



Project Narrative

Absolute Priority 6 (a) Parent Engagement
Investing in Innovation Development Grant

Project: **Learning Together**

Applicant: **CASA de Maryland**

Locale: **Langley Park, MD**

Date: **August 16, 2013**

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"I have lost my fear of speaking in English in public. I have learned ideas from classmates and teachers and it has opened my mind. We feel powerful when we come to school meetings. We sit together and feel useful. People ask me for help and I can help them. I can get what I want to achieve and participate more."

Isabel R.
After completing parent classes



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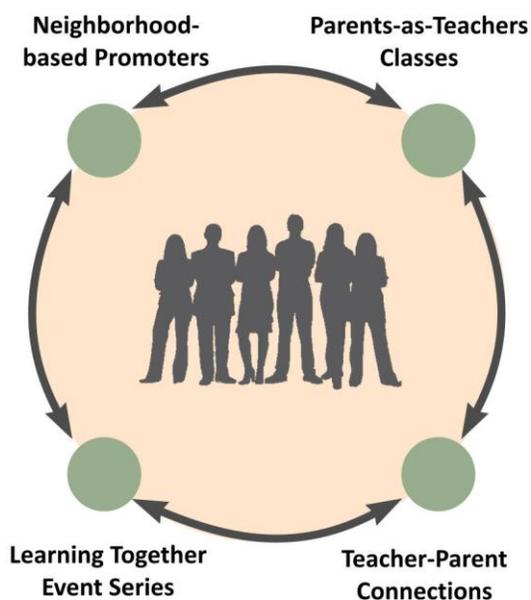
A. SIGNIFICANCE

OVERVIEW — Using a quasi-experimental, mixed method approach, the **Learning Together (LT)** project will examine the following hypothesis: *Latino parents with low levels of formal education and English proficiency can rapidly gain the skills and strategies to successfully navigate child-supporting activities and systems and decisively impact their students' academic outcomes through a socially-robust, skill-building program of neighborhood-based promoters, parents-as-teachers classes, family-school events, and teacher-to-parent connections.*

Learning Together is part of an ongoing collaboration between CASA de Maryland (CASA), Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS), and the Family School Working Group at the University of Maryland's College of Education (UMD) — core partners and contributors in the Langley Park Promise Neighborhood (LPPN), a 2012 planning grantee. Advisors include the Internationals Network for Public Schools (Internationals), an innovator in immigrant education and an i3 grantee in 2012; Families in Schools, creator of *Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors)*, an evidence-based training program for primarily Spanish speaking parents; Flora Rodriguez-Brown, a national expert in culturally competent family literacy; and the Urban Institute (UI), the data and evaluation partner.

A NOVEL APPROACH TO A GROWING NATIONAL CHALLENGE – Unlike most parent engagement programs, Learning Together is an integrated, place-based initiative designed to build parents' skills, confidence, and social capital to navigate the U.S. education system in spite of Limited English Proficiency (LEP), low-education attainment, and immigrant/cultural challenges. The

***Learning Together* is a socially-robust, place-based approach built on four cornerstones**



initiative provides parents support from a child's birth onward using principles pioneered by the Harlem Children's Zone and engendered in the Promise Neighborhoods Program.

Today, one in four U.S. public school students speaks a language other than English at home, more than double the rate in 1980.¹ Currently, one in five U.S. children is Latino and, by the year 2030, that statistic will likely grow to one in three.² Many live in communities like Langley Park, MD, densely populated with large numbers of Latinos with little formal schooling, working low-paying jobs, and lacking the English proficiency and cultural roadmap to secure a better life for their families. Despite their challenges, Langley Park parents have positive child-rearing traditions, a strong work ethic, and deep cultural values and reserves.³ Learning Together provides the systemic, integrated and sustained family engagement capacity⁴ needed to enable these parents to further develop skills and strategies to support their children's success.

To spur new solutions for communities like Langley Park, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) issued in 2012 its *Impact in Place* report examining “how place matters” and “how a community comprehensively supports the lives of the people who live there, how overlapping investments in a particular place can be coordinated to increase impact, and how an understanding of community context improves the efficacy of service delivery.”⁵

In the same year, Paul Tough's book *How Children Succeed* chronicled decades of research highlighting the critical role of supportive parents in the resilience of children to overcome adversity in school and in life. The Flamboyant Foundation has played an important role in examining the extensive body of research on the role of parents in student's success and emphasizing that teachers are only with children an average of 14% of the child's time, making it essential that the home be a place of learning with high parental expectations and support.⁶ Yet many parents in Langley Park and throughout the country are challenged to model and guide effectively because of linguistic and cultural barriers.

Learning Together combines these two themes — place-based solutions and parent criticality — into a culturally-competent, parent partnership and infrastructure. The initiative overcomes shortcomings in the current practice of parent engagement in three significant and

novel ways: (a) **trusted parent-promoters** hired from the community to stimulate and cultivate a socially-robust network of parent-to-parent, parent-to-teacher, and parent-to-services interactions from birth to high school; (b) **a focus on the transformational potential of family literacy** for the parent as well as the child; and (c) **the building of safe, common ground for parents and teachers** to grow, celebrate, and share. These Learning Together innovations, detailed in the following Design section, are one facet of a close collaboration between Prince George's County, its school system, and CASA to build the pathways to integrate the Latino population into the larger community. Working with its county partners, CASA has run a highly-successful health promoter program since 1996, created a day labor marketplace that protects workers from employer abuse, and is currently leading the planning for a bilingual, next generation secondary school and providing a wide range of additional services for over 20,000 individuals annually. CASA, the lead organization in the Langley Park Promise Neighborhood, which won a 2012 planning grant, has completed an exhaustive neighborhood needs assessment and planning process, and is posed to compete for an implementation grant in 2014. During this work, parent engagement emerged as a vital need and opportunity.

POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF THEORY, KNOWLEDGE, & PRACTICE -

Learning Together builds on six promising areas of parent engagement research and practice: (1) the loud call for family-school-community systems; (2) the shift from a deficit-based to an asset-based approach in working with the low-income Latino community, and building solutions from the considerable, yet often overlooked, community funds of knowledge; (3) the success and adoption of the health promoter (*promotores*) model nationally; (4) the convergence of cognitive, academic, and immigrant research on the vital importance of family literacy; (5) the spark that family literacy can trigger in a parent's internal attitudes toward their own learning; and (6) practices to build the cultural competency of teachers and strengthen teacher-parent connections.

