



Mariposa  
Kids

# LEARNING REPORT



# 2023

SAFE SPACE



FREE PLAY



COMMUNITY







## INTRODUCTION

Mariposa Kids conducts three central programs for children in grades TK-5 centered around three pillars of SAFE SPACE – FREE PLAY – COMMUNITY. Our After-School Program serves an average of 40 children annually in the hours from school dismissal to 6pm on every school day of the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) academic calendar. Summer Camps run for seven to nine weeks between June and August, Monday to Friday, from 9a-5p with an average of 27 children enrolled each week. Lastly, Mariposa Kids conducts an average of ten Holiday Day Camps throughout the school year on select SFUSD school holidays.

The After-School Program at Mariposa Kids is the core program of the organization both in terms of budget (75% of the annual budget) and time spent during each year, approximately 80% (mid-August to May 31). Therefore, we decided to focus our initial learning activities on our 2022-2023 After-School Program. This report outlines what we learned about our After-School program and how we're using this data to improve our programming in future years.





# BACKGROUND & PURPOSE



Mariposa Kids updated its Mission, Vision & Values at the beginning of 2022 to recenter the organization’s focus and to act as a guide as the organization, staff, and families re-oriented after the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. With our new Mission, Vision & Values in place, the board approved our P.L.A.Y. Initiative<sup>1</sup>, an 18-month strategic initiative, in the summer of 2022 to guide our organization’s next steps in areas related to: Programs, Leaders, Analysis and our Years Ahead.

Within the “Program” area of our P.L.A.Y. Initiative, Mariposa Kids decided to embark on an evaluation process of programming to get a better understanding of the impact of our current programs and provide clarity on our organization’s desired short- and long-term outcomes. In Fall 2022, our Theory of Change<sup>2</sup> was approved by our board. We moved forward with our evaluation project focusing on three key areas we wanted to learn more about in order to better understand whether we were as effective as we believed. In the history of the organization, data collection had not been conducted and analysis of effectiveness did not previously exist.

To strengthen our positioning as an out-of-school time (OST) program in San Francisco and be able to better communicate our impact to families, partner schools, and funders, our Learning Agenda’s three questions were:

*Are children building friendships with other children in different grades?*

*Are children getting more outdoor time each day by participating in our programs?*

*Have parents made a relationship with a new family at Mariposa Kids?*





We chose these three areas of focus because they are central to our values, supported by literature on childhood development, and are uniquely embodied in our After-School Program.



## Cross-Age Friendship

Grade school peer rejection can be a predictor of a child's challenges adjusting to adolescence and participation in delinquent activities as a teenager. Furthermore, grade school victimization can also predict adolescent depression and social programs.<sup>3</sup> We can fend off these possibilities by nurturing friendships between children of different grades. These friendships can help younger children navigate situations that may arise both within our program and at their school through the help of their friends in older grades. Cross-age programming can also "increase the older child's level of independence and competence while increasing the younger child's spirit of belonging in a community of learners."<sup>4</sup> Additionally, cross-age programming helps younger children gain literacy and numerical skills more effectively than counterparts in single age groups as older kids will incorporate reading, writing, and numbers in regular play and thereby, increasing younger children's exposure to these.<sup>5</sup>



## Outdoor Time

Many children in the USA do not get sufficient unstructured play time and time outdoors. The lack of unstructured play time has been fed by national education policy that emphasizes high academic achievement and testing at the expense of recess time. A lack of access to safe outdoor spaces in children's lives can cause issues with focusing attention, behavior, socio-emotional, and developmental growth. Additionally, the lack of free, unstructured outdoor play can impede children's development of problem solving and decision-making skills.<sup>6</sup> Outdoor play provides for more diverse and imaginative play that enhances opportunities for children to collaborate, practice language skills and in turn, improve awareness and reasoning. This play time also allows opportunities for children to develop rules for play and to resolve conflicts,<sup>7</sup> while also experiencing vast benefits that come from utilizing natural or park places including: reduced stress, anger and aggression, reduced ADHD symptoms and improved ability to maintain focus/attention, greater engagement with learning, and improved impulse control.<sup>8</sup>



