UCP Charter Schools: PROJECT ELEVATE -Elevating Learning by Empowering and Valuing Advancement of Teacher and other Educators

U.S. Department of Education-Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Teacher and School Leader Incentive Program (CFDA Number: 84.374A)

PROJECT NARRATIVE

UCP Charter Schools, a Charter LEA with a network of eight schools in Central Florida, is responding to the need to provide highly effective teachers and leaders to close the achievement gap between high need low performing students through this proposal to the US Department of Education – Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (CFDA Number 84.374A).   The proposed project, Project ELEVATE will address the challenges associated with recruitment and retention of effective teachers and leaders in high need schools and build capacity in teacher leadership through development and implementation of TeachMastery (a customized targeted and job embedded professional learning program), teacher mentor/coaching, master teachers and model classroom, development and implementation of the KEY Program (Key Engagement for Yay-Worthy – a gamification incentive program), Principal Academy and Principal Resident program and building Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT). The project will also improve the UCP performance-based compensation (PBCS) by providing multiple pathways for differentiated compensation and incentives and redefining career growth paths for classroom-based teachers and principals/assistant principals.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a particular significant impact on our younger generation of workers who are now our novice teachers. Their skill development was interrupted, they have experienced higher levels of stress and anxiety compared to previous generations, their emotional intelligence skills were hindered, and they value organizations that foster a diverse and inclusive environment. Project ELEVATE will support these teachers where they are and where they journey to be to ensure the best possible educators for our high need students.

Absolute Priority 1: Human Capital Management System (HCMS) or Performance Based Compensation System (PBCS) and Career Advancement Opportunities

For over twenty years, UCP Charter Schools has been unlocking the potential of thousands of the most marginalized and vulnerable students in Central Florida. UCP Charter Schools current set of Human Capital Management System (HCMS) and Performance Based Compensation System (PBCS) policies and practices work together to attract, develop, deploy, motivate, and retain people who have the competencies needed to achieve the ultimate goal of the schools which is to unlock the potential of all students. This project will allow UCP Charter Schools to further develop and enhance our HCMS/PBCS to continue to raise student academic achievement for both a unique and high-risk group of students (students with disabilities who are also low income) by closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing students to address Absolute Priority 1. UCP Charter Schools Project ELEVATE will expand their current PBCS, described in the proposal by providing additional opportunities for teachers and school leaders to receive incentive pay for increased student, teacher, and school performance. The launch of the UCP KEY (Key Engagement Yay-Worthy) will use a gamification strategy as a unique way to motivate team members to create an exceptional work culture and foster employee satisfaction and well-being while providing incentives for items that UCP has identified will move the mark

on student achievement. This project will provide a personalized and individualized investment in a career advancement program for teachers and leaders aligning with their unique needs and foster a culture of continuous learning to support individual growth aspirations while contributing to the overall success of our educational community with the primary focus being student learning outcomes.

Absolute Priority 2:   High Need Schools

Project ELEVATE will serve the eight schools in the UCP Charter Schools network of public charter schools in Central Florida.   UCP Charter Schools serve approximately 2,100 students from 18 months through 12th grade with a disproportionate number of students with disabilities (including students with significant disabilities) educated together with their peers.   All schools in the UCP Charter Schools network meet the definition of "high need" based on the Absolute Priority Criteria of at least 50% of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch.   The overall UCP Charter School LEA average of low-income students is 95% and has grown 10-20% for every school over the last year.   UCP uses the Direct Certify method of determining eligibility and all schools also participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) of the NSLP. Additionally, all schools with the exception of one are located in a Qualified Opportunity Zone and two of the schools are located in what is considered a "Severe Distressed" Opportunity Zone. Below is a chart of the schools and corresponding status from the most recent Florida DOE data: https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/edu-info-accountability-services/pk-12-public-school-data-pubs-reports/students.stml

	Free/Reduced %	High Need School?	% of SWD
UCP Seminole Charter School	89%	Yes	70%
UCP Bailes Community Charter School (BCA)	98%	Yes	50%
UCP Osceola Charter School	100%	Yes	78%
UCP Bailes Early Childhood Academy	97%	Yes	50%
UCP Downtown Charter School	100%	Yes	70%
UCP Pine Hills Charter School	100%	Yes	45%
UCP Transitional Learning Academy (TLA)	93%	Yes	100%
UCP West Orange Charter School	79%	Yes	61%

The schools are racially diverse as well with the LEA having an average of 80% of non-white students with students, families speaking 16 different languages and over 50% of families served being identified as Hispanic.

	White	Black	Hispanic	Other
UCP Seminole	18%	22%	51%	9%
UCP BCA	29%	9%	53%	9%
UCP Osceola	12%	10%	76%	3%
UCP East Orange	25%	11%	58%	6%
UCP Downtown	10%	18%	67%	4%
UCP Pine Hills	3%	73%	21%	3%
UCP TLA	18%	24%	52%	6%

UCP West Orange	28%	18%	46%	8%
All UCP Charter Schools	20%	20%	54%	6%

Although this was not specifically identified as a priority, the fact that UCP Charter Schools serve 50-75% students with disabilities (including students with very significant disabilities) as well as a low SES population gives the schools and its students a double challenge of high risk/high need.

Competitive Preference Priority 1 – Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources and Opportunities

As part of the project, UCP Charter Schools will continue its comprehensive system-wide assessment of the existing disparities in access to resources and opportunities among students and teachers/leaders with the project focused on taking action by both teachers and leaders to address these needs. The assessment will include analyzing data related to student outcomes, resource allocation, access to opportunities, discipline practices and representation among staff to prioritize and develop personalized, individualized, and empowering strategies to ensure that all students have equitable access to educational resources, opportunities and educators who produce effective outcomes for students. Although all UCP Charter Schools will be served in this project (including elementary, middle, and high schools), the project will target additional resources and strategies in this project to the lowest performing schools and highest needs schools (UCP Downtown, UCP Pine Hills and UCP Osceola).

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Supporting Diverse Educator Workforce and Professional Growth to Strengthen Student Learning

UCP Charter Schools is committed to inspire excellence in teaching and learning by creating and maintaining a workforce of increasing diversity where students are able to learn from adult role

models who look like them and share common experiences, as well as Highly Effective educators who may not look like them but bring the diversity of many backgrounds and experiences. UCP Charter Schools currently embraces diversity in all forms including over 65% of our teachers a person or color and 50% of our leadership team. The project will seek to increase the number recruited and retained of fully certified, in-field/dual certified experienced educators from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds through its' Pathway to Teacher Program, Future Teacher Academy and Summer Learning Institute projects with partners from local and national HBCU and HIS. All UCP Charter Schools teachers are considered "shortage" areas as they are required to be dual certified in grade/subject level and exceptional education (ESE) – every UCP Charter School teacher and leader serves high needs students. As part of Project ELEVATE, UCP Charter Schools will create an Equity Awareness Team responsible for periodic survey and assessment of educator perceptions related to professional equity in UCP Charter Schools and identification of professional learning, policies and strategies that address equity gaps.

Need for Project – Specific gaps or weaknesses in services, infrastructure, or opportunities and how the proposed project will address:

UCP Charter Schools LEA are a network of inclusive public charter schools focused on inclusion and serving a disproportionate number of low-income students with disabilities learning with their peers that has outperformed in increasing learning gains of students for similar populations. The priority for Project ELEVATE is to continue to increase student learning gains for this high need population by ensuring access to highly effective and diverse teachers and school leaders and addressing these gaps and opportunities:

- Shortage of teachers specifically with expertise in special education to serve the high percentage of SWD at UCP Charter Schools.

- High turnover of teachers and high % of teachers who are novice teachers to UCP Charter Schools

- Lack of alignment of teacher diversity with the students they teach.

- Inexperienced principal leaders and lack of a "bench" of aspiring leaders.

- Inconsistent on-boarding, evaluation and on-going professional learning of teachers and leaders.

UCP Project ELEVATE will seek to improve and enhance our PBCS to incentivize team members providing multiple pathways for differentiated compensation and incentives to address these needs and goals.

At UCP, we believe that every child has the right to an education and a life without limits. Yet, in a nation that values equality, educational opportunities for students with disabilities are lacking. The Civil Rights movement of the 60's was a precursor to legislation protecting the rights of children with disabilities to public education. Unfortunately, even today many people assume that the best place for children with disabilities is in a special school or classroom, separated from their peers. Many students with complex learning needs have been denied access to opportunities which foster academic success, based upon the erroneous assumption they could not benefit from traditional instruction. Students with disabilities continue to be educated isolated from their peers and communities. However, experts and people with disabilities themselves are united in their beliefs that inclusive education offers the best outcomes for all students. That is our mission and our passion.

But although the teacher shortage is a critical issue in general – it is most acutely a problem in special education. 82% of special educators across the nation state that there is a lack of support when trying to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Hale, 2015). Like other marginalized

populations of students, students with disabilities experience a disparate proportion of unprepared, underprepared, uncredentialed, under credentialed, and inexperienced teachers, thus significantly limiting their access to learning. These students begin their learning journey behind, and we need to do everything we can to help them catch up as fast as they can.

