

SUEÑOS UNIDOS / UNITED DREAMS: A BILINGUAL PARENT CO-OP IN TRANSITION

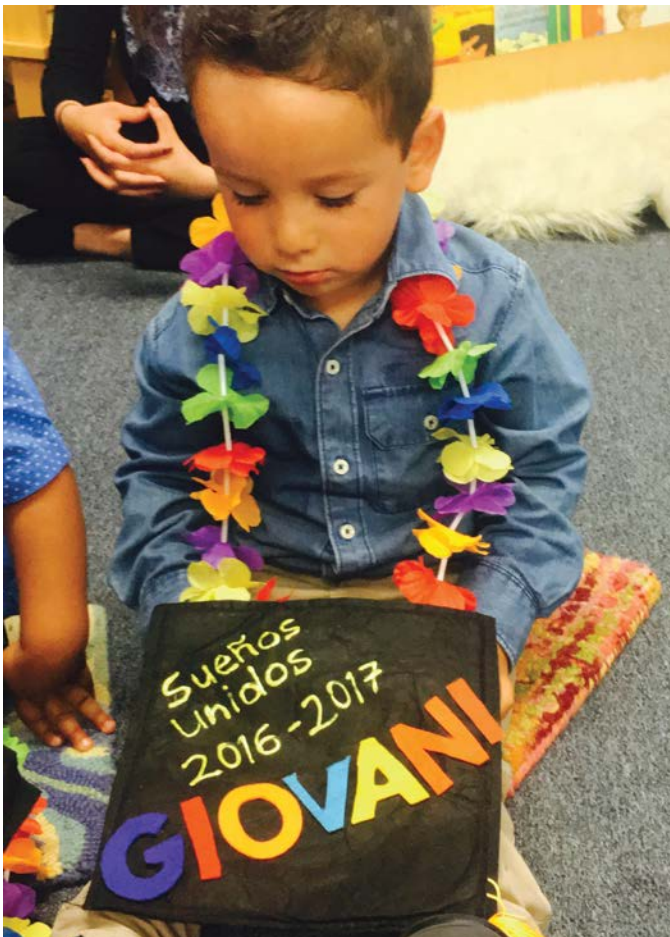


Prepared by
Puente de la Costa Sur (PUENTE)
July 2018

CHILDCARE ON THE SOUTH COAST: A HISTORY OF UNMET NEED

About 12 years ago, Executive Director Rita Mancera, (then a home visitor for Puente's Family Engagement Program), learned that licensed childcare was hard to come by on the South Coast for children under the age of three. There were no affordable options for low-income families. Since preschool was outside some parents' budgets, some children would not see the inside of a classroom (or any structured learning environment) until kindergarten.

Mancera visited the homes where infants and toddlers were being cared for during the day—sometimes by parents, often by relatives or other local women who were paid to babysit children while their parents worked in local fields or nurseries.



What Mancera noticed there helped bring the issue into focus. For one thing, with no public playground in the region, children spent their days confined to the small apartments and trailers that farm workers rent on the South Coast. Inside, she saw children sometimes strapped into car seats on the floor. Mancera learned that caregivers kept the children in the car seats for long stretches of time before picking them up or letting them move freely. Why? To keep them safe. Farm worker housing is a potentially hazardous environment for children to play, with rough plank floors and exposed electrical outlets.

"They would eventually get them out and feed them, and it was okay. But those babies at that age need to be on a carpet, to crawl," says Mancera.

"Some homes are no larger than 25 square feet, so there is not a lot of mobility for a child who wants to crawl, jump or run. I remember one particular farm that rented rooms in a house to at least six different families. The room of a family I visited there had enough space only for a bed and a dresser. The mother did not dare to bathe her baby in the communal bathroom. Instead, she made it work on top of the bed, the only space available. At other farms, families often sleep in their own living rooms, so during the day, the mattresses are stacked on their sides along the walls and could fall at any moment."



Children were kept from playing outside, because families feared they would be exposed to harmful pesticides—the sort that their parents regularly spray on local crops. The parents knew that an industrial farm was no place for toddlers to play.

Substandard housing is a serious problem on the South Coast. However, the lack of daycare facilities obligated working parents to pay for childcare wherever they could find it.

