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PACE: Partners Advancing Childhood Education
2013 Investing in Innovation Fund Development Full Application

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SIGNIFICANCE

(1) A novel approach as compared with what has been previously attempted nationally.

United Way of Greater Atlanta (UWGA), one of the oldest and largest United Way organizations in the US, is a leader in implementing large early childhood initiatives within our 13-county area. UWGA's history of success is in creating pathways to long-term achievement and stability through family engagement programs and teacher professional development opportunities designed to increase school readiness and student achievement outcomes for our youngest learners. Empirical studies have demonstrated the positive impact these interventions can have on cognitive, social, and physical developmental outcomes, while closing the achievement gap among ethnic and socioeconomic divides.^{1,2,3} Programs targeting family engagement and school-family partnerships contribute significantly to student gains in achievement, attendance, and behavior.^{4,5} However, research also shows that formal strategies to increase parent involvement and build school-family relationships are limited, and often used in isolation to support student achievement.^{6,7} UWGA will take a novel approach to early childhood education by implementing a comprehensive program targeting family engagement and family-school partnerships simultaneously to improve student outcomes, strengthening the ability of families to support their child's education and school staff to build effective home-school partnerships from PreK (ages three-five) through grade three. Our four-year i3 project, *PACE: Partners Advancing Childhood Education*, builds upon our previous work with SPARK, a W.K. Kellogg Foundation national school readiness program targeting children ages three through six at risk for being inadequately equipped to succeed in school. Over a five year period, SPARK Georgia provided similar services through four implementation "hubs" in DeKalb and Gwinnett counties, which served as centers within high-need communities focusing on 800 children and their families.⁸ In 2008, the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation made it possible to expand the success of SPARK by replicating the model incrementally through the creation of *PACE* in eight different communities while refining and learning from the model at existing hubs and laying the groundwork for future

hubs. Using lessons learned through SPARK, *PACE* incorporates parent engagement programs, teacher professional development, and collaborative community partnerships resulting in smooth school transitions and effective school-family partnerships.

PACE focuses on **Absolute Priority 6: Improving Parent and Family Engagement – Subpart A: Developing and implementing initiatives that train parents and families in the skills and strategies that will support their students in improving academic outcomes, including increased engagement and persistence in school** and is novel for four key reasons: (1) Our project integrates family engagement strategies into a comprehensive model PreK (ages three-five) to grade three and therefore, **removes the silo approach**. Children with high needs are targeted to receive a continuum of services in a diverse, geographical area via community hubs as the focal point of activity. (2) Our approach is **based on research and experience in successful implementation** of school readiness and family engagement strategies. Landmark studies of intervention programs such as Abecedarian, Perry Preschool, and Chicago Child-Parent Centers have educated policymakers about the criticalness of the early years and the potential of high-quality intervention programs.⁹ More recently, a meta-analysis of 35 preschool studies conducted over the past 20 years concluded the effect of preschool education to be quite large, such that young children who attended preschool performed statistically and significantly better on cognitive and academic measures, and experienced statistically significantly fewer instances of personal and social challenges in comparison to students who did not attend preschool.¹⁰ This study also identified a sustained impact of preschool: students who attended preschool demonstrated significantly higher levels of academic achievement and fewer behavioral issues in comparison to students who did not attend preschool for up to 25 years after early intervention. Longitudinal analyses of family involvement in early education have also shown that greater levels of parent engagement in school has a statistically significant positive effect on their child’s literacy and math achievement, as well as significant positive impacts on high school dropout and graduation rates.^{11,12,13}

Building on this research-based evidence, SPARK Georgia provided services to families through the Parents as Teachers (PAT) home visitation model as well as additional literacy based services for parents such as child development seminars and delivery of books through a mobile learning van.¹⁴ School Readiness Councils were also established at several SPARK partner schools which then led to the creation of School Transition Teams.¹⁵ Comparisons of SPARK cohorts with control groups show that SPARK children generally outperformed their peers on standardized tests in first and second grades and had significantly better school attendance.¹⁶ Low-income, preschool children at risk for reading failure were targeted through our four US Department of Education Early Reading First programs, which included high-quality professional development and coaching, and resulted in statistically significant increases in each of the four core early literacy skills that predict future reading—and academic—success.¹⁷ Together, these evaluations of prior UWGA programs affirm our history and capacity in implementation and rigorous evaluation of comprehensive, research-based school readiness programs. (3) Further study will provide the opportunity to **generate new evidence regarding the individual and combined impact of parent engagement, family-school partnerships, and school readiness initiatives targeting at-risk students.** Through the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 2011, we conducted two Family Engagement Roundtables with community leaders, service providers, and parents/families to discuss the challenges and opportunities for effective family engagement. By working with our national partners, Parents as Teachers (PAT) National Center and Parent Services Project, UWGA has made significant progress in designing, implementing, and refining a high-quality comprehensive model including home visitation, school transition, and parent leadership development. Through our quasi-experimental evaluation, examining the impact of *PACE* across four-tiers of service, we will expand on the current understanding of effective early education programs and identify best practices of joint efforts to promote student achievement through parent engagement and family-school partnerships. Our project will adhere to the standards of cultural competency, by meeting families where they are outside of formal

preschool and school-based settings and considering that some families may be reluctant to participate, important in projects serving large numbers of immigrant or non-English speaking families, such as ours. (4) Preliminary evaluation data from *PACE* provides **evidence to support the efficacy and effectiveness of our current model.**¹⁸ The 2012-13 *PACE* evaluation shows both child and parent outcome gains. After one year of program participation, 89% of parents demonstrated an increase in child development knowledge, parent life skill scores increased in six out of eight domains for healthy home environments, and parent leadership behaviors within the school and community also grew. Similarly, children’s school readiness skills have shown improvement from pre- to post-test. At post-test, 100% of children scored at the “mastered” or “strong skills” level for the *Get Ready to Read* assessment as compared to 87% at pre-test. Additionally, 100% of students scored in the average-advanced range of the *Bracken School Readiness Assessment*; an improvement from the pre-test where 25% of students scored in the very delayed-delayed range.¹⁹ Based on this history of prior success, *PACE* is poised to expand its reach to other communities in the Atlanta metro area and beyond, guaranteeing that all children and their families have the skills necessary for future academic success. Appendix D provides further documentation on *PACE* effectiveness.

(2) Contribution to the development and advancement of the field of study.