At UCP Charter Schools, every one of our teachers are special education educators as classes have a minimum of 50% or more made up of students who have a disability. The challenge is even greater as our educators are asked to help students make learning gains with an even wider variety and intensity of disabilities than a traditional public school and ensure differentiated instruction for these students in the same classrooms as their typical peers. Teachers graduate from university teacher prep programs or join the teaching field (as an alternative certificate pathway) underprepared in general for the work of teaching and learning. New teachers' development is far from being complete upon their graduation from respective teacher preparation programs (Barrett, et al., 2009). In the case of UCP teachers, they are charged with many tasks that are not generally part of any traditional teacher preparation program such as writing Individual Education Plans for complex students, managing a classroom team of paraprofessionals, therapists, nurses and behavior coaches, developing a collaborative partnership with families and utilizing various assistive technology to ensure every child has a voice while always keeping top of mind to accommodate and celebrate the gifts of every individual student.

UCP Charter Schools began as a PreK ESE program in 2001, operating under the 65+ year old non-profit (United Cerebral Palsy of Central Florida). Through the years, the system of schools has evolved to its current inclusion model serving students toddlers through 12th grade and becoming recognized as an Charter LEA in 2016. Like our relatively young school system, our

teachers are mostly early career teachers with 80% having less than five years of experience at UCP Charter Schools.   Nationally, there is an increased rate of attrition by as much as 50% of teachers leave teaching within the first three to five years (Le Maistre & Paré, 2008). with teachers citing inadequate pay, unreasonable caseloads, and the inability to serve student's needs (Darling-Hammond & Podolsky, 2019).   Teachers have been reporting higher stress levels, with 27% of candidates from the Education Recruitment Report (ERR) survey reported that work intensification and stress is a major reservation for teaching in the U.S. As a result, nearly half (47%) of teachers have considered leaving the classroom due to stress. Research suggests that teacher turnover has negative effects on school performance, particularly for schools that are low-achieving and serve larger high-needs populations (Hanushek, et al, 2016; Ronfeldt, et al, 2013). The greatest area of teacher shortage (Irwin et al. 2022) is in serving students with disabilities.   At UCP Charter Schools, with over 50% of the students having a disability and 95% high poverty, our teacher focus is ensuring that all students achieve high standards requiring they have teachers, related service providers and leaders who have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach and intervene effectively.

Although a less experienced teacher is not always less-effective, less experienced teachers demonstrate a need for more support not only to increase instructional quality but also to increase their retention probability both in the field and at their school.   The other challenge is that there is a shortage of "master teachers" who are able to mentor and support a novice teacher. The National Center for Education Statistics (Irwin et al., 2022) showed public schools understaffed ranging from 56% to 75% of all school districts.   With the data showing 51% of all school districts and 90% of high poverty districts reporting difficulty attracting and retaining highly qualified SETS (NCPSSETS, 2014, Irwin et al., 2022). Last year, UCP Charter Schools

had a 40% overall school turnover rate – causing a continual churn, undermining long term improvement efforts, and impacting our ability to improve student learning outcomes. The recent State of Florida investment in starting salaries has helped significantly in addressing the compensation issue for recruiting new teachers but has not addressed incentives for experienced highly effective teachers and teacher leaders. UCP conducts exit surveys with each departing team member which provides valuable insights into the reasons behind their departure and helps us understand and address issues related to employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention. UCP uses this data to identify trends, evaluate their company culture, and make improvements to enhance employee retention and morale and has been used to create Project ELEVATE. Although compensation is an issue, exiting team members are equally concerned with the need to be better trained to meet the intense social emotional post-COVID needs of students, differentiate instruction to meet the very diverse learners of UCP, need for a teacher mentor, time to do the additional compliance and paperwork requirements, lack of experienced classroom support positions (i.e. Paraprofessionals) and teacher leader opportunities to grow more within the consortium of schools.

In the most recent school year, 6% of UCP Charter School classrooms had long term substitutes and 20% had an out of field teacher. The majority of these teachers came through an alternative pathway to teacher and thus lack some of the basic pedagogy and skill set that a fully certified teacher would bring to students (Rose & Sughrue, 2020). During the last evaluation period, only one of these teachers was rated as "highly effective" using the UCP Instructional Personnel Evaluation system – a pivotal data point that reinforces the need for Project ELEVATE. Although the strategy of recruiting out of field teachers is a necessity, these teachers need additional support and professional learning to allow them to be highly effective and help our

students achieve. Overall, 49% of UCP Charter School teachers were rated "Highly Effective" but that means 51% of our students had at best an "effective" teacher.   The UCP Instructional Personnel Evaluation System utilizes the Danielson Framework for Teaching to enhance professional practice (Danielson, 2009).   In addition to the four domains of instructional practices, 33% of the evaluation is tied to student learning ensuring an increase in each domain and student learning is the primary object of this project.   However, there has not been a consistent training or monitoring system to ensure inter-reliability of these ratings, and this will be a priority as part of Project ELEVATE.

Project ELEVATE will include elements to address the above issues of recruitment and retention for teachers working with high need students through a multi-faceted approach which will include development and implementation of the following:

- Formal teacher mentor and coaching program with incentives for the teacher mentors

- TeachMastery – a new multi-track and customized professional learning program using innovative methods that meet the needs of adult learners.   The program will also tier our teachers into three tracks   Great Start Teachers (0-2 years), Next Steps Teachers (3-5 Years), Master Teacher (6+ years) with a personalized learning plan based on their identified needs. Teacher feedback indicates that the usual "sit and get" generally doesn't resonate with them so UCP Project ELEVATE will work with partners to provide educators with training through a variety of methods including on-line modules, bug-in the ear coaching, and hands on workshops to increase effectiveness of our adult learners.

- Expansion of our "grow our own" Pathway to Teacher program for our existing paraprofessionals and "Future Teacher Institute" for aspiring teacher high school students.

UCP has a strong commitment to inclusion and diversity in all forms. Diverse teachers, diverse leadership and diverse school cultures create higher expectations, stronger communities, and better outcomes for students and for school staff. If a student is of color and has a teacher of color in preschool through fifth grade, they are 39% more likely to persist through high school (Gershenson, 2017). That is a powerful data point that is statistically significant but according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in the 2017-18 school year, approximately 79% of public-school teachers were White and non-Hispanic, 9% were Hispanic (of any race), 7% were Black and non-Hispanic, 2% were Asian and non-Hispanic, and 2% identified as Two or more races and non-Hispanic. UCP Charter Schools are proud that our teaching staff significantly exceed this national average with an incredibly diverse population of teachers (65% of our teachers are minorities). However, our teachers still do not mirror the 80% of our non-white students and we want to get better in both recruiting, hiring, and retaining a diverse work force reflective of our students.

UCP	White	Hispanic	Black	Other/ Mixed
Students	20%	53%	20%	6%
Teachers	35%	38%	16%	11%

As part of Project ELEVATE this project, UCP Charter Schools will enhance its work with Historically Black Colleges and University (HBCU) and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) focused on recruiting and preparing a diverse teaching force to grow our diversity at UCP Charter School to provide students with every opportunity to reach their fullest potential. Project ELEVATE will expand our current Future Teacher Summer Institute to bring students from HBCU and HSI together for a 5-week paid summer internship working with our students in our Awesome Summer Learning Academy. Additionally, funds from the grant will support expansion of participation at job fairs for recruitment of teachers and teacher interns at these

HBCU and HSI, working with our existing marketing and on-boarding/recruiting team.

One of our other needs relates to Principals/Leadership professional learning and development of an aspiring leader pipeline.   Studies find that the quality of the school's leadership is among the most important predictors of whether a teacher continues in the school from year-to-year (e.g., Boyd et al., 2011; Grissom, 2011; Ladd, 2011). This research suggests that more effective principals are better able to retain teachers because they create more positive school climates, supply teachers with greater support, provide more beneficial opportunity for professional growth, and otherwise positively shape teachers' working conditions in ways that lead to greater job satisfaction and attachment (Ingersoll, 2001; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Kraft,e et al., 2016). But it is important that principals understand and focus on "strategic retention" – retaining high performing teachers while not retaining ineffective teachers (Grissom & Bartanen, 2019). In the last couple of years, UCP Charter Schools has had several of our more experienced and effective principals promoted to LEA-wide leadership roles.   Although internal growth opportunities are a positive retention strategy, it also created a gap with our next level of leadership.   Currently, none of our principals/assistant principals have been in their role at UCP for more than two years.   Although we have been successful in recruiting some leaders with experience in other districts, there is still a large learning curve with our unique schools and population and their ability to support learning gains for our diverse students. Additionally, although our Principal/Assistant Principal team is much more diverse than the national average of 20% minority (50% of UCP Charter Schools principals/assistant principals are minorities), research supports that having leaders of color will support recruitment and retention of a diverse teaching population and this will be a focus on our leadership recruitment and development.   Project ELEVATE will use a two-prong approach focusing on providing

incentives and support for our current leader development and growth and also developing a bench of a leadership pipeline.   Recently, UCP Charter Schools was approved by the Florida Department of Education to offer a Level II School Principal Preparation Program which will provide our assistant principals, principals, and other aspiring leaders a formal pathway to getting their Principal Certification (Appendix F).   This UCP Principal Prep program will provide participating administrators with high quality, research-based, and job-embedded professional learning that integrates the Florida Principal Leadership Standards to enhance their instructional leadership skills and provide support for the application of this learning at their school sites.   There are four domains that align to these standards and field experience. Principals/Assistant Principals will receive an incentive payment for completion of each Domain activities and field experience.   Principals/Assistant Principals will also have the opportunity to attend national conferences on best practices to further expand their tool box.

