

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2017-18



Read Better Be Better

We create change by:



Improving  
concentration



Encouraging an  
active enjoyment  
of reading



Helping develop  
a deeper  
understanding of  
what is being read



# MISSION

Read Better Be Better helps children improve literacy skills and become better learners.

# VISION

A society in which all children master the foundational skills necessary to become independent learners.

# VALUES

Be Excellent  
Be Kind



# Letter from the CEO

2017-18 was a year of reflection and action.

First and foremost, Read Better Be Better continued to drive positive outcomes for the children with whom we work: RBBB students scored, on average, 31% higher on standardized reading comprehension tests than the 3rd grade average. And that's an average – one school saw RBBB students outperforming the comparison group by 102%.

Because of our simple business plan and laser focus on a single issue, organizational success is, at first glance, simple to define. Read Better Be Better's 5-year strategic plan is results-driven and predicated on two key mandates – to reach as many students as possible, without compromising program quality. It was therefore an enormous point of pride this year when a second independent evaluation (again generously sponsored by Valley of the Sun United Way – and highlighted later in the report) corroborated the powerful results of the first evaluation from 2015. That is to say that, while scaling from 2 pilot sites to 20 school-based programs, we have managed to maintain a commitment to program excellence.

However/and, at RBBB we are committed to being better.

2017-18 was also a year in which we paused to reflect on how the organization could continue to support program growth above and beyond the 5-year plan. We made some investments in our back office, most critically hiring Operations Manager, Suzanne Brimley, who worked tirelessly to professionalize the finance, IT and HR departments. Going forward, we know that our program is supported by robust structures and procedures that will protect and promote the mission.

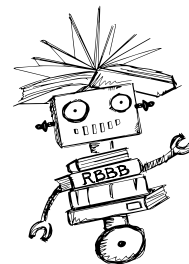
2017-18 was also the year that we began to recognize our place in the community beyond our classrooms. While we continued to observe the positive change that we could affect in our controlled space, we recognized that there were changes taking place beyond the classroom that could create additional barriers to achieving our vision: A society in which all children master the foundational skills necessary to become independent learners.

As Dyana P. Mason states in an article for *NonProfit Quarterly*, "Nonprofit organizations have been at the forefront of much of this nation's social and political change for the last two centuries, and you are in good company when you take action." At Read Better Be Better, my team and I are beginning to better understand the problems, needs, and reality of the children in our program. As such, we are carefully stepping forward into our role as education advocates – speaking up about broken systems that perpetuate social inequality.

Be Excellent, Be Kind.

"Choice is at the crux of our mission. Whatever judgements we place on what we call 'success', I think we have to understand the privilege of choice. It's not my position to talk about what you want to do with the rest of your life, but let's give you the chance to make that choice yourself ... to be whoever you want to be."

**-Sophie Etchart, Founder & CEO, RBBB**



# Supporters and Partners

**GOAL: Be recognized among the communities we serve for what we do**

Our deepest gratitude for the support and dedication of our community partners, tireless team, and our brilliant volunteers. Thank you for Being Better.





# Governing Board



## **Sophie Etchart, Founder/CEO, Read Better Be Better**

Sophie Etchart was born in Connecticut, but raised and educated in England. She studied at the University of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. Upon graduation, she joined a financial services agency specializing in board-level strategic HR consulting before Sophie committed to a full transition into the non-profit sector.

Once there, Sophie managed SKIP, an international development organization in northern Peru, and a team of 25 staff and volunteers working with 330 young people aged 3-17 for 2 years. Sophie met her husband, an Arizona native, in Peru and moved to Phoenix in 2012. She spent 2 years managing the JA BizTown® team at Junior Achievement. There, Sophie identified the need for basic reading comprehension support. The JA BizTown® program serves over 20,000 students per year; an alarming number of whom had neither the focus nor the foundational skills to obtain the most value from the experience. When the “Move On When Reading” law was announced, she decided that the timing was critical to support those 3rd graders at risk of being kept behind.

Read Better Be Better is based on the proven SKIP model and adapted to the current environment. In 2017, Sophie was recognized as one of Phoenix Business Journal’s 40 Under 40 younger business leaders making an impact in the Phoenix area. She lives in the Coronado District of Downtown Phoenix with her husband Andy, her son Cody and two dogs.