The problem affected Anglo and white-collar parents, too. Mancera herself could not find care for her son when she returned to work after he was born. “I did not have a plan. I was very stressed about who would be a good person to take care of him; what would be a safe, nurturing space for him.” Eventually she found another new mother who was willing to come over and babysit their two children at Mancera’s house.

The lack of care options took a clear toll on the community’s most vulnerable children during their formative years. Norka Bayley was the teacher at Pescadero Preschool, part of the La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District, for more than 25 years. She retired in 2017. Bayley would regularly welcome 3-year-olds to her classroom that had

never read a book. They did not know how a pencil worked. They did not have toys at home, so they lacked manual dexterity and spatial ability.

“For all the years I was teaching in Pescadero, we knew that childcare was the greatest need,” she says. “I remember going to community meetings, and the number one issue was always some form of childcare for the community.”

Ninety percent of the children were coming from Spanish-speaking homes, with little or no exposure to English. Literacy testing later showed some of them struggling with reading. Poor students who are not reading proficiently by the third grade are 13 times less likely to graduate high school on time, compared with those who are, according to a seminal study from Johns Hopkins University.

But the social isolation of those early childhood years—whether growing up in a farmworker “barracks,” a trailer, or a comfortable house—affected all of Bayley’s rural students equally.

“Sometimes I had children who knew the whole alphabet when they arrived, but they had no social skills. They would not play with other children,” she recalls.

IDENTIFYING THE NEED, INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY

All young children deserve to spend their days in a safe, nurturing, affordable daycare facility staffed by certified childcare professionals. For Pescadero, the South Coast Family Engagement Initiative—a partnership with the Heising-Simons Foundation, the La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District, Puente, and South Coast residents—identified this need and engaged the community to find innovative solutions. Puente hired Arlae Alston, an expert in Early Childhood Education, to spearhead the project.

Over three years, starting in 2014, the Initiative documented the essential characteristics of the region's population and the demographics of the La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District, held focus groups for parents, created a community steering committee, and conducted extensive training for parents and caregivers. Significantly, only 30% of parents had graduated from high school; many never completed elementary school. While it would have been easy to focus on the rural deficits caused by poverty—low educational attainment; scarce, shared housing; physical and linguistic isolation; and widespread trauma and abuse—the Initiative

The determination to make a better life for themselves and their children; core resilience; respect for the role of education; strong family structure, moral values and respect; and pride in their cultural identity and practices—provided the foundation for the Initiative's efforts.

focused on the strengths of Latino parents. These strengths—the determination to make a better life for themselves and their children; core resilience; respect for the role of education; strong family structure, moral values and respect; and pride in their cultural identity and practices—provided the foundation for the Initiative's efforts.

Spotlight: South Coast Family Engagement Initiative

Puente's bilingual parent co-op grew out of the South Coast Family Engagement Initiative, an ambitious partnership launched in 2014 to reverse chronic problems in local students' early reading and language skills. With major support from the Heising-Simons Foundation and the San Mateo County Office of Education, the La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District and Puente focused on giving parents and at-home caregivers the tools they needed to understand child development and improve reading skills, with innovative programs tailored to the community.

Some highlights:

- Puente hired Arlae Alston, expert in Early Childhood Education, to oversee the project.
- Puente introduced Abriendo Puertas (Opening Doors); a ten-part curriculum that teaches parents how to support their children's growth and education at every age.
- An expert with the San Mateo County Department of Education gave a 12-session workshop on early childhood development to 26 home care providers using curriculum from PITC, the Program for Infant-Toddler Care. Puente followed up with more training, made possible by First 5 San Mateo County.
- The Raising a Reader program was expanded at Pescadero Elementary School beyond preschool and kindergarten. 'Raising a Reader Family Nights'—a proven intervention—taught parents how to practice reading to their children and sent children home with a new care package of books each week.



CHILDCARE BREAKTHROUGH

The decades-long push for affordable quality childcare became front and center in 2016, when Puente opened Sueños Unidos (“United Dreams”), the first-ever South Coast bilingual childcare co-op.

Alston felt that it was a now-or-never moment for the dream of a free, bilingual Pescadero childcare co-op. The Heising-Simons Foundation agreed and granted Puente new funding for a one-year pilot program. Puente also received a grant from First 5 San Mateo County, which enabled a partnership with experts at Family Connections in Redwood City to provide technical assistance to Puente staff.

