



Community Reading Buddies 2019 Outcomes



Aspire Education Project

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Community Reading Buddies 2019 Outcomes

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Executive Summary

“*Reading Buddies helped me connect on a deeper level with my fellow Oakland community members. I walk away from this program extremely inspired by the other teens I worked with and by the young children working tirelessly to improve their reading skills.*”

NICKY, YOUTH MENTOR

Nicky, a 12th grade student, was one of over 200 volunteer Youth Mentors who participated in Community Reading Buddies (CRB) this past summer. CRB sets our sight on decreasing the literacy gap

by inspiring a love of reading. Using cross-age peer mentorship, CRB combats summer learning loss in Oakland’s earliest readers while allowing young people throughout the Bay Area develop skills by helping their younger counterparts maintain or strengthen their reading foundations.

“*Community Reading Buddies showed me that I can be a leader for the next generation.*”

KELLEN, 9TH GRADE

Middle and high school-aged mentors spent an average of 21 hours over two months reading and playing with almost 200 of Oakland’s early readers in preschool and grade school from three OUSD Child Development Centers. Youth Mentors reflect the diversity of the Bay Area, coming from 51 district-run, charter, and private schools throughout Alameda and Contra Costa counties.

Using pre- and post-assessments of the Buddies administered by Youth Mentors and a post-program survey of Youth Mentors, CRB 2019 produced the following outcomes:

- 82% Buddies showed growth in at least one literacy and kindergarten-readiness category: alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness, number sense, interest in reading, understanding of age-appropriate texts, social skills, and active involvement
- 56% Buddies maintained or increased their interest in reading throughout the summer

CRB at a Glance: 2019 Gains over 2018

- 18.6% increase in number of Buddies served across 3 Oakland sites
- 31.8% increase in number of Youth Mentors
- 40% increase in average number of hours volunteered per mentor
- 86% increase in total cumulative hours served



- 68% Buddies maintained or increased their understanding of age-appropriate texts
- 82% Youth Mentors made gains in learning how to embrace and work with differences in people
- 80% Youth Mentors said they can better handle mistakes
- 81% Youth Mentors better understand the responsibility of being a leader

In 2019, CRB posted strong numerical gains over the 2018 program year and even stronger stories of growth through mentorship. As one young buddy put it when asked how her reading buddy made her feel: *"Happy! Happy! Happy, happy, happy!"*

Introduction

“ Kids connect with books in different ways. You can't always sit down and read, sometimes the book is like a toy with instructions.”

MONET, 12TH GRADE

Oakland educator Nancy McKee-Jolda started Community Reading Buddies (CRB) in 1994. Passionate about education and seeing the effect teenagers could have on young learners' interest in reading, Nancy ran the program until the formation of Aspire Education Project in 2005. Since then, Aspire has strengthened CRB's foundations, growing its impact on both Oakland's youngest students and the Bay Area's youth.

Favorite CRB Moment

“ My favorite Reading Buddies moments were when my Buddies would give me hugs at the end of sessions. It made me feel like I had really bonded with them.”

CAMILLE, 10TH GRADE

CRB's objective is to close the literacy gap that exists for children in Oakland by spreading the joy of reading. Through mentorship and evidence-based early literacy education, young students experience a love of reading, setting themselves up to succeed in continuing language development. Additionally, as CRB mentors, East Bay middle and high school students build leadership skills while giving back to their community.

Over the course of eight weeks in the summer, middle and high school “Youth Mentors” provide one-on-one literacy intervention to preK-3rd grade “Buddies” across three Oakland Unified School District Child Development Centers (CDC). Youth Mentors meet with their Buddies twice a week to shape early literacy foundations and nurture a genuine love of learning.

2019 marked the 25th anniversary of Community Reading Buddies; it is Aspire's largest program to date. This summer, we reached the following achievements:



- Worked with 191 preK-3rd grade Buddies from nine classrooms in the Oakland Unified School District's Child Development Centers, an 18.6% increase from 2018 and the highest number of Buddies we have served.
- Engaged 207 teenage Youth Mentors representing 51 Bay Area middle and high schools, a 31.8% increase from 2018.
- Delivered 4,317 hours of one-on-one and small group literacy support and youth leadership development to participants, an 86% increase from 2018.
- Hosted nine Family Reading Nights/family engagement events in which 124 family members and 273 students participated.
- Provided 998 developmentally and culturally appropriate books to participating children and families (743 from Aspire and 255 from our partner organization, Tandem).



Need for the Program

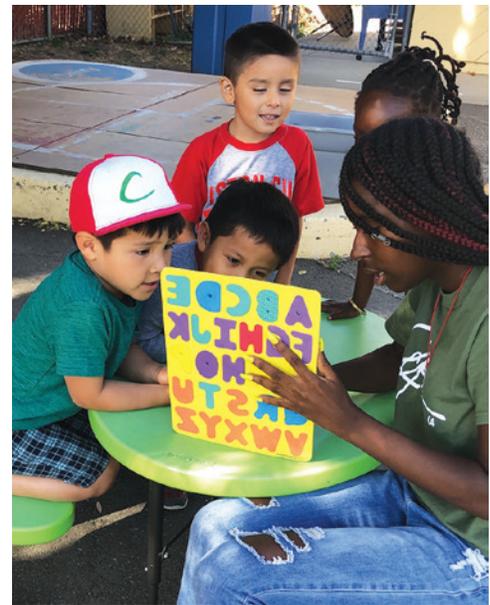
“ I [learned] how important it is that all kids get a chance to learn and have role models.”

MIA KELLY, 10TH GRADE

Disparities in the Bay Area

The Bay Area¹ is well-known worldwide for its technological innovation, home to some of the largest tech corporations in the world. If it were a country, the region would have been the 19th largest economy in the world in 2017, with gross domestic product (GDP) at \$748 billion.² By many indicators, the region is prospering and will continue to do so at higher rates than the U.S. as a whole.

Yet along with this prosperity comes harmful consequences for many families and children. The Bay Area’s cost of living has been outpacing wage growth since 2015.³ Rising populations and lack of affordable housing make it increasingly difficult for families to meet their basic needs. Median market rent in Oakland rose more than 72% between 2011 and 2017, compared with a 44% increase for the Bay Area as a whole.⁴ According to the Insight Center’s Family Needs Calculator, which calculates the minimum income necessary to provide for families’ basic needs, a single parent with a preschool child would need a salary of \$79,933 or \$37.85 per hour. In a two-adult household, the family would need a minimum household income of \$84,416, or approximately \$20 per hour per adult.⁵ However, the Bay Area’s median wage in



1 The Bay Area is defined by the Bay Area Council Economic Institute as the San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, n Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, Napa, Santa Rosa, and Vallejo-Fairfield Metropolitan Statistical Areas