Through UWGA’s work with the Kellogg Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, PAT National Center, Parent Services Project, and other key national and regional partners, we have been an active partner in contributing to the advancement of practice in parent and family engagement. The i3 grant will allow us to test our strong theory that by equipping parents, families, and teachers with the knowledge and leadership skills to work together in support of child development and learning, we can improve high-need students’ educational and developmental outcomes from PreK (ages three-five) to grade three. We will conduct an impact study using a quasi-experimental, non-equivalent group design to examine the individual and combined impact that parent engagement and family-school partnerships have on academic

outcomes. The *PACE* evaluation will uncover useful and new information to promote best practices in parent engagement, family-school partnerships, and school readiness across a variety of settings. More specifically, the following effects will be studied: (1) removing the silo of services and connecting research-based strategies into a continuous, comprehensive family and parent engagement model; (2) connecting settings that typically do not collaborate (e.g., child care centers, family child care providers, elementary schools) to improve student outcomes; (3) making school transitions a multiyear window, rather than a single point limited to kindergarten or first grade; and (4) making adjustments needed to support successful family and parent engagement among high-need, under-researched populations.

Our project has the benefit of involving a large number of strong partners with their own networks which can further disseminate findings. We will develop a National Family Engagement Council to guide strategic direction and dissemination with a focus on developing a model of best practices and partnerships that can be replicated nationwide and will include: PAT National Center, Parent Services Project, University of Georgia Center for Family Research, GA Grade Level Reading Campaign, Atlanta Speech School, GA Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS), United Way Worldwide, and GA Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL). For instance, our work with PAT National Center and Parent Services Project has resulted in the design and implementation of products to build capacity in home visitation, school transition, and parent leadership development for PreK families, such as a community hub manual, School Transition for PAT Parent Educators guide, the Parent Leadership Institute Training-the-Trainers manual, and “Let’s Go to School! A Guide for Families on Kindergarten Transition.” Furthermore, UWGA has a longstanding relationship with Dr. Kristie Kauerz, a research scientist at the University of Washington and Program Director for PreK-3rd Education. Dr. Kauerz is the lead author of *Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches*. This continuum of learning framework was designed based on research and best practices in a variety of categories of PreK to grade three

work.²⁰ *PACE* results could help further inform the family engagement practices of the Framework and the National P-3 Center. Appendix G confirms these commitments and provides an overview of each partner's contributions.

(3) Substantially improve on the outcomes achieved by other practices, such as through better student outcomes, lower cost, or accelerated results.

Studies of our previous work in the area of early learning show that our programs are effective in improving student outcomes. The *PACE* model is evidence-based and will improve outcomes for students in our target population. A study of four cohorts of *PACE* implementation (birth to age five) since 2008 has demonstrated the project's positive impact on improving student growth, as evidenced in the most recent 2012-13 evaluation: (1) Developed by the PAT National Center, the *Parent Knowledge Test* assesses the understanding of essential components of early childhood development.²¹ Parents complete the pre-test upon enrolling in *PACE* and the post-test nine months following their enrollment. Nearly 89% of parents, who took both the pre- and post-test, demonstrated a gain in knowledge.²² (2) The *Get Ready to Read!* tool is administered to four-year-old children and measures pre-reading skills in three areas indicated by research to be essential for early literacy: print knowledge, beginning writing, and oral language.²³ Children at both *PACE* hubs made positive shifts in their scores from pre- to post-test during the 2012-13 school year setting the stage for age-appropriate success in school. (3) The *Bracken School Readiness Assessment* measures a child's readiness for school in areas such as letters and numbers.²⁴ It is administered to rising kindergarteners in the fall and spring before they enter kindergarten. Children who completed both the pre- and post-test demonstrated a positive shift toward school preparedness.

PACE's impact is supported by the inclusion of several strategies that evidence-based research has shown to have a positive impact on student achievement. **(1) Parents as Teachers (PAT):** PAT is an internationally recognized strengths-based educational initiative designed to enhance child development and school achievement focused on increasing parent knowledge and

improving parenting practices, providing early detection of developmental delays and health issues, and increasing children's school readiness and success. Four randomized control trials and seven peer-reviewed published outcome studies have shown statistically significant effects of PAT on children and parents in comparison to their non-PAT peers. These effects include: at age three, PAT children are more advanced in language, social development, and other cognitive abilities; PAT children score higher on kindergarten readiness tests and standardized measures of reading, math, and language in grades 1-4; and PAT parents get involved in schools early and are more involved throughout their child's schooling.²⁵ Studies further affirm that participation in home visitation programs such as PAT, predicts children's school readiness and third grade achievement regardless of family income.²⁶

(2) Incredible Years School Age BASIC Series: Incredible Years is a preventative program focused on building positive parenting practices and healthy parent-child relationships. Randomized control trials of Incredible Years within high-poverty schools reported increases in school protective factors, such as socioemotional competence and fewer behavior challenges among children, as well as healthier parent-child relationships at home.^{27,28} Including this program in the *PACE* model is expected to sustain the positive effect of PAT into the K-3 environment, as well as provide high-quality parent engagement services to a new population of high-need families.

(3) Parent Leadership Institute (PLI): The PLI is an initiative of the Parent Services Project designed to train and support emerging parent leaders in early childhood and school settings. Parent Services Project's PLI and Stronger Together curricula are grounded in the five evidenced-based protective factors promoted by the national Strengthening Families Initiative and Center for the Study of Social Policy. Positive outcomes for children occur when parents are an integral part of the planning and decision making process.²⁹ A national evaluation revealed statistically significant increases in parent knowledge, skills, and capacity and in parents' sense of themselves as leaders; positive trends for all 17 leadership capacities and skills such as goal setting, communication skills, and parent recruitment; parent leadership action initiated with credit to past PLI participation; and

partner agency capacity and engagement of parents.³⁰ **(4) School Transitions and Alignment:** Effective school transition practices have multiple positive impacts such as improved academic achievement, especially for low-income children; narrowed achievement gaps; and increased parental involvement.³¹ To improve the quality of education, studies find that PreK through grade three alignment is a significant factor.³² For instance, a study of elementary schools in California revealed that some schools scored significantly better on the state’s academic performance compared to schools with similar students. Achievement gains were also linked to practices that provide schoolwide instructional consistency within grades, curricular alignment from grade-to-grade, and classroom instruction guided by state academic standards.³³ **(5) Professional Development:** When staff understand students’ home culture and context, they can develop strategies to bridge school and home-based activities and increase support for student achievement. *PACE* will prepare school staff to engage parents and families through high-quality professional development that includes presenting information, modeling behaviors, practicing strategies, providing feedback, and coaching.

