

SMA+RT Cards & The KinderMobile: Enhanced Public Library Service for Salinas Students: *Funding Proposal to the Claire Giannini Fund*

Background

Salinas struggles with a significant challenge that poses a large obstacle to building strong futures for our youth: Too many third graders in Salinas read below grade level. By third grade, it is critically important for students to read on grade level because after third grade, students are reading to learn. If students cannot read or struggle to read by third grade, then the ability for them to learn throughout their academic career is severely stunted. The future of the City is therefore closely intertwined with the community's success at supporting its young readers and the Salinas Public Library is studying ways to assist students, families and schools in producing better third grade reading outcomes.

As a result of this objective, the Salinas Public Library is proud to be one of the public libraries in the state participating in the Student Success Initiative (SSI) aimed at assisting public libraries in their efforts to create collaborations with schools for library cards for school children. The Pacific Library Partnership (PLP), consisting of the 42 library jurisdictions within the San Francisco Bay Area, with the NorthNet Library System (NLS), consisting of 54 library jurisdictions in Northern California as a partner, received a \$50,000 LSTA grant for the Student Success Initiative for FY 2016/17. The program was expanded in FY 2017/18 to include 36 additional libraries and the Salinas Public Library was chosen as one of the group.

The SSI does not mandate a particular framework for public library/school collaboration, but offers guidance, through a resource toolkit developed by the initial cohort of 11 libraries, for a number of collaborative options and models. The toolkit includes best practices, Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs), introductory letters and marketing which can be duplicated, as well as case studies from the libraries about their efforts throughout the year.

Currently, the Salinas Public Library has been working with the toolkit and with the guidance of a mentor library to develop a solution that best fits the needs of Salinas and that can be implemented effectively by the library. Salinas is served by several different school districts and in order to be most effective, we have chosen to begin the library card collaboration with one district, the Salinas City Elementary School District (SCESD), and to expand the partnership to additional school districts over the next few years as we perfect our processes.

Librarians have met with SCESD staff on numerous occasions to better understand their needs and brainstorm solutions and have currently chosen a model that will pilot the program in four elementary schools beginning in the Fall of 2018. These four schools were selected by the district and have some of the lowest 3rd grade

reading schools in the district. An MOU describing the partnership and authorizing the exchange of data to facilitate a “virtual” library card based on the student’s school identification number, as well as other terms of collaboration is in process and expected to be approved by the school board and city administration in April.

It’s not just enough, however, for students to *have* a library card; its even more important that they *use* the card. So in addition to the provision of library cards (named the SMA+RT card: Salinas Makes A+ Readers Together) to students in these four schools, library staff will also be providing education to teachers and students on usage of the Library’s digital collection of e-books and e-audiobooks and also in searching the Library’s catalog and locating material of interest. Students and teachers at these schools may place holds on up to 2 items at a time and these items will be delivered to the school. The library currently offers afterschool homework centers in three out of the four schools and these centers will benefit from increased access to library materials and also usage of additional digital services such as online homework help.

In addition, the Library initiated a kindergarten library card campaign in the Fall of 2016 with all three elementary school districts (Salinas City, Alisal Union and Santa Rita) that was repeated with even greater success in 2017. Library card applications were distributed to all schools, were completed by parents and cards were distributed to the schools. However, because we understand that there are often significant barriers to public library use for Salinas families, staff was determined to find ways to serve these students, even if they weren’t able to come to a library. One solution was to turn our bookmobile into a “Kindermobile,” now in its first semester of visiting every kindergarten classroom in Salinas (in all three districts) on a monthly basis.

Funding Requested

Fortunately, much of the work encouraged by the Student Success Initiative requires very little funding to put in place. Because we would like to ensure that students (and their families) are able to utilize library resources as conveniently as possible, there are several enhancements to the projects described above that we believe would guarantee more positive outcomes for Salinas students and their families:

1. Kindermobile books: \$15,000

Our current bookmobile collection consists of approximately 3,000 picture books, early readers and board books for young children. In the first month of operation, over 1500 books were checked out and we expect that demand to continue and probably grow as more and more children have library cards. Ideally we would like to have a collection of over 5,000 books to guarantee a good selection for these children. At approximately \$12/book, the cost for the addition to the collection

would be \$24,000, but because we have applied for several other grants, we are requesting \$15,000 at this time.

2. SMA+RT Card and Kindermobile marketing materials: \$5,000

Ensuring that Salinas families know about these services and can use them is of utmost importance, so the need for adequate marketing material is vital. In addition, ensuring that kindergarten students can quickly check out materials is also important, so we would like to purchase duplicate keychain cards and lanyards or wristbands for the students for next year's campaign so that teachers can retain the keychain copy for bookmobile use.

3. Online Homework Help (BrainFuse): \$7,500

BrainFuse is an online homework help and academic assistance service used by many public libraries and by schools as well. The service includes one on one tutoring for students of all ages and includes a writing center for K-12 students as well. In addition, it also provides adult literacy and workforce development services for college students and adults and as a result, we will be using California Library Literacy Services grant funds to pay for half of the cost of the service in this initial year and on an annual basis if the service is well-utilized. Students will have the opportunity to use BrainFuse in our school-based afterschool homework centers, as well as being able to use it from home or within any of our libraries. Since there are times when the numbers of students needing help exceeds the number of tutors available in our centers this online service will be of great assistance.

4. Funding for school delivery: \$7,500

Once a week book delivery to the pilot schools is anticipated to require approximately 6-8 hours of Library Clerk time (depending on volume) on a weekly basis to locate the reserved material, check it out to the student card and make the delivery to the school district. Since the district has their own delivery system, this should allow for delivery to only one location which greatly simplifies the process.

Total funding requested: \$35,000

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