These advances are particularly significant for Latinos who are the least educated population in the U.S.⁷ and often the most isolated from U.S. schools. Most parent engagement programs fail to reach Latinos, and those that do are generally limited in scope and duration. The

goal of Learning Together is to harness the promising advances listed above into a comprehensive, birth-and-beyond parent engagement solution enabling Latino parents to have early success in navigating the systems integral to a child's success.

(1) Family-school-community systems — Learning Together (LT) is a capacity building initiative that addresses all components of ED's new Family Engagement Capacity Building Framework, which accompanied the Notice. To enhance the Capacities, Connections, Cognition, and Confidence of Latino parents, we are creating a complementary learning system outside the schools as proposed by the Harvard Family Research Project;⁸ to that end, LT creates a system of informal and formal learning through promoters, classes, events, and teacher-parent connections. To meet ED's system conditions (Systemic, Integrated, and Sustained), we utilize Kania and Kramer's collective impact model,⁹ with CASA as the backbone organization and the LPPN providing the infrastructure of supporting programs, partners, and data sharing. The process conditions (Linked to Learning, Relational, Developmental, Collaborative, and Interactive) are integral to our asset-based approach.

(2) From a deficit-based to an asset-based approach — Luis Moll's asset-based "funds of knowledge" approach has energized instruction and community building in Latino communities and beyond since 1990. Even in the poorest communities, Moll, Ruby Payne and other asset-based proponents observe, there are vast stores of skills, specialized knowledge, talents, traditions, and resources; the exchange of these funds of knowledge through dense social networks is essential to survival and family stability.¹⁰ Strong Latino child-rearing traditions and the concepts of "familia" (that whatever is done in everyday life should benefit not only the individual but the family),¹¹ "respeto" (respect),¹² and "confianza" (mutual trust developed through social networks)¹³ are foundational assets in the design of Learning Together. Parents' funds of knowledge and the day-to-day issues they face are kept central in all of CASA's instructional programs through an engaging Freirean participatory process of reflecting upon and developing insights into the learners' evolving knowledge and culture.¹⁴ Crosnoe notes similar approaches in seven programs that strengthen immigrant parents' support of children's school

readiness and early learning; among these is Project FLAME which serves as a key model for Learning Together's Parents-as-Teachers classes.¹⁵ A ten-year evaluation of FLAME shows marked improvement in parent ability and confidence as well as child literacy.¹⁶ Delgado Gaitan, De Gaetano, and Lindsey & Lindsey are among the researchers highlighting culturally responsive approaches in parent engagement.¹⁷

(3) The health promoter model — In developing the funds of knowledge approach, Moll was strongly influenced by Vygotsky's *zone of proximal development* — namely, the social environments or scaffoldings that extend what individuals are capable of learning by themselves to what they can achieve with the support of more knowledgeable peers, co-workers, and instructors.¹⁸ Creating a new, trusted, socially-robust scaffolding for the exchange of knowledge is the work of LT's parent-promoters, trained neighbors hired from the community. Public health organizations increasingly use promoter models, which are proving effective in improving health outcomes as well as decreasing costs.¹⁹ Health promoters employ door-to-door outreach in areas of dense residential concentration as well as visiting church services, laundromats, community centers, and community events to engage residents. As members of the communities they serve, health promoters function as peer educators and are more likely to engage community members in honest discussions about sensitive matters. Although health promoters have been active with children and families for many years, there is little application of neighborhood-based parent promoters. The LT promoter program will be modeled after CASA's highly-successful health promoter program that in 2012 alone provided information to more than 10,000 people.

(4) The importance of family literacy — Family literacy, defined broadly as parent/family/child interactions at home and in the community that support the early literacy learning of children²⁰, is a key focus for the parent-promoters and other LT components for three reasons. First, as is now widely recognized, all children benefit cognitively from home literacy environments that foster language and literacy development.²¹ Second, Flamboyan's analysis of the parent engagement literature indicates that a parent holding high expectations and supporting learning at home is pivotal — ultimately far more important to a child's long-term success than a

parent's participation in school. To this end, Learning Together technical advisor Flora Rodriquez-Brown emphasizes, "As valuable as family literacy programs are, their real strength must be in their ability to foster autonomy, and self-reliance within families, schools, and communities."²² Goldenberg states that home literacy environment measures were better predictors of children's literacy scores than either ethnicity or socioeconomic status.²³ Third, the dual language realities, cultural discontinuities, and parents' low education levels make the very nature of family literacy among poor Latinos a much studied topic and a challenge that is critical to overcome.²⁴

(5) Sparking the parent as learner — Among the most hopeful observations that researchers of family literacy make is that family learning does not always proceed from parents to children but often also from child to parent.²⁵ Given that many foreign-born Latino parents have no more than a few years of elementary education, levers to help them advance their own literacy, expand their English proficiency, and acquire new knowledge have enormous implications because: (1) children model their parents' behavior,²⁶ (2) parents are more likely to support children's learning when they see themselves as effective learners,²⁷ and (3) adult education including English proficiency can snowball into meaningful family economic success.²⁸ To reinforce how parent changes in turn impact children, one noteworthy study by Magnuson found that maternal education before a child is eight years old correlates with significantly higher reading scores for the child.²⁹ Accordingly, Learning Together is designed to foster parent learning in three ways: informally through interactions with promoters and other parents, formally through training and certificates for parents, parent-promoters, and teachers, and inspirationally as these graduates become role models similar to the catalytic impact of City Year graduates. Further, the focus on the parent as learner stems from family economic success research regarding "portable, stackable credentials" that serve as on-ramps to better employment.³⁰ Experience shows that jobs exist for CASA's promoters and FLAME's parent-trainers despite low levels of formal schooling.

