

2021-2022 Fiscal Year

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE



The California State Library's
**California Library Literacy
and English Acquisition
Services Program**



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Report to the Legislature on the California Library Literacy and English Acquisition Services Program of the California State Library

State of California

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California State Library

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This report covers the 2021-2022 fiscal year. Cover page image courtesy of Project Second Chance, Contra Costa County Library.

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Executive Summary

Founded in 1984, California Library Literacy Services was the nation's first statewide library-based literacy program. Over four decades, California's library literacy programs have helped more than 300,000 learners and their families.

Californians served through this program are usually the lowest level, hardest-to-reach learners. Trained volunteers provide one-to-one or small group tutoring based on each individual's pace and goals.

Literacy programs in California's public libraries transform the lives of thousands of Californians every year. They help adults gain basic literacy skills, achieve their learning goals, build their confidence, and increase use of library services. Communities are strengthened. Families succeed more easily.

During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, California Library Literacy Services supported 26,406 California adults and family members in 44 counties at 104 of the state's 185 public library jurisdictions.

As libraries reopened, literacy services were provided at 425 of the state's 1,127 library locations, up 20 percent over the previous year, and 163 community sites – one-third more than the prior year. The state provided \$8.3 million in funding: \$4.8 million for adult literacy services, \$2.5 million for family literacy services, and \$1.1 million for English-as-a-Second-Language services for adults.

Over 6,900 California adults received 321,593 hours of free literacy instruction. Of these, 48 percent were Latino or Latina, 67 percent identified as women, and 65 percent were between the ages of 30 and 59.

As libraries transitioned away from pandemic protocols, literacy programs continued using the best innovations that took root in 2020, including tutoring via digital devices and online programs.

During the 2021-2022 fiscal year:

- More than 4,230 volunteers supported local programs with \$7.7 million worth of service.
- Local libraries supplemented the state's \$8.3 million investment, with \$19.5 million in local funds -- 15 percent higher than the total amount of local funds contributed to the program during the previous fiscal year.
- Nearly 350 community agencies partnered with a library literacy program.
- More than 18,340 goals were met by learners, including learning the alphabet, reading a book, helping their children with homework, or advancing their careers.
- The statewide Adult Learner Leadership Institute enabled adult learners to build confidence, public speaking skills, and the ability to advocate for issues that matter to them.
- The State Library is a partner in a three-year initiative to place 70 AmeriCorps members in library literacy programs. This project is supported with \$2.7 million in federal funding and focuses on pandemic recovery and capacity building.
- Seventy-one library literacy programs delivered family literacy and community outreach services to 5,847 families and 13,071 children. Family literacy program staff helped adults develop their confidence and skills, learn how to select books, read to their children, and foster a love of reading.

Policy & Programmatic Considerations

Continued and Ongoing English-as-a-Second-Language Funding

The current one-time funding for English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) services ends June 30, 2026. California has the highest proportion of non-English speakers and immigrants of any state and, by any measure, is not offering sufficient ESL services for its residents. Ongoing annual funding of \$10 million would help local literacy programs better meet this need.

By uniting adult literacy services for English speakers, family literacy services, and English-as-a-Second-Language-Services into one “block grant,” the State Library will be better able to respect the diversity of California’s communities and library jurisdictions, serve more California residents, and help Californians more efficiently.

Improved Measurement of Outcomes

A single reporting tool implemented statewide would help local literacy programs gather comprehensive and accurate program outcomes and generate better quality data to analyze and improve programs, including gauging impact and equity. State oversight becomes more efficient as local literacy programs report consistent data that can be easily aggregated and used to assess program results, allowing resources to be directed at programs with the greatest need. Development of this tool, analysis of data, and refinement is estimated at \$1.2 million.

California Library Literacy Services: The Need

More than half (54 percent) of American adults read below a sixth-grade level.

Many adults find it difficult or impossible to fill out a job application, take a driving test, understand a news article, cast a ballot, or read a book with their children.

These adults do not lack intelligence, capability, or motivation. Instead, they lack access to the help they need. They are more likely than stronger readers to be poor, out of work, vulnerable to fraud, or incarcerated, and lacking in the tools to help them navigate a complex digital world.

More than a quarter of California adults read below a second-grade level, leading to lost economic growth and income, higher health care costs, and difficulty supporting their children’s learning.

- Twenty-eight percent of California adults score at or below Level 1 and an additional 25 percent score between Level 1 and Level 2 on the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies scale (PIAAC). The Barbara Bush Foundation estimates that Level 1 is similar to a second-grade reading level, and Level 2 is similar to a fifth-grade reading level. Math skills among California adults are even lower: Thirty-six percent score at or below Level 1 for numeracy (mathematical skills) and 26 percent score between Levels 1 and 2.¹

¹ <https://www.barbarabush.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/BBF-National-Action-Plan-for-Adult-Literacy-2021.pdf> accessed 20 March 2023.