Excellent leaders do not thrive in isolation. Effective school directors must be connected to other strong leaders to continue to build their professional skills and maintain a passion for their work. The UCP Principals/Assistant Principals will be a cohort to share ideas and learnings.

As part of Project ELEVATE UCP Charter Schools will also supplement this program by working with professionals from C-Suite Analytics.   C-Suite Analytics is a world-renowned expert in retention using a innovative concept called a "Stay Interview".   In the inverse of an exit interview which takes places after a team member has left, the Stay Interview is a structured discussion a leader conducts with each individual employee to learn the specific actions they must take to strengthen that employee's engagement and retention (Forbes, 2020).   CEO ███ ███████ is a former board members and has provided several in-kind professional development sessions.   However, without a focused on-going effort and support, it has been difficult for

leaders to achieve results.   As part of Project ELEVATE, C-Suite Institute will provide training and individual coaching with each principals (see letter of support in appendix) through the grant project terms.

Although we want to continue to train and support our existing leaders, it will be equally important to grow a strong bench of the next generation leaders.   UCP Charter Schools have had a strong commitment to promoting from within and many of our best leaders have worked up the ranks with informal training and support. Last year, we provided an opportunity for self-identified aspiring leaders to participate in a "Leadership Pipeline Training".   However, in order for this strategy to be a sustainable and on-going process, UCP Charter Schools needs a framework. As part of Project ELEVATE, we will convene school based Instructional Leadership Teams allowing schools to engage a rich complement of voices in the school level decisions most critical to instructional quality while empowering and training aspiring leaders. Many of our schools have elements of "teacher led" and the ability to have a "voice" is one of the positive comments that team members share about working at UCP.   This project will create a structure including Principal training so they can effectively launch a successful ILT as well as provide sufficient protected time for teachers for their work and compensation through incentive pay and/or release time.   These leaders will also have opportunities for various

additional leadership training.

UCP will also build a Principal Resident program where current teacher leaders will have the opportunity to participate with release time using a job shared approach (co-teachers would share a classroom allowing each to have paid release time to participate). Principal residencies are considered an essential component of principal preparation programs. These programs provide aspiring principals with hands-on, real world and job-embedded experiences that allow them to learn, practice, and reflect on the skills required for effective school leadership (NYC Leadership Academy/AIR, 2016).

Building on similar or related efforts to improve relevant outcomes:

UCP Project ELEVATE will build on prior knowledge and practices to improve our current systems that are currently funded through a range of funding including state and federal funding and philanthropy. These current funding resources will continue to be allocated and the TSL funds requested to support Project ELEVATE will allow us to get better faster to allow us to improve student learning for our students.

In 2018, UCP invested in a comprehensive Human Capital System (Paycom) to streamline and automate processes from every step of the team member life cycle providing an integrated approach to managing employee data, recruitment, on-boarding, performance evaluation, payroll,

benefit administration, and other HR related processes. This mobile friendly system allows potential new team members to set up one application and then apply for multiple positions. The system automates job postings and applicant tracking and supervisors are able to use the system to make notes and track a new hire through the on-boarding journey. Once hired, this system provides a self-service one stop shop to give team members real time access to their salary/other compensation information and benefits including paid time Off balances. Team members can also use the system to apply for internal opportunities. It also houses an interconnected talent manager that includes performance management and Paycom Learning providing opportunities for some basic on-line learning/assigning courses.

Paycom also allows various check-in surveys including a post-on boarding survey and an exit survey. Most recently, our Paycom liaison has been working with the HR team to support a more robust use of the system including data analysis on hiring and retention trends and how to translate this information into actionable follow-up strategies. This includes the ability to systematically report recruits by position, how long a position takes to fill, how many candidates, as well as retention reports within schools. Paycom will house important data for reporting and also to drive changes. However, there is no individual who has working with this as their most important priority. In order to move the mark on recruitment and retention – there must be someone who wakes up every morning and says, "how am I going to ensure that we are the employer of choice for every team member". Project ELEVATE will support a new position – a Talent Engagement and Retention Manager whose role will be to lead these efforts (Appendix – Job Description).

As a partner school with the University of Central Florida, UCP Charter Schools was represented on the CEEDAR Center/AACTE sponsored "Reducing the Shortage of Special

Education Teachers Networked Improvement Community" that focused on the addressing the problem of the shortage and lack of diversity of fully prepared and credentialed special education teachers in public schools across the nation. Eleven teacher preparation programs in higher education were selected to participate in this NIC and developed a range of strategies to positively impact the special education teacher shortage.   Information and strategies learned have been incorporated into our Project ELEVATE.

UCP Charter Schools existing PBCS includes differentiated salary raises for teachers and school leaders based on annual performance evaluations. Each year, there is a differential based on rating with Highly Effective teachers and leaders resulting in greater increases than Effective ratings and no increases for rating below Effective.   Last year, UCP also implemented a tiered retention bonus based on seniority and began piloting performance bonuses based on specific job-related criteria that ultimately rolled up to our overarching goal of improving student learning and achievement.   UCP Charter Schools will build on existing systems and apply lessons learned and stakeholder feedback to create and implement this project.

UCP Charter Schools has developed a very comprehensive and aggressive recruitment marketing strategy using branded social media, ads, postcards and most recently videos utilizing teachers and other educators speaking about their experience working at UCP. One of the main goals is to provide a realistic overview of what the position entails and describe the type of individuals who would be successful as well as a "fit" stressing the ability (and interest) in being an out of the box thinker, comfort as part of a collaborative team and being member of and understanding the needs of a very diverse population. The UCP marketing department has conducted in person focus groups to ascertain the skills and personalities for success as a UCP educator and has weaved these attributes throughout its campaigns.   UCP Charter Schools has built partnerships

with various universities and career services centers and participated in recruitment events for potential teacher candidates where they can meet school leaders and current teachers. As a lesson learned from COVID, UCP has leaned in on individuals increased comfort level with virtual platforms to host "Virtual Job Fairs" allowing us to easily meet with more applicants initially including out of area candidates. Funding from Project ELEVATE will allow us to expand these efforts as well as have the added "carrot" of offering additional incentives for hard to fill positions.

One of UCP's recent strategies to increase the pool of diverse teachers, retain current teachers and improve student achievement was an increased focus on hiring, training, and potential growing strong paraprofessionals. At UCP Charter Schools, each classroom has a team of either a co-teacher with a paraprofessional or two paraprofessionals, so their effectiveness is critical. Hemelt, et. al., 2021 found that paraeducators had a positive impact on students' reading and math achievement scores on state standardized tests and that these impacts were particularly strong for students of color. Surveys with UCP teachers also found that when there was a strong team of paraprofessionals, the teacher felt less stressed, more effective, and more likely to stay as a teacher.

In the last two years, UCP Charter Schools elevated the starting salary of paraprofessionals significantly (from $10/hour to $15/hour) and also increased the training and subsequent expectations of the position. In August, we will launch our first Paraprofessional Institute – an all-day professional learning focused on teaching paraprofessionals strategies to become laser focused on their role to help support student learning. One of our other strategies will also be to teach our teachers how to effectively use their paraprofessionals – most have never "supervised" anyone and flounder trying to direct their paras for optimize use.

In 2018, UCP launched a "Pathway to Teacher" program funded by the Universal Orlando Foundation. The program was based on the belief that one of the most effective teacher recruitment strategies is to further develop existing team members such as paraprofessionals who have already demonstrated interest, competencies, and passion for helping students with disabilities. Paraeducators are considered to be a promising pool of future teachers who can help schools address the issues of teacher shortages, attrition, and diversification (Chopra et. al., 2023). Prior to implementation, UCP conducted a series of focus groups with existing paraprofessionals and identified obstacles for them to pursue the next steps to become a teacher. These were identified as financials barriers, time, general fear of going to college, and lack of knowledge on how to access available resources and support. The "Pathway to Teacher" program provides support for all of these obstacles including financial support for tuition and other college related expenses (i.e. childcare, gas card, parking pass, laptop) as well as Project Coordinator/Success Coach to support paraprofessionals enrolling and going back to school. This project has been largely successful with several graduates who are now successful teachers (including one who was just selected as their school Teacher of the Year) and many others in the pipeline. The program has an endowment from a recently deceased donor to continue at its current capacity, but Project IMPACT will also provide funding to increase the number of participants.

