

MARCH 2019

# PARENTS AT THE CENTER

Final Parent Leadership Institute Evaluation Report

PREPARED FOR

**Children's Aid New York**

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# Executive Summary

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The Parent Leadership Institute (PLI) of Children's Aid (CA), funded via a 2013 Investing in Innovation (i3) development grant operated between the 2014-15 through 2018-19 school years. Key goals of the PLI included: (1) improving the capacity of parents to effectively engage in the school community in support of their child and (2) increasing the capacity of school staff to create and support environments which are welcoming to and supportive of the active engagement of parents as key members of the school community. Through implementation of the PLI, CA expanded its partnership with six schools located in the South Bronx community of Morrisania, an area characterized by high levels of poverty, health disparities, and crime, and low levels of academic achievement and attainment among both children and adults.

The focus of the PLI and its work on building the capacity of parents to be leaders and advocates for their child aligns with the process of stage setting as identified by Robinson and Harris (2014). The researchers identify stage setting as parent efforts to "construct and manage the social environment around their children in a way that creates conditions where success is possible (p. 200)." The PLI, with its focus on building parent capacity, has encouraged partner schools to think creatively about ways to authentically encourage parents to become more engaged in their child's school and education. The project director stated, "what you're trying to do is to get ways that maybe you can push outside of getting them [parents] in there for doughnuts for dads or muffins for moms. Getting beyond that to talk about the real, authentic ways of encouraging parents to get involved."

## Staffing and Program Components

At the heart of the PLI are the CA parent engagement coordinators (PECs) who collaborate with parents, school staff, staff from local community organizations, and other CA staff to develop and deliver programming that meets the needs of the parents and families served by participating schools. The coordinators are supported by a project director who manages PEC hiring, provides training to PECs and school staff, facilitates parent engagement opportunities with teachers, and works with PECs to coordinate campus parent engagement activities. The PEC serves as one of three core components of the PLI which also includes a separate space in the school for parents and the delivery of tailored services and supports to parents and school staff to improve parent skills and capacity to effectively engage in schools. Jointly, these three program components reflect the desired operation and potential impact of the PLI.

Each of the PLI partner schools continued to operate as a New York community school during the school year with Children's Aid serving as the lead community school partner for all but one school. Although six schools, including the four co-located schools, are included as part of the formal i3 grant, the schools are also co-located with three additional unfunded schools which the project director and PECs indicate are also included in all provided activities and services to the extent possible.

## Evaluation Goals and Methods

Children's Aid contracted with Policy Studies Associates in early 2014 to conduct an evaluation of the implementation and impact of the PLI in participating schools. The evaluation period included the 2014-

15 through 2016-17 school years. Throughout the evaluation period, the evaluation explored the following proposition:

*Through the coordinated efforts of Parent Resource Centers, parent engagement coordinators, and adult education and leadership development activities, parents will develop home environments that promote learning and will forge stronger connections with their children's schools, resulting in student achievement and attendance that exceed those of similar students enrolled in matched schools.*

## Implementation Evaluation

The primary goal of the final, Year 4 implementation evaluation was to document via interviews with representatives of key stakeholder groups and analyses of administrative data on parent participation in sponsored services, strategies for implementing PLI during the 2016-17 school year. Of interest was learning about ways that CA staff worked with school staff to integrate parent engagement activities into overall school operation. In late spring 2016-17 members of the evaluation team conducted individual interviews or focus groups with more than 30 stakeholders representing each of the participating partner schools, the New York Department of Education, a partner organization, and CA staff. Analyses of these interviews serve as the primary basis for this report. To supplement these analyses, the evaluation team also analyzed CA administrative data on the types of services and supports provided to parents. These data provide additional context to the evaluation and provide information on “fidelity of implementation” as required by i3.

## Impact Evaluation

The final phase of the evaluation incorporated quantitative analyses of data on student academic progress and performance prior to and during PLI implementation. To isolate the potential impact of the PLI on student outcomes, the evaluation compared the performance of the six PLI schools in mathematics, English/language arts, and attendance with that of 18 similar non-participating schools New York City public schools. The primary analytic method was an interrupted time-series model which looks for shifts or changes in key outcome areas after implementation of a new intervention or program compared with trends prior to the change in practice.

## Findings

For the 2016-17 school year, CA achieved implementation targets in the areas of staffing, dedicated space, activity/workshop offerings, and parent participation in activities. Implementation targets for offering specialized services to individual parents and connecting individual parents with information on community resources were not met for the school year. In Year 4, PLI staff made increased efforts to work more collaboratively with school-based staff. However, despite these efforts, PECs continued to struggle to develop a shared vision for parent engagement grounded in parent capacity-building on nearly all campuses. Teacher participation in activities also varied in Year 4 with PECs reporting increased efforts to reach out to and build connections with classroom teachers around parent support for academics.

Analyses of quantitative data on student academic performance and engagement yielded no statistically significant differences in student performance of state reading or mathematics assessments for PLI and

comparison schools. Similarly, there was no statistically significant difference in attendance rates for students attending PLI and comparison schools. However, the raw difference of 3.5 percentage points between PLI and comparison schools provides potential evidence for a later impact in this area. PLI staff worked more consistently and directly with school staff on activities designed to improve school attendance rates than they worked with school staff on improving student academic performance.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The PLI continued to operate as initially planned for most key program components. The PLI was successful in meeting implementation targets for (1) PEC staffing, (2) the availability of a resource room, (3) the delivery of a diverse array of activities and workshops for parents, and (4) the number of parents participating in activities and workshops and achieving leadership status. Parent participation in activities and parents achieving leadership levels of participation increased annually between Years 2 and 4. Reflecting both challenges in recording contacts with individual parents and a shift away from a case management focus, PECs did not meet implementation targets for the two indicators which centered on individualized services for parents.

Over time PECs increased their efforts to work collaboratively with principals, teachers, and community school staff. These collaborative efforts are critical for supporting the integration of the PLI into overall school operations. Consistent outreach and collaboration in this area will likely help with the development of a shared vision for parent engagement. Given the importance of the development of partnerships with other members of the school community, CA may want to consider elevating its focus on this aspect of the work both when selecting new school partners and throughout PLI design and implementation. Interviews with CA and other school-based staff highlight the importance of understanding and adjusting to school contextual conditions for PLI success. In this light, developing and maintaining effective relationships with both parents and school staff should be at the forefront of PLI implementation and planning efforts.

Although impact analyses did not find statistically significant effects on students' educational outcomes, the evaluation's findings suggest a potential for parent-centered programs to reduce chronic absenteeism among students. The PLI's direct messaging about the importance of school attendance may have influenced parents' efforts to ensure that their children attended school as often as possible. Further, as program staff hypothesized, the PLI may have indirectly supported improved attendance by helping parents and other caregivers improve their health and strengthen their connections with other parents. Additional investigation and analysis may be able to establish causal links between the PLI's program components and improved attendance at school.

# Overview of the Children's Aid Parent Leadership Institute

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The Parent Leadership Institute (PLI) of Children's Aid (CA), funded via a 2013 Investing in Innovation (i3) development grant operated between the 2014-15 through 2018-19 school years. Key goals of the PLI included: (1) improving the capacity of parents to effectively engage in the school community in support of their child and (2) increasing the capacity of school staff to create and support environments which are welcoming to and supportive of the active engagement of parents as key members of the school community. Through implementation of the PLI, CA expanded its partnership with six schools located in the South Bronx community of Morrisania, an area characterized by high levels of poverty, health disparities, and crime, and low levels of academic achievement and attainment among both children and adults.

National and local organizations have long advocated for the implementation of parent engagement activities by schools as a potential means of

improving student academic performance and engagement (Ishimaru et al., 2016). However, although there is consensus that families play a significant role in a student's academic achievement and engagement (Cabrera & LaNasa, 2001; Jeynes 2005; Roderick, Nagaoka, and Coca, 2011; Perna & Titus, 2005; Robinson & Harris, 2014), there are divergent opinions about what effective parent engagement looks like in practice and the role that school-based staff can play in fostering deeper levels of parent engagement (Ishimaru et al., 2016; Mapp & Kutner, 2013; Robinson & Harris, 2014).