## Family Relationships

By building social connections and providing opportunities for the development of friendships between families in our programs, Mariposa Kids can help support healthy home environments for optimal child development. Too many caregivers are isolated and overstressed, in part because they lack a community that can provide weekend childcare, go on playdates, or serve as emergency contacts for their children.<sup>9</sup> Family events and even a small interaction during child pick-up can allow organic moments for members of families to connect on shared interests, experiences, and to learn about others they may have not met in other social settings.



# METHODOLOGY

These three questions encompass valuable aspects of healthy childhood development that we believe our programs positively contribute to through participation in our After-School Program.

## Cross-Age Friendship

*Data collection:* We developed a 10-item survey for the 40 children enrolled in our After-School Program to measure friendship at Mariposa Kids. The survey questions were inspired by Wyndol Furman's<sup>10</sup> work and a Malaysian study that evaluated childhood friendship.<sup>11</sup> Response options were tailored to more colloquial language of children ("Mostly Yes" became "A Little" and "Yes" became "A Lot"). The questions were tested with a small sample of children selected at random across grade levels. Following slight revisions from the test, each child was pulled aside by a staff member during program hours and asked each question verbally with responses recorded by the staff member anonymously. Utilizing verbal questioning allowed children across grades with varying degrees of literacy to participate in the same fashion with 100% participation (40 out of 40 children responded).



*Analysis:* Once data collection was complete, the staff director reviewed graphs of responses for each question visually and disaggregated responses by child age and gender. In addition, the results were shared with three parent board members, a program parent, and staff member who provided additional feedback.

## Outdoor Time

*Data collection:* We set aside the third week of every month between February and May 2023 to record minutes children spent outside. Each day, the start and end time of children being outside was recorded by staff along with activities children engaged in during this time. As part of our daily programming, children are picked up from their school and walk to the clubhouse where Mariposa Kids operates, approximately 0.5 miles away. As this time is outside and involves physical movement, it was recorded as outdoor time. During data collection, rain caused reductions in outdoor data time collection as children were forced to remain inside once their 0.5-mile transition walk was completed. An above average rainy season meant our study was impacted frequently by rain outs.

*Analysis:* Our benchmarks for outdoor time come from recommendations by the US Department of Health & Human Services<sup>12</sup> (60 minutes a day of moderate to vigorous physical activity) and the US Center for Disease Control<sup>13</sup> (60 minutes of physical activity per day for 5 days a week). We averaged our results for student outdoor time by day of week, and summed our actual results by week, before comparing these totals to the benchmarks.



## Family Relationships

*Data collection:* We developed a short family experience survey, which included six questions about family relationships and five demographic questions. Questions for the survey were inspired by the *Strengthening Families: A Protective Factors Framework*.<sup>14</sup> The survey was tested among four parents of children currently enrolled in our After-School Program, revised, and then rolled out to all enrolled families in the program. Parents completed surveys on their mobile devices with answers recorded anonymously via Google Forms. Mariposa Kids hosted a family dinner that acted as the initial push to receive survey responses. Staff followed up with families that had not taken the survey for the following two weeks.

We concluded our outreach and received 31 responses out of the 32 families enrolled in our After-School Program, or 97% of total families responding (Our family count is less than our child enrolled count due to pairs of siblings enrolled.)

*Analysis:* Once data collection was complete, the staff director reviewed graphs of responses for each question visually, and disaggregated responses by different family factors including income, parent education level, and child ethnicity.