Things moved very quickly after that. A newly formed committee of local Anglo and Latino parents helped Alston figure out how to use existing resources to create the co-op, which essentially went from funding to launch in two months. Two other developments helped speed things along. First, Puente converted part of its own office space into a temporary home for the co-op, previously reserved for afterschool care for children whose parents attend classes at Puente. Second, the Bilingual Parent Co-op offered an opportunity to create a rich environment that would encourage

children's acquisition of literacy skills and interest in multiple languages while preserving and valuing each child's home language. It would provide school-readiness activities that foster growth in attention, memory, literacy and numeracy, problem-solving and critical thinking, and that help children explore their relationship to the natural world. The co-op allowed Puente to enter the space of providing professional early care as a first step, which would support the long-term capacity building needed to establish a permanent licensed toddler childcare center on the South Coast.

The Bilingual Parent Co-op would provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for children and adults to experience joy, playfulness and learning—both individually and in groups. It would also be a bilingual space in which parents and children could feel safe and comfortable, and that would honor children's home language while introducing them to a second.

Childcare would be free for all, but all parents would come in one day a week to assist professional teaching staff. Parents would also commit to making meals for all the children on a rotating basis, to keep

Spotlight: What Makes Puente's Co-op Different

Founded in October 2016, the Sueños Unidos/United Dreams bilingual parent co-op quickly gained a reputation for professional, compassionate childcare. Here are some other elements that make the first-of-its kind co-op on the South Coast unique.

- The co-op is 100% bilingual, starting with the teachers. Anglo and Latino children learn to speak and write in each other's languages.
- In two-parent households, both parents are expected to play a role in their child's education. The co-op has 100% participation by fathers.
- By design, the co-op breaks down social barriers between parents who may be farm owners or farm workers. Everyone is a parent.
- The management of the co-op is in the hands of locals who have formed a committee to steer it into the future. There is no intermediary.
- Children who enroll in the co-op will eventually be toilet-trained by their teachers. In the meantime, the co-op provides free diapers.
- There is always something good to eat at lunch thanks to co-op parents. Parents take turns cooking for all the children. Puente reimburses them for the cost of ingredients.

costs down for everyone. Puente staff, parents and partners interviewed and hired a highly qualified, accredited lead teacher and teacher's aide, and laid the groundwork for building a local pipeline of accredited Early Childhood educators in conjunction with experts at Cañada College. The whole experience left the community feeling empowered and excited about the co-op's potential.

"Interacting with these other women has been amazing. I really look forward to it," says Linnea Hoffman, a committee member whose son Grant is one of the first children in the co-op. Hoffman says the name of the co-op, Sueños Unidos/United Dreams, speaks to the hope that she and other parents have for a bright, safe, inclusive future. "We all really want the same things for our children and our community's children. And it's been fun to think about ways that our kids' needs can be best met," she says.

Jean-Marie Houston, Administrator of Early Learning Support Services with San Mateo County, an early believer in Puente's capacity to address its early learning challenges, collaborated with Puente

to provide training to caregivers through the Program for Infant/Toddler Care (PITC). "To me, it is part of what makes me excited about doing work with Puente—they don't wait for people to come up with solutions. They think big," she says.

The Bilingual Parent Co-op would provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for children and adults to experience joy, playfulness and learning. It would also be a bilingual space in which parents and children could feel safe and comfortable, and that would honor children's home language while introducing them to a second.

MAKING A MEASURABLE IMPACT



The eight children in Sueños Unidos/United Dreams are always learning, always on the go. On a sunny winter Wednesday, out on the playground, there are long, glorious hours of playtime. Children sharpen motor skills and test their sense of adventure by climbing on the jungle gym and sliding down the slide. They jump and dance to music, to lyrics in English and Spanish. They take turns hopping off a small hay bale, digging in the sandbox, and playing with bouncy balls. Two alert teachers circulate from classroom to playground, monitoring for potential accidents and handing out toys and hugs.

The rhythm of the children's days—reading circle, playtime, art and science, mealtime, toilet time, nap time, playtime again—will be familiar to anyone who has visited a daycare facility. But a close observer will quickly realize that the teaching philosophy that animates this childcare co-op is also intentional and unique.

"We make children feel seen, and never feel wrong. It's freedom, it's learning through play," says former co-op Lead Teacher Elvia Morales.