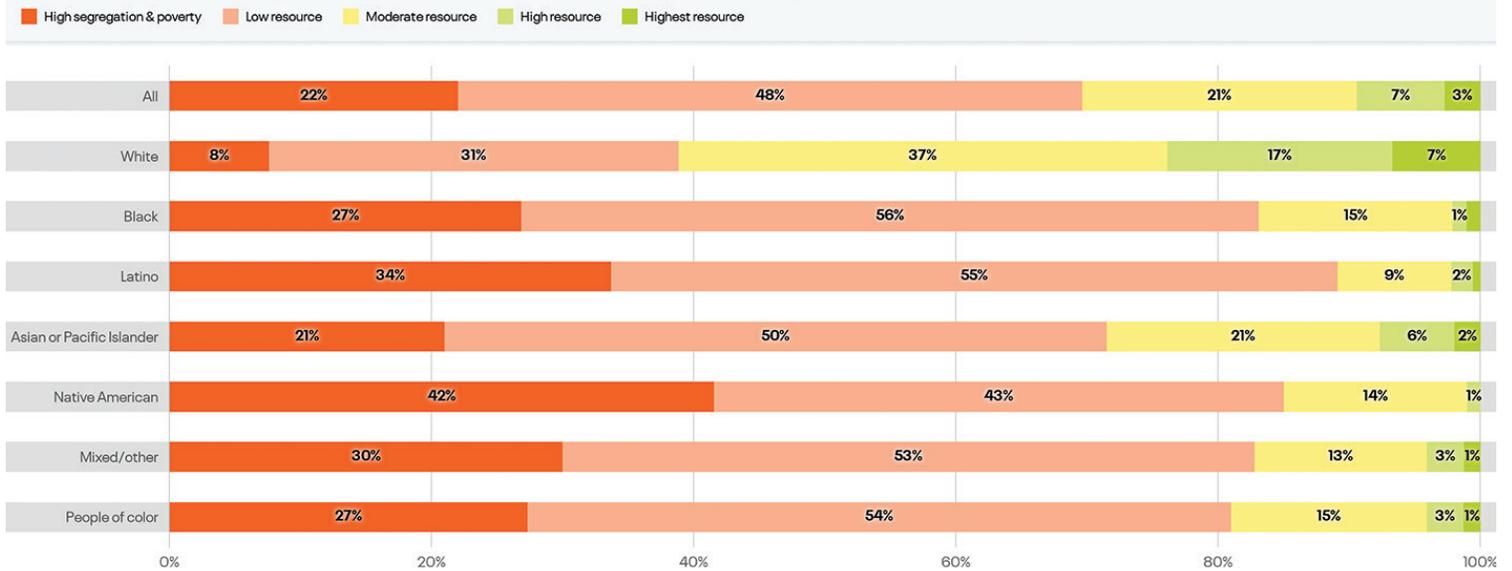
2 Bay Area Council Economic Institute, “Continuing Growth and Unparalleled Innovation,” (July 2018) <http://www.bayareaeconomy.org/files/pdf/BayAreaEconomicProfile2018Web.pdf>

3 Ibid.

4 Bay Area Equity Atlas, “Market Rent: Bay Area Equity Atlas,” (2019) <https://bayareaequityatlas.org/indicators/market-rent#>

5 Insight, “Family Needs Calculator (Formerly the Self-Sufficiency Standard,” (2018) <https://insightcced.org/2018-family-needs-calculator/>

Percent of Population by Neighborhood Resource Level and Race/Ethnicity, Oakland, CA, 2015



Data source: California Fair Housing Task Force 2019 Opportunity Maps; American Community Survey | Bay Area Equity Atlas

“I learned the importance of empathy and patience. Working with kids of all backgrounds, it became clear to me that someone may be working hard to catch up in terms of academic achievements, but if they are already behind, there is a lot more work to be done.”

NICKY, 12TH GRADE

with high amounts of segregation and poverty, and over half of the city’s Black and Latinx population live in a low resource neighborhood.⁸ These numbers are much higher compared to the city’s total population as well as the city’s White population, as shown in the above chart from the Bay Area Equity Atlas.

Neighborhood resources and segregation are critical for understanding education inequity in Oakland. As the Haas Institute Index puts it, “segregated residential patterns shape the life chances of its residents, who not only reside in racially segregated neighborhoods, but attend racially segregated schools

2017 was \$52,100⁶ and while those in the 80th percentile saw a 19% increase, workers in the 20th percentile actually saw a 7% drop in their wages between 2000 and 2015.⁷

6 Bay Area Council Economic Institute, “Continuing Growth and Unparalleled Innovation,” (July 2018) <http://www.bayareaeconomy.org/files/pdf/BayAreaEconomicProfile2018Web.pdf>

7 Bay Area Equity Atlas, “Income Growth: If growth were inclusive, lower-wage workers would see their incomes rising,” (2019). <https://bayareaequityatlas.org/indicators/income-growth#/>

8 Bay Area Equity Atlas, “Neighborhood opportunity: In an equitable region, access to opportunity-rich neighborhoods would not vary systematically by race,” (2019) <https://bayareaequityatlas.org/indicators/neighborhood-opportunity#/>

and have racially differentiated access to a plethora of public and private resources as well.⁹ The lack of access to resources and opportunities for academic and professional success perpetuates inequities that severely handicap Oakland's underserved communities. Education inequities in particular have long-term consequences for educational and professional opportunities, which in turn make it exponentially more difficult for families to build wealth and achieve success across generations.

The Importance of Kindergarten Readiness

In Oakland, only 18% of district-run schools have students that, on average, meet the standard for English Language Arts in third to eighth grade.¹⁰ This is critical information for advocating for early literacy—research proves that kindergarten readiness is crucial for later success in grade school,¹¹ which in turn is an indicator of high school graduation rates.¹² In Alameda County, research found that only 21% of children who were not ready for kindergarten actually met third grade English Language and/or Math standards. Worse, the study found that the gap identified in kindergarten actually widened by third grade for Black and Latinx children and children from households earning less than \$50,000.¹³ Nationally, longitudinal studies show that children who are not proficient readers by 3rd grade are four times less likely to graduate high school. Alternatively, a 3rd grader that is reading at grade level has an 89% chance of graduating from high school.¹⁴

Favorite CRB Moment

“My favorite moment was seeing my Buddy's face light up when I walked into a room with a book I had picked out just for her. She was so excited to read about a topic she was interested in that it was impossible not to get excited as well.”

TENAYA, 11TH GRADE

Summer Slide

Researchers note that the academic skills of many lower income students erode during the summer months, in what is called “summer slide.” Various research has tried to measure

9 Haas Institute, “Racial Segregation in the San Francisco Bay Area, Part 1,” (August, 1970). <https://haasinstitute.berkeley.edu/racial-segregation-san-francisco-bay-area#conclusion>

10 Oakland Achieves, “Oakland Achieves,” (August 2018). <https://oaklandachieves.org/>

11 Applied Survey Research, *Kindergarten Readiness and Later Achievement* (2018) <http://www.first5alameda.org/files/Alameda%20Longitudinal%20KRA%20Study%20Final.pdf>

12 Donald J. Hernandez, *Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation* (2012) <https://oaklandliteracycoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/AECF-DoubleJeopardy-2012-Full.pdf>

13 Applied Survey Research, (2018), *Kindergarten Readiness and Later Achievement* (2018) <http://www.first5alameda.org/files/Alameda%20Longitudinal%20KRA%20Study%20Final.pdf>