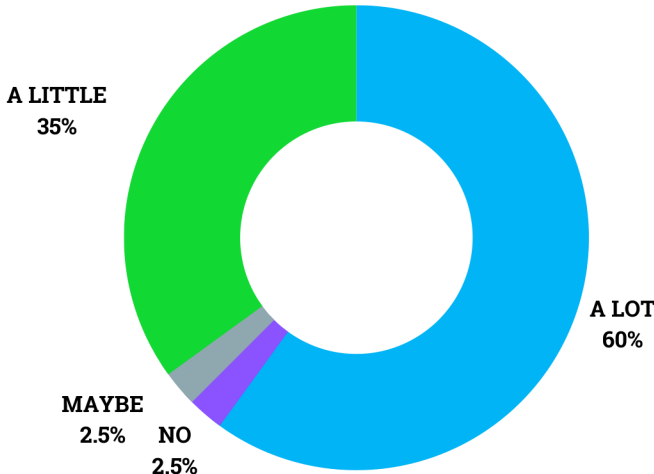
# RESULTS

## Cross-Age Friendship:

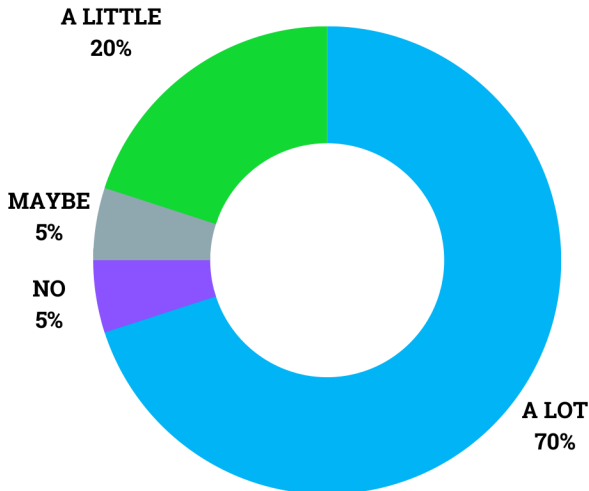
### Are children building friendships with other children in different grades?

Overall, 95% of children responded that they made friends in other grades at Mariposa Kids, and 90% of children responded that Mariposa Kids helped them make new friends.

