



IGNITING IMPACT IN WEST MARIN

Working Together. Making a Difference.

A Regional Approach

This Learning Brief highlights the Partnership's regional implementation of its unique collaborative approach to closing educational equity gaps for students and families in West Marin. This case study outlines some promising indicators of success that may spark similar action in other regions.

West Marin

This rural region is the largest geographic, but smallest population, area in Marin. It is home to approximately 620 K-12 students and 110 preschoolers living in 8 unincorporated communities (Point Reyes Station, Olema, Stinson Beach, Bolinas, Tomales, Dillon Beach, Nicasio, and Inverness) attending one of 3 Preschools, 5 K-8 Schools or 2 High Schools in 4 districts. Approximately 60% are students of color, 35% primarily speak a language other than English, mainly Spanish, and 55%-66% live in families that experience some form of financial hardship.



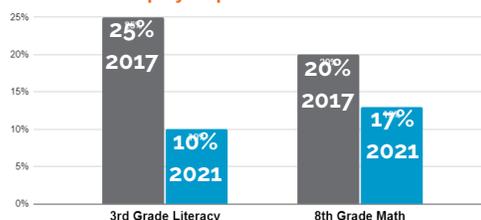
- West Marin school districts:
- Shoreline Unified
 - Nicasio
 - Bolinas-Stinson
 - Tamalpais Union High School
- West Marin
 School sites

What Is the Data Telling Us?

While equity gaps persist (see data to the right) and more improvement is needed, Partnership efforts are taking hold. Coming out of COVID, Shoreline Unified was the only district in the county to see standardized test scores improve for students of color in **both** 3rd grade literacy and 8th grade math.

These improvements reduced equity gaps in both subject areas.

SUSD Racial Equity Gaps Reduced from 2017 to 2021

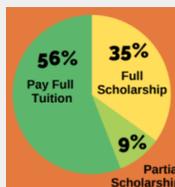


In 2019, only **33%** of children of color were supported to develop the skills needed to be **ready for kindergarten.** (click [HERE](#))

The avg. **cost of preschool** in Marin is higher than the Statewide avg. by **39%**

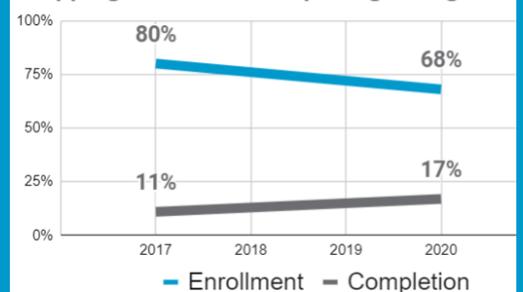
44% of all preschool students in West Marin were on **full or partial scholarships**

Click [HERE](#) for ECE Fact Sheet



College & Career Enrollment & Completion Rates

SUSD College going Students of Color are dropping out before completing college.



During COVID, access to digital learning was not available to at least **100** students.

Click [HERE](#) to read more.

Key Factors

- Rural locations like West Marin are difficult to get to and lack population density. Serving fewer people in a distant location is more expensive and time consuming than providing those same services in a well populated area.
- Public transportation to, and within, West Marin is very limited.
- A significant number of parents/guardians speak a language other than English and work non-traditional hours in low-wage, hospitality and ranching industries.
- As home prices skyrocket, and the economy continues to shift from farming and ranching to tourism, differences in the lived-experiences of wage workers, farm workers, white-collar internet-based workers, retirees, and weekenders increase.
- Due to topography that limits cellular transmission and cabled internet, there are pockets in West Marin that do not have internet access.
- West Marin is the only community in the county with a regionally dedicated philanthropic foundation - [The West Marin Fund](#)
- Small districts can be nimble and responsive to very localized needs and circumstances. Yet, they also have the same fixed infrastructure as larger districts (i.e. admin, facilities, business operations, State mandated reporting, etc.). Therefore, both per-student revenue and expenses tend to be larger than in larger districts.



Systemic Challenges

Students of Color are not failing;
Our systems are.

- The region has long struggled to maintain stable support infrastructure for the students and families who need it the most. Nonprofit organizations and county programs find it financially and logistically difficult to operate in West Marin.
- Transportation to/from school and/or enrichment programs is challenging and expensive in a rural area.
- Operating in such an economically, linguistically, and culturally diverse community makes inclusive family engagement difficult.
- Housing prices, wealth gaps, and linguistic differences create segregation and have widened the differences in students' day-to-day lived experiences.
- Broadband internet to support family engagement, homework, and virtual learning is inaccessible in some pockets of the region.
- Small school districts, in expensive rural areas, have high fixed expenses and difficulty attracting and retaining quality staff.

How the Partnership Works

Fixing the System not the Students

The goal of the West Marin regional effort, as with all Partnership endeavors, is to **shift the systemic conditions that hold inequity in place (practices, policies, resources, power structures, relationships, and hearts and minds)** by applying the Partnership's unique collaborative approach. Unlike the Partnership's other **county-wide efforts**, the West Marin pilot knits systems together within a **specific geographic region**.