14 “Study: Third Grade Reading Predicts Later High School Graduation” http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/inside-school-research/2011/04/the_disquieting_side_effect_of.html



the loss of learning. One study found that students in the fall, on average, performed approximately one month behind where they were in the spring. Studies have also found that children from lower income households have higher levels of learning loss over the summer than their higher income peers.¹⁵ The effects of summer slide are cumulative: “by the time a struggling reader reaches middle school, summer reading loss has accumulated to a two-year lag in reading achievement.”¹⁶

On the other hand, high-quality summer programs have been found to have a positive effect on student performance.¹⁷ According to the California Department of Education, “children who attend high-quality early care and education programs are better prepared for kindergarten, have stronger language skills in the first years of elementary school and are less likely to repeat a grade or drop out of school.”¹⁸

15 Jennifer Sloan McCombs et al., “Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children’s Learning,” (2011) <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Making-Summer-Count-How-Summer-Programs-Can-Boost-Childrens-Learning.pdf>

16 “Kids & Family Reading Report.” The Summer Reading Imperative, 2018. <https://www.scholastic.com/readingreport/summer.html>

17 Jennifer Sloan McCombs et al., “Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children’s Learning,” (2011) <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Making-Summer-Count-How-Summer-Programs-Can-Boost-Childrens-Learning.pdf>

18 “Early Childhood Education.” Early Childhood Education - A Blueprint for Great Schools (CA Dept of Education), August 9, 2011. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/bp/bpstrategy5.asp#fn23>

Program Design and Best Practices

“Teaching is learning and learning is teaching.”

LOUISA, 8TH GRADE

Community Reading Buddies was designed to have a triple impact in the Bay Area: Buddies receive literacy and child development support to stem the tide of summer slide; Youth Mentors develop essential life and leadership skills they can use well into adulthood; and communities from all over the Bay Area come together over a common goal of supporting children’s education.

CRB is a youth-led reading program where middle and high school Youth Mentors engage one-on-one with preK-3rd grade Buddies for a summer of interactive reading and outdoor play. Mentors read with students, initiate literacy skill-building activities together, and engage in interactive play during each ses-



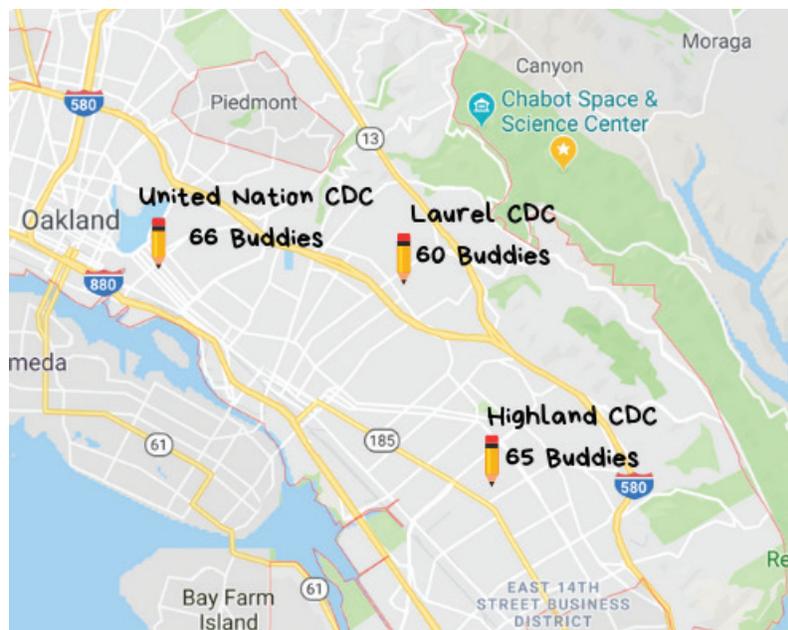
Favorite CRB Moment

“The first time I worked with one of my Buddies, she was really shy and barely wanted to pick a book, much less talk to me at all. By the end of that session, she was sitting on my lap and excitedly talking to me about the coloring page she was doing.”

CELIA, 10TH GRADE

Each Buddy receives two dedicated 90-minute sessions per week with their mentor through this proven and highly impactful approach. Youth Mentors undergo training that reflects effective practices for supporting early learners' development, ensuring maximum positive impact on the approximately 190 Buddies who participate each summer and creating an empowering experience for the program's 200 plus Youth Mentors.

CRB works with the Oakland Unified School District's (OUSD) Early Childhood Education department and its child development centers. CDCs serve students ages 3-5 years, with some running after-school and summer school-age programs. Enrollment is needs-based according to the families' gross monthly income and other factors. There is a full-tuition option for those who earn above the income maximum. This year, we brought CRB to three centers: Highland CDC, Laurel CDC, and United Nation CDC.



We can examine the opportunities of children in and around the neighborhoods where each CDC is located by using the Opportunity Atlas,¹⁹ which tracks the income of adults based on the neighborhood they grew up in. Highland CDC serves a population that on average will go on to earn between \$25,000-\$30,000/year; Laurel CDC's neighborhood population will go on to earn between \$30,000-\$50,000/year; and United Nation CDC's neighborhood population will go on to earn between \$35,000-\$50,000/year.

¹⁹ "The Opportunity Atlas," (2019) <https://www.opportunityatlas.org/>



Value for Buddies

Small group and one-on-one interactive reading has proven to be an invaluable tool for supporting the development of early literacy and language skills.^{20,21} According to the American Academy of Pediatrics' Council on Early Childhood, "reading with children in their infancy and preschool years is associated with higher language skills at school entry and later literacy acquisition."²² Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences highlights "one-on-one tutoring by qualified tutors for at-risk readers" as the gold standard for literacy support, along with "instruction for early readers in phonemic awareness and phonics."²³

“One important thing I learned from Reading Buddies was that if you're patient and kind with the Buddies, even if they are hard to work with at first, it's easy to build a good relationship with them.”

LEO, 12TH GRADE

20 Kenneth Rainin Foundation & NORC at the University of Chicago (2016). "Every Oakland Child Ready for Kindergarten." http://krfoundation.org/krf/site-content/uploads/2016/08/SchoolReadinessForChildren_RaininFoundation_NORC.pdf

21 Council on Early Childhood (2014, June 23). "Literacy Promotion: An Essential Component of Primary Care Pediatric Practice." *Pediatrics*, <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2014/06/19/peds.2014-1384>

22 Council on Early Childhood (2014, June 23). "Literacy Promotion: An Essential Component of Primary Care Pediatric Practice." *Pediatrics*, <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2014/06/19/peds.2014-1384>

23 Institute of Education Sciences (2003). *Identifying and implementing educational practices supported by rigorous evidence: A user-friendly guide*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 3.

