



STANISLAUS  
**READS!**

Ready, Engaged, Able, Determined Students



# Investing In Our Future:

Equipping Children to Read and Succeed in Stanislaus County

2015



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The Stanislaus County Library

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Content for this community report is derived from the *2015 Stanislaus County Community Solutions Action Plan (CSAP)*, which is a compilation of original research and feedback from six community gatherings, multiple work groups, and numerous face-to-face interviews.

# Letter to our Community

Imagine a community where every child shows up on the first day of kindergarten ready to learn, has quality children's books in the home, is healthy and in school daily, and participates in literacy-rich summer programs. If we work together, Stanislaus County can be a place where every child is equipped to succeed, not just in school, but in *life*.



**Stanislaus READS!** is a multi-agency, multi-year initiative to uncover many winning solutions to help children read – and succeed – by third grade. Why is third grade such a critical benchmark? Because it's the last year a child is taught reading as a subject. In the fourth grade, students no longer '*learn to read*' but must '*read to learn*.' If they have not mastered reading as a core skill by third grade, chances are they will struggle to succeed throughout their academic years.

Recognizing the magnitude of early childhood literacy in our community, stakeholders in the public, private, philanthropic, and faith-based communities have been meeting since January 2014 to study the issue in-depth. Led by Stanislaus Community Foundation, the Stanislaus County Office of Education, Head Start, the Children & Families Commission and Stanislaus County Libraries, the coalition seeks to mobilize the broader community, including parents, child care providers, educators, healthcare practitioners and business leaders.

Ultimately, Stanislaus READS! is both a community awareness campaign and an investment of many small bets at specific school sites. Although our scope is county-wide, we have partnered with five pilot schools to develop impactful strategies that can scale up to the larger region.

Over the past year, we've gathered data and identified goals around three primary challenge areas that impact third-grade reading levels: ***school readiness, chronic absences, and summer slide***. We want to help more children enter school ready to learn, build a stronger parental commitment to ensure their students' regular school attendance, and provide meaningful learning opportunities to keep children engaged during the summer season. This report highlights these three challenge areas and related goals, bright spots, challenges and indicators for tracking progress over time.

As you read this community report, we trust that you will be inspired to join us as we collectively invest in every child in our community. It's an investment worth making.

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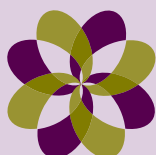
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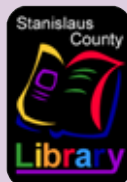
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Beyond the Classroom Walls

Stanislaus READS



Stanislaus  
Community  
Foundation



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# Why Third Grade Reading Matters

Reading ability by third grade is a major predictor of future student success. By the end of third grade, students shift from learning to read to reading to learn. To master future subjects in their academic career, students must have a solid foundation in reading. Students who fail to reach this critical milestone are at a higher risk for dropping out of high school, teenage pregnancy and incarceration.<sup>1</sup>

## Third Grade Reading in Stanislaus County

Analysis of literacy rates in Stanislaus County highlights disparities among third graders. There are gaps among White, African American, and Latino students, as indicated in the chart below. Disparities in grade-level reading rates are further prevalent for socioeconomically disadvantaged students (32%); as well as English Language Learners (ELL) (26%).

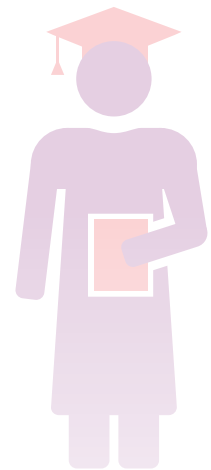
A student not reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade is

**4 TIMES**

less likely to graduate from high school.<sup>2</sup>

**61%**

of Stanislaus County students do not read at grade level by the end of their 3rd grade year.<sup>3</sup>



Percentage of Third Graders Scoring Proficient or Higher on English Language Arts CST: 2009 – 2013<sup>4</sup>

Stanislaus County					
Race/Ethnicity	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
All Students	38	39	42	42	39
Black	34	30	35	41	35
Asian	47	51	55	55	54
Hispanic/Latino	27	28	33	33	32
White	54	53	55	55	52
English Language Learners	18	22	28	26	26
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	29	29	34	35	32

<sup>1</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, A KIDS COUNT Special Report. 2010

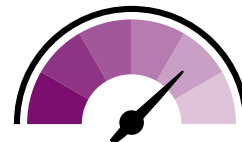
<sup>2</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation. *Double Jeopardy.*, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> *Reading Literacy in the United States: Findings from the IEA Reading Literacy Study*. 1996.