(6) Practices to build the cultural competency of teachers — We are using two primary bodies of research to inform the work with teachers and schools. The first is the Flamboyant Foundation's

valuable School-Wide Family Engagement Rubric³¹ and the second is the research and practice of the Internationals Network for Public Schools, a 2012 i3 winner and advisor to Learning Together. Internationals is a recognized leader in welcoming Latino and other immigrant families, partnering with families for student achievement, and investing families in school success.

SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVING THE OUTCOMES OF OTHER PRACTICES — Just as health promoter programs have been shown to improve health outcomes while reducing health costs,³² Learning Together is a system enhancer that will substantially improve student outcomes and reduce education costs by complementing and strengthening the other parts of the education system. During their children’s early years, LT will inform and empower parents enabling them to better utilize health and early learning resources and more fully foster their children’s growth, leading to a higher level of kindergarten readiness and third-grade reading fluency. During the elementary years, Latino parents with a greater command of how Langley Park schools work can more fully support and participate in their students’ education, reducing the need for supplemental academic or wraparound supports or, where they are still needed, making them more effective. As students approach the secondary school years, LT will encourage parents and students to persist through high school graduation and educate them about affordable paths to postsecondary education and sound employment — while enhancing the effectiveness of dropout prevention programs, violence prevention programs, and other practices addressing the problems of adolescence.

In addition to being a socially-robust, skill-building program for parents, Learning Together is also a platform through which other programs and partners can reach and support parents and children. For example, one of our early childhood partners, CentroNia, is expanding a Family Book Clubs program which is a natural (and no-cost) extension of LT’s mission and program. As with LPPN and other place-based initiatives, there is a force multiplier effect that draws other resources to join in an integrated approach to improving outcomes, reducing costs, and accelerating results.

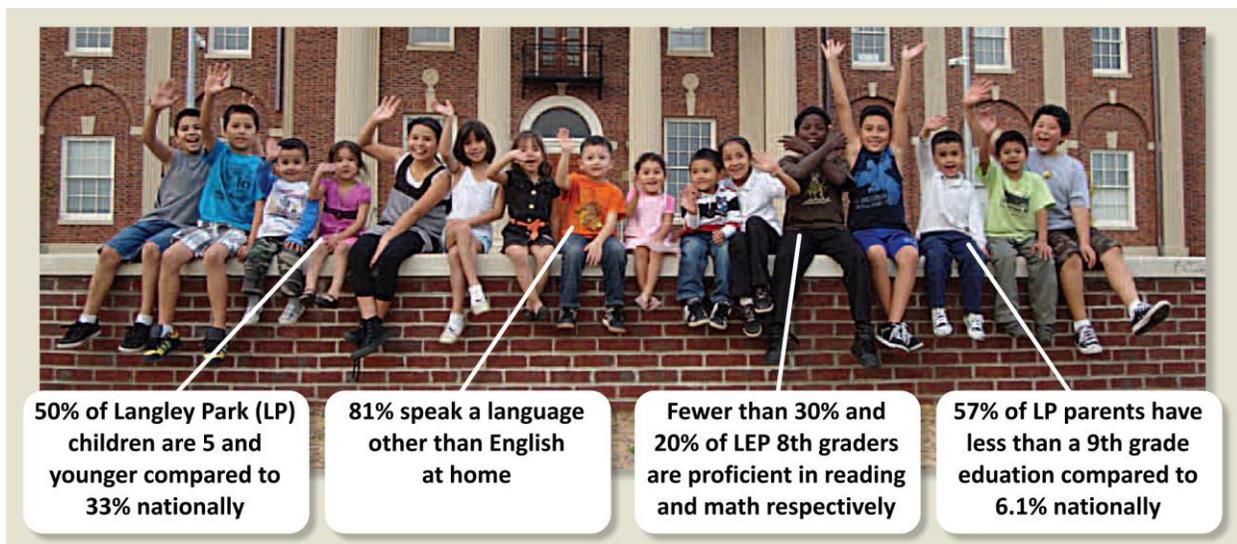
B. QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN

ADDRESSING ABSOLUTE PRIORITY 6 (A) – Learning Together is designed to “provide parents and families the skills and strategies

that increase student engagement and improve student outcomes” through a socially-robust, place-based approach. The project fully meets the eligibility requirements for High-Need Students.

THE CLARITY AND COHERENCE OF THE PROJECT GOALS AND THE LOGIC MODEL – Learning Together is a three-year initiative serving 1,760 families with children below 18 years living in the Langley Park Promise Neighborhood (LPPN). Because 50% of Langley Park’s 3,800 children are five years and under (compared to 33% nationally) and over 34% of 15-17 year olds are not in school (compared to 3.8% nationally), the program will support all parents with children under 18 years of age with extra outreach to parents of pre-elementary and elementary children. **The LT project goal** is to foster parents’ skills and strategies to increase student engagement and improve student outcomes in spite of their Limited English Proficiency (LEP), low-education attainment, and immigrant/cultural challenges by creating sustainable, socially-robust scaffolding. The logic model (next page) shows the four project components that comprise that scaffolding (left column), the program outputs for each component (second column), and the short-term outcomes, the intermediate parent and teacher outcomes, and the long-term student outcomes. The method for measuring and evaluating these outcomes is described in the Evaluation Plan (Section E).

<u>High-Need Students</u> 94% Free Reduced Lunch 88% Latino/Hispanic 51% Limited English
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Learning Together Logic Model