*"ALL OF THE WORKSHOPS ARE PURPOSEFUL. IT'S NOT A WORKSHOP JUST TO SAY, OKAY, WE NEED TO COLLECT NAMES. WE'RE ACTUALLY DOING THIS TO SERVE OUR COMMUNITY."*

**Teacher from a PLI School**

For each year of its operation, the PLI advocated for a model for parent engagement that was grounded in the premise that active, direct services and supports delivered to parents will enable parents or other participating to be better-equipped to support the positive development of their children. The focus on parents as recipients of services in the PLI framework broadens the scope of parent and family engagement efforts beyond that of traditional school-based activities which often center the children with parents primarily encouraging and supporting higher levels of performance for their child. In contrast, in recognition of the key roles that parents play in establishing productive learning environments for their children, the PLI actively centers parents as the focus of services and support.

The focus of the PLI and its work on building the capacity of parents to be leaders and advocates for their child aligns with the process of stage setting as identified by Robinson and Harris (2014). The researchers identify stage setting as parent efforts to "construct and manage the social environment around their children in a way that creates conditions where success is possible (p. 200)." The PLI, with its focus on building parent capacity, has encouraged partner schools to think creatively about ways to authentically encourage parents to become more engaged in their child's school and education. The project director stated, "what you're trying to do is to get ways that maybe you can push outside of getting them [parents] in there for doughnuts for dads or muffins for moms. Getting beyond that to talk about the real, authentic ways of encouraging parents to get involved."

# Staffing and Program Components

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At the heart of the PLI are the CA parent engagement coordinators (PECs) who collaborate with parents, school staff, staff from local community organizations, and other CA staff to develop and deliver programming that meets the needs of the parents and families served by participating schools. The coordinators are supported by a project director who manages PEC hiring, provides training to PECs and school staff, facilitates parent engagement opportunities with teachers, and works with PECs to coordinate campus parent engagement activities. The PEC serves as one of three core components of the PLI which also includes a separate space in the school for parents and the delivery of tailored services and supports to parents and school staff to improve parent skills and capacity to effectively engage in schools (Exhibit 1). Jointly, these three program components reflect the desired operation and potential impact of the PLI.

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## Exhibit 1. PLI Core Components

Program Area	PLI Component
Space in the school	The parent resource room is an adult-focused space dedicated to providing parents with a welcoming area within the school
Dedicated staff	Parent engagement coordinators (PECs) coordinate closely with other CA staff in their schools, school leadership, the local parent association, parents, teachers, and the district-assigned parent coordinators or other staff designated to work directly with parents in the participating schools.
Tailored services and supports	PECs: (1) coordinate the design and delivery of adult education workshops and parent leadership development activities; (2) help parents link with needed resources both within the school and within the broader community as needed; and (3) work with other school staff to support effective parent connections

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## PLI Partner Schools

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Each of the PLI partner schools continued to operate as a New York community school during the school year with Children’s Aid serving as the lead community school partner for all but one school. Although six schools, including the four co-located schools, are included as part of the formal i3 grant, the schools are also co-located with three additional unfunded schools which the project director and PECs indicate are also included in all provided activities and services to the extent possible.

Each of the participating schools have relatively small enrollments and, like other Bronx schools, are characterized by comparatively high enrollment rates of students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and English language learners. Nearly all enrolled students represent a racial or ethnic minority group, and between 23 and 62 percent of students were labeled as chronically absent (missed 10 percent or more of school days) during the 2016-17 school year. For all but one of the partner

schools, fewer than 20 percent of students met annual English Language Arts and mathematics performance targets as measured on the New York State Department of Education Assessments (Exhibit 2).

## Report Overview

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This report serves as the final report on this phase of the PLI and includes an exploration of implementation during year 4 (2016-17 school year) and analyses of quantitative data on student academic performance. The next section of the report provides an overview of evaluation goals and methods. The following section includes a discussion of Year 4 implementation and impact findings. The final section includes summary conclusions and recommendations for continued program improvement.

## Evaluation Goals and Methods

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Children's Aid contracted with Policy Studies Associates in early 2014 to conduct an evaluation of the implementation and impact of the PLI in participating schools. The evaluation period included the 2014-15 through 2016-17 school years. Throughout the evaluation period, the evaluation explored the following proposition:

*Through the coordinated efforts of Parent Resource Centers, parent engagement coordinators, and adult education and leadership development activities, parents will develop home environments that promote learning and will forge stronger connections with their children's schools, resulting in student achievement and attendance that exceed those of similar students enrolled in matched schools.*



Exhibit 2. PLI School Characteristics – SY 2016-17

School Name	Total Enroll	Grades served	% Minority	% Students with Disabilities	% English Language Learners	% Poverty	% Chronically Absent Student (<90% attendance)	State Assessment Performance	
								Math	ELA
A	321	PK-5	99%	32%	15%	85%	34%	5%	6%
B	420	K-5	98%	20%	5%	79%	N/A	61%	61%
C	591	PK-8	99%	23%	25%	88%	26%	19%	18%
D	293	PK-5	99%	18%	11%	89%	23%	15%	18%
E	272	6-8	98%	26%	15%	86%	23%	3%	18%
F	483	9-12	100%	28%	12%	82%	62%	N/A	N/A

Exhibit reads: Source: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm>

Note: Percentages are rounded

\*The highlighted schools indicate partner schools which are served by a single PEC and share a resource room.

## Implementation Data Collection and Analysis

For the 2014-15, 2015-16, and 2016-17 school years, the evaluation team focused evaluation efforts on developing an in-depth understanding of what the PLI looks like in practice across each of the six partner schools (Hildreth, Butler, & Francis, 2016; Hildreth, Butler, & Orozco, 2017). The primary goal of the final, Year 4 implementation evaluation was to document via interviews with representatives of key stakeholder groups and analyses of administrative data on parent participation in sponsored services, strategies for implementing PLI during the 2016-17 school year. Of particular interest was learning about ways that CA staff worked with school staff to integrate parent engagement activities into overall school operation.

In late spring 2016-17 members of the evaluation team conducted individual interviews or focus groups with more than 30 stakeholders representing each of the participating partner schools, the New York Department of Education, a partner organization, and CA staff. Analyses of these interviews serve as the primary basis for this report. To supplement these analyses, the evaluation team also analyzed CA administrative data on the types of services and supports provided to parents. These data provide additional context to the evaluation and provide information on “fidelity of implementation” as required by i3.

Data analyses included a review of all interview transcripts to identify themes about PLI implementation and impact. To analyze data on program operation, evaluation team members created a database to facilitate tracking toward implementation targets.

## Impact Data Collection and Analysis

The final phase of the evaluation incorporated quantitative analyses of data on student academic progress and performance prior to and during PLI implementation. To isolate the potential impact of the PLI on student outcomes, the evaluation compared the performance of the six PLI schools in mathematics, English/language arts, and attendance with that of 18 similar non-participating schools New York City public schools. The primary analytic method was an interrupted time-series model which looks for shifts or changes in key outcome areas after implementation of a new intervention or program compared with trends prior to the change in practice.

The impact analysis sought to answer the following three questions:

- At the end of three years of program implementation, what are the average school-level proficiency rates on the state reading assessment of students enrolled in grades 3-8 for schools that have received PLI supports from CA, compared to the average proficiency rates of similar schools that do not receive the CA supports?
- At the end of three years of program implementation, what are the average school-level proficiency rates on the state mathematics assessment of students enrolled in grades 3-8 for schools that have received PLI supports from CA, compared to the average proficiency rates of similar schools that do not receive the CA supports?
- At the end of three years of program implementation, what are the average school-level attendance rates of students enrolled in grades PK-12 for schools that have received PLI

supports from CA, compared to the average proficiency rates of similar schools that do not receive the CA supports?

## Selection of Comparison Schools

In early 2014, members of the evaluation identified three comparison schools (18 in total), all located within the New York City school district, for each PLI school for the impact analysis. Using propensity score matching, the research team identified comparison schools using school-level data based on the following criteria:

- Grades served
- Number of students enrolled
- Percent minority
- Percent of economically disadvantaged students, as measured by free and reduced-price meals
- Performance on 2013-14 reading and mathematics assessments
- Percent English language learners
- School climate measures of parent communication and engagement

All treatment and comparison schools received the “business as usual” parent involvement supports provided by the New York City school districts. Since 2003, the NYCDOE has provided schools parent coordinators, who are typically responsible for conducting parent workshops, sharing information about parent-teacher conferences, and trouble-shooting problems with parents. Both treatment and comparison schools had at least one district-assigned parent coordinator. Treatment and comparison schools may also have formal parent organizations or formal relationships with local organizations, such as ASPIRA of New York, Inc., that support parent engagement.