Community Reading Buddies

How CRB's curriculum supports school readiness



Every Week

Oral language and conversation
Narrative skills: characters, setting, events, details
Vocabulary
Print motivation



Weeks 1 & 8: Meeting & Reflecting

Print awareness
Back-and-forth conversation
Book selection
Retelling familiar stories



Week 2: Alphabet Sounds

Phonological awareness
Recognizing and producing rhyming words
Identifying word ending sounds



Week 3: Alphabet Knowledge

Recognizing and naming letters of the alphabet
Letter-sound correspondences



Week 4: Counting

Counting objects
Writing numbers
Counting syllables in spoken words
Using math vocabulary



Week 5: Beginnings & Endings

Blending onsets and rimes of single-syllable spoken words
Segmenting words into onsets and rimes



Weeks 6 & 7: Sound Awareness

Isolating sounds in three-phoneme (CVC) words
Adding or substituting sounds to create new words
Blending 2 or 3 phonemes to create words

A 2011 RAND Corporation study on summer programs' effects on student learning found that high-quality summer programs with large effects include small group or one-on-one learning, alignment with school-year curricula, differentiated teaching and learning methods, and family involvement.²⁴ A Kenneth Rainin Foundation study of effective school readiness programs found that programs with large and medium effects on language and literacy include activities such as interactive book reading, differentiated instruction, and small group instruction.²⁵



CRB focuses on these aspects to provide education programming that supports young students' learning. Our one-on-one design ensures that students receive the individualized attention they need to develop strong literacy fundamentals. Youth Mentors focus on a different literacy skill each week using our program-specific mobile library and supplemental worksheets to increase awareness of sounds and language, promote letter recognition, and associate letters with their corresponding sound. These skills are in alignment with the California Department of Education's Pre-school Learning Foundations.²⁶

To ensure that Youth Mentors use evidence-based interactive techniques

to enrich the reading experience, they complete a pre-program training and are supported throughout the program to:

- Use books to help students understand how print works.
- Talk with children during reading to encourage critical thinking and narrative skills.
- Understand the importance of repetition for developing brains.
- Develop Buddies' fluency with alphabet letters and sounds.
- Support and encourage Buddies' exploration of cultural identity.

24 Jennifer Sloan McCombs et al., "Making Summer Count: How Summer Programs Can Boost Children's Learning," (2011) <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Making-Summer-Count-How-Summer-Programs-Can-Boost-Childrens-Learning.pdf>

25 Kenneth Rainin Foundation & NORC at the University of Chicago (2016). "Every Oakland Child Ready for Kindergarten." http://krfoundation.org/krf/site-content/uploads/2016/08/SchoolReadinessForChildren_RaininFoundation_NORC.pdf

26 California Department of Education (2008). "California Preschool Learning Foundations." (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/preschoollf.pdf>)



To measure each Buddy's progress, we train Youth Mentors to administer a pre- and post-assessment, which documents various literacy skills necessary for kindergarten readiness. The Calsoyas Group,²⁷ an education consultancy, originally designed the assessment, and CRB staff amended the evaluation instrument in alignment with our program design.

Value for Youth Mentors

Youth Mentors are the linchpin of CRB, serving as leaders of the program. Cross-age mentorship presents a unique opportunity not only for Buddies to learn from an older sibling figure but also for Youth Mentors to

develop important life skills through the challenges they must work through while engaging with their Buddies.

A Brandeis University report on "Learn & Serve" programs (programs that have both an educational component and a community service component) found positive short-term impacts on young people's civic attitudes, educational attitudes, and school performance.²⁸ Researchers have explored how young people can develop self-esteem and self-efficacy through experiential learning. When young people participate in building community, they expand their feelings of self-worth and a sense of something beyond themselves.²⁹ The Circle of Courage model outlines four foundations of self-esteem for youth: generosity, or the opportunity to show respect and concern; belonging, or the opportunity to establish trusting connections; independence, or the opportunity to build self-control and responsibility; and mastery, or the opportunity to solve problems and meet goals.³⁰

“*Reading Buddies challenged me because I can be shy or soft-spoken at times and being in a lead role pushed me to do more things out of my comfort zone.*”

AMIRA, 11TH GRADE

27 As full disclosure, Aleka Calsoyas, the Managing Partner of The Calsoyas Group, was a co-founder of Aspire Education Project. She no longer participates in the operations or governance of Aspire Education Project, but holds an Emeritus role on the Board.

28 Alan Melchior et al., "Summary Report: National Evaluation of Learn and Serve America," (1999) <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1011&context=slceeval>

29 Martin C.S. Wong, Tony C.M. Lau, Albert Lee. "The Impact of Leadership Programme on Self-Esteem and Self-Efficacy in School: A Randomized Controlled Trial," (PLOS ONE, December 18, 2012). <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0052023#s4>

30 Larry K. Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, Steve Van Bockern. "The Circle of Courage and Positive Psychology." <http://graingered.pbworks.com/f/Circle+of+Courage+Positive+Psychology.pdf>



CRB provides an environment where Youth Mentors have the opportunity to develop these skills and more. We provide mentors with the training and tools they need to engage with their buddies, but it is essentially their responsibility to use these resources to develop positive relationships with their Buddies. Through their experiences with their Buddies, Youth Mentors learn negotiation, positive reinforcement, patience, and self-management.

While they are given the independence to build on the four foundations of self-esteem on their own, the program also provides continuous support for Youth Mentors. Research advocates for the building of positive peer cultures, where young



people can provide feedback to one another and explore new behaviors and perceptions.³¹ Youth Mentors with previous CRB experience and/or other leadership experience have the opportunity to become “Lead Mentors.” They

“CRB requires you to learn all the time. The first to come to mind was when I had two Reading Buddies who were both rambunctious; they were both really hyper. I had to find a new way to engage them.”

JOHN, 9TH GRADE

are required to have a higher commitment to the program than other Youth Mentors and receive additional training on leadership and peer support. Along with staff, Lead Mentors lead pre-session meetings with introductions, icebreakers, and setting expectations; facilitate a debrief session with mentors in between reading and playing sessions; assist staff with set up and clean up tasks; and provide informal support to new and younger mentors in the form of friendship-building and confidence-boosting.

provide informal support to new and younger mentors in the form of friendship-building and confidence-boosting.

At the end of the program, Youth Mentors complete a post-program survey to measure their growth and offer feedback for the program. Adapted from the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development questionnaire,³² the survey asks how Youth Mentors felt they grew in 19 different life skills categories.

31 Erik K. Laursen, “Rather Than Fixing Kids - Build Positive Peer Cultures,” (2005). http://reclaimingjournal.com/sites/default/files/journal-article-pdfs/14_3_Laursen.pdf

32 Seevers, Dormody & Clason, “Youth Leadership Life Skills Development Scale,” (1995). <http://youthrex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Youth-Leadership-Life-Skills-Development-Skills.pdf>



Value for Communities

CRB prides itself on being a community-based program built by, for, and with Bay Area communities. CRB staff work closely with teachers and administrators to make both the planning and implementation of the program successful. Youth Mentors

Favorite CRB Moment

“During playtime when my Buddy had to leave he first dragged me over to meet his family who told me about how much he enjoyed Reading Buddies. They told me what an impact the books we shared had.”

FREDDIE, 12TH GRADE

reflect the diversity of the Bay Area, coming from a wide range of ethnic, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds and bringing different perspectives to a safe peer environment. CRB also works with our partner, Tandem, Partners in Early Learning, through Family Reading Nights

to engage Buddies and their families throughout the school year. Whatever their role, everyone has a common purpose: the education and well-being of young learners.

Buddy Experience

“What do you do with your reading buddy?”

“Have fun.”

AVERY, 5 YEARS OLD

This summer, CRB worked with three CDCs throughout Oakland: Highland CDC, Laurel CDC, and United Nation CDC. At United Nation, we worked with three preK classrooms. At Highland CDC we worked with two preK classrooms and one summer school-age classroom. And at Laurel CDC we worked with two preK classrooms and one summer school-age classroom. In total, CRB Youth Mentors served nine classrooms, reading with a total of 191 Buddies.

