

The Big Lift



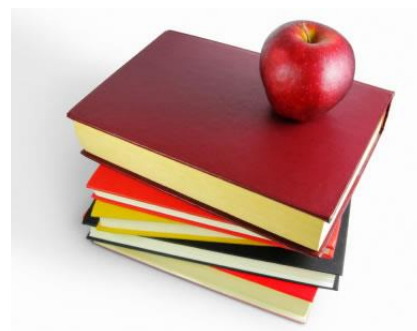
Plan Update: November 3, 2015

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The Big Lift Goal

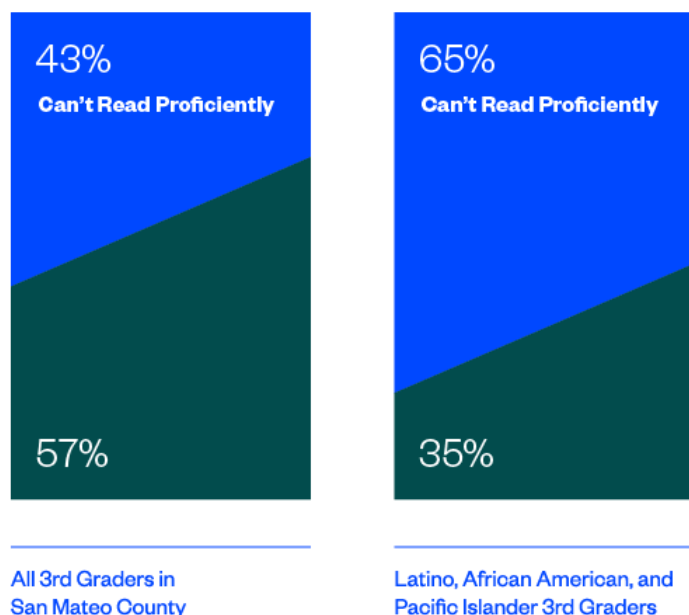
Achieve a big lift in San Mateo County's educational outcomes by going from 57% of our children reading proficiently in 3rd grade to 80%.



The Big Concern

In San Mateo County, one of the most affluent communities in the country, 43% of third graders do not read at grade level. This rises to a shocking 60% among Latino, African-American and Pacific Islander children. As decades of research have revealed, children who start behind are likely to stay behind. The failure of communities to ensure that all children are ready for school and succeeding by third grade means fewer lifetime opportunities, lower productivity, higher social costs in public benefits and remedial education, and more crime and spending on prisons.

READING PROFICIENCY AMONG 3RD GRADERS IN SAN MATEO COUNTY, 2013-2014



The Big Plan

The Big Lift is one of the nation's most watched models to give kids a stronger start.



San Mateo County has realized that the educational status quo is no longer an option and, in 2013, launched The Big Lift, a collective impact collaborative made up of over 200 educators, nonprofits, businesses, government and foundation leaders that together are spearheading a bold social venture that aims to transform early learning. The Big Lift combines high-quality and connected learning experiences from preschool to third grade based on the Annie E. Casey Third Grade Reading Campaign framework (Why Reading at the End of Third-Grade Matters, 2010 and Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading, 2013), which combines the following evidence-based interventions: (1) a comprehensive school readiness strategy focused on high-quality preschool for 3- and 4-year olds that leads to an aligned and sequenced set of high-quality learning experiences in kindergarten through third grade; (2) a focus on reducing chronic absence in the early grades; (3) development of inspiring summer learning opportunities that enable children to maintain their academic and developmental gains from high-quality preschool throughout the early grades; and (4) strengthening family and community engagement through a substantial investment in strategies that support parents/caregivers to provide rich learning environments in the home.

Key measurable outcomes for The Big Lift include: increasing the percentage of children ready for kindergarten from 50% to 80%; reducing chronic absence by 50%; increasing the percentage of children reading below grade level who attend inspiring summer programs to 80%; and increasing the percentage of families who have the resources they need to be strong advocates and participants in their children's education to 100%. Ultimately, this will lead to the overall

goal that 80% of children will be reading proficiently by the third grade in target communities by 2020.

