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One in Five

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Executive summary

One in Five: The Santa Barbara Dyslexia Initiative uses data-driven decision-making to address the unmet needs of adults with dyslexia who fail to enroll or thrive in adult education and career transition programs. There are two cohorts to be served through this proposal. The first is adults 18 and over with dyslexia; these adults will be tutored by volunteers and teachers who will receive training in research-tested approaches to reading. The second includes community members, including seniors, parents, caregivers, and grandparents who will be trained to develop the knowledge and skills to successfully work with children who struggle with reading because of dyslexia. The two parts of the project will build a corps of highly trained and knowledgeable tutors. By including all adults in need of services, collaborating with community nonprofits and advocates, and coordinating approaches with existing career and college pathways, the project addresses the specific and remediable needs of adults with invisible learning disabilities and serves those who would not otherwise be included in or qualified for services for adults with intellectual, developmental or physical disabilities. These adults will benefit through gaining skills that support transitions to continued education and career paths.

This project trains a cadre of community volunteers and educators in research-tested, Orton-Gillingham approaches to reading remediation to serve the 15-20% of the population that has dyslexia. The project uses research-tested direct instruction as well as state-of-the-art technological intervention (learning software and apps) to assist adults. For years, the noncredit education program at Santa Barbara City College has referred especially challenged adult students to the Santa Barbara Public Library's Adult Literacy Program, which provides free, one-to-one tutoring for all community adults. Partners in this project include the Dyslexia Community Foundation (a new nonprofit now forming) and the Decoding Dyslexia information and advocacy group and could include clients referred from a wide range of community service providers. This project enables all learners to have access to research-tested instructional techniques and improved learning outcomes.

Program goals include

Specific outcomes include:

Training a minimum of 50 adults (25 volunteer tutors, 20 parents, and 5 staff members) in appropriate basic reading instruction techniques for individuals with dyslexia. Tutors will include Homework Help volunteers, who can bring scientific reading instruction to local children and families, as well as adult literacy tutors. At least half of these will complete a practicum using Orton-Gillingham approaches to reading instruction.

For learners with dyslexia, the goal is to instruct and show reading gains for 20-30 adults per year. Trained volunteer tutors will continue to serve new learners at no additional costs in subsequent years. Learning outcomes include mastering each step of the designated program before advancing to the next level. Standards for mastery will derive from the specific structured language approach (e.g. level mastery in the Barton Reading System, Wilson Reading System, or other Orton-Gillingham based instructional system). Students will also demonstrate progress using standard reading tests, such as Woodcock Johnson or Dibels. Engaging these tutors and parents to help community adults and children enrolled in K-12 improve reading skills. These outcomes (75% of participants feel more confident in teaching reading; 90% develop improved knowledge of reading instruction) will be measured by survey. Presenting public talks and information sessions that result in at least 75% of audience members increasing their knowledge of learning disabilities, educational methods, and benefits of non-traditional thinking.

Integration

The Santa Barbara Dyslexia Initiative is a transition planning project that weaves the efforts and outreach of many partners and collaborators. These include Santa Barbara City College, the Santa Barbara Unified School District and its Parent Resource Center, advocacy groups The Dyslexia Project and Decoding Dyslexia, Family Service Agency (which is a partner with the Library) and local and national training groups. This project helps adult learners take better advantage of community resources; thus other potential partners include veterans' groups, the Department of Rehabilitation, the Workforce Investment Board, One-Stop Center, corrections and probation, and health care agencies. Together these groups focus on helping adult learners make successful transitions to educational opportunities and the workforce.

Oftentimes, the barrier to adult education progress may be a lack of reading skills. This has also been identified by the Workforce Investment Board Strategic Plan as one of the areas that occupations require in common:

- Problem identification
- Reading Comprehension
- Content Skills such as speaking to actively convey information
- Active Listening
- Communicating effectively in writing

Once students are enrolled at SBCC, they have access to Disabled Student Programs and Services, but as independent learners and at community education sites they may not have access to the resources, support, and technology that DSPS provides. However, research tells us how to help adult learners make successful transitions. There are many points of entry to participation in the Dyslexia Initiative; this proposal provides assistance to adults along the continuum of services, whether they are afraid of seeking more education and training because of lack of skills, or have hit a plateau in their growth because they need to remediate reading skills.

The most important piece of the project is a three-month tutor/teacher training program, offered free of charge to volunteer tutors in the library's adult literacy program; local adult education, elementary, and secondary teachers and teachers' aides; parents of children in grades K-12; undergraduate and graduate students in teacher training programs; and any interested community members. The training program will be offered in person a minimum of two times throughout the project year, with options for online/video learning for those unable to attend in person. In addition, four tutors/teachers who help two students successfully complete the Orton-Gillingham-based curriculum will receive certification from the appropriate Orton-Gillingham curriculum organization and can serve as master trainers in the future.