When a young boy who is painting outdoors decides it would be fun to coat his own arm and neck in water-soluble green paint, Morales looks over casually and says, "Great! Let me know when you want to get cleaned up." Later, a child spills milk at lunchtime. Morales turns it into a teachable moment about how accidents happen, and helps the child clean up the mess.

Other moments offer a lesson in patience and communication. When they first arrive at the co-op, many children do not yet know how to share, which is developmentally appropriate. Conflicts over toys often end in tears. Some children express frustration by pushing or hitting each other. But under Morales's tutelage, the children have learned to ask one of the teachers for help. A boy wants a blue ball that another child is playing with. Assistant teacher Jennifer Mercado starts a timer and lets the child who has the ball know that he only has a few minutes left with it before he must share it. Potential conflict: defused.

At this co-op, children learn to be compassionate, curious, accepting—and bilingual. "The social-emotional issues are the main thing for us, because they need to be happy with themselves and believe that they can learn, believe they are happy reading books, they are happy connecting with other children, they are happy with differences," says Morales.

As they grow from 18 months to three years old, their developmental progress is rapid and measurable. When a child enters the program, they go through the same careful screening administered by all licensed programs. Morales and Mercado then tailor a course of learning to fit that child's needs—setting up activities that will challenge the child. All instruction is in both Spanish and English.

The co-op's only indoor room is a wonderland of art supplies and objects to touch, count, make art with, and play pretend. There are bins of bottle caps, quarried stones, smooth pebbles, building blocks, pine cones. Real dishes that break when they fall—to teach kids about breaking and fixing. Plastic bottles for pouring water. Sunflower seeds that the children plant in the classroom and then transfer outside.

“We make children feel seen, and never feel wrong. It’s freedom, it’s learning through play.”

Parents receive regular feedback about their child's progress, as well as detailed developmental summaries from Morales. The summary answers 16 questions pertaining to how children are moving forward in areas of expressive language, social and emotional development, math and science, and physical and developmental health. “The parents love to hear what their children are learning,” says Morales.

Parents themselves are also very much involved. Once a week, a parent or family member for each child must attend the co-op and assist the teacher with supervision, cleanup and lunchtime prep. The arrangement has two major benefits: it keeps the co-op cost-free for parents by reducing overhead, and it gives them insight into what their children are learning and how they are learning it. After observing the positive results teachers achieve with handling tantrums and meltdowns, parents often choose to adopt those same techniques at home, says Morales.

“We are partners with our parents. We model more than we teach. When they are here, they see it. There are opportunities to resolve conflicts. They see how it happens.”

New mom Alondra Zavala and her husband José are grateful for the progress their son Emiliano has

made in the year he has been at the co-op. Emiliano is just two and “he already knows all his numbers up to 10. He knows so much English and Spanish,” marvels Zavala. “He sings his ABCs. And he loves books.”

Emiliano has been teaching his mother the songs he learns at the co-op, along with all the hand movements. “So I went to his teacher and asked her, ‘What’s that song again? I need to learn it.’” Moreover, Emiliano has been toilet trained by his teachers. (The co-op calls it ‘toilet learning’). One behavioral lesson from the co-op has come in very handy with an active boy who likes to run around, and touch things wherever he goes. Instead of telling him “no,” Zavala explains why he should not do something. “So I tell him, if you go jump off this thing, you’ll hurt yourself,” she says. “He listens.”

Not all lessons have been as easy for her to integrate. On the boy's very first day at the co-op, Morales asked Emiliano to look out the window and wave goodbye to his mom as she left for work. According to Alston, “It is helpful for children to see their parents leave rather than just ‘disappear.’ If a parent leaves without saying goodbye the child might feel that school is a place where my mom disappears. This creates anxiety and insecurity. These are not good for the child—an anxious child cannot play and explore. If you can’t play you can’t learn.”

Zavala at first felt it had backfired: Emiliano was in tears. “I went to work broken-hearted. I asked Morales not to do that again. But later, I saw how he was evolving and learning new stuff, and he stopped crying,” Zavala continues. “And that’s when I realized that she was right—that it was important for him to see me leaving so that he would also know I’m coming back. I just didn’t want him to be anxious or insecure.”

Puente has already successfully transitioned eight young graduates into Pescadero Preschool and welcomed four new children in their place. The graduates arrived at preschool prepared: toilet learned, socially adapted, and familiar with the routines of the day.



