San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item V.

To: JPA Governing Board

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

Date: September 13, 2022

Meeting: September 19, 2022

Re: Big Lift Inspiring Summers Report

Background

The Big Lift is a collective impact initiative that ensures all San Mateo County students are reading at grade level by the third grade. It is a countywide effort, led by San Mateo County, San Mateo County Office of Education, San Mateo County Libraries and Silicon Valley Community Foundation. The Inspiring Summers program, a key pillar of The Big Lift, has been serving early elementary-aged students in our partner school districts since 2015.

Discussion

This summer, we served 954 students entering kindergarten to third grade at eight school sites across six of our partner school districts: Cabrillo Unified School District, Jefferson Elementary School District, La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District, Redwood City School District, San Bruno Park School District, and South San Francisco Unified School District.

Summer learning experiences are more critical than ever—as we work to mitigate the effects not just of summer learning loss, but remote schooling learning loss as well. During our third year of COVID related challenges, the Inspiring Summers program accelerated summer learning by providing a safe space for students to develop their academic and social emotional skills.

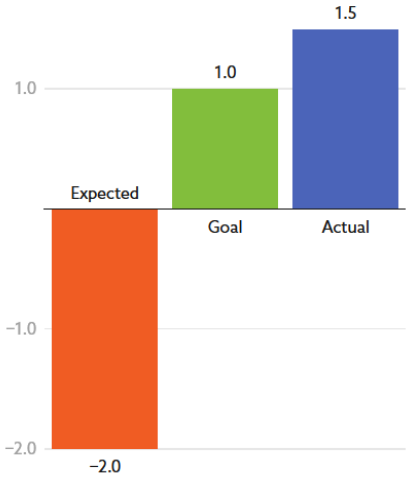
Staff hiring remained the biggest challenge to our ability to serve all eligible students and we pursued multiple hiring strategies to support the largest program possible this year. The County secured additional funding for teacher recruitment by offering teachers a stipend to return. San Mateo County Libraries provided additional funding to offer more competitive hourly rates for our interns, which had

a transformative effect on recruitment. We also expanded the age requirement to hire sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds. With these efforts, the library was able to hire 149 interns to staff all the classrooms school districts were able to support.

Participation in Inspiring Summers results in being ahead, rather than behind. Focusing on rich, literacy instruction in the morning, Inspiring Summers' students gained 1.5 months in reading and 0.5 months in math ability across our 8 sites, in an average of just 22 program days. This accomplishment was achieved in the context of slightly increased program absences due to accelerated COVID activity in the community.

Summer changes in reading ability, in months of learning

Actual changes measured with BellXCel Star assessments at the beginning and end of the program.

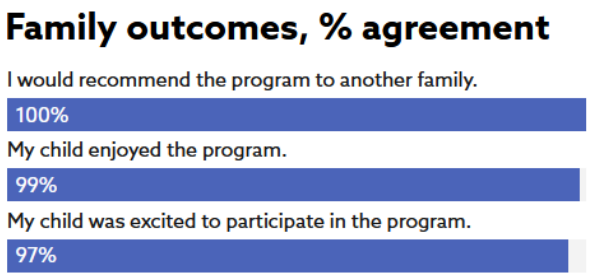


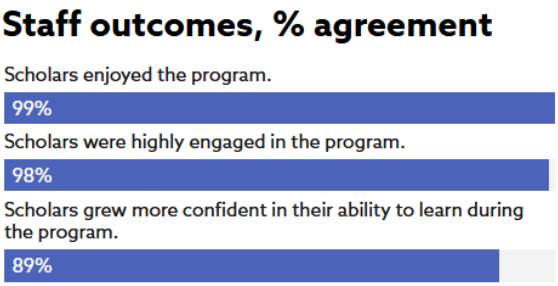
Social emotional skills are essential to academic learning and overall well-being and are more important since the start of the pandemic. Social emotional learning is imbedded in every part of the Inspiring Summers program day and library staff led students in mindfulness activities to help identify and name feelings and use self-soothing behavior when upset.

Students and staff enjoyed fewer restrictions, which led to more collaboration and engagement among our students. In the afternoon, library staff led students in engaging, hands-on STEAM activities. Students were encouraged to collaborate with each other, make mistakes, and practice growth mindset. Families and educators reported that children gained confidence, improved their eagerness to learn, and increased their ability to work through challenges.

Many children experienced mental health challenges during the pandemic and developed a negative association with school during distance learning. Families reported seeing an increased positivity and excitement in their child during the program. When children got picked up, they enthusiastically shared about the projects and learning that happened during their day. Children were not only more prepared to start the school year but are excited to do so.

"He wasn't excited to go to school at all. Now, during this summer program, I see the excitement in his face every morning. He's ready for class and comes back happy and excited to share what he learned at school. We loved this program, and I hope it continues so many more children can thrive in kindergarten." – Parent of Rising Kindergarten Student





Caregivers reported that because of the comfortable and secure environment, their child could learn and grow. Children's confidence and independence increased as they had the opportunity to work with their peers and engage in projects and learning. As can be seen in the charts above, the program continues to enjoy extremely high satisfaction ratings.

"We're so thankful to have this program. It makes a difference, it really does. The kids love it, families love it, the staff love it." – Kristen Lindstrom, Partner Program Lead, La Honda Pescadero Unified School District

Inspiring Summers fuels imaginations, nurtures academic progress, and supports the social-emotional needs of youth to thrive--during the school year and beyond. While a program that stops summer learning loss is a success, we exceeded that benchmark to realize learning gains and match our most successful year in the program's history.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact associated with accepting this report.

Recommendation

Recommend JPA Governing Board accept the Big Lift Inspiring Summers Report. Operations Committee members present for the September 13, 2022 meeting concurred with this recommendation.