

FINALIST: READING PARTNERS



Overview: READING PARTNERS' (www.readingpartners.org) overarching goal is to help low-income youth at a system-wide level reach proficiency by producing measurable improvement in students' literacy skills. READING PARTNERS helps those in kindergarten through second grade achieve mastery of foundation reading skills appropriate for their grade level. By significantly improving student learning rates for third- and fourth-grade students, the program puts older students on track to or reading at grade level by year-end. Through its well-designed and honed model, proven results, nationwide reach, and funding sources, READING PARTNERS is on a trajectory "to move the needle" in children's literacy.

READING PARTNERS has worked to improve children's literacy and life opportunities since 1999 when three community leaders launched a one-on-one tutoring program to help struggling readers. Started in the Bay Area, READING PARTNERS is now a nationwide program that recruits volunteers to tutor students using their evidence-based curriculum. Given its local founding, much of the research, new innovations, etc. is developed and tested in the Bay Area and then replicated in other regions. The model is well designed and skillfully coordinated with significant training and support for volunteer tutors and on-site coordinators.

READING PARTNERS identifies the highest need Title 1 public and public charter elementary schools in the East Bay, where a large portion of students both qualify for free or reduced price lunch through the National School Lunch Program and are reading between one month and two-and-a-half years below grade level equivalency.

Studies show that students who do not read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave high school without a diploma than proficient readers.

Grant Request: The Impact 100 Grant would fund a new reading center at Laurel Elementary in Oakland (a Title 1 school in which 79% are low-income and 28% are English Language Learners) where the program would enroll more than 40 students for the 2017-18 school year. The principal and teachers at Laurel would identify those students with the greatest need who would benefit from being in the program. Target students are prioritized for enrollment, and teachers continue to refer students to the program throughout the year.

READING PARTNERS would recruit at least 50 volunteers to tutor students using their evidence-based curriculum. Student-tutor pairs work for 45 minutes twice per week, using an individualized reading plan based on regular student skill assessments. The program also provides supplements in-school tutoring with home-involvement strategies, free age- and skill-appropriate reading materials for students to start home libraries. Additionally, bi-annual reading celebration events engage parents and families to celebrate students' progress.

READING PARTNERS leverages AmeriCorps by providing a fully trained AmeriCorps member to staff the reading center to support tutors and students alike, as well as ensure that the curriculum is delivered with fidelity.

A portion of the grant funds would support programmatic staff, volunteer engagement, training and support, curriculum and program materials, marketing and communications, research and program evaluation, and administration.

Projected Impact: The impact of this grant would be significant; helping to narrow the reading achievement gap for 40 students at Laurel Elementary and create a community of confident and excited learners with promising futures.

Transformational Potential: Every child deserves to read and succeed. Impact 100 East Bay can be a part of the growing literacy movement to unlock potential of struggling readers. This impact is replicated nationwide and Impact 100 East Bay's grant would be part of this immense effort.

Sustainability: A \$55,000 grant will fund over 50% of the cost to launch the reading center at Laurel Elementary (total project of \$100,000). Reading Partners local board and leadership are committed to impacting as many students as possible, and thus leverage investments from schools and private philanthropy to sustain the success of the program.