

THE **BIG** LIFT



The Big Lift Inspiring Summers

Reflections from 2016 and Guidance for 2017

January 2017

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1. The Big Lift

The Big Lift is a collective impact collaborative led by three agencies - Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF), the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE), and the County of San Mateo (SMC), partnering with dozens of county leaders and hundreds of community-based organizations to close the achievement gap and improve third-grade reading proficiency in the County.



San Mateo County is one of the wealthiest counties in the nation, yet 50 percent of children are not reading proficiently by third grade. This number rises to 73 percent among Latino, African American and Pacific Islander children. San Mateo County - realizing that the educational status quo was no longer an option - launched The Big Lift to advance a bold vision for early learning to address the literacy gap for children of color and low-income children. This vision includes the following evidenced-based interventions, or pillars:

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. Developing inspiring summer learning opportunities that enable children to maintain their academic and developmental gains; and
4. Supporting parents and caregivers as children's first and most influential teachers to provide rich learning environments in the home.

Major funding for The Big Lift is provided by the County of San Mateo, the Social Innovation Fund, an initiative of the Corporation for National and Community Service, and Google.org.

2. The Big Lift Inspiring Summers

Summer learning loss is a well-known phenomenon in which academic skills learned over the school year are partially lost over the summer months and children fall behind in subjects such as reading and math. These losses are cumulative and can add up to significant deficits over the course of several years. Not surprisingly, low-income children are disproportionately affected by the “summer slide” because they lack access to the physically and intellectually stimulating activities such as camp and travel in which their higher-income peers participate over the summer.



The goal of The Big Lift Inspiring Summers (BLIS) program is to stem the tide of summer learning loss for low-income children in San Mateo County by immersing them in a five-week, full-day program. BLIS provides literacy and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) content in a learning environment ripe with innovation, hands-on activities, technology, enrichment, nutritious meals and activities for their bodies such as yoga and outdoor play. BLIS is designed to be academic *and* inspiring; engaging children in a love of learning while putting them on the path to reading

proficiency.

In June of 2016, The Big Lift launched The Big Lift Inspiring Summers (BLIS) program to address the summer learning pillar of The Big Lift for children entering kindergarten and first grades in the first cohort of Big Lift school districts: Cabrillo, Jefferson, La Honda-Pescadero and South San Francisco. Seven hundred and fifty three (753) children participated in the full-day, five-week program comprised of education, nutritious meals, socialization and play.

In 2017, the first cohort will add entering second graders and, in 2018, entering third graders. The second cohort of Big Lift districts includes Ravenswood, Redwood City and San Bruno Park school districts.

3. Summary of BLIS 2016 Highlights and Evaluation Findings

While low income children across the United States generally *lose*, on average, two months of reading skill over the summer months, children participating in BLIS were assessed at the beginning and end of the program using the Renaissance Star Reading Assessment, a valid and reliable measure, and were found to *gain* the equivalent of 1 to 2 months of reading skill over the course of the program, a remarkable 3 to 4 month net gain. By many measures, The Big Lift Inspiring Summers 2016 was a great success. Here are a few of the key highlights:

- Over 750 low-income children received a high-quality summer learning experience that had a measurable impact on their literacy development.
- Children received three to four hours of literacy instruction per day and additional school readiness experiences.
- Learning experiences were innovative, inquiry based and hands-on.
- Hundreds of high-quality books and learning supplies went home with children and teachers at the end of the summer to build their home and classroom libraries.
- Field trips to exciting locations like the San Francisco Zoo, CuriOdyssey, the Seymoure Marine Science Center, San Mateo County Memorial Park expanded children's horizons.
- Warm & welcoming environments were offered to families through community breakfast time, parent-child cooking classes, I Am Raising A Reader early literacy program, family field days, closing ceremonies, multi-cultural talent shows and more.
- A low teacher to student ratio plus English language and instructional coaches allowed for one-on-one support.
- Young adults were engaged and supported as leaders in their classrooms.
- Daily yoga and mindfulness practices gave children tools to live a balanced life.

Parents and teachers were surveyed at the end of the program and their feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Across the four districts, 97% of parents reported that they were highly satisfied with the BLIS experience and 95% reported that their children enjoyed the program. Ninety percent of teachers reported that their BELL training had helped them develop professional skills and 91% of parents reported that they were more involved in their child's education.

Five hundred and fifty (550) children, or 73% of all BLIS participants, participated in I Am Raising A Reader, a six-week summer family literacy program. Results from the RAR Parent Surveys showed that families participating in the program achieved RAR Benchmark literacy behaviors at statistically significant levels, including 77% of families reporting that they learned new tips and techniques that would help their child during the school year and a 50% increase in the amount of time parents and children spent looking at books (from 18 to 27 minutes).

At the end of the summer, each of the participating school districts developed a Summer Learning Partnership Report in collaboration with BELL that provided additional implementation highlights for each community and beautiful photographs that bring the program to life. These reports are available at www.thebiglift.org.



4. Purpose of this Report

With these positive findings as background, the purpose of this report is to review the highlights and challenges of the first year's implementation and to provide guidance for administrators and staff who will be planning and implementing the 2017 program.

The BLIS 2016 program had a short ramp-up time due to the timing of provider selection and the complexity of developing a new and integrated program model. By contrast, planning for BLIS 2017 started in August 2016, just weeks after BLIS 2016 ended; everyone involved in this major effort will benefit from the lessons learned and time invested in these thoughtful preparations.

Information was gathered for this report through several means. Jessica Mihaly, the primary author of the report, made site visits to BLIS sites during program implementation while she was serving as initiative officer for The Big Lift at Silicon Valley Community Foundation. After the program ended, then serving as a consultant, she held and participated in input sessions with key leadership staff from BELL, the San Mateo County Library and the school districts that implemented BLIS in 2016. The Big Lift would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals who participated regularly and continue to participate in on-going BLIS planning meetings, including: Leticia Bhatia, Kennelyn Celeste and Kathie Nguyen from South San Francisco Unified; Jennifer LaRocque and Kelly Bohm from Jefferson Elementary; Kristen Lindstrom from La Honda Pescadero Unified; Debbie Silveria and Joy Dardenelle from Cabrillo Unified; Nicole Pasini and Stephanie Saba from San Mateo County Libraries; Kris Murray and Lupe Nuñez from BELL; Jane Gardner and Joe Rodriguez, Big Lift strategists and Andrea Jones and Elisa Espinoza from SVCF. Additional thanks go to Andrea Jones, Diana Harlick, Kris Murray and Lupe Nuñez who provided input on drafts of this report.

