



Program Visited

- Reading Partners, San Jose
 - Cesar Chavez Elementary School, Alum Rock School District
2000 Kammerer Ave, San Jose, CA 95116, USA
 - Bachrodt Elementary School, San Jose School District
102 Sonora Ave, San Jose, CA 95110, USA

Focusing Philanthropy Staff

- Teresa Burton

Reading Partners Staff

- Aarika Riddle, ED Bay Area & Silicon Valley
- Sydney Burrell, Deputy Program Director, Silicon Valley (former AmeriCorps volunteer)
- Monique Garcia, External Relations Manager, Silicon Valley

Executive Summary

This was the first San Jose Reading Partners (RP) site visit by Teresa Burton. She saw two schools: Cesar Chavez Elementary School in the Alum Rock School District and Bachrodt Elementary School in the San Jose School District. The purpose of the visit was to meet the San Jose staff and learn more about the Silicon Valley program.

Background

Reading Partners recruits, trains, and deploys volunteers to provide weekly 1:1 literacy tutoring to struggling readers in elementary schools, employing a structured reading curriculum that can be adapted to address each individual student's needs. At each school site, RP transforms a dedicated classroom into a Reading Center and recruits and trains 40-100 volunteers. In collaboration with teachers, RP identifies 40-75 K-4th grade students per school to receive two 45-minute intensive sessions each week throughout the school year. Students are assessed at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year to identify their individual reading levels and to monitor progress toward literacy goals as determined by each students' particular needs. The Silicon Valley program serves the following cities: Redwood City, Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Milpitas, and San Jose.

RP Office Info

- Silicon Valley and Bay Area Staff: 7 paid staff members + 21 AmeriCorps members
- Headquartered in Milpitas

Cesar Chaves Elementary School Visit

School Site Statistics

- School enrollment total: 300 students
- Current Reading Partners students: 50 students referred by teachers and Principal
- Goal: 50 students
- Students receive 2 tutoring sessions per week for 45 minutes each
- 70-80 volunteers spend 1 hour per week, the extra 15 minutes are for preparation and record-keeping
- Program runs 8:55am – 5pm, Sessions run all day
- Students are referred and begin sessions in September except for Kindergarteners who start in January



- Half of students who start in Kinder come back as 1st graders. RP focuses on Kindergarteners because their learning gaps are smaller.
- Challenges at Cesar Chavez: recruiting more volunteer tutors

During the visit to Cesar Chavez, a handful of volunteer tutors and students cycled through the reading center. The volunteers all had a consistent process of checking-in, reviewing the student's file, collecting curriculum packets, retrieving the student from class, leading the 45-minute one-on-one session, returning the student to class, and making follow-up notations in the student files.

Bachrodt Elementary School Visit School Site Statistics

- School enrollment total: 600 students
- Current Reading Partners students: 18 students referred by teachers and Principal
- Goal: 40 students
- Site coordinator expects to reach 22 students by the end of October
- Volunteers: 30, Volunteers spend 1 hour per week, remaining 15 minutes is for preparation and record-keeping, Bachrodt has more than enough tutors because Qualcomm and San Jose State Univ. are nearby.
- Program runs from 3pm – 5:45pm except for Tuesdays 1:30pm – 5:45pm, at least 3 session per day
- Bachrodt is part of a more diverse neighborhood, has a bilingual immersion program that brings kids in from the whole city with a lottery system
- Challenges at Bachrodt:
 - District does not allow kids to be pulled out of the classroom during the school day.
 - As an after-school program, staff has less access to teachers and has to communicate more with the Principal, office staff, afterschool extracurricular staffs, and parents at pick-up time.
 - Student Recruitment at Bachrodt includes educating school and afterschool staff on the types of kids who will benefit from Reading Partners programs (not kids who love to read, but kids who need help learning to read).
 - Student reading abilities are closer to grade-level and it is slightly harder to pinpoint what they need to work on and measure progress.
 - The San Jose District has more money to put into teachers' classroom resources and salaries. Some teachers earn extra income by staying late to tutor individual students. Teachers in San Jose District are also trained to do level 1 and 2 interventions in the classroom. Smaller districts have more use for volunteers.