QUALITY OF THE PROJECT DESIGN

(1) Addresses the absolute priority the applicant is seeking to meet.

PACE focuses on **Absolute Priority 6: Improving Parent and Family Engagement – Subpart A: Developing and implementing initiatives that train parents and families in the skills and strategies that will support their students in improving academic outcomes, including increased engagement and persistence in school.** Our i3 project will take *PACE* best practices to the next level by implementing a continuum of parent and family engagement from PreK (ages three-five) to grade three to improve student outcomes for child care centers, family child care providers, and two DeKalb County elementary schools. Located in Clarkston, Georgia, our target schools will be Indian Creek Elementary (66% limited English proficient, 97% free/reduced lunch, Title 1, did not meet AYP, and under Needs Improvement Status) and Jolly Elementary (39% limited English proficient, 95% free/reduced lunch, Title 1, did not meet AYP,

and under Needs Improvement Status), as well as eight child care centers and family child care providers that feed into Indian Creek and Jolly.^{34,35,36,37} Our child care centers and family child care providers were selected after consultation with community partners to identify those agencies best poised to implement high-quality family engagement strategies. Moreover, several of our participating child care centers and family child care providers include refugee populations, reflective of the community and elementary school demographics. Clarkston is a diverse suburb of Atlanta with 43.3% of its population comprised of foreign born persons.³⁸ Moreover, Clarkston is highly impoverished with 31.7% of its residents living below the poverty line.³⁹ This staggering statistic is more than double the national rate of 14.3%!⁴⁰ Our program will reach more than 900 students and their families, across two cohorts of participants and other students in the target schools and centers impacted by *PACE* trained educators, as well as approximately 82 teachers and administrators over the four-year grant period. As the hub agencies, Indian Creek and Jolly will serve as our focal point for the participating families, staff, and community partners. Families will be selected for participation in *PACE* based on risk factors outlined in the National Center for Children in Poverty's Young Child Risk Calculator (e.g., more than 200% below the federal poverty line; households without English speakers; large families; low parental education; residential mobility; single, teen, or unemployed parents).⁴¹ *PACE* will be led by our Project Director who is responsible for managing program implementation, collaborating with program partners, supervising Parent Educators and Transition Coaches, and co-supervising consultants. Our Parent Educators, working with families of children ages three-five will provide direct services to families through home visits and deliver the evidence-based Parents as Teachers (PAT) curriculum. Building on best practices from our existing PreK program, our Transition Coaches will use the Incredible Years School Age BASIC Parents Series to pilot a new and expanded parent engagement program, providing monthly parent workshops and follow-up home visits to families with children ages five-eight.

Educators and Coaches will also cultivate parent leadership by coordinating Parent Leadership Institutes, and empower our school staff with resources to successfully engage parents.

(2) The clarity and coherence of the project goals, including the extent to which the proposed project articulates an explicit plan or actions to achieve its goals.

PACE's goals, from our detailed logic model (see Appendix D), include: (1) improve parent and family engagement in child's education; (2) build family-school partnerships; and (3) increase student's school readiness and academic achievement. *PACE* outcomes are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: <i>PACE</i> Outcomes
<p>Outcome 1 – Ready Parents: Improve parent and family engagement in child's education.</p> <p><u>1a.</u> Parent knowledge scores for <i>PACE</i> parents will increase an average of 5% each year of program participation. <i>PACE</i> parents will demonstrate a significantly higher level of knowledge growth each year in comparison to parents who did not participate in <i>PACE</i>. <i>Measure: Annual Pre-/Post-test Parent Survey – Child Development Knowledge</i></p> <p><u>1b.</u> <i>PACE</i> parents will demonstrate an increase on a minimum of two healthy home indicators (e.g., reading time and other school-related activities, parent-child relationships) each year of program participation. <i>PACE</i> parents will demonstrate a significantly higher level of growth in healthy home indicators each year in comparison to parents who did not participate in <i>PACE</i>. <i>Measure: Annual Pre-/Post-test Parent Survey – Home Environment</i></p> <p><u>1c.</u> <i>PACE</i> parents who participated in the Parent Leadership Institute (PLI) will demonstrate an average increase of 5% in levels of school involvement and leadership behaviors each year of program participation. <i>PACE</i> parents who participated in the PLI will demonstrate a significantly higher level of growth in school involvement and leadership behaviors each year in comparison to parents who did not attend the PLI. <i>Measure: Annual Pre-/Post-test Parent Survey – School Involvement and Leadership; PLI and School Activity Attendance Records</i></p> <p><u>1d.</u> The number of <i>PACE</i> families requiring developmental disability services, as identified through <i>PACE</i> administered screenings, who receive referrals will increase each year by 5%. <i>Measure: Ages and Stages Questionnaire, Annual PACE Administrative and 2-1-1 Data, Annual Pre-/Post-test Parent Survey – Supportive Resources</i></p>
<p>Outcome 2 – Ready Schools: Build family-school partnerships.</p>
<p><u>2a.</u> <i>PACE</i> educators (child care providers, teachers, administrators) will demonstrate an average increase of 5% in levels of participation in school transition activities for each year of program participation. <i>PACE</i> educators will demonstrate a significantly higher level of growth in school transition activity participation in comparison to non-<i>PACE</i> educators. <i>Measure: Annual Pre-/Post-test Educator Survey – School Transition Activities; School Activity Attendance Records</i></p> <p><u>2b.</u> At least 75% of <i>PACE</i> families will participate in a minimum of two school transition activities each year. <i>PACE</i> parents will demonstrate a significantly higher level of participation in school transition activities in comparison to non-<i>PACE</i> parents. <i>Measure: Annual Pre-/Post-test Parent Survey; School Activity Attendance Records</i></p>

Table 1: PACE Outcomes

2c. The School Transition Council will identify and implement a minimum of two new school transition activities each year. School transition activities identified by the School Transition Council will be integrated into school policy by the end of Year 4. *Measure: Annual Pre-/Post-test Educator Survey; Annual School Policy Records*

Outcome 3 – Ready Students: Increase school readiness and student achievement.

