



READING *by* THIRD

*A Call to Action for
our Shared Future*



COMMUNITY PROGRESS REPORT 2013

A woman with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a pink jacket over a black top, is sitting on a green artificial turf surface. She is holding a book titled "WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE" and looking towards a young child whose back is to the camera. The background shows a blue tarp and some outdoor structures.

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UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC

Through the Beyond Our Gates initiative, University of the Pacific is working collaboratively to improve the social and economic vitality of our region. When this initiative was launched about three years ago, the University and our community partners asked, “Where should we focus our efforts to have the most significant impact on lives in San Joaquin County and beyond?”

We recognized quickly that the answer lies in education—helping children learn today so they can be effective citizens tomorrow. More specifically, we determined that improving early literacy—or Reading by Third—holds tremendous promise toward ensuring successful futures for our young people and for our community as a whole.

Research tells us that children who aren’t strong readers by the end of third grade fall behind, and many of them never catch up. Unfortunately in San Joaquin County, fewer than half of students can read at grade-level when they leave third grade. These children are more likely to drop out of high school and will face considerable challenges in achieving career and educational goals.

The problem is serious, but not unsolvable. Already, our community has developed a collective strategy for improving early literacy. **Together, we have established clear, common goals that focus attention and resources on the factors that most strongly influence reading ability: school readiness, parent engagement, attendance and opportunities for enrichment.**

I am proud to report some early successes: Over the past year, our collective initiative has created an annual literacy report card designed to help us track progress and ensure accountability. We have developed a Community Grant Writer pilot program that will build capacity by bringing new and much-needed funding to community organizations with successful educational programs. We have launched a series of workshops that are showing local parents and caregivers why—and how—to support literacy at home.

Our goals are ambitious. I believe that, working in close collaboration with our community partners, we are on the path toward achieving them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Pamela A. Eibeck".

Pamela A. Eibeck
University of the Pacific



The Beyond Our Gates Community Council is a group of about 50 local leaders, representing the education, business, law, government, nonprofit, arts, faith and media sectors. Convened by President Pamela Eibeck, the Council meets regularly to guide Pacific's community-engagement priorities.

2012-13 BEYOND OUR GATES

Community Council – *Executive Committee*

Gillian Murphy
*Dean, Applied Science,
Business and Technology*
San Joaquin Delta College

Ann Johnston
Owner
The Balloonery

Gary Dei Rossi
Commissioner
First 5 San Joaquin

Sue de Polo
Commissioner
First 5 San Joaquin

Linda Mora
Vice President
El Concilio

Lynn Beck
Dean, Gladys L. Benerd School of Education
University of the Pacific

Steve Gutierrez
Chief Executive Officer
Apantli

Tariq Bruno
Executive Director
Stockton Urban Academies

Pamela Eibeck
President
University of the Pacific

Ted Leland
*Vice President,
External Relations and Athletics*
University of the Pacific

Jennifer Torres Siders
Community Relations Manager
University of the Pacific



A COLLECTIVE RESPONSE

Recognizing that a child's reading ability at the end of third grade is a key predictor of academic success, the Beyond Our Gates Community Council is committed to objectives proven to influence early literacy:

SCHOOL READINESS—San Joaquin County children, beginning at birth, will have access to early-learning experiences that prepare them for school.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT—Parents and caregivers will be empowered to play their indispensable roles in the successful education of their children.

ATTENDANCE AND ENRICHMENT—Local families will be aware of and have access to practical solutions for two of the most significant roadblocks to achievement, chronic absence from school and summer learning loss.

A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

With the launch of the San Joaquin Reads early literacy initiative, the Beyond Our Gates Community Council joined a network of more than 100 communities across the country, all committed to third-grade reading success. In September 2012, Ralph Smith, managing director of the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and senior vice president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, addressed our community at the Beyond Our Gates Dialogue. His remarks are excerpted here:

“Those of us who care about intergenerational poverty know that if we’re going to disrupt the scourge of intergenerational poverty, we’ve got to do three things: **We’ve got to get young people to finish high school; we have to help them get and keep a job; and we have to help them delay parenting until they’re 25 years or older or married.** Three things. That’s all we have to do ... The tragedy is that the first of those is the most formidable: Graduating from high school. For the poorest kids in this society, that has become an increasingly unattainable goal We have got to reverse course on that.

“Let me tell you how we reverse course. We reverse course by recognizing that schools cannot do it alone, that the rest of us cannot sit and stand on the sidelines and blame the schools. There is a group of kids for whom the schools will not succeed without all our help. I call these the three-strike kids.

STRIKE 1: These are the kids who are already so far behind when they start school that they’re not going to catch up. ... We have got to get more of these students ready for school, and it means that we’ve got to reach into the homes. We’ve got to help the parents and grandparents and caregivers who love these kids, who have high aspirations for these kids. We’ve got to make sure that every kid has a high-quality opportunity for preschool.

STRIKE 2: These are the kids who fall farther behind during the school year. ... When we look at low-income kids, we find that—adding up the unexcused absences with the excused absences and the disciplinary absences—these kids are missing well over 10 percent of the school year. Now just imagine (missing) one month of the school year during kindergarten, another month during first grade, and another month during second grade – it’s virtually impossible for that kid to be on grade level by the end of third grade.

