**ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND**

Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver) was established in 1965 and works toward a vision of being nationally recognized as a leader for social mobility – where students of all ages and backgrounds build a better, more equitable Colorado through innovative and transformative education. Moving toward realizing that vision, MSU Denver’s mission is to provide a high-quality, accessible, enriching education that prepares students for successful careers, postgraduate education and lifelong learning in a multicultural, global and technological society. The University’s diverse community engages Metro Denver community members in scholarly inquiry, creative activity, and the application of knowledge. MSU Denver welcomes undergraduate students who are diverse in many ways: over half (57%) are the first in their family to attend college; 48% identify as students of color; the average age is 25; 1,000 are connected to the military; and over half transfer from another institution. Each year, MSU Denver empowers over 18,000 of Colorado’s students to advance their lives and careers through high-quality, real-world education taught by noted academics, national experts, and industry professionals. MSU Denver alumni power the state economy with 100,000+ work-ready graduates, more than 80% of whom live and work in Colorado. In a world that continues to struggle through a pandemic, MSU Denver is uniquely positioned to lead by attracting, preparing and graduating students equipped to succeed in Colorado’s recovering workforce.

**GOALS**

The University’s goals and objectives are based on its 2030 Strategic Plan and five imperatives that are driving the accomplishment of the pillars and goals described in the plan: remain committed to providing a rigorous and enriching university education; foster an anti-racism and inclusive environment; design a sustainable business model that allows MSU Denver to grow and thrive; continue to build MSU Denver’s reputation and brand; and demonstrate responsiveness through agility, flexibility and tenacity. MSU Denver helps Colorado meet its educational and economic goals by investing in learning experiences for its students and community members at large. The MSU Denver Family Literacy Program, part of the College of Letters, Arts and Sciences (led by a professor who is first-generation college graduate), is an excellent example of the University’s commitment to meeting the needs of the urban community it serves.

**CURRENT PROGRAMS**

To better meet Colorado’s workforce challenges, MSU Denver offers eight graduate degrees, which augment 95+ majors and 90+ minors, 34 certificate programs through the College of Business; School of Education; College of Letters, Arts and Sciences; College of Health and Applied Sciences; and School of Hospitality. Additionally, the University features wraparound support for students, offering access to resources that will allow them to persist to earning a credential and succeeding in the workforce and the community. The College of Letters, Arts and Sciences at MSU Denver encompasses the Division of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and the Division of Mathematics and Science. The College touches all students at the University, as many of the general curriculum courses are offered through its departments. The College offers programs that provide specific assistance or enrichment to students and three programs, including the Family Literacy Program (FLP), that provide direct service to the community.

**PROGRAM AND CAPITAL REQUESTS ONLY**

Since the pandemic, children of color have been disproportionately impacted by remote learning situations and are more likely than their white counterparts to have lost ground in their learning. Additionally, parents whose first language is not English have the greatest challenges in assisting their children due to language barriers. The FLP works to address these inequities by improving early literacy and reversing trends through intergenerational, unified family literacy services for Metro Denver’s most vulnerable families. The program: 1) assists children in reaching their potential as learners; 2) educates and engages parents in becoming partners in the education of their children; and 3) helps parents improve their own literacy or basic skills to attain a post-secondary education and/or employment. FLP uses an asset based approach that respects the depth and richness of families’ life experiences. MSU Denver respectfully requests *dollar amount* in grant funding to support this impactful work. COVID-related challenges have resulted in unforeseen expenses, from the need to purchase additional technology to the necessity of renting a second storage unit to store FLP’s furniture that was removed from classrooms to adhere to social distancing requirements.

FLP offers long-term 2 Generation programming, providing parents and children with language, literacy, and life skills in an integrated manner. This approach recognizes the need to support the whole family; children participate in literacy rich play-based learning while parents gain skills they need to support those efforts and fulfill their own goals. These FLP efforts prepare toddlers and preschoolers with the developmental, social, and emotional skills for kindergarten readiness. Research on family literacy programs shows significant benefits to struggling students and low-income families. According to the National Center for Families Learning (NCFL), participating children exhibit significant gains in reading at grade level and attendance. Longitudinal evaluations by the Ohio Literacy Resource Center show increased high school graduation and college enrollment. FLP demonstrates significant positive results consistent with this research.

