

**OUNCE OF PREVENTION FUND
INVESTING IN INNOVATION FUND
NARRATIVE**

The Ounce of Prevention Fund (Ounce), in partnership with **Chicago Public Schools (CPS)**, requests an Investing in Innovation Development grant under **Absolute Priority 3** and **Competitive Preference Priority 6** to implement and evaluate the Ounce Professional Development Initiative (PDI). The PDI supports parallel learning cycles of three groups of early childhood professionals to simultaneously improve classroom instruction, school leadership and embedded PD in early childhood education settings. This PD approach is a component of a highly comprehensive model of early childhood education for high-needs, low-income children and their families developed by the Ounce in Chicago in 2000 (called Educare). Educare has now been replicated in 12 diverse and high-needs sites across the country. Rigorous independent evaluation of implementation at these Educare schools, including the PD component, shows that classroom and instructional quality are high, and that high-needs children who participate in the program enter kindergarten achieving near national norms. We hypothesize that this PD approach can significantly elevate early childhood instruction in community-based settings, which provide the majority of early learning opportunities for Chicago's low-income children birth to five. In contrast to normative early childhood settings, Educare programs have a strategic focus on children's achievement and organize their systems and supervisors' activity towards helping teachers be effective. Extending an initial Chicago-based pilot to include the preschool years and transitions to kindergarten, this proposal will replicate the core design elements of the PDI, iteratively adapting them and their implementation to the prevailing conditions in community-based early childhood settings and improving the PDI's functionality. The goal is to raise the quality of instruction, leadership and embedded PD supports for effective

teaching and children's achievement in those settings while simultaneously preparing the PDI for an efficacy evaluation in community-based settings in the near future.

Almost ten years after the Illinois Early Learning Standards (IELS)¹ for preschool were adopted, few early education teachers and schools in Illinois have the knowledge, capacity and organizational focus to deliver data-informed, high-impact instruction aligned to the standards. This low level of implementation is particularly the case in settings serving diverse, high-needs children at risk of poor school readiness.^{2,3} And while complementary early learning standards for infants and toddlers are currently under development in Illinois, few teachers of high-needs children ages birth to three across our state are successful in aligning classroom practices and formative assessments with curriculum goals that are research-based, developmentally appropriate, and which lay the essential foundation for children's progress and academic achievement in preschool and beyond. In response, the Ounce's PDI aims to build birth-to-five teachers' capacity to design and deliver standards-aligned, data driven instruction, toward the long-term goal of closing the achievement gap for high-needs students in Chicago.

Over the last two years, through a partnership with CPS and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Ounce has begun piloting our PD approach outside of the national Educare network in community-based settings serving high-needs children and families in Chicago. This proposal builds on and extends this existing Chicago-based PD initiative to incorporate the preschool years (ages three and four) and the facilitation of effective transitions of children and families to kindergarten and primary grade teachers and schools.

The project has two goals: (1) to implement and study the Ounce PDI's capability to strengthen standards-based, data-informed early childhood instruction in high poverty, underserved communities; and (2) to make key adaptations to the PDI design and

implementation to fit conditions and drivers found in specific community-based early childhood settings and improve functionality. Interim results will inform PDI iterations over the grant period and ensure a strong model is in place for future study and scaling.

Through three core PD strategies or “contexts for learning” (i.e., Training Labs, Coaching and Reflective Practice Groups (RPGs)), the PDI will support *early learning teachers* in transitioning to a teaching approach that: (a) aligns their curriculum, instruction and assessment practices to the IELS’ and core curriculum goals for infants and toddlers; and (b) improves their decision-making in teaching moments so they provide high-needs children with evidence-based interactions that are socially supportive, organized, and instructionally challenging. We will use the same three PD strategies to support *leaders of early learning programs* in building and implementing organizational systems and cultures to support effective teaching. Finally, we will focus on developing the knowledge, skills and capacity of *PD Coaches*, who are charged with rigorously implementing our PD approach, making model-informed decisions when contemplating adaptations in the course of PD delivery, and working with the project team and evaluators to inform ongoing development of the PD design and implementation. Our work with *coaches* layers in this third group of early learning professionals who will receive high quality PD through our project. By aligning the professional learning cycles of these three key stakeholders – *teachers, leaders, and coaches* – early learning settings are poised to realize significantly improved standards-aligned instruction in the classroom, leading to better results for young high-needs children over time.

A. NEED FOR THE PROJECT.

This project addresses the urgent need to raise the achievement of young, high-needs students *before* they enter kindergarten, and strengthen collaboration between early learning and K-3

schools to sustain these early gains. Doing so requires teachers and school leaders to be more effective in their work with high-needs students during the early years. The early childhood education field needs effective PD models to promote early childhood leaders' and teachers' ability to focus intently and more effectively on raising student achievement and improving teacher effectiveness. Four factors underlie this need:

1. *School readiness and achievement gaps.* Research shows that nationally low-income, high-needs students enter kindergarten – *one full standard deviation* (on average 15-18 points) behind their more resourced peers in literacy and mathematics; in addition, they commonly lack age-expected self-regulation and social-emotional skills necessary for navigating K-3 classrooms and curriculum. In CPS, the percentage of low-income children not meeting standards in reading and math at third grade and fifth grade is nearly identical.⁴ Thus, the student catch-up growth rate for high-needs students is nearly zero. If early learning programs have not effectively promoted the early achievement of high-needs students by kindergarten entrance, it is likely they will remain behind and never catch up.