- Up to \$232 billion in annual health care costs is linked to low adult literacy skills. Low-literacy adults are more likely to use and return to emergency rooms, misunderstand prescription medicine labels, have trouble navigating health care and insurance, and have less knowledge of preventive care and chronic disease.²
- The Barbara Bush Foundation estimates that low levels of adult literacy cost the U.S. \$2.2 trillion a year. States with the lowest levels of adult literacy, such as California, would economically benefit the most by bringing all adult learners up to the minimum proficient level of literacy, which includes navigating digital texts and being able to compare information.³ Increasing a person's literacy benefits the individual, their family, and the wider community. Nationally, a 1 percent increase in average literacy rates yields a 1.5 percent, or \$2.3 billion, permanent increase in the GDP.⁴
- Fewer than 10 percent of the adults in need of reading help in the United States are receiving services,⁵ and only 4 percent of English language learners are receiving the education they need.⁶ Half of all literacy programs in the nation--78 percent of California Library Literacy Services programs--have waiting lists.⁷
- Seventy percent of the nearly 2 million incarcerated Americans are classified as having low literacy skills.⁸ Individuals without a high school diploma are 63 percent more likely to be incarcerated than college graduates.⁹
- Forty-three percent of adults with the lowest literacy levels experience poverty, and 88 percent of children whose parents have not graduated from high school live in poverty.¹⁰
- One-third of adults at the lowest levels of literacy (PIAAC Level 1 and below) are unemployed. Their average annual income is \$34,000 -- nearly two times lower than the income of workers with even slightly higher levels of literacy. About two-thirds of employed adults with low literacy earn less than \$16,000 per year.¹¹
- Two-thirds of the 43 million American adults with the lowest level of literacy were born in the United States. The remaining one-third are immigrants, among whom the range of English language learning needs is as diverse as the population. More than 30 percent of limited-English-proficiency adults without a high school diploma live in California.¹²

2 Vernon, J. A., Trujillo, A., Rosenbaum, S. & DeBuono, B. (2007, October). Low health literacy: Implications for national health policy. Health Sciences Research Commons. Washington, DC: George Washington University. Retrieved from http://hsrc.himmelfarb.gwu.edu/sphhs_policy_facpubs/172/

3 The Barbara Bush Foundation report uses data for individuals scoring at Levels 1 and 2 on the PIAAC. <https://www.barbarabush.org/reports/>.

4 Literacy for All: Adult literacy through Libraries. (ALA, 2019)

5 https://prolitteracy.org/Portals/0/pdf/PL_AdultLitFacts_US_flyer.pdf?ver=2016-05-06-145137-067

6 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/english-plus-integration-instructional-paradigm-immigrant-adult-learners>

7 https://www.prolitteracy.org/Portals/0/pdf/PL_AdultLitFacts_US_flyer.pdf

8 <https://www.barbarabush.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/BBF-National-Action-Plan-for-Adult-Literacy-2021.pdf> referencing National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Adult Literacy: https://nces.ed.gov/naal/prison_lit.asp

9 The Relationship Between Incarceration and Low Literacy - Literacy Mid-South: literacymidsouth.org

10 <https://www.barbarabush.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/BBF-National-Action-Plan-for-Adult-Literacy-2021.pdf>

11 <https://www.barbarabush.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/BBF-National-Action-Plan-for-Adult-Literacy-2021.pdf>

12 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/WIA-LEP-June2009.pdf>

- Low literacy reflects America's racial inequities as well as its diversity. About one-third of the U.S. is Black or Hispanic, but more than half of adults with low literacy are Black or Hispanic. Black and Hispanic Americans are three times more likely to have low literacy skills than White Americans.¹³
- Children of low-literate parents have a 72 percent chance of being at the lowest level of literacy themselves when they become adults.

13 <https://www.barbarabush.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/BBF-National-Action-Plan-for-Adult-Literacy-2021.pdf>

The Value of California Library Literacy Services



A Contra Costa County Library learner and tutor selecting a book together.

California Library Literacy Services provides value for the learner, the taxpayer, the community, and the library.

Library-based literacy programs are successful because they are based in trusted, convenient, and safe spaces at the heart of the community.

California Library Literacy Services will celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2024. Why is there still a need for libraries to provide literacy services? The answer: Because adults and their families still have basic learning needs in a world that demands up-to-date skills and multiple solutions are required to address these needs.

Adult school enrollment declined over 47 percent between 2018 and 2021. While enrollment is now beginning to increase, the focus is not on adult basic education. Adult schools serve fewer basic level learners

than in past years. In 2020, adult schools focused on basic skills education for fewer than 50,000 students, about 15 percent of the adult education enrollment, and a drop of about 30 percent from 2016.

As the need for a skilled workforce grows and communities feel the effect of pandemic-related school learning-loss and dropout rates, demand for services for basic-level learners will continue.

Public library literacy programs are an integral part of California's adult education landscape, reaching and engaging learners who are not served by other agencies. The welcoming, easy-to-access, people-centered, and information-rich library environment helps learners flourish and achieve their literacy goals. Libraries partner with other community institutions, from Adult Education Consortia and public schools to human service agencies and faith-based organizations, to build a network of services for the hardest to reach.

“When you have a disability, people look at you, but they do not see you. They hear you, but they do not listen to you,” said one learner in a

new reader book he wrote himself. He has accomplished so many firsts this year — writing a letter, sending a card, and creating a book — and because of his tutor and the larger literacy community, his library is a place where he is truly seen and heard.”

— Livermore Public Library

Libraries provide a distinct set of resources including location, space, information, commitment to privacy and intellectual freedom, and dedicated and knowledgeable staff. Equity of access and lifelong learning are core library values.¹⁴

“At the age of eight, after being kicked out by a parent who dealt drugs, S. was found on the streets by police and placed in foster care. In Special Education classes, she was told she had ADD. She dropped out of high school because she had been bullied ruthlessly. At age 18, she was referred to the literacy program by her father, an adult learner with an undiagnosed learning disability. S. set the goals of reading books and writing essays, skills she needed to pass the GED. With courage, she wrote about her abusive and frightening childhood. After four years, she graduated from adult literacy and moved on to adult school, saying ‘My tutor is an amazing teacher and gave me the courage to sign up for this.’”