FLP uses research-based approaches to meet the literacy and educational needs of these vulnerable children and families. Case studies conducted by NCFL along with other research demonstrate that parent engagement and education along with student literacy education increase school readiness and improves families’ opportunities. Based on these research-guided concepts, FLP helps children reach their potential as learners through improved school readiness; educates and engages parents as they become full partners in educating their children; and improves parents’ literacy or basic educational skills to attain post-secondary education and/or employment. FLP offers two program delivery strategies: Families Learning Together (FLT), which operates on the academic calendar and Parents as Teachers (PAT), which offers year-round programming.

FLT primarily serves families with children ages one through eight. Using the four-component Kenan Model endorsed by National Center for Families Learning, children and parents both attend school: 1) children in kindergarten through third grade receive literacy education in elementary school, and children ages one through four attend Early Childhood Education (ECE) preschool offered by FLP; 2) parents improve their own English or literacy skills through adult education; 3) parents learn to support their children’s literacy development in parent education classes; and 4) Parent and Child Together (PACT) time brings parents and children together in children’s classrooms, communities or homes two hours per week, giving parents an opportunity to actively support their children’s learning.

PAT is an evidence-based home visiting model for children birth to kindergarten age predicated on the belief that parents are their children’s first and best teacher. As noted in a PAT research summary, parents in PAT read more frequently to their young children and were more likely to enroll their children in preschool, both of which were positively linked to school readiness and later school achievement. In addition, PAT combined with preschool shows promise for narrowing the achievement gap between low-income students and more affluent students. PAT increases parents’ knowledge of child development and parent practices, providing early detection of developmental and/or significant health-related delays, while increasing school-readiness. The program offers: twice monthly education sessions (previously in the home, currently virtual) where parents learn skills to become their children’s first teacher; information and activities to increase parents’ knowledge and encourage child development in an age-appropriate way; and regularly scheduled “Group Connections” meetings for families to build social connections and increase knowledge of supporting children’s development.

FLP utilizes a centralized service model and now functions primarily in Adams County due to a high need. FLT operates out of STEM Launch in Adams 12, Rose Hill Elementary in Adams 14, and uses space in St. Augustine School in Brighton. FLP reaches families with significant economic and educational challenges; parents lack English language skills and often live below poverty level, and many children experience scholastic struggles. During the most recently completed academic year FLP served 212 adults and 231 children, including 45 families in PAT. Ninety-five percent of participants identified as Latino, primarily of Mexican heritage; 3% as Afghani; 1% as African American; and 1% as White.

***Goals and Objectives***

***Parents as Teachers (PAT) Birth – Kindergarten for Year 2022-2023***

***Goal I:***Provide stimulation to develop pre-literacy skills for very young children (Birth-Age 2) and equip young children (Age 3-Kindergarten) with skills necessary to succeed in school.

*Objective 1:* Serve 50 infants and young children from birth to kindergarten entry and their parents on a year-round basis; tracked by enrollment and visit information.

*Objective 2:* Demonstrate 75% of FLP students reach age-appropriate levels in cognitive, social, and motor skills measured by rating of 4 or 5 on the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and PAT milestones and health forms. Children aging out of PAT will show 85% school-readiness.

***Goal II:*** Empower parents as child’s first teacher and architect of child’s development; and foster commitment to education in the home.

*Objective 1:* Demonstrate age-appropriate interactions with children for parents (or primary caregivers). On parent questionnaire, 85% of parents will rate themselves 4 or higher in ability to support child’s learning and assist in development and satisfaction with Parent Educator.

***Family-Centered Early Childhood Education (ECE) for Academic Year 2022-2023***

***Goal I:*** Provide high quality family literacy services to low-income families.

*Objective 1:* Provide four days of face-to-face preschool instruction with a strong emphasis in emergent literacy skills Monday-Thursday each week. Each family with over 40 hours of instruction will report a sense of increased integration into and involvement with the community. This proposed schedule is subject to change dependent upon COVID-19 risks and safety protocols. If/When remote learning is once more necessary in Fall of 2022, we will provide synchrous/asynchrous high quality ECE content on the Google Classroom platform, as has been done since the onset of the pandemic.