### Have you made friends at Mariposa Kids who are in different grades?



### Has Mariposa Kids helped you make new friends?



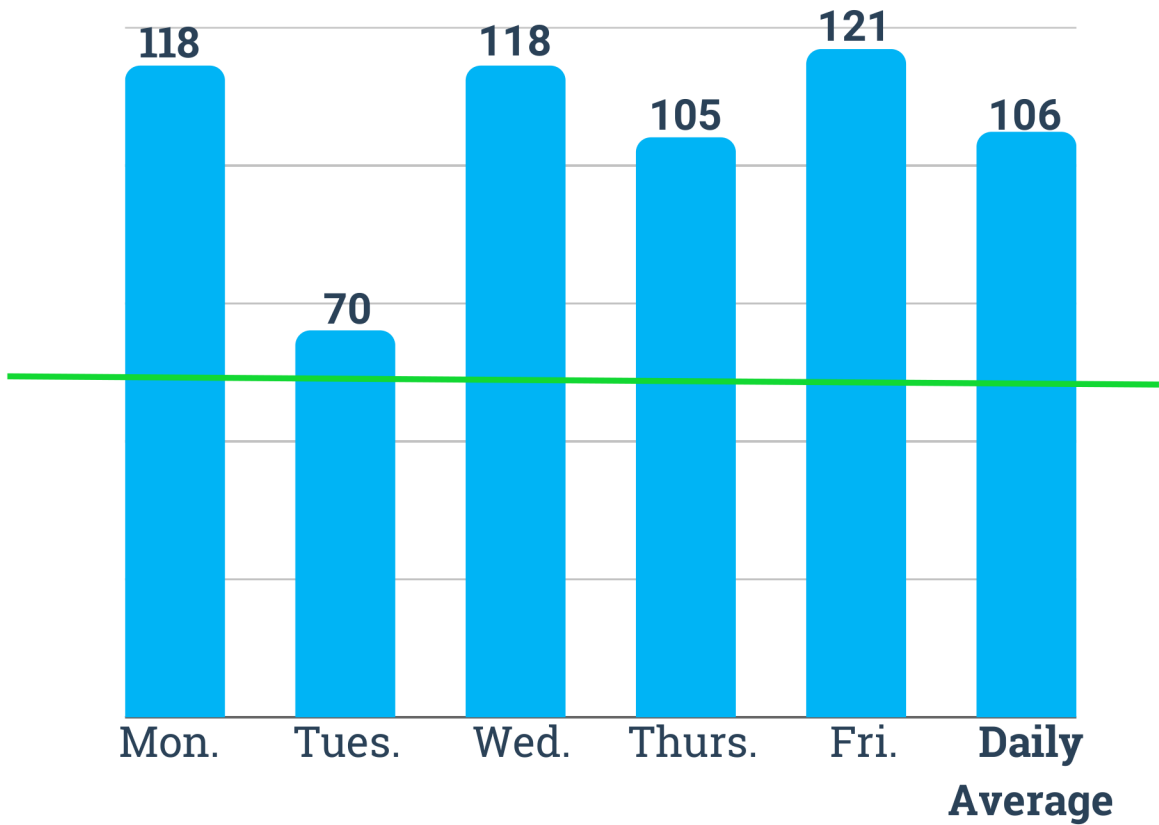


**Outdoor Time:**

**Are children getting more outdoor time each day by participating in our programs?**

*At Mariposa Kids, children are spending a daily average of 106 minutes outdoors when in our After-School Program. The range of daily minutes outdoors averaged between 70 minutes to 121 minutes with Tuesdays seeing the lowest count and Fridays having the highest count in minutes for the week. Tuesday's count is less than other days because of the impact of weather on programming which resulted in closures during data collection weeks.*

**Average Daily Minutes Outside**



— CDC Recommended Time Outside (60 Minutes/Day)

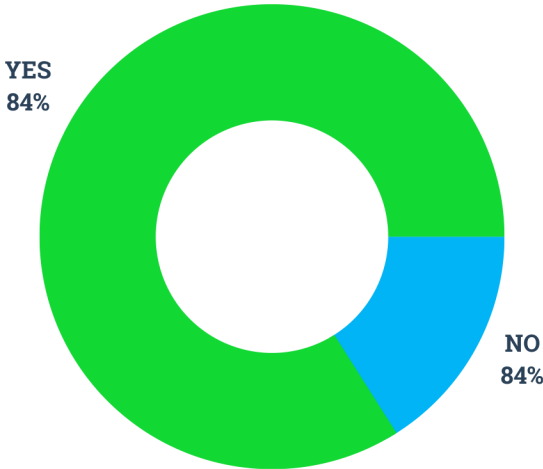


**Family Relationships:**

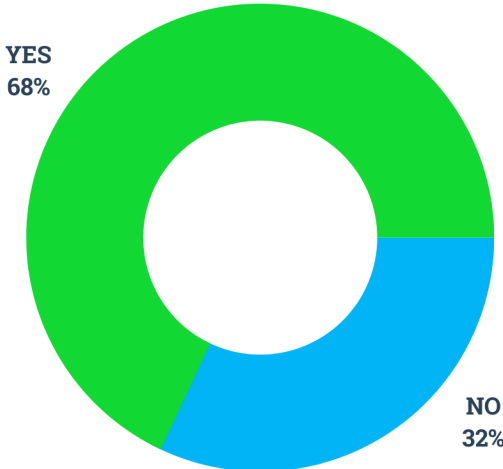
**Have parents made a relationship with a new family at Mariposa Kids?**

*Of the 31 families that responded, 84% reported becoming friends with other families enrolled in our After-School Program. Two out of three families (68%) have asked another family enrolled at Mariposa Kids for support like watching their child, picking up their child, or talking to each other about parenting. Finally, over three-quarters of our families (77%) felt more connected to the community based on participating in our programming.*

**I have become friends with another family at Mariposa Kids through our connections to Mariposa Kids' Programs.**



**I have asked another family enrolled at Mariposa Kids for support (e.g. watching my child, picking up my child, or talking to about parenting).**