UCP Charter Schools partners with local universities that offer degree-conferring teaching preparation programs, as well as with alternative routes to licensure. One of its strongest partners is the University of Central Florida (UCF), one of the largest public universities in the country. The main campus is located within 30 minutes of all the schools and the UCP BCA Charter School and UCP BECA are located a few blocks from the UCF campus. In 2019, UCP

Charter Schools was designated as a University of Central Florida Inclusive Demonstration School System (MOU in Appendix B) to provide an immersive learning environment for pre-service and in-service teachers in the field of exceptional education while providing rigorous learning opportunities. UCP Charter Schools hosts multiple teacher interns each year plus an additional 30-35 other interns (i.e. physical, speech, occupational therapist, social worker, clinical counselors). Additionally, it hosts over 4,000 hours of "service learning/observation" hours each year with students who have real time classroom experience. However, the majority of these hours were at the UCP BCA/UCP BECA due to proximity and additional project support from UCF faculty nearby. In order to encourage students to provide hours at the highest need schools, we will be adding some stipends/gas cards to support students to participate there.

In 2016, the UCP Teacher in Residence (TIR) was developed in partnership with ██ ████ ████ of the University of Central Florida to support the development of pre-service teachers and increase the quality of instruction in the paraprofessional role. The pre-service teachers work as direct instructional support under the expertise and supervision of expert teachers. The pre-service teachers are paid interns assuming all teaching and non-teaching duties for an entire school year within one school site. These approaches help to balance the usual traditional preparation programs that require a high investment by teacher candidates (tuition and time) before they gain any real sense of teaching profession and their teaching talent. One study published by American Research Institute for Policy Development found that when comparing traditional student teaching programs with a teaching internship supported by intensive mentoring and other induction procedures statistically significant lower attrition rates among teachers completing a more intensive internship. Additionally, findings indicated lower turnover rates among the interns when compared to the teacher turnover rates for the schools in which

they were employed. The Teacher in Resident program has been highly successful in placing final year interns at UCP Charter Schools. However, similar to service learners, the majority of TIRs were placed at the UCP East Orange Charter School. The Project will include a differential hourly rate for TIR's to incentivize these high-quality interns to choose one of the other schools.

The University of Central Florida College of Community Innovation and Education was recently awarded a grant (Project CENTRAL) to develop a high-quality, interdisciplinary system of personnel development in special education. This funding not only addresses these needs, but also provides initial preparation of certified, licensed, and highly effective teachers to teach and remain in High-Need Schools (HNS) through induction programs.   As part of our partnership with the University of Central Florida, our paraprofessionals and teachers have priority for acceptance for this and into many of their grant funded masters' programs.   One of the identified obstacles for participation is "time".   Although additional compensation is appreciated to participate, teachers face challenges of insufficient time to prepare lessons, paperwork, etc. usually spending nights/weekends doing these tasks leaving little time for additional study.   As part of Project ELEVATE, UCP will allow pairs of teachers to job share so they can attend classes and fulfill their study requirements.   They will be assigned a class to co-teach and both be fully paid with a requirement for future commitment to teaching or being a leader at UCP Charter Schools.   This innovative strategy will show teachers that we truly value their professional learning and are willing to support them in a meaningful way.

Although we are grateful for the UCF partnerships, UCP Charter Schools have also been working to expand our partnerships with other teacher prep programs.   Last year, UCP entered into teacher preparation and service-learning partnerships with Ana Mendez University (HIS) and Valencia Community College to expand the diversity of students who might be interested in working at UCP.

One of the goals of a newly hired Professional Learning Specialist is to expand the internship partnerships.

Knowing that previous experience in a particular setting is the best predictor of future performance, UCP Charter Schools has prioritized high-performing student intern teachers and Teacher in Residents as priority candidates for teaching jobs within the schools in which they are placed. This has been a successful strategy with the majority of these individuals' accepting positions either at that school or within the UCP Consortium of schools.

In 2022, UCP tried a unique long-term approach to interest potential teachers in the field by hosting a 5-week paid summer internship for high school students (Future Teacher Institute). These students assisted in our Awesome Summer Learning Academy (a stimulus funded program for our most struggling students) and received additional training and a mentor assigned to support them.   Additionally, this summer, a partnership with CareerSource Central Florida and their Summer Job Exploration Program allowed us to introduce the idea of potential teaching to low-income youth while they participate in the Future Teacher Institute.

As part of Project ELEVATE, we will be building on these programs and also work with several local and national HBCU and HSI to invite 20 early career teacher prep students to attend the Future Teacher Institute, providing transportation and living expenses.

Over the last couple of years, UCP has refined its' onboarding process with the premise that onboarding is more than just orientation. We have recently invested in two key positions to enhance the process – a Human Resources On-Boarding Coordinator and Professional Learning Specialist which will play critical roles in the development and implementation of Project ELEVATE. At the beginning of each school year, there is a one week intense "New Education Academy" for all new education faculty and staff as well as an Education Conference for all

education team members. Although these have been well received from post-event surveys, it also is clear that the experience is akin to "drinking from a fire hose" with a lot of information to process in a short time. We have provided different professional learning through the school year, but it has not been in a structured and consistent manner utilizing more recent research of adult learning theory. Additionally, although it is preferred that all new team members start at the beginning of the school year, in practice, education staff start through the year, and it is critical that they get up to speed as quickly as possible to begin making an impact on our student learning.

As part of Project ELEVATE, we will take our teacher feedback and review of adult learning theory, and our Professional Learning Specialist will create TeachMastery, a new multi-track and customized professional learning program using innovative methods that meet the needs of adult learners. The program will also tier our teachers into three tracks Great Start Teachers (0-2 years), Next Steps Teachers (3-5 Years), Master Teacher (6+ years) with a personalized learning plan based on their identified needs. Teacher feedback indicates that the usual "sit and get" generally doesn't resonate with them so UCP Project ELEVATE will work with partners to provide educators with training through a variety of methods including on-line modules, and hands on workshops to increase effectiveness of our adult learners. Bug-in-the ear coaching will be included as one strategy. Bug-in-ear coaching is a method that involves using technology to provide real-time feedback and coaching to teachers. It typically involves a teacher wearing an earpiece while teaching, with their lesson live streamed to a coach or mentor who provides feedback through the earpiece. Incentives for participation and skill acquisition will be built by using the new KEY program.

Comprehensive effort to improve teaching and learning and support rigorous academic standards for students:

Although student achievement is the result of a complex interplay between a wide array of factors—including schools, parents, and the home learning environment—teachers are widely regarded as one of the most important influences into children's academic development outside of the home (Burgess, 2019). Researchers have consistently suggested that teachers significantly affect student achievement, possibly more than any other single factor (Koedel & Betts, 2007). According to Rivkin et al. (2005), a teacher's effectiveness has more impact on student learning than any other factor under the control of school systems, including the size of classes or the size of the school. Teachers are thought to be among the most important school-provided educational inputs in the K-12 years (Hanushek & Rivkin 2010). As it should, society's expectation to ensure outcomes for the 7.3 million children with disabilities have increased. This societal shift is reflected in federal legislation (i.e. IDEA, NCLB 2001) requiring all students including those with significant disabilities to participate in an accountability system that hold schools responsible for teaching academic content to all students as well as closing the achievement gap. This results driven outcome aligns with increased demands for special educators to support grade level instruction for all students (Brownell, et al, 2010).   In the 2022 Florida Assessment (FSA) showed that 53% of third graders statewide scored at or above Level 3, considered a satisfactory or passing mark. This was down from 54% in 2021.   However, only 17% of students with disabilities in the district scored at or above Level 3.   At UCP Charter Schools, almost 19% of students scored a level 3 during this testing period.   Our students arrive significantly below grade level.   This has been UCP Charter Schools focus and mantra – grade level standards-based instruction for every student.

UCP participates in the School Improvement Rating method for evaluating the effectiveness of our programs with the focus on learning gain growth for our students. Our population consists of 50% to 100% exceptional education students when compared to the state average of 15%. This year, Florida changed their testing initiative and provided three state testing points – Progress Monitoring 1, 2 and 3 (FAST) to evaluate learning gains of students. UCP Charter Schools was proud of the learning gains we were able to achieve during the initial year of this testing. During the 2022-23 school year participation in the FAST testing for grades K-10 showed our schools averaging 7.68% score growth in ELA with 63.1% of our student's showing growth as well as a 4.93% score growth in math with 76.6% of our students showing growth in the Math testing. In comparing our testing data with our district and state averages, even though we have a significantly higher exceptional education population we consistently score within 8% of their average score for each district. It is imperative our students continue to have this intense effective instruction with consistent educators to catch up.

At UCP Charter Schools, we have already witnessed what a difference of a low turnover highly effective team has at our UCP BCA Charter School. This was the first campus that expanded to the elementary inclusion model so did have a head start but this school consistently out-performs in student achievement. UCP BCA Charter School was recognized as being ranked Number 10 in all Florida elementary schools in ELA student learning improvement (and this data included our 50% of students with disabilities compared to the 10-15% average in most Florida schools).