The RAND Corporation, The Big Lift's external evaluator, conducted focus groups and made site visits to each of the communities. RAND's general impressions are incorporated into this report.

Each section of the report is designed to provide an overview of and reflections on 2016 program implementation, followed by guidance for 2017.

5. Launching The Big Lift Inspiring Summers

In October 2015, Silicon Valley Community Foundation issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to select an organization to help The Big Lift school districts deliver an evidence-based program to children entering kindergarten, first, second and third grades. Recognizing that The Big Lift was operating on a limited funding timeline, it was critical to The Big Lift's leaders that the summer contractor focus on building capacity among local school districts and community-based organizations to implement a proven program. This option was preferable to having an outside entity deliver the program directly and then leave at the end of its contract, taking with it all of the skills and knowledge needed to run the program.

Three organizations responded to the RFP, including BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) and the San Mateo County Libraries (SMCL). A review team comprised of superintendents of the four Big Lift districts and three external experts reviewed the applications and ultimately recommended that both BELL and SMCL be funded to create a new program. BELL would train and support credentialed teachers to provide a literacy-based academic program in the mornings and SMCL would provide a STEM-based



enrichment program in the afternoons in a playful, physically engaging, outdoor-focused and dynamic environment.

BELL had 20 years of experience managing quality summer programs and proposed to implement a licensed program that met the Social Innovation Fund's requirements for an evidence-based program. The San Mateo County Libraries applied to lead BLIS with an

innovation and STEM-based program developed with the Bay Area Discovery Museum (BADM) and a yoga and mindfulness program provided by Headstand.org. Additional partners were engaged to provide nutrition services (Second Harvest Food Bank and Revolution Foods) and literacy-based family engagement programming (Raising A Reader).

6. Program Design and Implementation

2016 Reflections: Curriculum

BELL's academic curriculum coupled literacy and math instruction Monday through Thursday, with Fridays dedicated to field trips and guest speakers. Academic instruction, enrichment opportunities, school readiness, and social emotional and non-cognitive learning were woven throughout the program day with a focus on grade-level reading. Activities focused on college- and career-readiness, healthy lifestyles, and community engagement were woven into academic and enrichment programming. During College Pride Week, students learned about the college experience and how success in school is connected to success in life.



The afternoon curriculum, developed by the Bay Area Discovery Museum, provided hands-on activities designed to foster 21st Century skills such as teamwork and leadership, increase self-confidence, and expose students to new subjects, opportunities, and career paths — particularly those related to STEM fields. Activities were based on week-long inquiries on a theme, with a range of activities elaborating on that theme. The interdisciplinary project-based curriculum blended engineering and the skills of collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking. Headstand.org provided curriculum and training for SMCL facilitators to lead daily yoga and mindfulness

activities designed to help children regulate stress and develop skills in naming and recognizing emotions in themselves and others and developing strategies to manage feelings and energy levels.

Many BLIS sites coordinated guest speakers and programs that enriched the curriculum even further, such as family cooking and nutrition classes, visits from the local library, the very popular petting zoo, dental clinics, storytelling, dancing, magic, college pride day and more.

There were several challenges related to developing a blended curriculum model. While the new model provided a full day of stimulating activities for the children, this often resulted in children spending consecutive hours at desks and limited time outdoors. In

addition, because of the timing of the award, BELL and SMCL did not have sufficient time to coordinate and align curricular approaches and The Bay Area Discovery Museum did not have long to develop their curriculum for the young children in BLIS nor to have it reviewed by The Big Lift team.

2017: Curriculum

- BELL and SMCL collaborate to enhance cohesion and alignment of tone and language used in mornings and afternoons, particularly related to classroom management.
- BADM revises the entering K and first grade curricula to ensure developmental appropriateness for young children; develops new curriculum for incoming second graders; submits curriculum to The Big Lift for review by early childhood experts in March and completes revisions before training begins.
- BELL reviews and enriches rising first grade curriculum, per recommendations of district leads.
- As part of BELL's Quality Assurance process, each site was visited by a BELL external evaluator. The detailed reports from these visits will be available by the end of December and can be used in refining plans for Summer 2017.

7. Leadership

2016 Reflections: Leadership

Leadership for BLIS 2016 came from many corners, with dedicated individuals and organizations going above and beyond their required duties to ensure that the program was a success. Staff from La Honda-Pescadero, Cabrillo, Jefferson and South San Francisco school districts, BELL, SMCL, the Bay Area Discovery Museum, San Mateo County Office of Education, Silicon Valley Community Foundation and The Big Lift leadership teams worked overtime to deliver a program that enriched the lives of hundreds of children and families and built capacity countywide. The compressed timeline and first-time nature of BLIS 2016 necessitated a level of overdrive that was not sustainable and should not be required in 2017. Fortunately, many of these individuals have provided feedback and solutions are already being put into place to create a more manageable and efficient workflow before the new year begins. SVCF has convened a committee of BLIS 2016 district leads, BELL, SMCL and The Big Lift staff on a monthly basis since October.

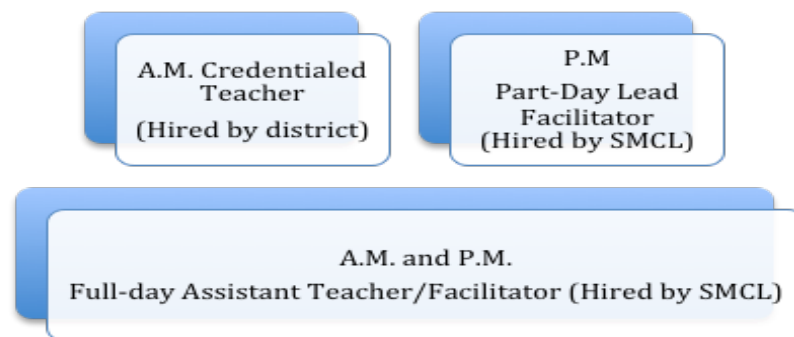
2017: Leadership

- Hire a countywide Big Lift Inspiring Summers Coordinator to establish clear and documented program guidelines, and oversee and monitor implementation of BLIS across districts. It is expected that this position will take on a number of the responsibilities that fell onto the organizations mentioned above. A job description has been developed by SVCF and The Big Lift leaders will determine next steps for the position.
- Require that district leads (Program Partner Leads or PPLs) have administration experience and highly recommend that PPLs and site managers are assigned only to BLIS and are not asked to manage other summer programs.
- Ensure that school district leaders are prepared to provide support as needed to PPLs and site leaders.
- Continue to convene districts with BLIS and Big Lift lead agencies on a monthly basis through June to address policy issues.