## **Rachel Aj, Government & Regulatory Affairs Manager, Cox Communications**

Rachel Aja is a native Arizonan, and attended the University of Arizona in Tucson. She has been involved in a variety of volunteer organizations, including the Hugh O’Brien Youth Leadership Program and the Luke Air Force Base Honorary Commander Program.

Rachel currently works in government affairs with Cox Communications, and in her free time she enjoys spending time with her family and friends, and watching her seven nieces and nephews play and learn. Rachel has volunteered as a Site Leader for Read Better Be Better since 2016.



## **Jonathon Gonzales, Family & Health Administrator, Catholic Charities**

Jonathon is currently the Family and Health Administrator with Catholic Charities Community Services Westside Head Start Program. Previously, he was the manager for Phoenix Children’s Hospital Center for Family Health and Safety. Jonathon worked as the State Director of the Arizona Head Start Association (AHSA) to strengthen member agencies and partners who enhance the lives of young children and families by serving as the unified voice of the diverse Head Start/Early Head Start community through advocacy, collaboration and education.

Jonathon has served as the inaugural Regional Director and with South Phoenix Regional Partnership Council with First Things First. In the past, he worked as the Director of Community Outreach with Children’s Action Alliance and Prevention Specialist with Maricopa County Tobacco Education and Prevention Program.

He is an alumnus of Brophy College Preparatory and holds a master’s degree from Arizona State University. He serves in the Arizona Army National Guard as a First Lieutenant and Executive Officer with the 3666th Support Maintenance Company. He is a servant leader who thrives on serving his community and working with other Valley leaders to work towards better outcomes for children and families. Jonathon is married with 3 children ages 22, 20, 15.



## **Gary Linhart, Founding Partner, ViaWest Group**

Gary is a Founding Partner of ViaWest Group, a Phoenix-based commercial real estate investment and development firm where he heads the capital markets activity, overseeing the sourcing of debt and equity for the company’s various investment opportunities, including long-term programmatic and large-scale institutional investment partnerships.

Gary earned a BA in Economics from Northwestern University and an MBA in Finance from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. He is fluent in Japanese and proficient in Spanish. He is currently active in the Arizona Chapter of the Young Presidents Organization (YPO), serves as the Vice Chair of the Executive Committee of the Urban Land Institute (ULI), Arizona Chapter and is the Chairman of a ULI national product council.

Gary is passionate about improving education in Arizona. He leads a real estate industry advocacy group for Expect More Arizona and is on the board of directors for Read Better Be Better. He lives in Phoenix with his wife Julie and their two sons, Zachary and Matthew.



**Dr. Karen Ortiz, Vice President & Program Director of Early Childhood Education, Helios Education Foundation**

Dr. Ortiz's work revolves around building and strengthening early childhood systems to promote language acquisition and emergent literacy for children birth through age eight. In this role, Dr. Ortiz works in conjunction with the Foundation's community investment team to identify partnership opportunities and implement the Foundation's strategic early childhood education investment goals in Arizona and Florida.

Dr. Ortiz brings more than 25 years of academic and professional experience in early childhood education. In addition to practical experience within school districts and classroom settings, she served as an early childhood policy advisor to Arizona's Governor Janet Napolitano and was Director of the State Board on School Readiness. Dr. Ortiz has helped lead statewide and national initiatives impacting children ages birth to eight and their families. Dr. Ortiz is a graduate of Arizona State University and holds Doctoral and Master degrees in Curriculum and Instruction, Early Childhood Education. She holds undergraduate degrees in business and nursing.



**Andrew Steele, CEO, BeckonCall**

Andrew earned a VVA in International Finance and Marketing from the University of Miami where he received the Henry K. Stanford Academic Scholarship, and is an alumnus of the executive MBA program at the J. Mack Robinson School of Business at Georgia State University, graduating Cum Laude with a concentration in Corporate Finance and Strategy.

Andrew is currently the CEO of BeckonCall - a cutting edge clinical communication platform that automates care team communication workflows and reduced communication cycle times by as much as 90% - which he launched in 2015 in partnership with Scottsdale, AZ based neurologist, Dr. Jeffrey Becker.

