

IMPACT REPORT 2020

Beyond Our Gates

Celebrating 10 years of powerful community
collaboration and improved outcomes



UNIVERSITY OF THE
PACIFIC



A new president pledged to help identify and meet community needs, and partners expressed the willingness to collaborate. From this backdrop, Beyond Our Gates was formed in 2010. With a track record of sustained success, the initiative moves into its second decade.

BEYOND OUR GATES:

Eibeck's vision becomes long-term success

On Nov. 12, 2010, Pamela Eibeck stood at a podium in the Donald and Karen DeRosa University Center Ballroom and declared the start of an ambitious community involvement program for University of the Pacific.

One year earlier, Eibeck had been named Pacific's 24th president and became the first woman to hold the job. From the moment she arrived in Stockton, Eibeck was clear about her desire to have the university and community work together to improve the quality of life and educational opportunities.

On that day, 10 years ago, the Beyond Our Gates program officially began with a clarion call from Eibeck: "Our initiatives must be aligned with our mission as a university. And, most importantly, it's crucial that everyone understands that the success of all community initiatives will depend on the passion of our faculty and staff, and the ability and willingness of the community to partner with us."

Eibeck and university officials embarked on a listening tour, engaging community leaders in such areas as the economy, education, the environment and the arts. That led to series of initiatives aimed at improving campus and community relations. Ultimately, the decision was made to narrow the focus to a high-impact community need.

The focus on early-childhood literacy


"Through all of our study and meetings, it became obvious that education was the key to the futures of Stockton and San Joaquin County," Eibeck reflected.

"We felt it was important to narrow our focus to an area where we could galvanize partnerships and make a big impact. This all came at a time when research on grade-level reading by third grade was being touted as a key metric to determining the long-term success of students."

Beyond Our Gates has been a powerful force for children's literacy in Stockton and San Joaquin County since University of the Pacific founded the initiative in 2010.

The program has served as a convener of many community leaders and organizations that focus on education—specifically early-childhood learning. This 10-year impact report focuses on Beyond Our Gates' accomplishments and challenges.

"With the ongoing commitment of the Beyond Our Gates Community Council, local efforts will continue and reading by third grade will remain a priority," added Jamie Baiocchi, early childhood director for the San Joaquin County Office of Education.



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Beyond Our Gates Accomplishments

Grade-level reading

Much of our work focuses on grade-level reading by third grade, which researchers have noted is a key metric in overall education success. After the third-grade reading level in San Joaquin County dipped to 27% in 2016, the success rate has improved steadily to 40.8% by 2019. We are proud to be a part of this communitywide education improvement.

School attendance

For five years, Beyond Our Gates has sponsored the Every Day Counts Attendance Challenge. Participation has improved from 40 schools and 10,000 honorees to 151 schools and 43,000 students with perfect attendance during the 2019 contest period.

Community meetings and conferences

Beyond Our Gates has sponsored more than 75 community convenings in the past 10 years on topics that include grade-level reading, diversity in children's literature, adverse childhood experiences, school counseling and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on K-12 education. Beyond Our Gates holds an Annual Dialogue on childhood literacy that draws approximately 200 community members.

Mini-grant program

Through funding from the James Irvine Foundation, we developed a competitive mini-grant program for nonprofits and other education partners that has pumped \$325,000 into initiatives that focus on children's



literacy. Our grants have paid for literacy tutors, innovative language programs, screening for adverse childhood experiences and much more. The Irvine Foundation has funded Beyond Our Gates' work with \$900,000 over six years (2016 to 2021).

COVID-19 town halls

- Beyond Our Gates sponsored a San Joaquin County superintendent's summit—a virtual webinar to discuss education and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Superintendents from the San Joaquin County Office of Education and Stockton, Lincoln and Lodi school districts were panelists in a discussion attended by 300 members.

- Education and health care experts served on the panel for a virtual webinar to look at the interaction between the sectors in battling the pandemic. More than 150 virtual attendees listened to the panel discussion.

CURRENT AND FORMER PROGRAMS WITH BOG COLLEAGUES

Beyond Our Gates has created powerful partnerships with non-profits, school districts, businesses and others in a variety of programs aimed at helping childhood literacy in San Joaquin County.