3a. In each year of the program, a minimum of 85% of PreK *PACE* students will demonstrate significant gains in oral language skills. PreK *PACE* students will demonstrate a significantly higher level of growth in pre-literacy skills each year in comparison to non-*PACE* PreK students. *Measure: Annual Pre-/Post-test Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test IV*

3b. In each year of the program, a minimum of 85% of PreK *PACE* students will demonstrate significant gains in pre-mathematics skills. PreK *PACE* students will demonstrate a significantly higher level of growth in pre-mathematics skills each year in comparison to non-*PACE* PreK students. *Measure: Annual Pre-/Post-test Bracken School Readiness Assessment (Third Edition)*

3c. In each year of the program, a minimum of 85% of PreK *PACE* students will score “average” or “above average” in social skills development at year-end post-test. PreK *PACE* students will demonstrate a significantly higher growth rate in social skills each year in comparison to non-*PACE* PreK students. *Measure: Annual Pre-/Post-test Social Skills Rating System – Teacher Report, Social Skills Scale, Preschool Level*

3d. Beginning in Year 2, a statistically significantly greater proportion of kindergarten students who received at least two years of *PACE* will meet or exceed state standards in English language arts in comparison to non-participating kindergarten students. *Measure: Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS)*

3e. Beginning in Year 2, a statistically significantly greater proportion of kindergarten students who received at least two years of *PACE* will meet or exceed state standards in mathematics in comparison to non-participating kindergarten students. *Measure: Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (GKIDS)*

3f. Beginning in Year 2, a statistically significantly greater proportion of students in grades 1-3 who received at least two years of *PACE* will meet or exceed state standards in English language arts in comparison to non-participating students each year. *Measure: Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), grades 1-3*

3g. Beginning in Year 2, a statistically significantly greater proportion of students in grades 1-3 who received at least two years of *PACE* will meet or exceed state standards in reading in comparison to non-participating students each year. *Measure: Georgia CRCT, grades 1-3*

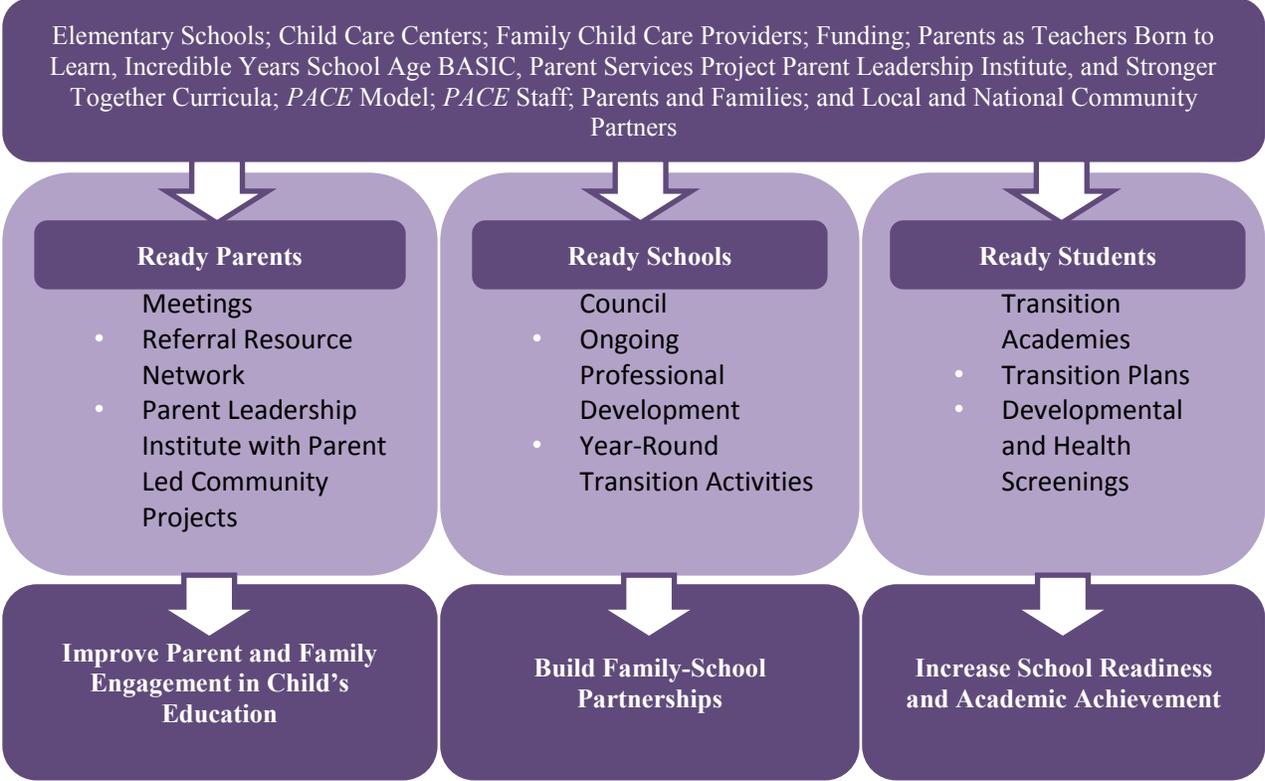
3h. Beginning in Year 2, a statistically significantly greater proportion of students in grades 1-3 who received at least two years of *PACE* will meet or exceed state standards in mathematics in comparison to non-participating students each year. *Measure: Georgia CRCT, grades 1-3*

3i. Beginning in Year 2, K-3 students who received at least two years of *PACE* will demonstrate a statistically significantly higher average rate of school attendance in comparison to non-participating students in each program year. *Measure: School Attendance Records*

3j. Beginning in Year 2, K-3 students who received at least two years of *PACE* will

Table 1: PACE Outcomes
demonstrate lower frequency of delinquency referrals in comparison to non-participating students in each program year. <i>Measure: School Delinquency Records</i>

To achieve our goals, we will engage in multiple strategies represented in our existing logic model in Appendix D and summarized in the figure below.



(3) The clarity, completeness, and coherence of project goals, and a description of project activities for achieving those goals, including the identification of potential risks.

Table 2 highlights our three interconnected goal and strategy areas to improve parent and family engagement and student outcomes. Research that supports each of these strategies is based on our previous experience as well as evidenced-based practices highlighted in the Significance section and Appendix D, with further, detailed partner contributions outlined in Appendix G.