The target communities are those with school districts where reading scores are close to or below the county average. The targeted school districts had the following percentages of third graders scoring below "proficient" on the California Standardized Test in English Language Arts in 2013: Bayshore (64%), Brisbane (55%), Cabrillo (55%), Jefferson Elementary (49%), La Honda (65%), Pacifica (40%), Ravenswood (78%), Redwood City (58%), San Bruno Park (56%), San Mateo-Foster City (42%) and South San Francisco (48%).

Unfortunately, there is a fragmented patchwork of supports for children in these communities, particularly in the earliest years when critical learning takes place, from quality private programs that most families cannot afford, to public programs of uneven quality that suffer from frequent funding cuts and low teacher pay, to relatives who provide baby-sitting but often little more. Of the estimated number of eligible low-income children in these districts, over one-third (36%) are not able to access high-quality early education programs. It is no surprise then that children from these communities are not entering schools with the requisite skills they need to be successful.

An additional innovative element of The Big Lift will be a focus on early math. A growing body of research is changing notions about what early skills set children on a path toward school success. Several large-scale studies reveal that early math ability is the strongest predictor of later academic success in third and fifth grade (School Readiness and Later Achievement, Duncan et al, 2007). Increasing the quality and quantity of math instruction increases both math learning and literacy skills (Schoenfeld and Stipek, 2011). Math and literacy are also inextricably linked in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, for example, as students will be asked to explain the reasoning behind mathematical operations, thus necessitating excellent literacy skills.

The Big Lift will implement these elements over a five-year period, beginning with a competitive grant process to enhance and add new preschool spaces in qualified target districts.

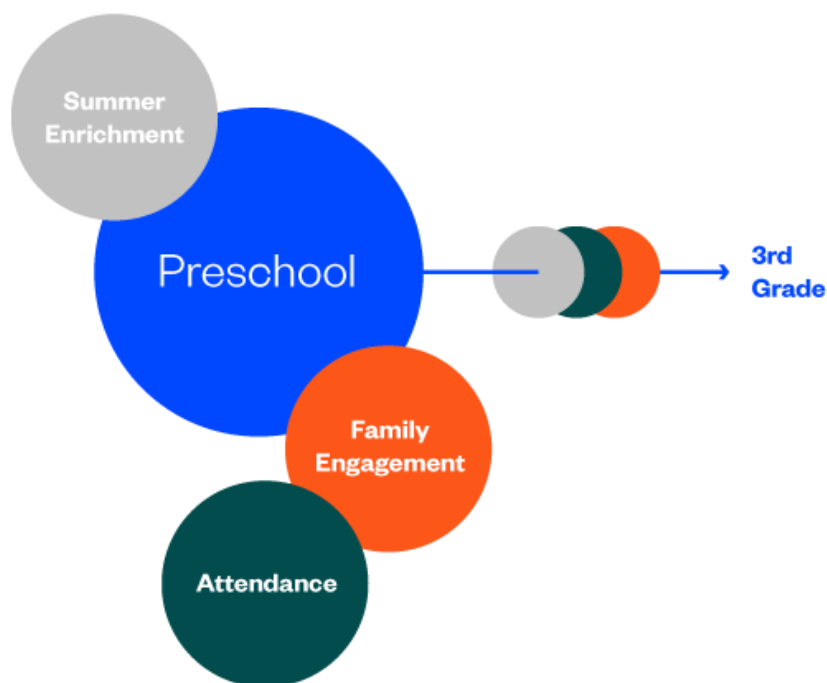
Interventions to combat chronic absence and increase family engagement will follow and take place beginning in the grantee districts. Inspiring summer programs will be also be implemented in the grantee target districts. Over the course of five years, The Big Lift intends to expand beyond initial grantee target districts to full rollout in the 11 target districts. In order to meet the desired outcome of 80% of children in the 11 target communities reading proficiently by third grade, The Big Lift projects it will need to serve 8,600 students by 2020 with a projected cost of \$30-40 million annually.

