Executive Summary

Early literacy skill development provides a foundation for later academic achievement. In recent years, San Joaquin County’s third grade literacy proficiency has increased five percentage points (39% in 2018 from 34% in 2013); however, it still lags behind the California state average (49%).

First 5 San Joaquin aims to improve these outcomes by investing in early literacy programs. Efforts include increasing access to age- and culturally-appropriate books, supporting families to have the skills and resources to read with their children, and increasing awareness of the importance of early literacy. Funded programs include Raising A Reader, Read to Me, Stockton!, and the Talk. Read. Sing. Draw. Play. marketing campaign implemented in partnership with the University of the Pacific’s Beyond Our Gates Initiative.

This report presents key findings from an evaluation of First 5 San Joaquin’s early literacy efforts in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-2018. Key findings and recommendations from this evaluation include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Finding</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First 5 San Joaquin’s early literacy programs reached thousands of low-income children and families.</td>
<td>Continue to invest in a multi-pronged approach to early literacy. Consider ways to expand activities and broaden reach to additional high-need communities (e.g., rural, non-native English-speaking families).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Talk. Read. Sing. Draw. Play. (TRSDP) marketing campaign has increased public attention on the importance of early literacy through multiple media platforms (e.g., social media, flyers, mini-billboards, sponsorships).</td>
<td>Continue to build on the successful TRSDP marketing campaign to include other forms of social media (e.g., Instagram) and expand the available media platforms for early literacy messaging (e.g., short videos).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First 5 San Joaquin promotes the integration of early literacy activities into a cross-sector network of community partners, including service providers and local businesses.</td>
<td>Explore opportunities to strengthen partners’ expertise of early learning by expanding training opportunities and providing ongoing technical assistance. Continue to widen the network of partners that support early literacy efforts to increase the number of early literacy champions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2https://www.pacific.edu/Documents/marketing/acrobat/2018%20Reading%20Report%20FINAL.pdf
Background

First 5 San Joaquin supports the well-being of young children by investing in programs that build literacy skills and behaviors from an early age. This includes increasing children’s access to age- and culturally-appropriate books, supporting families to have the skills and resources to read with their children, and increasing awareness of the importance of early literacy. Funded programs that address First 5 San Joaquin’s early literacy goals include:

- **Raising A Reader family literacy program.** Raising A Reader (RAR) is a comprehensive literacy program that helps families build reading routines. Each week, four age- and culturally-appropriate books are introduced in the home and classroom in a rotating book bag. Families also receive training to help them read with their children, and are introduced to the public library to encourage them to continue book sharing. A bilingual RAR program is incorporated into all First 5 San Joaquin preschool and home visitation programs.

- **Read to Me, Stockton! book distribution program.** Read to Me, Stockton! (RTMS) is a family literacy program affiliated with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Every month, RTMS sends books to children ages 0-5 living in the 12 Stockton zip codes. The purpose of RTMS is to increase children’s access to high-quality age-appropriate books.

- **Talk. Read. Sing. Draw. Play. marketing campaign.** Talk. Read. Sing. Draw. Play. (TRSDP) is an early literacy and family engagement marketing campaign that raises awareness about the role that families play in increasing their child’s early brain development and prepare children for learning. This campaign is implemented in partnership with the University of the Pacific’s Beyond Our Gates Initiative. In addition to funding TRSDP’s various marketing strategies, First 5 San Joaquin partners with community organizations to integrate TRSDP messages and materials into their agencies’ programs and services.

This report presents key findings from an evaluation of First 5 San Joaquin’s early literacy efforts in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-2018. This evaluation sought to understand the reach of First 5 San Joaquin’s early literacy efforts and the impact on children, families, and the early literacy system. Findings are informed by surveys completed by participating families, interviews with funded programs and community partners, and marketing campaign analytics, as well as data from the First 5 San Joaquin Client and Service database. For a full description of evaluation methods, please refer to the Technical Appendix.

A note about the data

This report includes quantitative data from each of the three funded literacy programs. However, each program collects slightly different data given the type of program and intensity of services. Therefore, the sample sizes (n’s) presented throughout the report vary depending on the available data. More details on each data source can be found in the Technical Appendix.
By investing in multiple early literacy strategies, First 5 San Joaquin reached thousands of children, the majority of whom are from high-need populations.

In FY 2017-2018, First 5 San Joaquin’s funded efforts reached thousands of young children and families through multiple literacy strategies.