2. *Teacher Effectiveness in Early Learning.* A large body of evidence demonstrates that effective early education teachers of high-needs children provide them with emotionally supportive, organized and instructionally challenging interactions, capable of reducing or preventing the achievement gap at kindergarten entry and promoting positive life outcomes.^{5,6,7,8,9} However, in cities like Chicago that struggle with large numbers of communities faced with the effects of intergenerational poverty, high numbers of dual-language learners and an underprepared workforce, the majority of early childhood opportunities for low-income children are occurring in settings where the prevailing instructional quality is low: of 700 CPS preschool classrooms serving high-needs children, only 2% of these classrooms have

teachers who provide the “high levels” of instructional supports necessary to promote young children’s comprehensive development and specific learning of early literacy and math skills for school readiness.^{3,10} It is essential that we focus on increasing the quality of instruction for high-needs students in early learning settings by strengthening the standards-based, data-informed instructional practice of infant, toddler and preschool teachers.

3. *School Leadership in Early Learning.* Effective teaching requires an organizational context effectively designed and led to support teachers’ ongoing learning and practice. Effective leaders focus strategically and intensively on children’s achievement and on helping teachers to be effective. They promote alignment to standards and goals, tracking of children’s progress and rigorous curriculum implementation. They attend to the quality of instruction in their classrooms and they organize the supports teachers need to be effective, including building relationships among the teaching staff and between the teachers, families and the community. The critical importance of this focus has been made clear in studies of the dynamics of school improvement.¹¹ Specifically, when poor curriculum alignment is coupled with weak instruction in a school, the “...likelihood of improved student learning dropped to zero. Literally, not a single school improved in either reading or math with this combination of indicators.”¹¹ In early childhood education, school leaders’ focus is too often fractured by the need to attend to separate and often competing licensing, eligibility and reporting requirements of multiple public funding streams. There is an urgent need to cultivate an educational leadership perspective that has a strategic focus on children’s educational outcomes and the concurrent building of key systems of support, including teacher learning experiences, directly tied to effective teaching.¹² One of those sub-systems of support is strong ties among families, schools and communities, including ties and alignment between early learning schools and K-3 schools. Collaborative practices of

data sharing and articulation meetings have been found helpful in supporting effective transitions of children into kindergarten and with sustaining children's early learning gains. However, these ties and practices are not common. Indeed, a study conducted with early learning directors found that only 50% use the same criteria as K-3 schools to determine children's readiness for school, and nearly 60% reported engaging in no activities outside of their center to support children's transition to kindergarten.¹³

4. *PD in Early Learning.* In order to improve the quality of early childhood programs, PD must effectively enhance teachers' and leaders' expertise and changed practice. Varied learning contexts are required to support the transfer of knowledge into daily decision-making and practice; training alone is not sufficient.^{14,15} Unfortunately, in early childhood education, one-time, in-service workshops for teachers remain the primary approach, resulting in a low impact on teacher effectiveness.¹⁶ Current PD for early childhood leaders also tends to be delivered through stand-alone workshops that focus on the various funding-based accountability requirements. Implementation of the PD design depends on the quality and effectiveness of the PD provider. When the PD provider does not follow adult learning principles in training, does not implement a coaching cycle with fidelity, and/or is not skilled in facilitating group learning processes, adult learning is less likely to occur. We must pay attention to the implementation effectiveness of the PD provider (from here forward, the *Coach*) as an essential aspect of the design of any PD approach. Indeed, studies of workforce quality and development indicate that early childhood teachers and leaders are the least likely to receive effectively designed and delivered PD.¹⁷

In sum, there is a significant need to develop, refine, validate and disseminate comprehensive approaches to PD in early childhood education capable of raising the quality of instruction and

organizational leadership essential to closing the achievement gap of young, high-needs learners. The Ounce's PDI is an approach that can make that difference.

Our PDI for early learning programs has been informed by the factors above and is focused on increasing the quality of teaching and the leadership and organizational supports that create the conditions for effective teaching and improved outcomes for high-needs students. Over the last ten years, we have replicated, evaluated and strengthened our PD approach in Educare schools in high-poverty communities serving multiply-stressed families and high-needs children, including children with disabilities and dual-language learners.

An independent evaluation of our work with the 12-site Educare network by researchers at the University of North Carolina indicates that leaders in this network are strategically focusing on children's achievement and supporting teachers through our PD approach to be effective. Classroom quality and teacher-child data indicate teachers respond to this leadership and embedded PD with higher quality classroom environments and instruction that more effectively promotes children's achievement. Across the network, in each site, the achievement gap at kindergarten entry is substantially reduced for demographically-diverse, high-needs students, and in particular for low-income, dual-language learners compared to their dual-language peers nationally (see Appendix C).