8. Staffing

2016 Reflections: Staffing Model

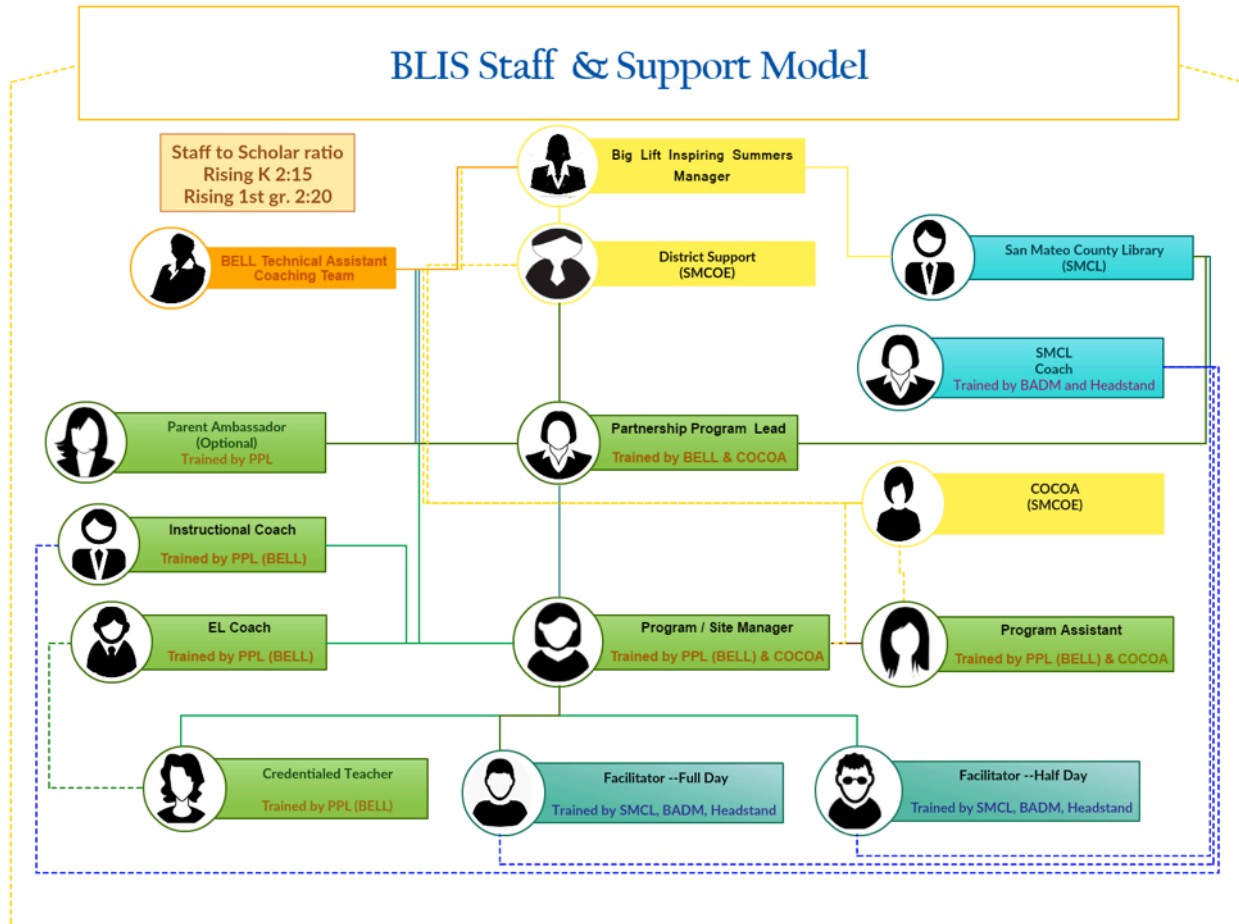
BLIS 2016 classrooms were staffed by two teams of teachers. In the mornings, a credentialed teacher was joined by a full-day facilitator, usually a college student. In the afternoons, the full-day facilitator stayed on and was joined by another college student who served as the lead facilitator for the afternoon program, as reflected in the chart below. Classrooms were clustered with ratios of two adults to fifteen children for rising kindergarteners and two adults to twenty children for rising first graders. The teaching teams were supported by teams of coaches and administrators from BELL and SMCL.



Recruitment and hiring of staff was managed through two primary sources: each participating school district was responsible for hiring the “Partner Program Leads” (BELL’s term for district liaisons), site principals, credentialed teachers, instructional coaches and English Language coaches to support the “BELL” portion of the day. The San Mateo County Libraries were responsible for hiring assistant teacher “facilitators” to staff the full day and part-day “facilitators” to lead the afternoon “SMCL” portion of the day as well as the coaches to support them.

This blended staffing model posed several challenges, including:

- The two teams had never met before the first day of school and had no time to plan together, nor did they have time scheduled to meet for warm hand-offs during implementation of the program.
- The assistant teachers, who had developed relationships with the children in the morning and had observed the credentialed teachers’ classroom leadership techniques, remained assistants in the afternoons despite the fact that they were more prepared than their part-day peers to take on a leadership role.



2017: Staffing Model

- Provide 2-3 site set-up days in which BELL and SMCL staff work together to prepare classrooms and develop positive working relationships.
- Ensure that teaching teams have time to meet at least weekly to debrief and plan.
- Assign the full-day facilitators as co-lead facilitators in the afternoon, so they can provide continuity of classroom routines and management techniques.
- Build in opportunities for the full-day facilitators to be mentored by the credentialed teachers in the morning. For example, facilitators lead an activity (such as a circle time) under the guidance of and with feedback from the credentialed teacher.