Preschool teacher Patti Marin recalls that it was immediately obvious which children had benefited from the childcare co-op, in contrast to the ones who had never been inside a classroom or held a book.

"The first day was amazing for them," says Marin. "Just the simplest thing, like knowing they're safe here and it's okay to say goodbye to Mom and Dad—it was the smoothest transition we've ever seen."

While other students struggled to catch up on language, motor skills, and managing their bodies and behavior, the co-op trio would quietly sit down for circle time and start to read. "Their attention span is better. They love books," adds Marin. "I had one boy come in who didn't know how to open a marker. He just kept looking at it. But the boys from the co-op said, 'Red! I want red! Okay, the lid goes here.'"

"We are seeing a big difference," confirms Erica Hays, former Principal of Pescadero Elementary School. A close connection exists between the bilingual parent co-op and the elementary school, located as they are on adjacent parcels with a big, backyard view of the Santa Cruz Mountains, where bellowing cattle range, and a shared fence separates the two playgrounds. At lunchtime, the elementary school students say hi to the younger children. And the co-op kids visit the preschool space before starting there, to make it less intimidating.

The parents of co-op children are directly involved in the school's life. That involvement continues once their children transfer to preschool. Co-op parents are more likely to seek out preschool teachers and administrators with questions. They are proactive about setting up a plan to address issues that may arise, ranging from speech delays to behavioral concerns, says Hays.

Children forge much of their executive function [self-management], language skills, and social and character development in the crucial years between 0 and 5. The Big Lift is a bold social venture that focuses on these years and aims to transform early childhood education in San Mateo County. It has made it possible, more than ever before, for more low-income families on the South Coast to afford to send their children to preschool.

Now in the Big Lift's third year, early testing shows that the school district is well on the way to achieving its goal: to have 80% or more of its students reading proficiently by 3rd grade. By the time they reach first grade, many children in Pescadero Elementary are reading well. And thanks to the co-op and the preschool's bilingual environments, children now start school with much more English vocabulary.

"For years, many of our kindergarten students didn't know their letters or their numbers or their colors or their shapes. And now we're seeing a lot more students ready," says Hays.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Good news spreads quickly, and other parents quickly started approaching Puente about enrolling their children in the co-op. It now has a waiting list of 20 families. Its success will not be assured until every child under the age of three on the South Coast has access to quality, free childcare. The waiting list is a sign that many children in the community need help, and they are not getting it because of limited resources.

Turnover is slow. When children turn three, they are not automatically discharged from the co-op. This is because Puente has made a commitment to holding a space for every child until they can enroll in the preschool (which has an age cutoff at September 1). Some children are nearly four by the time they enroll. The co-op needs a transitional classroom to handle the vastly different developmental needs of an 18-month-old who is just beginning to talk, and a child who enjoys reading several books a day. Right now, that is not a possibility.

"We can only take eight children, and that's one of the things we don't like. It is not fair to say no to some people, knowing that they desperately need it, knowing that their children are missing a lot by

not being in our program," says Mancera, the Executive Director of Puente.

Puente estimates the current level of need at 36 children aged 18 to 36 months, which means that, right now, Puente can only serve 22 percent of those families.

"I think it's the worst part of my job. Yesterday, I spoke to a woman whose child is 15 months old and I had to tell her that there are still five people on the waiting list ahead of her. She looked desperate and very disappointed," says Alston, Puente's Family Engagement Project Manager. Co-op slots open on a first-come, first-served basis.

Severe space limitations are the co-op's primary challenge. The co-op occupies one long room within Puente's offices, separated from the reception/staff area by a thin plastic divider. If a child in the co-op is having a particularly bad day, everyone on the other side of the wall hears it. Space is at a premium and spaces for school activities compete with areas for playing and napping.



FUNDING UNCERTAINTIES

Funding is another major challenge. The bilingual parent co-op was made possible thanks to an \$80,000 pilot grant from the Silicon Valley-based Heising-Simons Foundation, with some smaller grants from the Bella Vista Foundation, First 5 San Mateo County, the Peninsula Giving Circle of the Latino Community Foundation and individual donors.

A new grant from Heising-Simons is helping the co-op make its transition from a cooperative to a licensed facility. A site visit with their new program officer resulted in an invitation to apply for a grant to make the transition possible.