# LESSONS & LOOKING FORWARD

Mariposa Kids' out-of-school time programming has been active for over ten years. Until now, we relied on anecdotal evidence that our After-School Program was a success, such as feedback from kids, parents, and staff. Through our 2022-23 school year evaluation process, we have learned that much of what we believed to be true in the past is in fact true:



## Cross-Age Friendship

Friendships are happening across and in-between age groups because we provide playtime with all grades together outdoors and two large groups inside (TK-1 in one group and 2nd-5th grade in another). When at school, these children do not have immediate access to opportunities for cross-age relationship building based on recess and lunch schedules where they are separated into two grade groups, and single grade learning. Mariposa Kids is the time period in a child's daily life where they are making friends and creating cross-age relationships. There was no major differences in outcomes when reviewing data by gender or age.



Children are making cross-age friendships because of their participation in our After-School Program.



## Outdoor Time

Children at Mariposa Kids are surpassing the United States' HHS and CDC recommended daily outdoor time of 60 minutes through their participation in our After-School Program. Overall, children are getting almost double of the recommended time outdoors just at Mariposa Kids. When we combine these minutes with the recess time they get in school, children at Mariposa Kids are reaching 243% of the CDC-recommended time outdoors.




Children are getting more outdoor time because of their participation in our After-School Program.



## Family Relationships

When children attend Mariposa Kids' After-School Program, their families are forging new relationships with each other and feel more connected to the community. Our program's ability to connect families, build community, while also connecting children and families with a sense of community is shown through our findings. Our findings also show that through these family connections, support is provided amongst caregivers that can help strengthen families and provide for a safer home environment for children in our After-School Program, as outlined in the Protective Factors Framework.<sup>15</sup> There were no major differences found when reviewing responses based on family annual income, child ethnicity/race, or family education level.



Families are connecting and making relationships with other enrolled families at Mariposa Kids.

As we look forward, Mariposa Kids plans to:

1. Encourage more cross-age relationship building through activities outlined in our annual curriculum and utilizing our Junior Rec Leader program to help deepen the positive impact of these cross-age relationships.
2. Include outdoor minutes as a key metric in our annual goals to ensure we continue to prioritize this element of children’s days in our program.
3. Increase opportunities for family engagement and participation in programming.

Results of this study show that Mariposa Kids is having a positive impact on the development of children in our After-School Program. Developing friendships helps children's social-emotional development, and daily unstructured outdoor playtime helps them build strong bodies and minds. Lastly, we believe when children leave our program each day, they will experience improved well-being at home because of the family connections their parents hold through Mariposa Kids. As Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University stated in his research, “Children don’t grow up in programs... They grow up in families and in communities.” By connecting our three pillars of SAFE SPACE – FREE PLAY – COMMUNITY, Mariposa Kids’ After-School Program is succeeding in moving successfully towards our Theory of Change.

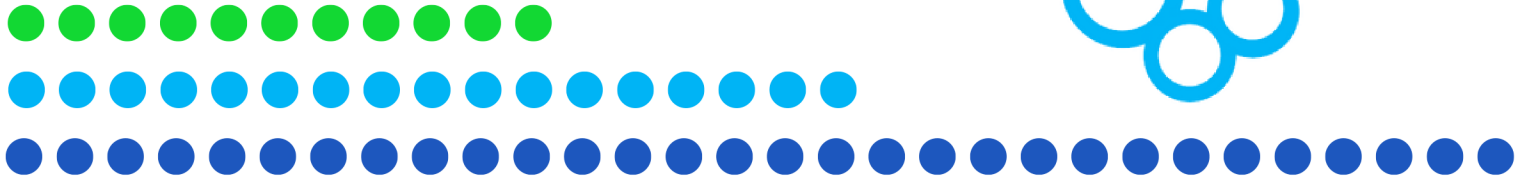






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2. See our website for Mariposa Kids' full Theory of Change
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