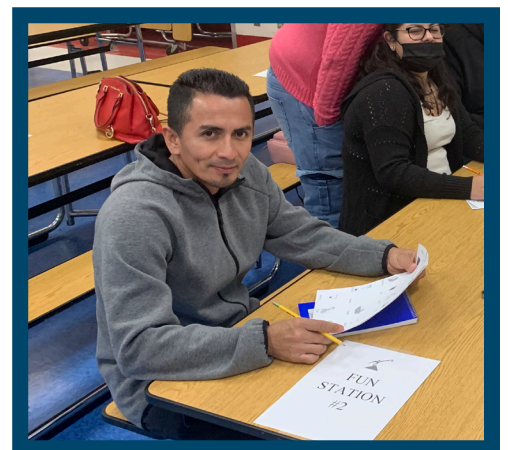
— A.K. Smiley Public Library

How It Works

California Library Literacy Services was the nation's first statewide library-based literacy program. Over four decades, California's library literacy programs have helped more than 300,000 learners and their families. Californians served through this program are usually the lowest level, hardest-to-reach learners. Trained volunteers provide one-to-one or small group tutoring based on each individual's pace and goals.

Libraries provide confidential services and can help adults who do not have the skills or support to attend and succeed in traditional classroom-based programs. Staff and volunteers in library literacy programs provide one-to-one and small group tutoring that is inclusive, learner-driven, family-oriented, and community- and volunteer-focused. Meaningful relationships develop from tutor-learner partnerships, and, in many cases, the volunteer's experience is as transformative as the learner's.

The California Library Literacy Services program needed to adapt during the pandemic. The typical face-to-face tutoring



A LearningQuest/Stanislaus County Library learner working on learning material.

14 Literacy for All: Adult literacy through Libraries. (ALA, 2019)

model was severely impacted. Half of tutors and learners found a way to continue, but half did not. Libraries closed for part of the period, meeting areas were not accessible, and many participants avoided in-person meetings.

Staff, volunteers, and learners found new ways of teaching and learning. Program staff found that adult learners often prefer the adaptability of virtual tutoring, which increases educational opportunities in remote areas and outside regular library hours. These changes improved and expanded the service model, and libraries continue to deliver services online and train volunteers to tutor in the virtual environment.

During the 2021-2022 fiscal year:

- 104 library jurisdictions provided literacy services to adult learners and their families at tutoring locations in 425 of California's 1,127 public libraries and 163 community sites. Libraries offered tutoring in 21 percent more library locations than the previous year.
- California Library Literacy Services is offered in libraries serving 69 percent of California's total population.
- More than 4,200 volunteers supported local programs with \$7.7 million worth of service.¹⁵
- Seventy-one jurisdictions delivered family literacy programs to supplement their adult literacy tutoring programs.
- Thirty-two library systems added English-as-a-Second-Language services in the first round of a five-year funding cycle and served 976 learners in the first six months of services.
- Nearly 7,000 adult learners received tutoring and 1,257 are awaiting tutoring, meaning that 15 percent of those who requested services are on a wait list. Participating learners enjoyed 321,593 hours of instruction.
- Six percent of library literacy services adult learners were served while incarcerated.
- More than 20,000 family members, including 5,847 adult learners, 13,071 children and 1,094 other family members, received family literacy and community outreach services. They received nearly 92,000 books to help them build home libraries and 49,591 learning kits.
- 3,249 parents and caregivers and 5,983 children were served through Mobile Library Literacy Services which provided outreach services through bookmobiles and library vans.
- \$19.5 million in local funds matched the state's \$8.3 million investment, an increase of 15 percent in local investment compared to the previous year.¹⁶



The Camarena Memorial Public Library literacy staff speaking with a family.

15 The value of volunteer time was calculated using data from Independent Sector, which draws on data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. 216,597 hours x \$35.56 = \$7,702,189; <https://independentsector.org/resource/value-of-volunteer-time/>

16 The State of California provides \$4.8 million to support adult literacy services and \$2.5 million to support family literacy services.

- 345 community agencies partnered with a library literacy program.

Although nearly 7,000 adults with low literacy skills received tutoring in the 2021-2022 fiscal year, 81 of the 104 California Library Literacy Services programs still had waiting lists. There weren't enough volunteers and resources to help the other 1,200 Californians who came to their local libraries eager to learn to read and write.

English-as-a-Second-Language Services

English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) services began in the 2021-2022 fiscal year after the governor and the Legislature approved \$15 million in funding to do so. This one-time investment of state funds is helping literacy programs meet a crucial community need: serving the literacy needs of those acquiring English language skills. Libraries have consistently reported demand for ESL services, but until recently California Library Literacy Services funding was restricted to English-speaking adult learners and could not be spent on ESL tutoring.

