



Getting an early Boost.

Preparing San Mateo County's kids to be reading proficiently by third grade.

**THE BIG
LIFT**

In 2011, San Mateo County leaders were presented with the startling data that despite being in the top 1% of affluent counties in the nation, 45% of kids were not reading at grade level by third grade. The statistic rises to a shocking 60% among Latinx, African American and Pacific Islander children and 75% among low-income children of color.

This matters because until third grade, children learn to read. After third grade, they must read to learn and if they are not reading proficiently by this critical benchmark, the opportunity gap widens and it becomes increasingly difficult for them to be academically successful. Not only is this an equity issue but according to Professor James Heckman,

Nobel Laureate in Economics, not investing early on is an economic issue and his research has shown that investing before age five renders a 13:1 return on investment in cost savings to the criminal justice, healthcare and social services systems, and increased contributions to the workforce and local economy.



The Big Lift™ is a bold social venture that seeks to give kids the boost needed in the early years so that they enter kindergarten ready to read by third grade and succeed in life. Their goal is to move the needle in San Mateo County from 50% to 80% of kids' reading proficiently by third grade.



This nationally-recognized collective impact model involves collaboration between 300+ organizations, driven by the vision and leadership of the County of San Mateo, Silicon Valley Community Foundation and San Mateo County Office of Education. With start-up funding provided by San Mateo County's Measure A and then Measure K half-cent, voter-approved sales taxes, The Big Lift has drawn down significant funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service White House Social Innovation Fund, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, First 5 San Mateo County, The Packard Foundation, Google.org, Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund (SV2), Genentech, Gilead and Heising-Simons Foundation, as well as partnered with national leaders including the Campaign for Grade Level Reading, RAND Corporation, BellXcel, Stanford Graduate School of Business Alumni Consulting Team, and Harvard Kennedy School.

Eleven school districts in San Mateo County have reading proficiency rates below 50% and, to date, The Big Lift has been implemented in seven of those districts: Jefferson Elementary School District, South San Francisco Unified School District, San Bruno Park School District, Cabrillo Unified School District, La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District, Ravenswood Elementary School District, and Redwood City School District. Families participating in The Big Lift are 73% dual language learners with an average family income of \$38,000 annually, in stark contrast with San Mateo County's median household income of \$116,000.

3900+ kids received high-quality preschool in 99 newly created or enhanced classrooms

200+ teachers received an average of 40 hours of professional coaching and development

92,800 books distributed to families through Raising A Reader

50% increase in the amount of time families engaged in literacy activities in the home

7,300 cumulative gain in school day attendance and 10% reduction in chronic absenteeism as a result of targeted messaging to families on the importance of attendance

1,200+ kids participate annually in a full-day, four-week Inspiring summer experience including intensive literacy curriculum and STEAM activities

The Big Lift program consists of four key interventions based on the Annie E. Casey Foundation framework – **Quality Preschool, Family Engagement, School Attendance, and Inspiring Summers** – that are further supported by rigorous evaluation and data collection, preschool to third grade alignment, and collaborative building.

Embarking into Year Five of The Big Lift, partnerships from education, nonprofit, philanthropy and corporate sectors continue to strengthen and enrich the program. Creative partnerships and the data-driven approach continue to ensure The Big Lift is at the cutting edge of best practices. Preliminary data shows that The Big Lift kids are more ready for kindergarten than their demographically-similar peers, that they are achieving three-month reading gains over summer instead of learning loss, and that the culture of literacy is growing in the home.

The Big Lift collaborative is continuously growing and has galvanized the community around a single metric – getting 80% of county kids reading proficiently by third grade. When kids are reading proficiently, succeeding academically, and engaged in learning, everyone wins.

*Lift up San Mateo County kids,
visit thebiglift.org*