Under his leadership, BeckonCall won the prestigious Arizona Innovation Challenge and received a \$250,000 grant award from the State of Arizona, and was selected as portfolio company of Jumpstart Foundry, a preeminent health-care technology startup accelerator and seed fund based in Nashville.



**Patty Tate, Former Superintendent, Osborn Elementary School District**

Recently retired as Osborn Superintendent, Patty worked for almost 40 years as a volunteer, parent, teacher and educational leader to help Osborn students succeed. In addition to her commitment to public education, Patty serves as a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and CASA Peer Coordinator, speaking up for abused and neglected foster children in court and supporting other CASAs in this work. She and her husband Don, also a retired educator, are committed to improve the health, security and education of all Arizona children.



**Jenny Volpe, Executive Director, Make Way for Books**

Jenny Volpe is executive director of Make Way for Books – the Early Literacy Resource Center for Southern Arizona, a Tucson-based nonprofit organization that serves 31,000 children, parents, and educators each year. Jenny is passionate about helping children gain access to quality educational opportunities and believes in the power of literacy to change lives. In her work with Make Way for Books for the past six years, she has dedicated her time working to ensure that children in our community have access to early literacy services, are prepared to succeed the moment they step into the classroom, and have the chance to realize their fullest potential.

Jenny holds a bachelor of arts in literature and education from The University of Chicago and a master's in education from the Johns Hopkins University. Believing in education as a means to achieve social change, Jenny began her educational career as a Teach For America teacher and taught elementary school for five years before entering the educational publishing world and nonprofit sectors.

Jenny has spent considerable time traveling and volunteering in countries throughout Asia and Europe working with children and families in a variety of educational settings. In her role as executive director of Make Way for Books, Jenny is proud to lead a dedicated staff working to ensure that Arizona is a place where all children can succeed in school and in life.

# Program Overview



## The Problem

Students who do not read proficiently by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are **4X less likely to graduate high school.** -Annie E. Casey Foundation

**85% of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders from AZ low-income families are not proficient readers.** - NAEP

**AZ ranks 48th in the US for PreK-12 education and 45th in the US for 4th grade reading proficiency.** -US News and World Report



## Our Solution

Read Better Be Better is the only nonprofit organization in Arizona that engages youth leaders to help solve the state's literacy crisis.

We train 6-8th grade students to implement a highly structured after-school curriculum for 3rd grade students considered to be at risk of being retained, in compliance with the Arizona State Literacy Plan.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Graders + 8<sup>th</sup> Graders | 2 x Per Week | 90 Minutes Per Session**

## GOOD NEWS!



**89% of students reading at grade level by the end of 3rd grade will graduate high school irrespective of family income.**

## Reader Self-Perception Survey

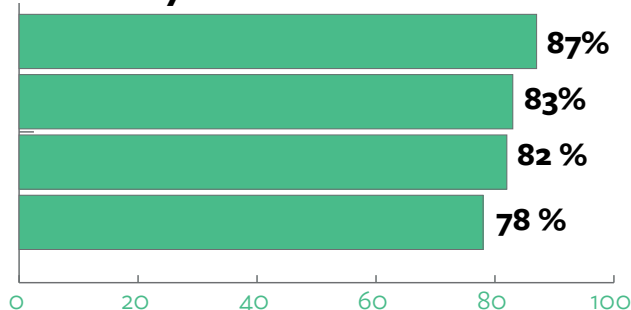
I am getting better at reading.

I read better now than I could before

I understand what I read better than I could before

Reading is easier for me than it used to be.

### Fall 2017-18



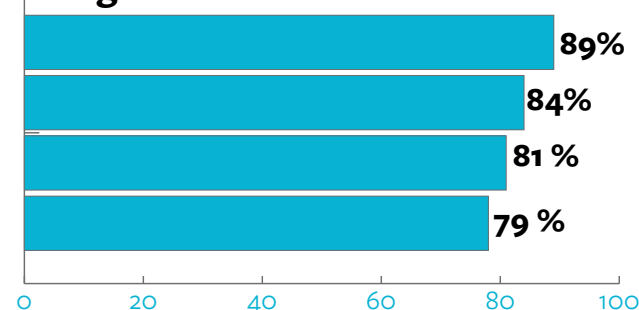
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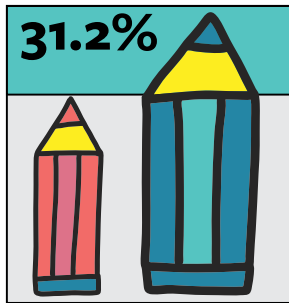
Reading is easier for me than it used to be.