Over the last two years we have begun piloting our PD approach outside of the Educare network in community-based early learning programs in Chicago. Initial implementation tells us our design is feasible in these settings. We have identified differences in the context-specific conditions between Educare and community-based settings, including staffing density and qualifications, and various policies, material supports and organizational culture and routines that enable effective teaching. We have reasoned hypotheses about how to adapt the design and

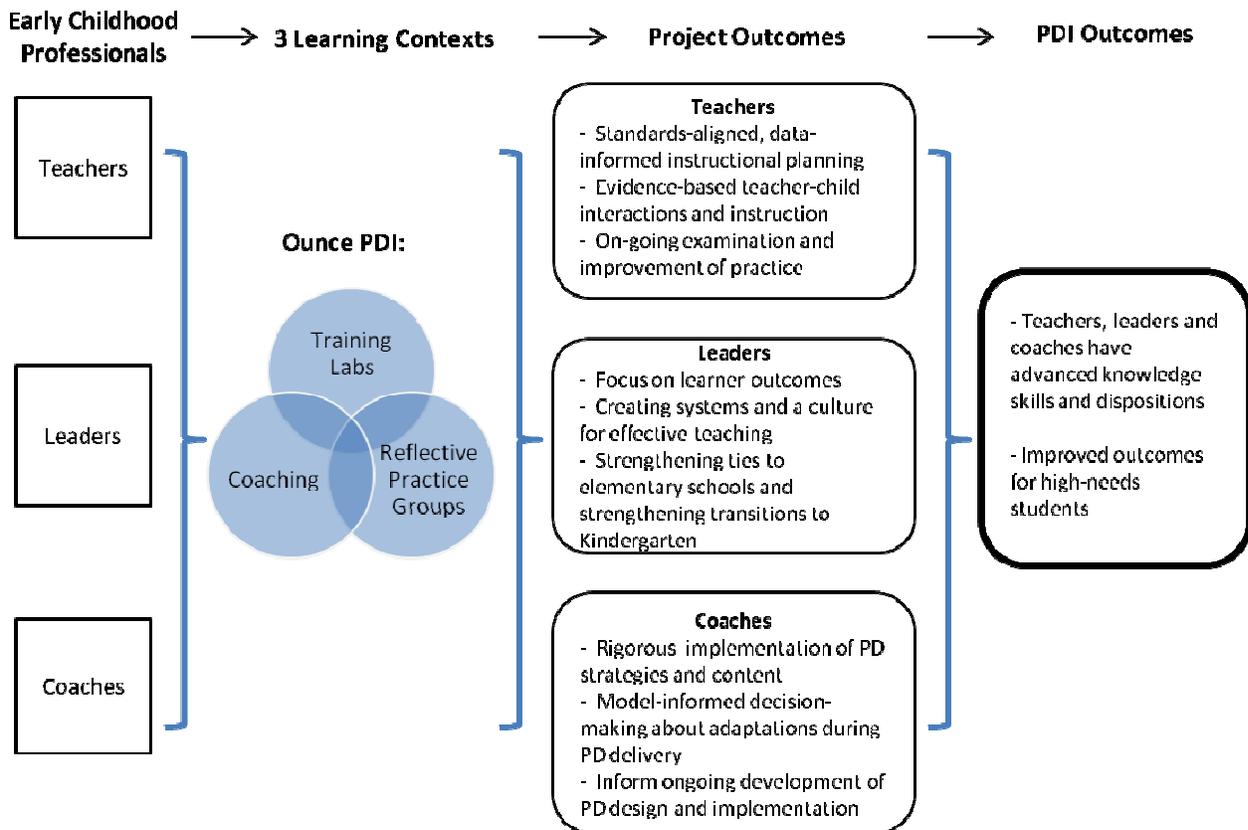
implementation of our PDI to increase its functionality amid these conditions. Further research on our PDI, using the proposed developmental methodology (see this narrative, Section D), will allow us to identify and test out needed adaptations, assess the emerging power of our approach to enhancing instruction and raising children's achievement in these normative settings and prepare the PDI for an efficacy study in the near future.

B. QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN.

1. Ounce Professional Development Initiative (PDI) Goals, Logic Model and Intended Outcomes. The proposed project is structured to promote the learning and effectiveness of *teachers and leaders*, the two key drivers of student achievement in birth-to-five education settings. Specifically, we propose to deliver a comprehensive PD program to increase effective teaching and corresponding leadership supports in early childhood education settings and to promote the learning and effective implementation of the professional development provider: a *PD Coach*. The PDI's goal for *teachers* is to facilitate their transition to a standards-aligned, data-informed approach to teaching and learning in early childhood. Our goal for *leaders* is to cultivate a strategic focus on children's achievement in the early learning program and through the kindergarten transition (*see Appendix J for a description of the PDI's Kindergarten transition work*), and on implementing four sub-systems of support directly tied to effective teaching. Our goal with *PD Coaches* is to build understanding of the priority of delivering the PDI strategies and components with fidelity, to engage in thoughtful model-informed decision-making around context-based adaptations while implementing the PDI and to partner with i3 Project Co-Directors and evaluators in the ongoing refinement of the PDI design. Our goal for our high-needs *students* is to improve school readiness through age-appropriate work habits and attitudes; print awareness/ comprehension/oral language; letter and phonological knowledge; and

mathematics. Figure 1, below, shows the project's Logic Model. Detailed objectives and a workplan are located in Appendix J.

