

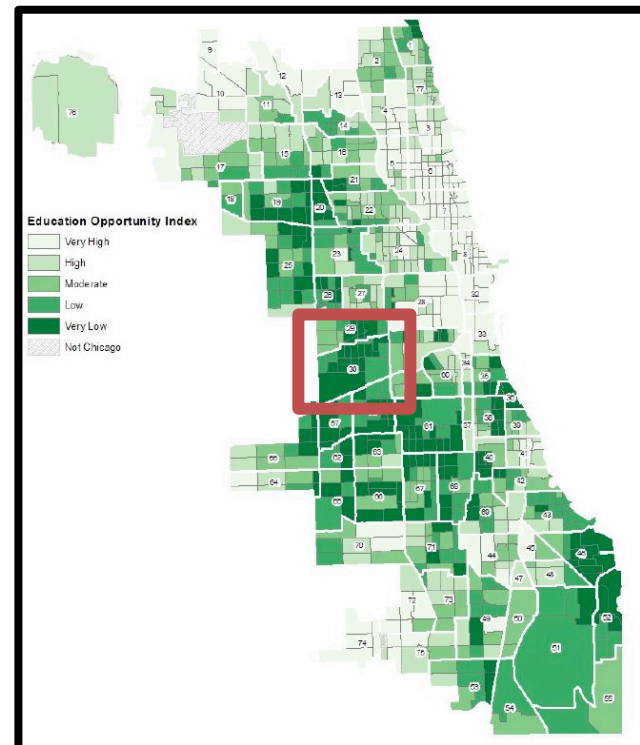
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Background

- In 2014, students from the UIC School of Public Health engaged with community members to establish a partnership with Gary Elementary School to create a pipeline program that would increase awareness of college and provide an opportunity to build literacy for elementary school children, and build community service participation among UIC students.
- The program incorporated community members' knowledge of Gary Elementary and prioritized their perceptions of what would be most beneficial to youth in Little Village. This unities by sharing their college experiences and reflects positive intentions as UIC continues to form community partnerships
- Pen pal friendships have shown to be effective in supporting cross-curricular learning.¹⁻³ Past programs have found to promote reading, language, spelling, writing, math, social studies, science, technology and a positive attitude towards writing¹⁻³

Overview of Community Needs

- Joseph E. Gary Elementary School is located in Chicago's community area of South Lawndale, a primarily Mexican immigrant neighborhood. As a Chicago Public School, Gary Elementary has incorporated college-readiness as a goal through their Continuous Improvement Work Plan.⁵
- 55.7% residents do not have a high school diploma, higher than any other Chicago community⁴
- 21.7% of 3rd-5th grade students at Gary Elementary are at or above their reading grade level⁵
- Educational Opportunity index includes the following variables: Adult educational attainment, Student (school) poverty rate, Reading proficiency rate, Math proficiency rate, Early childhood education neighborhood participation patterns, High school graduation rate, (From the Chicago Department of Public Health [CDPH]: Community Health Status Assessment, 2014)⁶