<sup>4</sup> [kidsdata.org](http://kidsdata.org), California Dept. of Education, Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Results. Nov. 2013.



## Moving the Needle on Third-Grade Reading Levels



The bold vision for Stanislaus READS! is that more students are reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade. To ensure this critical milestone, Stanislaus READS! has set the following goals:

- Outcome 1** Parents are empowered to be their children's first teacher.
- Outcome 2** Children enter Kindergarten with the knowledge and skills necessary for successful participation in school.
- Outcome 3** Schools and parents strive to reduce chronic absence in the Head Start through 3rd grade so that students receive sufficient instructional time and support to read at grade level or above.
- Outcome 4** Children have greater access to quality summer learning and enrichment opportunities.
- Outcome 5** Organizations and systems work in collaboration to maximize resources and sustain impact.



## 2020 Aspirational Targets

Stanislaus READS! has developed metrics to track our progress over time among participating schools and partners:

- Grade-Level Reading:** **90%** of 3rd grade students are reading at grade level
- School Readiness:** **80%** of children are "on track" in Kindergarten assessment
- Summer Learning:** **100%** of children are participating in literacy-rich summer programs
- Student Attendance:** **50%** reduction in chronically absent students in Head Start through 3rd grade





# Why School Readiness Matters

School readiness is generally understood as children entering kindergarten with the social, emotional and academic skills needed to learn in an elementary school environment. School readiness starts from the first day of life. Talking with young children and reading books to them greatly impacts their ability to learn in the future. Research shows that children living in low income households are likely to reach their third birthday having been exposed to 30,000,000 fewer words than three year olds from more affluent families.<sup>5</sup> 61% of children from low income households have no children's books available in their homes.<sup>6</sup>

## School Readiness Challenges in Stanislaus County

### Lack of Data

In Stanislaus County, 'school readiness' is not defined or assessed as a universal benchmark—assessment approaches are inconsistent across classrooms, schools, and school districts. Where assessment data is available, it is not consistently and meaningfully shared between preschool and Kindergarten programs.

### Limited Access to Books

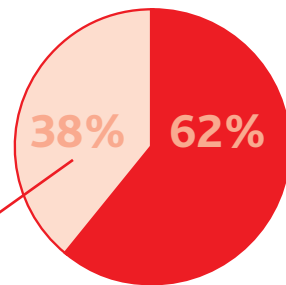
Access to books and exposure to literacy enhancing language are also a concern in Stanislaus County. According to research published in 2014, only 53% of Stanislaus County's young children, ages birth to five (0-5) are read to every day.<sup>7</sup>

### Barriers to Early Learning

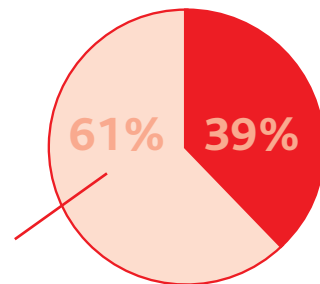
Another challenge to effective school readiness is the limited access to quality children's preschool programs. Only 38% of Stanislaus County three- and four-year-olds attend preschool.<sup>8</sup>



**Only 38% of Stanislaus County three-and-four-year olds attend preschool**



**61% of children from low income households have no children's books available in their homes**



<sup>5</sup> Hart, B. & Risley, T.R. The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap by Age 3. 2003, spring. *American Educator*

<sup>6</sup> *Reading Literacy in the United States: Findings from the IEA Reading Literacy Study*. 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Children Now 2014 Scorecard

<sup>8</sup> Children Now 2014 Scorecard





# School Readiness Goal:

Children enter Kindergarten with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in school



## School Readiness Strategies

### Track School Readiness Data

Integrate Kindergarten Student Entrance Profile (KSEP) as a universal school readiness tool across Head Start, Transitional Kindergarten, and Kindergarten at five pilot schools.

### Increase Access to Books

Increase children's access to books in early years by expanding Imagination Library, a free book distribution program for families, to five pilot schools.

### Professional Development

Increase professional development of early learning & child care providers on literacy.

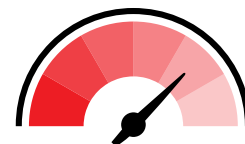
### Align Efforts

Encourage pediatricians and other healthcare providers to incorporate a literacy promotion program within their practice.