PROOF OF CONCEPT

The Big Lift is now in the Proof-of-Concept phase. Implementation of the initiative has begun in four launch communities with below-average third-grade reading outcomes and the capacity to improve them. These communities will be closely tracked and results will be reported to the County of San Mateo. The Big Lift plan will be further developed and refined as the Initiative progresses.

The Big Lift Pillars

The Big Lift combines high-quality and connected learning experiences from preschool to third grade. The Big Lift will blend two years of high-quality preschool with programs to reduce chronic absence, to end summer learning loss, and to engage families and the broader community to support learning in school and at home.



PRE-SCHOOL

The high-quality preschool element of The Big Lift, and the focus of Year One grants, is based on a highly successful Preschool for All (PFA) pilot implemented in San Mateo County from 2005-2009. A longitudinal analysis of children who had experienced two full years of high-quality preschool through PFA, carried out by the John W. Gardner Center at Stanford University, obtained the following second-grade proficiency rates for PFA participants versus a control group of non-participants: reading proficiency (74% versus 55%); writing proficiency (55% versus 43%); mathematics proficiency (62% versus 50%); and work study skills (75% versus 68%).

Given the importance of a high-quality preschool experience to improve outcomes for low-income children, Year One of The Big Lift will focus on creating 300 brand-new high-quality preschool spaces and improving the quality of 500 existing spaces for 3- and 4-year-olds in the target communities with the ambitious goal of increasing access gradually until all 8,600 low-

income 3- and 4-year-old children in the 11 target communities have access to high-quality preschool by 2020.

In order to help grantees achieve the measurable outcomes, The Big Lift will support them through the strategies described below. These strategies for strengthening kindergarten readiness and family engagement will be the primary focus in Year One, with activities related to chronic absence and summer learning introduced in years Two through Five: (1) Direct financial support to help preschool classrooms achieve and sustain high quality, including resources for teacher planning and release time, learning materials, staffing, data/administrative support and operating expenses for new spaces; (2) Independent program quality assessment using the empirically valid Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS), providing the basis for grantee development of quality improvement plans; (3) Supports for teachers to improve and sustain early math instruction, shown by research to be the strongest predictor of academic success, as well as, reading proficiency in third and fifth grade; (4) Evidence-based professional development, provided by experts on an ongoing basis, including specific Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) elements such as screening and teacher-child interactions; (5) Coaching and technical assistance based on classroom quality assessments, delivered on-site to help teachers apply professional development learning to their classroom work; (6) Support for developmental screening of all children, including support for classrooms to identify children with special needs early and provide needed services; (7) Supports for effectively serving dual language learners and their families, including training, coaching and family engagement provided through the Early Childhood Language Development Institute; (8) A spectrum of family engagement Strategies that builds upon family strengths, culture, language and experience to support parents as children's most influential teachers; (9) Higher education supports for early educators leveraged through the community college and workforce development systems, and bachelor's degree cohort programs; (10) Resources for facility renovations including

improvements to existing classrooms and start-up funds to furnish new classrooms; (11) Targeted professional development, coaching and other supports to help 'pipeline' programs reach a level of quality at which they can fully engage in the proposed program; and (12) Implementing Pre-Kindergarten to third grade alignment strategies with grantee school districts in partnership with local initiatives Bridges to Success, the Early Learning Math Initiative and Transitional Kindergarten.

The California Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS), developed as part of a federal Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant, will serve as an over-arching quality framework for The Big Lift preschools, ensuring a minimum level of quality is achieved in all preschool settings and incentivizing increasingly higher levels of quality. Programs will need to meet a baseline entry requirement in order to be eligible for participation, and will be assessed regularly to determine if progress is being made.

Quality supports will be provided to new and upgraded classrooms through a combination of professional development, coaching and technical assistance. A growing body of research, including the San Mateo County Preschool for All pilot project, shows that professional development workshops on their own are insufficient and that in-classroom coaching and technical assistance is the key to helping teachers apply what they have learned to their classroom practices (American Institutes of Research and RAND Corporation, 2013). San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) will serve as the primary technical assistance provider to Big Lift preschool classrooms.