About 44 percent of Californians speak a language other than English at home, and half of those speak English "less than well." In 2021, 26.5 percent of California's population was foreign-born, more than twice the rate in the rest of the country. About half of all children in the state have at least one parent who is an immigrant.¹⁷

Data from the U.S. Census and Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), finds "immigrants are over-represented among low-skilled adults in the United States—accounting for 33 percent of adults with low literacy skills and 24 percent of those with low numeracy skills while comprising only 15 percent of the overall U.S. adult working-age population."¹⁸

Demand for ESL services is high, but the opportunities for learning have decreased for many years, fluctuating according to available funding. The Migration Policy Institute has estimated that only 4 percent of English learners are served.

California adult schools and community colleges reduced class offerings more than a decade ago, and some do not focus on adult basic education. Just over 257,000 students were enrolled in ESL programs in 2018-2019, and today adult schools and community colleges are serving less than half the number of students they served 15 years ago.¹⁹ Classroom-based programs also struggle with retaining students.²⁰

Libraries offer a learner-centered way to support English language acquisition. Staff at the Redwood City Public Library note:

17 "Quick Facts California, 2017-2021" United States Census Bureau, accessed April 3, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/CA/EDU685221>

18 Batalova, Jeanne and Fix, Michael, "Through and Immigration Lens: PIAAC Assessment of the Competencies of Adults in the United States", Migration Policy Institute, February 2015, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/through-immigrant-lens-piaac-assessment-competencies-adults-united-states>

19 <https://www.calpassplus.org/Launchboard/Adult-Education-Pipeline.aspx>, accessed April 13, 2021.

20 <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2018/12/19/problems-accelerated-learning-esl-opinion>

“ESL learners at our library said learning is fun and they have reached so many milestones in such a short amount of time. They feel they are gaining confidence due to the supportive learning atmosphere in the small group sessions.”



A group of LearningQuest/Stanislaus County Library learners.

Public libraries have long reported community demand for ESL services. Some libraries developed programs before the new funding was available. With the added state funding, more libraries are now applying their successful outcome-based, one-to-one tutoring model to offer ESL services. Thirty-two libraries applied to provide ESL services using State Library funding in 2021-2022 and 22 more will join the group for 2022-2023. Noted one library:

“Recruiting learners to our new ESL program offering was not difficult, as individuals have been asking for these services for a long time and we had been unable to provide them due to lack of funding/staffing.”

Yolo County Library reported:

“The way in which the community embraced the idea of a library ESL class overwhelmed our staff with happiness. We visibly could see the community was ready for this library development.”

Focus on the Learner

“My goals in reading are changing. As I become a better reader, I may have new opportunities that I never thought of. I don’t know what the future holds, but it’s a whole lot brighter now.”

— Learner, San Diego Public Library

Each adult learner is different, and not all learners seek higher education or new work skills. In California Library Literacy Services, tutoring is driven by learners’ goals which are centered on learners’ aspirations and needs.

California Library Literacy Services are planned, implemented, and evaluated with learners, using a framework known as “Roles and Goals.” The framework helps staff and volunteers move past pre-designed curricula to deliver learner-centered instruction; track, acknowledge, and celebrate progress; and evaluate the program’s impact.

“F., an immigrant to the United States from Jamaica, would get lost in San Jose because he could not read the road signs. During his tutoring time, he learned to read, got his driver’s license, and became a citizen. To support his family, F. started a small catering business. After a while, a friend approached him with the opportunity to partner on a brick-and-mortar restaurant, and the two are now co-owners.”

— Partners in Reading, San Jose Public Library

Goal-setting helps learners reflect on what brought them to the program, define what they want to work on, take ownership of their instruction, stay motivated, and build self-confidence. It is a best practice in adult education that helps learners achieve success as community members, workers, family members, and lifelong learners.

“I can write emails and texts to the school and in my job. I was worried because I need to text my clients. Now I can understand.”

— Learner, Sonoma County Library

The goals included in the “Roles and Goals” framework range from learning the alphabet to reading a book, sending an email, searching the Internet, interviewing for a job, paying bills, accessing community services, reading a medicine label, and helping a child with homework.

As literacy programs rebuilt in 2021-2022, almost 70 percent of the learners who set at least one goal for themselves achieved their goal, including:

- 45 percent mastered the alphabet, letters and sounds
- 59 percent read a book
- 68 percent used a new technology skill
- 63 percent were able to help with their children’s education by sharing a book, helping with homework, or interacting with teachers or schools
- 57 percent met a job-related goal such as writing a resume or locating job opportunities. In a challenging pandemic environment, 37 percent got a new job
- 75 percent accessed community services and resources
- 63 percent received support to pay their bills
- 80 percent were able to use the library and were able to take a family member to the library.

Learners see how reaching their goals makes a difference in daily life, including budgeting and opening bank accounts for the first time.

“In the past, Mary had relied mostly on her husband to care for daily life requirements such as paying bills and driving. Now that he had medical needs and she was his caregiver, she was not able to attend sessions

in person but could participate online. Her goal was to learn to be independent.”

— Riverside Public Library

Goals also grow and change as learning opens new doors:

“S. is a young woman who has been struggling to find housing, eat healthfully while on the street, and make smart decisions. She came to the program with limited reading ability — less than first grade. Once matched, S. and her tutor focused on reading simple self-help books, practicing phonics, life skills like writing thank you notes, how to spend money, and more. S. is setting her sights on community college, is working on obtaining permanent housing, and now has hope in her future where there once was none.”

— Newport Beach Public Library

Learner Leadership Changes Lives

Learners in library literacy programs also build confidence to become leaders in their libraries and communities. Many participate in supplementary programs that support their progress and are funded, in part, by the State Library using federal Library Services and Technology Act funds.