Figure 1. PDI Logic Model



The PD approach is innovative in three ways: (1) it is tri-level (i.e., involves 3 groups of early childhood professionals); (2) it purposefully creates varied contexts for adult learning (i.e., Training Labs, On-Site Coaching and RPGs) that collectively result in building knowledge, transferring that knowledge to practice and sustaining learning and improvement over time; and (3) it uses an iterative process to refine the design and implementation during the initiative to improve its functionality given emerging learner- and context-specific conditions. These three aspects of our approach are in contrast to prevailing approaches to PD in early learning in Chicago and across the country.

We use three PD strategies or “learning contexts” to promote parallel learning cycles for teachers, leaders and coaches: Training Labs, On-Site Coaching and RPGs. *Training Labs* are interactive sessions that develop knowledge and understanding of professional competencies related to teaching, leading and coaching. *On-Site Coaching* supports the systematic transfer of the knowledge learned by teachers, leaders and PD Coaches in Training Labs into practice. *Reflective Practice Groups* engage teachers, leaders and coaches in shared reflection, inquiry and examination of practice. During these groups, teachers will also engage in lesson study where they compare and contrast their instruction and gain trust in their peers as a learning community to support continuous reflection and improvement.

The project will be implemented in community-based settings through an iterative, research-to-practice process over three years. From an inquiry perspective, we have two goals: Inquiry Goal 1: To refine the capability of our PDI to strengthen standards-based, data-informed instruction in birth-to-five early education programs; and Inquiry Goal 2: To identify necessary adaptations to our PD design and implementation to best fit conditions and drivers found specific to application in community-based early learning settings.

The project inquiry is innovative because: (1) we will study context-dependent variations in implementation of the PDI, e.g., variations by community area, staffing density and qualifications, organizational policies, systems and supports for effective teaching and other factors; and (2) we will document, study and implement adaptations and refinements to our PD design and delivery methods based on the results of our inquiry. This research-to-practice process will allow us to further specify the key elements and contextual drivers that improve the PDI’s feasibility and functionality in the project sites and at scale.

3. PDI Strategies – Three Learning Contexts

The PDI will be implemented in four early learning programs in Chicago that: (a) serve high-needs students from birth to age five, including those with special needs and dual language learners; and (b) currently receive CPS Community Partnership Program and Early Head Start and/or Head Start funding. Approximately 67 infant, toddler and preschool teachers, 40 leaders and supervisors, and 912 students will participate over the course of the three-year initiative. All students served will be high-needs (*see Appendix D for detailed demographics, and Appendix J for numbers of beneficiaries*).

Coaches assigned to each participating early learning program will deliver PD through the three primary strategies or “learning contexts” for *teachers* and *leaders*. Two PD Coaches (one with expertise in 0-3 education and the other in 3-5 education) will work with teachers and leaders in each program to allow for the development of positive, trusting relationships and continuity across the PD approach. Project staff will provide parallel PD to Coaches through a parallel approach involving the same three strategies. We will study the learning cycle of coaches at the same depth as the learning cycles of teachers and leaders.

Training Labs. Training labs will occur monthly in three-hour interactive sessions designed to develop understanding of the competencies specific to effective early childhood teachers and effective educational leaders. Video-based observations will occur during every Training Lab. (*See Appendix J for examples of PDI Content*). Training Labs for infant and toddler teachers are approved by the Illinois PD Registry, assisting participating teachers with accumulation of points toward the state’s Infant-Toddler Credential and leaders with points toward the Director Certificate. Given the low qualifications currently required of infant-toddler teachers, annual progress toward this credential is required by CPS. CPS will accept teachers’ participation in our

Training Labs as satisfying their annual PD progress requirement (*see CPS MOU, Appendix G*).

We will also pursue ISBE approval to provide Continuing PD Units (CPDUs) to preschool teachers participating in our Training Labs.