IMPROVING ATTENDANCE

A growing body of research has revealed that chronic absence is prevalent among young children and attendance has a critical role in student achievement. Chronic absence is defined as missing 10% or more of school for any reason, excused or unexcused. Nationwide, more than

10% of students miss nearly a month of school every year. As early as preschool, chronic absence predicts poor attendance and academic performance in later grades. Poor children are more likely to be chronically absent and more likely to lose ground academically. By sixth grade, chronic absence is a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school. Improving student attendance is an essential, cost-effective but often overlooked, strategy for ensuring our students are on-track to learn and succeed (Present, Engaged and Accounted For: The Critical Importance of Addressing Chronic Absence in the Early Grades, National Center for Children in Poverty, Chang, et al, 2008). In Years Two through Five, The Big Lift will seek community-wide solutions to chronic absence in the early years through interventions such as support to targeted school districts to examine and address chronic absence in the early years, data analysis, family engagement and professional development for preschool and elementary personnel.

INSPIRATIONAL SUMMERS

The Big Lift Inspiring Summers Program will provide enriching experiences and prevent learning loss, so that underserved kids have the support they need to read and succeed. The summer learning programs will help to ensure that kids don't lose what they have learned throughout the school year, over the summer. Creative, hands-on projects will engage kids with science, art, technology, and math in the summers between preschool and 3rd grade. This program will support Big Lift kids' interest in academic subjects and persistence in school.

The Big Lift Inspiring Summers Program will be designed not only to end summer learning loss, but to expose children to new ideas and experiences in the context of continuous and comprehensive help on fundamentals like reading.

By 2018, The Big Lift plans to serve 2,000 San Mateo County children each summer.

More than half of the achievement gap between lower- and higher-income students can be explained by unequal access to summer-learning opportunities. Middle-class students are quite often enrolled in science, art and sports enrichment camps over the summer, keeping them engaged in learning. Students from less affluent families are often denied such access due to their financial situations. According to the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, low-income students lose an average of more than two months in reading achievement in the summer months. By the end of fifth grade, disadvantaged children are nearly three grade equivalents behind their more affluent peers in reading, a gap from which it is very hard to recover. As a result, low-income youth are less likely to graduate from high school or enter college (Are Schools the Great Equalizer? Cognitive Inequality during the Summer Months and the School Year, Downey, Von Hippel & Broh, 2004).

High-quality summer learning is essential to preventing "summer learning loss" and improving students' academic achievement and readiness to learn. In Year One, The Big Lift will organize a planning process to determine the best approaches to expanding access to summer programming in Big Lift communities by Year Two. The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading has developed a set of guidelines for investments in summer programs that The Big Lift will use - along with recommendations from Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning (Rand Education and Wallace Foundation, 2011) - as a framework for this planning effort, indicating that programs should: (1) Offer a six-week, full-day model; (2) Serve all youth living in poverty; (3) Blend academic learning in core subjects, hands-on activities, technology, and enrichment; (4) Strengthen and expand partnerships between schools, community organizations, and public agencies to leverage resources, identify gaps, and improve programs; (5) Provide incentives to students that improve attendance and engagement with enrichment activities such as arts, music, sports and free breakfast and lunch; (6) Offer innovative professional development for educators and youth development leaders; (7) Engage in rigorous evaluation of implementation and impact to strengthen the evidence base for "what

works"; and (8) Move summer programs from the periphery to the core of school reform strategies through better planning, infrastructure, data collection and accountability.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The Big Lift will employ a combination of family engagement strategies to meet the identified needs within each community, including the evidence-based Raising a Reader early literacy program; Virtual PreK, a program of the Chicago Public Schools that engages families in expanding learning from the classrooms to the home with the belief that "learning takes place virtually everywhere"; and the Early Childhood Language Development Institute (ECLDI), a SMCOE-based program focused on helping families and teachers meet the needs of young dual language learners. ECLDI's goal is to shift the understanding and practice of family engagement in San Mateo County from one of parent education, or "random acts of family engagement," to authentic collaboration and partnership among families of dual language learners, educators, and the school system. ECLDI's definition of success is that children and their families from diverse backgrounds feel engaged in their education, supported in their learning, and respected and appreciated for the rich resources they bring to the classroom and the community. ECLDI will work in Big Lift communities to create a community-wide commitment and expectation that all parts of an educational system will integrate family engagement principles and practices.