### Community Awareness

Create a culture of early literacy among parents and community members through a comprehensive community awareness campaign.

## School Readiness Indicators of Progress



- Increase % of children meeting age-level expectations at the end of preschool and beginning of Kindergarten.
- Expand Imagination Library and enroll children and their families.
- Increase % of children enrolled in high quality early care and education (ages 0 to 3).
- Increase % of children enrolled in high-quality pre-K (ages 3 and 4).



## Bright Spots

### Sharing Data on School Readiness

In 2015, SCOE's Head Start programs will implement a Kindergarten Student Entry Profile (KSEP) screening for four year olds advancing to either Transitional Kindergarten (TK) or Kindergarten (K). This screening will serve as a baseline to determine how well children are prepared for school. Training and use of the assessment tool will expand to include TK & K teachers from the pilot schools in the campaign. The collaboration between Head Start and local elementary schools will result in shared data that will help all programs accurately measure and improve outcomes.

### Partnerships that Grow Jobs and Help Children

SCOE's Head Start Program was recently awarded over \$2M in federal funds to support child care home services for approximately 80 Stanislaus County children ages birth through 3 years. SCOE, the City of Modesto, the King-Kennedy Westside Collaborative and Modesto City Schools partnered to increase the number of family-owned child care providers on the West side of Modesto. Child care providers will receive professional education and assistance with their business models, which is a 'win-win' that creates more jobs in the community. In turn, participating child care providers will ensure all children in their care receive developmental and health assessments to support their children's school readiness.



Students are accessing the server-based LEXIA reading program at Richard Moon Primary School, a Stanislaus READS! pilot school.

# Why Attendance Matters

Missing school during the early grades can have an incredibly negative impact on future academic achievement. Although no standard definition exists, chronic absence is commonly defined as missing 10 percent or more of school in an academic year and includes both excused and unexcused absences. Almost 90% of the elementary students with the most severe attendance problems—those who miss 36 days or more of school per year—are estimated to be low-income. Chronic absence is associated with declining academic performance, starting as early as kindergarten.<sup>9</sup>

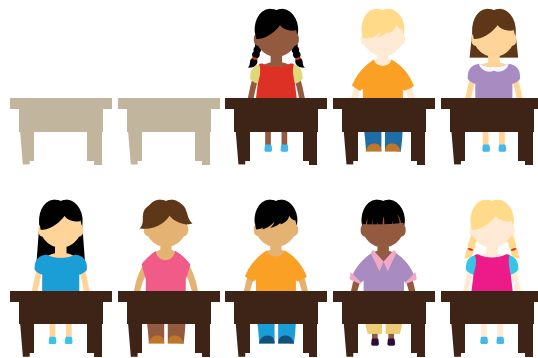
## Attendance Challenges in Stanislaus County

### Chronic Absence Impacts School Funding

In California school districts lose \$1.4 billion each year due to truancy because funding is based on school attendance rates. Stanislaus County's elementary school truancy rate is 21%, which equates to \$19,657,862 in lost ADA funding.<sup>10</sup>

### Lack of Data

Traditional school attendance data focuses on Average Daily Attendance (ADA), which hides chronically absent students. Schools use different software programs and coding to track attendance. Specific reasons for absence are not retrievable from systems and coding these reasons also varies by school district, which makes any intervention or education efforts daunting.



Truancy costs  
Stanislaus County  
**\$19,657,862**  
in ADA Funding

<sup>9</sup> Attorney General Report on California Elementary School's Truancy & Absenteeism Crisis. 2014

<sup>10</sup> AG Report, 2014





# Attendance Goal:

Schools and parents work to reduce chronic absence in Head Start through 3rd grade



## Key Attendance Strategies

### Begin With Data

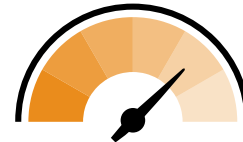
Collect data on chronically absent children to determine what factors limit school attendance.

### Align Efforts

Align efforts so that chronically absent children are identified and services for families are coordinated among agencies and schools (i.e. Head Start, Sierra Vista, Center for Human Services, Family Resource Centers, Housing Authority).

### Raise Community Awareness

Provide outreach to parents on the importance of attendance in early years when students are learning to how to read.



## Attendance Indicators of Progress

- Reduce % of children chronically absent from school.
- Identify and reduce % of children 'at risk' for chronic absence.