- **Read to Me, Stockton!:** The program delivers a free book each month to participating children in underserved neighborhoods. All Stockton zip codes are now served.
- **Family Day at the Park:** Beyond Our Gates sponsors Library Lane at the community's largest annual literacy event. Pacific students dress as superheroes and read to children, with more than 1,000 kids going home with a new book each year.
- **LENA Technologies:** The pilot program uses a word-count apparatus to monitor increases in literacy interaction. Some parents/guardians doubled verbal interaction with toddlers. Our partners were the San Joaquin County Office of Education, Stockton-San Joaquin Public Library, Child Abuse Prevention Council, First 5 San Joaquin and El Concilio.
- **Development of the Talk. Read. Sing. Draw. Play. Campaign:** This multifaceted program emphasizes an array of strategies that help improve the vocabulary of children.
- **Reach Out and Read San Joaquin Book Drive:** The program supplied thousands of books to children during regular doctor checkups.
- **Diversity on the Bookshelf:** This training for early-childhood educators showed how to work diversity, inclusion and equity into literature work with children.
- **Family Literacy Project:** With funding from First 5 San Joaquin, partners hosted workshops to teach parents why and how to read with their young children.
- **Summer Book Buddies:** Volunteer tutors at Stockton's Cesar Chavez Central Library helped incoming first-, second- and third-grade students who were struggling with reading.
- **Tomorrow Project:** The summer academies aim to improve high school graduation rates. The program has been successful for 10 years.



Awards

Beyond Our Gates has received national, regional and local recognition for its children's literacy programs.

- Beyond Our Gates is a six-time recipient of the annual Pacesetter Award from the national Campaign for Grade Level Reading. The awards are presented to communities that excel in children's literacy programs. BOG's awards have been for attendance programs, children's literacy efforts and summer education programs.
- Beyond Our Gates founder Pamela Eibeck and former director Jennifer Torres have been named to the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading's Champions—essentially its hall of fame.
- Family Resource and Referral Center Action On Behalf of Children Award.
- Regional CASE (Council for Advancement and Support of Education) Award for educational programs (presented for the Attendance Challenge).
- Beyond Our Gates' Jennifer Torres wrote the City of Stockton's successful 2017 All-America City Award entry.



The staying power of dedicated community partners

BY JENNIFER TORRES

When I joined University of the Pacific in 2011, it was after having spent seven years at The (Stockton) Record, mainly as an education reporter. Every year at the newspaper, I covered state test scores that showed San Joaquin County students lagging behind their peers on measures of reading and math. I talked with educators working hard to boost high school graduation rates and to make college more accessible across the Central Valley. Then, around 2008, I saw the Great Recession's destructive toll on children and families.

Yet, in the many stories of challenge and frustration, I also found examples of resilience and resolve, and of a community coming together to transform its collective future. I was especially compelled by what I saw happening at University of the Pacific.

In 2010, then-President Pamela Eibeck and a committee of university and local leaders convened a series of public forums to understand how Pacific, as a citizen-institution, could play a role in strengthening the social and economic well-being of San Joaquin County. By the time I

came to Pacific a year later, those discussions had yielded ideas and insights.

Quickly it became clear that an initiative centered on education held enormous promise. That by drawing on the expertise of Pacific's own school of education, the San Joaquin County Office of Education and school districts, we could begin to untangle the root causes underlying many of the Valley's longstanding problems.

Yet, it was also clear that our efforts needed focus. Eventually, as we



◀ Jennifer Torres signs one of the children's books she authored for an attendee at Family Day at the Park.

examined the region's greatest strengths and needs, we realized that by galvanizing action and attention around early literacy, we could achieve a long-term positive impact on all areas of education. That is because a child who is a strong reader by the end of third grade has the best chance of continued success through high school and beyond.

What I found—and still find—most inspiring about early literacy as a shared community priority are the many meaningful ways individuals and organizations have supported and sustained it. While institutions

such as First 5 San Joaquin and the Stockton-San Joaquin County Library have contributed their decades' worth of knowledge and leadership, other partners have joined the effort with new and innovative endeavors: Read to Me, Stockton's book distribution and family engagement initiative, for example. Efforts like these give Beyond Our Gates its staying power by making early literacy a lasting part of the community conversation.