The Adult Learner Leadership Institute, an intensive small-group workshop with learner facilitators, returned this year via Zoom. The Institute offers a curriculum that helps adult learners practice public speaking, advocate for themselves, and build confidence. The flexible virtual schedule made it possible for a wide range of learners from across the state to participate. Other opportunities include the following:

- Learner leadership trainings and networking sessions provide adults with learning opportunities, social connections, and practice with speaking and facilitation.
- Learners serve as judges for the annual Writer to Writer Challenge, which supports learners in writing letters to authors and is sponsored by the Southern California Library Literacy Network. Many have had stories published in national publications for adult learners. A member of Carlsbad Library staff notes: “One learner’s confidence with writing has improved so much over the years, that she is now a published author of children’s books.”
- Adult learners serve on boards and adult literacy advisory councils and advise on materials to be purchased in libraries. They lead book clubs and other activities: “Library Learners Book Club came to exist because we listened to



A learner and tutor pair from the Livermore Public Library.

our learners' needs," reports the Camarena Public Library. "One of the most rewarding aspects of the literacy program is when successful learners are recruited to become volunteer tutors themselves," notes the Azusa City Library.

- Learners led English-as-a-Second-Language circles. "The weekly conversation groups and reading/writing clubs meet an immediate need for adult learners because they are learner-led. If the learners have questions or concerns about homework help for children, best educational technology and apps, or what questions to ask their child's teachers, the facilitators work with the group to address those needs," reports the Monrovia Public Library.
- Learners become library advocates. Says Monterey County Free Libraries: "Learners' enjoyment and trust in the program is reflected in the fact that the greatest form of marketing we have is word of mouth. By far the greatest outreach resource we have is current and former participants."

When learners advocate for themselves, they experience pride and empowerment:

"Sometimes I get emotional when I read my writing assignments, because my brain still does not believe it's my new and improved way of writing... My happy tears flow like a river. In the last 11 years working for the same company, I had never requested a pay raise. Last week, with the help of my tutor Joe, I submitted my first letter requesting a pay increase. I'm asking my employer to pay me a salary equal to what other professionals are paid for the same type of work."

— Learner, Sonoma County Library

Literacy services, at their best, support learners as a whole person, not just as a struggling reader:

"An adult with low literacy likely also has other challenges in areas such as digital literacy, employment, or stable housing. The library now has resources to support all of these needs which can help adult learners achieve both short-term and long-term goals. Literacy services provides an important piece of the puzzle to make sure the library isn't leaving anyone behind."

— Burbank Public Library

Family Literacy

Research has shown that the single most significant factor influencing a child's early educational success is an introduction to reading and being read to at home prior to beginning school.

During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, 71 of the state's 104 library literacy programs delivered family literacy services to:

- 1,520 families that included adults enrolled in California Library Literacy Services
- 2,463 children in those families
- 4,327 families that included 7,224 children and 842 other family members.



A caregiver and child during a LearningQuest/Stanislaus County Library family literacy program.

Family literacy programs provided 91,799 books to families to help them build home libraries and provided 49,591 learning kits to help them continue learning at home. Family literacy services help learners succeed in the roles they play in their families as caregivers, parents, and advocates. Families take part in programming, are connected to one another and community resources, and are given materials to take home and keep.

When adults read to children and discuss story content, ask open-ended questions about story events, explain vocabulary, and show features of print, they promote increased language development, comprehension of story content, knowledge of

story structure, and a better understanding of language—all of which leads to reading success.²¹

A mother's reading skill is the greatest determinant of her children's future academic success, outweighing factors such as family income and neighborhood.²²

U.S. adults with low levels of education who have parents with low levels of education are 10 times more likely to have low skills than those who have higher-educated parents.²³

Children whose parents have low literacy levels have a 72 percent chance of being at the lowest reading levels themselves. These children are more likely to receive poor grades, display behavioral problems, have high absentee rates, repeat school years, or drop out.²⁴

In California in 2022, 69 percent of California's fourth graders scored "below proficient" in reading.²⁵ The pandemic created additional challenges, with one third of young children "missing reading benchmarks" and significantly higher percentages of low reading scores in economically challenged areas.²⁶

21 <https://ferstreaders.org/resources/fifty-top-literacy-statistics>

22 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2010, October 25). Improving mothers' literacy skills may be best way to boost children's achievement. National Institute of Health. <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/improving-mothers-literacy-skills-may-be-best-way-boost-childrens-achievement#:~:text=Researchers%20funded%20by%20the%20National,adult%20literacy%20education%20to%20parents.>

23 U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. (2015, February). Making Skills Everyone's Business: A Call to Transform Adult Learning in the United States. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED558793.pdf>

24 https://proliteration.org/Portals/0/pdf/PL_AdultLitFacts_US_flyer.pdf?ver=2016-05-06-145137-067

25 <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2019/pdf/2020014CA4.pdf>

<https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/stt2019/pdf/2020014CA8.pdf>

<https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/5116-fourth-grade-reading-achievement-levels?loc=6&loct=2#detailed/2/6/false/1729,871,573,36,867,38,18,16,14,13/1185,1186,1187,1188/11560>

26 <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/08/us/pandemic-schools-reading-crisis.html>, accessed 17 April 2022.