## Baseline equivalence

The evaluation team established baseline equivalence of the treatment and comparison schools using student-level data from the 2013-14 school year, the year immediately before the initiation of PLI activities in treatment schools. PSA fit the following two-level model with grades nested within schools (level 1) and schools (level 2). The full model specification can be found in this report’s appendix. For the reading and mathematics assessments, PSA researchers standardized student scores; therefore, the baseline treatment-comparison difference is in effect size units. These data indicated that there were no significant differences in the performance of students enrolled PLI schools and students enrolled in comparison schools prior the PLI launch in fall 2014 (Exhibit 3).

### Exhibit 3. Baseline Equivalence Testing

Baseline measure	Treatment group N	Comparison group N	Comparison group mean <sup>1</sup>	Treatment-comparison difference	Standardized difference
New York State reading assessment	833	3,765	-0.03	-0.15	-0.15
New York State mathematics assessment	851	3,818	-0.10	-0.04	-0.04
Student attendance	2,202	7,732	82.82	2.09	0.12

Note: The comparison group mean and treatment-comparison difference are in standardized units.

### Analytic Procedures

Using data from the 2017 school year, PSA researchers fit a three-level impact model for each of the three outcomes (i.e., standardized reading and mathematics scores and student attendance) with observations within grades (level 1), grades within schools (level 2), and schools (level 3). At the school level, PSA included the following controls:

- Percent economically disadvantaged (i.e., the proportion of students who received free- and reduced-price meals),
- Percent of students from minoritized populations,
- Percent of students who were English language learners
- Number of students enrolled in the school
- School climate scores for parent communication and engagement
- The number of students who took the reading and mathematics assessments
- The number of students who scored proficient on reading and mathematics assessments
- The propensity score for the school

The full model specification can be found in this report’s appendix.

<sup>1</sup> We standardized students’ ELA and math scores to investigate the impact on students’ scores while accounting for the different scoring ranges used across grade levels. The z-score represents the number of standard deviations a score is from the mean. To calculate the z-scores, we divided students’ scores by the mean score for all students included in the sample in the same grade (e.g., a third-grade student’s score was divided by the mean of all third-grade students in the sample). We then aggregated the student-level scores to create grade-level z-scores. An effect size provides information about the magnitude of an observed effect. In contrast with p values, which indicate whether an effect exists, effect sizes indicate the size of the difference between two groups. Effect sizes help create a standardized meaning of the difference between groups, regardless of the effect’s scale. Researchers use a variety of benchmarks to interpret effect sizes; one approach, proposed by Cohen (1988), refers to effects as small ( $d = 0.2$ ), medium ( $d = 0.5$ ), and large ( $d = 0.8$ ).

# Implementation and Impact Findings

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## Assessing Fidelity of Implementation

As required by the i3 grant, staff from PSA and CA developed a logic model (Exhibit 4) detailing the planned operation and impact of the PLI. The initial model incorporated the components of the PLI as a separate, externally-developed initiative and neglected to account for the potential, and often significant impact, of the context of the partner school on PLI implementation and outcomes. Interviews conducted during the 2015-16 school year (Year 3) revealed the impact that school context, particularly as it related to principal understanding and buy-in, had on the nature of PLI implementation across partner schools.

In response to these findings, the evaluation team updated the logic model with key contextual factors to better reflect the different factors that may affect PLI parent engagement efforts. The updated logic model highlights several school context factors which can affect parent engagement efforts in partner schools including: (1) connections with the principal and other school staff (2) level of integration with other community school services and supports; and (3) development of partnerships with other community organizations. Each of these three factors potentially affects the processes of developing and maintaining a shared vision of parent engagement in the local school context. The evaluation team updated the contextual components of the logic model again based on Year 4 data collection findings to include the potential role of local area superintendents and district expectations for the type and nature of parent engagement activities across schools.

Findings from Year 3 and 4 data collection align with prior research on the design and implementation of family engagement work. The dual-capacity framework (SEDL, 2013) highlights the important role that school context plays in terms of multiple factors including (1) openness of administrative staff to working with parents in new ways; (2) school and district policies and procedures dedicated to fostering deep, integrated partnerships with parents; and (3) a shared, building-wide commitment to building the capacity of both parents and staff to partner successfully. The framework notes that school conditions can foster school-family partnerships along a continuum of ineffective to effective partnerships. An ineffective school lacks any meaningful opportunities for school staff and parents to build partnership capacity. An effective school is characterized by staff who recognize the contributions that parents can make to student learning while providing multiple opportunities for family members to engage with their child around learning and within the school overall.

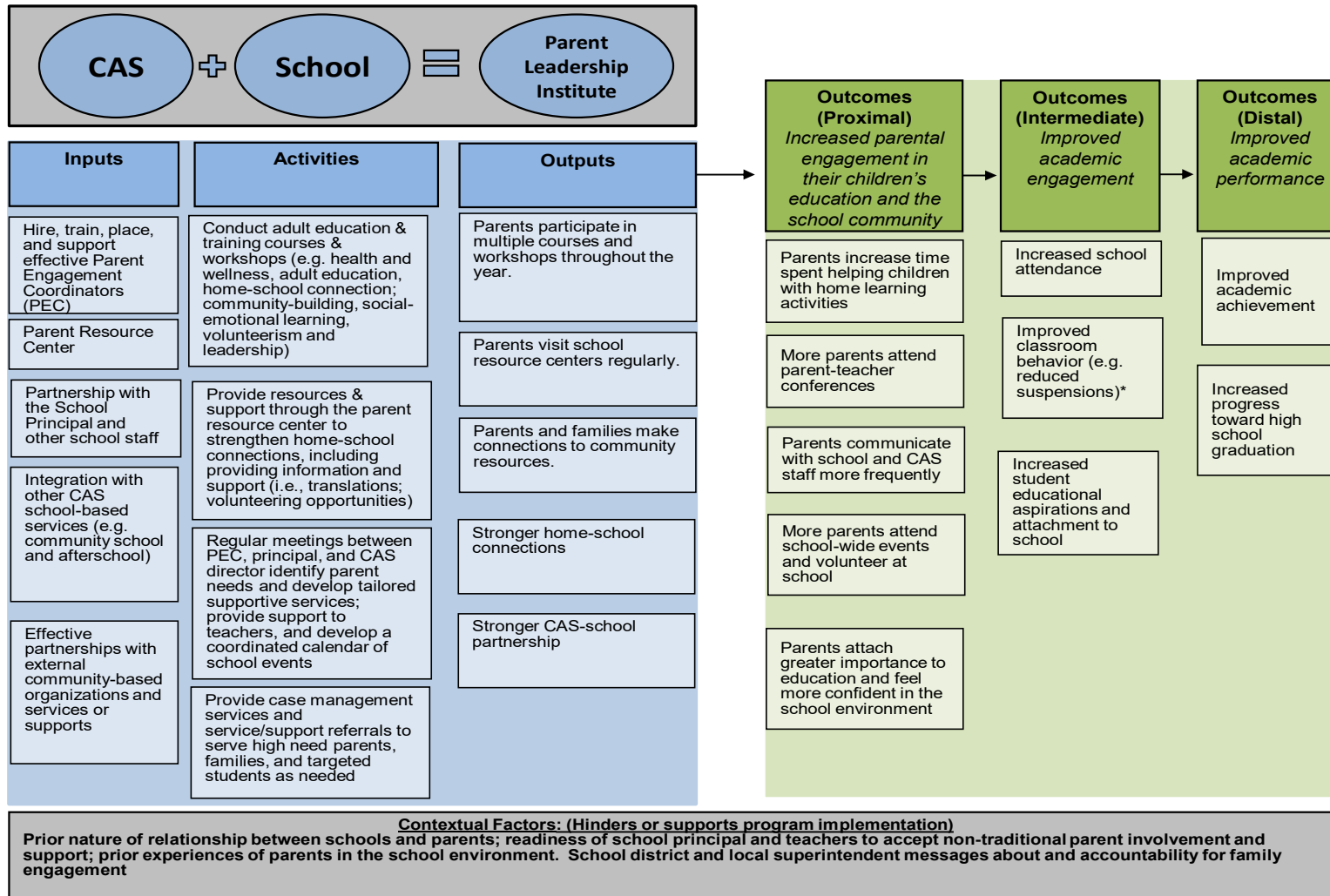
Over the course of the evaluation, the evaluation team has observed the complexity of the work of the PLI. As noted above, the PLI is an externally developed initiative which is nested into schools of various levels of interest and capacity in building new relationships with parents. Moreover, schools themselves are nested within larger administrative regions and the overall New York City school district. Adding to this complexity, the PLI is one of many programs and initiatives operated by Children's Aid. Available information suggests that this nesting of the PLI in Children's Aid, the partner school, and regional and districtwide offices affects the nature of initiative activities within and across schools. Discussions with CA staff have revealed that CA, as an organization, has evolved and continues to evolve as it makes organizational adjustments to develop and implement a more broadly defined view of parental involvement in schools. During interviews, CA staff discussed different challenges faced in building internal consensus on what effective, meaningful parent engagement activities and support looks like in practice.