2016 Reflections: Schedule and Length of Day

In order to meet the needs of San Mateo County's working families and to ensure enough time for the BELL and SMCL programs to be fully implemented, the BLIS program was designed to be a total of 8 hours, including 3 hours of BELL content in the morning, 1 hour of lunch and transitions and 4 hours of STEM, yoga and mindfulness in the afternoons.



Several teacher and site leaders who provided feedback about BLIS 2016 believed that the eight-hour day was too long for the children, particularly the entering kindergarteners, many of whom had never been in a formal school setting before. The day was even longer for children on the coast in Cabrillo and La Honda-Pescadero, many of whom rode the bus for an additional hour each way. In contrast, many families expressed the desire for a longer day due to their work schedules. According to the district, children had a particularly hard time

focusing during lunch, nap and yoga; transition times that are often hard for new teachers to manage.

2017: Schedule and Length of Day

1. Provide a nap period for entering kindergarteners after lunch.
2. Schedule credentialed teachers to stay for an additional hour through lunch, nap and yoga with entering kindergarteners.

2016 Reflections: Fridays and Field Trip Days

The BELL partner model is designed as a 4 day program with the expectation that the afternoon provider, in this case the SMCL, will manage the Friday schedule, including field trips. District staff reported challenges with the relatively unstructured Friday schedules and some reported that the lead facilitators were challenged to create engaging content all day.

Off-site field trips appeared to create a significant amount of stress for those involved. Generally, field trips are an activity that require experienced adults to manage. On the two

field trip days, the young adult facilitators were not sufficiently supported to manage large groups of children in highly stimulating and crowded environments, such as the San Francisco Zoo.

2017: Fridays and Field Trips

1. Friday schedules are more structured and facilitators are fully supported by SMCL coaches.
2. Site managers attend field trips to provide additional support to facilitators
3. Give families a list of field trips at the opening orientation and ensure that there are sufficient adults to chaperone field trips.
4. Consider having more “on-site” field trips such as the Marine Science Institute’s travelling fish tanks and the on-site petting zoo, which bring new and exciting content to the school site.
5. Engage Google.org, a funder and sponsor of BLIS, in planning field trips and/or providing guest speakers to come to BLIS sites.

2016 Reflections: Student Engagement and Experience

While the original vision for a balanced day was realized to some degree, the program suffered from a variety of challenges that resulted in children sitting at desks and having a more school-like experience than was originally intended. This contributed to children losing focus and energy for the tasks at hand. Observations by SVCF staff and RAND noted that the mornings appeared to be well-organized; children were engaged in reading, writing and creative activities and seemed relaxed and comfortable in their classrooms. The afternoon was full of rich content, however, the classrooms seemed to be more chaotic and children often appeared tired and less engaged.

Several factors may have led to the challenges experienced in the afternoons:

- Children were tired after a long morning of academic activities. For many of the entering kindergarteners, this was their first formal school experience.



- Classroom management skills can take years to develop and the SMCL facilitators were young and new to teaching.
- Transition periods, in particular, can be challenging to new teachers. Lead facilitators began the day at lunch time, a key transition period, and then were asked to lead mindfulness activities that were hard for young children to focus on when already tired.
- Some of the afternoon activities appeared to be developed for older children and were not developmentally appropriate for entering kindergarteners and first graders, which exacerbated children’s difficulty focusing on the activities at hand.
- The classroom environments were set up “classroom style” with desk and chairs, which made it hard for the afternoon program to function as a more play-based and creative program and led to more stationary desk activities when children especially needed to transition to active learning styles.

2017: Student Engagement and Experience

1. Ensure that BLIS has sufficient classrooms and outdoor space and that staff have the training and support necessary to create active learning environments for children.
2. Agree upon an appropriate minimum amount of time children should spend outdoors and ensure that the day is structured for that minimum to be met with a combination of recess and outdoor curriculum.
3. Build in structured opportunities for the teaching assistant facilitators to be mentored by credentialed teachers.
4. Include more training for facilitators on classroom management.
5. Increase opportunities for facilitators to receive more on-the-job support and coaching.
6. Big Lift and SMCL staff contact experienced summer camp providers to request guidance in running an educational summer program for young children with young adults as leaders.

2016 Reflections: Teacher Recruitment and hiring

Recruitment and hiring were challenging for the districts and for SMCL. SMCL's model relies



on hiring college students as the primary pool of candidates and they were particularly hard hit by the fact that many college students were still in school during the interview period and were not out of school until after the scheduled training dates for the BLIS program. The districts' primary challenge was the short timeframe for recruitment.

2017: Teacher Recruitment and Hiring

1. Begin teacher recruitment in January or February.
2. Begin BLIS programs after the middle of June so that SMCL can hire from a larger pool of college students.
3. Provide recruitment flyers, social media posts and job descriptions to districts in collaboration with BELL and SMLC.
4. Request that districts recruit and hire the full-day facilitators for their programs, when possible.
5. Recruit Big Lift preschool teachers for facilitator positions to benefit from their experience and expertise working with groups of young children, build continuity in TBL programs and build capacity among TBL teachers. Extend recruitment to non-Big Lift preschool teachers, as well.

Training and Coaching

2016 Reflections: Training

In 2016, BELL and SMCL trained their respective staff teams separately. BELL trained Program Partner Leads (PPLs) in the BELL curriculum, instructional methods, policies and support systems over 5 days. PPLs then trained the Instructional Coaches (IC), English Language Coaches (ELC) and Program Site Managers (PMs). The coaches then trained the credentialed



teachers to deliver the BELL content. Although there are many layers to this training, BELL has found that it lends itself to scale and is as effective as direct training in part because trainings are supported by step-by-step handbooks for each staff member and by BELL's e-learning platform, BELL U, which provides a library of resources that includes content outlines and PowerPoint presentations for PPLs and site leaders to use when presenting their trainings. In addition, BELL conducts a quality assurance visit during the summer to ensure program fidelity and provides a Technical Assistant who is available throughout the program.