STRIKE 3: Summer is an opportunity for enhancement. It is also a risky period. ... There are low-income parents in this community, and in communities all around the country, who don’t have a clue as to what their kids are going to do, and whose kids are going to have an erratic summer with no plans. Those kids are going to come back to school in September farther behind than when they left in June.



“It’s on their behalf that I want to recognize the incredible effort that you put forward here, the vision that you’ve shown, the honesty in collecting data and setting out an agreement to hold yourselves collectively accountable. It is that set of actions and behaviors, those sets of commitments, that make me so proud to come today and say to this community, welcome to the Grade-Level Reading Communities Network.”

—Ralph Smith, *Managing Director of the national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading and Senior Vice President of the Annie E. Casey Foundation*



EARLY PROGRESS

Throughout San Joaquin County, Pacific's partners in the Beyond Our Gates effort are focusing their attention and resources on programs and activities that promise to improve early literacy success.

BUILDING CAPACITY

As the local economy begins to heal, San Joaquin County residents continue to face poverty, unemployment and other challenges. Meanwhile, the nonprofit organizations that work to help them also struggle under financial uncertainty: Public budgets have been cut, and private donations have slowed. Without the time and expertise to pursue major grants, service organizations are often unable to expand—or even to maintain—successful programs.

In early 2013, University of the Pacific and a group of community partners announced a potential solution: We will pay for a freelance grant writer to help San Joaquin County's nonprofit organizations secure funding for services and projects.

The **Community Grant Writer** program is jointly funded by University of the Pacific, First 5 San Joaquin, Health Plan of San Joaquin, San Joaquin County Behavioral Health Services and Community Foundation of San Joaquin. In this two-year pilot program, a professional grant writer will help community nonprofits by preparing grant applications and proposals, and providing workshops on grant-writing and program development. We believe this innovative project will draw new philanthropic dollars to our region and contribute to a spirit of collaboration.

IMPROVING SCHOOL READINESS

One of the most effective ways for parents to help prepare their young children for school is to read to them every day. Unfortunately, many local families lack access to high-quality children's books, and many caregivers are unsure why—and how—to read with their kids. **Reach Out and Read** is a research-tested program that trains doctors and nurses to advise parents on the importance of reading aloud. As part of the program, children receive a new book at each of their well-child pediatric checkups from 6 months to 5 years of age. Locally, the program has a special focus on low-income families. In 2012, when the future of Reach Out and Read San Joaquin was uncertain, a group of community partners, including Health Plan of San Joaquin, First 5 San Joaquin and San Joaquin A+ came together to revive the program and develop a plan to sustain it. Then, in fall 2012, University of the Pacific led a holiday drive that collected more than 3,000 new and gently used children's books for the local Reach Out and Read effort.

EMPOWERING PARENTS

Parents are their children's first teachers and have an ongoing role in the educational process. To help parents and caregivers become strong advocates for their children and to support learning at home, Pacific and its partners in the Beyond Our Gates effort held a series of literacy workshops in summer 2013. The **Family Literacy Project** was jointly funded by Pacific and First 5 San Joaquin. It included a dozen workshops offered in English and Spanish and hosted by nonprofit agencies, faith communities and other organizations throughout San Joaquin County. Focused on families with children up to 5 years old, each workshop featured a presentation on the importance of early literacy and offered guidance on how to help children develop literacy skills. Participants received a high-quality children's book to take home, as well as a collection of literacy resources.

SUPPORTING SUMMER LEARNING

Summer can be a time for enrichment and exploration, but for many children – especially those from low-income backgrounds – it's also a time when important academic skills are lost. Studies have demonstrated that children can lose months of learning when school is out of session and other educational options are unavailable. To prevent summer learning loss and to help struggling readers catch up, the Stockton-San Joaquin County Public Library system, a Beyond Our Gates partner, developed the **Summer Book Buddies** program. In its inaugural year, response to the program was overwhelming. Nearly 60 children entering first, second and third grades were assessed for reading ability. They then received personalized tutoring three days a week during their summer vacations. About 30 teens and four teachers volunteered their time as tutors and supervisors, helping to ensure that the children they served have a stronger reading start in the academic year ahead.



READING by THIRD

A Community Call to Action



The ability to read proficiently by the end of third grade has been identified as a make-or-break benchmark in a child's education – and it's one that too many local children fail to reach. Fewer than half of San Joaquin County third graders demonstrate proficiency on standardized-language arts tests, a statistic with troubling implications for the future of our region's children and for the economic health of the region itself.

Through San Joaquin Reads, the Beyond Our Gates Reading by Third initiative, we are building a collaborative process for problem solving. While we believe that the efforts of individual organizations have an important role in improving our community, it is clear that the deep-rooted problems we face require a new and strategic approach.

We seek to enhance the effectiveness of independent stakeholders by:

CONVENING LOCAL LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONS around the common agenda of early literacy.

MAINTAINING COMMUNICATION across a broad range of individuals and organizations.

PROVIDING BACKBONE SUPPORT AND COORDINATION for a countywide literacy initiative, in part by making available the services of a community grant writer.

BUILDING SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY GOALS among local leaders and external funders.

COLLECTING AND ANALYZING DATA and reporting progress through an annual Literacy Report Card.

As we continue working to address the causes of the poverty, crime and low education levels that persist in San Joaquin County, we seek investment in a collective process—one that focuses the power of partnership on our community's most urgent needs.





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