On-Site Coaching. Coaching plays a central role in facilitating the transfer of knowledge teachers and leaders gain from Training Labs into their macro- and moment-level decision-making and interactions. With teachers, although it is important to work with high-quality curriculum and materials, research has shown that children's development and learning is actually promoted through quality *interactions* teachers have with children while using materials and engaging them in planned standards-based, data-informed learning opportunities.¹⁸ But changing teacher-child interactions can be very difficult. Our coaching is therefore delivered in an organized, content-based, yet individualized manner with the explicit intent of impacting the effectiveness of these moment-level decisions teachers make about their interactions.¹⁹ The coaching cycle – joint planning, observation, joint feedback and reflection – creates a unique learning context where discussions of pedagogy become meaningful because they are based in real practice. When teachers focus on implementation of a specific activity or interaction that is linked to a specific standard(s), discussions of abstract pedagogical issues such as the roles of responsiveness, play, manipulatives, constructivism, language and instruction become grounded in everyday experience. Coaches connect with teachers at their level of readiness for change and build the teachers' capacity to reflect and examine the ways they interact with children through a moment-to-moment thought and decision-making pattern of *observe-reflect-respond*. We focus on reducing teachers' mechanistic interactions by increasing the conscientiousness and information they bring to these moment-level decisions.

Individualized coaching sessions are gradually replaced by video-based observation and group-study taking place during the RPGs, so that teachers learn to provide feedback on each other's teaching and eventually take on this responsibility themselves. With leaders, the coaching is delivered through the same cycle – joint planning, observation, joint feedback and reflection – with the explicit intent of increasing leaders' understanding and development of the organizational subsystems that support effective teaching and for problem-solving with staff barriers to effective teaching and children's kindergarten readiness through an intentional decision making cycle (*see Appendix J*).

Reflective Practice Groups. The learning context created by RPGs contributes uniquely and additively to the learning cycle of teachers and leaders. First, groups break the professional isolation experienced by teachers and leaders. The group dynamic brokers professional and social ties within and across teachers and program leaders.²⁰ The stage is set for advancing professional dispositions and cultivating a culture of practice noted for its shared identity, common purpose, adopted standards, metrics, vocabulary and habits of reflection and improvement. Second, integrating video-based observation and reflection into the group dynamic increases the sheer amount of good practice teachers and leaders observe and the multiple and varying analyses teachers and leaders hear.²¹ Both outcomes of groups, breaking isolation and increasing opportunities to see and analyze good practice, result in deepening not only the individuals' level of reflection but makes reflecting, learning and improving together a culture and standard professional practice. These groups are essential to the sustainability of the practices over the long term. We will transfer facilitation of these groups from *coaches* to supervisors and teachers at participating programs in Year 3 of the Project.

In their first year, *teachers* will convene in RPGs involving only teachers in their cohort. This allows us to build the norms of sharing, reflecting and planning in groups as well as comfort and confidence with video-based observation and reflection. In their second year of participation, half of the RPGs (n=4) are convened across the age span, so that teachers of infants, toddlers and preschoolers engage together in video-based observation, group reflection, and activities to further strengthen the alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessments to the standards from birth through the Common Core of Standards at kindergarten. *Leaders* participate in Reflective Practice Groups for all three years of the initiative, convening with other leaders from across the four schools to discuss movement towards an educational leadership perspective, style and shared decision-making; understanding the four organizational sub-systems to support effective teaching and children's outcomes (in the birth-to-five program and at kindergarten transition) and problem-solving barriers to implementing new systems.

A description of the core content of the PD, including details of the Focused Teaching Cycle and the *observe-reflect-respond* interaction pattern for *teachers*, the Leadership Perspective and Decision Making Cycle for *leaders* and the Coaching Cycle and the Fidelity Decision Making Cycle for *coaches*, is in Appendix J.

Intervention Cost Per Child. Project costs are estimated at \$3,773 per student during the development phase, but at scale-up costs decrease to \$1,369 per student. At scale, costs for the President, Project Co-Director (Research to Practice), the independent evaluation, as well as some travel, equipment, supplies, contractual and other costs are eliminated. Since development, refinement and dissemination are completed, at scale, FTEs for the Project Co-Director (Implementation), PDI Managers, and Operations Manager are reduced by 50%. Projected costs

to scale the Ounce PDI are \$136,900,000 for 100,000 students, \$342,250,000 for 250,000 students, and \$684,500,000 for 500,000 students.

C. QUALITY OF THE PROJECT EVALUATION.

Introduction. The proposed project pursues two primary objectives: first, to refine the capability of the Ounce’s PDI to strengthen standards-based, student-centered early childhood instruction in high poverty, underserved communities, and second, to discover necessary adaptations of the PDI design to fit conditions and drivers found in specific community-based early childhood settings. To equip an evaluation to match these objectives we will draw upon key features of design and development research as well as established methodologies for implementation and impact evaluation.^{22, 23} The primary aim of development research is to reduce “...uncertainty of decision-making in designing and developing (educational) interventions” that often involve the implementation of multi-layered, inter-related systems with multiple actors and across varied contexts.²⁴ Development research typically identifies key “implementation drivers” within sub-systems critical to complex reform initiatives. It then studies the functionality of those drivers in successive design iterations across contexts, and provides prompt and relevant data to program designers to improve functionality.^{25, 26}