- Raising A Reader served **1,504 families and children** ages 0-5 through a First 5 San Joaquin preschool or home visitation program across San Joaquin County.

- First 5 San Joaquin funded Read to Me, Stockton! to distribute books to **1,676 newly enrolled children** ages 0-5 living in Stockton.

- Talk. Read. Sing. Draw. Play. mini-billboards resulted in **640,000 impressions** and Facebook advertisements reached approximately **50,000 individuals**.³

As intended, First 5 San Joaquin early literacy programs reached high-need populations (Exhibit 1). The majority of children served were Hispanic/Latinx (60 percent) and 46 percent spoke Spanish as their primary language. In addition, the vast majority (85 percent) of all program participants lived in Stockton, with almost half of participants living in zip codes with high rates of poverty (95205, 95206, and 95207). Nearly three-quarters of children used Medi-Cal as their primary insurance, indicating that they likely live in low-income households. Interview respondents also reported serving children with special needs, families who are undocumented, single parents, and grandparents who are primary caregivers.

**Exhibit 1. First 5 San Joaquin early literacy programs reach high-need populations⁴**

**Of the families who participated in early literacy programs...**

- **85%** lived in Stockton
- **71%** of children were covered by Medi-Cal
- **60%** identified as Hispanic/Latinx
- **46%** spoke Spanish as a primary language

---

³ The reach of the TRSDP marketing campaign was estimated based upon the location of each advertisement and the approximate number of individuals likely to see the information.

⁴ Insurance, race/ethnicity, and language data are only reported by RAR funded programs. Zip code data is reported by both RAR and RTMS.
Families and children increased literacy skills after participating in Raising A Reader and Read to Me, Stockton!

Raising A Reader (RAR) is a comprehensive family literacy program. Families who participate in RAR completed a survey at the beginning of the program and after 26 weeks of participation. Survey data demonstrated that on average, families increased their engagement in literacy activities after participating in RAR. These activities include increasing how often they read to their children, how often they visit the library, and how many books they have in the home (Exhibit 2).

At the beginning of their participation, 42 percent of families reported reading books to their children most or every day, which increased to almost three-quarters of families (70 percent) by the end of the program.

Similarly, the number of parents who reported visiting the library in the last month increased from 41 percent to 66 percent. As described by one community partner, their program connects families to the library by “host[ing] our Raising A Reader workshops at the local library so parents can get to know the librarians by name and face. Also, we walk them through the steps on how to apply for a library card and give them a tour as well.”

Finally, RAR increased the number of children’s books available in the household. Before participating in RAR, 41 percent of children had five or fewer books available to them at home, compared to 11 percent after RAR. In addition, after program participation, 29 percent of families had 6-10 books and 60 percent had more than 10 books in the home.

Exhibit 2. More families engaged in literacy activities after program participation, compared to before
On average, children in these families also increased their literacy skills throughout their time in the program (Exhibit 3). For example, an average of 45 percent of children listened quietly while reading before the program, while 55 percent of children exhibited this literacy skill after the program. Likewise, children demonstrated an increase in other literacy skills including turning the pages of the book (seven percentage points) and asking questions about the story (six percentage points) while a caregiver read to them.

Exhibit 3. Children increased their literacy skills from **before** to **after** the program

**“The last time I read to my child, they...”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Before (%)</th>
<th>After (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quietly listened</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turned pages</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asked questions</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Read to Me, Stockton!** is a book distribution program that increases children’s access to high quality, age-appropriate books. Between November 2017 and January 2018, 2,531 participants of this program received an online survey asking them about their literacy skills and behaviors. Similar to Raising A Reader, families increased their engagement in literacy activities after participating in Read to Me, Stockton! For example, of the total number of survey respondents (n=163), 94 percent reported spending more time reading since receiving books from Read to Me, Stockton! Survey respondents also shared examples of how the program has had an impact on their children and family. One parent said, “A mi hijo le alegra cuando llega un libro en el correo le encantan los libros. Muchas gracias por los libros.” [“My child loves books, they get really happy when the books come in the mail. Thank you so much for the books.”] Another parent shared, “When I check the mail and get a book, I immediately start reading it to my baby.”
Raising A Reader: Literacy engagement increased for Spanish-speaking families

Survey data demonstrated that all children benefit from participation in First 5 San Joaquin’s Raising A Reader (RAR) literacy program. However, children and families who primarily speak Spanish experienced even more notable gains. On average, Spanish-speaking families showed greater gains in the frequency of reading with their child, the number of library visits per month, and the percent with more than five books in the home compared to English-speaking families (Exhibit 4). Child age and program type may help to explain the differences in these data. For example, Spanish-speaking families, in comparison to English-speaking families, were more likely to have younger children ages 0-3 enrolled in RAR (53 versus 24 percent) and participate in RAR through home visitation (79 versus 30 percent) rather than though a preschool (21 versus 70 percent) program.