Within the i3 evaluation framework, the logic model is directly linked to measures of fidelity of implementation. I3 requires that grantee establish targets for key inputs, activities, and outputs as outlined in the logic model. Staff from CA and PSA jointly developed implementation targets in Year 1 of the PLI and made slight adjustments to the targets after Year 2 to better reflect the realities of on-the-ground implementation. Parent engagement coordinators are responsible for collecting information on parent participation in PLI services and/or workshops and entering those data into the CA data management system. Each year the PLI director provides an export of these data to the evaluation team who compile the data to determine CA success in achieving implementation targets. Exhibit 5 provides each of the fidelity of implementation targets for the 2016-17 school year. We include the completed Year 4 fidelity of implementation matrix in Appendix A-2.

## Year 4 Fidelity of Implementation

In this section we explore the PLI during 2016-17 in terms of meeting fidelity of implementation targets and understanding strategies for working with representatives of the different stakeholder groups. Within the framework of the logic model (Exhibit 3), inputs are the different types of resources that an organization provides or uses in support of an initiative or program. Program staff and partners, in turn, leverage use of these resources to support the design and delivery of activities in support of a program's long and short-term goals (e.g. program implementation). In this section, we discuss each of the key measures included in the fidelity of implementation matrix. In the first section we provide a discussion of the inputs, activities, and outputs as they operated during the school year. Where applicable, we include the extent to which CA was successful in achieving fidelity of implementation targets for the school year.

Exhibit 4. PLI Logic Model



## Exhibit 5. PLI Fidelity of Implementation Measures

Major Component	Subcomponents	Fidelity Scores	Level Calculated	Adequate Fidelity at Campus/School level	Program-level
<b>Establishing Parent Resource Centers at Each School</b>	Allocation of space in the school building	Not completed = 0 Completed = 1	Campus <sup>2</sup>	Campus has dedicated space for center = 1	
	Hours Center is scheduled to open spans both the school day, afternoons, and evenings	Not scheduled = 0 Scheduled = 1	Campus	Campus center has scheduled hours during day, after school, and evenings = 1	
<b>Program-level threshold</b>		Campus score = 0 - 2	Program	Score of 2 = adequate fidelity at campus-level = 1	3 of 4 campuses have adequate fidelity (score = 1)
<b>Parent engagement coordinator</b>	The number of family engagement coordinators planned for each school are hired and trained by CAS The proportion of family engagement coordinators with qualifications set for their position	Hire target number = 1 Not able to hire target number = 0	Campus	100% of target hired and trained = 1	
		Not qualified = 0 Qualified = 1	Campus	At least 90% of staff meet qualifications for their position = 1	
<b>Program-level threshold</b>		Campus score = 0 - 2	Program	Score of 2 = adequate fidelity at campus-level = 1	3 of 4 campuses have adequate fidelity (score = 1)
<b>Conduct adult education and training courses and workshops</b>	Offer planned GED, ESL & Technology courses	Offered all planned courses during the school year = 1 Fewer than planned courses actually offered = 0	Campus	100% of planned courses offered = 1	
<b>Program-level threshold</b>		Score = 0 - 1	Campus	Score of 1 adequate fidelity at campus level = 1	3 of 4 campuses are at adequate fidelity (score = 1)
<b>Provide Resources/support Through Parent Resource Center</b>	Provide information and support in advance of parent teacher conferences	Available = 1 Not available = 0	Campus	Provide services to at least 10% of parents = 1	

<sup>2</sup> Because two sets of schools share a single school building/campus and PEC, we collapsed these two schools into a single campus and aggregated activities into a single campus. Fidelity of implementation analyses include all six PLI schools collapsed into four campuses.



Major Component	Subcomponents	Fidelity Scores	Level Calculated	Adequate Fidelity at Campus/School level	Program-level
	Provide help desk, support center during parent teacher conferences	Available = 1 Not available = 0	Campus	Provide services to at least 10% of parents = 1	
	Provide individualized support on communicating with teachers	Available = 1 Not available = 0	Campus	Provide services to at least 10% of parents = 1	
	Provide opportunities for parents to sign up for school leadership and volunteer activities	Available = 1 Not available = 0	Campus	Provide services to at least 20% of parents = 1	
	Targeted outreach to parents of struggling students	Outreach efforts made = 1 Efforts not made = 0	Campus	Contact at least 50% of parents of struggling students = 1	
<b>Program-level threshold</b>		Score = 0 – 5		Score of 4 or higher = adequate campus-level fidelity = 1	3 of 4 campuses are at adequate fidelity (score = 1)
<b>Provide parents with information about available community resources</b>	Provide information, supports, and referrals for other parent and family needs (e.g., housing and emergency assistance; sexual health)	Not completed = 0 Completed = 1	Campus	At least 30 parents per campus receive information or referrals = 1	
<b>Program-level threshold</b>			Score – 0 - 1	Score of 1 = adequate campus-level fidelity = 1	3 of 4 campuses are at adequate fidelity (score = 1)
<b>Parents participate in courses and workshops</b>	Parents complete at least one course or workshop	Parent does not complete course or workshop = 0 Parent completes course or workshop = 1		50 parents per school complete a course = 1 < 50 parents = 0	)
	Parents achieve leadership level (complete 2 courses and core workshops)	Parent does not complete leadership level = 0 Parent completes leadership level = 1		30 parents per school complete training level = 1 < 30 parents = 0	
<b>Program-level threshold</b>		Parent score = 0 -2	2 = adequate fidelity at parent-level	At least 30 parents in school have score of 2 = adequate fidelity = 1	3 of 4 campuses are at adequate fidelity (score = 1)

## Availability of Parent Resource Rooms

### Implementation Targets: Availability, Met; Hours of availability, Met

In Year 4, CA continued to meet the implementation target for the availability of parent resource rooms with all four campuses having a dedicated space. However, as in prior years, interview participants reported that the functionality of the space and the extent to which it fostered the types of family engagement promoted by the PLI varied across campuses. These variations reflect the challenges CA has faced since Year 1 in securing access to a separate, dedicated space in partner schools. Space available for parent resource rooms varied from a small office off the school's main office for one campus to a large, recently renovated space that also began housing the school's food pantry in Year 4. The space for another campus was in the process of renovations at the end of the 2016-17 school year.

*"THE SCHOOL CAN BE LIKE A COMMUNITY HUB FOR PARENTS WHERE THEY'RE GETTING RESOURCES OR EXPERIENCES THAT HELP TO ELEVATE THE CHILD'S EXPERIENCES AT SCHOOL."*

**Children's Aid Community School  
Director**

During each year of the PLI evaluation, respondents representing school staff, parents, and CA staff have highlighted the importance of this space for facilitating increased levels of family and parent engagement. During interviews, participants discussed the ways in which the space can help facilitate parents' levels of comfort and frequency of time spent on campus. For example, the principal of the school with the small office off the main office noted that he never saw parents congregating in that space. The school's PEC agreed and commented that the size of the room and the proximity to the main office likely dissuaded parents from wanting to spend time in the room. This description of the resource room stood in contrast to the school that housed a separate space for parents and served as a location for many PLI activities including ESL and GED classes. One PEC described the space as being a "neutral zone" and a space where parents feel safe and comfortable. A community school director added that having a "specialized space" parents aligns with the school's goal of "meeting families where they are." A CA staff person emphasized the importance of the neutral space and discussed the ways in which staff have viewed the space has evolved over the course of the PLI. The staff person stated, that it became increasingly important over time to use the space on each campus and to sponsor activities only in ways that aligned with parents' expressed needs. The staff person explained,

*Because, everywhere else in the school, what's happening in there is dictated by the principal or the teachers. So being able to really create a space where there can be a different power dynamic and real collaboration between parents and school staff, parents with each other, regardless of who their kid is at a school; that is becoming more and more critical, we see, to the work.*

The staff member added that maintaining the neutrality of this space grew to be a "non-negotiable" or core aspect of the PLI model over time.