There is something fundamentally optimistic about embarking on an undertaking whose ultimate aims might not be realized for decades

to come. I am so proud to have been part of the ambitious and forward-thinking Beyond Our Gates community, and look forward to celebrating as its leaders continue to transform the future of San Joaquin County.

Jennifer Torres-Siders was community relations director at University of the Pacific from 2011–17. She is now communications and community engagement senior manager at Caltech. She also is a children's book author.



PACIFIC

Open Books:

San Joaquin Literacy Project

PACIFIC
TIGERS

Grade-level reading by third grade

Our Focus

Research shows that proficiency in reading by the end of third grade enables students to shift from learning to read to reading to learn. This allows them to master the more complex subject matter they encounter starting with fourth-grade curriculum. Those not reading by grade-level in the third grade are more likely to drop out before high school graduation.

Our Work

With the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, Beyond Our Gates has been the lead organization for the Stockton-San Joaquin area since joining the campaign as a charter member in 2012. In 400-plus campaign communities, University of the Pacific is the only private university serving in a lead role.



The improvement in third-grade reading is testimony to the work being done at San Joaquin County schools and by the students. Beyond Our Gates brings collaboration and heightened awareness to the efforts. The hard work will continue, and the whole community can help lift literacy rates.

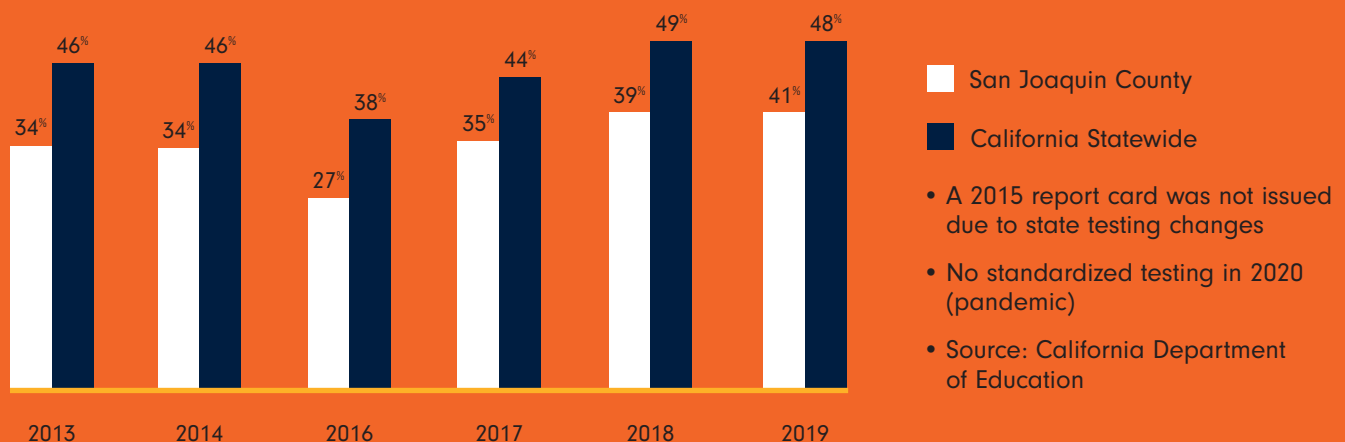
James Mousalimas

San Joaquin County Superintendent of Schools

San Joaquin Literacy Report Card

Since 2012, Beyond Our Gates has produced an annual San Joaquin County Literacy Report Card. The report card tracks several metrics, most importantly grade-level reading by third, chronic absenteeism and pre-school enrollment. Through the years, the report card has chronicled consistent improvement, although the county continues to lag behind California as a whole.

THIRD-GRADE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY REPORT CARD





School Attendance

Our Focus

The focus has shifted from truancy (unexcused absences) to chronic absenteeism, defined as missing 10 percent or more school days for any reason. In California, chronic absence is approximately 18 missed school days in a school year. In San Joaquin County, 14 percent of students were chronically absent in 2018–19, a slight improvement over the previous year.

Studies show that chronically absent students lag behind in their studies.

The National Center for Educational Statistics reports the effects of lost school days build up one absence at a time on individual students. Penalties for students who miss school may unintentionally worsen the situation.