The San Mateo County Libraries provided five days of training to their facilitators. The training consisted of 3 days lead by the Bay Area Discovery Museum and 2 days lead by Headstand.org.

Feedback from PPLs indicated that they would have liked to have engaged in more in-depth training with both BELL and the San Mateo County Libraries. In addition, they wanted to be sure that curriculum had been received on-site well before program launch so that teachers could have hands-on training with the curriculum.

2017: Training

1. Cross-train the PPLs and site leads in BELL and SMCL curricula.
2. Develop safety procedures that are consistent throughout the mornings and afternoons and ensure that all program providers are adequately trained in them. Examples include proper handling of bodily fluids, proper child supervision and sign-in/sign-out procedures.
3. Provide additional classroom management training to college hires.
4. Amplify academic curriculum training for PPLs and ensure curriculum is available on-site for site-level training.
5. Adopt SMCL's new plan for 2017 to have a highly scripted curriculum for the first two weeks to help new facilitators develop their teaching skills, followed by more open-ended curriculum for last three weeks.



2016 Reflections: Coaching

BLIS teachers and facilitators were supported by a network of coaches, hired and trained by BELL and SMCL. In most cases, Program Managers also spent time in classrooms providing instructional support.

Coaching provided to credentialed teachers for the “BELL portion of the day” was offered through the Instructional Coach (IC) and English Language Coach (ELC) who were hired by the districts and trained by the PPLs. These coaches then trained the credentialed teachers at their sites. The IC and ELC met for 30 minutes every day with credentialed teachers to support lesson planning and provide instructional coaching in the BELL model. In some cases, coaches worked in the classrooms, modeling instructional practices. ELCs provided one-on-one and small group support to dual language learners in the classroom and through a “pull-out” model. ELCs also helped credentialed teachers use the sheltered instruction model for dual language learners. LHPUSD employed a credentialed teacher as a coach for the SMCL facilitators in the afternoon, as well.

SMCL coaches met with SMCL facilitators for 30 minutes a day. These coaches were supported through a weekly call with the Bay Area Discovery Museum.

BELL technical assistance coaches provided scheduled and as-needed support to PPLs throughout program planning, launch, implementation, and closing. Pre-program conference calls and weekly email updates provided frequent touchpoints. BELL technical assistance coaches were on-site frequently and provided in-person and phone troubleshooting between visits.

2017: Coaching

- Continue the current coaching model.
- Provide an opportunity for PPLs to participate in BADM weekly coaching calls
- Increase coaching support for SMCL facilitators in the afternoons and Fridays, as the budget allows.

9. Student Eligibility, Recruitment and Enrollment

2016 Reflections: Student Eligibility and Prioritization

Student eligibility and priority for BLIS 2016 were addressed in the following manner:

Eligibility

- Children must be enrolled in a Big Lift school district for Fall 2016 (Cabrillo, Jefferson, La Honda Pescadero, South San Francisco).
- Families of participants must earn less than 80% of Area Median Income
- Children enrolled in publicly-funded “full-year” preschools whose schedules are concurrent with the Big Lift Inspiring Summers program are generally not eligible for participation in BLIS; however, The Big Lift will consider on a case-by-case-basis circumstances in which it would be beneficial to children and not detrimental to the preschool for children to leave their preschool program early to attend BLIS.

Enrollment Priorities

Among those who met the requirements above, priority was to be given in the following order:

Entering Kindergarteners

1. Children who have attended a Big Lift preschool program
2. Children who have not attended a preschool program
3. Children who have attended a non-Big Lift preschool program
4. Children who have attended Transitional Kindergarten

2017: Eligibility and Enrollment

- Maintain eligibility criteria and priorities for incoming Kindergarteners. For incoming 1st – 3rd Graders, retain eligibility criteria and replace priorities with: “Children who have attended a Big Lift summer program and/or a Big Lift preschool”

2016 Reflections: Student recruitment and enrollment

SVCF provided target enrollment numbers to each district, based on the total available budget for BLIS 2016 and the relative size of each district. Recruitment and enrollment then became the responsibility of the districts. Ultimately, 75% of the target was met which is



excellent for the first program year; however getting to that number was a significant struggle and very time consuming for the three larger districts, given the compressed timeframe and the significant amount of time required to enter each child into the BLIS Cocoa database.

2017: Student recruitment and enrollment

- Begin recruitment in January or February
- Emphasize recruiting children who have participated in a Big Lift preschool or BLIS program and provide a priority enrollment period.
- Provide recruitment materials including flyers, banner designs, social media posts, etc. to districts and Big Lift preschools in January
- Explore outreach and recruitment of Big Lift part-year preschool students through text messaging available through the Ready4K program
- Develop on-line forms in English and Spanish to streamline enrollment and ensure that information gathered is complete and legible.
- Ensure that staff are available to support parents in filling out enrollment forms in relevant languages.
- Educate site-level staff at each participating district so that they become part of the marketing team.
- Consider holding informational meetings at each district in early Spring.

10. Children with Special Needs

2016 Reflections: Children with Special Needs

Some children came into BLIS with identified special needs. For other children, BLIS was their first experience in a formal educational setting and in some cases, the first time they were identified by teachers with concerns about possible special needs. Given the short timeframe for startup, the BLIS program was not prepared to fully meet the needs of children in either category.



2017: Children with Special Needs

- Begin discussions with school districts, BELL and SMCL in late Winter or early Spring to determine how BLIS programs will meet the needs of children with identified or suspected special needs.
- Ensure that the needs of children with special needs are met. For children with IEPs, ensure that the requirements of their IEPs are communicated to staff and appropriate accommodations made.
- Ensure that staff members are available to provide extra support as needed; consider hiring floaters for this purpose.

11. Data and Evaluation

2016 Reflections: Data and Evaluation

Descriptive Client Level Data

The Cocoa database, managed by the San Mateo County Office of Education, is a powerful tool that enables The Big Lift to gather and utilize information about participating children, families and teachers. In order for Cocoa to be fully functional, information about participants must be gathered and entered consistently and with fidelity. For BLIS participants, data was gathered through handwritten enrollment forms and entered by district staff. In 2016, this proved to be a very time consuming and challenging process.