In 2022, UCP Charter Schools partnered with the Reed Charitable Foundation to train UCP PreK-3rd grade teachers on the Orton-Gillingham method to build foundation literacy

acumen. The successful development of literacy skills impacts student learning and achievement in a profound and direct relationship (Botel, 2022). The OG approach is an explicit, systematic, and multisensory instructional method that has helped make significant learning gains specifically for students with diverse needs who struggle to read. UCP BCA Charter Schools was chosen as a model demonstration school. The project also piloted a whole school approach to bring a more collaborative focus to lesson planning which has increased teacher engagement and retention and will be replicated as part of Project ELEVATE. In April 2023, UCP Charter Schools was awarded a Comprehensive Literacy State Development Program (CLSD) subgrant by the Florida Department of Education. This two-year grant will empower UCP Charter Schools to provide additional support to increase literacy outcomes for students by 5-8%. The grant will also fund UCP Charter schools to train instructional staff and speech-language therapists to support students with the latest research and best practices to foster reading, writing and comprehension skills. The grant will work in partnership with Project ELEVATE and provide funding for additional professional development with stipends to attend, purchase of a true Learning Management System, and a robust progress monitoring system.

UCP is also a recipient of 21st Century Community Learning Center grants for four of our schools – providing high quality after school and summer programs focused on STEM based academic programs. Additionally, through the use of Title I and other grants, we have added Interventionist/Instructional coaches and tutors at each campus to help support teachers focus on learning gains.

Addressing needs of targeted population or other identified needs:

The target population of this grant will be teachers (particularly novice teachers), aspiring leaders and principals/assistant principals with the ultimate goal of improving student learning. The

grant will address their identified needs of targeted professional development, mentors, model classrooms, release time, incentives, and opportunities to grow through our comprehensive Project ELEVATE coupled with our current funded initiatives. These strategies will ultimately benefit our diverse students. There is a wide variation among the students whose families are attracted to UCP Charter Schools. Our differentiated approach to instruction, the low teacher to student ratio and the staff's commitment to meet the needs of diverse learners makes UCP Charter Schools a logical fit for those students who have IEPs and are struggling in school. Many students enter UCP one or more grade levels behind their typically achieving peers. In addition to learning difficulties, many students joining UCP struggle with social, emotional, or behavioral constraints. Additionally, UCP holds the belief that all students can learn if placed in the right learning environment. Therefore, our academic expectations for students are high, and in line with what would be expected from any student at that developmental level. The school is committed to closing achievement gaps. As students progress in school, they will meet rigorous learning goals and expectations in an environment that is engaging and nurturing.

PROGRAM DESIGN

In 2022, UCP Charter School introduced the concept of 4 Disciplines of Execution for Educators through professional development and book study for school and district leadership. This framework developed by ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ focuses on achieving important goals and executing strategies effectively. As part of this exercise, UCP Charter Schools established two WILDLY IMPORTANT GOALS (WIGS): Improve student learning and Improve team member retention. Team members created annual work plans and KPI dashboard to track progress towards these goals that will now be used in collaboration with Project ELEVATE.

Based on research of evidence-based effective practices related to the implementation of HCMS,

PBCS, educator evaluation and educator improvement plans, the Planning Team developed a Logic Model grounding the project in a strong theory of support and rationale. The logic model provided in Appendix A clearly specifies the activities, outputs and outcomes expected through this grant.

Rationale:

Project ELEVATE is a culmination of extensive research and collaboration with various stakeholders to develop strategies to address gaps in getting to the ultimate goal – improving student achievement. UCP Charter Schools utilized stakeholder surveys followed by summits of different groups (teachers, principals, education leadership team) identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the current systems, gap analysis and potential strategic changes. Additionally, a comprehensive literacy review of relevant programs and strategies was conducted, and these findings were incorporated into our plans.

The project will address the needs/weaknesses identified above by:

1) Increasing the number of diverse and effective teachers and leaders that can support learning gains especially for students with disabilities.

2) Improving on-boarding and on-going professional learning to allow teachers and leaders to become highly effective.

3) Strategically retain diverse and effective teacher and leaders

4) Provide fiscal incentives that align with the above goals.

The program will be designed and modified with teacher, paraprofessional, principal, and other stakeholder feedback. Bullock and Tubbs' (1990) research reinforced that formal structures and "buy in" from staff are important in the successful implementation.

UCP has used a system of performance-based pay using Performance Evaluation data and also most recently using the annual work plan goals driven by the agency WIGS to create a

performance bonus plans. Through our partnerships with local theme park Universal Studios, we have also been able to provide various theme park tickets for incentives as well. We will continue to support these initiatives and use a variety of additional incentives to reinforce behaviors that lead to improved school culture, and subsequently retention and reward performance. Research has shown that educational incentives can be effective tools at promoting the retention and reducing attrition of teachers in high-need areas (Chotfelter, et al, 2008). Retaining teachers in the long-term benefits districts greatly by minimizing financial losses associated with teacher training (Watlington, Shockley, Guglilmino, & Felsher, 2010; Loeb & Miller, 2006; Zhang & Neller, 2016). Based on the literature, between 40% and 50% of teachers will leave the field prior to completing their fifth year (Zhang & Neller, 2016). Figlio and Kenney (2006) used data from the National Education Longitudinal Survey from a broad survey of K-12 schools, students and their families and their own survey to study the relationship between teacher performance incentives and student achievement. The researchers examined the impact of the frequency and magnitude of merit raises and bonuses as well as teacher evaluations. The results of this research showed that students achieved better learning even when teachers were given modest incentive pay. Students at schools with teacher pay-for-performance programs scored an average of one to two percentage points higher on standardized tests than their peers at schools where no bonuses were offered. UCP Charter Schools will work with a group of teachers and other stakeholders to refine and enhance the incentive programs. Odden and Kelly (2002) reinforced that for any of these pay plans to work, the involvement of all parties, adequate funding, training, and persistence is needed.

UCP incentive system will include:

- Stipends for teachers teaching in the highest of need classes.

- Master Teacher (1 per school) stipend to ensure that each school has a very experienced and highly effective teacher to model and particularly support novice teachers.

- Mentor Teacher (1 per new teacher) stipends to ensure that each newly hired teacher has an experienced and highly effective teacher to provide individual support.

- Model Classroom Stipend – (1 per grade level) to be shared with entire classroom team.

- Teacher In Resident Differential – to encourage quality interns to complete their internship at our higher need schools.

- Paid release time for teachers to attend a free Masters program at the University of Central Florida or participate as a Principal in Residence.   This will be accomplished by pairing two teachers together who will job share by co-teaching a class and be paid as a full teacher.

One of our most innovative elements of Project ELEVATE will be the development and implementation of the UCP KEY Program – using a gamification strategy. Gamification uses game mechanics (points, levels, challenges) to tap into essential human desires (rewards, status, competition) to meet employees where they are (particularly appealing to younger educators). More commonly used in the private sector, it has shown to enhance employee development, engagement, and retention by creating interactive and gratifying experience (Murawski (2021).

KEY stands for Key Engagement Yay-Worthy – expressing that an accomplishment is deserving of celebration, excitement, or approval!   The KEY program will use a points and reward system where teachers and leaders can earn points for various activities with accumulated points able to be redeemed for incentives funded through Project ELEVATE.   Activities could include attending professional development opportunities, leading professional learning communities, improving student learning, providing parent training, excelling in innovative teaching methods,

student engagement or collaborative practices or leading an action research project. Teachers will also be able to earn digital badges (similar to micro-credentials) who demonstrate mastery in specific areas or complete certain professional milestones. Lastly, there will be opportunities for teachers to recognize and appreciate each other's achievements through a peer recognition system. Teachers can nominate and acknowledge their colleagues for outstanding teaching practices, collaboration, or leadership. This kind of system can encourage collaboration and a culture of positive feedback and celebration of successes collectively (Jackson, et.al, 2009 Stiglers, 2010). Teachers come to UCP Charter Schools with varying levels of training and experience, and we are committed to providing each student within the consortium with a high level of research-based, quality instruction. We have found that some of our teachers really stand out as leaders in implementing the research-based curriculum that we have found works best with our unique population of students. Then there are the "quietly amazing" teachers who go into their classrooms and employ effective learning strategies that go unnoticed by colleagues who could truly benefit from seeing these practices in action. To provide a level of instructional consistency throughout our schools, we intend to identify several model classrooms based on the level of instruction in each content area paired with increased student achievement. Like our students, teachers need brain-based learning experiences that are relevant and challenging and that provide opportunities for active participation (Sousa, 2006). We will have these Model Classrooms open and available for observations.