At Bachrodt, we walked past students playing outside and participating in several other after-school activities. In the Reading Center, four pairs of volunteer tutors and students were in session. Again, it was clear that the volunteers were following the process of checking-in, reviewing the student's file, collecting curriculum packets, retrieving the student, leading the 45-minute one-on-one session, saying hello to parents at pick-up time, and making follow-up notations in the student files.

Training for Tutors

Training for tutors consists of: 1) Overview of community and students, 2) Explanation of Reading Partners curriculum and folder system, 3) Mock session with student, 4) Online volunteer hub orientation, 5) Info on optional extra trainings

Training for AmeriCorps Members

Site Coordinators are AmeriCorps members and get 11 weeks of training.

- Summer: 5 weeks of full-time training



- Fall: members attend training every Friday from September to November

AmeriCorps Partnership

- Reading Partners employs 21 AmeriCorps members this year in Silicon Valley
- Members commit to 1 year. Half choose to stay for an additional year
- Reading Partners recruits their own AmeriCorps members locally, mostly from San Jose State
- The biggest challenge for AmeriCorps members is finding affordable housing in the Silicon Valley despite RP's generous housing stipend

Book Donations & Supplies

- Students receive a book of their choice at the end of every lesson
- Books are donated by San Jose State University, local high school book drives, and local companies
- One teacher in Cupertino holds a book drive that brings in 700 books per year
- Reading Partners also holds supply book drives.
- Tutors also donate supplies.

Contact with Parents

- Reading Partners opens their centers to parents during school events such as Open Houses, Parent-Teacher Conferences, and School Literacy Nights in order to meet parents and highlight their work.
- They also try to be accessible to all parents by distributing permission forms in several languages.
- Parents who pick their children up after school have more contact than those whose children are tutored during the school day.

Community Partnerships

- Reading Partners has a strong working relationship with Alum Rock School District Superintendent, school district staff, Cesar Chavez staff, and Somos Mayfair, the local community org. The Superintendent continues to enjoy strong support from the Mayor and community.
- Alum Rock School Board President is up for re-election this November. The Mayor is campaigning against him along with Somos Mayfair as a result of corruption and mismanagement.

Conversations with Tutors

At Cesar Chavez Elementary School, I spoke with Elaine who has been a volunteer tutor for a year. She said her motivation came from her own experience as a child who needed help learning to read. Her parents were able to afford a tutor but she wants to help those who can't. She likes the RP curriculum, the one-on-one time with her student. At the end of last year, she was gratified by the progress her student made. Her student was initially shy and said reading was too hard, but kept trying and by the spring, showed improvement.

I spoke to Marc at Bachrodt Elementary School. He works nearby at JumpStart. He finds tutoring rewarding because he normally has trouble focusing. He thinks of tutoring as a type of meditation. He is able to focus on the session and on overcoming his student's shyness. He feels the social-emotional work is important and tries to connect with kids in order to give them more confidence in their abilities.

Key Observations

An important part of implementing an effective program nationwide is consistency, delivering the exact same curriculum in each location. With 14 regions and hundreds of partner schools throughout the country, consistent implementation standards and program fidelity is a key focus for Reading Partners national and regional leadership. Notably, program delivery as observed by Focusing Philanthropy staff across Reading Partners regions and schools has been extremely consistent.



I was very impressed with all of the San Jose staff members I met. They are smart, enthusiastic, and hard-working. Because they serve so many area school districts, staff spend much of their time traveling and each person also has more than one role. For example, Monique conducts tutor orientations three times per week, leads grant-writing and development, and works closely with corporate partners, high schools and colleges. Sydney spends her time at the schools supervising the site coordinators, training and mentoring the AmeriCorps members, and recruiting AmeriCorps members for next year. They seem very passionate about their work and have a high level of responsibility. They all have an interest in education, are knowledgeable about the most effective reading interventions, and are committed to delivering an excellent program in order to help kids be successful in school and life.