***Goal II:*** Partner with parents of children, ages one through four, to encourage children's optimal growth and development with a focus on early literacy and English language acquisition.

*Objective 1:* In addition to PACT sessions and Parent-Teacher Conferences, will offer three literacy-focused home visits or video calls during the 2022-2023 school year. The option of meeting in a socially-distanced setting, such as a park will also be considered. Visits/video calls will continue to be literacy centered, and materials will be provided for students with ongoing staff support. Visits will promote parent engagement with the preschool curriculum, and offer additional parenting resources.

*Objective 2:* Work with parents to nurture children’s development through PACT time, goal setting during Parent-Teacher Conference Calls/Home visits, and use of the Teaching Strategies GOLD (TS GOLD) online assessment. In collaboration with Adult Educators, ECE staff will track parent participation in PACT time, the ability to set appropriate goals and number of observations recorded. Parents will be introduced to observing and documenting their children, to partner with our ECE staff on individual student documentation. Skill development in all areas will be evident over time and will foster the parent-teacher relationship. Parental collaboration and trust for the success of the child are the anticipated outcomes.

***Goal III:*** Assist children, ages one through four, in attaining school readiness

*Objective 1:* Demonstrate 90% of children participating in at least 50% of classes show age-appropriate and/or one year’s growth in TS GOLD’s major areas of child development and English Language Acquisition growth. Children will practice various skills in a face-to-face or hybrid preschool literacy rich environment— dependent upon COVID-19 risks and safety protocols. With documentation, and ongoing support from staff, outcomes for TS GOLD are expected to be somewhat similar to previous years. However, given the introduction of transitional learning from last year’s “hybrid” preschool, slower than average growth of emergent skills will be taken into consideration. Kindergarten readiness as well as English Language Acquisition will be measured through assessments.

**EVALUATION**

FLP relies on evidence-based practices for program delivery and uses a range of evaluations. For PAT, the ASQ assesses developmental milestones based on parent and parent educator observations including: Communication, Gross Motor, Fine Motor, Problem Solving and Personal-social. Annually, parents with PAT children 10 months of age and older are assessed using the PICCOLO (Parenting Interactions with Children: Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes) tool designed to measure 29 developmentally supportive parenting behaviors in four domains—Affection, Responsiveness, Encouragement, and Teaching. The Life Skills Progression is used to assess family well being. As the PAT Parent Educators (PE) have been trained in Infant/Toddler Mental Health through CoAIMH, and work individually and as a group each month with a Mental Health Consultant, they are better able to spot potential difficulties in the children they serve. If a problem is suspected, the PE will make a referral to the appropriate agency. Prior to the pandemic, hearing and vision screenings were conducted on each child annually. Since moving to a remote format, the PE’s check with parents for information on hearing and vision screenings after their child has seen the doctor.

Children in ECE are assessed in ten development areas using TS GOLD, based on teachers’ and parents’ observations. As one PE also works in the ECE program, those families are able to benefit from her training in the area of Infant/Toddler Mental Health. TS GOLD aligns with Common Core State Standards, the State’s early learning guidelines, and Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework Assessments. Checkpoints are entered three times per year, generating reports for lesson planning. Parent/teacher conferences occur at checkpoints to share each child’s progress and, with parents, set goals for the child. Despite COVID-related challenges, FLP will continue using TS GOLD assessments along with age-appropriate ASQ questionnaires. Current plans include using the TS GOLD assessment in the physical ECE classroom at STEM Launch. Documentation and observation remain key to individual student growth as we move forward from a hybrid/remote school year. Data is collected weekly for PAT home visits and group connections, including demographic information, health records, and data from screenings at home. For FLT, data collection is streamlined to retrieve family demographic, attendance, and academic gains data. Additional records are kept regarding formative assessment, family/partner activities, lesson plans, staff professional development, and volunteer hours. FLP partners with the districts, with parental permission, to collect data about children’s progress in reading, writing and math and gathers data through surveys and focus groups to evaluate program effectiveness.