For Project ELEVATE, UCP has partnered with ██ ██ █████ to provide an innovative platform for professional development, TeachLivE™ (TLE). ██ ██ █████ the founder of this project, has been a long-time collaborator with UCP and their innovative products will be utilized as part of the PD for the participants. TeachLivE™ (TLE) allows for condensed teacher and

paraprofessionals learning in a simulated environment. This tool will be used to target specific objectives with teachers and paraprofessionals in the UCP PD models. In the TeachLivE™ (TLE) Lab, teachers will walk into a room where everything looks like a typical classroom including props, whiteboards, and of course, students. However, unlike the brick-and-mortar setting, the lab is a virtual setting and the students in the classroom are avatars. The virtual student acts like typically developing or atypical developing students, depending on the objectives of the experience. Participants can interact with students and review previous work, present new content to students and provide scaffolding or guided practice in a variety of content areas and monitor students while they work independently. In this unique environment, new teachers and paraprofessionals can learn the instruction and management skills needed to implement based on students learning skills while practicing teachers can hone and refine their skills. This practice can occur without adversely affecting the learning of real students. Within TLE the embedding of Virtual Human Presence (VHP), called an interactor, is a key component that is delivered through the Internet and thus will be able to be shared with our remote partner schools. The results of a national research study on the efficacy of TLE and the transference of those skills back to the K-12 classroom setting have shown that four 10-minute sessions with TLE avatars can change and improve at least one effective teaching behavior in the TLE simulator and in the classroom (Dieker, Straub, Hughes, Hynes, & Hardin, 2014).

The introduction of a formal mentoring program will allow a first-year teacher to work with an experienced teacher to improve their techniques and pedagogical approaches. A new teacher is also able to develop a personal relationship with a more experienced educator; they are able to share emotions and experiences with one another. An induction program aims to facilitate and increase teaching effectiveness of new teachers through the expertise of veteran teachers (Moir,

2009; Goldrick, 2016). A mentor is experienced and is able to share a plethora of thoughts and ideas related to education. There are a number of benefits of mentoring programs for new teachers, these benefits include: higher retention rates; considerable professional development, improved ability to problem solve in the classroom, adoption of strategies and practice techniques from their mentors, higher confidence and self-esteem, decreased sense of isolation, and an overall improved attitude towards teaching (Fantilli & Mc Dougall, 2009; Sun, 2012). Studies have found that "across all districts, lack of funding and lack of time" [for mentors to devote to their novice teachers] were "most commonly identified as the barriers to implementing adequate mentoring programs" (DeCesare, et al., 2016). Our mentor program will include release time for both the participant and the mentor and a stipend for the mentor.

After the quality of a school's teachers, the quality of a school's leaders is the most influential school-based factor-affecting student learning. Moreover, research has found that leadership impacts student achievement the most in academic settings serving students who traditionally have not done well in school (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2005). Research has indicated that one of the primary reasons for leadership turnover is inadequate preparation and professional development, however, implementation of: high-quality preparation programs that carefully select and deeply prepare principals for challenging schools; access to in-service training, mentoring, and coaching that continue to support and develop principals; and collaborations between professional learning programs and school districts can minimize the churn (Levin & Bradley, 2019). As part of Project ELEVATE, we will implement the new Principal Prep program as well as make opportunities available for our current leaders and aspiring leaders to attend national conferences targeted on improving student achievement. Additionally, we will develop and launch a Principal Residency Program. There is research

evidence supporting the effectiveness of principal residencies. These programs help bridge the gap between theory and practice by providing aspiring principals with real-world experiences and opportunities to develop leadership skills.

Project Implementation:

UCP Charter Schools has developed a time line that will meet the goals and objectives of the project (see below):

PI (Superintendent), PD (Proj Director), TARM (Talent Acquisition/Retention Mgr.), DA (Data Analytics), PLS (Prof Learning Spec.), OBS (On-Boarding Coord), LDS (UCP Leadership Team), MKT (Marketing Mgr)				
Strategy/Milestones	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**	**Who Responsible?**
Advertise, Hire and onboard Project Director, Talent Mgr and Data Analysis	x			PI/LDS
Collect Baseline Data on Teachers/Leader Performance, Demographics and Retention	x			TARM/DA
Collect and analyze teacher/leader data/make adjustments as needed	x	x	x	PD/TARM/ DA
Collect Baseline Data on Students Academic Performance and Demographics	x	x	x	DA/LDS
Collect MOY Student Data	x	x	x	DA/LDS
Review Data/Make Adjustments as needed	x	x	x	DA/LDS
Collect EOY Student Data	x	x	x	DA/LDS
Review EOY Data /Make adjustment as needed		x	x	DA/LDS
Recruit/Select Advisory Council	x			PD/LDS
Establish Meeting Schedule for Advisory Council	x			PD
Advisory Council Meet (Quarterly)	x	x	x	PD/LDS

Kickoff meeting with leaders to review grant goals and objectives.	x			PD/LDS
Kickoff Meeting for all potential participants	x			PD/LDS
Conduct annual assessment of programs	x	x	x	PD
Contract with independent evaluator.	x			PD/PI
Meet with independent evaluator/review and implement recommendations	x	x	x	PD/PI/LDS
Review, monitor and update budget	x	x	x	PD/PI/LDS
Develop marketing materials/website regarding Project ELEVATE.	x			MKT
Improve Recruitment of Teachers				
Identify additional HBUC/HSI Partner schools	x			PD/PLS
Execute MOU with partner universities.	x			PD
Create targeted minority recruitment materials including print, social media and video	x			MKT
Recruit - Future Teacher - HBUC/HIC Participants	x	x	x	TARM/OBS
Identify job fairs at HBUC/HSI	x	x	x	TARM/OBS
Participate in job fairs	x	x	x	TARM/OBS
Select - Future Teacher participants	x	x	x	TARM/PD
Develop Training Plan for Future Summer Teacher Institute	x	x	x	TARM/PD
Develop Info sharing plan for Pathway to Teacher/Do regular updates	x	x	x	TARM
Feature Pathway to Teacher participants in social media, etc.	x	x	x	MKT
Select participants for Pathway to Teacher	x	x	x	TARM/PD
Update marketing materials for Teacher in Resident (TIR)	x			MKT

Develop additional TIR partnerships/internship	x	x	x	TARM/PLS
Recruit for TIR with emphasis on highest need schools.	x	x	x	TARM/PLS
"Hire" TIR with differential salary for highest need schools.	x	x	x	TARM/PLS
Improve Teacher Effectiveness				
Finalize Mentor Handbook	x			TARM/PLS
Finalize Incentive Plan for Mentor teachers	x			TARM/PLS/ PD/LDS
Recruit Mentor Teachers	x	x	x	TARM/PLS/ LSD
Train Mentor Teachers	x	x	x	TARM/PLS
Assign Mentor Teachers	x	x	x	TARM/PLS/ LSD
Identify Model Classrooms	x	x	x	TARM/PLS/LSD
Train Model Classrooms	x	x	x	TARM/PLS
Develop schedule of model classroom visits	x	x	x	TARM/PLS
Recruit Master Teacher per school	x			TARM
Hire Master Teacher per school		x	x	TARM/ Principal
Train Master Teacher per school		x	x	TARM/PLS
Distribute Master Teacher Stipend.	x	x	x	PD
Conduct focus groups with teachers to determine PD needs.	x	x	x	PD/TARM/ PLS
Develop TeachMastery Design Plan	x			TARM/PLS
Develop TeachLivE schedule	x			TARM/PLS
Develop on-line modules based on identified needs.	x	x	x	TARM/PLS
Train staff trainers on effective adult learner strategies.	x			TARM/PLS
Identify coaches to utilize "bug in the ear".	x	x	x	PD/TARM/ PLS
Select teachers to utilize "bug in the ear" coaching	x	x	x	PD/TARM/ PLS /Principals

Train coaches in "bug in ear" techniques	x	x	x	TARM/PLS
Begin using "bug in ear" coaching		x	x	TARM/PLS
Administer exit surveys after each PD and conduct qualitative and quantative analysis of responses/adapt PD based on feedback.	x	x	x	TARM
Improve Retention				
Identify targeted hard to fill classroom eligible for incentive	x	x	x	PD/TARM/ PLS /Principals
Define/communicate parameters for targeted hard to fill incentive	x			TARM/PLS
Review "hard to fill" classroom needs	x			TARM
Create stakeholder group to provide feedback on KEY program.	x			TARM
Define goals and objectives of KEY Program	x			TARM/LDS
Determine point categories of KEY and assign point values	x			TARM/LDS
Choose and contract with vendor to implement KEY program (including tracking/providing reports and providing incentives.	x			TARM
Determine system to celebrate achievements and milestones	x			TARM
Kick off KEY Program	x			TARM
Pay out Year 1 KEY Program incentives.		x	x	PD
Provide quarterly (Year 1) and bi-annual opportunities for feedback (Year 2 & Year 3)	x	x	x	TARM
Identify Teachers for Project CENTRAL/Masters	x	x	x	PD/TARM/ PLS /Principals
Identify "Co-Teachers" for Project CENTRAL	x	x	x	PD/TARM/ PLS /Principals
Distribute High Need Class Incentives	x	x	x	PD

