San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item III. D.

To:	JPA Governing Board
From:	Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services
	Carine Risley, Deputy Director of Library Services
Date:	September 15, 2020
Meeting:	September 21, 2020
Re:	Summer Learning Report

Background

San Mateo County Libraries have successfully addressed learning loss and increased participation in our transformational summer programs since 2014, with the annual, instrumental support of Measure K funding. Through the Big Lift Inspiring Summers program, Summer Learning Challenge, Summer Meals, and Summer Youth Employment program, we have impacted thousands of children and families by providing enriching, educational, healthy, and fun summers each year.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about many dramatic changes in our communities. What remains unchanged is our unwavering commitment to equitable success for all San Mateo County youth. We reimagined summer and delivered on a new vision appropriate to our current environment. Challenges to supporting families this summer were numerous, but we were able to come together with partners, and as a community, to provide vital support to youth and our families.

Discussion

Summer Learning Challenge

We radically transformed Summer Learning to help lift barriers to participation, particularly for our hard-working families that are having to balance work and childcare while primarily staying at home.

To make the program more accessible we automatically included all our youth library cardholders into the program. Youth with library cards all had at least one chance to win the $1,000 college scholarships available to each of our communities.

To bridge the digital (and stay in place) divide, we created a promotional Summer Learning Challenge mailer to encourage youth in high-need areas of the County to read and learn all summer long, get a library card, and utilize the library's e-resources. From the mailer, we saw 4,017 new youth card holders and card renewals.

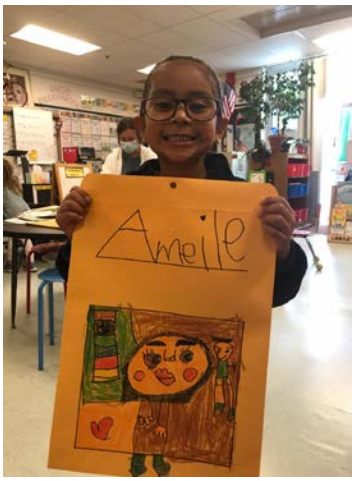
Books are even more essential as people's worlds have gotten smaller with shelter in place. We began print book distribution on June 23 and by summer's close, we had given more than 82,000 books to youth and families through partners and our Curbside Services.

Staff pivoted summer programming into the virtual space, connecting families to high-quality programs including a summer-long Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) Camp and a weekly Summer Learning Showcase series. Library STEAM camp featured 108 staff-led activities for youth in preschool through 3rd grade. These activities explored themes such as math concepts through shapes and symmetry, engineering with fort and bridge construction, and chemistry experiments. These videos had been enjoyed 3,672 times as of August 25.

The Big Lift Inspiring Summers

The Big Lift is a county-wide collective impact effort led by the County of San Mateo, San Mateo County Office of Education, and Silicon Valley Community Foundation. This program is largely funded by Measure K, with a goal to reach 80% of San Mateo County youth reading proficiently by 3rd grade. San Mateo County Libraries leads The Big Lift Inspiring Summers in partnership with The Big Lift agencies, seven school districts, and the national nonprofit, BellXcell. Children entering Kindergarten through 3rd grade engage in literacy instructions, hands-on STEAM learning, and mindfulness activities. This is the first year we have implemented a program that includes rising 3rd graders.

The Summer 2020 Inspiring Summers program was reimagined due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Onsite programs at Daly City, La Honda-Pescadero, San Bruno, and South San Francisco were modified to meet public health orders. Each site followed the same health and safety guidelines, had access to a nurse, and limited access to outside persons on campus. Classroom sizes were significantly reduced, with a maximum of 12 students per class. Classes did not intermingle, and participants developed close bonds within their safe bubbles. The program day was also shortened to a half day program, eliminating the traditional library STEAM afternoon curriculum portion as well as lunch.



Enrollment was smaller due the new and limited program model, and the program began with 605 students. Preliminary enrollment data from our district partners showed a decrease in participants as camps progressed, primarily due to COVID-19 concerns expressed by families. At the program end, 413 students remained in the program.
Two new features this year included providing all originally enrolled youth take-home, hands-on STEAM kits, as well as making weekly wellness calls to families. The STEAM kits

compliment the usual fun and engaging library afternoon curriculum and were made possible through Human Services Agency grant funding.

The STEAM kits were a huge success and were consistently praised by parents of program participants. Ninety-three percent of the 228 families surveyed indicated that they learned something by participating in the library STEAM kit activity.

"I think it was amazing, I am so thankful for all the support and dedication from all the school staff. The steam kits were also a great way to spend our weekends and the webinars were very helpful. Thank you BIG LIFT for giving my son some fun this summer!"

Library Coaches reached 156 families through weekly, bilingual family wellness phone calls. Staff connected families with technology support and financial aid for the fall school year. Through calls, families felt supported and staff mitigated isolation during the socially distanced summer program.

At the close of the program, each youth in the program received a set of books and a bilingual English/Spanish reading comprehension box for parents and caregivers to engage their child in fun and enriching conversations about the books they have read. All youth received a library card if they did not already have one and were also enrolled in the Summer Learning Challenge. While the traditional closing ceremony was not offered this year for all families, each class of participants still celebrated the success of summer.

Big Lift Inspiring Summers will continue to serve rising kindergartners through 3rd graders in summer 2021 and has received additional grant support from the California State Library.

All partners involved in the program this year agreed that, despite a challenging environment, the goals of summer were met: we provided a safe experience, key social-emotional development and interactions for children, and a special, educational learning experience for the summer.

Summer Meals

San Mateo County Libraries continues to address food insecurity, which increases during the summer break when children lose daily access to free and reduced-price lunches at school.

Food insecurity is an issue that has become increasingly challenging in this pandemic environment. San Mateo County Libraries' meal service program took place this summer at the East Palo Alto Library and at the La Honda-Pescadero Inspiring Summers school site. In addition, we started a new meals sponsorship for the Colma Parks and Recreation program. At the La Honda-Pescadero Inspiring Summers school site and the Colma Parks and Recreation program, families were able to pick up lunch and snack to take home Monday-Friday. At the East Palo Alto Library, meals were served Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

"Thank you for all your help this summer with the lunch program. Thank you for the toy donations as well. Our kids cherished them so much! We hope we can continue to work with you in the years to come." – Staff Member at Colma Community Center

We are proud to have served 6,719 meals this summer. Of these meals, 1,243 were served to adults.

Summer Youth Employment Program

Our Inspiring Summers program benefited from the energy and enthusiasm of the interns in our Summer Youth Employment Program. We hired 45 college interns to work at sites, with 67% returning for their second, third, fourth, or fifth summer. Eighty-six percent of the interns said that they would likely return next summer, while 100% said they would recommend the internship to a friend. Forty-eight percent of interns became more interested in working in education or with children as a career as a result of their experience.

"I had a wonderful time; it was an amazing experience that I will cherish for the rest of my life as it was my first experience in the classroom in a teaching role." – Summer Intern

Even in an environment of continuously changing conditions and guidelines, we engaged families and youth this summer and are proud of our inventive work to support equitable experiences for San Mateo County youth.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact associated with accepting the report.

Recommendation

Recommend JPA Governing Board accept the Summer Learning Report. Operations Committee members present at the September 15, 2020 meeting concurred with this recommendation.