A Staged Approach to Reaching Every Child in San Mateo County



PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

The Big Lift anticipates selecting between 10-16 grantees (year One) in two to four of the 11 target communities. The estimated range of awards to grantees will be \$100,000-\$500,000, based on provider capacity.

SVCF will solicit applications from eligible grantees in the target communities that provide high-quality preschool services. Eligible grantees will include private and public non-profits, including multi-service agencies and school districts, whose existing programs are in good standing with (or exempt from) California Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing. A critical requirement includes a memorandum of understanding between the grantee (if the grantee is not a school district) and the school district or districts within whose boundaries the grantee is located, to ensure all four of the dimensions of The Big Lift Plan are implemented.

For preschool providers (including school districts if they apply as direct providers of preschool services), the specific requirements will include: (1) Organizational and leadership capacity to meet the data, evaluation and fiscal requirements of the Social Innovation Fund (SIF) Grant; (2) Ability to meet the quality requirements, as evidenced by a minimum score of a Tier 3 on the QRIS; (3) Agreement to comply with external evaluators and participate in multiple evaluation activities, including, but not limited to: data use agreements, participation in external CLASS and

ECERS assessments, provision of student attendance data, verification of QRIS status, and willingness to conduct valid child assessments, such as the Desired Results Developmental Profile and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire; (4) Commitment to engage in ongoing quality improvement, including participation in activities that support progress on a Quality Improvement Plan (e.g., coaching, training on developmental assessments, etc.); (5) Participation in family engagement strategies outlined in Big Lift; and (6) Engagement in a whole child approach to curriculum, including the highlighted math component.

For school districts, specific requirements include: (1) Commitments to prioritize and actively engage in The Big Lift's four focus areas; (2) Agreement to implement Pre-Kindergarten to third grade alignment strategies to ensure that children sustain the benefits of their preschool experience into the elementary school years, such as cross-grade professional development and sharing individual child data as the child progresses through the grades; (3) Agreement to comply with external evaluation, including various data agreements; (4) Agreement to track and make attendance data available; (5) Agreement to share standardized test results and report cards through their school years; (6) Progress towards assigning a California unique student identifier to children in preschool; and (7) Agreement to collect and share kindergarten entry data.

An independent review panel will assess the ability of grantees to meet the goals and requirements of The Big Lift, including capacity for growth. Other factors to be considered in evaluating applications will include: a commitment to increasing the number of full-day preschool spaces and summer programs available in the community; evidence of prior and/or intended PreK-3 alignment work; strong community collaboration; organizational capacity; community need; and capacity to serve the most vulnerable children.



LAUNCH COMMUNITIES

The Big Lift has launched in the following four school districts with below-average third-grade reading outcomes and the capacity to improve them. A total of approximately \$4.4 million will be awarded to preschool providers and school districts in these communities. These grants represent the first round of grants that will be made over the course of three years to provide high-quality learning experiences from preschool to 3rd grade. The learning experiences will include high-quality preschool and summer programs, and will focus on reducing absenteeism and engaging parents and the broader community to support learning in school and at home.

Among the four school districts selected below for Big Lift grants, the percentage of third graders who scored below “proficient” on the California Standardized Test in English Language Arts in 2013 ranged from 48 percent to 65 percent. But all districts have demonstrated they’re ready to work to improve third grade reading outcomes for all children in their schools.