Table 2. Goals and Strategies Aligned with Absolute Priority 6
Goal 1: Improve parent and family engagement in child's education.
<i>Strategy Area: Ready Parents (Years 1-2: 250 families, Years 3-4: 250 families = 500 families)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide four full-time Parent Educators (PreK) with a caseload of up to 25 families each year and three full-time Transition Coaches (kindergarten to grade three) with a caseload of up to

50 families per year;

- Use PAT delivery components: *Personal Visits* (50 minutes/month) in which Parent Educators educate parents about their child’s development and engage the family in activities providing meaningful interaction and *Parent Group Meetings* (1 hour/month) to discuss child development and parenting issues in a supportive environment;
- Provide referrals in response to *Screenings and Assessments* including developmental, health, vision, and hearing through the *Referral Resource Network* administered by a United Way 2-1-1 Referral Agent to assist families in identifying and connecting with needed resources;
- Implement the Incredible Years School Age BASIC Parents Series for Transition Coaches to pilot a new and expanded parent engagement program, for children ages 5-8 providing monthly parent workshops and follow-up home visits to these families in partnership with the GA Department of Early Care and Learning and UGA Center for Family Research;
- Continue partnership with the Parent Services Project to enhance and expand the *Parent Leadership Institute* (PLI) to add kindergarten to grade three and introduce a literacy focused component using the Scholastic Read and Rise Family Guide;
- Implement PLI workshops designed to train and support emerging parent leaders in early childhood and school settings; key topics include: family strategic planning, organizing for change, leadership techniques in diverse settings, understanding family support principles, and influencing school systems;
- Develop modified PLI workshop series for Summer Transition Academy (STA) to train and support emerging parent leaders in early childhood and school settings; and
- Assist development of parent-led community projects that form relationships with educators and the community to enhance children’s academic and social-emotional skills.

Potential Risks: (1) ***Working with families where English is a second language or who do not speak English.*** PACE will contract with translators to help provide equal access to PACE services for these families. Bilingual Parent Educators (PreK) and Transition Coaches (kindergarten to grade three) will also be available to support families. The PACE Project Director will ensure program documents are written in multiple languages (e.g., English, Spanish). Program staff will recognize that some parents may be unable to read and will provide verbal information so that all families receive information regarding their child’s progress. (2) ***Working with refugee families.*** To address barriers and to ensure high-quality services for these families, representatives from Refugee Family Services, will serve on our PACE Management Team. (3) ***Working with students and families with special needs.*** Every PACE student will be provided with developmental, health, vision, and hearing screenings. Children with identified issues will be referred to appropriate services through the Resource Referral Network and our United Way 2-1-1 Referral Agent as our Parent Educators (PreK) and Transition Coaches (Kindergarten to grade three) provide ongoing family support and services. Special assistive devices will be provided to students and families who participate in the program if needed. (4) ***Participation and access to child care.*** Child care will be provided to parents during education activities taking place outside of the home to encourage participation and alleviate challenges with arranging for and affording child care.

Goal 2: Build family-school partnerships.

Strategy Area: Ready Schools (125 families/year X 4 years = 500 families, 4 Parent Educators, 3 Transition Coaches, 76 teachers, 6 administrators, 16 summer academy teachers)

- Empower school staff with resources to engage parents;
- Provide teachers with training in five-day Summer Transition Academy (STA) focused on the content knowledge and pedagogical skills needed to implement evidence-based reading interventions, strategies for addressing the social-emotional needs of young children, family engagement, and providing grade-level support with coaching (two hours per day) from the Atlanta Speech School and the Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning who will model lessons, co-teach, observe, and provide feedback and coaching;
- Expand school transition activities through grade three, using best practices developed by UWGA, University of Washington, and PAT National Center;
- Provide year-round school transition activities for all families focusing on three key areas: Establish Relationships, Promote Academics, and Provide Ongoing Communication;
- Convene a School Transition Council of school administrators, child care centers, and family child care providers to plan transition activities and vertical/horizontal alignment based on state preschool and elementary Common Core Standards and Georgia’s Quality Rating and Improvement System;
- Provide staff with training to engage and empower families to make the home to school connection through use of the “Utilizing School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action” with topics such as establishing a framework for school, family, and community partnerships; reviewing case studies of partnerships in action; developing state and district leadership; and increasing family involvement in schoolwork; and
- Implement the Parent Services Project’s *Stronger Together* curriculum (three-day annual training), a nationally field-tested, transformational curriculum focused on developing strong relationships between educators and parents; combines training, leadership development, and application of skills and knowledge; curriculum includes content which is directly related to ensuring the healthy, emotional development of children and promoting family engagement.

Potential Risks: (1) Scheduling professional development with existing school and child care schedules. *The PACE Project Director will work with school administrators and child care center directors to schedule professional development and trainings for PACE and prevent scheduling conflicts with the existing school and child care schedules. Efforts will be made to schedule PACE professional development and trainings on existing professional development days. In addition, professional development and training materials will be posted to our PACE website and readily accessible.*

Goal 3: Increase school readiness and student achievement.

Strategy Area: Ready Students (transition activities: 250 families in Years 1-2 and Years 3-4 = 500; Summer Transition Academy for 80 children/year X 4 years = 320 children)

- Develop individualized early learning, school, and child transition plans via Parent Educators and Transition Coaches for each student based on the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards and Common Core Standards;
- Collaborate with GA Grade Level Reading Campaign to implement intensive grade level Summer Transition Academy (STA) (rising kindergarten to grade three) 5 half days/week for

4 weeks (2 classes with 10 students/grade level) to provide targeted small group instruction for struggling readers, prepare students for academic success, and prevent fade-out;⁴² use of evidenced-based practices to enhance reading comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary of children reading below grade level; and employ an assessment protocol to identify students who are at-risk for or already experiencing reading failure; and

- Share PreK data and integrate use of GKIDS, a performance-based assessment providing data on level of instructional support needed for students entering kindergarten which promotes internalization of standards, curriculum, and instruction by PreK to grade three teachers.

Potential Risk: (1) Working with students and families with special needs, (2) Working with families where English is a second language or families who do not speak English, and (3) Working with refugee families. As described above, in Goal 1, various interventions have been identified and will be implemented to address these three identified areas of risk.

QUALITY OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

(1) Management plan articulates key responsibilities and well-defined objectives, including the timelines and milestones or completion of major project activities, metrics to assess progress, and annual targets to monitor whether the project is achieving its goals.