Evaluation

BELL conducted a pre and post Renaissance STAR early literacy assessment on every BLIS participant. This tool is considered to be a valid and reliable assessment. Teachers utilized formative assessments from the start of the summer to understand each child's learning needs and to inform individualized learning plans.

Assessment data from the end of the summer show that children gained an average of two months in reading skills in La Honda Pescadero and one month in the other three districts; this is juxtaposed with the national average of 2 months of summer learning loss. STAR results are an early indication that participating in the BLIS summer learning program had a positive impact on academic achievement and decreasing summer learning loss.



Data are also available from The Big Lift's process evaluation. The Big Lift's external evaluator, the RAND Corporation, conducted informal observations of BLIS sites and two focus groups of teachers. RAND asked teachers what two words best described their experience of the BLIS program. The words most frequently mentioned were creative, energetic, ambitious, fun, exhausting, chaotic and disorganized. RAND also

heard from SMCL staff that they felt they didn't fully understand the extent of the responsibility they were signing up for when they were hired.

In the Summer of 2017, BLIS will be the focus of the impact evaluation comparing entering first graders participating in BLIS in Jefferson and South San Francisco school districts to entering first graders who did not participate in BLIS. This evaluation will meet the Social Innovation Fund requirement of a true quasi-experimental evaluation. Students' pre- and post-BLIS literacy skills will be compared using the Fountas & Pinnell literacy assessment, a valid and reliable measure of literacy used in all Big Lift districts. This evaluation study will provide additional information on how effective BLIS has been in the early stages of implementation; however, it will not be considered a definitive evaluation of BLIS given this will only be the second summer of program operation.

2017: Data and Evaluation

Provide full cooperation to RAND to implement the impact evaluation and communicate expectations clearly with the districts participating in the evaluation, Jefferson and South San Francisco.

A workgroup has been meeting in late 2016 to refine Cocoa forms and processes, addressing the following items:

- Review and refine the full packet of family paperwork and develop a timeline for distribution and completion.
- Review and refine Family Information and Consent Form and Teaching Staff data.
- Determine how Cocoa relates to district student information systems.
- Define roles and responsibilities related to family eligibility verification and data quality monitoring and follow up.
- Prioritize BLIS customizations needed for Cocoa and an import function for school districts to facilitate their ability to meet data requirements.

12. Family Engagement

Family engagement is specified as one of the four pillars of The Big Lift, and it has been recognized as an underlying foundation of all of the pillars, including summer learning. Families participating in BLIS were engaged through an early literacy program called I Am Raising A Reader and in a variety of informal ways that varied across sites, including newsletters, orientations, closing ceremonies at which scholars performed skits, songs, dramas, dances and presentations about their summer learning experiences and field trip participation.



Each school provided an orientation to incoming families. BELL provided outlines and sample agendas and devoted time in the PPL training to orientations; however, the orientations that took place were not consistent in content or delivery across sites. There were some challenges, including lack of translation at some sites and inconsistent messaging about the program.

I Am Raising A Reader

The Big Lift offered BLIS families the opportunity to enroll in I Am Raising A Reader (IARAR), a new program that supports families to engage with their children in shared reading and literacy activities during the summer months. Each week for 6 weeks, participating families received videos via text or email, in English or Spanish, designed to help them build their children's literacy and vocabulary skills and their children received a Ladybug magazine in the mail.

Five hundred and fifty (550) children, or 73% of all BLIS participants, participated in I Am Raising A Reader. Results from the RAR Parent Surveys showed that families participating in this six-week program achieved RAR Benchmark literacy behaviors at statistically significant ($p < .05$) levels, including: A 50% increase in the amount of time parents and children spent looking at books (from 18 to 27 minutes); 81% of parents reported that participating in IARAR helped them prepare their child for the upcoming school year and 77% of families reported learning new tips and techniques from the magazines and videos that would help their child during the school year.

2017: Family Engagement

- Offer I Am Raising A Reader to families in 2017.
- Ensure that staff are available in each district to help families use the new on-line enrollment system.
- Explore whether Ready4K can be offered as part of BLIS and how that would integrate with I Am Raising a Reader.
- Provide an outline of content to be covered in orientations and districts provide site specific detail where appropriate, to include family engagement opportunities such as IARAR, Ready4K!, field trips; program design and philosophy, schedule, nutrition services, safety, etc.
- BELL will provide additional resources to facilitate parent engagement and will encourage site-level training to include elements of parent engagement.
- Districts ensure that translation services are available for orientations and utilized so that all families understand the content provided.
- Coaches review orientation content and logistics of orientations with PPLs at least two weeks before the orientations.



13. Food Service

2016 Reflections: Food Service

As part of their response to the BLIS RFP, the San Mateo County Libraries offered to provide meals to BLIS children and families through the federal Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), which was recognized as an exciting opportunity to leverage resources to support Big Lift kids. Administrators of the four districts participated in the RFP review panel and were aware that SMCL would be providing this service as part of BLIS; however, it turned out that two districts already had arrangements of their own to access the Summer Food Service Program under their own contracts and felt very strongly that they



needed to maintain those plans. Under federal regulations, there can only be one SFSP provider at any given site; unfortunately, TBL and SMCL were not informed of the districts' plans until after the SMCL had already applied (and been awarded contracts?) to serve children at the BLIS

sites. In addition, the SMCL agreement with the State of California for the SFSP allows SMCL to operate "open sites" which enables them to offer free meals to any child under 18 at a site, not just those children enrolled in a particular program.

After several rounds of negotiations, the two districts ultimately maintained their contracts to serve BLIS children and SMCL let go of those contracts. SMCL had already negotiated a contract with Revolution Foods to serve all four districts which had provided an economy of scale for both the meals and the transportation to the sites, but ultimately, the contract was reduced and RF offered meal services only to Jefferson and La Honda Pescadero.

Another complicating factor was that the SFSP only offers two meals a day and BLIS children were on-site long enough that they needed an additional meal or snack. SVCF

connected SMCL with Second Harvest Food Bank which was able to provide nutritious snacks to all four districts, with separate arrangements for the two that were not operating under the SMCL food program and with SMCL staff hand-delivering the snacks to each of the sites.

A great deal of time and social capital was spent negotiating these arrangements and in order to avoid a repeat of the same predicament, the planning for 2017 began as soon as the 2016 program ended.