Families often struggle with basic skills. The Santa Barbara Public Library's downtown afterschool Homework Help program for K-6 students, for example, provides up to 900 sessions each month of assistance from trained volunteers. Parents who bring their children to Homework Help are often frustrated because they do not have the skills and knowledge to help struggling readers, including children with dyslexia.

In 2017, California's education code will formally recognize dyslexia as a learning disability, and schools will be required to provide and improve services for students with dyslexia. The law specifies evidence-based, multisensory, direct, explicit, structured, and sequential approach to instructing pupils who have dyslexia—in other words, what is known to scientists and dyslexia experts as Orton-Gillingham based approaches. Without proper basic reading instruction and knowledge of accommodations, adults seeking successful educational or career transitions will be stymied, and K-12 students will not progress to the level where they can successfully move into good careers or higher education.

Tutor and parent education from the Dyslexia Training Institute or similar organization, including webinars and the "Dyslexia for a Day" simulation, is key to the project. Tutors/parents will also learn direct, systematic instruction techniques and receive materials from a research-tested program using the gold standard in interventions and curriculum. Such program, featuring Orton-Gillingham direct, intensive, multisensory instruction approaches, tested over many decades, helps students progress at individual rates as they fully master the material. Orton-Gillingham techniques are used infrequently in classrooms due to the intensive training and close one-to-one work required, but individual tutors provide an effective means of instruction. By training those adults and parents who are desperate to read better and help their children learn, the Santa Barbara Dyslexia Initiative demonstrates a commitment to helping learners read better and uses the best knowledge and subject matter experts.

Community education is another crucial element of the project. Working with the nonprofit Dyslexia Community Foundation, we will reach out to other organizations such as the SB Unified School District's Parent Resource Center, which houses parent resources. Community and business leader Paul Orfalea has already agreed to deliver a community keynote sometime this year as the fourth annual series of distinguished dyslexic speakers co-sponsored by Santa Barbara Unified School District, the Santa Barbara Education Foundation, the Kirby-Jones Family Foundation, and The Dyslexia Project. This talk will be the anchor of an ongoing, free education series featuring speakers, films, and panel discussions about dyslexia.

Justification

Dyslexia is one of the least visible but most frustrating learning challenges faced by adults and children. Up to one in five children and adults have dyslexia, defined as: "a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge." (International Dyslexia Association) Dyslexia is a hereditary neurological difference in the brain, but is often not identified as such. However, the American Federation of Teachers says 20% of elementary students have significant problems learning to read, and 20% more do not read fluently enough to enjoy or engage in independent reading. Reading failure rates for Latino children and English language learners are much higher. At least 25% of American adults lack the basic literacy skills

required in a typical job, and rates for the incarcerated are higher: 48% of the American prison population has dyslexia (Moody 2002), and 2/3 of juveniles in detention have dyslexia. About 60% of students identified for special education services in Santa Barbara Unified School District have “specific learning disabilities” such as dyslexia and other processing disorders. These students are much less likely to read well (only 10% are “proficient” or “advanced” in grades 2-6), have English proficiency (less than 5%), and complete the courses required for CSU or UC admission (fewer than 30%). Special education students are more likely to be truant, chronically absent, or drop out, and only 75% graduate from high school.

Scientific research using fMRIs conclusively demonstrates that during the reading process the brains of individuals with dyslexia function differently than typical readers, and that appropriate instructional approaches can change brain functioning and lead to vastly improved learning (Shaywitz, 2003; Wolf, 2007). Typically, however, teachers are only prepared for half of the knowledge base they need in order to teach reading to all learners. Scholars agree on the fundamentals of reading instruction, but good training is still difficult to obtain.

The Santa Barbara Public Library’s Adult Literacy Tutoring Program already serves a wide range of adults with dyslexia or who are poor readers. Some dropped out of school, or attended schools before compulsory special education laws. Others received special education services but never understood their specific needs and believe they were “stupid.” Still others graduated from high school, either with or without special education support, but realize that they do not have the reading skills they need to pursue good careers or higher education. Many attempt to go back to school or advance at work and are shamed by their failures. One of our colleagues in the City, for example, never was able to achieve a significant promotion because of learning disabilities, and was embarrassed by his failures until he learned of the accommodations available to him. Education about legal rights and opportunities is an important piece of career and school progress for those with dyslexia, and for parents of children with dyslexia.