### Program to Date

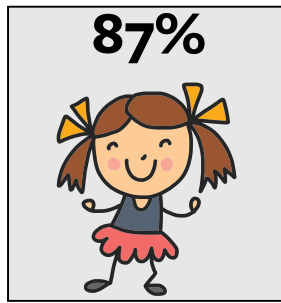




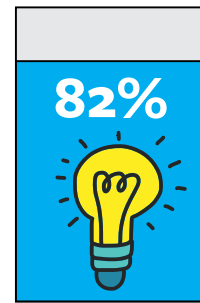
# 2017-18 Program Highlights



RBBB participants **outperform** non-participating 3rd grade students by **over 31.2%** on standardized comprehension tests.



**87%** of 8th grade reading leaders, after participating in RBBB, said they are, on the whole, **satisfied with themselves.**

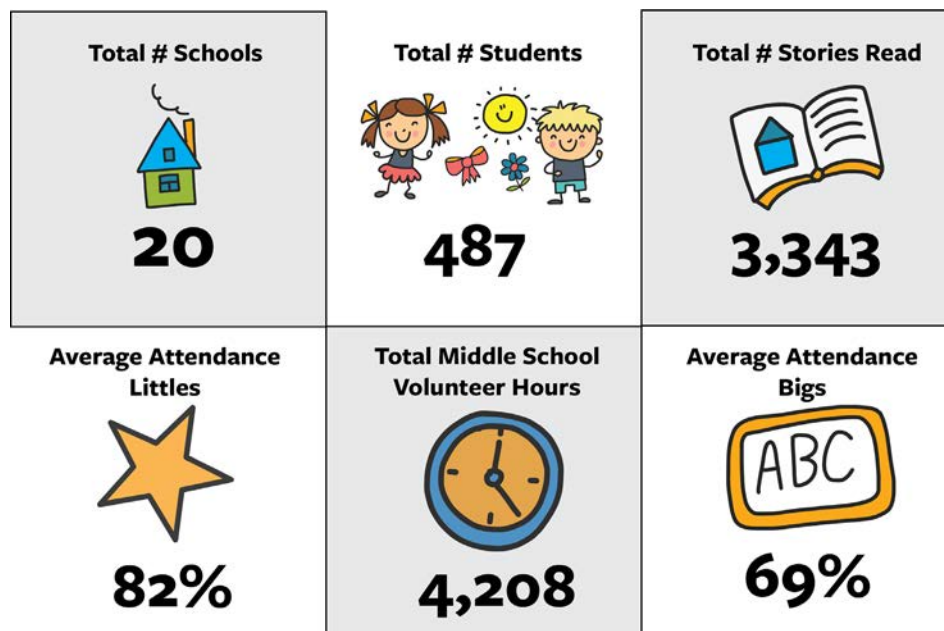


**82%** of 3rd Graders agree or strongly agree they **understand what they read better** than they could before participating in RBBB.

“...a unique opportunity to see a better world through the lens of Bigs and Littles who come together to read...the Bigs are empowered to see something larger than they are and the Littles get to be embraced in a world that is all about them and their success - for at least 2 afternoons a week...and then guess what - they get to envision the time they can give back and take on the role of the big... It's so much more than improving reading - it's improving humaning”.

- Dr. Betsy Hargrove,  
Superintendent, Avondale ESD

## Fun Facts



# Empowering Readers

**GOAL: Serve 6,800 children in 10 school districts by 2020-2021 school year**

"Now I read all day at home!"

-Isaiah, Tri-City West  
Thornwood Boys and  
Girls Club

Karla Brockman, a teacher at Wildflower Elementary School, revealed in an RBBB survey that she hoped for 3rd grade students to build an interest in reading and work on their fluency. What she found was "Students who attended went from reading far below to meeting or exceeding on DIBELS and Galileo Benchmarks," she said.