Support for the \$27,600/child funding gap currently comes out of the Puente general fund, but that is not sustainable. Still, Puente has committed to its long-term vision of providing quality childcare for all children, ages 0-3 years.

"We're in the red, and we can't afford it, but it's the right thing to do. We can see the impact on our families already. It is a successful program. And once we've started it, we're not going to let it go," says Mancera.

Puente realized that in order for the program to be sustainable it had to obtain a childcare license. However, in order to do that there was a need for funding up front to renovate the space—extensive electrical, plumbing and carpentry improvements will be necessary including a small toilet, half walls, new sinks, appliances, and doors.

"Puente continues to seek foundations and individuals who can appreciate the impact of what has been accomplished to date, and would consider multi-year funding so that children's educations don't have to depend on whether the money is coming in from year to year," says Mancera.

Meanwhile, demand continues to grow. Puente needs to hire two more teachers to allow the co-op to expand its hours from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Right now, the co-op ends at 3 p.m., and it is a struggle for most working parents to come pick their

"We haven't limited ourselves by saying, 'this is the Puente way.' There are a lot of possibilities, and the most important thing is that we talk to the community, because they have a lot of common sense and wisdom about how to do things in a way that would work for them."

children up in the middle of the afternoon—especially Latino mothers and fathers who work long hours at local farms and nurseries. Only two families have the flexibility to come at that hour. More typically, it is a grandmother or other caregiver who comes.

"I had a family that had to decline a spot in the co-op because they couldn't find anyone to pick up their child. The mother—and I—were really disappointed," recalls Alston.

Parents need to be able to go to work knowing that their children are safe and in good hands—entrusted to qualified, passionate educators. Principal Erica Hays of Pescadero Elementary has seen generations of students pass through the school without the benefit of a structured early childhood education. In a community with limited choices and no public parks, Puente's playground facilities (and its daily literacy, art, and music activities) offer an essential boost to local children.

"It's crucial. And if the co-op could be expanded to allow more kids to participate, that would be ideal," says Hays. "We've had families come in whose kids are too young for preschool and I've referred them to the co-op. The main thing would be to expand access to the younger families."

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

When it comes to expanding childcare for South Coast children, the missing pieces are means and opportunity. Once those can align, the results are likely to transform the lives of a generation of children who otherwise will lack many of the privileges taken for granted by youngsters who are growing up just 30 miles away in Silicon Valley.

Puente is growing the program incrementally, starting with renovations and licensing to allow its existing space to accommodate four more children. Support from San Mateo County Community Development Block Grant funding, individuals, and grants will make this a reality by the end of 2018.

Puente will continue to pursue its larger vision—to address the region’s education gap by providing universal early childhood education to local families and their youngest children, from infants to toddlers. Imagine a five-classroom center that offers expanded access to children starting at 3 months of age. The first room would be for six infants, ages 3-8 months. One class would accommodate nine

toddlers, ages 8 to 18 months. Two classrooms would accommodate up to a total of 24 older toddlers, ages 18 to 30 months. And a fifth transitional classroom would be for 16 younger three-year-olds who miss the preschool deadline due to their birthdate.

Fully realizing this vision would require a projected \$1,000,000 annually in operational support, and \$2,425,000 to construct, purchase and/or overhaul a building in the Pescadero area. Those are big numbers for the Pescadero community, but they may be within reach for the right philanthropic institutions.

Housed as it is in a small former school district building, Puente does not have the footprint to accommodate a new building. Mancera is in active talks with the La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District, San Mateo County staff, and private landowners to sound out all the configurations that may be possible.

Spotlight: Childcare Is a Social Justice Issue

You can buy sustainable produce from farms that commit to treating their workers well, but what happens when farms are not compelled to provide childcare for their full-time workers? Historically, workers on the South Coast who earn the minimum wage have struggled to afford to send their children to preschool.

Children often do not see their parents until 8 p.m. because they work two jobs. Under those circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that parents do not have the time to be involved in their children’s education.

Most families “over the hill” in Silicon Valley would never think of that as a sustainability indicator.