Program evaluation results are compiled in July each year. The FLP demonstrates significant success among participating families, adult learners and children. Based on evaluations done for school year 2020-2021, 100% of PAT children receiving services were at age appropriate levels in all areas. Parents reported increased confidence in supporting their child’s learning and assisting in children’s development. The latest TS GOLD Snapshot Report shows that Early Family Literacy (center-based ECE) children who attended at least 50% of class time scored “Meeting or Exceeding” the TS GOLD Widely Held Expectations in Social-Emotional (66% of students), Physical (66%), Language (66%), Cognitive (83%), Literacy (66%) and Math (83%) learning. This data is limited and based on the first semester back in an in-person environment. Many children had to adjust to the classroom setting after an extended period using a remote learning platform. For over half of the students enrolled, this was their first preschool experience, and many had a difficult time with parental separation.

**COLLABORATION**

Public schools in Adams County School Districts 12 and 14 and the Denver Housing Authority (DHA) play key roles by providing key space and school resources. Additionally, St. Augustine Church in Brighton furnishes classroom space in their unused school building. Teachers and administrators identify families needing services. Other program collaborators include: The National Center for Families Learning (NCFL); Adams County Workforce Development Board; The Mariposa Center for Infant, Child & Family Enrichment; Colorado Association for Infant Mental Health; La Casa/Quigg Newton Community Health Center; Red Rocks Community College, Community College of Denver; Denver Early Childhood Council and the Early Childhood Partnership of Adams County; the Adams County Human Services Department; Motheread; and Families First. The FLP’s partnership with MSU Denver’s School of Education (SOE) working with ECE students as a field placement site for the “Teaching for Social Justice” class is still on hold due to COVID 19. Field work classes have been postponed until Spring 2022 (unless health and safety protocols change). Working with SOE interns is a valued collaboration and is expected to resume with these students supporting the program through classroom preparation and working with the children when safe to do so. The SOE students support and learn to co-facilitate PACT time activities as well as participating in two home visits offered during the semester. For the Spring 2022 semester, the FLP projects working with and engaging SOE interns as part of our safe return to in-person instruction.

**INCLUSIVENESS**

MSU Denver values diversity and identified inclusive excellence as a theme interwoven throughout its strategic plan. MSU Denver’s student profile is unique among Colorado universities, consistently attracting Colorado’s most diverse student body. Over half are first generation college students and 46% identify as students of color, demonstrating MSU Denver’s welcoming environment for all students. Over 90% of the Family Literacy Program participants and 57% of staff identify as people of color. Family involvement and input is encouraged; they help determine PAT Group Connection topics and themes for family service learning projects, among other avenues for engagement. The recently updated PAT Policies and Procedures Manual includes items designed to promote inclusivity in programing. During the 2020-2021 program year, the EFL component provided teaching staff with a variety of remote PD sessions around inclusivity and social/emotional regulation in the Google classroom/remote classes. EFL teachers were able to attend the Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Conference remotely, as it was deemed not safe at the time to host in person sessions. Teachers were able to utilize various social/emotional coping techniques with our students and their families around COVID-19 pandemic issues. Emotional health remains a key concern.

**BOARD/GOVERNANCE**

The MSU Denver Foundation Board has 29 members. The full board meets six times annually and the Executive Committee six additional times. Members serve three-year terms and are not term limited. They devote at least five to seven hours per month in work for the University. Board members are expected to become members of the President’s Society (minimum gift of $1,000 annually). An ad hoc advisory group consisting of family literacy professionals and the co-founder of FLP provides input and feedback on program operations.

**VOLUNTEERS**

Prior to the pandemic, volunteers, including MSU Denver students and faculty, members of the public housing community, and current and former PAT parents help FLP in the classroom, with parent meetings and during special events. Prior to COVID, participating parents volunteered by recruiting new families; assisting at group meetings; and providing childcare at meetings. The ECE program offers volunteer positions and training to parents. In the past, Early Family Literacy staff has volunteered with program staff and participants in Philanthropy Field Days at History Colorado. Each year FLP receives in-kind operational support from MSU Denver and Adams County public schools. For 2021-2022 in-kind support will be *estimated dollar amount.*

**PLANNING**

MSU Denver launched its 2030 Strategic Plan earlier this year as a roadmap toward accomplishing its vision: We are a nationally recognized leader for social mobility – where students of all ages and backgrounds build a better, more equitable Colorado through innovative and transformative education.