Evaluation Factor 1. Methods of evaluation provide high quality implementation and performance data sufficient to assess progress toward intended outcomes. Exhibit C1 in Appendix J presents a generalized logic model of the Ounce PDI. This model complements those presented in Section B, and emphasizes (from left to right) the role of organizational capacity in creating the resources and conditions for full implementation of standards-aligned PD for early childhood teachers, leading to improved student learning. Three collaborative professional learning cycles translate organizational capacity into powerful early childhood

instruction – the **decision-making, coaching, and focused teaching cycles**. These cycles organize the professional learning of site leaders, instructional coaches, and classroom teachers respectively. The evaluation’s theory of action is that focused attention to these “cycles” as inter-related PD systems, implemented in varied program contexts, will yield information most valuable to honing the quality of PDI training/coaching/reflective processes and assessing their impact on adult and student learning. Six primary evaluation questions will guide our inquiry:

1. (Documentation) What are the baseline demographic and organizational characteristics of the PDI implementation sites? Do these remain stable over the course of the grant?
2. (Documentation) What is the intended (or “beta”) PDI design for each PD cycle or specific adaptations to cycles, and what resources and expertise do they require?
3. (Implementation and fidelity) What challenges arise at each successive iteration of implementation of the three professional learning cycles, and how do they impact realized vs. intended levels of implementation? What adaptations emerge from professional reflection on these challenges within reflective practice groups?
4. (Adult Learning Impacts) What features of implementation are most critical to realizing targeted adult learning outcomes? What impact do successive professional learning cycles have on the targeted professional learning outcomes for leaders, coaches, and teachers?
5. (Student Learning Outcomes) Does the PDI produce evidence of superior outcomes for low-income, under-served students and families in community-based provider settings?
6. (Feasibility) How feasible is the implementation of the Ounce PDI in diverse community-based provider settings and contexts? What threshold characteristics do community-based organizations need to engage the Ounce PDI productively?

Exhibit C2 in Appendix J summarizes core features of the evaluation for the three primary PD cycles. Below we review several features of the proposed evaluation design.

Sampling considerations. Development within the PDI will be manifest at several levels, including: **persons and groups** (roughly 127 professionals, distributed among program leaders and supervisors (40), coaches (8), and teachers (67), as well as students (912), and parents/guardians (1,216) **settings** such as classrooms (40+) and regular meeting rooms (10+); **events and processes** varying in frequency from teachers reflective practice groups (about 10/year) to coaching sessions (2 per month) to class sessions (daily per year); and **products** such as protocols, schedules, tools, and revisions of curricular materials. Given this diversity of scale, we will deploy and combine comprehensive, purposive, and random sampling strategies to complement research questions, and secondarily, research resources.

Comprehensive interviewing of critical role players such as center directors and coaches should be possible over all years of the grant. Purposive sampling will be used to study particularly successful developments of PDI components across sites – for example, highly effective coaches or reflective practice groups. More randomized sampling will be used to investigate predicted developments across larger populations (individual and group interviews with teachers) and events (e.g., sampling coaching sessions or classroom sessions for observations). It is possible that political considerations will affect some sampling decisions, reflecting for example the policies of programs regarding surveys to parents.

Mixed methods research strategy. A mixed methods approach will be essential to capture and triangulate target outcomes across persons, settings, events, processes and products. Qualitative approaches to data collection will include document analysis, individual and group interviews, and structured observations of meetings, coaching sessions, and collaborative activity

in professional learning and reflective practice groups (including use of videotape where feasible). Survey techniques will be used extensively to ascertain the views of participants around organizational capacity, quality of group process, and to explore shifts in knowledge, skills, and dispositions. We intend to develop a repeated measures sampling technique to capture the quality of interactions among coaches and teachers in coaching situations.²⁶ Finally, we will utilize several validated standardized assessments in domains such as quality of instructional environment, quality of teacher-child interactions and student developmental progress and school readiness, involving both qualitative and quantitative analyses.

Capturing relevant contextual factors. An important program development goal is to understand variations in implementation across program sites as a function of organizational and community characteristics. The evaluation will establish baseline measures of potential variables mediating the implementation of PDI, including characteristics of professional staff and affiliate families (based on administrative records), community social and economic characteristics (e.g., census 2010; Chicago crime statistics), and program organizational characteristics (e.g., teacher educational levels; rates of teacher absence and attrition).

Assessing implementation of PD cycles. The Ounce has developed guides and checklists for tracking fidelity of implementation of the decision-making, coaching, and focused teaching cycles. The evaluation will integrate these protocols into its detailed documentation of the inaugural (or “beta”) implementations of these cycles at each of the four program sites during the first six months of the study. Data from direct observations of training, coaching, and collaborative professional learning processes will be combined with surveys and interviews to identify areas of success and challenge in the facilitation of professional learning.

Measuring the Development of Organizational Capacity. The evaluation will assess organizational capacity at two primary levels. At the program level, the evaluation will adapt the principal and teacher surveys of the Consortium on Chicago School Research's Five Essential Supports for use in community-based programs to establish baseline on measures of organizational supports for standards-based instruction.²⁸ These instruments include measures of leadership capacity, parent and community relationships, professional learning capacity, instructional rigor, and a climate of high expectations for learning. At the team level, the evaluation will assess the emerging effectiveness of professional learning teams (e.g. teachers' reflective practice groups) at regular intervals with survey, interview and observational instruments drawn from the literature of professional learning communities.²⁹ In addition, the evaluation will investigate the improvement of articulation between the affiliate programs and CPS kindergarten programs as an organizational capability, using interviews, document analysis, and administrative records of student transitions between the two institutional settings.