- Cabrillo Unified School District
- La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District
- Jefferson Elementary School District
- South San Francisco Unified School District

Program Evaluation

The Big Lift envisions three primary strategies to assess its impact: (1) Data System. Build and implement a comprehensive online data system that will be used to store individual-level data at the child, parent, classroom, site, and agency level. The Big Lift already has developed a preliminary plan for database development, hosting, and maintenance; (2) Develop and Implement Short-Term Outcome Measures (combination of internal and external evaluation). Short-term outcome measures will include those that grantees can collect themselves using an online data system and valid child and program assessment tools using reliable observers. Short-term outcome measures for Year One grantees are likely to include the following, at a minimum: 1) 75% of children in target communities have access to quality preschool using preschool enrollment data and publicly available population data, as well as kindergarten entry data; 2) 100% of participating preschool classrooms will demonstrate improvements in quality on research-based program quality assessment tools using the Classroom Observation Scoring System (CLASS) and the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS); and 3) 80% of participating children will make progress on school readiness domains using a validated developmental assessment tool such as the Desired Results Developmental Profile; and (3) Develop and implement long-term outcome measures (independent, external evaluation). Funds will be set aside for an independent, quasi-experimental evaluation that compares children in participating Big Lift programs to children who did not participate. Outcomes that will be prioritized will include the following, at a minimum: (1) 80% of participating children will enter kindergarten ready to learn (using a battery of empirically valid assessment tools administered by outside observers); (2) 80% of participating children will demonstrate grade level proficiency in key academic areas between kindergarten and second grade such as math and reading (using report card data or assessment data collected by schools); and (3) 80% of participating third graders in target school districts will be reading proficiently at grade level (California Smarter Balanced standardized assessment).

In Year One, QRIS results will be used to design a unique Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for each classroom, and SMCOE will provide the training, technical assistance, coaching and access to learning materials necessary to reach goals established on the QIPs. The performance and monitoring will comprise a cycle that starts with QRIS rating, moves to QIP goals, identifies and provides supports needed to achieve QIP goals, and tests the effectiveness of those results by conducting a new QRIS rating every 24 months. The cycle will continue to repeat over the life of the proposed project.

Programs will be required to maintain child and teacher data for each classroom on a monthly basis and to certify this data each month in order to receive funding. Site visits are built into the SMCOE technical assistance and coaching model and will occur at least monthly, ensuring that SMCOE staff have regular opportunities to see firsthand how well grantees are implementing quality standards and make changes to their quality improvement goals on an ongoing basis.

All data collected on children participating in the Big Lift shall be kept confidential. Key Stakeholders in the Big Lift shall comply with all applicable legal requirements with respect to the use and security of such confidential information, and shall protect such confidential information by using the same degree of care, but not less than a reasonable degree of care, to prevent the unauthorized access to or use, dissemination, or disclosure of confidential information as it uses to protect its own confidential information.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

Key stakeholders in The Big Lift target communities, including school districts, preschool, family engagement and summer providers and community-based organizations, will convene on a regular basis to build a coordinated, collective impact-like approach within each community. The focus of these convenings will be to build bridges between previously disconnected systems in order to leverage resources and strengthen the safety-net for children and families. These

convenings will also serve as the foundation for developing plans for The Big Lift for Years Two-Five and beyond to ensure sustainability built on collaboration and shared systems change priorities.

A highly skilled cadre of coaches will be established at SMCOE that includes those focused on general curriculum and instruction as well as specialists with more concentrated expertise in areas such as mathematics, family engagement, children with special needs and dual language learners.

The Big Lift Preschool Plan has a strategy proposed for growing new high-quality preschool programs. Classrooms who do not yet meet Tier 3 on the QRIS and who wish to become part of The Big Lift will become 'pipeline' programs. Pipeline programs will have access to technical assistance and coaching around areas of improvement needed to achieve Tier 3. They will also be given priority for SMCOE early learning professional development workshops that address QRIS (such as screening and assessment, dual language learners and instructional practices).

In Years Two-Five, The Big Lift will subcontract with a technical assistance provider to support the development and expansion of high-quality summer programs in target communities. One such provider is the Partnership for Children and Youth, a San Francisco Bay Area nonprofit that has launched a first-ever statewide initiative, Summer Matters, focused on creating and expanding access to high-quality summer learning opportunities for all California students. The skills and expertise of this organization will be utilized to help develop a plan for long-term, sustainable expansion of high-quality summer programs for children in Big Lift communities. Funds have been set aside for Year One of the proposed project budget so that planning for this work can get underway.