The RBBB mission has always been to help children master overall reading comprehension and enjoyment. With our values of Be Excellent and Be Kind, however it isn't difficult to see why the approach our program takes has more than just intellectual success attached to it, which is exactly what Andrea Tuura, a fellow teacher from Wildflower Elementary School, found. "My expectations were that students would become more fluent readers and that it would foster a love of reading," she said. Ms. Tuura got exactly what she expected with a little more on the side. She goes on to say that "Students were excited to attend RBBB and they often told me of things they were working on. They seemed proud of their work and loved that they got to work with the older kids. I still see many of them talking to their older buddies!"



**1 in 4**



**of 3rd graders said  
since participating in  
RBBB, they now enjoy  
reading more at home.**

**"It changed me because I didn't like to read and now, I do."** - Wendy, 3rd grade student, Michael Anderson

**"I wanted to start reading chapter books and now I have started to read chapter books!!!"**

-Jazlynne, 3rd grade, Encanto Elementary

**"They are all more eager to read! More confident in answering text-dependent questions."**

- Emma Williams, 3rd-grade Teacher, Chaparral Elementary



**87%** of 3rd graders indicate they like coming to Read Better Be Better.

# Empowering Leaders

**GOAL: Increase high school graduation rates**

"What I like about Read Better Be Better is that I read almost every day which I never really did!"

**- Thomas, 6th Grade, Shaw Butte Elementary School**



Reading Leaders power the Read Better Be Better program. When middle school students make the conscious choice to forgo other extracurricular activities or social time with their friends and families to volunteer with younger kids, they demonstrate to each Reading Learner what commitment to excellence really is.

To volunteer is the first step in Reading Leaders taking command of their own development, not only in academic skills but in a community-centric and leadership mindset that benefits all.

RBBB unveils to many middle school students confidence and skill sets they often don't know they possess. Each Reading Leader's interaction with their Reading Learners and their interaction with their fellow peers and the Site Leader, broadens their understanding of self and community. As an added bonus, the student receives a certificate with the number of hours they logged during their time with RBBB to start laying the foundations of skill-laden resumes for future academic pursuits and career interests.

**"The program changed me by making me a little bit more tough...What I do differently at home is that I read more and try to be more of a leader both at home and school."**

**-Amanda, 6th grade, Arroyo Elementary School**







### School Climate and Culture

Students aren't the only beneficiaries of Read Better Be Better. Schools find an improved school climate and culture from the Be Excellent and Be Kind values that RBBB positively reinforces in its program.

"Some of our toughest 6th graders that I've had in step 4 conferences due to their behavior have talked about wanting to make sure that they go into the Read Better Be Better

program. It's something they're excited about. I know how hard it is to get older kids excited about reading, so this is just very exciting to see," said Kimberly Gessner, Assistant Principal at Shaw Butte Elementary School. The increased responsibility of being a "Big" for middle schoolers and of modeling the excellence and kindness for their "Littles" begins to bubble over into their daily routines and behaviors, benefiting both the students and school alike.

### Workforce Development

It is no secret that Arizona, as well as most of the nation, is suffering from a shortage of qualified teachers. Arizona has a critical shortage of teachers. At the start of the 2017-2018 school year there were 1,968 vacant teaching positions, and 3,408 teaching positions are filled with people who don't meet standard teaching requirements (Arizona School Personnel Administrators Association, December 2017).

RBBB works to develop a qualified workforce with student teachers

from across the valley, partnering with institutions of higher education for community-based solutions to the teacher shortage epidemic. Our program offers education students the opportunity to gain invaluable classroom management experience, work with diverse student populations, exposing each to positions in communities with the most need. Being in schools and working with school administration gives education majors a unique opportunity to be recruited by these districts by the end of their

academic career. Experience in a non-high stakes environment, future teachers are given the unique privilege of working on any classroom needed skills they may be lacking before entering a classroom in which they will be directly accountable. RBBB's unique program involving both 3rd-grade students and middle schoolers also provides an expanded real-world insight that many education students do not receive, enabling them to be prepared to meet any position in which a school may need a qualified teacher.