A review of calendars for the school year and discussions with PLI stakeholders continue to indicate that the centers operated throughout the school year with activities offered at some schools during the day and at others on evenings or weekends to best meet the needs of parents. One PEC noted that

consistently offering services on a regular schedule in the same space has been critical for building parent buy-in and trust over time. The coordinator stated, “We have ESL every Tuesday and Thursday, no matter what. We don’t move them; this is their room.” Some PECs also noted that teachers and other school staff used the rooms for other non-PLI activities.

## PEC Staffing

### **Implementation Targets: Number, Met; Appropriate qualifications: Met**

Throughout PLI implementation, CA had notable success in maintaining stability in PEC staffing. During the first three years of operation, CA replaced one staff person during Year 2. There was no additional turnover in PEC staff during Years 3 and 4. This stability of staffing has likely had a positive effect on PLI implementation stability over time and reflects positively on the strategy for hiring and placement that was developed during Year 1. Describing the initial hiring process, one CA community school director stated, “I think the [hiring] process that we engaged in, we did a fishbowl, it was a very rigorous process... and I think that really set the tone in the right direction for us, and it has been huge for us. I think for other programs that's probably the most important decision they make.” The program director added that there was an intense focus on hiring staff who were familiar with and lived in the local community. Interviews with parents, teachers, and partners reveal high levels of satisfaction with the PECs with people highlighting the flexibility and commitment of PECs to doing what is necessary to meet the needs of parents and to serving as important members of the school community.

Parents who participated in focus groups during the spring site visits also spoke very highly of their contacts with their school’s PECs. Describing the impact of the PEC, one parent stated, “She is the spark of the program. When there is a workshop, she is outside yelling, ‘parents, parents, come we have a workshop today’.” Similarly, a parent described the work of the PEC saying, “She motivates. She makes you feel part of the team, she calls you; she looks for you.”

## Adult Education and Training Courses and Workshops

### **Implementation Target: Offer planned courses including GED, ESL, technology courses, etc.: Met**

Both interview and administrative data indicate that CA staff successfully delivered a range of workshops and activities to families at all partner schools during the 2016-17 school year. Both PLI and other school staff describe on-going efforts to tailor services to meet the needs of the families and broader community served. PECs reported sponsoring or leading a total of more than 200 different activities across the four campuses during the school year. Available programming during the school year included regular ESL and GED classes, family archery, healthy cooking, parent organization meetings, college enrollment planning, school choice planning and preparation, stress management, resume development, and immigration support services.

The topics of activities varied both across and within campuses and reflected the emphasis placed on tailoring services to meet the needs and interests of families. For example, one community school director described school efforts to provide services and supports to the school’s grandparents, parents who had recently immigrated from Africa, and families which included an incarcerated parent or other

family member. Other examples of targeted services include separate groups for fathers and mothers and for Spanish-speaking parents. A community school director stated, “We will ask them what they want, what they need, what they think is important, or we use a little bit of research so we become experts on the topics or common issues that affect that group [of parents].” A representative from an organization that partners with CA highlighted staff efforts to “listen to the interests and needs of the people that they are serving; they’re not coming in with an agenda per se.” The representative commented that this strategy helps make family members feel more comfortable in the school building and also helps to build a sense of community among parents and other family members. Interviews with parents from two campuses confirmed staff reports about efforts to engage parents in the selection and design of activities. At the core of this focus is an understanding that parents choose to be involved in the school and tailoring services increases the likelihood that parents will make the choice to participate in engagement activities.

In contrast to prior years and a key aspect of this tailoring process, Year 4 planning included regular discussions and joint planning with the community school director and most district parent coordinators. Staff from all campuses described on-going strategies to ensure regular communication among key parties and to plan services in a manner that limited the duplication of efforts and ensured that a wide range of services were provided to families. Staff from all campuses discussed regular check-ins among staff and focus groups with parents to help shape the types of services and supports provided. A community school director reported that jointly working on calendars was an important organizational strategy for the school year and helped ensure coordination of efforts. The program director added that joint planning also provided opportunities for PLI staff to introduce new ways to engage with parents to other school staff. When asked to discuss changes in PLI implementation over time, one community school director stated, “I think our capacity is different. Our ability to provide so many opportunities for parents including workshops and partnerships.” He also added that the level of coordination with the district-funded parent coordinator had improved, and there was less competition as the role of the PECs and the PLI became more clearly defined, stating “at this point, it doesn’t feel competitive. It’s just do parent work, and we all work together to get it done as opposed to asking, ‘oh where is this coming from?’”

## Provide Resources/Support Through Parent Resource Center

### **Implementation Target: Offer specified services to 10 percent of parents, Not met**

CA has struggled to meet the implementation indicators associated with the delivery of specific services to 10 percent of parents and providing targeted support services for struggling students to 50 percent of identified students. One campus met the 10 percent threshold for parent support during conferences and support for communication with teachers. None of the other three campuses met any of these indicators. In prior years, staff had difficulties consistently entering case management information into the data management system.

Over the course of the three years of operation, Children’s Aid has shifted its focus from case management of specific family needs to delivering specific workshops and activities centered around the resource room and building stronger connections with other partners both inside and outside of the school. The project director noted that Children’s Aid has placed social workers in most schools as part of community school wrap-around services, and they are moving toward having social workers focus on case management services as needed by families. She noted that during the second year, PECs openly

advertised access to the New York Times Neediest fund which provides direct funding to families to meet emergency needs. By Year 4, although those funds were still available, PLI staff were less likely to announce the availability to parents. One school added a food pantry to the resource center and provided services to hundreds of families out of the center.

## Provide Parents with Information about Available Community Resources

**Implementation Target: Provide information and support to at least 30 parents, Not met**

As with the prior indicator, capturing the reach of PLI services continued to be a challenge for Year 4. No schools met the implementation target for the 2016-17 school year.

## Parents Participate in Courses and Workshops

**Implementation Target: At least 50 parents complete at least one course or workshop per campus, Met. At least 30 parents achieve leadership level (complete at least 23 hours of workshops), Met**

Parent engagement coordinators were successful in meeting implementation targets for parent participation in workshops during the 2016-17 school year. PECs from all four campuses were successful in having at least 50 parents per campus complete one course or workshop. The number of participants in workshops continued to increase in Year 4. The number of adult participants increased from 856 in Year 2 to 1,887 in Year 3 to 2,817 in Year 4. The number of parents participating in an activity across campuses ranged from 327 to 952.

Additionally, three of four campuses were successful in having at least 30 parents achieve leadership status by completing 23 or more hours of courses or workshops. The number of parents achieving leadership status increased from 157 to 169 from Year 3 to Year 4. A total of 97 parents achieved leadership status in Year 2. Among parents achieving leadership status during the 2016-17 school year, approximately 46 percent of parents had previously achieved leadership status during a prior school year, and 54 percent had achieved the status for the first time during the year.

## Working with Principals and Teachers

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Year 3 findings highlighted the role that school context played in the ways that the PLI has been implemented over time. The framework for understanding the continuum of school contexts outlined at beginning of this report provides a useful context for understanding goals and operation of the PLI. The development of strong partnerships with community school staff, teachers, principals, parents, and staff from partner organizations serves as an important but hard-to-quantify aspect of PLI operation. Interviews with PECs, community school directors, district parent engagement coordinators, principals, and parents underscore the challenges faced in developing and maintaining these partnerships over time.