Measuring relevant adult learning outcomes. The Ounce PDI aims particularly to elevate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions (KSD) of program leaders, coaches, and teachers. As training, coaching, and reflective practice protocols evolve, the evaluation will develop corresponding assessments of knowledge and competencies. However, the evaluation also will draw upon several validated instruments to track changes in KPD linked to training, coaching, and reflective learning, including: (1) Stage of Change Scale for Early Education and Care, 2.0, to track changes in the openness of early childhood teaches and leaders to question their professional practices and innovate to improve practice; (2) professional knowledge assessments in leadership, coaching, and teaching, linked particularly to standards alignment and assessment practices, based upon instruments piloted by the Ounce in its Educare program sites; and (3)

measures of early childhood environment and teaching quality, such as the Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).^{30, 31, 32, 33}

Measuring relevant early childhood and family outcomes. While the primary focus of this development grant is the enhancement of professional learning, the evaluation will also track student outcomes in the social-emotional, physical, cognitive, language and English language acquisition domains. The four project sites will utilize the Teaching Strategies GOLD, birth-to-six developmental assessment, given its adoption in all CPS pre-school and kindergarten classrooms.³⁴ Possible instruments for tracking early language and literacy outcomes include the Early Communication Indicator (ECI) for infant and toddlers, the Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP) for preschool literacy, and the KRT-CPS Kindergarten Readiness Test for transitioning preschoolers.^{35, 36, 37} The evaluation will explore options for securing parent/guardian consent for maximum access to student-level assessment records consistent with FERPA regulations and the memorandum of understanding with the four community-based programs. Other foci could include parents' knowledge of PDI activities, parent satisfaction with teacher interactions, and student absence and mobility rates.

Assessing magnitude of change in adult and student outcomes. The evaluation does not anticipate that random assignment to control and treatment groups will be a feasible option for tracking adult and student outcomes over the time of the grant. Among other issues, moderate to high turnover in staff or student populations, typical conditions within community-based early childhood settings, would preclude an effective randomized design. The evaluation will exploit three levels of meaningful comparison: (1) change from baseline within individuals (e.g., possible increases in a teacher's "stage of change" level); (2) comparisons between like settings

that differ in their quality of implementation of PDI processes (e.g., teachers' quality of practice from baseline across more or less successful coaching dyads); and (3) comparisons with selected settings in similar programs from the same or comparable communities (e.g., change from baseline in preschool literacy scores across PDI and non-PDI programs matched for organizational and demographic characteristics). The evaluation may also be able to gain access to CPS-wide normed assessment data on measures like the KRT-school readiness battery, allowing annual tracking of PDI sub-population gains against city-wide averages.

Evaluation Factor 2. Establishing reporting mechanisms for timely input to PDI development decisions. The evaluators will work closely with the Ounce to deliver timely and relevant data reports to the PDI's Technical Work Group, the initiative's primary mechanism for making program development decisions. The evaluators also will deliver interim data reports to the cross-site leadership group regarding specific feedback on challenges to training, coaching, and reflective practice group functioning. A management challenge for the evaluation will be to coordinate a data collection calendar keyed to the varied time intervals for the three PDI cycles, and to develop rapid reporting mechanisms to propel program development loops efficiently.

Evaluation Factor 3. Feasibility of evaluation plan within available resources. Drs. Steven Tozer (PI) and Samuel P. Whalen (co-PI; project director) of the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) will lead the independent evaluation of the project. Both researchers contribute acknowledged expertise in educational evaluation, accenting instructional leadership, PD, and organizational capacity (see bios in this narrative, Section D).³⁸ While the proposed evaluation poses methodological challenges, it is feasible within the budgeted resources for the following reasons: (1) the co-investigators bring extensive expertise with evaluation in complex, community-based educational organizations to the project; (2) UIC

supports strong assets both in early childhood education and evaluation methodology that can be applied to staffing and project advisement; (3) logistic hurdles are minimal due to the location of all project sites in Chicago; (4) budgeted resources include at least one full-time early childhood evaluation specialist and one half-time graduate assistant, sufficient to cover a wide range of events each week for the duration of the project, along with a 10% commitment by Dr. Tozer, and a 50% (2.5 days per week) commitment by the co-PI, Dr. Whalen.

D. QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT PLAN.

The Management Plan is informed by the Ounce's 29 years of leadership and experience in early childhood education practice, professional development, and research. In addition to delivering comprehensive PD to the national network of Educare schools, the Ounce is the primary PD provider to evidence-based home-visiting programs in Illinois. We provide PD to raise the quality of over 75 CPS- and ISBE-funded center-based programs that serve 2,500 infants and toddlers in Chicago each year. As a Head Start/Early Head Start Grantee, we provide intensive supervision and technical assistance support to eight EHS/HS agencies in 17 centers serving 1,400 children in Chicago.