California also funds school districts based on average daily attendance, so chronic absenteeism is literally costly.

Our Work

Attendance has been a priority since the formation of Beyond Our Gates. Over the past five years, Beyond Our Gates held the Every Day Counts Attendance Challenge each September (National Attendance Awareness Month). Each student with perfect attendance receives rewards including literacy-themed bookmarks and wristbands and sports tickets to local professional and college teams. Each school also receives one Kindle Fire to raffle among students.



Achieving strong attendance takes a commitment from everyone: the students, families, teachers, staff, administrators and others. When you have all of those groups of people contributing, you can create a culture where attendance matters.

Danielle Valtierra

Principal of Alex G. Spanos Elementary School

By the Numbers

43,415

San Joaquin County students
with perfect attendance during
the 2019 challenge

12,500

Students with perfect attendance
in the 2015 challenge

151

Schools participating in the
2019 challenge, up from 63 in
the 2015 challenge

88.2%

Percentage of students with perfect
attendance for 2019 winning school
STEAM Academy at River Islands

83%

Percentage of students with perfect
attendance for 2018 winning school
Alex G. Spanos Elementary School

Early-literacy mini-grants

Our Focus

Beyond Our Gates' ability to support the work of its partners increased significantly with funding from the James Irvine Foundation, starting in 2016. BOG received the first of three two-year, \$300,000 grants (\$900,000 over six years altogether). A significant portion of the funds helped partners create or enhance early literacy work through mini-grants.

Our Work

Beyond Our Gates receives approximately 18-20 mini-grant applications each year from non-profits, the faith community, school districts and other entities. Six to eight grants are presented annually.

Mini-grant Success Stories by the Numbers

\$325,000

Early-literacy mini-grant funds
distributed by Beyond Our Gates
from 2016 to 2020

73

Students who graduated from a
Summer Reading Academy at the
Stockton YMCA

3,240

Books distributed by grant recipient Delta
Kappa Gamma as part of Books for Babes
- new books presented in the hospital to
parents of newborns

80

Pre-school teachers and day-care providers
trained in the program Diversity on the
Bookshelves-emphasizing diversity in
children's literacy

340

Additional children registered
for the Read to Me, Stockton!
Imagination Library program
during one grant period

27

Students completing a one-year intensified
reading program at one.TLC, a school
for homeless children. All grade levels
improved overall reading scores.



Our goals are to provide free books to children via outreach at community events and during free events at the museum. With mini-grant funding, we gave away close to 500 books during one free admission event. We also gifted 488 books in one outing of our outreach program with our museum bus.

Marianne Prieto

Director, Children's Museum of Stockton

Annual dialogue on early literacy

Our Focus

The Beyond Our Gates Annual Dialogue focuses on the region's education challenges and opportunities through thought-provoking national, state and local speakers.

Our Work

The Dialogue helps further ongoing discussion of how best to support education and improve quality of life. The series is a catalyst for real-world application. After speakers present their remarks, we challenge Beyond Our Gates audience members to consider ways to implement new strategies at the local level.

Past speakers have included:

- Giannina Perez, Senior Policy Advisor for Early Childhood for the office of California Gov. Gavin Newsom
- Kevin Slattery of the innovative early literacy group Providence Talks
- California State Librarian Greg Lucas
- Alison Gopnik, an internationally recognized expert on children's learning and development
- Ralph Smith, managing director of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

Giannina Perez

Senior Policy Advisor for Early Childhood for the office of California Gov. Gavin Newsom



STEM AND THE ARTS

Tomorrow Project

University of the Pacific's Tomorrow Project increases the college readiness of K-12 students so they can successfully compete in higher education. The Tomorrow Project has contributed to our region's social, economic and civic growth for the past 10 years.

Pacific, in collaboration with local schools, governmental agencies and nonprofit groups, launched the Tomorrow Project Academies, including Reach for the Stars, which focuses on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) under the support of Pacific graduate and former NASA astronaut Jose Hernandez.

Harmony Stockton

From 2011 to 2017, Harmony Stockton helped blend music and learning through a grant and a four-way partnership between the University of the Pacific, Stockton Symphony Association, Stockton Unified School District and United Way of San Joaquin County. Harmony Stockton was modeled after Venezuela's El Sistema, a national system of youth orchestras. The local program was based at Stockton Unified's Marshall Elementary School.

