipulatives (such as magnetic letters) and

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comfortable furniture. In addition, participants will receive books to start their own personal libraries through a variety of channels, including the SPARK Home Library Program.

Lack of student engagement in literacy activities – participants will be actively engaged in literacy activities during school, after school, and in the home. SPARK tutors will focus on providing fun literacy activities for students (such as Leapster digital learning systems, creative group literacy games, and literacy-focused art projects) to keep the program engaging and innovative.

Lack of parental involvement – a major focus of this program will be on keeping parents engaged and involved in their children’s reading progress. To that end, at all sites parents receive phone calls, letters home and, if possible, home visits to remind them of upcoming SPARK events and to keep them apprised of their children’s progress. They will also be engaged through the Home Library Program.

**(3) 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. (5 points)**

SPARK training utilizes a number of best practices to provide all staff the appropriate knowledge and skills to be effective. The training program was developed at BGCGM with the assistance of Ruth Short, Ph.D. of the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee. Dr. Short was instrumental in the development of the SPARK program model has more than 20 years experience in designing, managing and evaluating literacy programs. At the point notice of funding is received, affiliate Clubs will recruit and hire Site Coordinators. Coordinators will visit the Milwaukee Clubs for a multi-day train the trainer session where they will receive all training that they will facilitate for SPARK staff upon return to their Club. Each Site Coordinator will be

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a certified teacher, well qualified to offer on-site, on-going tutoring assistance to staff. The training is facilitated jointly by the BGCA Program Coordinator, Director of Training and Professional Development and the evaluation team. Training includes:

***Tutor Training-Education and effective tutoring*** (8 hours) The training was developed by BGCGM in collaboration with Ruth Short, Ph.D. The training incorporated "Balanced Literacy" into effective tutoring practices. *Lesson plan training* (6 hours)-SPARK uses a very structured lesson plan for each lesson. Staff are trained to write and use the lesson plan. Topics covered in these trainings include writing and implementing the SPARK lesson plan, active learning, student behavior management, planning and time management and educational games.

*Vocabulary training* (3 hours)-This training stresses the importance of vocabulary development and how it impacts student learning. *Reading comprehension training* (3 hours)-Staff are taught how to improve SPARK students' reading comprehension. The levels of comprehension are taught along with ideas to help students to better understand what they are reading. *Active learning* (3 hours)-This training shows staff how to have fun with the students while they learn. Cooperative and experiential learning is addressed. *After school training* (2 hours)-All staff who work with the students after school attend this training. Topics covered include: Safety, active learning, conflict resolution, organized play, student management, planning, reflecting *Writing* (2 hours)-Staff are taught how to improve their students' writing skills. They learn a variety of strategies to use to get students excited and interested in writing.

***Family Literacy Partner Training-Family Literacy Training*** (6 sessions) These sessions focus on stages of language development, aiding children and developing reading skills, positive reinforcement strategies for parents, equipping parents to be the educator for their children, incorporating reading in all daily activities, understanding reading levels in running records and

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wordplay and high frequency words. *Home Visit Training* which focuses on cultural sensitivity, building relationships, safety training and mandated reporting.

The sites coordinators will then visit an Existing BGCGM SPARK site where they will put what they learn into practice in an experiential learning exercise by acting as a tutor during live School Sphere tutoring sessions, leading a Community Sphere after-school session and shadowing a Family Literacy Partner as they interact with participants' parents.

Upon return to their Clubs, the site coordinators will be responsible for hiring and coordinating the training of SPARK tutors and family literacy partners using what they have learned at the multi-day training. The initial training will be facilitated by webinar or Skype. Led by the BGCA department of Training and Professional Development with assistance from the evaluation team it will focus on fidelity of training and program implementation.

The need for and subject of ongoing professional development will be facilitated through regular review of tutor observations conducted by site coordinators at affiliate sites. Using the tutor observations (described in section E.3.) site coordinators conduct a formal evaluation of tutoring sessions which provides rich information about the strengths and deficiencies of each tutor. Each tutor is observed no less than once each month (an average of two observations each week at each affiliate site) and observation forms are forwarded to the BGCA program coordinator each week for review. Review of the observations by the program coordinator will prompt site specific professional development in identified areas of need.

***D. Adequacy of resources***

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

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As described in detail above the SPARK program is a wrap around program that provides participants literacy programming in every aspect of their lives. The comprehensive and intensive nature of the intervention has demonstrated promising results. Using a randomized control design, evaluation of the Milwaukee SPARK program funded through i3 has found that program participants receiving more than 19 sessions gained, on average, 35% more scale point growth on a standardized test than students who did not participate. The evaluation also showed that the program may be having an impact on Phonics, Concepts of Print, and Vocabulary and Word Structures. The total cost of the program as designed is [REDACTED]. When the extent of the intervention is considered the project team feels this is very reasonable when the long term goals and potential effect of SPARK is considered.