Exhibit 4. Spanish-speaking families experienced notable gains in family literacy activities before versus after participation, compared to English-speaking families

Read books most or every day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visited the library in the last month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Had more than 5 books in the home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tell the story in Spanish. Talk to your child in Spanish. You can make up questions. You can make up a story. Whatever works for you. The important thing is to have the child on your lap, talking to your child, looking at a book. Letting your child feel, touch, see a book. Talk about the colors, the actions, that kind of thing.

– First 5 San Joaquin partner
Talk. Read. Sing. Draw. Play. (TRSDP) partners report that campaign materials are engaging, effective, and accessible.

TRSDP marketing campaign materials demonstrate how talking, reading, singing, drawing, and playing help prepare children for learning (Exhibit 5). Materials are available in both English and Spanish, and appear in a variety of formats, including mini-billboards, countertop displays in neighborhood markets, flyers, and paid advertisements on Facebook.

Interview respondents described TRSDP campaign materials as engaging, which has helped to increase public attention on the importance of early literacy. “It’s such a well-designed, beautiful campaign,” said one interview respondent. They added, “It really captures your attention and then you remember it.”

Interview respondents also noted how effective the TRSDP campaign is because it complements other early literacy efforts in the county, such as the First 5 California Talk. Read. Sing. marketing campaign, creating a uniform message promoting early literacy. One interview respondent said, “Parents know [the message] because they see it or hear it on the radio. They see it on TV. They see it on the buses. We bring it to them. It’s everywhere.” Finally, interview respondents stated that they appreciated the teaching options TRSDP offers parents to strengthen their child’s literacy skills. One partner said, “[Parents] may not be able to read but they can sing. They can play. And all that just helps increase a child’s development.”

“[Parents] may not be able to read but they can sing. They can play. And all that just helps increase a child’s development.”

– First 5 San Joaquin partner
The impact of the First 5 San Joaquin literacy efforts are evident in the extent to which they are present in the community. In addition to the media campaign, First 5 San Joaquin collaborates with organizations from different sectors to integrate TRSDP messages into their existing programs. One respondent shared, "I see First 5 San Joaquin out there in the community and involved in just about every early literacy effort." A sample of First 5 San Joaquin early literacy partners who use TRSDP materials are listed in Exhibit 6.

**Exhibit 6. First 5 San Joaquin collaborates with organizations to integrate early literacy messages into existing community programs and services**

**Books for Babes**, a project initiated by the Tau Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma, Stockton, distributes books and TRSDP flyers to families with infants born at St. Joseph's Medical Center and San Joaquin General Hospital.

**Community Medical Centers** participates in First 5 San Joaquin funded Reach Out and Read, a national program that trains medical and dental professionals to integrate literacy activities into regular check-ups. Books are distributed at two dental clinics.

**Human Services Agency, Child Protective Services** distributes TRSDP flyers to families in their waiting rooms and visiting area.

**SJ TEETH** (San Joaquin Treatment and Education for Everyone on Teeth and Health) distributes children’s books as part of its community outreach and education efforts.

**First 5 sponsored community events** distribute TRSDP materials.

**Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** distributed 30,000 tote bags with TRSDP grocery store tip sheets to nutrition and breastfeeding class participants.
Improving early literacy is a collaborative effort, led by First 5 San Joaquin.

Interview respondents articulated the collaborative nature to improving early literacy in San Joaquin County, and noted the leadership of First 5 San Joaquin in particular. One respondent said, “That's the beauty of First 5. It is such a collaborative, and it's connecting with all the agencies and all the folks that make a difference. The best part is we all work together so well.” Another respondent said that the backbone to the collaborative is through First 5 San Joaquin. They continued, “We all work together to try and resolve the issue of preparing our children for school, making sure that they're healthy, making sure that they have fun activities, and their parents care about them.”