Family literacy programs serve those who are caregivers as well as parents. Colusa County Library reports:

“In May 2022, we began to specifically reach out to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers of children. In an agricultural economy where many parents work long hours, it is often family, friends and neighbors who spend days with the children. In our small county, person-to-person outreach is highly effective and most of our participants learn of our family literacy services that way.”

Family literacy programs include activities to help adult learners support their children’s education and development. Staff help adults develop confidence and learn how to select books, read to their children, and foster a love of reading. Virtual programming, home deliveries, and use of mobile messaging services to deliver family learning options provided creative ways for families to connect with each other and their libraries during the pandemic.



Colusa County Free Library families during a family literacy program.

Staff also help adults strengthen their connections and communication with educators, healthcare professionals, and family members, and navigate the systems and services that affect their families.

Co-design principles, where libraries work together with their communities to design services, are a growing part of family literacy through California Library Literacy Services. By incorporating feedback from learners and actively involving them in program planning, libraries are delivering literacy services in collaboration with program participants.

As A.K. Smiley Library explains:

“We conduct regular interviews with participants to learn their needs or concerns and how we can help. We use the information from these interviews to design family literacy programming. Our Family Literacy Advisory Committee includes a parent, a tutor, library staff, and a community member from Head Start. The coordinator meets with potential family literacy participants, at resource fairs or outreach events, and listens to their needs and aspirations while evaluating how we can support them.”

Libraries tell us how family literacy outreach brings in new learners and opens new opportunities:

“Victoria, a housekeeper at a large casino, joined our program after her son saw the Adult Literacy Program flyer in a backpack he had checked out for his daughter. After about six months, Victoria achieved her goal

of writing a letter to her granddaughter in English. In her 62 years she had never written any letters in English. Her granddaughter was thrilled to receive the letter and be able to read it on her own.”

— Beaumont Library District

Family literacy services include the whole family -- elders, older children, and other relatives -- and programs can involve learning about community resources and topics such as physical and mental health. Reports one learner in Calexico:

“Learning about nutrition was enlightening and I’ve used the information to change my diabetic parents’ diet, incorporating tons of veggies into the menu. I love these programs.”

New Service Models Following Pandemic Closures

“When the pandemic closed the library’s classroom to in-person learning in 2020, Tonya was not ready to quit. She was determined to work toward her goals and met with her tutor by Zoom and phone. When the library reopened, she was the first student back in the building! She helps us find new students and tutors for our program.”

— Sutter County Library

Face-to-face meetings between learners and tutors are central to all literacy programs. However, when the pandemic closed library buildings across the state in March 2020, literacy programs needed to develop new ways to serve their adult learners.

In 2021-2022, adult learners, volunteers, and staff continued to embrace the flexibility, convenience, and welcoming nature of digital learning. “Our hybrid learning platform has opened a whole new avenue for outreach,” says the Redwood City Public Library. “It’s becoming more common to see new faces join us for our family Book Club or family workshop.”

“I can’t go to the library to study because I have a baby. Zoom classes help me a lot because I can’t even drive. I can choose any time I want that is good for me. I can help my son because now I can read children’s books to him.”

— Learner, Porterville Public Library

AmeriCorps

A new statewide initiative will place up to 70 AmeriCorps members in 35 public library jurisdictions to help literacy programs recover and rebuild after several difficult years. This project is supported

with \$2.7 million in federal funding and implemented with California Volunteers and the Office of the Governor. It began in fall of 2022, and it supports capacity building after the pandemic caused library doors to close and local library literacy programs to experience a 50 percent decline in tutors and enrolled learners. The State Library is partnering with Pacific Library Partnership, which received the AmeriCorps State and National award, and the nonprofit Literacyworks to implement the initiative.

The Role of Volunteers

Thousands of Californians volunteer as library literacy tutors. They help learners, contribute to their communities, and reap the benefits of service. “Tutors love sharing those ‘aha’ moments that learners experience and feel a sense of joy and pride when their learners achieve their small and big goals,” reports the Altadena Public Library.

“Part of our recruitment strategy is to treat everyone as potential volunteers. We actively engage neighborhoods and communities where potential learners live. We partner with organizations that work with communities of color and are increasing the number of volunteers who are younger and come from diverse backgrounds.”

— Fresno County Public Library

Partnerships and Programming

California Library Literacy Services are embedded in their communities and thrive with strong partnerships.

In the 2021-2022 fiscal year, library literacy programs partnered with 345 community agencies to deliver literacy services. Partnering agencies included adult schools and community colleges, public schools that offer space for parents to learn English, Head Starts and other early learning organizations, homeless shelters and housing authorities, jails and juvenile justice departments, faith-based organizations, local businesses, and non-profit organizations.

“In order to better reach people on probation and parole who might benefit from literacy help, a county Behavioral Health mental health therapist trained as a volunteer tutor. We are slowly working together to figure out how best to serve this population.”

— Colusa County Free Library

Library literacy programs and their partners shared space, shared resources and instruction with one

another's communities and provided supportive referrals to one another's services.

Statewide, many libraries are partners with California's network of adult education providers and participate in their local adult education consortia. This partnership benefits library literacy programs as other consortia members learn more about the flexible learning opportunities available at libraries. At the same time, this partnership updates library staff about local resources and increases understanding of the roles of adult schools and community colleges.