**(2) 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.**

The SPARK program cost per participant in the described project is [REDACTED] to serve 900 students. After a successful two year implementation period affiliate partners will have the ability to maintain a SPARK program without the administration and oversight provided by BGCA. When those costs are removed from the program budget the cost of SPARK is reduced to approximately [REDACTED] per student per year. This represents very reasonable costs when one considers the annual per student expenditures of the participating school districts ([REDACTED] per student on average) and the expected benefits as described above.

***E. Quality of the management plan***

**(1) 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 for accomplishing project tasks.**

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Management of the project will be the direct responsibility of the program coordinator to be hired by BGCA. The coordinator will work with local affiliate clubs and school districts to ensure SPARK services are being offered with regard to the established timeline, sites have the level of personnel assigned to support the students, work with the external evaluator to conduct observations at affiliate sites and ensure systems are in place to collect program data, facilitate professional development and work with affiliates to facilitating collaboration among the schools and program sites.

SPARK will also be supported by the BGCA Government Grants and Finance departments. The Finance department will be responsible for all financial accounting and reporting requirements associated with the grant. The Government Grants department will be responsible for administrative management of the award.

<b>Goal:</b> Demonstrate an impact on improving student growth in reading for high-need students by expanding the implementation of and investment in community literacy			
<b>Objective 1:</b> Significantly improve reading performance of participants through literacy work in three spheres			
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Milestones</b>
Local affiliates and districts under contract	Oct 2012	Project Director; Project Coordinator	Signed agreements with all partners

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Administrative staff at local affiliates in place	Oct-Nov 2012	Project Director; Project Coordinator; Local Affiliates	Affiliate staff identified
Multi-day training institute	November 2012	Project Director; Project Coordinator, Training Consultant	Institute itinerary
Recruit tutors at school sites	Oct–Nov 2012	Local Affiliates, Site Coordinators	Tutors assigned
Tutors provided all necessary training	Approx. 25 hours December 2012	Program Coordinator; Site Coordinators; Local Affiliates	Calendar of training; Registration completed
Program space prepared at each school with print rich environment	Oct–November 2012	Project Director; Coordinator and Site Coordinators; Tutors	Tutoring space at the school identified
One-on-one tutoring takes place during school	3 times per week for 30 minutes for 30 weeks during the school year	Coordinator; Site Coordinators; Tutors	Students identified; Parent permission received; schedule set; Program space prepared

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Running record results used to plan tutoring	Every 2 weeks during the school year	Site Coordinators Tutors; Teacher's input	Running records administered and analyzed
Professional development for tutors	Ongoing	Site Coordinators; Training Coordinator	Site coordinators provide coaching/modeling
K – 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade students participate in community sphere	3 times weekly for 60 minutes during after school CLC	Site coordinators; Tutors; Family Literacy Partners (FLP)	Students identified; Parent permission signed; Students registered;
Community sphere projects shared	3 times per year with school & family sphere	Site coordinators; Tutors	Students participate in community sphere
Create list of books and book extension activities for parents to use at home	Jan 2013 Jun 2013	Coordinator; Site Coordinators	Alignment of books with school community family sphere; Book list created
Training for Family Literacy Partners (FLP)	Dec 2013	Training Coordinator; Site Coordinators; Local Affiliates	Session scheduled; agenda set; participants registered

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School-based family events	Monthly	FLP; Site Coordinators; Tutors; Parents	Event schedule planned; Event agendas set
Regular parent contact	Two per month	FLP; Teachers	Plan for parent contacts
Parents are provided resources to support their child at home	Monthly	Family Literacy Partner	Books and resources obtained and organized by age group

**(2) The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project. (5 points)**

Program Director-Kimberly Boyd is BGCA's Vice President of Education Programs and (short Bio). She is included in the project at 20% as her responsibilities include oversight of the program, but not direct responsibility for implementation. She will devote her effort to supervision of the program coordinator, managing agreements with participating affiliates and assisting the Principal Investigator with coordination of the evaluation.

Program Coordinator-Phoebe Baily, Ed.D. will devote 100% effort to the project and will be directly responsible for the implementation of the SPARK program. The Program Coordinators duties are described in detail in section E.1. above.

Training Coordinator-Pam Hodges, Ph.D., Director of Training and Professional Development at BGCA will commit 25% effort to the program. She will be responsible for planning and assisting in the implementation of the training program described in section C.3.

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Principal Investigator-Curtis Jones, Ph.D. will serve as the program evaluator. Dr. Jones will commit 25% effort to the program. This commitment includes designing and leading the evaluation as well as assisting in training. He will also lead an evaluation team that includes a literacy expert and a graduate student researcher.

Affiliate Administration-The budget for the SPARK program includes an allowance for a senior staff member to provide administrative oversight at the affiliate level. The percent FTE is directly related to the number of sites each affiliate implements. Oversight will be the responsibility of either a Vice President or Director of Programs. The allowance is 20% FTE for a single site, 30% for two sites, 40% for three sites and 50% for 4 or more sites.