Improve Leader Effectiveness				
Determine schedule for Principal Cert Program	x			PLS
Recruit trainers for Principal Cert Program.	x			PLS
Begin Principal Cert Program	x			PLS
Schedule C-Suite PD	x	x	x	PLS
Schedule C-Suite Coaching Sessions	x	x	x	PLS
Conduct C-Suite PD/Coaching	x	x	x	PLS
Train Principals on ILT	x			PLS/LDS
Train Principals/AP on Performance Evaluations/Walkthroughs	x			PLS/LDS
Conduct inter-reliability checks for PE.	x	x	x	PLS/LDS
Identify annual conference for student achievements	x	x	x	PD/PLS
Identify aspiring leaders to attend conference	x	x	x	PD/TARM/ PLS /Principals
Register for conference	x	x	x	PLS
Attend conference	x	x	x	Attendees
Develop Principal in Resident program.	x			PLS
Select Principals in Residents (2 per year)	x	x	x	PD/TARM/ PLS /Principals
Identify job share for Principal in Resident.	x	x	x	PD/TARM/ PLS /Principals

Project Evaluation:

Upon notification of funding, UCP Charter Schools will contract with an external evaluator to ensure an objective evaluation designed to determine project impact, attainment of objectives, and achievement of GPRA outcomes. The evaluator will have experience in education, Federal grant evaluation, and addressing GPRA measures and project goals. In evaluating the implementation, progress, and outcomes of UCP ELEVATE will implement a mixed-methods evaluation (Bowen,

Rose, & Pillkington, 2017; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006) to provide formative feedback for continuous improvement of the implementation and generate periodic formative and summative evaluation reports on the project.

On-going Evaluation: Continuous and comprehensive monitoring and assessment of program operations and outcomes and the direct impact of this project on students learning gain. Qualitative research methods will include surveys, focus groups, interviews involving UCP leadership, teachers, parents, and students, as well as observations of key program activities such as teacher professional development and training, classroom instruction and personalized coaching activities. Data will be collected by the UCP project director and provided for analyses to the external evaluator.

UCP will also commit that there is a formal system to gather feedback from participants on the development of the Project ELEVATE plan as well as written policies and procedures on the various incentive systems. When staff are part of a formal feedback gathering session, they believe that management has a commitment to listening to them and meeting their needs.

Formative Evaluation: Data collected during all phases of the project will be used for formative evaluation to determine project modifications. The plan will be implemented and monitored by the UCP team and the project evaluator. A minimum of two meetings per academic year will be scheduled to review evaluation data, progress toward objectives, and to recommend adjustments, based on evaluation information. The evaluator will provide a summary and analysis of information in discussion at midpoint each year and a written summary of the outcomes will be submitted with the frequency required.

Summative Evaluation: Data collected from all aspects of the project will be used to determine if the project was effective, cost-efficient, and successful in meeting its stated goals and objectives.

To determine teacher effectiveness, UCP will rely on data from the performance evaluation system. The UCP Charter School Teacher and Principal Evaluation Systems, are based on the Danielson Model to assess teacher, instructional support personnel, school leader and district leader effectiveness across four performance domains linked to student growth measures. The evaluation process will inform all components of the UCP Charter School Human Capital Management System. The Danielson Model evaluation systems for teachers and principals assess professional performance through observation rubrics. Evaluators will receive a minimum of 8 hours of training per year for experienced evaluators or 5 days of training for those new to the system. Processes have been put in place to train all administrators. All evaluators will participate in Inter-rater Reliability training to ensure the fidelity of the assessment. Fidelity monitoring will help reduce evaluator bias in observation results, increase inter-rater reliability and improve equity for educators whose careers and compensation trajectories are directly impacted by the results of annual educator effectiveness evaluations and subsequent performance ratings. By using objective data to increase accuracy in educator ratings, UCP Charter Schools will be able to place its best teachers with those who need them most. The Educational Leadership Team will monitor teacher evaluations for consistency between Performance Scores and Student Growth Scores, and where discrepancies exist, additional investigation will be conducted and if needed, additional training will be provided to the evaluator. During the school year teachers will be assessed based primarily on an overall score. This score reflects his/her understanding and application of the instructional framework across all four domains. The overall score is determined by multiple measures. During the pre-conference, the teacher and evaluator will collaborate on the evidence that will be collected in each domain during the school year as well as a timeline for collection. For the purposes of this

evaluation model, there are two types of observations: formal and informal. An informal evaluation can be announced or unannounced. This observation should be a minimum of ten minutes in length and there is no planning or reflective conference, although timely, actionable feedback is provided to the teacher regarding the observation. Classroom walkthroughs are not informal observations and will not be used for the purpose of evaluation. The formal evaluation, including the planning and reflection conference, is the primary method for collecting evidence that will be used as a source of data for the summative evaluation. This evaluation is not less than thirty minutes in length and will be performed by an evaluating administrator. Depending on level of experience in subject area/grade level taught, previous evaluation scores and other relevant information, each teacher will receive between one and three formal evaluations each year, and between two and four informal observations per year. If a teacher is on a performance improvement plan these numbers vary. The collection of data from observations, predetermined activities and agreed upon data will be reviewed based upon the rubric set forth in the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The summative score is to be based on aggregating data from each of the two components required for evaluation: student growth and instructional practice. Each score will fall within four levels of performance as follows: 1. Highly Effective, 2. Effective, 3. Developing, or 4. Unsatisfactory.

Last year, in order to support teacher development and continue to streamline processes for principals and transform our school walkthroughs, coaching and feedback process, UCP Charter Schools invested in Bullseye.   This platform allows instructional leaders to conduct effective walkthroughs, deliver tailored feedback and support immediately and personalize professional development for teachers.

	Action Step 1	Action Step 2	Action Step 3
Components	Classroom Instruction	Environment	MTSS Data Application
Timeline	2x per year Weekly Walkthrough	2x per year Weekly Walkthrough	3x per year
Lead Person(s)	Principal/ Assistant Principal will lead PLC meetings and follow up on suggestions.	Principal/ Assistant Principal will lead PLC meetings and follow up on suggestions.	Principal/ Assistant Principal will lead PLC meetings and follow up on suggestions.
Resources Needed	Danielson Walkthrough form and MTSS data.	Danielson Walkthrough form and MTSS data.	Danielson Walkthrough form and MTSS data.
Specifics of Implementation (training, coaching, system structures, implementation support and leadership structures.	Formal walkthroughs will be reviewed during school-based meetings by instructional leaders. Coaches will assist with implementation suggestions given in PLCs. School-based leadership will follow through with informal walkthroughs.	Formal walkthroughs will be reviewed during school-based meetings by instructional leaders. Coaches will assist with implementation suggestions given in PLCs. School-based leadership will follow through with informal walkthroughs.	Formal walkthroughs will be reviewed during school-based meetings by instructional leaders. Coaches will assist with implementation suggestions given in PLCs. School-based leadership will follow through with informal walkthroughs.
Measure of Success	Formal and Informal assessments given in the classroom.	Formal and Informal assessments given in the classroom.	Formal and Informal assessments given in the classroom.

Check In Review/Date	Reviews will be during BOY, MOY, and EOY. Informal meeting following formal walkthrough.	Reviews will be during BOY, MOY, and EOY. Informal meeting following formal walkthrough.	Reviews will be during BOY, MOY, and EOY MTSS meetings,

MANAGEMENT PLAN

As the project lead, UCP Charter School LEA, a program of United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of Central Florida, will coordinate the overall project operations and accountability and serve as the fiscal agent. UCP has over 65 years of experience in providing high quality research-based education services to children with and without disabilities in an inclusive model and consortium of eight schools. UCP, although independently owned and operated, is also part of network of a 100+ affiliate disability organization as well as University partners such as the UCF and other community partners. UCP recently completed a successful statewide Department of Education Instructional Best Practices Dissemination Grant assisting other charter schools in more effectively serving students with disabilities. UCP has additional extensive successful experience in managing large scale projects and coordinating efforts across funding streams and across departments, ensuring that timelines are met, milestones accomplished, and deliverables realized on time and in budget, including experience with multiple federal grant programs funded through the Title II, Title I, IDEA, ESSERS, Literacy grant, Resumes for current UCP staff members who will have responsibility for the grant are included in Appendix B; their time and effort are part of the required non-federal match for the grant.

The Project ELEVATE team includes a range of diversity by gender, age, background, culture, race, and experience in the areas of disabilities, professional learning, curriculum, assessment, and

human resource management. The project team in hiring will comply with the nondiscriminatory policy stated under Section 717 of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended for FY 1980; Title IV of the Education Amendment of 1972; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended and comply with Florida's Sunshine Law, which demands open employment and disclosure practices. All material will be reviewed by the advisory board and will be created with all intended purposes to be free of racial, color, national origin, age, disabling conditions, sexual, religious, and ethnic bias, and shall present a balanced coverage of multi-cultural contributions and representation.