PROGRAMS & STRATEGIES	PROGRAM OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM PARENT & TEACHER OUTCOMES ¹	INTERMEDIATE PARENT & TEACHER OUTCOMES ²	LONG-TERM STUDENT OUTCOMES ³
Neighborhood-based Promoters	Each of the promoters reaches out successfully to 50 families. (Promoters in Y1-2-3: 12,24,35) Each promoter interacts with all 50 families at least monthly	Parents believe they have the skills and strategies to increase student engagement and improve student outcomes - Parent efficacy scale - Parenting knowledge and confidence - Knowledge fostering early reading - Knowledge and confidence accessing resources - School literacy	Parents engage more with their children to support learning - Foster reading - Ensure homework is done - Make sure child on time for school - Encourage child to do well in school Parents engage more with schools - Use of English in school settings - Talk to teachers - Attend school events - Regularly check child's grades and attendance - Teacher report of parent involvement	Students are more engaged and persistent at school and exhibit greater academic achievement - Pre-school enrollment - Kindergarten readiness - Student attendance - Suspensions and expulsions - Grades - Performance on standardized tests
Parent-as-Teacher Classes	Families attend PT classes (10%, 15%, 15% of families in Y1-2-3) Parents regularly attend sessions (90% attendance) Parents highly rate satisfaction with & value of classes (3.5 of 4) Parent-graduates successfully gain credentials	Teachers are better able to assist LEP student learning - Teacher efficacy scale	Teachers engage students and parents - Parent/student report of experiences with teachers	
Learning Together Event Series	Parents and children widely attend the 6 events (Combined attendance: 900, 1800, 2100 in Y1-2-3) Parents highly rate satisfaction with the events (3.5 of 4)			
Teacher-Parent Connections	Teachers participate in program (15 per year) Teachers highly rate satisfaction with & value of classes (3.5 of 4)			

¹ Exact indicators will consist of tested survey items with established psychometric properties.

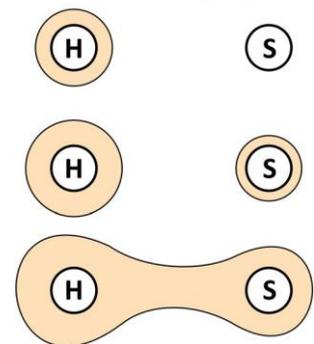
² These indicators come from the student, parent, and teacher school climate survey instrument currently used in PGCPS.

³ These indicators come from administrative datasets currently available through PGCPS.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

– Learning Together combines established programs and models into a new system design for enhanced social scaffolding for parents and families. Using tested components removes a significant implementation risk. There are four components of LT: *Neighborhood-based Promoters*; *Parents-as-Teachers Classes*; *Learning Together Event Series*; and *Teacher-Parent Connections*. Our vision is that a parent’s social scaffolding will grow organically through their many interactions with parent-promoters, instructors, group events, teachers, and most importantly, other parents — expanding the parents’ zone of proximal development around first the home (H) and then the school (S). Each component is discussed below, highlighting its contribution to the goals, the scope and implementation of the activities, the evidence for the approach and potential risks, and the method of feedback and continuous improvement.

Growing a parent's social scaffolding through *Learning Together*



Neighborhood-based Promoters Scope and implementation. Modeled

after CASA’s health promoter program, the promoters play a vital role in creating safe and trusted relationships with families, legitimizing the LT initiative, and bridging linguistic and cultural divides. As parents and members of the community themselves, promoters function as role models, peer educators, navigators, coaches, and cheerleaders. A full-time supervising-promoter will provide training and oversight for a team of four part-time parent-promoters. Each parent-promoter will support 50 families, all of whom live in their same apartment complex. A smaller group of apprentice-promoters will work with the parent-promoters while developing their own skills. Promoters will be deployed for one-third of the neighborhood (588 families) in year 1, two-thirds in year 2, and all 1,760 families in year 3. Through individual and group interventions, promoters utilize culturally appropriate education materials and a Freirean participatory methodology to engage community members. Two of the issues promoters will help overcome are (1) the commonly-held perception among many recent immigrant parents that they cannot help their children because they do not speak English and/or have little formal schooling and (2) the belief that they should not interfere with the school and the teacher. Additionally, promoters

keep all the parts of LT connected and mutually reinforcing: they encourage participation in Parent-as-Teacher classes and LT events (and assist with both); guide parents to programs and services provided by CASA and its community partners; and build bridges to the teachers and staff at the three participating schools (Langley Park-McCormick, Cool Springs, and Mary Harris Mother Jones elementary schools). Tablet computers will enable promoters to retrieve program resources and log their interactions into CASA's Salesforce database to track and monitor all programs and services. *Evidence for the approach and potential risks.* Over the past 17 years, CASA has implemented an effective health promoter program reaching over 10,000 individuals annually. Evidence for CASA's program and national health promoter studies are in Appendix D. The greatest risk to the parent-promoter program is fidelity of implementation. Fortunately, CASA's health promoter program is trusted and valued by the community. Furthermore, to ensure successful implementation, the program will be overseen by George Escobar, CASA Director of Services, who has supervised CASA's health promoter program for four years. *Method of parent/staff feedback and continuous improvement.* A key to the success of CASA's promoter program is a unique monthly training/ improvement session with all promoters and supervisors. These are high-energy exchanges and brainstorming sessions at which performance data is reviewed; hot topics are shared and prioritized; and guest experts provide training. LT will implement this approach and the evaluation team will be linked into these sessions and collect data from parents in their formative evaluation and program improvement role.

Parents-as-Teachers Classes *Scope and implementation.* As the promoters accelerate the exchange of knowledge, the Parents-as-Teachers (PT) classes deepen parents' knowledge in three crucial areas: child/family wellness, family literacy, and school literacy. The core of the course design and content is Project FLAME, an Academic Excellence³³ family literacy program developed for LEP families and run from the University of Illinois for over 20 years. After reviewing numerous parenting and family literacy classes, we selected Project FLAME for its sociocultural methodology that closely aligns with our own, and for its emphasis on parent-as-learner and parent-as-teacher. As evaluations of FLAME demonstrate, the model fosters self-

reliance and confidence and enhances the home/school relationship and parents' understanding of the U.S. school system. Flora Rodriguez-Brown, founder and director of FLAME, is a Learning Together adviser and will train the first crop of trainers. CASA's extensive English and adult education capability, serving over 4,000 adults each year, provides the class infrastructure and CASA's knowledge of the schools and community services informs the class content.

Offered in early and middle childhood versions, the PT classes will serve approximately 10% of families with children in Langley Park Promise Neighborhood in year 1 and 15% in both years 2 and 3. Taught by the promoter teams and guest speakers, classes run 13 weeks with one 150-minute session each week, resulting in a certificate of completion. For many parents, this certificate will be their first formally-recognized education achievement of any kind.

