San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item V.

To: JPA Governing Board

From: Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services
Carine Risley, Deputy Director of Library Services

Date: September 14, 2021

Meeting: September 20, 2021

Re: Summer Learning Report

Background

On May 17, 2021, the Governing Board approved a strategic set of interventions and an estimated $892,000 in funding, to provide unprecedented summertime library support to accelerate youth learning gains and prepare youth for reentry into school this autumn after more than a year of pandemic life. With our history as leaders in the summer learning space and the vision of our Governing Board, we developed a robust set of interventions to provide unprecedented support for a historic summer.

Discussion

To ensure that every child in San Mateo County would be able to grow and thrive this summer, our enhanced summertime efforts focused on Big Lift Inspiring Summers, Library Explorers Camp, Families CREATE, and Partner Programs.

<u>The Big Lift Inspiring Summers</u>

The Big Lift is a county-wide collective impact effort geared toward increasing reading proficiency by third grade, led by the County of San Mateo, San Mateo County Office of Education, and Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

This year, San Mateo County Libraries assumed program responsibility for Inspiring Summers at the seven eligible school districts: Cabrillo Unified School District, Jefferson Elementary School District, La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District, Ravenswood City School District, Redwood City School District, San Bruno Park School District, and South San Francisco Unified School District.

Supplemental funding of $612,000 helped to ensure we were successfully able to:

- Provide more slots for students to serve 976 youth, out of a total of 1,594 applicants
- 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 adding five days, providing a best practices five-week experience

The Summer 2021 Inspiring Summers onsite program followed strict health and safety protocols with limited access to outside persons on campus and modified group sizes of no more than fourteen. A partnership with Stanford University helped us increase staffing for the expanded program and of 273 applicants, we hired 155 interns for the program.

The program was full day to implement both academic and STEAM curriculums, and new phonics intervention and assessment was implemented for rising Kindergarteners who demonstrated the need for additional help to transition back into a classroom setting. Meals and snacks were included throughout the day for each student, along with weekly virtual experiences from community partners and outside experts to engage youth for additional experiences exploring technology, nature, and health.

The increased capacity to serve youth was in high demand, with 420 more applications for eligible aged youth than there were available spots, from families eager for an in-person summer program.

Preliminary enrollment data from our district partners demonstrate high attendance of 91% throughout the program and retention of 89% students. Half of all rising first through third grade scholars (51%) had attended Big Lift Inspiring Summers in a previous year. Attending quality summer experiences for at least two summers and regular attendance are both critical factors that correlate with the most significant youth gains.

Family comments on Inspiring Summers include:

"As a working parent, I would love the program to be more than 5 weeks because it is a lifeline for our community. I constantly have to look for programs where my son can learn and be safe while I am at work."

"He is very happy to be in the program and always excited to come home and tell us about his day and all the fun activities he does in class with STEM."

"Seeing them learning to be independent and do projects by themselves is a big help. I love the program, and I want to thank you for providing this summer program. Thank you very much!"
All students received library cards at the end of the program, a set of books provided by the State Library family literacy grant, automatic enrollment in the Summer Learning Challenge, and a free San Mateo County Parks pass.

Inspiring Summers program experience has helped to inform strategy at school districts and the Office of Education to support youth this fall. Program data and assessment results are currently being gathered for analysis and a full impact report is expected to be complete before the next JPA meeting.

Library Explorers

The new Library Explorers in-person enrichment camps were supported by $135,000 in supplemental funding and designed to maintain and grow youth literacy, math, and social-emotional skills in preparation for the 2021-22 school year.

In June and July, Library Explorers was offered at all community library locations (except Atherton, Sanchez, and Woodside - due to size and space limitations). Participating libraries were reserved exclusively for youth from our communities Monday through Wednesday.

The program was promoted through schools and to families unable to attend Inspiring Summers. Staff were able to successfully solicit 632 interest submission forms from families and exceeded our initial enrollment goal to accommodate 334 youth during the five weeks of Library Explorers.

The 14 days of Library Explorers drew upon our evidence based Big Lift Summers curriculum and increased the number of youth able to enjoy rich, researcher developed experiences. Daily activities over 632 thrilling hours inspired creative learning through science, engineering, and math activities. We engaged youth socially, encouraged their growth, and some reluctant readers rediscovered the joy of reading.