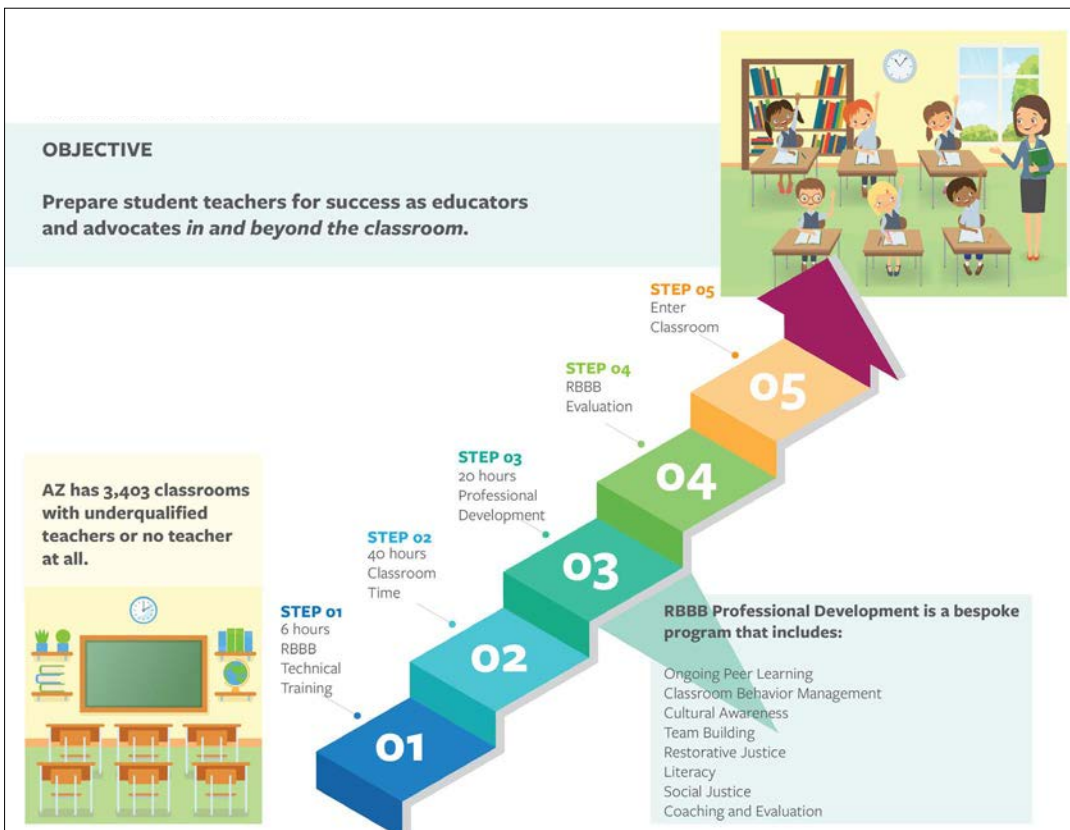
**Blog Post: [CLICK HERE](#) to read "How Workforce Development Will Help Reduce Arizona's Teacher Shortage."**

**"RBBB has strengthened my classroom management skills."**

-Mandy Christiansen, RBBB Site Leader and Elementary Education student at GCU

**"The skills I've gained simply from running a classroom like setting (even for such a short amount of time each week) have put me way ahead of the game in terms of teaching skills and classroom management."**

-Rebecca Sherod, RBBB Site Leader and Early Childhood and Special Education at ASU



# Empowering Families

## Vocabulary Rich Families

By nature, people talk with a “lazy tongue,” limiting their speech to bare minimum vocabularies. Furthermore, adults have learned to emulate the speech vocabulary of those with which they engage in conversation.

Dominic Massaro, a professor emeritus of psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, found in recent studies that picture books are two to three times as likely as parent-child conversations to include a word that isn't among the 5,000 most common English words.

The act of reading aloud is the best way to help children develop word mastery and grammatical understanding, which form the basis for learning how to read, while improving a child's linguistic capabilities.

Reading picture books to children would not only expose them to more words, he said, but it also would have a leveling effect for families with less education and a more limited vocabulary.