PT classes will be a mixture of skills building, relationship building, and information sharing and have both Spanish and English segments. Instruction in Spanish allows parents to discuss their children without struggling to understand a second language and sends an important message about the value of the family's home language. However, research shows that many Latino parents understand more English than they use due to limited opportunity and confidence³⁴ and parents express a strong desire to learn English. As a result, the second portion of each of the PT classes stretches English usage as parents work together through a task simulation. Parents problem-solve and support each other through a series of role-plays and simulations designed to help access opportunities and services in the community; encourage, support, and extend their children's literacy and learning; and improve their own ability to connect and communicate with their children's teachers and schools. The goal is not to teach English per se, but rather to help parents better access and use whatever English knowledge they do have (known as *pragmatics*³⁵) and gain the confidence to acquire new and challenging skills. Ideally, their PT experience will motivate parents to join one of CASA's 19 ESOL classes. LT advisers Barbara Denman, PGCC, and the UMD Family School Working Group will be key advisors on the dual language approach.

Each class will have a topical focus, including: **Child/family wellness** – topics include child health and development, parenting skills, access to community resources, and financial

literacy. Content and speakers are pulled from CASA's many other related classes as well as from the many organizations partnering on LPPN, including CentroNia and Community Clinic, Inc., our lead early childhood and health partners. **Family literacy** – the instruction and activities encourage *literacy opportunity* (availability of adequate amounts and types of reading and writing materials for children), *literacy models* (persons in the home who use literacy in an open and obvious manner), *literacy interaction* (direct exchanges between parent and child to enhance literacy knowledge), and *home-school connections* (the school's role in literacy learning and the cultural and social discontinuities that inhibit it). Finally, **school literacy** – through discussion, guest speakers, and field trips, parents explore Prince George's County schools, along with the role of teacher and parent and ways parents can support student learning. Parents will each receive an attractive PT class binder in which to insert resource material throughout the course.

Each class will end with three homework assignments: (1) an activity for parents to do with their own children, (2) a parent-as-learner assignment often aimed at extending their English usage (rehearsing how ask for school information, for example), and (3) journaling about a school related issue in Spanish to strengthen their literacy in their native language. *Evidence for the approach and potential risks*. A 10-year evaluation of Project FLAME shows promising practice across seven outcome areas³⁶ and Families in Schools' Abriendo Puertas demonstrated large effect sizes on a range of program objectives.³⁷ While CASA has extensive instruction capability, instructor quality is the greatest risk for the PT classes; accordingly, we have set up a training program for our supervising-promoters that will include training by Flora Rodriguez-Brown, class observations and support from a program coach, peer-to-peer observation and debriefing, and regular participant satisfaction surveying throughout the program. *Method of parent/staff feedback and continuous improvement*. Feedback surveys and interviews will be conducted as part of the evaluation plan on a formative and summative basis. Parent questions and hot topics are regularly surfaced through the participatory nature of the classes. Instructors will meet together with LT staff at the end of each quarter to debrief and improve the program.

Learning Together Event Series Scope and implementation. CASA’s experience over many years is that community gatherings and celebrations are crucial to any program. To drive public awareness that Langley Park is “Learning Together” and to support a range of program objectives, we will organize six community events throughout the year — each a fusion of cultures. Beginning with a Back-to-School Fiesta in late August and culminating with a Learning Through the Summer Celebration in June, the events will (a) celebrate family, (b) raise awareness of LT in the larger community, (c) preview what is coming in the next segment of the school year, (d) recognize parents and teachers who have completed programs or training or made a contribution to LT, (e) highlight the work of students, (f) build informal social bridges with teachers and school staff, (g) reinforce the role of promoters and the PT classes, and (h) educate on special themes. Evidence for the approach and potential risks. Past success locally supports the approach. No material risk is anticipated. Method of parent/staff feedback and continuous improvement. Participant surveys will be collected; events will be debriefed and program enhancements installed.

Teacher-Parent Connections Scope and implementation. Given the importance for families to reinforce messages about learning outside of school, the Flamboyant Foundation urges schools and teachers to give parents “individualized and actionable information about what children are learning in school, how they are learning it, and what families can do to support that learning at home.”³⁸ Flamboyant’s parent engagement frameworks and tools for the classroom, school, and district will be used with our three target schools to strengthen how they can enhance parent engagement. While we have the full support of the district and school principals, rather than push for a top-down mandate, we believe it will be far more fruitful to support those teachers and staff who exhibit interest in learning how to support parents’ academic socialization and involvement. Investing in their success, we believe, is the fastest way to build family-school bridges.

Accordingly, our top priority is to develop and offer a High Leverage Parent Engagement Practices Course (“Teacher Practices Course”) to teachers, jointly developed and taught by representatives of CASA, the Family School Working Group at the University of Maryland (UMD), and PGCPS. The course will consist of a week-long summer session and six evening

workshops throughout the school year. Five teachers from each of our three schools will be enrolled each year for a total of 45 teachers over the three years of the grant. Graduates will receive a certificate of completion from the UMD College of Education. Over the course of the year, teacher-participants will be charged with developing an action-research project to increase the capacity of family engagement and academic support at their school. In June, teachers will present their projects to classmates, parents, parent-promoters, school leaders, school-based parent liaisons, and PGCPs and UMD representatives in a conference format designed to facilitate discussion and deepen family engagement practices at the school and county levels.

The summer session and subsequent evening workshops will be guided by an asset-based theory of community knowledge. Funds of knowledge of families will be integrated into the sessions. The curriculum will examine Langley Park cultural knowledge as a vehicle for making K-12 teaching and learning more relevant and motivating. In addition to its focus on the application of culturally responsive teacher practices, the program will investigate Latino and African American community history and the social context of learning that are particularly important in a county that is shifting from being predominantly African American to increasingly Latino, while the teaching staff remains largely African American and European American. Subtopics will include (a) histories of migration including push and pull factors; (b) histories of incorporation, exclusion, community building, and community education infrastructure; (c) funds of knowledge and its application in parent engagement and the classroom. The effort will be supported by PGCPs's Office of International Programs which will also make available workshops designed for international parents, ESOL family workshops, programs for building parent leadership, and programs about preparing the pathway for college. *Evidence for the approach and potential risks*. Research conducted by Flamboyan on school-based parent engagement and evaluations of the Internationals approach to immigrant/LEP parent engagement can be found in Appendix D. We believe the risk of a limited first step in the schools, as described here, is off-set by the larger risk of a mandated top-down initiative that might trigger resistance. Accordingly, we are committed to investing in and working with teachers who share our