**Working with principals.** Principals play critical roles in shaping how schools function. Across all campuses staff noted that, at some level, principals from all schools recognized the importance of securing parental involvement and the potential positive impact of parental involvement on student achievement. A CA staff person commented that findings from the Year 3 report revealed a gap “between our

“BUT HERE, I HAVE LOST THE FEAR. AND WITH MY SON, I CAN READ TO HIM . I CAN SAY THE ALPHABET WITH HIM. AND IN NUTRITION CLASS, IT’S GOOD FOR OUR HEALTH TO KNOW THESE THINGS, TO KNOW WHAT’S GOOD FOR MY SON SO HE CAN STAY HEALTHY.”

**PLI Parent**

understanding of the practices around parent engagement, versus what principals understand and/or want.” She added that the principals do not have to engage in the PLI if they choose not to. To address this gap the PLI program director focused efforts on modifying how the program interacted with principals on two key levels: (1) within each partner school and (2) at the district level by developing an understanding of the messages about family engagement that principals received from regional and district offices and office staff. The staff person commented that the district-level work was a key shift in practice that they had not anticipated when initially designing the program.

Despite these efforts, principal understanding of the full extent and goals of the PLI continued to vary across campuses in Year 4. Interviews with nearly all principals revealed a clear tension between a more direct focus on parents as facilitators of student academic achievement and engagement and the more seemingly indirect focus on increasing parent capacity as promoted by the PLI. Interviews with principals also indicate that accountability pressures from the school district to meet specific goals for parent engagement may be the source of some of these tensions. These pressures may be especially challenging if the PLI operates on a co-located campus because the PEC must balance meeting the needs of different principals who might have different goals or visions for PLI operation.

Principal interviews highlight these tensions. For example, one principal commented that he was not fully clear on PLI goals. He stated, “I think one of the things that I would like to know more about [is] what Children’s Aid vision for parent engagement is and how that would combine with what our vision is.” Principals from two schools emphasized the importance that they placed on having the PEC help them meet the parent engagement duties as captured in their annual principal evaluation. One principal stated,

*I have requirements that I need to meet. Those academic outcomes that I need to meet...The feedback that I get when I'm evaluated against the quality review or my performance, from my superintendent. And so I have to put an action plan into place also.*

Another principal expressed a similar sentiment highlighting the tension between an explicit focus on serving parents as individuals versus serving parents as means of facilitating increased student engagement and school improvement. Discussing strategies to improve PEC hiring by Children’s Aid, the principal stated:

*I would say that the organizational weakness for Children's Aid might be what their vetting process is to bring in individuals who all have that idea that our job here is to support the principal and the school, not thinking of themselves as individuals or as separate from the school, but thinking of themselves as part of the school.*

This response highlights a persisting gap between the PLI vision and the principal’s vision for parent engagement. The CA vision for parent engagement prioritizes the parent as the recipient of services and support and helping parents “set the stage” for student academic success. This focus stands in contrast to a vision of engagement which prioritizes the principal or students. The ultimate goals of each of the visions for parent engagement are the same: enable students to be more engaged in school and experience increased levels of academic achievement. It is the paths by which these goals are achieved that differs. This is not to say that CA staff don't appreciate the importance of being directly supportive of the principal and his/her goals for the school. A CA staff person discussed the transactional nature of relationships between external and school-based staff in some schools. In these situations, external staff such as the community school director may be asked to perform some duties or hold activities which fall outside the scope of their preferred work. However, building trusting relationships with principals is critical to the initiative's overall success so some level of transactional work may have to occur. The CA staff person noted that it is important for staff to balance these competing demands. She stated:

*TO KNOW THAT YOU CAN COME IN AND IT'S NOT THREATENING. YOU CAN COME IN AND SIT WITH YOUR CHILD AND DO PROJECTS WITH THEM, AND THE MATERIALS ARE THERE, AND THERE'S A RESOURCE AND THERE'S AN OUTLET. EVEN IF THE PARENT DOES HAVE A STRUGGLE ... IT COULD BE WITH A TEACHER, IT COULD BE WITH THE SCHOOL, IT COULD BE WITH WHATEVER, TO KNOW THAT THERE'S A NEUTRAL VOICE THAT'S NOT THERE TO JUDGE, AND THAT IS THERE TO SUPPORT THEM AND THEIR CHILD. THAT MAKES IT ALL THE MORE WORTHWHILE.”*  
**Teacher in PLI school**

*So we've had to really work with the [community school] directors. Both kind of understanding the position they're in, supporting them because they do a lot of work to clear the path for the parent engagement work; while at the same time, figuring out those points where, no, this is a non-negotiable point in terms of the practice, because it might undermine the parent's trust in what's happening there, or it might send the wrong message, which would undermine trust. Those things we've had to do a little bit more work around. That's not in every place, but in some places, where it tends to show up more.*

Discussing the different roles between the work of the PEC and the district coordinator in her school, another principal stated that she prioritized the public relations role of the parent engagement staff person, stating that a key role for the school’s district-funded parent coordinator was to “get our message out there...to be the first face our parents see when they come to the school.” The principal also noted that the district coordinator also provided a level of “interference” when a parent just needed to talk.

Reflecting on this aspect of school context, a CA staff person emphasized the importance of PECs maintaining neutrality between parents and the principal when operating in the school rather than being seen by parents as an extension of the principal. The staff person noted that gaining the trust of parents is critical for the type of work called for by the PLI. The almost inevitable dynamics of power that come to play in schools when dealing with the principal has the potential of undermining this trust. Discussing the relative independence that the PECs have from the school’s principal compared with district-provided parent coordinators, the CA staff person stated:



*What they've begun to understand is that there are some things that just have to come from the school's parent coordinator, versus things that happen in the parent engagement center. Ideally, what we'd love to see is that everybody's practice is the same, and that tension between parent engagement vis-a-vis the principal in the principal's role, versus just good engagement that really reinforces the role of the parent in the school community in their child's education; that those things will become one and the same. But right now, that's not the case. The parent engagement coordinator really being focused on just that, not intervening in a conflict between a principal and a parent. In that instance, the power dynamic is all leaned on the principal's end because the parent coordinator is employed by who?*

Few PECs described extensive relationships with principals around PLI planning and implementation. Both the PECs and the principals stated that principals were more likely to have regular conversations with the community school director or the district-funded parent engagement coordinator about parent engagement work. Describing the principal's involvement with family engagement activities, one PEC acknowledged the different pressures the principal faced as leader of the school and how those pressures might affect the level of engagement with parent activities. She stated,

*I guess that the weight of having the city behind her, teachers, and the daily things that happen...I think it's taken a toll on her, as on all of us, but I feel this is a team effort, and I feel that if she could delegate more and have less on her shoulders, it [the PLI] could work better. Her role could be more substantial, it could have more meaning, or she could reach out to better grasp what she's supposed to do as principal.*

The PEC indicated that the principal was somewhat separated from the parents and that things might be better if she was "out" there more. A PEC who leads activities on a co-located campus described a more open relationship with one principal and more challenging relationship with the other principal, stating:

*The principal trusts us so much. We're able to say, 'that might not work, let's try it this way.' Or we're able to say, 'we failed, how can we do it better next time?' We have a healthy partnership. We don't have that relationship [with the other principal]. [The principal] wants everything her way. If I produce good work, that's good for her. We did a workshop, she came in and said, 'This is great. This is what I want to see more. And she left. It's not the best partnership, but at the end of the day...as long as parents feel safe in this room and the workshops we do are successful, that's all that matters.*

PECs from the other two campuses described similar respectful, but somewhat limited, relationships with principals.



**Working with teachers.** Both PECs and the project director noted increased levels of involvement with teachers in partner schools during the 2016-17 school year. All four PECs described more explicit efforts to connect with teachers. Teachers who participated in focus groups also reported increased outreach by PECs during the school year compared with prior years. Strategies for connecting with teachers included reaching out to them individually to see if there were ways that the PECs could help teachers make better connections with parents and responding to specific requests for assistance posed by some teachers. PECs also reported inviting teachers into the resource room so that they could see both the number of parents who were in attendance and the types of activities in which they were engaged. One parent engagement coordinator linked the development of these relationships with the consistency of services and visibility that the PLI had achieved in the school over the prior two school years. Over time, PECs said that they were able to build credibility with and gain the trust of some teachers in the school.