Using pre- and post-assessments administered by Youth Mentors, we evaluated the improvement in our Buddies' skills. Over

Favorite CRB Moment

“Doing the handshake with Domonic.”

SUNDUS, 10TH GRADE

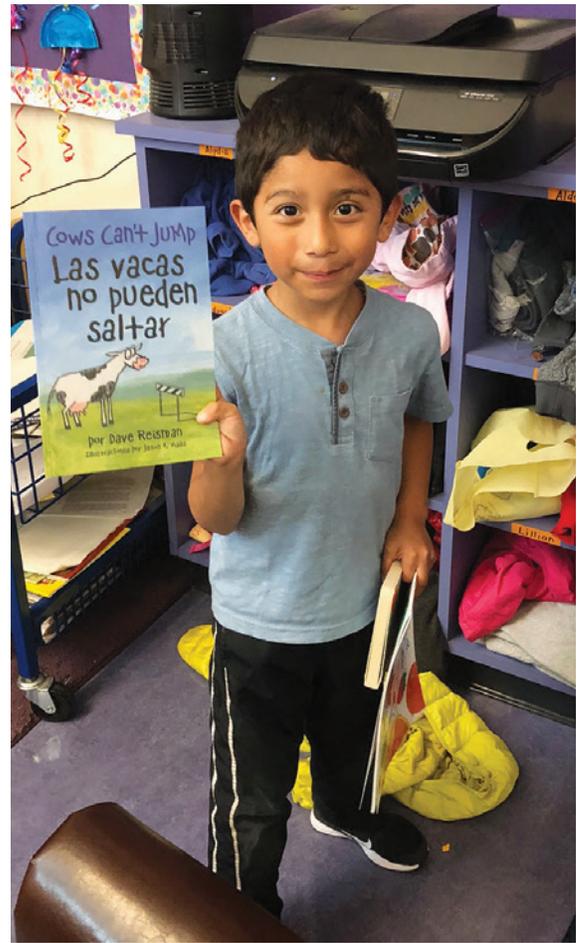


our eight-week program, Buddies were able to reinforce what they learned during the previous school year to prevent summer learning loss and expand their capacity for reading in the upcoming school year.

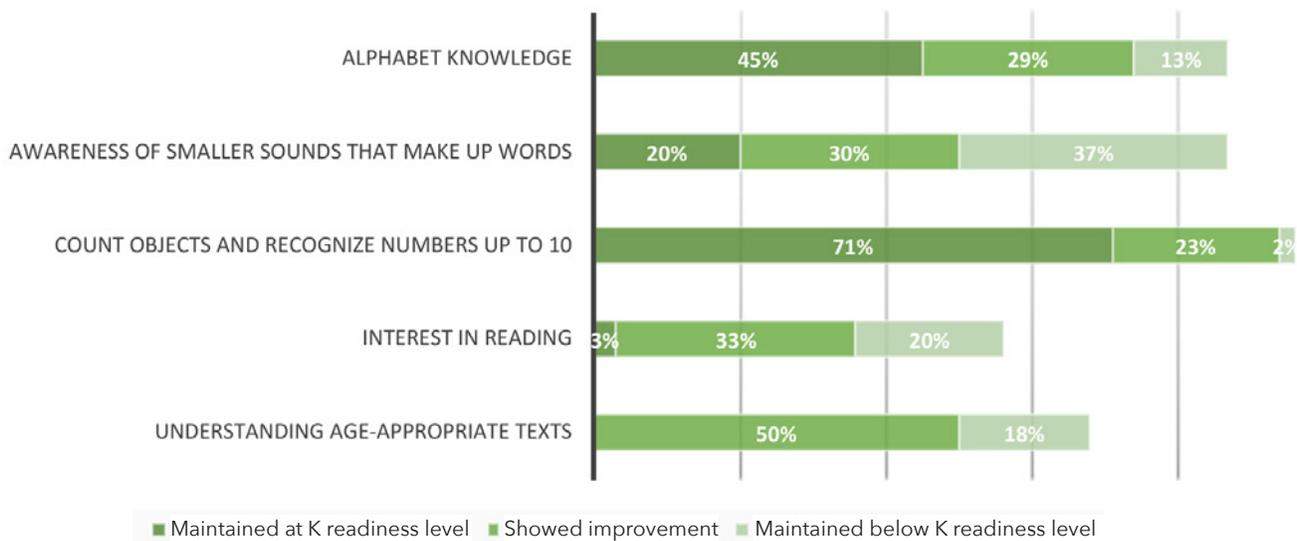
Youth Mentors recorded their Buddies' growth in seven critical areas correlating with school readiness and desired program outcomes:

- Alphabet knowledge
- Phonemic awareness
- Number sense
- Interest in reading
- Understanding of age-appropriate texts
- Social skills
- Active involvement

Mentors observed that Buddies either maintained or improved in all seven categories:

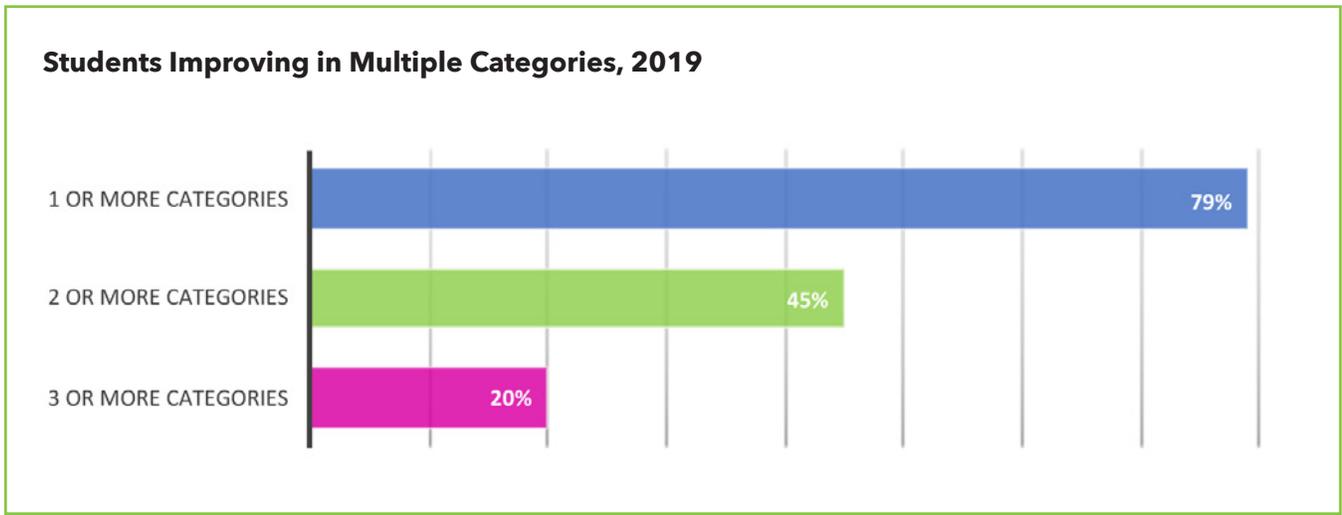


Student Growth in Each Category, 2019



This year, we continued to measure the components of the program that stimulate oral language development and conversational skills. 59% of students improved their involvement in activities with their mentors, while 66% increased back-and-forth conversation during outside play.