Project Principal Investigator (in-kind position) ▮▮ ▮▮ ▮▮▮▮ (CEO/Superintendent) will serve as the Project PI and will take an active role in the development and implementation of this critical project. ▮▮ ▮▮▮▮ has been with UCPCFL for over 28 years and has over 35 years of experience working with students with and without disabilities and their families in multiple states and in both educational and non-profit organizations. As the longest tenure CEO at UCP, ▮▮ ▮▮▮▮ has led the expansion of the organization from serving 100 young children with cerebral palsy to a $34 million multi-faceted organization with eight charter schools. ▮▮ ▮▮▮▮ has served as the lead on multiple Federal Charter School Start Up Grants, Community Development Block Grants, 21st Century Community Learning Center grants, CARES/ESSERS/ARP grants, and the PI on a Florida Department of Education Instructional Best Practices (IBP) Dissemination Grant assisting other Charter Schools to serve students with disabilities and the recent Project RAISE, OSEP Stepping Up Technology Grant. She has also supported numerous other federal grants (Title I, IDEA, Title II, Title IV). ▮▮ ▮▮▮▮ has extensive interest and experience with utilizing incentive programs to improve teacher and leader performance.   Her dissertation topic was "Effects of a Bonus on Quality Improvement for Pre-School Classroom Educators".

Project Director (to be hired)- To ensure the success of the project, UCP will hire a full-time 100% time & effort, grant-funded Project Director. The Project Director will be fully responsible for the success of the grant and will direct, coordinate, and ensure the project's integrity by adhering to Federal requirements, funding guidelines, and the Project ELEVATE proposal. The Project Director will monitor, track, and assess project goals and outcomes on an ongoing basis and manage the grant budget, ensuring the expenditures are allowable and that the match is fully attained. Biweekly meetings between the Project Director and the Project Team will ensure project milestones are met and within budget. The Project Director will be supported by an Advisory Board which will meet quarterly to discuss the project's status and determine if modifications are needed.

Talent Acquisition and Retention Manager (to be hired) will report to the Project Director and will be responsible for LEA- wide teacher and leader recruitment, including diversity recruitment initiatives, as well as management of retention strategies including Project KEY.

Data and Analytics Manager (to be hired) – will be responsible for leading data collection, monitoring, analysis and reporting on progress and results.

Professional Learning Specialist (in-kind position). ███ █████ has recently joined the team with over 25 years in the field of education; ██ █████ has spent the last 8 focusing on the professional development of educators, both new and seasoned. ██ █████ entered the field in 1999 with a Bachelor in Physical Education from UCF and rounded out her academia at the University of West Florida with an Educational Specialist degree. █████ educational belief is that every teacher can make an impact on every child given when both are given equitable access.

██ █████ is responsible for ensuring professional learning for UCP's educators and developing new partnerships with teacher prep programs.

Senior Director of Education (In-Kind position) – ████████████ ███ ██████ ███ graduated from Florida State University and then completed her graduate work at the University of Central Florida. ███ ████████ ████ has taught in the public school system as well as worked at the University level. ███ ████████ ████ was the project coordinator of an effective practices, professional development state discretionary grant with UCF and Florida's Department of Education.

Director of Curriculum and Instruction (In-Kind position)– ██ ████ ███████████ attended Howard University where she received her B.A. in Sociology and her Master's degree in Social Work. She received her Ed.D. in Educational Leadership from Nova Southeastern University in 2004 and a Master's of Arts in Education in December 2014. She has been in the field of education for over 20 years. She was previously the Principal of UCP Pine Hills Charter School. Additional members of the UCP Leadership team including the Senior Director of Finance, Senior Director of Human Resources, Marketing Manager, Director of Assessment and Accountability, Curriculum Instruction Specialist, Instructional coaches, and On-Boarding coordinator will also support the project.

To assist with project oversight and ensure on-going communication between key internal and external stakeholders and project staff, a Project ELEVATE Advisory Committee will be convened with representation from local university partners, principal and teacher representatives from each school, Insufficient engagement and communication with stakeholders can quickly derail the most well thought out project. Continuing to reach out to stakeholders who can help provide the types of support needed will be key to ensuring program continuation (Pasley et al., 2015). The Advisory Committee will meet quarterly in Year 1 to monitor project implementation and then twice a year with the option to meet more frequently as needed.

ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

System Change and Improvement:

As evidenced by the UCP Charter Schools past success in leveraging local, state, and federal funds and managing grant programs, the proposed project has been designed to result in systemic change. UCP Charter Schools will implement a comprehensive Teacher and School Leader Incentive program project to increase the quality of teaching and learning in high-needs schools and increase equitable access to education for students enrolled in high-needs schools. Perhaps the two most important global systemic improvements referenced in research (Ball and Forzani, 2009; Aslam and Kingdon, 2013) due to the focus and enhancement of the human capital system are: Attention to the day-to-day operations and well-being of staff will directly influence the student outcomes and achievement and the attention to the day-to-day operations and well-being of staff will result in increased satisfaction and retention of staff.

Specifically, through a strategic alignment of resources, including UCP Project ELEVATE, UCP will increase learning gains for some of the most marginalized students changing their trajectory of their future to truly create a life without limits.   The project will also:

- Increase the clarity of communication at all access points for external and internal candidates about entry, career ladder, and career lattice requirements, and preparation and advancement opportunities.

- Expand teacher leadership preparation opportunities.

- Review and realign current compensation models for teacher leadership positions and roles.

- Implement a more robust system for connecting educators with personalized, targeted, relevant, and rigorous professional learning opportunities as a result of data emerging from

observations and evaluations.

- Improve instructional effectiveness and retention of early-career and out-of-field teachers.

- Increase the reliability and validity of the observation processes and evaluation systems for educators.

- Improve the effectiveness of instructional leaders through job-embedded professional learning and support.

- Support the fidelity of implementation of research-based best practices to improve instructional effectiveness and student learning outcomes at high-need schools.

Build Local Capacity:

Project ELEVATE aims to build a sustainable system for educational leaders by implementing the following strategies:

- Ongoing Professional Learning: Project ELEVATE will provide continuous professional learning opportunities for teacher leaders and school leadership. These opportunities will focus on enhancing skills, staying updated on best practices, and navigating the changing landscape of educational practices. Workshops, active learning sessions, workplace learning, and conferences will be utilized to deliver the training and learning experiences.

- Mentoring and Coaching: The project will establish mentoring and coaching programs to support new and struggling educators and leaders. Experienced teachers and leaders will serve as mentors, providing guidance, support, and sharing knowledge, experiences, and research-based strategies. Peer-to-peer coaching and collaboration will be encouraged to foster professional growth and development.

- Structured Classroom Observations: Both mentors and administrators will conduct structured classroom observations that emphasize a growth model rather than a ranking or rating system.

The focus will be on providing feedback and identifying coaching opportunities to help educators improve their teaching practices. This approach ensures the development of skilled educators and administrators.

- Sustainable Educator Development: Project ELEVATE aims to create a sustainable system of educator development. By providing effective mentoring programs, the project intends to increase teacher retention rates, job satisfaction, and overall professional growth. Research suggests that new teachers who receive support through mentoring programs are more likely to remain in the profession.

- Networking Opportunities: The project will facilitate networking among teachers across UCPs (Unified Community Partners) schools. Mentors will play a role in connecting teachers with relevant organizations, state contacts in subject areas, and professional development opportunities offered by UCPs partner organizations. This networking will foster collaboration, sharing of ideas, and access to additional resources.

By implementing these strategies, Project ELEVATE will establish a sustainable system for educational leaders, promoting continuous professional learning, effective mentoring, and coaching, and creating a supportive and collaborative network within the educational community. This system will contribute to the growth and development of educators and leaders, ultimately enhancing the quality of education provided in UCPs schools.

Sustainability:

The real measure of sustainability will be teacher and leader performance leading to improved student achievement and retention of highly effective educators after the TSL Federal grant concludes. To help ensure adequate funding is available for future years, data and outcomes from the project's impact will be shared with philanthropic organizations and individual contributors.

All UCP Charter Schools are in good financial health and have obtained clean audits every year it

has been in operation. UCP Charter Schools, as a program of the non-profit UCP of Central Florida, has access to the agency financial team and the board particularly its Finance Committee, who has significant financial and accounting experience from different sectors. UCP Charter Schools has experience successfully implementing large Federal and State grants. Some examples include a recent OSEP Stepping-Up Technology Implementation ($2.5 million), Florida Comprehensive Literacy State Development Program ($914,000), 21st Century Community Learning Center ($2.48 million), US DOE Charter School Program Grant ($3.01 million), and CARES/ESSERS II and III ($5.2 million).

UCP of Central Florida also supports and augments the UCP Charter Schools budgets to ensure sufficient support for students and faculty through funding from private foundations, corporate giving programs, special events and individual donations. The in-kind Senior Director of Development and her team last year raised over $1.3 million to support these efforts.

In terms of broad support for the proposed project, UCP has collected input from stakeholders and external partners as evidenced by the letters of support included in Appendix C

In addition to funds, the improved skills and staff developed and recruited through the Project ELEVATE program will serve as resources to ensure the continuation of the training, learning, and development of program goals. Enhanced learning will create "master" leaders and teachers that will model improved instructional, leadership, and system functions. These individuals will act as mentors for newly hired or promoted individuals, thereby maximizing capacity in the system, and continuing the improvements and programs developed in this grant.