*WE'RE PUSHING TEACHERS. WE'RE [WORKING] NOT ONLY WITH THE PARENTS, BUT THE TEACHERS AND HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS. AND I THINK, AS TIME GOES BY, THEY SEE THAT THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS OF COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS. THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS OF ENGAGING A PARENT. IT'S NOT JUST PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCE.*

**PLI Parent Engagement Coordinator**

Describing work with teachers, one PEC stated that she approaches teachers individually to discuss parent engagement strategies and the ways that engagement can support student goals for students. PECs, teachers, and principals from several of the campuses discussed PEC support of the academic parent-teacher teams (APTT) conferences implemented by some PLI schools. These conferences provide a platform for the development of a closer partnership between parents and teachers. One PEC also discussed working with teachers to offer grade-level mathematics and literacy sessions for parents.

Teachers from three campuses discussed their work with their school's PEC. Describing the role and impact of the PLI, one teacher stated:

*I see that as a way to engage parents and bring them into the building. If you think about a child's life cycle as a triangle in school, one angle is the parent, one angle is the child, and one angle is the teacher. And they have to work in conjunction, or else you'll have that open shape, and information goes in and out, but it isn't retained. By having your parents actively involved, it creates that support. One good thing about a triangle is that you turn it on any side, it will stand. So that parent is very necessary to help that triangle remain a structure, its integrity and to stand. I think by these programs... The parents feel involved, and they feel that they are important.*

Although some teachers were open to PEC support, PECs noted that not all teachers were open to PLI efforts. However, despite some resistance, PECs commented that they continued to attempt to make these connections finding that some resistant teachers become less resistant over time, especially if they were able to see the partnerships with other teachers in practice. PECs also noted that teacher turnover also makes it important for PECs to continue to reach out since new relationships are constantly needed to be forged with incoming teachers.

**Working with district staff.** CA staff made some efforts to explain its vision of parent engagement with staff from the New York Department of Education. The program director reported that the primary goal of the district outreach was to increase awareness of the nature of PLI engagement efforts. The project

director stated that as part of these efforts she presented to district parent coordinators approximately three times about core elements of the PLI approach. Topics of training included: the use of space, cultural competence, parent trust, and parent advocacy. A former district staff person praised CA efforts to bring a coherent view of parent engagement to the school district. The former staff person noted that there has traditionally been no clear vision for parent engagement in the district beyond the desire for increased levels of parent involvement. She added that the lack of clarity resulted in a lack of consistency of efforts across schools and parent coordinators.

## A Focus on Attendance

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The project director noted that at each school and throughout the evaluation period, PECs supported several initiatives to boost student attendance. For example, the PLI supported Attendance Awareness Month, during which PECs provided coffee to parents at morning drop-off and discussed the importance of consistent student attendance. Parents and their children also participated in a “School Every Day” march to celebrate and affirm the importance of attending school. For PLI staff, a key strategy to support attendance was communicating the instruction time lost when students are chronically absent. As one staff member documented, “Parents were surprised how much their child has actually missed. Ten days [out] from school does not sound too bad for some parents, but 60 hours of instruction means much more for most.” In addition to direct strategies to support attendance, the PLI’s structure and activities indirectly supported student attendance. PLI activities helped parents strengthen their networks which, as one staff member explained, helped parents see that they were not alone in supporting their child’s development. Similarly, activities centered on parents’ and caregivers’ health may increase students’ attendance. One Children’s staff member hypothesized that the PLI-supported grandparents’ group may contribute to positive student outcomes:

*[The grandparents’ group] is affecting people’s health because [the grandparents] talk about how they’re taking care of themselves and if they’re getting enough rest. Then, you notice the kids that were late or chronically absent are going to school more and arriving on time because the grandparent has a little more energy and connection to the community.*

In the next section of the report, we focus in impact analyses. These analyses indicate that these focused CA efforts have the potential of supporting improved attendance by students.

## Impact Findings

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Our analysis of attendance and achievement outcomes found no statistically significant impacts of the Children’s Aid Parent Leadership Institute on students’ math, reading, or attendance. In 2017, the comparison group mean attendance was approximately 86 percent. Students in schools implementing the PLI had a mean attendance rate that was, on average, 3.5 points higher than their peers in comparison schools. However, this difference is not statistically significant.

For analyses of academic achievement, we standardized students’ scores to create a comparable measure across grade levels. In 2017, students in comparison schools had reading scores that were 0.06 standard deviations above the mean, while students who attended PLI schools had reading scores that

were 0.13 standard deviations lower than students in comparison schools. Similarly, in math, students in comparison schools had assessment scores that were 0.07 standard deviations above the mean. Students who attended schools in PLI schools had scores 0.23 standard deviations lower than students in comparison schools. None of the differences between students in treatment and comparison schools were statistically significant (Exhibit 6). Appendix A3 contains information on attrition.

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### Exhibit 6. Impact Analysis Results

Baseline measure	Treatment group N	Comparison group N	Comparison group mean	Impact estimate
New York State reading assessment	894	2,991	0.06	-0.13
New York State mathematics assessment	943	3,022	0.07	-0.23
Student attendance	2,001	5,931	85.54	3.54

Note: The comparison group mean and the impact estimate for ELA and mathematics scores are in standardized units.

Additional analyses explored whether school-level analyses might provide some indication of differential outcomes between PLI and comparison schools. Although the differences in mean student attendance rate did not reach statistical significance, the implementation of attendance-focused activities by PECs and early indications of improved student attendance have the potential of highlighting an area of impact. The PLI continued to operate for two school years beyond the evaluation period. Analyses which incorporate these additional two years may yield statistically significant results that build on the PLI’s current progress (Exhibit 7).

**Exhibit 7. Average Attendance, ELA, and Math Outcomes, 2017, by Matched Group**

	PLI schools			Matched comparison schools		
	ELA	Math	Attendance	ELA	Math	Attendance
Children’s Aid College Prep Charter School	–	–	–	–	–	–
P.S. 211	-0.61	-0.46	89%	0.29	0.62	88%
P.S. 61	-0.33	-0.17	89%	0.14	0.25	88%
P.S. 314	-1.1	-1.20	88%	0.12	0.27	84%
Fannie Lou Hamer Middle School	-0.24	-0.75	90%	-0.02	-0.35	88%
Fannie Lou Hamer High School	–	–	71%	–	–	70%

Note: ELA and Math scores have been standardized.

Due to data quality issues, Children’s Aid College Prep Charter School and its matched comparison schools were excluded from follow-up analyses.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

In this section of the report we summarize key findings from Year 4 and the impact analyses and highlight potential implications of these findings for future scale-up efforts for Children’s Aid and the PLI.

### Fidelity of Implementation and Potential Changes to the PLI Model

The PLI continued to operate as initially planned for most key program components. The PLI was successful in meeting implementation targets for (1) PEC staffing, (2) the availability of a resource room, (3) the delivery of a diverse array of activities and workshops for parents, and (4) the number of parents participating in activities and workshops and achieving leadership status. Participation and leadership level numbers increased annually between Years 2 and 4.

As for the other two indicators which reflect the case management aspects of the initial PLI model, some campuses were able to achieve one or two of the individual indicators, but the initiative as a whole was unable to achieve the overall indicators for any school year. This status likely reflects both the difficulty of adequately capturing the more informal aspects of PEC work and the increased focus, over time, on working with school staff more closely and developing and delivering a wide range of tailored activities for parents as a whole.

This shift in focus from individual case management to larger scale activities for parents and more direct contact with other school stakeholders potentially has implications for the program model. If this is the direction that staff from Children's Aid advocate, then removing case management activities as indicators of PLI operation may be something to consider as the organization reviews ideas for scale-up and replication. It is likely that some level of this work will continue as a result of PEC relationships with parents but removal of this work as a key area of focus for PECs may be warranted. Continuing to build strong connections with the community school director, school social worker, and other school-based staff will allow parents to continue to receive needed services and supports while allowing PECs to continue focus on joint planning and developing tailored activities.

Another potential change to the PLI model centers around core components which currently include space, staff, and the tailoring of services to parents. However, undergirding the PLI model both explicitly and implicitly is the work needed to develop and maintain partnerships with key stakeholders including the principal, teachers, and other community school staff. As CA considers options for scaling up and/or replicating the PLI model, it may be helpful to consider making this core work more explicitly a component of the PLI model. A more formal recognition of the role of these partnerships in the PLI model highlights the importance of these partnerships and may encourage earlier conversations with the different stakeholder groups about the role the PLI can play in overall school operation.