Most Buddies showed measurable improvement over the course of the sessions. 79% of Buddies improved in at least one category, and 20% showed improvement in at least three categories.



Teacher Feedback

Teachers and aides at all three CDC sites provided feedback to CRB staff by anonymously completing an end-of-program survey. Their responses reflected praise and appreciation for the program. Teachers noted that Youth Mentors were positive role models and that they had an encouraging impact on their students. 100% of respondents observed that their students increased their engagement in back-and-forth communication; 88% said their students increased their ability to observe, anticipate, and reason about cause and effect. This same percentage observed increased interest in literacy and literacy activities and an increased understanding of numbers.

“*Outstanding program! The students were always excited about seeing their Reading Buddies and love reading. Excellent program that more schools and the community should know about.*”

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER EDUCATOR

Youth Mentor Experience

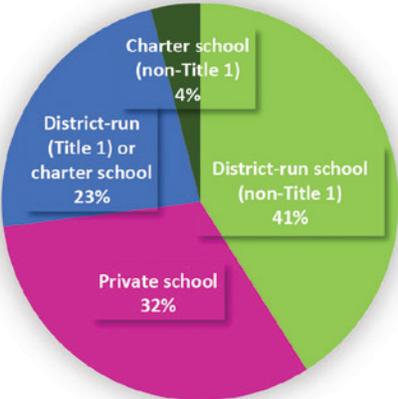
“ An important thing that I learned throughout the program was to not judge or make assumptions about anyone. Throughout the summer I got to interact with so many kids as well as people my age which really taught me the value in seeing everyone as equal. Because of that, reading buddies has completely changed my outlook on life and has made me into a better member of my community.”

ERIKA, 11TH GRADE

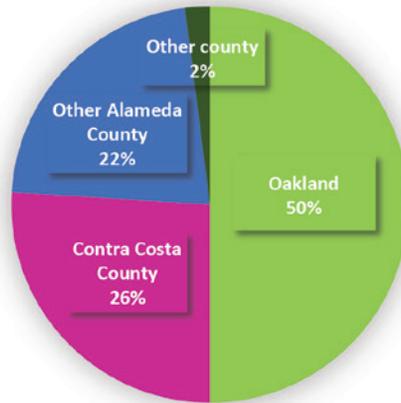
This summer, 207 middle and high school Youth Mentors collectively spent over 4,300 hours providing early literacy support while developing their own critical life skills. They represented 51 public, charter, and private schools throughout the East Bay, primarily from Alameda (73%) and Contra Costa (26%) counties, with 59% from district-run schools, 31% from private schools, and 8% from charter schools. Approximately 23% of mentors attended a public or charter school that receives Title I funding. 28% of Youth Mentors were returning volunteers, with about 47% of those returning in their third year or more.



Where Mentors Go to School, By School Type, 2019

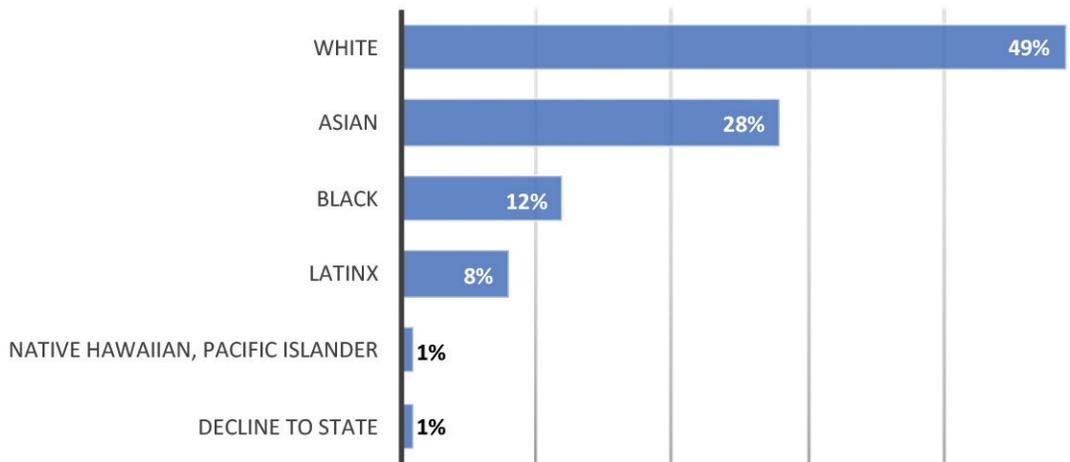


Where Mentors Go to School, By Location, 2019



Youth Mentors represented the diversity of the Oakland community. Of our summer 2019 cohort, 50% of mentors were from Oakland schools, a notable increase from 39% in 2018. Of those from Oakland, 50% attended private schools, 37% attended Oakland district-run schools, and 13% attend charter schools. Of all Youth Mentors, 50% were youth of color, a marked increase from 43% in 2018.

Mentor Racial/Ethnic Backgrounds, 2019



Each of our 207 Youth Mentors contributed an average of 21 hours over two months to CRB, almost double our minimum requirement of 12 hours and an increase from the 15 hours averaged by mentors in 2018. This reflects CRB's commitment to creating a flexible and rewarding volunteer experience for our mentors, where they feel supported yet empowered to manage the challenges that come with working with young learners.



Our group of mentors included 13 young people from the Oakland School District's Exploring College, Career and Community Options (ECCCO) program and four from Girls Inc.'s Eureka internship program. These individuals received a small stipend

Favorite CRB Moment

“It was really nice when my Buddies were excited to see me and when they were excited to read and play.”

ALEXANDRA, 8TH GRADE

from their respective programs for their participation in CRB, an acknowledgment of the need for some young people to earn money during their school breaks. Each of the 17 participants contributed an average of 54 hours to the program, almost three times the overall average contribution.

Lead Mentors complete extra leadership training and must commit to more hours than the average volunteer. This year, CRB welcomed 28 Lead Mentors, each contributing an average of 26 hours to the program.