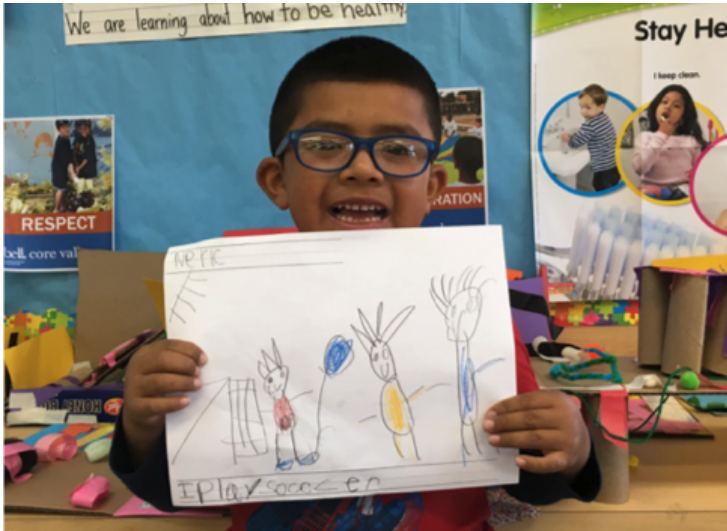
2017: Food Service

- Require that the seven BLIS 2017 districts inform SMLC, in writing, by September 2016 of their intent to either use SMCL as the SFSP contractor or to provide their own meal service (this was completed prior to the publication of this report).
- If any districts apply for their own SFSP contracts, encourage them to apply as “open sites”.
- Begin working with Second Harvest Food Bank in early 2017 to request their support with snacks.

14. Communications and Marketing

2016 Reflections: Communications and Marketing

Communications and marketing efforts for BLIS 2016 were undertaken as a team effort, as staff from all of the lead agencies and Harbour Consulting participated in ensuring that the program would be well-received and sufficiently publicized. Major activities included:



announcing the selection of BELL and SMCL as the primary contractors; designing promotional materials; organizing site visits and planning and executing a major launch event in the Jefferson school district with speakers, a slide show and classroom tours.

2017: Communications and Marketing

- Convene an ad-hoc communications workgroup in the Spring to address the marketing needs of BLIS.
- Coordinate site visits so that, to the extent possible, they are distributed over different school and districts. Consider creating an online sign-up form with pre-designated times and dates so that schools know the schedule in advance.
- Big Lift leadership teams determine whether an open house event is desired for 2017. If so, begin planning well in advance and ensure that tour arrangements are well-coordinated.

15. Supplies and Materials

2016 Reflections: Supplies and Materials

The procurement, delivery, storage and utilization of supplies and materials, including iPads and other technology, posed some challenges for BLIS 2016, including:

- Some teachers worked in their own classrooms and had access to supplies that were needed for BELL activities, such as Legos and other fine motor manipulatives, while others were in borrowed classrooms and lacked access to needed supplies.
- The STAR assessments were much more successful, particularly for entering Kindergarteners, when delivered via tablets with touch screens rather than



computers, yet not all programs had access to tablets.

- Questions arose regarding who was responsible for fixing and/or replacing tablets if they were damaged during BLIS implementation.

- SMCL staff and volunteers delivered consumable supplies

rather than having them shipped directly to the sites, which was time consuming.

- Some materials and supplies provided in support of SMCL curriculum were not advisable for use with young children such as balloons and marbles
- Many of the non-consumable items SMCL purchased to implement their program were paid for with Big Lift funds and yet no plans were made for their storage between BLIS summers and the majority were donated to teachers to use in their school-year classrooms.

2017: Supplies and Materials

- Ensure that all teachers have equitable access to supplies and materials.
- Request use of the San Mateo County Office of Education's "PONY" delivery system to deliver supplies and materials to districts and schools, where appropriate.
- Ensure that all children have access to tablets, provided by districts, for curriculum and assessment uses.
- Develop agreements with districts regarding use of their technology tools, classrooms and supplies, as appropriate, indicating that this is part of the contribution districts can make to BLIS, which is providing a valuable program to their children at no financial cost to them.
- Provide a budget for copying or request that districts provide access to copiers for materials such as parent newsletters, children's mini-books, enrollment documents.
- BELL will provide a list of necessary materials and supplies and will support districts to order their own supplies for direct delivery to their sites.
- Request space at school districts to store BLIS items between summers.
- Ensure that all supplies and materials are safe and developmentally appropriate for young children.

16. Health and Safety

2016 Reflections: Health and Safety

In 2016, The Big Lift relied on each school district and the San Mateo County Libraries to instruct their respective staff in safety protocols rather than having a consistent set of policies and procedures across all of the BLIS sites. Given the lack of experience of many of



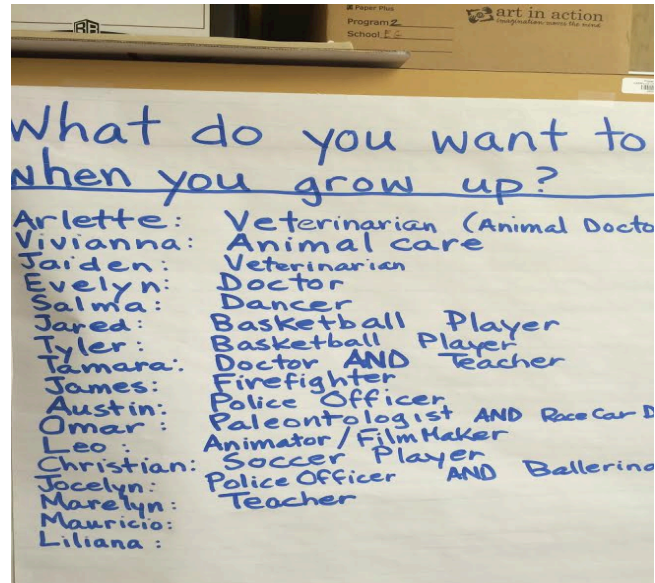
the staff, particularly those teaching in the afternoons, it will be critical going forward that The Big Lift convey a set of practices and principles to communicate and ensure that child safety is the highest priority.