**[CLICK HERE](#) to read more about Professor Dominic Massaro's Findings**

“One of the sixth-grade parents thanked me for providing this program to her daughter and giving her another opportunity to shine!”

**-Renee Hamill, Principal, Solano Elementary School**



**“I changed by seeing the kids improve. At home I practice helping my brother think while reading.”** -Araceli Morales, Big, Tri-City West Thornwood Boys and Girls Club

**“On vacations I go to Mexico and read to my step mom.”** -Katherine De La Rosa, 3rd Grade, Encanto Elementary

**“I use my new tactics to help my brother read.”** -Pilar Carlisle, Big, Tri-City West Thornwood Boys and Girls Club

# Empowering Companies

Ensuring that students read at grade level is a direct correlation and investment in the development of a statewide quality workforce.

The statistic that a student who does not read on grade level by the 4th grade is 4x more likely to drop out school is well known and documented in the field of education. However, the consequential fallout of a workforce staffed with fewer educated individuals is not as frequently discussed. The fact remains that employees who struggle to read are less

likely to produce quality output for employers. Resulting in lower total productivity and, therefore, profit for the company.

Read Better Be Better addresses the reading proficiency and comprehension gap in our state's and nation's future workforce.

**Webinar: [CLICK HERE](#) to listen to “3C Amplified” featuring Sophie from RBBB and Adam Arkfeld, ParaCore President.**

“...coming to teach and help really brightens my day.”

**- Lazaro, 6th Grade, Sunset Elementary**

**“Now, as a full-time Instructional Technology Specialist at ASU, I plan on bringing some of the skills I learned from RBBB into our office.”**  
-Josselyn, former RBBB District Leader

**“[This position] has helped me prepare for future job positions by showing me more diverse situations”**  
-Andrina, Former Site Leader

**“RBBB has given me management and leadership skills that I use daily.”** - Rachel Aja, Site Leader, RBBB and Community Volunteer, Cox Communications

# Empowering Communities

**“The program helps children read and I can’t think of anything better that impacts an entire community than having literate people who then are able to make better decisions for themselves, for their families, for their community, for their state, and for the nation,”** -Patty Tate, former superintendent Osborn ESD

**“By day, Rachel works in a politically-related position as the Government and Regulatory Affairs Manager at Cox Communications. Read Better Be Better has influenced the way she wants to change her community.”** - Rachel Aja, Site Leader, RBBB and Community Volunteer, Cox Communications

**“Having been a struggling reader myself, I knew the impact a program like this could make on a community and after my first day of training, I knew RBBB was my home.”** -Josselyn, former RBBB District Leader



**“I speak out now. I engage educators. I call my senators to explain why they should prioritize education.... I see how solving this crisis will create better communities.”**

- Kelsey Pinckney, former RBBB Program Manager and Community Advocacy/Social Policy Student, ASU.