Our project will receive overall direction, operations management, and program accountability from: (1) The **PACE Management Team** who will also be responsible for development of a long-term sustainability plan. The team will be led by our Project Director with representatives from: DeKalb County Schools (DCS), DECAL, Atlanta Speech School, Parent Services Project, Refugee Family Services, and The Evaluation Group (see Appendix G). (2) The **PACE Project Director** (1 FTE) will be responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operation of the program; supervising the Parent Educators and Transition Coaches; collaborating with evaluators and partners; leading the National Family Engagement Council; developing dissemination and sustainability plans; and coordinating professional development, school transition activities, and the Summer Transition Academy. (3) The **National Family Engagement Council** will guide strategic direction and dissemination of strategies with a focus on developing a replicable model of best practices and scalability (see Appendix G). (4) The **School Transition Council** will plan transition activities and vertical, horizontal, and temporal curriculum alignment based on state Common Core Standards, Georgia's Quality Rating and Improvement System, and Kristie Kauerz's Framework for PreK-3rd grade alignment from the University of Washington. (5)

Other personnel and expert consultants include: PreK Parent Educators (4 FTE); school-based Transition Coaches (3 FTE); United Way 2-1-1 Referral Agent (.50 FTE); family child care providers (4 total); child care centers (4 total); Indian Creek Elementary; Jolly Elementary; and professional development providers (e.g., Atlanta Speech School). Periodic, ongoing activities throughout the grant include: Management Team and School Transition Council meetings (monthly); evaluation team reports (quarterly); and National Family Engagement Council meetings (quarterly). Table 3 provides an overview of our management plan.

Table 3. PACE Management Plan (January 2014 – December 2017)			
Goal 1: Improve parent and family engagement in child’s education.			
Milestone	Timeline	Responsibility	PACE Outcome
Hire Project Director	1/14	Project Advisor	1a, 1b, 1c, 1d
Hire Parent Educators, Transition Coaches, and United Way 2-1-1 Referral Agent	1/14	Project Advisor, Project Director	1a, 1b, 1c, 1d
Implement Incredible Years School Age BASIC Series training	2/14	Project Director, Transition Coaches	1a, 1b, 1d
Collaborate with UGA Center for Family Research and DECAL to expand family support and home visitation to grade three	2/14, ongoing	Project Director, Transition Coaches	1a, 1b, 1d
Recruit families for PAT and Incredible Years	2/14, ongoing	Parent Educators, Transition Coaches	1a, 1b, 1d
Begin use of PAT and Incredible Years delivery components with families	3/14	Parent Educators, Transition Coaches	1a, 1b, 1d
Help families identify and connect with needed resources through Referral Resource Network	3/14, ongoing	Parent Educators, Transition Coaches, 2-1-1 Referral Agent	1d
Expand PLI to add K-3 and a literacy component for parents	Begin, 5/14	Project Director	1c
Implement PLI workshops for parents	8/14, annually	Project Director, Parent Educators, Transition Coaches	1c
Assist with parent-driven community projects	8/14, annually	Project Director	1c
Goal 2: Build family-school partnerships.			
Begin School Transition Council meetings	3/14, monthly	Project Director	2a
Provide year-round school transition activities	4/14, ongoing	Project Director, PACE Staff, DCS	2a, 2b, 2c,
Implement <i>Stronger Together</i> three-day	4/14,	Parent Services	2a, 2b

Table 3. PACE Management Plan (January 2014 – December 2017)			
training	quarterly	Project	
Provide ongoing assistance and coaching in <i>Stronger Together</i> and other strategies to engage and empower families	4/14, quarterly	Parent Services Project, Professional Development Providers	2a, 2b, 2c,
Provide grade-level, training, support, and coaching for Summer Transition Academy	6/14, daily	Atlanta Speech School	2a, 2b, 2c
Goal 3: Increase school readiness and student achievement.			
Provide developmental, health, vision, and hearing screenings and assessments and appropriate referrals	Ongoing	Parent Educators, Transition Coaches, DCS, 2-1-1 Referral Agent, Referral Agencies	1d, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 3f, 3g, 3h, 3i, 3j
Hire Summer Transition Academy teachers	3/14, annually	Project Director, DCS	3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 3f, 3g, 3h, 3i, 3j
Design individualized transition plans	3/14, annually	Parent Educators, Transition Coaches, Teachers	2c, 2d, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 3f, 3g, 3h, 3i, 3j
Provide training for Summer Transition Academy teachers	4/14, annually	Project Director, DCS	3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 3f, 3g, 3h, 3i, 3j
Implement K-3 Summer Transition Academy	6/14, annually	Project Director, Teachers	3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 3f, 3g, 3h, 3i, 3j

(2) Commitment of any key partners or evidence of broad support from stakeholders.

With secured match from the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation (see Appendix G), our proposed four-year i3 project will take *PACE* best practices to the next level by testing implementation of a comprehensive model that extends the continuum of our family engagement model to grade three. Our project has the benefit of involving a variety of national partners (Parents As Teachers National Center, Parent Services Project, United Way Worldwide) and state/local partners (DeKalb County Schools, University of Georgia Center for Family Research, Atlanta Speech School, Refugee Family Services, GA Campaign for Grade Level Reading, GA Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS), and GA Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL)) who have their own networks through which our project will be studied and findings further disseminated (see Appendix G). Several partners (PAT National Center, Parent Services

Project, University of Georgia, United Way Worldwide, GA Grade Level Reading Campaign, Atlanta Speech School, GEEARS, and DECAL) will also serve on our National Family Engagement Council to guide strategic direction and dissemination with a focus on developing a model of best practices and partnerships to replicate nationwide.

(3) Feedback and continuous improvement in the operation of the proposed project.

Periodic, ongoing activities throughout the grant include: Management Team and School Transition Council meetings (monthly); evaluation team reports (quarterly); and National Family Engagement Council meetings (quarterly). By providing these ongoing activities throughout the year, *PACE* will have a continuous feedback loop that will assist with monitoring the program. Time will be allocated at meetings to allow review of reports and other data to inform *PACE* personnel, partners, and stakeholders of the progress, to date, of the program. The *PACE* Project Director and Management Team will use these sources of information to identify areas for improvement and make adjustments, as needed, throughout the life of the project. In addition, a customized website, linked to United Way's *PACE* website, will be created as a tool to manage implementation and promote information sharing and networking across communities. The website will provide various areas geared to specific populations (e.g., Parent Educators, Transition Coaches, consultants, families) and include a variety of useful components (e.g., directory, data input, resource library, FAQs). *PACE* will also make use of videoconferencing, online file sharing systems, project management tools, and mobile technology devices for communication and coordination of day-to-day activities.

PERSONNEL

(1) Project's staffing plan, including the identification of the project director, and with unfilled key personnel positions, identification of how critical work will proceed.