Appropriate education for those with dyslexia changes everything; while it does not remove difficulties, it builds knowledge and strategies that change brain function. The gold standard for multisensory, structured, and scaffolded direct instruction is based on the work of Samuel Orton and Anna Gillingham in the 1920s and 30s (known as Orton-Gillingham approaches) and provides research-tested methodologies that can and should be taught to parents, volunteers, and teachers. Quality reading instruction using an Orton-Gillingham approach includes multisensory techniques, direct instruction in phonology and morphology (such as the seven syllable types, spelling rules, syllabication rules, and Greek and Latin roots), assessment and diagnostic teaching, and reading comprehension/fluency training, as well as a supervised practicum. Information about reading disabilities and participation in a “dyslexia simulation” for tutors helps build a framework for building an effective learning climate.

Outreach & Marketing

Outreach and marketing are crucial to the success of this project. The project will benefit from taking advantage of the Library’s well-established, existing web and social media presence. Community advocates, such as The Dyslexia Project, have established excellent working relationships with the school district, pediatricians, early childhood educators, education and social justice non-profits, the media, and other organizations to create the network needed to raise community awareness. Development of a coordinated marketing plan will help the project staff plan and carry out outreach to parent groups, nonprofits, community social service agencies, schools, advocacy organizations, and others. The Santa Barbara Public Library can expand its existing outreach to its many community partners, and include additional service providers, such as health care agencies, in building knowledge of dyslexia and available

services. In addition, the dyslexia community is not well served by print media such as newspapers, so the project will include extensive use of radio advertising, public service announcements on television, and social media. We will be working with the new Dyslexia Community Foundation and with the Decoding Dyslexia group and its online community.

As a first step, the project will develop a marketing plan. A marketing consultant will create and distribute radio ads and social media outreach, oversee the creation of a video PSA, and work with staff to implement a comprehensive community outreach plan.

Alignment

The project aligns two major goals for 2016-17, and in identifying and serving an at-risk population, links individual educational goals and family learning. The consortium's vision of developing an inclusive, collaborative, and coordinated approach meshes ideally with the Santa Barbara Dyslexia Initiative, which works with local agencies, adult learners, teachers, and parents to include those who have dropped out or are at risk of falling behind or dropping out of formal education. Rather than approaching the issue of reading disabilities through a piecemeal approach, training instructors in a research-proven, data-driven methodology supported by experts in the field (Shaywitz, 2002, and Wolf, 2010) will help non-readers and low-literacy adults. By focusing on mastery of the skills necessary for higher learning and job preparation accelerates transitions for those adults whose skills have stagnated.

The pioneering emphasis of this project focuses on the mission of providing excellence in adult education. Very few communities have made a focused commitment to providing research-based training and support for adults and all children with dyslexia. Such programs, which help individuals gain the reading skills needed to master written information, the internet, the GED, degree programs, employment certification, promote career and college transitions. In addition, individualized tutoring by highly prepared tutors promotes excellence student support and focuses attention to the individual needs of adult learners. Providing state-of-the-art training supports innovative professional development not just for faculty but for volunteer tutors and parents as effective community educators. Together these work to create meaningful, measurable outcomes: improved reading skills and progress toward career and educational goals.

Current Students Served: 350 adult learners served through Adult Literacy Services each year at the Santa Barbara Public Library System, 100 of whom are ESL only

Target Number of New Students Served for 2016-17: 30

NON-AEBG funding

Free adult literacy services at the Santa Barbara Public Library System are supported and sustained by funding from California Library Literacy Services, a program of the California State Library. In addition to 50 adult learners with learning disabilities, the Library's program serves another 300 students each year, including those preparing for the GED, workplace skills, and college transitions as well as English language learners. The City of Santa Barbara also provides core support for the adult literacy program. Other local funders, including the Kirby-Jones Foundation and the Friends of the Santa Barbara Public Library, also provide annual support, and special projects have been funded by the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services through the Library Services and Technology Act, the Brittingham Family Foundation, the Orfalea Foundation, and others. The Library's Adult Literacy Program is a partner in the

Family Service Agency's five-year federal Healthy Relationships project, which will provide salary support for expanded staff through 2020.

Sustainability plan

The Library's Adult Literacy Program has provided free services for 29 years, serving thousands of local adults, and is funded through state and local government support, community grants and donations. The goal of this project is to train volunteers and staff who will then have the skills and supplies to work within existing programs and continue the project into the future. Regular library staff, who bring long experience to the project, and long-term volunteers will help pass on knowledge. Rather than simply hiring "one-shot" professionals who will leave at the end of the project, trained volunteers will persist and continue to train the next generation. The typical library tutor has at least four years of tutoring experience, and many volunteers have been active for 10, 15, or more years; most adult learners are tutored by volunteers with at least two years of experience. Furthermore, the Library is an anchor institution in the community, rather than being a new or single project-based organization, and adult literacy has long been one of its core services.