SCHOOL READINESS AND SUMMER LEARNING

Our Focus

In San Joaquin County, pre-school enrollment has hovered around 40 percent or less for the past decade. Some children lag far behind others in literacy. It is essential to reach parents or guardians early and empower them with the resources to make reading to children a priority. Once children start school, it is also imperative to develop summertime literacy activities so the learning continues.

Our Work

Talk. Read. Sing. Draw. Play. (TRSDP) campaign: Because 90% of a child's brain develops before age 5, it is crucial to actively read to and engage children from birth. And you can do more than read. Talking, reading, singing, drawing and playing with children helps nurture and enrich their learning experiences. Beyond Our Gates has featured TRSDP messages in flyers, on public transportation, in libraries and other settings, and Beyond Our Gates partner First 5 San Joaquin reaches families with its widespread use of TRSDP.

Bilingual Summer Reading Guides: Beyond Our Gates published eight-page guides to help augment summer learning. The guides include literacy-based activities, suggested reading lists, a literacy Bingo game and more for ages 0 to 5. BOG also published guides for kindergarten, first, second and third grades. BOG collaborated with the San Joaquin County Office of Education and The Record newspaper to distribute more than 50,000 guides annually.



A young boy is running away from the camera on a large, green grassy field. He is wearing a black cap, an orange t-shirt, and a black cape with orange and white stripes on the back. In the background, there are trees, a crowd of people, and some buildings under a bright sky.

“
We are
trying to
create a new
normal, not
just get back
to what we
used to do.”

Brian Biedermann

Interim superintendent for Stockton Unified School District
and a Beyond Our Gates Executive Committee member

‘New normal’ means challenges, opportunities

BY MIKE KLOCKE

Education throughout the country and across the world faces unprecedented challenges moving forward from the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Stockton and San Joaquin County are no different.

There is immense pressure on students, parents or guardians, educators and the public to deal with the uncertainties of a pandemic that has disrupted the whole traditional learning process.

On March 13, 2020, San Joaquin County Superintendent of Schools James Mousalimas announced the closure of schools for three weeks. Ultimately, the public schools closed for the remainder of the school year. Students, teachers, parents and guardians and others worked diligently to make “distance learning” work for the last month-plus of the scheduled school year.

The brutal uncertainty of this pandemic caused more turmoil for San Joaquin County education in July. Many K-12 school districts—as well as University of the Pacific—planned to return to in-class instruction and learning. But a huge increase in positive COVID-19 tests and deaths once again forced schools and families into distance learning for the fall.

In this report, we celebrate the commitment, collaboration, community-mindedness and success of University of the Pacific’s Beyond Our Gates program. The 10 years of dedication by community partners has led to significant educational advancements.

Beyond Our Gates, though, also anticipates a new normal. Some of our annual projects cannot be done this year. The annual reading report card assesses grade-level reading and more for county students. However, due to COVID-19, standardized testing was not conducted. The Every Day Counts Attendance Challenge honors perfect attendance in September—National Attendance Month. The contest format will not work with distance learning.

The resiliency and dedication of BOG partners will be even more crucial as we work through and emerge from this life-changing pandemic.

We remain optimistic because we know and cherish the collaborative dedication of so many sectors of community work, many of them coalesced into Beyond Our Gates’ work.

University of the Pacific, of course, is facing some of the same challenges as our K-12 cohorts

with distance learning once again a reality for fall term 2020.

Brian Biedermann, interim superintendent for Stockton Unified School District and a Beyond Our Gates Executive Committee member, eagerly addresses how immense challenges can be morphed into unprecedented opportunity.

“We are trying to create a new normal, not just get back to what we used to do,” Biedermann said. “You could look at this as a time of panic. But it’s kind of exciting because you really do have a chance to address the whole system.”

Beyond Our Gates remains committed to our leadership role and our dedication to helping enhance children’s literacy in the community.

Mike Klocke is community relations director at University of the Pacific. He worked as a newspaper editor for 38 years, including 27 in various roles including editor at The Record in Stockton. Interested in Beyond Our Gates? Contact Klocke at mklocke@Pacific.edu.



UNIVERSITY OF THE
PACIFIC