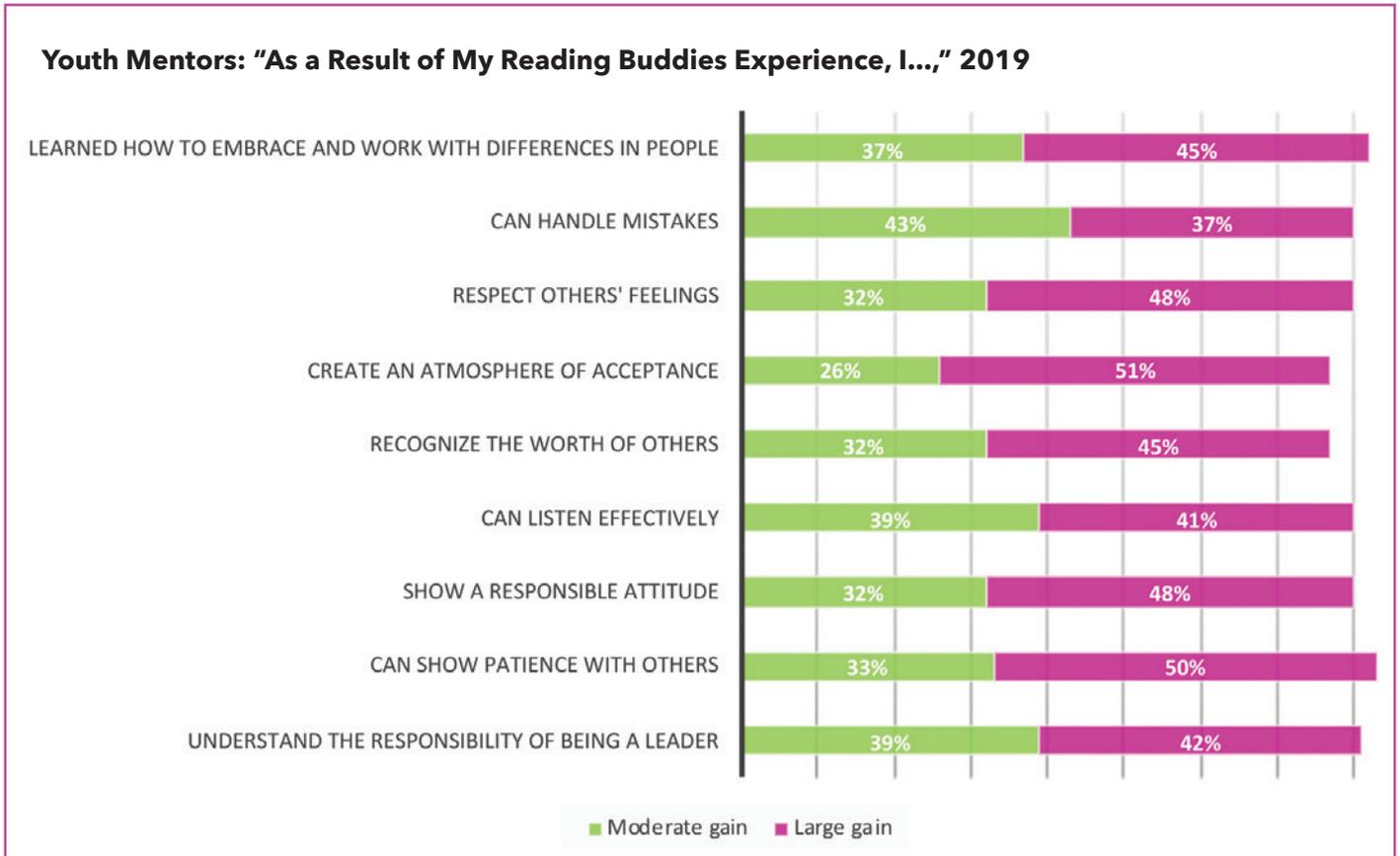
In addition to the 207 East Bay middle and high school volunteers, we hosted 15 volunteers from the Center for Talented Youth Civic Leadership Institute. The group of 9th graders came from all over the nation to participate in a three-week summer service-learning program at UC Berkeley. Together, they contributed a total of 30 hours to the CRB program.

Mentor Growth

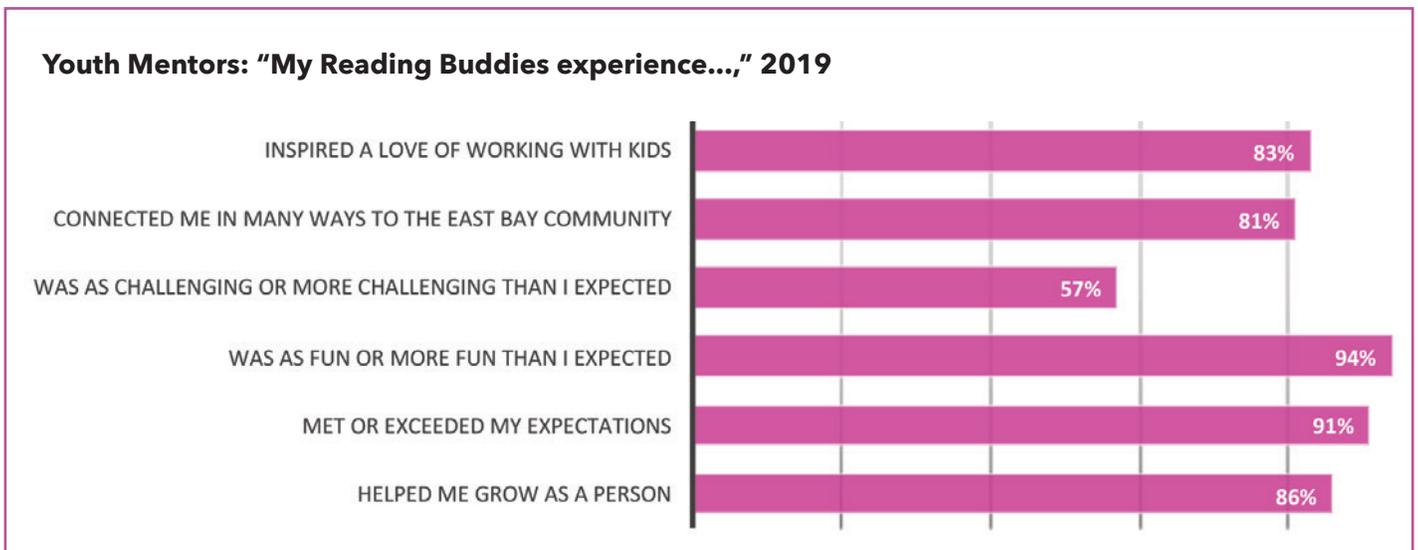
Upon completion of the program, Youth Mentors responded to a detailed survey regarding their participation in CRB. The survey, adapted from the Youth Leadership Life Skills Development questionnaire,³³ offers insight into how CRB supports the growth of our mentors' skills and citizenship.

33 Seevers, Dormody & Clason, (1995). <http://youthrex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Youth-Leadership-Life-Skills-Development-Skills.pdf>

The survey asked Youth Mentors to self-evaluate their gain in 19 life skill areas as a result of the program. A majority (over 60%) reported moderate to large gains in 18 areas, including “understand the responsibility of being a leader” (81%); “can put others’ needs before my own” (76%); “can listen effectively” (80%); and “create an atmosphere of acceptance” (77%). The chart below illustrates the top nine areas of improvement:



Youth Mentors reported a high level of satisfaction with the program:



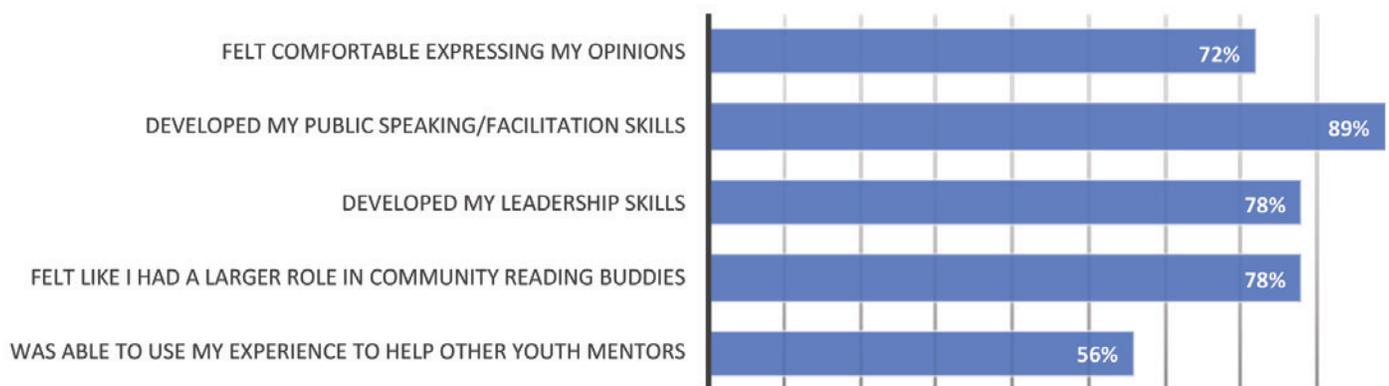


A majority of Youth Mentors felt like they received guidance from CRB staff, teachers, and peers; talked with peers about working with students; made friends with other Youth Mentors; and received thanks and validation for their work.

Lead Mentors

All Lead Mentor survey respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with their experience and extra responsibilities:

Lead Mentors: "As a Result of my Lead Mentor Experience, I...," 2019



Family Engagement

“My favorite Reading Buddies moment this summer was being able to meet my buddies’ parent and show how much they have improved.”

CHLOE, 10TH GRADE

Family engagement is an important aspect of CRB, as families are the ones who continue to foster their children’s love of reading. In the 2018-2019 school year, CRB and Tandem teamed up to host four Family Reading Nights, serving 64 adults and 71 students. These special evenings were celebrations for students and their families to join in the fun of reading. Each Family Reading Night included a book read-aloud, a family workshop on how to share books at home, literacy-related activities for students, and a book giveaway. Some Family Reading Nights featured local authors and performers. Approximately 3-5 Youth Mentors participated in each of these events by leading the literacy-related activities for the students.



Favorite CRB Moment

“My favorite moment was when one of my Buddies’ parent came and thanked me for helping his son enjoy reading more.”

LEO, 12TH GRADE

CRB invited families to the last day of the program for several End of Summer Celebrations. In total, we hosted five celebrations attended by 202 students (both Buddies and Youth Mentors) and 60 family members. These events were similar to Family Reading Nights but allowed more interaction between mentors and families. Youth Mentors led an interactive group read-aloud for families, using the skills they learned in the program. Each Buddy received a certificate for participating in the program and chose several books to take home. Families meeting Youth Mentors, many for the first time, talked about the impact the volunteers had on their children’s learning. Families also met CRB staff to discuss the program and offer valuable feedback. Overwhelmingly, families were pleased with the program and shared how CRB had guided and influenced their children to enjoy reading.

Over the course of the school year and summer session, we handed out almost 1,000 books to Buddies to take home and read with family members: 180 during the school year, and 818 in the summer. Tandem contributed 255 of these books.

CRB By the Numbers

The total program cost for CRB was \$71,105.71. The cost per program participant (Buddies and Youth Mentors) came to \$178.66 each, a decrease from \$193.17 per participant in 2018.

A majority of costs were for staff support required to organize logistics, manage all volunteers at each site, and oversee classrooms. For the first time, Aspire brought on a full-time Director of Early Literacy to plan and implement CRB, strengthening the foundations to grow a solid, impactful program.

CRB received generous funding from a number of foundations, corporations, and individual donors, many of whom were families of mentors. In total, community support equaled \$71,600.

Total Program Cost (Actual): \$71,105.71

Total Program Funding: \$71,600

Surplus funding: \$494.29

All surplus funding will go towards CRB 2020. Hachette Book Group, Chronicle Books, and East Bay Children's Book Project gave in-kind contributions of books to our mobile library.

As we enter our 26th year, CRB continues to find ways to expand and improve. In 2020 we are looking to increase the number of sites served and recruit more mentors in order to reach more young learners. This growth in numbers, along with a continuous drive to understand best practices, ensures that we will continue to have a strong impact on closing the literacy gap in the Oakland community and for young people throughout the Bay Area.

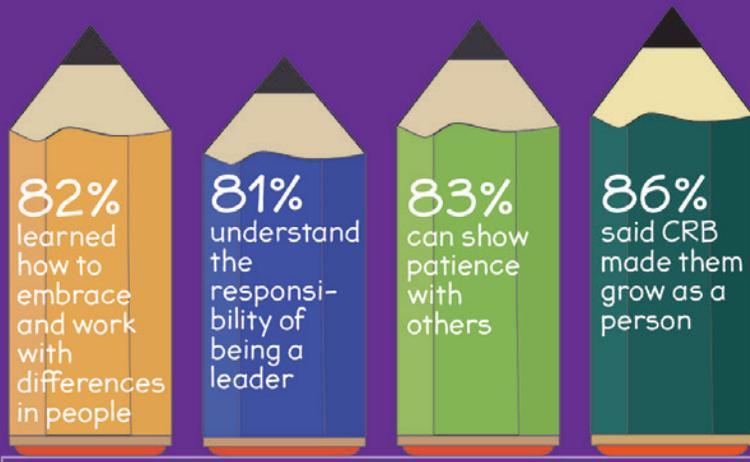
CRB

Community Reading Buddies

2019

BUDDY OUTCOMES

87%	68%	66%
increased or maintained their phonemic awareness	increased or maintained their understanding of age-appropriate texts	increased conversation skills

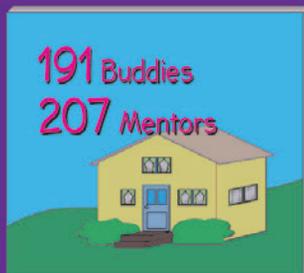


MENTOR OUTCOMES

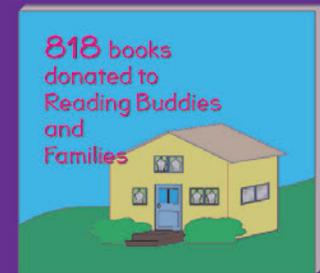
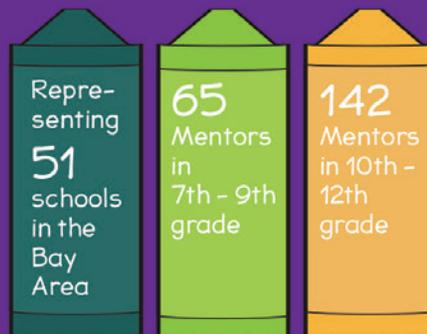


ABOUT THE BUDDIES

3	145	46
Child Development Centers served in Oakland	Buddies in Pre-K	Buddies in 1st - 3rd grade



ABOUT THE MENTORS >





2019 Aspire Board of Directors

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Aspire Education Project

1721 BROADWAY, SUITE 201
OAKLAND, CA 94612
510-658-7500
INFO@ASPIREEDUCATION.ORG
WWW.ASPIREEDUCATION.ORG
EIN 20-5274459



2019 CRB Staff

Allison Duncan, Program Assistant
Casey Costello, Program Intern
Marco Guillen, Program Intern
Ridha Kapoor, Program Intern