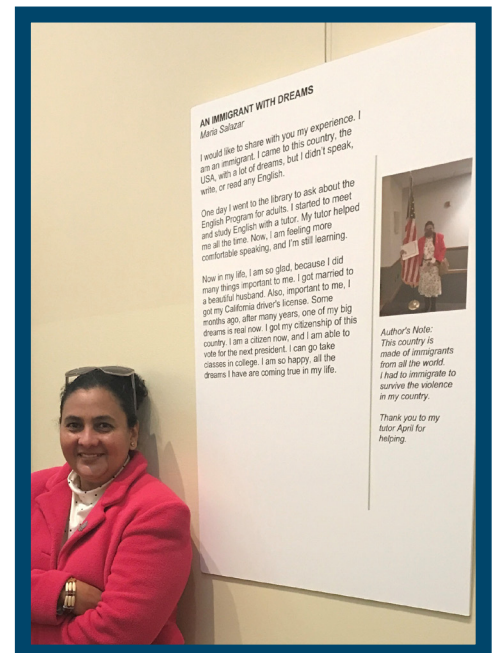
“Our local adult education consortium has made great strides in opening communication within all the programs. Many learners are referred to each other’s program. The consortium hired a junior college transition counselor who will often meet with library literacy learners to help encourage them to continue with their education.”

— Lassen Library District

Coordinators participate in regional networks in which they share training opportunities and exchange effective practices and ideas. Statewide training, facilitated by online learning opportunities, has fostered the sharing of expertise.

Literacy coordinators also collaborate with their colleagues in other parts of local libraries to provide programming that supports and enhances the work of the library literacy program. Some of that other programming includes:

- **Career Online High School:** Enables adult students to earn a high school diploma and a career certificate through the library.
- **CAreer Pathways:** Provides California residents with workforce development and learning through popular online learning platforms available at no cost. Platforms such as Northstar Digital Literacy, Coursera, LearningExpress, and LinkedIn Learning provide self-directed options for digital and professional skill building that can be supported by volunteer tutors and library staff.
- **California Libraries Learn:** Provides professional development for library staff, encourages growth and innovation in programming and services, builds a learning culture, and focuses on inclusion, diversity, equity and belonging.
- **Lunch at the Library:** Provides summer meals and enrichment programs for children in communities where at least 50 percent of children and teens are eligible to receive free or reduced-price school lunches.
- **Summer Programming:** High-quality, equity-focused summer reading programs for the whole family.



A Livermore Public Library learner posing in front of their story, 'An Immigrant with Dreams.'

National Networking

National funding and support of adult literacy issues helps California. The Adult Literacy and Learning Impact Network (ALL IN), a new collective impact initiative, poses no additional costs to California but allows Californians to work in conjunction with peers across the nation on common challenges. The State Library has signed on to participate. ALL IN stresses access for learners, quality instruction and learning opportunities, and increased uptake of services by adult learners – all goals of California's local library literacy programs. CLLS libraries will be asked to join the California State Library in this initiative and stay aware of and act on policy recommendations such as increased support for learner leadership and instructor training, better grassroots and national campaigns for adult literacy, and improved research and data on effective practices.

Appendix: Financial Awards

2021-2022 Fiscal Year – California Library Literacy Services Awards.

This information reflects the district numbers created in the 2021 legislative redistricting. The State Senators from odd-numbered districts will continue representing areas based on the 2011 redistricting until December 2024.

Library Literacy Program	Adult Literacy Services	Family Literacy Services	ESL Services	Grant Total	Assembly District	Senate District
A. K. Smiley Public Library	X	X		\$63,817	50	19
Alameda Free Library	X			\$30,838	18	7
Altadena Library District	X			\$24,053	41	25
Amador County Library	X		X	\$43,181	1, 9	4
Azusa City Library	X	X	X	\$52,750	48	22
Beaumont Library District	X	X	X	\$44,334	47	19
Benicia Public Library	X			\$26,380	11	3
Berkeley Public Library	X			\$62,927	14	7
Beverly Hills Public Library	X			\$31,436	51	24
Blanchard/Santa Paula Public Library District	X	X	X	\$74,435	38	21
Brawley Public Library	X	X		\$47,762	36	18
Burbank Public Library	X			\$26,954	44	20
Butte County Library	X	X	X	\$115,691	3	1
Calaveras County Library	X			\$36,178	8, 9	4
Camarena Memorial Public Library	X	X		\$44,418	36	18
Camarillo Public Library	X			\$25,476	38	21
Carlsbad City Library	X	X		\$63,775	37, 77	21, 38