The following highlights qualifications, including training and experience, of key project personnel: **(1) United Way of Greater Atlanta:** Serving as the fiscal agent for our i3 program, UWGA has an extensive history of managing large initiatives focused on early childhood and K-

12 education, closing achievement gaps, and increasing student achievement for all students (see Appendix C). Since 2003, our education division has implemented four federal Early Reading First grants (\$17M), a National Center for Learning Disabilities program (\$1M), a HHS Early Learning Opportunities Act initiative (\$911K), and three large foundation and privately funded programs (\$12M). These programs, implemented with various partners have an impeccable history with no audit findings. Further, UWGA has experience overseeing eight *PACE* sites which include multiple community-based partners and school districts. **(2) Project Advisor (.15 FTE):** Katrina Mitchell (M.Ed., Harvard University) has participated in the development of the *PACE* model since 2008 and will serve as our Project Advisor. She has extensive experience managing projects the size and scope of our proposed i3 project which includes: the development and management of local and regional initiatives that engage all segments of the community to drive sustainable change in education and in improving the outcomes for children, youth, and their families; leadership, strategic direction, management, and financial oversight of over 10 grant-funded initiatives; strategic direction for UWGA's Education Community Investment Process that allocates more than \$6 million to community partners serving children and youth in metropolitan Atlanta; and supervision of eight mid- and junior-level staff members. Ms. Mitchell will serve on the Management Team and supervise the Project Director. **(3) Project Director (1 FTE):** A national search for a full-time Project Director with the appropriate experience and qualifications will be conducted if *PACE* is selected for i3 funding. The *PACE* Project Director will lead the Management Team, supervise the Parent Educators and Transition Coaches, coordinate local partnerships, convene the National Family Engagement Council, collaborate with program evaluators, lead sustainability and scale up planning to replicate the *PACE* model, and disseminate project results to key stakeholders. **(4) Parent Educators (4 FTE):** Families with children in PreK (ages three-five) will receive intensive services through our ready parents strategy provided by our Parent Educators. These staff will have a bachelor's degree with skills in developing and implementing activities associated with age-appropriate social, emotional, and

physical development for children in PreK; preparation for new educational settings; support for families through use of the PAT foundational curriculum; and effective community collaboration. **(5) Transition Coaches (3 FTE):** Families with children kindergarten to grade three will receive intensive services through our ready parents strategy. Transition coaches will have a bachelor's degree with skills in developing and implementing activities associated with age-appropriate social, emotional, and physical development for children kindergarten to grade three; preparation for new educational settings; support for families through use of the Incredible Years School Age BASIC program; and effective community collaboration. **(6) United Way 2-1-1 Referral Agent (.50 FTE):** *PACE* will be supported by a part-time 2-1-1 Referral Agent who will refer families for necessary services through the Resource Referral Network. The agent will assess the needs of the family, offer community referrals, and provide follow-up with families and community partners to ensure success of interventions. This agent will also build the 2-1-1 database to ensure community-based referral options are focused within the Clarkston community. The agent will report to Nicola Canty, UWGA Special Projects Manager who will meet regularly with the *PACE* Project Director, Parent Educators, and Transition Coaches to provide information regarding family referrals. **(7) PreK-3 Summer Transition Academy Teachers:** *PACE* and DCS will hire 16 certified teachers to staff our Summer Transition Academy instructing students five half-days per week for four weeks in the summer. Rising kindergarten through grade three students will be recruited to participate. **(8) National Family Engagement Council:** This council includes nine representatives from nationally recognized organizations with a variety of experiences managing large family engagement initiatives. The council will meet quarterly, with one of these meetings in person UWGA. **(9) The Evaluation Group (TEG):** TEG, with more than 20 years of experience in implementing, and evaluating Department of Education grant programs, will serve as the independent evaluator. The TEG team has expertise in all areas of evaluation, including research design, measurement, benchmarking, test and survey construction, data analysis, and reporting. TEG utilizes multiple data collection

methods paired to match each program’s performance requirements. In addition, TEG has a long standing professional relationship with UWGA and has worked on past evaluations of *PACE* and other large initiatives such as Early Reading First. TEG has developed several data collection tools and protocols to date for UWGA including on-line data collection and reporting platforms. Eugenia Gwynn, Ph.D. and Krista Collins, Ph.D. will serve as the lead evaluators for *PACE*, continuing their previous work and relationship with the UWGA *PACE* initiative. Appendix G provides an overview of these partners and their experiences that will contribute to the success of *PACE* moving the field of study forward, and Appendix F provides resumes and job descriptions for *PACE* key personnel. *PACE* will coordinate with the appropriate offices at UWGA to ensure that available grant funded positions are posted within a reasonable amount of time after receiving the award. A *PACE* kick-off meeting led by the Project Director will be held within the first 30 days of the program and a 90 day implementation plan will be created to ensure that critical work is completed while all *PACE* positions are filled.

QUALITY OF PROJECT EVALUATION

(1) The clarity and importance of the key questions to be addressed by the project evaluation, and the appropriateness of the methods for each question.

The following questions will be used to guide the primary analyses of *PACE*:

Table 4: <i>PACE</i> Impact Evaluation Key Questions
1. Confirmatory: What is the effect of <i>PACE</i> PreK services on... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Pre-literacy skills after two years of program participation? b. Pre-mathematics skills after two years of program participation? c. Socioemotional development after two years of program participation?
2. Confirmatory: What is the effect of <i>PACE</i> K-3 services on... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. English language arts after two years of program participation? b. Reading after two years of program participation? c. Mathematics after two years of program participation?
3. Exploratory: What are the unique and combined effects of <i>PACE</i> ready parents and ready schools program components on student behavior and achievement after two years of program participation?

As shown in Table 5 below, a mixed-methods approach will combine qualitative and quantitative techniques to triangulate multiple sources of data and significantly enhance the validity of the

evaluation process.⁴³ Additionally, each question will be addressed by multiple data sources to assess the overall effectiveness of the program with reliability. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods will increase the depth of our information and provide feedback enabling us to make critical mid-course corrections and program adjustments in a timely manner.