**“I am more aware of the needs of those around me and am more comfortable as a mentor and leader.”**

- Tamara Tirado, Elementary School Librarian and RBBB Volunteer

**“Working with RBBB has shown me that I can make a positive impact in my community.”**

- Fabiola Espinoza, RBBB Site Leader

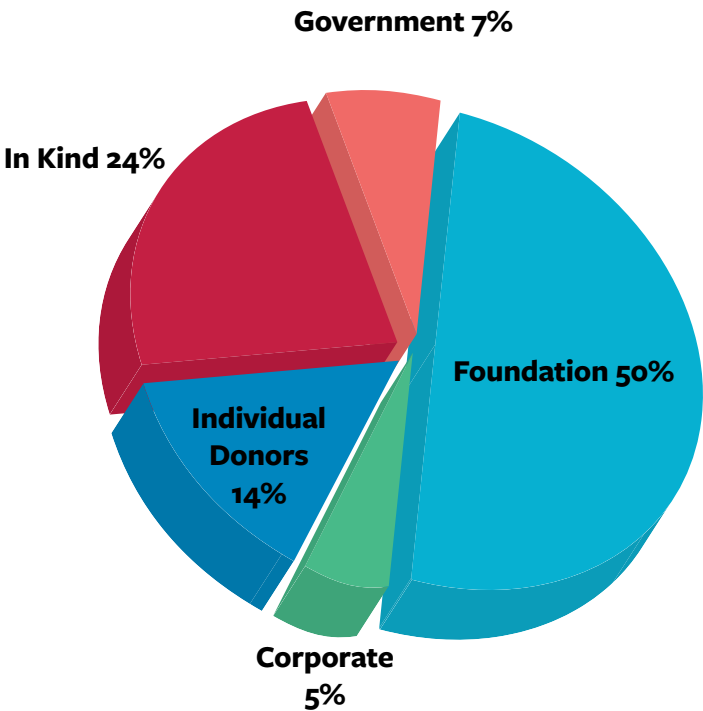


# Statement of Financial Position

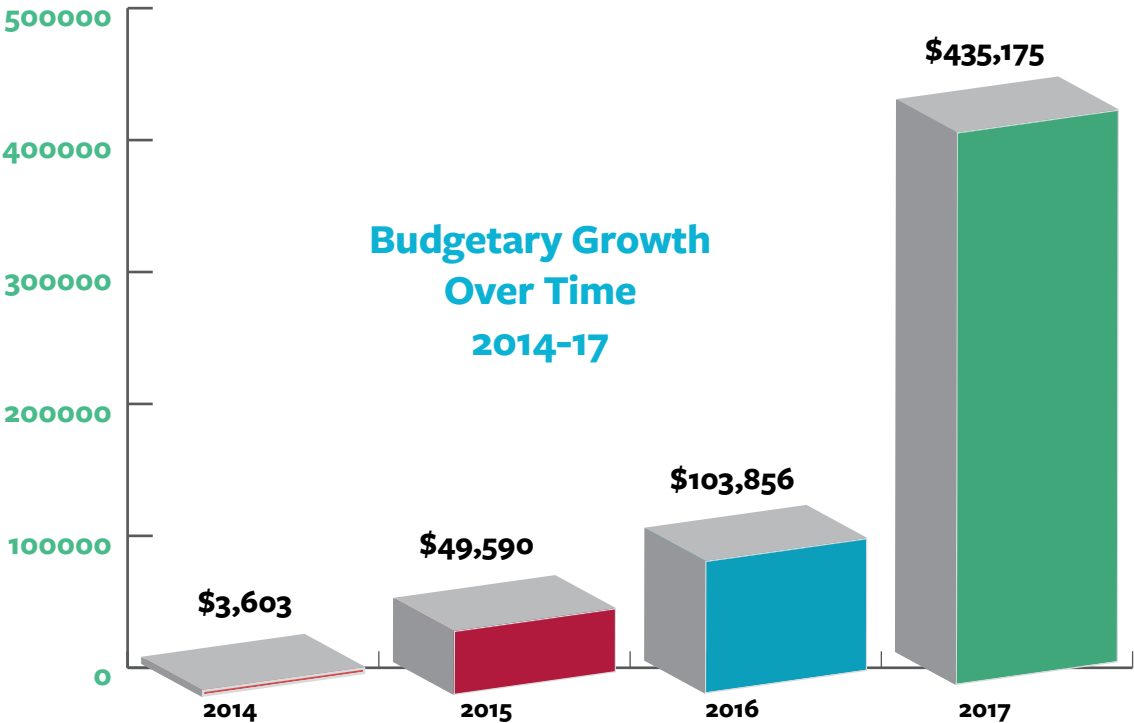
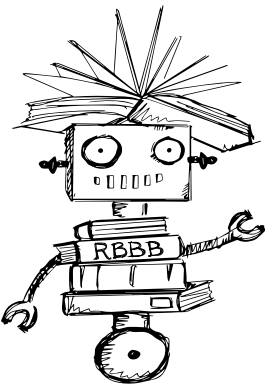
**GOAL: Generate 40% of revenue from school contributions by 2020-21 school year**

“When we look at opportunities with potential new partners, we look to see if they have other partnerships, if they have other resources, if they have diverse leadership that’s helping them and RBBB really spoke to all of those things.”

**-Katie Campana, Wells Fargo Community Affairs**



**Income By Funding Source**  
**TOTAL INCOME**  
**\$539,031**



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