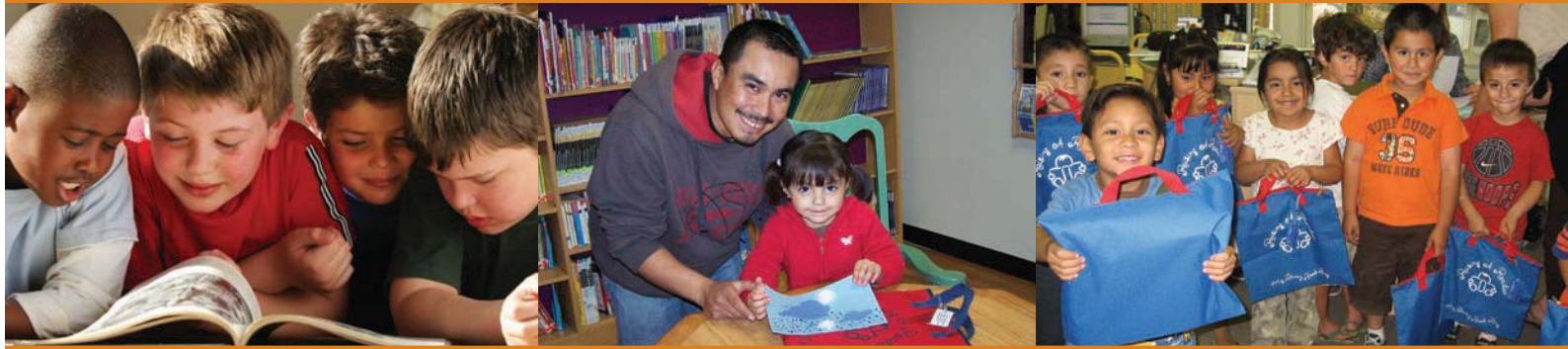


Raising a Reader Fund

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION

Turning Passion into Action



The San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation's Raising a Reader Fund was established by the Board of Directors in 2003. The fund brought an award-winning nationally recognized early literacy program to San Luis Obispo County. The program promotes daily book cuddling between parents and their young children, ages zero to five, which leads to healthy brain development, parent-child bonding and early literacy skills.

The fund brought an award-winning nationally recognized early literacy program to San Luis Obispo County.

Specifically targeted at youth during the first five years of life, a vital development window when 90% of brain growth occurs, Raising a Reader prepares children to enter kindergarten with a love of books and ready to learn. Implemented through the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education, First 5 San Luis Obispo County School Readiness Initiative, Head Start, California State Preschools and the Paso Robles Library, the program provides many children and low-income families with their first exposure to books and reading.

The latest evaluation of the 2008/2009 program finds that Raising a Reader is significantly increasing participation, reading frequency for children, parent education, and improving children's reading behavior. Because of this success, the Community Foundation continues to encourage new donors and funders to help continue and expand this beneficial program for our young readers.

Raising a Reader prepares children to enter kindergarten with a love of books and ready to learn.

Children who benefit from the program typically rotate through 26 red book bags each filled with four books selected for their visuals and ability to establish an interest in reading for the child.

By the end of the program they and their parents have read over 100 books.

Additionally, the San Luis Obispo County program includes one book in Spanish as well as a multi-language video that teaches parents and children how to bridge the literacy gap. At the end of the program, each child receives a blue library book bag to use as they enter kindergarten.



San Miguel Raising a Reader program

Raising a Reader's Theory of Change

Raising a Reader was developed to foster Five Anchor Behaviors:

1. Children drive the process and the Red Book Bag and books become a favorite toy
2. Program Implementers learn how to train parents in advanced read-aloud strategies and early brain development
3. The book bag delivery system is turnkey: a simple sustainable routine that is easily managed in a number of diverse settings
4. Parents learn and engage in "read-aloud" strategies and develop a regular routine of book cuddling
5. Families get to know and use their local library, drawn in by their child and the power of the Blue Library Bag

If those behaviors occur, according to Raising a Reader's Theory of Change, then children benefit from healthy brain development, family bonding, and increased early literacy skills – all proven elements for lifetime success. The children enter kindergarten with a love of books and ready to learn to read.

Ten independent evaluations have demonstrated the impact of this theory by documenting dramatically increased parent "read-aloud" behavior as well as greater knowledge of print concepts in children entering kindergarten.

National research shows that children enter kindergarten more prepared for reading when parents share picture books with their children daily.

Four-year-olds with access to the Raising a Reader program are exceeding national norms for kindergarten readiness when compared with other students from families of low education and income status.