**(3) The adequacy of mechanisms for ensuring high-quality products and services from the proposed project. (5 points)**

The SPARK model includes a number of tools designed to ensure efficacy of instruction. These tools are instrumental in guaranteeing the integrity of the program as well as fidelity of implementation.

Running records-Tutors assess SPARK participant progress utilizing a running record in which students read from a benchmark book. As the student reads the text aloud the tutor records errors. The running record serves as an indication of whether the material being read is too easy or too difficult for the child thus serving as an indicator of the areas where improvement is necessary. The running records are an important factor in planning future instruction and helping participants understand their own progress (Farr 1992<sup>13</sup>).

Tutoring session Observation-No less than once per month, site coordinators conduct an observation of a tutoring session for each tutor. The purpose of the observation is to collect uniform and reliable data about the tutoring sessions across sites to help make future decisions in

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regard to training, lesson planning and program design. A copy of both the observation guide and observation form is included as attachment G.

Lesson plans-Tutors write a lesson plan for each tutoring sessions. The primary function of the lesson plan is to guarantee that the tutors utilize the entire time available for the tutoring session in order to provide as much impact as possible. The component parts of the lesson plan are described in detail above in section B.3. of this proposal. A copy of a lesson plan form is included as attachment H.

***F. Quality of the project evaluation (15 points).***

**(1) 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. (10 points)**

The evaluation will utilize a mixed-methods approach to provide the SPARK project with both formative and summative feedback about both implementation and impact.

Fidelity of Observations Documentation—One of the biggest challenges facing the SPARK project is to ensure fidelity of implementation (FOI) to all three aspects of the program model (family, school, and community). To provide BGCA with the ability to monitor FOI, the Evaluation Team will design a FOI system and train project staff in the application and interpretation of this system. Staff from each participating school will receive annual training in the implementation of SPARK. During these events, the Evaluation Team will provide training in the utilization of the FOI system. Developing the capacity of local staff to maintain oversight over FOI is a more cost effective approach than having the Evaluation Team attempt to oversee the process.

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Case studies – Six sites will be chosen as case study SPARK sites. Within these sites, multiple methods will be used to identify factors that both promote and inhibit implementation. We will also be interested in identifying the ways sites have adapted SPARK to fit their local contexts. Case studies will involve making two visits to sites and collecting a variety of data from key stakeholders and participants. Interviews with school leadership and teachers will be used to explore their perceptions of SPARK, their concerns and ideas for improved implementation, and their impressions of the effectiveness of SPARK. Interviews with SPARK staff and focus groups with tutors and parents will be used to explore progress, along with barriers and facilitating elements for implementation, adequacy of training and supports and ways to improve these, satisfaction with SPARK, and other issues that arise during the course of the project. Finally, case studies will involve direct observation of tutoring sessions, parent involvement activities, home visits, and after-school sessions. These observations will be used to both check the accuracy of FOI observations being conducted at sites and to develop a more in-depth understanding of the quality of activities and engagement of participants. Taken together, these methods will allow the Evaluation Team to develop a deep understanding of the barriers to and factors that promote the successful implementation of SPARK in diverse school contexts.

Survey work – Through our case studies and discussions with SPARK leadership, the Evaluation Team will identify questions salient to the entire initiative. We will then develop and administer initiative-wide, on-line surveys of SPARK staff (tutors, site managers, parent partners), school staff, and parents to obtain a rich understanding of how the various project stakeholders understand and view SPARK.

Statistical analysis – The final element to the evaluation will be to analyze the impact of SPARK on student achievement. In the current project many sites are utilizing the Measures of Academic

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Progress (MAP) Reading assessment as a benchmark test. The MAP is a validated, reliable assessment of student reading achievement that is vertical equated across grade levels. The Evaluation Team will work with the data and research staff at each participating district to obtain MAP and other relevant student data, both for participants and other non-participants in the same schools (de-identified to protect confidentiality). Student growth on the MAP of participants and non-participants will be used to determine the impact of SPARK. This will be done by using multi-level modeling strategies (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2001<sup>14</sup>). Those sites that do not use MAP will have MAP assessments administered to students by either the evaluation team or program personnel.

Further, the Evaluation Team will explore subgroups of students and sites to identify factors that relate to the effectiveness of SPARK. Student subgroups will include those with disabilities and with low or high baseline achievement. At the site level, we will analyze FOI data to compare the impact of SPARK on student achievement as a function of the site's fidelity of implementation.

**(2) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide performance feedback and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes. (5 points)**

The ultimate goal of the work summarized below is to provide stakeholders with actionable and useful information at critical points that will improve their ability to implement SPARK across all sites with quality and fidelity. Throughout the two years of the project, monthly meeting between SPARK project staff and Evaluation Team members will provide the opportunity to share results from the various activities summarized below. Further, the evaluation will also write annual reports about implementation and impact utilizing the results of each method.