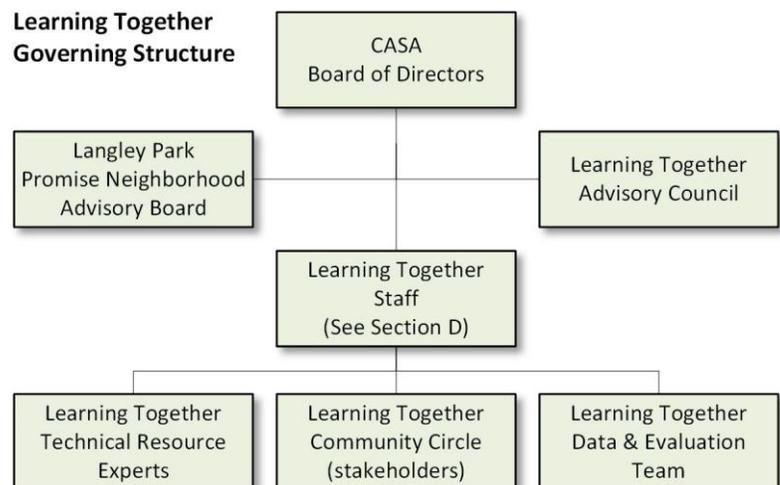
commitment to more effective family-school connections to enable children to become more comfortable and successful academically and in life. Method of parent/staff feedback and continuous improvement. Participant feedback is designed into the course and evaluated at the end of each cycle to enhance the course.

C. QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Over the past three years, CASA has led the successful planning and development of the Langley Park Promise Neighborhood (LPPN), integrating diverse stakeholders in a constructive process of community engagement, needs assessment, and program development. LPPN’s nine-member Advisory Board includes residents and partners; each of LPPN’s Design Working Groups is co-chaired by a topic expert and a resident; a group of outstanding Technical Resource Experts have provided valuable guidance; and CASA and PGCPS have worked closely with the Urban Institute to assemble an extensive data set for the neighborhood. These LPPN mechanisms will be adapted to the successful implementation of Learning Together as we describe below. In addition, we will draw on the capabilities of LPPN’s partners in early childhood, health, and family services. And finally, the mission alignment between PGCPS and CASA has led to a productive and expanding collaboration on a variety of crucial projects.

STRUCTURE FOR GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT — Community engagement in low-income immigrant neighborhoods is difficult, yet it is critical for achieving community

transformation. CASA’s ability to engage community members is widely recognized and the organization is often approached by research institutions, governmental agencies, and others to assist them in understanding the low-income immigrant community. CASA has



designed a management structure for the LT that will ensure program oversight, community involvement, evaluation, and program improvements and includes strong representation by Langley Park residents, who will serve in leadership roles on the new LT Advisory Council and Community Circle. The 13-member **Advisory Council** will provide strategic direction for LT. Co-chaired by representatives from the Prince George's County Public Schools and CASA de Maryland, Council membership will include other partner organizations and four Langley Park parents who have been active in LPPN. Council members will serve on three main LT Working Groups: *Curriculum Design, Program Implementation, and Sustainability*. During the design period, the first three months of the grant, the Council will meet every two weeks and on a quarterly basis thereafter.

To provide feedback on design and implementation at the participant level, the **Community Circle** will be clients and stakeholders, including parents, school leadership and partner organizations. It will meet monthly in year one and on a trimester basis in years 2 and 3.

Providing program and curriculum design support, the **LT Technical Resource Experts** will include the UMD School Family Working Group (K-12 issues; bilingual learning; parent engagement); Liliana Vargas, Internationals Network for Public Schools (immigrant parent engagement); Flora Rodriguez-Brown, Project FLAME founder (Latino family literacy); and Renata Claros, CentroNia (early education).

Finally, an **LT Data and Evaluation Team** will be comprised of CASA, the Urban Institute (evaluator), the UMD Family School Working Group, and PGCPs.

Members of the Learning Together Advisory Council

Duane Arbogast, Co-Chair
Prince George's Co. Public Schools

Gianni Campos
Langley Park Resident

Tehani Collazo
U. of Maryland School of Education

Barbara Denman
Prince George's Community College

Maria Guardado
Langley Park Resident

Alison Hank-Sloan
Prince George's Co. Public Schools

Virginia Kase
CASA de Maryland

Eliza Leighton, Co-Chair
CASA de Maryland

Silvia Lemus
Langley Park Resident

Beatriz Manuel
Langley Park Resident

Molly Scott
Urban Institute

Abigail Umanzor
CASA de Maryland

Linda Valli
U. of Maryland School of Education

TIMELINE, PROGRESS METRICS & ANNUAL PERFORMANCE TARGETS — August 2014 is a milestone as the official public launch of LT and the start of the first full school year. This timeline shows the project’s five phases over the initial 19 months after which the Fall and Spring cycles repeat through the end of the grant cycle in December 2016. Performance targets/metrics and main activities are described below.

Initial Implementation Timeline – Jan 2014 to July 2015

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL
Mobilizing/Hiring			Soft Launch			Fall Program Cycle			Spring Program Cycle			Retooling						

Mobilizing/Hiring *Performance target:* To do a soft launch of key program elements in April.

Main activities and milestones: Put management team in place. Hire and train 1-2 supervising-promoters and 4-6 parent-promoters and 1-2 apprentice-promoters. Commence curriculum design for Parents-as-Teachers classes and Teacher Practices Course. Design systems for capturing program data and participant feedback; set up evaluation plan instruments and procedures. Plan the calendar of family-school events.

Soft Launch *Performance target:* To deploy and test a small promoter team; prototype Parents-as-Teachers classes; run the first summer session of the Teacher Practices Course before the public launch in August 2014; hire all remaining first year staff.

Main activities and milestones: Hire 1 supervising-promoter, 4-6 additional parent-promoters and 5-8 apprentice-promoters. Promoters conduct individual sessions with parents and modify approach accordingly. Complete curricula. Modify Teacher Practices Course based on initial session. Finalize family-school events. Refine process for collecting program data, as needed.