Over the course of the program, youth grew in confidence by talking to other students and developing relationships. Staff noted that some youth would return to the library during open hours with their family to show off what they worked on during Library Explorers. Youth expressed interest in what they were learning daily, and parents emailed to share gratitude for how staff helped youth work through separation anxiety, get excited about science and robots, and make friends.

Rising kindergartners were assessed on their ability to identify upper- and lower-case letters, count to 30, and sound out letters. After completing the program, participating youth made gains which included on average at least a one-point gain in early literacy measures and a two-point gain in early math measures.

Post program surveys to families showed that 100% would recommend this program to another family. An average of 94% felt the program helped their child become more socially ready going back to school in-person, and an average of 92% felt the program helped their child become academically prepared for the new school year.

Feedback on Library Explorers included:

"We are grateful my daughter had a spot at the library explorers camp. Each day she would come home and explain what she did and learn. It was good for her to socialize and learn more STEM. Thank you!"

"We love our experience with Library Explorers, and we would like to thank all the staff who provided the time to help me keep my child engaged and away from devices."

"My child loved the camp. Initially, he was skeptical and unsure of what to expect. After the first week he loved it and couldn't wait to return. It was lovely to have this strong bond with our local library. After the library being closed in-person, it was challenging to re-engage my child to walk into the library. He was used to the pickup window. Now he's very comfortable going into the library every week to check out more books. I wish it would have been 3 hours vs 2. Or for more days versus 3/week. Very appreciative of this program. I highly recommend it!"

"My kids thrived under the routine, the clear expectations, and the engrossing activities. It was set up so well in advance so they could do more "big kid" activities and feel proud of their work. In this way, it really served an important part of our summer and I know is making my kids look forward to school again. It was a perfect set up for our family and I couldn't be more grateful they will be able to experience it. Thank you so much"

Families CREATE

The Families CREATE program is a 10-week virtual program series that is supported by $45,000 in supplemental library funding and $12,000 in state funding. Beginning in June, families of first through fifth grade students delighted in both self-paced and guided live, interactive experiences supplemented with ten Spanish/English kits of unique activities throughout the summer.

Families gained knowledge of library programming and resources on featured topics such as solar energy, insects, plants, and owls and had fun trying out activities both on their own and as part of a community. A total of 5,361 kits were distributed and more than 509 families attended the entire series of virtual sessions that supported learning and community building.

Feedback on Families CREATE included:

"Owen enjoyed owl pellet dissection and wants to do more. He is planning to take what he found in it to school to show to his classmates! We appreciate library's efforts to provide our children such fun and educational projects."

"After iterating along the way in true engineer fashion to build a pinwheel together and learn about kinetic energy, one young participant chimed in at the end to say: 'this was a good one!""

"My daughter enjoyed the class so much, now she is looking for bugs and puts them in the container!"

Partner Programs

To support the health and wellness of youth and families throughout the county, the Governing Board approved up to $100,000 to provide local Parks and Recreation departments with additional resources this summer. We confirmed interest with six Parks and Recreation departments in Belmont, Brisbane, Half Moon Bay, Millbrae, Pacifica, and San Carlos.

San Mateo County Libraries delivered 390 free books requested by our city partners, shared our STEAM curriculum utilized for Library Explorers camp, provided access to staff training, and provided materials needed to carry out curriculum activities. While no partner identified a need for subsidized support this summer for any community members, there was appreciation that this was available.

This collaborative work extended our community reach with each recreation program encouraging students to sign up for library cards and participate in our Summer Learning Challenge. While partners were busy supporting their programs in a dynamic pandemic environment, interest is present to deepen collaborations over a longer timeline for future years.

Feedback on Partner Programs included:

"Thanks for the resources and books for our campers, it was a big help to our summer."

"I received and used all the supplies that were dropped off. Thank you very much for your support this summer it was a big help."

The pandemic exacerbated inequities and presented myriad challenges to parents and their children. This summer afforded us an opportunity to connect many youth with a variety of enhanced educational and enrichment opportunities to help prepare them for the future.

Thanks to the strong commitment and concern the Governing Board expressed about learning loss this year, staff worked tirelessly this summer to imaginatively address the impacts of the pandemic on our youth and families this summer. We know the work is critical and will be ongoing.

Our experience and forthcoming program results will help to inform strategy to continue uplift youth this fall. Staff are developing robust out-of-school-time interventions to introduce for the school year to build on the gains achieved this summer.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact associated with accepting this report.

Recommendation

Recommend JPA Governing Board accept the Summer Learning Report. Operations Committee members present at the September 14, 2021 meeting concurred with this recommendation.