2017: Health and Safety

- Develop and distribute BLIS health and safety guidelines to include content on check-in and check-out procedures, handling of allergies, blood born pathogens, child supervision guidelines, etc.
- Ensure that all staff are trained and coached on these guidelines.
- Train coaches to monitor and support teachers to implement the guidelines.
- Work with established summer camp provider to develop these materials.
- Ask each site to submit their emergency and health-safety plans to The Big Lift coordinator prior to program launch.

17. Attendance

Attendance is one of the four pillars of The Big Lift and was seen as critical to ensuring success of children participating in BLIS. The 2016 program ran for 5 weeks, or 24 days, excluding July 4th. Given the importance of dosage to BELL's evidence-based model, districts were advised not to enroll families who knew in advance that they could not attend at least 21 days of the program and to emphasize the importance of regular attendance at parent orientations.



All four districts had very high attendance, ranging from 92% (22 days) in Cabrillo, 88% (21 days) in Jefferson, and SSF and 84% (20 days) in LHPUSD.

2017: Attendance

- Districts communicate expectations of full attendance to families prior to enrollment and at family orientation.
- Program assistants contact families of children who are absent to determine the reasons for absences and determine if staff can help to support daily, on-time attendance.
- Provide information to families about the importance of daily, on-time attendance during the school year and the detrimental impact of chronic absenteeism.

18. Conclusion

Implementation of the Big Lift Inspiring Summers 2016 was an outstanding accomplishment made possible by the hard work of many individuals from a group of organizations, including the implementing school districts: Cabrillo, La Honda-Pescadero, Jefferson and South San Francisco; BLIS lead agencies: BELL and San Mateo County Libraries with their partners Bay Area Discovery Museum, Headstand.org and Revolution Foods; the three Big Lift lead agencies: San Mateo County, San Mateo County Office of Education and Silicon Valley Community Foundation; and several partnering organizations.



As a result of these new and innovative partnerships, 753 children received 5 weeks of high-quality, hands-on learning in literacy and STEM subjects. They went on field trips to the zoo and marine science centers, danced the hula, learned to meditate and played goats and ogres in dramatized versions of Three Billy Goats Gruff. Families had the pleasure of seeing their children perform live songs and dances at closing ceremonies and five hundred and fifty families participated in the I Am Raising A Reader early literacy program.

Many lessons were learned over the course of the summer and the leaders who implemented the program have been generous in providing feedback and collaborating to develop shared recommendations to support an even stronger program in 2017, when the first four districts will add another grade and three new districts will come on board. Many of their recommendations are incorporated into this report.

Hiring a BLIS Program Manager will be valuable to the success of BLIS 2017 for the reasons stated above and the on-going need for this position can be reassessed at the conclusion of the 2017 program. In addition, a BLIS implementation handbook or manual would be a valuable tool to provide guidance and clarity to program leaders in specific aspects of the program, including data requirements, health, safety and field trip protocol, family engagement and more.

The Big Lift leadership would like to thank the individuals and organizations that contributed to the successful launch of The Big Lift Inspiring Summers in 2016 and look forward to continuing these partnerships and expanding to new ones in 2017.



District Planning Guide for Big Lift Inspiring Summers 2017

This list of activities is designed to provide school districts with a broad-brush overview of *district responsibilities* for implementation of The Big Lift Inspiring Summers (BLIS)

Key District Responsibilities	Key Partners to Districts	Timeline
1 Determine and notify San Mateo County Library (SMCL) of intent to provide food service (see Aug. 26 email from Elisa Espinoza). As of 1/1/17, all Cohort 1 districts have notified SVCF.	San Mateo County Library (SMCL), Second Harvest Food Bank	September 2016
2 Determine start date for BLIS 2017 and notify SVCF. As of 1/1/17, all districts have notified SVCF of start date except Cohort 2 and Cabrillo which is waiting on school calendar schedule	SVCF	November 2016
3 Identify and notify The Big Lift regarding number of sites and classrooms needed. Ideal is 2 classrooms per cohort of children.	SVCF	February 2017
4 Recruit children and families for BLIS 2017 with materials provided by The Big Lift	The Big Lift	February-March 2017
5 Enroll children and families, entering all required data into Cocoa database	SMCOE will provide Cocoa training	February -May
6 Execute contract with BELL for BLIS implementation	BELL	March 2017
7 Execute BLIS addendum to SVCF agreement to include 5% (Cohort 2) or 7.5% (Cohort 1) district cash match	SVCF	February 2017
8 Recruit and hire “Partner Program Lead,” credentialed teachers, coaches, site leads, janitorial, assistant teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPLs: min. 12 weeks prior to program launch • Site leads and coaches: min. 8 weeks prior to launch • Teachers and Assistant Teachers: min. 6 weeks prior to launch 	BELL and SMCL will provide hiring guides and job descriptions	Start ASAP: See suggested timeline under key responsibilities
9 Cocoa database trainings with PPLs and district BLIS admin staff (trainings provided by SMCOE)	SMCOE	February or March to May



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Key District Responsibilities, Con't		Key Partners to Districts	Timeline
10	Provide release time for district staff to attend BELL, SMCL and SMCOE trainings.	BELL, SMCL and SMCOE	April – June 2017
11	Order supplies, per BELL instructions, to be delivered directly to BLIS sites	BELL	6 weeks prior to launch
12	Coordinate with BLIS partners to ensure that the needs of children with identified and not-yet-identified special needs are met during BLIS implementation	The Big Lift, BELL, SMCL	Starting January 2017
13	Host parent orientation, including intro to “I Am Raising A Reader”	SMLC, BELL, Raising A Reader	Week prior to start date
14	Host 5-week BLIS program	The Big Lift, BELL, SMCL	June –July 2017
15	Host site visits of stakeholders, including funders, local policymakers, media, etc., in collaboration with The Big Lift	The Big Lift	June –July 2017
16	Provide iPads for assessments and classroom use		Assessments: 1 st & 5th week of program. Classroom use: throughout program
17	Provide storage for enrichment supplies and materials ordered by SMCL and delivered directly to site	SMCL to order	4 weeks prior to program launch
18	Submit information for Partnership Reports to BELL	BELL	2 weeks after program close
19	Store non-consumable supplies until BLIS 2018		2017-18 school year