Fall Program Cycle *Performance target:* To offer Parents-as-Teachers classes; hold 2-3 LT community events; hold 2-3 Teacher Workshops; Promoters connect with half of target families.

Main activities and milestones: Community outreach for parents; enroll parents and teachers in classes; recruit for community events; hold Advisory Council and Learning Circle meetings.

Spring Program Cycle *Performance target:* To offer full cycle of Parents-as-Teachers course; hold 2-3 LT community events; hold 2-3 Teacher Workshops; Promoters connect with half of

target first year families; complete staff evaluation. *Main activities and milestones:* Community outreach for parents; enroll parents and teachers in classes/workshops; recruit for community events; hold Advisory Council and Learning Circle meetings.

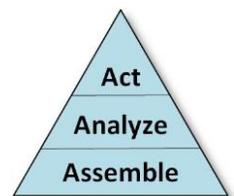
Retooling (begins in May 2015 and overlaps with end of Spring Program Cycle) *Performance target:* Update all program materials and processes as needed. Hire and train additional staff including 2-3 supervising promoters, 10-14 parent-promoters and 8-10 apprentice-promoters.

Main activities and milestones: Complete and analyze evaluation report of the 2014/15 academic year. Hold Advisory Council and Learning Together Circles to make program adjustments, as needed. Discuss with TREs and other program partners program adjustments, as needed.

COMMITMENT OF KEY PARTNERS – Prince George’s County Public Schools (PGCPS), our LEA partner, has been deeply involved in all LPPN design and development and is playing a substantial co-leadership role in ensuring the success of Learning Together. Also playing crucial contributing roles are the University of Maryland School of Education, Prince George’s Community College, Adventist HealthCare, and the Urban Institute. All of these organizations have committed the resources necessary to ensure that the project achieves its objectives. Please see Appendix G for their commitment letters and letters of support from the Maryland State Department of Education, Ford and Annie E. Casey Foundations, and others.

ENSURING FEEDBACK AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT – The management structures for Learning Together dovetail with CASA’s A-A-A program improvement model. All CASA programs *assemble* program data and feedback from participants and non-participants into its Salesforce data system, feeding into both management reports and the Evaluation Plan described in Section E below. LT’s staff will *analyze* the data and distribute short-interval performance reports for discussion. These analyses and discussions create an urgency to *act* on program improvements in the next cycle. At the staff

level, the A-A-A model will be adapted to each program component, for example, monthly in the case of the parent-promoters. At the higher level, the Urban Institute will collaborate on interim evaluations so that the performance of each program element in each stage can be reviewed with



the Advisory Council, Community Circle, and TREs enabling prompt program modifications.

These processes will be led by the Project Director with CASA's Chief Operating Officer (COO).

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

E. QUALITY OF PROJECT EVALUATION

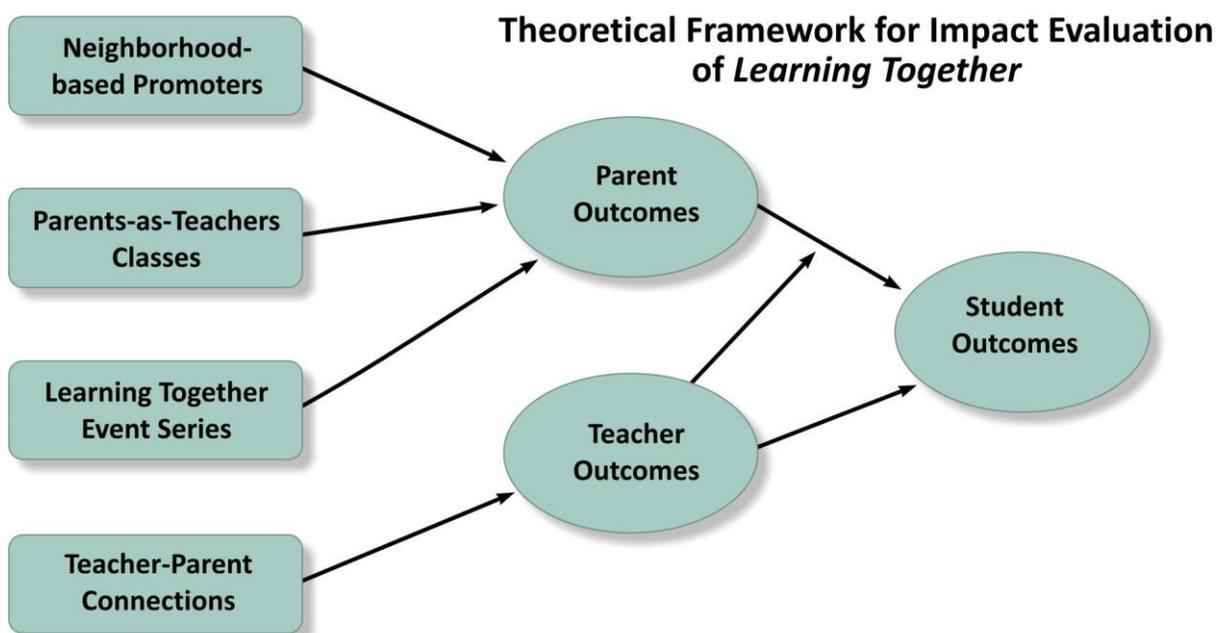
Building on the logic model presented in Section B, we will use a quasi-experimental mixed methods approach with two parts: (1) an **impact evaluation** to examine the effects of each component of Learning Together on intermediate (parent and teacher outcomes) and long range outcomes (student outcomes), and to assess the levels of participation by parents required to influence meaningfully intermediate and long range goals and (2) a **process evaluation** to gather information on implementation needed to fine-tune program strategies in real time, ensure

fidelity, and ultimately bring *Learning Together* to scale. The evaluation will build off the data sharing and evaluation frameworks developed through Langley Park Promise Neighborhood while leveraging the substantial data tracking infrastructure and capacity of CASA and PGCPs. The evaluation itself will be designed and conducted by Urban Institute (UI) in collaboration with University of Maryland School of Education to ensure quality, independence, and objectivity.