“If you care about the farm-to-table movement, you are going to have to include the children of workers,” says Arlae Alston, Family Engagement Director for Puente. “Buying organic and local and making sure that the workers are well paid are all-important. But the next step is making sure the workers have access to quality childcare,” she says. “We have mounds of data that show that this is what children need. As consumers, we should ask, ‘Where do your farmers take their children to childcare?’ Because if I’m working at a high-tech company, I know I have at least two centers to bring my child.”

Puente has discussed buying a house with a barn attached—there are some rare opportunities in Pescadero’s tiny market—or designing and building a space specifically to serve as a childcare center on school district land. There are other options too, but everything is contingent upon current uncertainties. If the county builds a new fire station near Pescadero High School, and the school district is agreeable, Puente could stage a childcare center in a brand-new building.



“We haven’t limited ourselves by saying, ‘this is the Puente way.’ There are a lot of possibilities, and the most important thing is that we talk to the community, because they have a lot of common sense and wisdom about how to do things in a way that would work for them,” says Mancera.

“What would be ideal is a dedicated space for a childcare center. And not one that has to be used for a lot of other things too,” Principal Hays says.

The county is aware of the South Coast need, and the link between early childhood education and students’ continued success. “We know facilities are a huge issue across the county, and it seems ironic

that the problem is we have no space to build. In Pescadero, they’re in a community that has lots of space, but no buildings,” says Houston, of the Early Learning Support Services (ELSS) in San Mateo County.

Houston calls the co-op “important.” “There was absolutely a need in the community for a place that was safe and developmentally appropriate for children under 3,” she says, but acknowledges the need is not yet fully met.

“I know from observing co-op models all over the county that that this is one of the best models for a kid-healthy environment,” Houston adds. “There are more hands on deck. And the parent participation makes it more affordable.” She also praised the commitment to bilingual education. “Kids who have fluency in two languages are cognitively at an advantage.”

Puente has practiced the art of improvisation for a long time. Rather than wait for the perfect solution, the co-op pilot program has been a way to think big in small space—with strong community support. The time to expand is now.

“Here in the U.S., all the research has shown that when you offer quality childcare for young children, it’s the best thing you can do for brain development, for attachment, for families,” says Alston. When we talk about social justice, we must talk about equity. Providing affordable, high-quality childcare for farmworkers is giving these families and their children what they need to succeed.”

Puente has practiced the art of improvisation for a long time. Rather than wait for the perfect solution, the co-op pilot program has been a way to think big in small space—with strong community support. The time to expand is now.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the Heising-Simons Foundation, the La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District, First 5 of San Mateo, the Bella Vista Foundation, the Peninsula Giving Circle of the Latino Community Foundation, the San Mateo County Office of Education, and many individual donors for providing support for our shared vision for affordable childcare for all South Coast children.

ABOUT

Julia Scott

Julia Scott, an award-winning journalist and radio producer, wrote this report. Scott's stories have appeared in The New York Times Magazine, Nautilus, The Walrus, Modern Farmer, OZY, Salon, Canadian Geographic and on radio shows like The World and Marketplace.

Scott is an editor with San Francisco NPR member station KQED Radio and a former editor at KALW Radio. A former reporter for the Bay Area News Group, she covered rural San Mateo County and its communities, including its regional environment and natural resources. Her work has been recognized with awards from the California Newspaper Publishers Association and the Society of Professional Journalists.

Puente de la Costa Sur (PUENTE)

For 20 years, Puente has served the rural, unincorporated San Mateo County South Coast communities of Pescadero, La Honda, Loma Mar, and San Gregorio. Puente both advocates for our communities, and leverages resources that foster economic prosperity and security, and that promote individual and community health and wellness. We support local leaders and work together with our neighbors to create solutions for our diverse communities. Puente's nearly 50 programs for education, youth leadership, employment, behavioral health and wellness, safety net services and advocacy efforts are the only such services offered in this far-flung region just "over the hill" from Silicon Valley, yet a world apart. There are no dental or medical providers, pharmacies, laundromats, department or hardware stores, libraries, or supermarkets. Nearly all services are located in Half Moon Bay, 18 miles away. A lack of transportation, childcare, and financial resources put these services beyond the reach of most residents. Each year Puente provides services and support to 1,500 individuals—nearly one-third of the residents of the region.

Puente serves farmworkers and low-income families, including seniors, adults, youth and children.





mypuente.org

PO Box 554
Pescadero, CA 94060

(650) 879-1691

outreach@mypuente.org