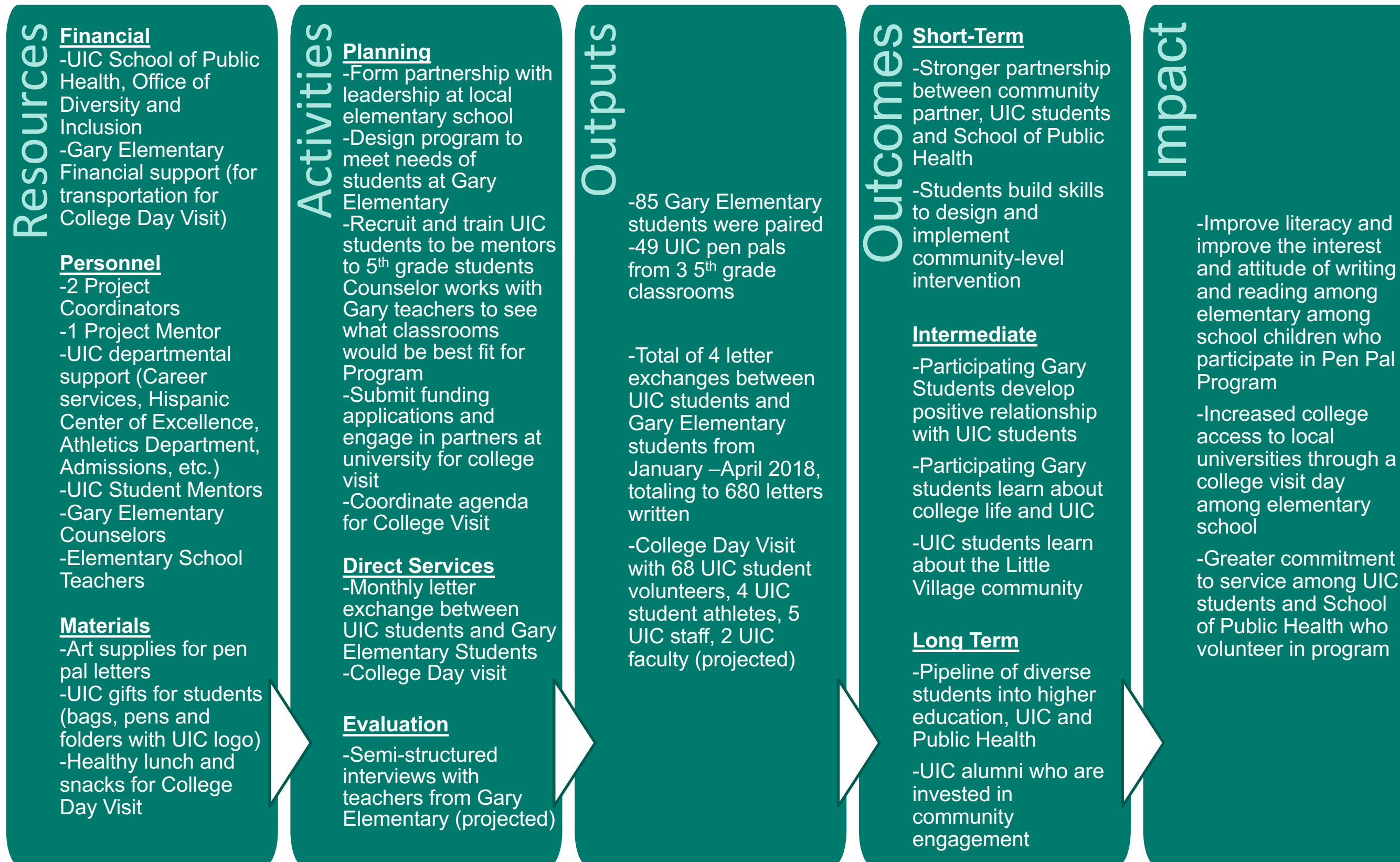


Educational Opportunity Index by Chicago Community Area, CDPH 2014

Aim of College Buddy Pen Pal Program

To build cultural capital for higher education among middle school students in communities with poor outcomes for higher education, student leaders from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) School of Public Health partnered with Gary Elementary School to implement the College Buddies Pen Pal Program.

Logic Model for 2017-2018 Pen Pal Program



Participation Results 2015-2018

In 2018, the program has increased its capacity by nearly 43% and currently works with 3 classrooms totaling 85 students.

Year	Gary Student Pen Pals	UIC Student Pen Pals
2015	43	44
2016	59	55
2017	55	50
2018	85	67
TOTAL	242	216

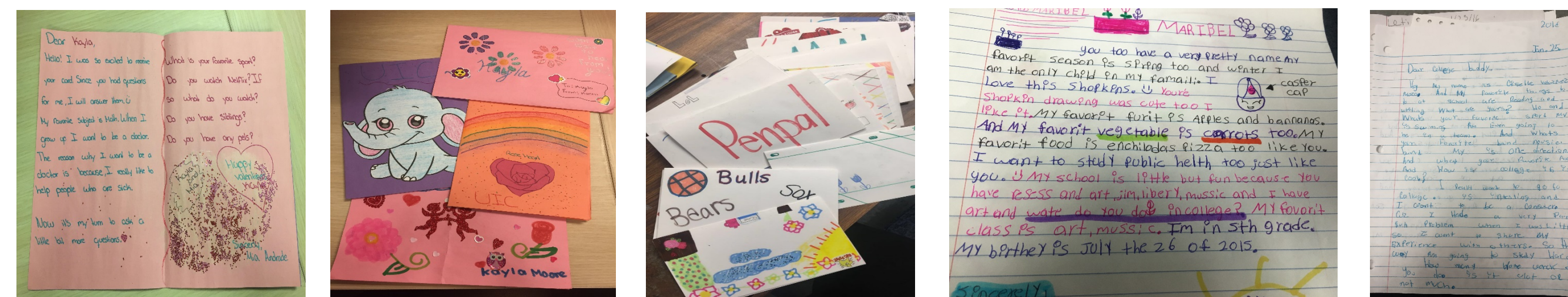
Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement

- Highlights the important role of public health researchers and students to create and leverage opportunities to engage in authentic community partnerships that go beyond traditional expectations that go beyond traditional expectations of academic research
- Builds positive rapport and expand activities of community partnerships to meet community needs
- Creates early pipeline of diverse students who are aware of the field of public health
- Potential lack of sustainability given unstable funding structure
- Lack of institutional buy-in can create lack of continuity in program

References

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Examples of Pen Pal Letters



Acknowledgements

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