San Mateo County Libraries

Agenda Item IV. D.

To:	JPA Governing Board
From:	Anne-Marie Despain, Director of Library Services Carine Risley, Deputy Director
Date:	September 10, 2025
Meeting:	September 15, 2025
Re:	Summer Learning Report

Background

Our library summer initiatives have focused on increasing opportunity, empowering young learners, and helping youth return to the academic year more inspired and prepared to learn than they were before.

We know how important learning enthusiasm and quality out-of-school-time experiences are to achieve necessary changes in third grade reading proficiency and summer learning losses. 45% of third graders in San Mateo County are not reading at grade level and the average child loses about 2 months of learning over the summer.

We have two key approaches to summer: an enrolled summer camp at partner school sites and open experiences offered all summer long at all libraries and out in our communities.

Discussion

Inspiring Summers Camp

This year we celebrated our 10th anniversary of The Big Lift Inspiring Summers, our full-day summer program for rising kindergarteners to third graders at eight school sites in returning school districts: Cabrillo Unified School District, La Honda Pescadero Unified School District, San Bruno Park School District and South San Francisco Unified School District, as well as three new school districts that serve children in our service area: Bayshore Elementary School District, Millbrae Elementary School District and Pacifica School District.

928 youth participated in our 4 and 5-week programs infused with critical academic literacy instruction with certified teachers as well as hands-on, child-directed STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) and mindfulness activities.

The Big Lift is a collective impact effort led by San Mateo County funded by Measure K to support some of our youngest community members to read by third grade. This year, our district partners used children's school year reading scores from newly required evidence-based assessments to prioritize Inspiring Summers enrollment. Also new this year—summer testing was eliminated to increase program time. Instead, school year literacy testing data will be used to measure growth for children participating in Inspiring Summers.

Enriching summer experiences on and off-campus continue to be an Inspiring Summers highlight. Our library MakerMobile visits ensured hands-on maker exploration. Library field trip destinations allowed kids opportunities to check out books with their library cards and become more comfortable accessing different activities at the library.
Additional excursions included visits to San Mateo County Parks and CuriOdyssey Science Museum. Family engagement peaked during a Pescadero Elementary School outing, with over 20% of participating youth bringing a family member to explore child-directed science exhibits, learn about native animals, and create lifelong memories together.

"My daughter has grown immensely independent and confident this summer. She has had a great time, and we appreciate all the fun activities and field trips. Thank you!" –Pescadero parent

"She is happy to be surrounded by peers, learning to navigate a new environment with new people and embracing changes with ease and excitement." – Millbrae parent

- 93% of Inspiring Summers families said they found more joy for learning and exploring during the program.
- 98% of families said they felt valued as a partner in their child's program experience.

Summer Adventure

Our choose-your-own-adventure program encourages youth to keep learning in fun and engaging ways. 142 exciting drop-in experiences featured bugs and reptiles, bilingual music, yoga and dance, magic, giant bubbles, and cave exploration.

This year, we made over 150 visits to local schools to spread the word and get kids excited about participating. Participants are asked to complete at least five reading and learning activities to be entered to win amazing prizes.

Along with tickets to San Francisco Giants Games and passes to CuriOdyssey, one youth in each city won the grand prize $1000 college scholarship to help them fulfil their future educational goals.

Over 44,000 books were distributed to kids and families to help kickstart their reading over the Summer Adventure and to build home libraries and our Lunch at the Libraries program provides additional resources for families relying on library lunches while school is out of session.

"It was really fun doing the activities and being active this summer!" –North Fair Oaks teen

"I did the summer adventure with my kids, and we enjoyed it. It really challenged us to read every day and to keep learning throughout the summer." –Foster City parent

"Thank you for encouraging different activities and getting us out to explore! We had so much fun and looking forward to continuing adventures and visiting all the libraries in our community!" -Brisbane family

Workforce Development

We promote workforce development through our annual summer internship opportunities. This year 22 local high school students made a difference by supporting library programs and engaging youth in our libraries and out in our communities. We also hired 122 Inspiring Summers interns, mostly college aged, to lead research informed STEAM activities developed by San Mateo County Libraries and the Center for Childhood Creativity.

Staff received robust professional development including training in healthy boundaries with CORA (Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse) to model and build skills to develop and recognize healthy relationships.

"I love giving back to my community and being able to be involved all summer. This internship has provided me with great work experience and the opportunity to connect with my community more deeply. Thank you so much." –Summer Intern

- 98% of Inspiring Summers staff said the support they received from program leaders helped enhance their instruction.

- 98% of Inspiring Summers staff said that they established caring and consistent relationships with youth in the program.

Whether in our enrolled program or dropping into opportunities offered at our libraries, we offered a variety of experiences to expand horizons and expose youth to new opportunities.

Our summer programs are designed to spark excitement and learning, ensuring children in San Mateo County grow and thrive through unforgettable summer experiences. These efforts are essential to prevent summer learning loss and increase access to enriching summer opportunities for all youth.

This summer, children and their families engaged in valuable learning adventures inside and outside of our library spaces; met new people, explored new places, learned new literacy skills and built strong family and community bonds.

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 9, 2025 meeting concurred with this recommendation.