Addressing **whole-child, root-causes** and working together to **build relationships across silos** was already underway through the work of the [West Marin Community Collaborative](#) and [MCF's investment in PreK-3 education](#) in West Marin. In 2018, when the Partnership joined in with the Community Collaborative to enhance its educational equity work, and [The West Marin Fund](#) joined as a Partner at the table, the **relationship network** both grew and deepened. Marin Promise Partnership, through support from its Backbone infrastructure, was then able to accelerate the development of **collective action** by **setting up data sharing and analysis** tools and facilitating Partners' in establishing their own regional, **peer-to-peer accountability** framework through an **antiracist equity lens**.

Initially focused on early childhood education and [Kindergarten Readiness](#) the regional approach expanded into the [College & Career](#) space and, once COVID hit, because of the strong collective infrastructure already in place, was one of the first communities able to quickly launch a [Learning Hub](#) and [SummerTogether](#), a collaborative [Summer enrichment](#) strategy. This tight regional network, supported by Backbone infrastructure, was also instrumental in successfully bringing Partners together to [integrate pre-k and K-8 systems](#) at the West Marin School and now serves as a collaborative model for the development of other place-based regional networks

Partners Working Together

Lessons Learned and Promising Interim Outcomes

Build Trust with Funders as Partners

Funders as Partners in a trusting, multi-stakeholder, cross-sector network, is critical to successful collaborative action. Maureen Kennedy's substantial, 10-year, \$1 million dollar grant through the [West Marin Fund](#) (WMF) supports ongoing, strategic, backbone services (see next page) vital to a regional approach. The grant also catalyzed the engagement of the WMF as a Partner in the collaborative action work. Through trust and partnership, WMF has learned first hand about community needs and has adapted its funding to support collaborative strategies such as the launch of early childhood developmental playgroups and home visiting programs. The WMF also stepped in during COVID to support [Learning Hubs](#) and [SummerTogether](#) (the region's first affordable summer enrichment program in over 25 years). Most recently, the WMF acted as a vital budget guarantor for the innovative [integration of K-8 and preschool education in the Shoreline School District](#).

Use Data for Learning & Leading

The use of data - numbers and narratives - to collectively assess and adjust strategies is also an important factor in successful collaborative action. In West Marin, Partners used data to adjust and improve the region's approach to college and career success. Partners, with support from Backbone staff, explored National Student Clearinghouse metrics and student survey testimonials and realized that despite scholarship support to enroll in college too many students were dropping out. In response, and based on the Partnership's experience with the data-informed work of the Tamalpais High School Success Network, the Tomales Success Network was launched. The new, up-stream readiness strategy focuses on getting students both to and through college. Now college and career readiness starts in 9th grade with building a 4-year plan and includes monitoring whole-child success metrics from 9th grade through graduation.

How the Partnership Works

Continued

Collaboration Principles

- Shift Systemic Conditions
- Work Together Across Silos
- Take Antiracist Action
- Address Whole-child Root Causes
- Use Numbers & Narratives (Data)
- Seek Continuous Improvement

Backbone Services

- Community & Partner Engagement
- Project, Process & Team Facilitation
- Research & Communication
- Data Sharing & Analysis
- Collaborative Funding

Partners Working Together (Continued)

Integrate Siloed Systems and Funding Streams

With support from Backbone staff, and guided by the Partnership's collaboration principles, the West Marin Kindergarten Readiness Team took an unprecedented step to **integrate the nonprofit preschool and public grade school systems**. This integrated solution is set to dramatically improve learning for all kids from Prek through Kindergarten. The coming together of these two systems will expand family access to quality preschool, provide much needed transportation for preschool families, improve developmentally appropriate learning supports in TK-K classrooms, and enhance both ECE and Kindergarten teacher stability and professional development. Preschools and grade schools can both be better when they work together, especially if surrounded and supported by other human-need and education service partners under a unified vision for quality early childhood education.

Respond, Adapt, and Repeat

By leveraging the relationships and collaborative practices developed while working together to launch Learning Hubs and SummerTogether, **Partners were able to quickly pivot their early COVID response efforts** toward a solution to fill and fund critical gaps in access to digital learning. Partners involved in the Shoreline Connectivity Collaborative's Starlink Project have leaned into their strengths to weave together the critical elements of a successful collaboration: technical assistance expertise from the Marin County IT department, lending library access to hotspot equipment through Marin County Free Library, family digital literacy support through Parent Services Project, and integrated public-private funding from individual donors, MCF, SUSD, West Marin Fund, and Federal and State ARP money.

Our Vision. Their Future.

We believe that all children can reach their full educational potential regardless of race, ethnicity, or family income. Yet systemic inequities in schools and communities throughout West Marin continue to limit what possible for many children of color and families living in poverty. Through a network-of-networks approach, in which regional collaboratives are linked together within a larger countywide Partnership, a unique and exciting strategy has emerged with unprecedented potential to once and for all close Marin's educational equity gaps all along a child's cradle-to-career journey.

Lasting change will result when organizations come together to take action.

To view resources and materials on this subject please visit:
www.marinpromisepartnership.org

What's Next?

- Launch other regional Donor Advised Funds
- Explore the development of other regional ECE ecosystems that bring together preschools & K-8 schools.
- Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the Partnership's Future Ready: College & Career Network
- Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the Partnership's County-wide Early Childhood Initiative
- Click [HERE](#) to watch several short videos from West Marin Partners, in their own voices.