## Bright Spots

### Head Start Staffing for Family Contact

Because the federal government requires attendance monitoring of its funded programs, the Head Start budget includes staffing to maintain contact with families and to communicate with them about absences in the program. Through these conversations, staff becomes aware of obstacles confronting families and, when possible, intervenes to assist. This staffing practice ensures that Head Start employees are aware of family situations and can work to connect appropriate services and/or support to family needs.

### Stanislaus County Office of Education's Destination Graduation

The Stanislaus County Office of Education (SCOE) launched an initiative: Destination Graduation in the fall of 2013. The goal of the initiative is to raise high school graduation rates in the county. One of the five pillars of action is Parent Engagement/Involvement. SCOE is partnering with community agencies such as Sierra Vista and the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) to provide parent education classes and to infuse curricular materials on the importance of school attendance.

# Why Summer Learning Matters

The summer months are critical for learning and development. While some children benefit from enrichment and cultural opportunities over the summer, low-income students lose an average of more than two months in reading achievement due to limited access to quality summer enrichment programs.

Over time, summer learning loss has a cumulative effect—by the end of fifth grade, low-income students fall behind by three grades compared to higher income students.<sup>11</sup> Only 25% of students currently participate in organized summer learning programs, although a majority of parents said they would enroll their children if more programs were available.<sup>12</sup>



## Summer Learning Challenges in Stanislaus County



### Lack of Data

School districts do not keep track of student participation in summer learning programs, so it is difficult to determine the level of student learning loss over the summer. Furthermore, even if schools did track summer program enrollment, there is currently no easy way to measure student gains and losses in reading proficiency over the summer.

### Barriers to Access

Studies show that for low-income families, cost and proximity are often cited as the primary considerations for whether parents choose to enroll their children in a summer program, which is most likely the case in Stanislaus County.<sup>13</sup> The most accessible location for summer learning is typically the neighborhood school, yet, like many communities nationally, summer programs at school sites have been drastically slashed or completely eliminated from district budgets.

<sup>11</sup> Cooper, H.; Borman, G; Fairchild, R. *School Calendars and Academic Achievement*,. In Handbook of Research on School, Schooling, and Human Development. 2010.

<sup>12</sup> McLaughlin, B.; Pitcock, S. *Building Quality in Summer Learning Programs; Approaches and Recommendations*, Wallace Foundation, 2009

<sup>13</sup> McLaughlin, B.; Pitcock, S. 2009



# Summer Learning Goal:

All children have greater access to quality summer learning and enrichment opportunities



## Summer Learning Strategies

### Incorporate Literacy into Existing Programs

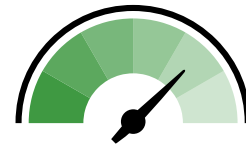
Develop best practices for integrating literacy curriculum into existing summer enrichment programs and strategies for implementation.

### Expand summer learning opportunities

Expand summer school offerings (i.e. open school libraries/ computer labs in the summer) and align with summer nutrition feeding programs.

### Raise Community Awareness

Create public awareness campaign to mobilize parents and community stakeholders around the importance of year-round reading. Centralize information about summer programs at the community level to improve family access to enrichment opportunities.



## Summer Learning Indicators of Progress

- Increase number of quality summer learning programs available to families.
- Increase numbers of students enrolled in summer learning programs.



## Bright Spots

### Chrysler Elementary Summer Model

Stanislaus Union School District made a small, but impactful investment in summer learning at Chrysler Elementary School during the summer of 2014. With the closest library branch five miles away, Chrysler opened their school library for the summer, and designed a summer program to coincide with the school site's summer feeding program. In addition to being able to check out books, students also participated in enrichment opportunities, including classes on art, drama, and music. The school offered parents access to the computer lab and classes through Sierra Vista Children & Family Services. The move was well-received by families and school administrators intend to expand the program in 2015 to include more opportunities for preschoolers, additional parent education, a summer reading challenge and coordination between community partners.

### Stanislaus County Library

The Stanislaus County Library's Summer Reading program encourages kids to keep reading all summer long by incentivizing reading. Casual, free choice reading is essential to help kids discover the love of reading. Children who read between 20-30 minutes a day for a week get to choose a prize. In addition to the reading incentive program, the library also offers enrichment activities or entertainment at each branch which often includes crafts, games, STEM activities, puppet shows, magicians, jugglers, and more. Stanislaus Library Foundation and the Friends of the Library sponsor performers to ensure that all activities are free to the public.