The Big Lift Partnerships

The Big Lift collaborative has achieved broad investment and ownership from participants in building infrastructure and resources to sustain the work and continuously improve outcomes. The backbone consists of three strong, countywide organizations—The County of San Mateo, the San Mateo County Office of Education, and Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

THE BIG LIFT LEADERSHIP

[Carole Groom](#)

President, San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

[Anne Campbell](#)

San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools

[Erica Wood](#)

Chief Community Impact Officer, Silicon Valley Community Foundation



Over 200 organizations are involved in The Big Lift. This includes leaders from business, government, education, philanthropy and nonprofits

The Big Lift Budget

3 – YEAR SOURCES AND REQUIREMENTS – FY 2015, 2016, 2017

Modifications to Comprehensive Budget must be approved by Board of Supervisors.

SOURCES

Taxes (Measure A)	\$15,000,000
Miscellaneous Revenue	
SVCF Social Innovation Fund	\$7,500,000
SVCF General	\$229,200
SMCOE	\$179,200
Silicon Valley Social Ventures	\$130,000
United Way	\$20,000
Community Grantee Match	\$471,500
First 5 San Mateo County	\$4,815,900
QRIS Block Grant	\$2,988,574
W.K. Kellogg Foundation	\$500,000
Race to the Top/QRIS Pilot	\$489,301
Heising-Simons Foundation	\$202,000
Individuals	\$25,550
<u>Total Miscellaneous Revenue</u>	<u>\$17,551,225</u>
Less 10% Administrative Overhead	(\$1,755,123)
TOTAL SOURCES	\$30,796,103

REQUIREMENTS

Salaries and Benefits	\$2,097,391
Services and Supplies	\$28,006,743
Consultants	\$536,569
Website/Communication	\$139,041
Meetings	\$16,359
TOTAL REQUIREMENTS	\$30,796,103

Sustainability

THE BIG LIFT 3-YEAR SOURCES AND REQUIREMENTS

Given the historically limited capacity of preschool and summer providers to raise funds to support their own programs and the relatively high cost of these programs, it is imperative that the larger Big Lift collaborative take responsibility for developing sustainable funding streams. The San Mateo County Board of Supervisors has indicated strong support for The Big Lift and has committed \$15 million in Measure A funding (a 2012 voter-approved tax measure) to support The Big Lift initiative assuming short-term outcomes are being met.

To date, The Big Lift collaborative partners have raised over \$28 million from public and private resources.

Over the Plan’s five years, The Big Lift collaborative partners realize it will be necessary to create a dedicated, sustainable source of funding. This is because when The Big Lift vision is fully implemented, there is an estimated cost of \$30-40 million annually. A finance committee has been established to develop this long-term public financing strategy. County Manager John Maltbie and Family Services Agency Executive Director Arne Croce co-chair the committee and it is comprised of some of the region's leading financial minds. This committee is tasked with exploring sustainable funding options through Government, Foundation, Business sources, in addition to financing models such as Pay for Success and other social impact investing strategies.

FUTURE FUNDING

By achieving strong results and securing additional funding, The Big Lift collaborative plans to expand access to high-quality and connected learning experiences from preschool to third grade to more children in San Mateo County, eventually accommodating all of them.

In the past two years, The Big Lift has been awarded major grants based on the plan’s strength and the extraordinary community-wide collaboration behind the effort.

Glossary of Terms

PFA – Preschool for All

CLASS – Classroom Assessment Scoring System

ECERS – Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales

QRIS – Quality Rating and Improvement System

RTT- ELC Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge

SMCOE – San Mateo County Office of Education

SVCF – Silicon Valley Community Foundation

ELDI – Early Childhood Language Development

SIF – Social Innovation Fund

QIP – Quality Improvement Plan



For More Information About The Big Lift

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