## Working with Teachers and Principals

The development of effective partnerships with school staff continued to be an area in which most PECs expressed at least some level of challenge. Year 4 saw an increased effort to work more directly with teachers around their work with parents. Both PECs and teachers discussed the increased efforts toward collaboration. The on-going challenges in developing effective partnerships are likely a reflection of the persistent gap between how principals typically view parental involvement and the vision of the PLI. More traditional views of parent engagement conceive of parents primarily as monitors and motivators of their children. This monitoring and motivating of students may lead to increased levels of student performance. The PLI also recognizes the importance of this level of parent involvement. However, the focus of the PLI is on increasing the capacity of parents to be effective in these roles and making them feel comfortable and welcome in the school via participation in sponsored workshops and activities. In the model, increasing parent capacity and level of comfort in the school may result in higher levels of student performance by helping parents set the stage for higher levels of student performance or engagement. Interview data from Year 4 indicate that more work with principals is likely necessary to help craft more closely aligned visions of parent engagement. It will be important for CA staff to clearly explain its focus on stage setting versus traditional parent engagement at the beginning of activities and making efforts to secure principal understanding and buy in.

However, despite these gaps in visions for parent engagement, the PLI continued to operate, with success, on all campuses during the 2016-17 school year. During interviews, all principals noted that they valued parental involvement at some level and also valued the partnership with Children's Aid. These factors appear to provide some level of space for the PLI to operate and provide opportunities for parent engagement work on all partner campuses. Referring back to the SEDL continuum of family-school partnership, no PLI schools were operating at the completely ineffective level. The increased level of partnership with other members of the school community, particularly the community school director, allowed the breadth and depth of PLI implementation to increase in Year 4. However, to move to fully effective partnerships as defined in the SEDL model, full principal buy-in to the PLI model would

be needed. CA may want to consider the extent to which this level of full principal buy-in, as opposed to minimal to moderate levels of buy-in where principals are open to but not fully engaged in the work, are desired in discussions of scale-up and replication. Data from Years 3 and 4 suggest that the PLI can operate with success in schools characterized by a low/moderate level of principal buy-in. Full integration of the PLI into overall school operation will, however, only occur with higher levels of principal buy-in and engagement.

## Student Impact

This evaluation suggests the potential for parent-centered engagement models for helping parents set the stage for the children's academic success. The PLI's program components—family engagement centers, dedicated staff, parent workshops, and connections to services—helped parents feel welcome in their school community, build and strengthen relationships with other parents, and develop skills to support their education and development. Although our impact analysis did not find statistically significant effects on students' educational outcomes, the evaluation's findings suggest a potential for parent-centered programs to reduce chronic absenteeism among students. The PLI's direct messaging about the importance of school attendance may have influenced parents' efforts to ensure that their children attended school as often as possible. Further, as program staff hypothesized, the PLI may have indirectly supported improved attendance by helping parents and other caregivers improve their health and strengthen their connections with other parents. Additional investigation and analysis may be able to establish causal links between the PLI's program components and improved attendance at school.

In addition to investigating the impact of the program on student attendance, additional analyses may identify the pathways from parent-centered engagement models to effects on student achievement. While workshops explicitly focused on academics were not a core component of the model, PECs increased their coordination with school staff as the project progressed to plan programming to support academics. However, the PLI does require principals and educators to expand their conceptions of school-based parent engagement activities in ways that incorporate programming designed to help parents improve themselves and foster a stable home environment. Given the program's primary focus on parents, observable effects on students' academic achievement may be detectable after the study period. In the shorter term, the skills, knowledge, and networks parents gained from the PLI may create a critical foundation for student achievement and engagement in school throughout their academic careers.

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# Appendix A



## Exhibit A1: Baseline Equivalence Testing

Major Component	Possible Score	Sub-Components	Campus A	Campus B (includes two schools)	Campus C	Campus D (includes two schools)	Programmatic Indicator Met
<b>1.0 Establish Parent Resource Centers at Each School</b>	1	<b>1.1</b> Allocation of space in the school building	Y	Y	Y	Y	Yes
	1	<b>1.2</b> Hours Center is scheduled to open spans both the school day, afternoons, and evenings	Y	Y	Y	Y	Yes
<b>Measures</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1.0 Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>2.0 Hire and Train parent engagement coordinators</b>	1	<b>2.1.</b> The number of family engagement coordinators planned for each school are hired and trained by CAS	Y	Y	Y	Y	Yes
	1	<b>2.2</b> The proportion of family engagement coordinators with qualifications set for their position	Y	Y	Y	Y	Yes
<b>Measures</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.0 Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>3.0 Conduct adult education and training courses and workshops</b>	1	<b>3.1</b> Offer planned GED, ESL & Technology courses	Y	Y	Y	Y	Yes
<b>Measures</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3.0 Total</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>4.0 Provide Resources/support Through Parent Resource Center</b>	1	<b>4.1</b> Provide information and support in advance of parent teacher conferences to 10% of parents	N	N	N	N	No
	1	<b>4.2</b> Provide help desk, support center during parent teacher conferences to 10% of parents	N	Y	N	N	No

Major Component	Possible Score	Sub-Components	Campus A	Campus B (includes two schools)	Campus C	Campus D (includes two schools)	Programmatic Indicator Met
	1	4.3 Provide individualized support on communicating with teachers to 10% of parents	N	Y	N	N	No
	1	4.4 Provide opportunities for parents to sign up for school leadership and volunteer activities to 10% of parents	N	N	N	N	No
	1	4.5 Targeted outreach to parents of struggling students to 50% of parents identified	N	N	N	N	No
<b>Measures</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4.0 Total</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>5.0 Provide parents with information about available community resources</b>	1	5.1 Provide information, supports, and referrals for other parent and family needs (e.g., housing and emergency assistance; sexual health; at least 30 parents)	N	N	N	N	No
<b>Measures</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5.0 Total</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>6.0 Parents participate in courses and workshops</b>	1	6.1 Parents complete at least one course or workshop	Y	Y	Y	Y	Yes
	1	6.2 Parents achieve leadership level (complete 23+ hours of workshops; at least 30 parents)	Y	Y	N	Y	Yes
<b>Measures</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6.0 Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Yes</b>

## A2: Baseline equivalence model

*Level-1 Model: Grade Level*

$$\theta_{0Gj} = \pi_{0j} + r_{Gj}$$

*Level-2 Model: School Level*

$$\pi_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(T_j) + \mu_{0j}$$

$\gamma_{01}$  represents the difference between the baseline mean scores of treatment and comparison schools. Exhibit XX displays the results of the baseline equivalence testing.

Impact analysis model

*Level-1 Model: Student Level*

$$Z_{iGj} = \theta_{0Gj} + \varepsilon_{iGj}$$

*Level-2 Model: Grade Level*

$$\theta_{0Gj} = \pi_{0j} + r_{Gj}$$

$$\theta_{1Gj} = \pi_{1j}$$

*Level-3 Model: School Level*

$$\pi_{0j} = \gamma_{00} + \gamma_{01}(T_j) + \gamma_{02}(\text{PctDisAdv}_j) + \gamma_{03}(\text{Minority}_j) + \gamma_{04}(\text{ELL}_j) + \gamma_{05}(\text{Enroll}_j) + \gamma_{06}(\text{Climate}_j) + \gamma_{07}(\text{NumTested}_{Gj}) + \gamma_{08}(\text{PctPro}_{Gj}) + \gamma_{09}(\text{Propensity}_j) + \mu_{0j}$$

$$\pi_{1j} = \gamma_{10} + \gamma_{11}(T_j)$$

where,  $Z_{iGj}$  is the z-score from the  $i^{\text{th}}$  time point in the  $G^{\text{th}}$  grade in the  $j^{\text{th}}$  school, as described above. The random term ( $r_{Gj}$ ) is assumed distributed normal with mean zero and variance  $v$ . The covariates “NumTested” and “PctPro” described below are grade-specific and will enter the model as grade-specific values. The measures below are school-level measure (not time varying) and represent measures of the schools during the pre-treatment years.



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