THE IMPACT EVALUATION — As the schematic below illustrates, we will examine the relationships among Learning Together programs and parent, teacher, and student outcomes.

Specifically, we will seek the answers to **5 Key Research Questions**:

- 1) *Are parent participation patterns (within and across components) and assessment of quality associated with parent outcomes, such as a greater sense of self-efficacy, engagement, and parent skills?*
- 2) *Are parent outcomes associated with student outcomes, such as pre-school enrollment, kindergarten readiness and school attendance?*
- 3) *Are teacher participation patterns and assessment of quality associated with teacher outcomes, such as a greater sense of self-efficacy and cultural knowledge?*
- 4) *Do teacher outcomes influence student outcomes directly and indirectly through parent-teacher interactions?*
- 5) *What are the thresholds for participation (within and across components) required to influence meaningfully parent and teacher outcomes and more supportive teacher-parent interactions?*



The soundness of an impact evaluation to answer these questions depends on the ability to compare families who are offered *Learning Together* to those who are not. Under ideal circumstances, this can be achieved through random control trials (RCT). However, in cases such as the “development stage” for Learning Together, the interventions cannot be effectively isolated from the control group since the promoters will be interacting regularly with other parents in the neighborhood not counted on the caseloads, and CASA will hold community-wide events to galvanize immigrant parents. Consequently, we will use quasi-experimental methods allowing us to isolate the effects of the program components. This entails leveraging PGCPs data on factors like grade, gender, race, receipt of reduced price- or free-lunch, and English proficiency of students to create comparison groups of students and parents and systematically gathering data on short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes—not just for LT program participants and their children, but for parents and students throughout PGCPs.

Analysis Plan: CASA will build off of its current Salesforce database, which is being modified to capture all Promise Neighborhood required data, to develop a comprehensive database to capture information on Learning Together program participants and their children. UI will combine this data with PGCPs administrative data on parents and students to compare outcomes at each stage. As laid out in the logic model in Section B, the data used for the analyses will include; outputs, short-term and intermediate outcomes, as well as long-term outcomes. *Outputs:* CASA will gather data on the dosage of Learning Together components that parents and teachers receive (i.e. the number of interactions a parent has with promoter, attendance at “Parents-as-Teachers” classes), track successful program completion and solicit individual assessments of Learning Together components from participants. This documentation will facilitate sophisticated analyses that test the relative impact of different Learning Together components as well as differing levels of program intensity or efficacy. *Short-term and intermediate outcomes:* In the both the short and intermediate terms, we expect to see changes in outcomes for *parents* and *teachers* who participate in Learning Together. In the short term, this means soft changes in attitudes and feelings best measured by standardized survey items, with

known psychometric properties. These measures include: parent school literacy, parenting ability, efficacy, and perceptions of interactions with teachers; as well as teacher efficacy, cultural knowledge, and perceptions of interactions with parents. In the intermediate term, we will focus on outcomes that reflect observable changes in behavior. These outcomes include: parent use of English in school settings, active engagement with children's learning, and interaction with the school and teachers. In order to gather data on short-term and intermediate outcomes, we will deploy a two-tiered strategy. CASA will solicit information directly from individual program participants, while PGCPs will gather the same items from non-participants through its annual school climate survey process. Long-term outcomes: We will use individual level PGCPs student data to track long-term outcomes including pre-school enrollment, kindergarten readiness, attendance, suspensions and expulsions, grades, LEP language acquisition, and academic achievement.

Analyses: To measure rate of change in our outcomes over time, we will use growth-curve models with repeated measures (e.g., parent sense of efficacy across $T\pi_i$ time points) both pre- and post-intervention³⁹. This technique coupled with our sample of size of roughly 3 cohorts of 600 families and 900 students, with a comparison group constructed using propensity score matching will give us substantial statistical power to detect relatively small effects, particularly for student long-term outcomes with universally available data. For example, when comparing average attendance rates for each of the Learning Together student cohorts versus those other PGCPs students of similar age and demographic backgrounds, we estimated that we would have enough statistical power to detect three-percentage point differences significant at the 0.05 confidence level on the psychometric properties of the measures we use to assess parent, teacher and student outcomes. Final power calculations for all individual Learning Together outcomes will be calculated within the first 100 days as part of the formulation of our final research design.

Given our goal to work with all 1,760 Langley Park families with children in three family cohorts, adding one third (nearly 600 families) per year, we should have sufficient analytic power to estimate medium to large effect sizes, particularly for intermediate outcomes. Final power

calculations will be performed once we finalize our research design within the first 100 days.

THE PROCESS EVALUATION will build feedback loops to diagnose implementation issues early-on and ensure the fidelity of the LT components as well as provide vital context for interpretation of the impact evaluation findings. Our process study will help answer qualitative questions like: (1) *Why do parents choose to participate or not in Learning Together program components?* (2) *How well do promoters and other CASA staff coordinate to administer Learning Together program components?* (3) *What do program participants like about Learning Together? What do they dislike?* (4) *Why do parents choose to complete or not complete Parents-as-Teachers sessions?*

Data: We will gather the data to answer these questions from varied sources. These include: Output data: CASA will produce reports on outputs like program attendance, assessments, and completion by parent characteristics (gender, age of child, language capacity) and by inputs (staff, time of sessions, etc.) to review with team members and the evaluators. Team meetings: Evaluators will observe program staff meetings to document staffing and programmatic changes over time. Program observation: Once LT is operational, evaluators will observe LT activities including promoter rounds, “Parents-as-Teachers” classes, community events, and teacher workshops. Focus groups: Feedback from parents and teachers about LT is vital. In addition to the assessment data that CASA will be gathering as outputs, UI will conduct school and neighborhood-based focus groups with program participants and non-participants. Key informant interviews: UI will conduct annual structured interviews with the promoters, LT staff, school principals and other key school personnel to gain their insights.

Applying the Results: Processes for acting on feedback and making continuous improvement were discussed in Section C.

“My mom has always taught me that education is the key to success and without education, you can’t do much. So whenever I don’t want to study for a test, she is always there to tell me it’s something small and I will be able to make it through.”

High school girl, Langley Park

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