San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item V.

To: JPA Operations Committee

From: Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services

Carine Risley, Deputy Director of Library Services

Date: May 5, 2021

Meeting: May 11, 2021

Re: Summer 2021 Learning Initiative

Background

On February 8, 2021 the Governing Board expressed their concern about learning loss and directed staff to think imaginatively to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth and families during summer 2021 and beyond. San Mateo County Libraries have an essential role to play in getting our youth ready for reentry into school this autumn after a year of pandemic life.

Student learning loss in the areas of reading and math is significant, with an average of five to nine months of learning loss. For high-need youth, that loss increases to six to 12 months of learning loss. Early learners are even more critically impacted, as the lack of in-person instruction at school has negatively impacted typical development, social emotional growth opportunities, and foundational literacy skills.

Regional findings by The Education Trust-West completed in February 2021 included the parent findings that:

- 73% worry about children's ability to socialize
- 82% worry their children's education and development will suffer
- 36% say they have skipped or reduced the size of their own or their child's meals as a result of the pandemic
- 60% have had to take time off or some sort of leave to care for their children

With our history as leaders in the summer learning space and the vision of our Governing Board, we have developed a robust set of interventions to provide unprecedented support for a historic summer.

Discussion

To ensure that every child in San Mateo County can grow and thrive this summer, we are requesting approval of four key interventions, in addition to our popular annual Summer Learning Challenge.

The Big Lift Summers Program - $612,000 to expand this award-winning program

The Big Lift (BL) 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, largely funded by Measure K, to reach the goal of 80% of San Mateo County kids reading proficiently by third grade.

San Mateo County Libraries leads the BL Summers programs, working closely with seven school districts and the national nonprofit BellXcel, to serve the highest need youth with enriching evidence-based experiences. This summer we will expand the program to:

- Provide more slots for students with an anticipated goal of serving up to 1,100 youth at 10 school sites
- Increase the ratio of adults to youth for safety and better learning outcomes
- Enroll an additional grade (rising third graders)
- Implement and assess supplemental math and phonics supports for rising kindergartners
- Restore the full day program as parents prefer and as aligns with evidence for learning gains
- Increase the length of the program to add five days, providing a best practices five-week experience

Staff training will be enhanced to incorporate information on COVID-19 youth trauma and the program will operate under the most current health and safety guidelines which were created and reviewed by the Office of Education medical staff.

In addition to the BL Summers expansion, San Mateo County Libraries are providing leadership and support to a second pillar of the County effort. We are now responsible for the Raising a Reader program to nurture family engagement and support the everyday use of books in the home. With this program, we will serve 200 classrooms at 66 individual sites. These are the most underserved preschool-aged children across the county and include targeted Big Lift preschools. This summer we will be establishing library visits and assisting all sites to resume providing culturally relevant bundles of books for all the children's homes.

Library Explorers Enrichment Camps - $135,000 to support this new program

The Library Explorers program is an in-library enrichment camp geared toward students who need extra support maintaining and growing their literacy, math, and socio-emotional skills in preparation for the 2021-22 school year.

In June and July, Library Explorers will be offered at all locations (except Atherton, Sanchez and Woodside - due to size and space limitations). These libraries will be reserved exclusively for youth from our communities on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Library Explorers will engage 322 of kindergarten through fifth grade students who will be enrolled in weekly 2-hour sessions, for five weeks. Activities will utilize our evidence-based Big Lift Summers curriculum and increase the number of youth able to enjoy rich, researcher developed experiences. Social emotional needs will be addressed with brain breaks and mindfulness activities.

Priority enrollment in May will be for high-need students our community school districts identify for participation in the program. In June, the remaining program slots will be open to the larger community and a waitlist will be available.

Families CREATE – $45,000 to expand this grant-funded program

In addition to safe in-person experiences, it is a priority to continue to offer choices to families for their children. The Families CREATE program is a 10-week virtual program series that recently received $12,000 in state funding to focus on providing STEAM-based activities that youth and families can participate in together.

Beginning in June, families of first through fifth grade students will be able to participate in both self-paced and guided live, interactive experiences supplemented with ten Spanish/English kits of unique activities throughout the summer. Families will gain knowledge of library programming and resources on the featured topics and will try activities on their own or as a part of a community.

1,446 kits will be distributed biweekly. Kits are divided by age: six to eight years old and nine to 11 years old based on the complexity level of the kit. Every other week, families can stop by the library to pick up kits that follow a specific theme. The following week families will have the opportunity to create together on Zoom. Themes include owls, insects, plants, sun/solar energy, and wind.

Partner Programs - $100,000 to support summer learning partner programs

In an effort to increase the number of youth who can be supported this summer, we are working with all interested city libraries and Parks and Recreation Departments and select community partners to:

- Provide books, library cards, and hands-on learning materials to youth enrolled in those programs
- Train partner staff on our summer learning Families CREATE curriculum and offer its use
- Subsidize admission for high need youth to increase enrollment and access to quality experiences

Additional funding to support this program will support approximately 600 youth in at least six communities with books and supplies for all supplemental activities selected. To date, confirmed partner Parks and Recreation departments include Belmont, Brisbane,

Half Moon Bay, Millbrae, Pacifica, and San Carlos. $15,000 of the funding would also provide subsidized spaces in camps for approximately 88 students in the varying programs.

The urgency of addressing COVID-19 impacts to provide all youth with equitable educational and enrichment opportunities will not decrease as summer draws to a close. We know the work is critical and will be ongoing. Staff are developing robust out-of-school-time interventions to introduce for the 2021-22 school year to build on the gains achieved this summer.

Fiscal Impact

If the Summer 2021 Learning Initiative is approved, costs to enhance youth summer experiences are estimated to increase by $892,000. This increase has been included in the FY 2021-22 Recommended Budget.

Recommendation

Recommend Library JPA Operations Committee approve the Summer 2021 Learning Initiative.