San Miguel Raising a Reader program

Impact on a Local Level

The evaluation done for 2008/2009 used the short Parent Survey that was developed by Raising a Reader. Parents are asked to complete the survey at the beginning of the program year and then again at the end. The pre-survey had a response rate of 81% (243 parents) and the post-survey had a response rate of 88% (266 parents).

The participants in the survey were mostly mothers (88%), with 10% of the surveys completed by fathers, and the last 2% by grandparents. Almost half of the parents had completed high school, while 24% had less than a high school education and 29% had attended college. Only 38% spoke English in their homes and a majority of all participants were low income.

Participation in Raising a Reader

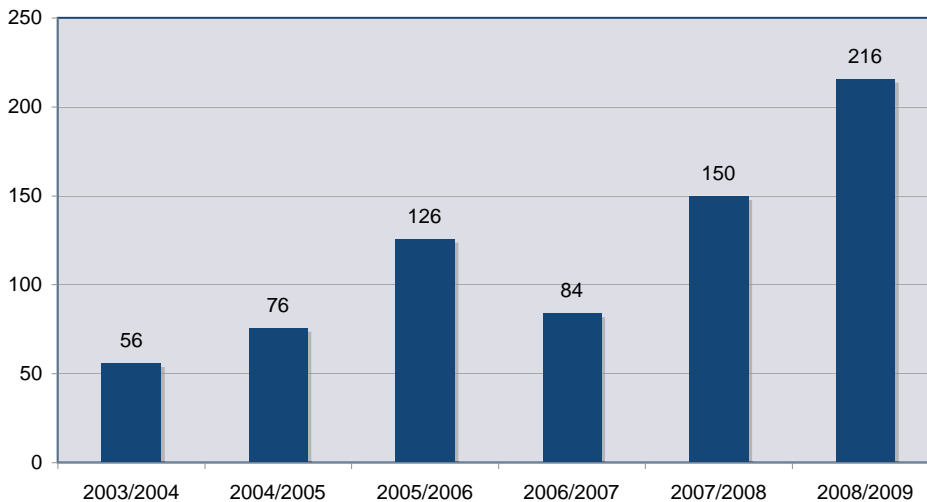
Raising a Reader operates through the California State Preschool, First 5 San Luis Obispo County, Head Start, Migrant Head Start and the Paso Robles Library. The Program launched in 2004, serving two communities. Raising a Reader has gradually been expanding so that it now serves and operates in 7 communities, with 11 locations throughout Oceano, San Miguel, Paso Robles, Cambria, Shandon, San Luis Obispo, and Los Osos.

To date, 793 families have participated in the program.

The overwhelming success of the program is reflected in the growing number of families participating in Raising a Reader. To date, 793 families have participated in the program. In the 2008/2009 program year, 301 families in the county participated. Of those, 216 of them were a new participant, which equals a growth of 144% over

the previous year. The graph below shows the overall increasing numbers of new participants in the program over the years.

Number of New Families Participating



The Community Foundation believes that every child in the county should have an equal opportunity at life success by preparing them to succeed in school. School readiness for the most critical population – low-income families whose parents are poor readers or who do not speak English well – is core to closing the county’s achievement gap. The Raising a Reader Fund is focused on providing youth with an early love for reading, giving them the gift of exploration and education that, when established early, will stay with them their entire lives.

“With one in three children entering kindergarten lacking pre-reading skills and many children in poorer neighborhoods not owning a single book, *the Raising a Reader program has made a very positive impact here in San Luis Obispo County.*”

It has enabled key caregivers and parents to foster the love of reading through “book cuddling”. In the areas where the program has been established preschool children are entering elementary school with greater pre-reading skills and interests.”

Brad Schultz,
Assistant Superintendent,
Educational Support Services,
San Luis Obispo County Office of Education





The SLO County Community Foundation is proud to support such an acclaimed program. Raising a Reader has proven both locally and nationally that its program is drastically helping to increase pre-literacy skills, especially for low-income children. Donors and funders are invited to join in helping to keep this vital program ongoing. Please contact Community Foundation staff for more information.

Local Success of Raising a Reader

By participating in Raising a Reader, the frequency of how often the child was read to greatly increased. Overall, parents reported their children being read to more frequently after participating by an increase of 25% over the baseline. Almost half of the parents report that their children were read to 5 or more times per week by the end of the program. Children were also more likely to ask to be read to after participating in Raising a Reader, increasing 24% over the baseline.

Reading-aloud behavior significantly improved for families after taking part in Raising a Reader. Children were 23% more likely to sit quietly listening, 17% more likely to ask questions, and 17% more likely to pretend to read along; all of which are markers of increased child literacy. Below, the noteworthy increases in percentages are shown for each of the behaviors.

Behavior While Reading With Parents