# Family Engagement Goal:

Parents are empowered to be their child's first teacher

Parents are the first and most important teachers in their children's lives. Research shows that students are most successful academically and socially when their parents are involved and engaged in their learning. Parental interaction is crucial for the development of their children's vocabulary, comprehension and critical thinking skills. By improving parental engagement, we can help turn around Stanislaus County's student achievement gap.

## Parent Engagement Strategies

### Build Social Connections

Incorporate 'Parent Cafes' at school sites as peer-to-peer model to help parents build social connections, improve parental confidence, and develop new abilities to support their children's success in school

### Build a Culture of Early Literacy

Support parents in their efforts to teach their children their ABCs and prepare them for kindergarten. Promote the importance of early literacy through targeted outreach to parents.



## Bright Spots

### Parent Cafes

Strengthening Families is a county-wide community initiative that incorporates "Parent Cafés" as a mechanism to engage parents in conversations around their children's overall health and development. Pilot school districts, SCOE and Head Start are planning introduction of Parent Cafés in the Spring of 2015. The simple approach of meeting parents as they arrive, drop-off or volunteer in their child's school, and providing a safe place for simple refreshments, conversation and small bites of learning facilitated by other trained parents has been shown to increase parental understanding of school readiness, commitment to school success, and engagement with school activities.

# Beyond the Classroom Walls...

The Stanislaus READS! Initiative has a dual focus for activities, at both the community and pilot school level. For the community, Stanislaus READS! will raise community awareness around the importance of school readiness, attendance, and summer learning. With its pilot schools, Stanislaus READS! will experiment with a number of strategies that have potential for scaling up. To participate in the pilot, Stanislaus READS! asked school sites to meet basic parameters, to share data and provide access to local families.



**Pilot Schools: Key Demographics (2012-2013 Academic Year)**

	Hispanic or Latino	White, not Hispanic	Black	ELL	Econ. Disadv.	3rd Grade Reading Level
All Stanislaus County Schools	57%	30%	3%	25%	66%	39%
Burbank Elementary School	78%	8%	2%	70%	100%	25%
Chrysler Elementary School	70%	13%	7%	46%	56%	20%
Las Palmas Elementary School	74%	16%	3%	51%	79%	39%
Moon Elementary School	61%	35%	2%	45%	83%	32%
Sylvan Elementary School	45%	31%	7%	17%	72%	40%

# How You Can Make a Difference...



To join Stanislaus READS! and keep track of our efforts, please visit us online at [www.StanReads.org](http://www.StanReads.org).



# Collective Impact: Working Together for Change



## STANISLAUS READS! STEERING COMMITTEE

Amanda Hughes, Program Officer, Stanislaus Community Foundation  
Sue Rich, Assistant Superintendent, Stanislaus County Office of Education  
Karen Pekarcik, Director, Child & Family Services, Stanislaus County Office of Education  
John Sims, Executive Director, Stanislaus County Children & Families Commission  
Diane McDonnell, County Librarian, Stanislaus County Libraries  
Susan Neufeld, Professor of Education, California State University, Stanislaus & Director, ABC Project

## PILOT SCHOOLS

**Modesto City Schools District**—Burbank Elementary School  
**Stanislaus Union School District**—Josephine Chrysler Elementary School  
**Sylvan Unified School District**—Sylvan Elementary School  
**Waterford Unified School District**—Richard M. Moon Elementary School  
**Patterson Joint Unified School District**—Las Palmas Elementary School

## STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Boys and Girls Club of  
Stanislaus County  
Center for Human Services  
City of Modesto  
City of Patterson  
CSU Stanislaus  
E & J Gallo Winery  
El Concilio  
Girls Scouts Heart of  
Central California

Learning Quest/Stanslaus  
Literacy Centers  
Modesto Junior College  
Modesto Rotary Club  
Morgan Stanley  
Parent Institute for Quality  
Education (PIQE)  
Self-Help Federal Credit Union  
Sierra Vista Child &  
Family Services  
Stanislaus County Behavioral  
Health & Recovery Services

Stanislaus County Community  
Services Agency  
Stanislaus County Health  
Services Agency  
Stanislaus County  
Housing Authority  
Stanislaus County Police  
Activities League (PAL)  
Stanislaus County WIC  
United Samaritans Foundation  
United Way  
Wells Fargo



[www.StanReads.org](http://www.StanReads.org)