Library Literacy Program	Adult Literacy Services	Family Literacy Services	ESL Services	Grant Total	Assembly District	Senate District
Chula Vista Public Library	X	X		\$67,874	80	18
City Of Commerce Public Library	X	X		\$57,967	54	30, 33
Colton Public Library	X	X		\$60,412	50	29
Colusa County Free Library	X	X		\$40,552	3, 4	1
Contra Costa County Library	X	X	X	\$111,988	11, 14, 15, 16	3, 7, 9
Corona Public Library	X	X		\$65,964	58	31
Covina Public Library	X	X		\$54,392	48	22
Del Norte County Library District	X			\$26,992	2	2
Downey City Library	X			\$39,888	64	30
Escondido Public Library	X	X	X	\$136,275	76	40
Fresno County Public Library	X	X	X	\$168,233	8, 27, 31, 33	12, 14, 16
Glendale Library, Arts & Culture	X		X	\$90,538	44, 52	25
Glendora Library & Cultural Center	X			\$25,208	48	25
Hayward Public Library	X	X	X	\$116,221	20	10
Hemet Public Library	X			\$31,378	60	19
Humboldt County Library	X	X	X	\$84,113	2	2
Huntington Beach Library	X		X	\$78,166	72	36
Imperial County Library	X			\$25,762	36	18
Imperial Public Library	X	X		\$34,580	36	18
Lake County Library	X	X		\$65,460	4	2
Lassen Library District	X	X		\$78,481	1	1
Lincoln Public Library	X	X		\$27,663	5	6
Livermore Public Library	X		X	\$66,584	16	5
Lodi Public Library	X	X		\$90,835	9	5
Lompoc Public Library	X	X		\$60,715	37	21
Long Beach Public Library	X	X	X	\$142,557	65, 69	33
Los Angeles Public Library	X	X	X	\$348,676	40, 42, 43, 44, 46, 51, 52, 54, 55, 57, 61, 65, 66	20, 24, 26, 27, 28, 35
Mariposa County Library	X	X		\$33,328	8	4
Merced County Library	X	X		\$71,029	22, 27	4, 14
Monrovia Public Library	X	X		\$75,629	41	25
Monterey County Free Libraries	X	X	X	\$104,673	29, 30	17
Monterey Park Bruggemeyer Library	X			\$38,412	49	25

Library Literacy Program	Adult Literacy Services	Family Literacy Services	ESL Services	Grant Total	Assembly District	Senate District
Moreno Valley Public Library	X	X		\$30,000	60	31
Napa County Library	X	X	X	\$123,874	4	3
National City Public Library	X		X	\$53,240	80	18
Nevada County Library	X	X		\$47,266	1	1, 4
Newport Beach Public Library	X			\$44,769	72	36
Oceanside Public Library	X	X	X	\$98,003	74	38
Ontario Public Library	X			\$35,250	53	22
Orange County Public Library	X	X		\$140,809	59, 64, 67, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74	37, 30, 36, 34, 38
Orange Public Library	X			\$33,874	59, 68	37
Placentia Library District	X		X	\$48,548	59	37
Placer County Library	X	X		\$66,936	5, 1	6, 4, 1
Pleasanton Public Library	X			\$50,276	16	5
Plumas County Library	X	X		\$43,447	1	1
Porterville Public Library	X	X		\$36,507	33	16
Rancho Cucamonga Public Library	X			\$25,775	50	29
Redwood City Public Library	X	X	X	\$303,508	21	13
Richmond Public Library	X	X	X	\$147,922	14	7
Riverside County Library System	X	X		\$103,901	36, 47, 58, 60, 63, 70	18, 19, 31, 32
Riverside Public Library	X	X		\$56,824	58, 63	21, 32
Roseville Public Library	X			\$29,231	5	6
Sacramento Public Library	X	X		\$98,770	6, 7, 9, 10	3, 6, 8
Salinas Public Library	X	X		\$160,767	29	17
San Benito County Free Library	X	X	X	\$94,560	29	17
San Bernardino County Library	X			\$105,712	34, 36, 39, 41, 45, 47, 50, 53, 58, 59	18, 19, 22, 23, 29, 32
San Bernardino Public Library	X	X		\$87,752	45	29
San Diego County Library	X			\$42,171	74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80	18, 32, 38, 39, 40
San Diego Public Library	X	X		\$167,685	75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80	18, 38, 39, 40
San Francisco Public Library	X			\$48,497	17, 19	11
San Jose Public Library	X	X	X	\$264,459	23, 24, 25, 26, 28	10, 15
San Leandro Public Library	X	X		\$104,178	20	9

Library Literacy Program	Adult Literacy Services	Family Literacy Services	ESL Services	Grant Total	Assembly District	Senate District
San Luis Obispo City-County Library	X	X		\$108,244	30, 37	17, 21
San Mateo County Libraries	X	X		\$90,464	21, 23	13
San Mateo Public Library	X	X		\$74,414	21	13
Santa Barbara Public Library	X	X	X	\$103,908	37	21
Santa Clara City Library	X	X		\$91,026	26	10
Santa Clara County Library	X	X		\$112,130	23, 24, 26, 28, 29	10, 13, 15
Santa Fe Springs City Library	X			\$32,681	64	30
Santa Maria Public Library	X	X	X	\$116,874	37	21
Santa Monica Public Library	X	X		\$61,368	51	24
Shasta Public Libraries	X	X		\$62,883	1	1
Siskiyou County Free Library	X	X		\$63,200	1	1
Solano County Library	X	X	X	\$140,485	11	3
Sonoma County Library	X	X	X	\$92,019	2, 4, 12	2, 3
South San Francisco Public Library	X	X		\$97,219	21	13
Stanislaus County Free Library	X	X	X	\$396,362	9, 22	4
Stockton-San Joaquin County Public Library	X	X		\$36,305	9, 13	5
Sutter County Library	X	X	X	\$101,441	3	1
Tulare County Free Library	X	X	X	\$183,413	2, 32, 33	2, 12, 16
Tuolumne County Library	X	X		\$48,386	8	4
Upland Public Library	X			\$27,706	53	29
Ventura County Library	X			\$56,372	38, 42	21, 27
Watsonville Public Library	X	X		\$63,428	29	17
Willows Public Library	X	X		\$48,650	3	1
Woodland Public Library	X			\$57,664	4	3
Yolo County Library	X	X	X	\$76,310	4	3
Continuing Grants Total	104	71	32	\$8,372,413		