One of the key outcomes of this collaboration is that agencies are intentionally connecting children and families to available early literacy resources and referring them to additional services. This includes Read to Me, Stockton!, local libraries, and online resources such as the First 5 San Joaquin and First 5 California websites. One respondent described the importance of making referrals to other early literacy programs to support families’ ongoing learning, “We collaborate with other organizations so that people keep this early literacy information going. It just doesn't stop with baby's first book or with this flyer. There are other resources that we want parents to know about and to use.” The partnerships between agencies have furthered the ability to support early learning in the community. A respondent shared, “The partnership we've all created here in the county working collaboratively with different agencies and different programs are focused on bringing early literacy to young children.”
Conclusion and Recommendations

Family literacy programs, TRSDP materials, and collaborations with local organizations, have helped to increase the reach of early literacy efforts and improve families’ literacy skills. Specifically, First 5 San Joaquin’s early literacy efforts are effectively engaging high-need populations, families are reading more often to their children, and organizations from different sectors are collaborating to improve early literacy countywide. The following recommendations are based on key findings from program data as well as suggestions offered by interview respondents.

- **Expand the reach of literacy programs.** Future efforts should consider opportunities to expand literacy programs to additional high-need communities. For example, First 5 San Joaquin could partner with organizations serving migrant families and rural communities. Program data also shows that Spanish-speaking families had greater gains in literacy activities after participating in programs. First 5 San Joaquin should continue to reach out to non-native English-speaking families.

- **Expand the reach of Talk. Read. Sing. Draw. Play.** Partners identified several opportunities to expand literacy messaging in the community by utilizing diverse media platforms. For example, partners suggested increasing early literacy messaging using media (such as a short video) to deliver these messages to families. Partners also suggested building on the successful paid advertisement placements on Facebook to include other forms of social media (e.g., Instagram).

- **Increase training opportunities for providers to strengthen early literacy expertise.** Partners reported wanting more literacy-related professional development and training for service providers in the county. Specifically, partners suggested trainings on the benefits of early literacy and the goals of the First 5 San Joaquin early literacy campaign; strategies to support families to build early literacy skills and access resources; and opportunities for literacy-related continuing education for home visitors. In addition, providers requested access to ongoing technical assistance for general questions and tips as they learn to integrate literacy activities into program activities.

- **Continue to widen the network of partners that support early literacy efforts.** Partners reported a desire for continued efforts to strengthen systems to ensure equity in early literacy across the community. For example, partners expressed the need to continue expanding the number and type of community partners engaged in early literacy efforts, including non-early care and education service providers, hospitals, labor and delivery units, faith-based organizations, and local businesses like banks and retail stores. Partners suggested that trainings for community partners would also help to increase the number of early literacy champions within organizations partnering with First 5 San Joaquin.
Technical Appendix

Methods

This evaluation report includes data from the following sources:

- **Raising A Reader pre- and post-family literacy surveys (n=948).** The family literacy survey is administered to parents and caregivers before program participation and after participating in Raising A Reader for 26 weeks as part of their child’s preschool or home visitation program. The survey asks parents and caregivers about how often they read to their child, how often they visit the library, and how many children’s books are in the home. This report includes findings from matched pre- and post-family literacy surveys collected in FY 2017-2018, which represents a sample of the total number of families who participated (n=1,504). The total number of responses varies across questions as not all parents answered every question on the survey.

- **Read to Me, Stockton! post only family literacy survey (n=163).** Between November 2017 and January 2018, 2,531 parents and caregivers who had registered to receive books from Read to Me, Stockton! received an online family literacy survey. The retrospective survey questions are similar to those on the Raising A Reader pre- and post-family literacy surveys, and was available in English and Spanish. The survey asked how long they had been receiving books from Read to Me, Stockton!, how many books were in the home, and whether the frequency of reading at home had changed since participating in Read to Me, Stockton!

- **Interviews with funded program staff and community partners (n=7).** Interviews were conducted with First 5 San Joaquin funded programs and community partners. These interviews gathered the perspective of local and systems-level stakeholders to better understand how First 5 San Joaquin efforts are benefitting children and families and supporting children’s early literacy efforts countywide.

- **Client and Service database.** The First 5 San Joaquin Client and Service Database provided information about the characteristics of children and parents who received early literacy services during FY 2017-2018.

---

5 The Read to Me, Stockton! survey was sent to current (n=1,676) and previously enrolled (n=855) families.