Table 5: PACE Evaluation Questions and Data Sources			
	Q1	Q2	Q3
<i>Parent Measures</i>			
Parent Survey			X
Parent Focus Group			X
Parent Group Meeting Observations			X
Parent Leadership Institute Observations			X
<i>School Measures</i>			
Educator Survey (child care providers, K-3 teachers, administrators)	X	X	X
Educator Focus Group (child care providers, K-3 teachers, administrators)			X
School Transition Council Meeting Observations			X
<i>Student Measures</i>			
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test	X		
Bracken School Readiness Assessment	X		
Social Skills Rating System	X		
K-3 School Data (demographics, attendance, and behavior records)			X
Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills	X		
Georgia Criterion-Referenced Competency Test		X	

Data collection is organized to align with the three primary goals of *PACE*. Participants receiving *PACE* services and those in the comparison groups will be asked to complete the same measures. A parent survey will be administered at the beginning and end of each year to capture change in outcomes over time. The parent survey will assess constructs such as parent knowledge of child development, home environment, school involvement and leadership, and school-family relationships, as well as questions regarding program experience and satisfaction. Similarly, child care providers, teachers, and administrators will be asked to complete an educator survey at the beginning and end of each year. The educator survey will assess constructs such as school-transition activities, school-family relationships, and parent involvement, as well as questions regarding program experience and satisfaction. Four versions of the survey will be available so that questions can be tailored to program experience of the

respondent, as well as the ages/developmental needs of their students. Separate parent and educator focus groups with *PACE* and non-*PACE* participants will be conducted at the end of each year to gain in-depth understanding of their PreK to grade three experiences. Additionally, meeting observations will be conducted to document program implementation with a focus on best practices and identifying challenges to program fidelity. Student outcome data will be collected using validated PreK measures and state assessments for kindergarten through grade three. PreK assessments will be administered blindly to assure the externality of the evaluation team. Data will be collected from all participating groups of students so that differences in student outcomes by level of service can be examined. Parent, educator, and implementation data will also be examined in relation to student outcomes to investigate the individual and combined contribution of *PACE* services. This study will use a quasi-experimental, non-equivalent group design to examine the impact that parent engagement and family-school partnerships have on academic outcomes. Families will be categorized by participation levels: Group 1: receive PreK (ages three-five) *PACE* services, Group 2: receive kindergarten to grade three *PACE* services, Group 3: attend the target elementary schools, child care centers, and family child care providers with *PACE* trained teachers, but do not directly participate in *PACE* services, and Group 4: attend the control elementary schools, child care centers, and family child care providers and therefore do not receive any benefit of *PACE*. A quasi-experimental design minimizes threats to internal validity and allows us to attribute any changes in participants to the program itself.⁴⁴

(2) Includes a clear and credible analysis plan, including a proposed sample size and minimum detectable effect size that aligns with the expected project impact, and an analytic approach for addressing the research questions.

The *PACE* program will be offered to two cohorts across the four year project, with each cohort receiving two years of program services. Each cohort will consist of 250 *PACE* families (100 PreK, 150 K-3), with program recruitment focused on students ages three to six, so that two-year participation can be completed and assessed within the target years. Two equivalent comparison groups will also be recruited: one group of 250 students attending the target early child care

centers, family child care providers, and elementary schools with *PACE* trained teachers, but not directly participating in *PACE* services, and a second group of 250 students attending the control child care centers, family child care providers, and elementary schools. One-to-one propensity-score matching without replacement will be used to minimize selection bias and ensure that each cohort year, *PACE* and non-*PACE* students are equated on background, demographic, and pre-test measures. Using a sample stratified across tiers of service, we will be able to investigate the individual and combined contribution of *PACE* services to student outcomes. Aligning with previous evaluations of *PACE*, the minimum detectable effect sizes (MDES) for the two confirmatory evaluation questions we pose are: Question 1, effects on PreK (N=300; 200 Tx, 100 comparison, pooled over 2 years), assuming an attrition rate of 20% and an unbalanced group split at 33/67, the MDES is .38 with an alpha of .05 and a power of .80; Question 2, effects on K-1 (N=450; 300 Tx, 150 comparison, pooled over 2 years), assuming an attrition rate of 20% and an unbalanced group split at 33/67, the MDES is .31 with an alpha of .05 and a power of .80. At the end of each year, a series of descriptive and logistic regression analyses will be conducted to examine the impact of *PACE* services on student outcomes, with a focus on differential effects across four levels of service. In Year 4, a multivariate latent growth curve analysis will be conducted to estimate the relationship between parent engagement and student outcomes over time. Using a developmental contextualist framework, whereby developmental outcomes are achieved through a series of bidirectional and transactional exchanges overtime,⁴⁵ a multivariate latent growth curve analysis is best suited to investigate the longitudinal dynamic relationships between parent engagement, school-family partnerships, and student outcomes.⁴⁶ Across all analyses, key moderating variables expected to impact these relationships (e.g., family demographic variables, program dosage) will be explored. Qualitative data will be coded and analyzed thematically to describe and expand upon the quantitative findings. The data collected through this study will allow us simultaneously to identify best practices of *PACE*, while investigating the individual and combined impact program activities have on student outcomes.

(3) Clearly articulates the key components and outcomes of the project, as well as a measurable threshold for acceptable implementation.

As outlined in our logic model (see Appendix D), *PACE* is designed to increase student school readiness and academic achievement through improving parent and family engagement in a child's education and building family-school partnerships. To encourage participation in evaluation activities, families will receive items such as school supplies, children's books, and tickets for community events. Staff at control child care centers, family child care providers, and elementary schools will also provide families with UWGA supported discussion groups for constructive peer sharing and exchange about parenting and child development. Classrooms in our target child care centers, family child care providers, and elementary schools will receive age-appropriate instructional materials from companies such as Scholastic and Kaplan. Given that curricular programs are being used to deliver the parent and teacher components of *PACE*, it is critical that implementation fidelity be measured to interpret outcomes correctly.⁴⁷ To determine the **measurable threshold for acceptable implementation**, we will use ratings comparing best practices to existing practices based on project documentation, records, on-site observations, surveys, and focus groups completed by those delivering or receiving services. Data collection will focus on the following criteria: *Reach*, or the extent to which targeted individuals participate in program services; *Dosage*, or the extent to which the target population participated in program services; *Quality*, or how well each component was delivered according to known standards; and *Responsiveness*, or the extent to which target participants were engaged and satisfied with program services.^{48,49} An example of computation for measuring implementation fidelity in Year 1 can be found in Appendix J, and will be revisited each subsequent year. The Annual Fidelity Index will be calculated each year with the expectation that implementation fidelity will continuously increase as program services are improved through experience. This focus on implementation will allow us to isolate *PACE* services that contribute to student and family outcomes. Help our students keep *PACE* with their peers!