

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: PATRICIA LOVE

plove@smcoe.org

650.802.5559

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RAND and BELL Studies Find The Big Lift Children Are Making Promising Gains

REDWOOD CITY, CALIF. Children participating in The Big Lift™ are making promising gains, according to early results from two evaluation efforts.

In the first [study](#), conducted by the RAND Corporation, children who participated in [The Big Lift](#) preschools were more likely than children with no preschool to start school ready for kindergarten. According to this study, when controlling for demographic characteristics, children in The Big Lift preschool programs were 27 percentage points more likely to be ready for kindergarten than children who had not attended preschool.

Impressive gains were also found for students in The Big Lift summer program, jointly offered by Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL) and the San Mateo County Libraries. In the annual impact [report](#) produced by BELL, the academic model for The Big Lift summer program, children who participated in The Big Lift summer program in 2017 experienced a one-and-a-half-month reading advantage instead of the typical two-month summer loss, for a net gain of three-and-a-half months.

“I am heartened to see the progress our children are making, which means The Big Lift is on the right track,” explained San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools Anne E. Campbell. “Our challenge now is to make sure we have the resources and partner organizations in place to continue this work, which now serves 3,000 children annually.”

The RAND report also focuses on understanding who was served by The Big Lift.

“As intended, Big Lift services primarily reach children from families with the lowest incomes,” said Celia Gomez, lead author of the kindergarten readiness study and an associate policy researcher at the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research organization. “Indeed, The Big Lift reached more than half of all entering kindergartners in participating districts who had annual family incomes of less than \$50,000.”

Overall, about one in three children in the 2016-17 kindergarten class in the first four funded Big Lift school districts was served by either The Big Lift preschool or summer program.

The kindergarten readiness findings represent the early results of the RAND Corporation’s multi-year independent evaluation of The Big Lift. This first study, *The Big Lift Participation and School Entry Indicators: Early Findings*, focuses on RAND’s analysis of participation rates and school

readiness outcomes for children who participated in The Big Lift preschool and/or summer programs during the initiative's first year. Results are based on assessments of 1,496 entering kindergartners in the 2016-17 school year in Cabrillo, Jefferson, La Honda-Pescadero, and South San Francisco school districts. The study provides baseline data that will allow tracking of trends in kindergarten readiness over time.

Thanks in part to The Big Lift, nearly half of the county's school districts now have a common way of measuring kindergarten readiness, and it is hoped that more will follow. Standardized kindergarten entry information is important because research shows that the skills children have when they enter kindergarten strongly predict how they will perform in third grade. Children who cannot read proficiently by third grade, in turn, are four times more likely to drop out of high school and be unemployed or incarcerated. Research has identified the critical role of high-quality preschool in helping to close the kindergarten 'readiness' gap as well as the value of high quality summer programs in preventing summer learning loss as children progress through the early elementary grades.

The Big Lift is a preschool to third grade collective impact initiative in San Mateo County, California. Launched in 2012 by the County of San Mateo, Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF), and the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE), the initiative aims to boost third grade reading proficiency through a set of four coordinated activities, called "pillars": 1) High-Quality Preschool; 2) Summer Learning; 3) School Attendance; and 4) Family Engagement. The Big Lift is working intensively with 96 preschool classrooms serving 2,000 children annually in seven school districts to improve quality, deepen family engagement, and help ensure more at-risk kids show up at kindergarten ready to thrive in school and in life. The Big Lift summer program provides a full-day, five-week summer program to low-income rising kindergartners through third graders in these same districts, using an evidence-based literacy curriculum created by BELL in the morning and a STEM focused enrichment component in the afternoon provided by the San Mateo County Library.

The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization that develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier and more prosperous. RAND's research and analysis address issues that impact people around the world including security, health, education, sustainability, growth, and development. Much of this research is carried out on behalf of public and private grantors and clients.

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