The Project Team includes two Co-Project Directors, two PDI Managers with expertise in content and teacher development in 0-3 and 3-5 classrooms, eight PD Coaches, an Operations Manager, and an Administrative Assistant. Appendix J provides a project management plan detailing activities, timelines, and staff accountable for key project tasks. This plan builds on the Ounce's experience in implementing the project in its pilot phase over the last two years. The management plan and project budget will ensure that: participating teachers, leaders and coaches receive the PDI's training, coaching and reflective practice groups in order to achieve the project's objectives; support the planned evaluation and iteration of the PDI design and

implementation; and document and disseminate findings and lessons learned to the field.

Throughout the grant period, project staff will assist leaders of participating programs and our CPS partners in building the organizational capacity and supports necessary to sustain the intervention over time. Provided in Appendix J are a project organizational chart and position descriptions. Résumés of key personnel can be found in Appendix F.

Debra Pacchiano, Ph.D., will serve as Project Co-Director, Research to Practice. Dr. Pacchiano is a research-to-practice expert with 18 years experience applying evaluation and implementation methodologies to improve curriculum and instruction, birth to third grade. She has developed the PD approach for improving teachers' classroom practice across the national network of Educare schools that will be implemented and further developed through the proposed project. Dr. Pacchiano has co-directed numerous local, state and federal initiatives and provides leadership to the Ounce's collaboration with the University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute (UEI) to align educational strategies birth to 8th grade.

Rebecca Klein, M.S., will serve as Project Co-Director, Program Implementation. Ms. Klein has over 15 years experience in early childhood education as classroom teacher, Master Teacher/Coach, program administrator and professional development provider. For the last two years, she has directed the delivery of the Ounce's PDI in the Chicago-based pilot project which will be expanded through this proposal.

Steven Tozer, Ph.D., Professor in the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago will serve as Co-Principal Investigator. Dr. Tozer a nationally recognized expert on education research and policy and is founding Coordinator of the Ed.D. Program in Urban Education Leadership which prepares principals to improve student learning in under-resourced

urban schools. Dr. Tozer has developed innovative teacher mentoring and principal preparation programs in partnership with the Chicago Public Schools.

Samuel Whalen, Ph.D., Research Director at the University of Illinois at Chicago's Ed.D. Program in Urban Education Leadership, will be Co-Principal Investigator with Dr. Tozer. Dr. Whalen's areas of expertise include: program evaluation design and analysis, school leadership preparation and school-community partnerships. He served as Senior Researcher and Principal Investigator for the UIC Community Schools Evaluator in 100 inner-city public schools in Chicago.

Diana Rauner, Ph.D., President of the Ounce, will provide organizational oversight and lead the Project's **Technical Work Group (TWG)** which will convene twice annually during the grant period. The TWG (Appendix J) includes individuals with content expertise (e.g., early childhood and K-3 education, curricula and instruction, bilingual/bicultural issues), professional and leadership development, program evaluation, as well as representatives from CPS' Office of Early Childhood Education and the City of Chicago's Head Start Grantee program. The TWG will function as a professional learning community and provide guidance and consultation to the Project Co-Directors and Evaluation Partners on: progress toward achieving intended goals; implications of implementation and evaluation data toward further development and refinement of the PDI during and following the i3 grant period; and dissemination plans and products. CPS membership on the TWG will be a key strategy in ensuring the sustainability and expansion of the PDI and other similar PD efforts for high needs early childhood settings in Chicago.

Organizational Capacity and Dissemination of Findings: The Ounce has over 25 years experience producing and delivering communications to public, private, academic, and nonprofit sector audiences, and will build on this success to document and disseminate information on the

i3 project. Through a project Web site, implementation briefs, white papers for publication in peer-reviewed journals, project monographs, conference presentations, and individual consultation, we will ensure that the public and education stakeholders have access to the information, data, and tools necessary to support sustainability and further expansion of the Ounce PDI. Additionally, findings and lessons learned from the project will be disseminated by the Ounce's partners at CPS through district PD activities with early learning programs, by the project evaluators through the UIC Urban Education Leadership Program, and by the Technical Work Group whose members include teacher and principal preparation faculty at leading post-secondary institutions.

The Ounce has a long track record of success managing and implementing complex projects and has sophisticated administrative, monitoring and fiscal systems and procedures in place to effectively manage an i3 grant and achieve project goals on time and according to the project budget. As a Head Start Grantee, we fund and provide oversight to delegate Head Start agencies to ensure fidelity to 1,500 federal program standards and received an Early Reading First Grant in 2003. The Ounce is a member of the Illinois Early Learning Council where we provide leadership on the alignment of the IELS with K-12 education standards. As mentioned above, we are currently collaborating with the University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute (UEI) to conceptualize an educational continuum for high-needs students that begins at birth at our Educare of Chicago school and continues through UEI-operated K-12 charter schools.