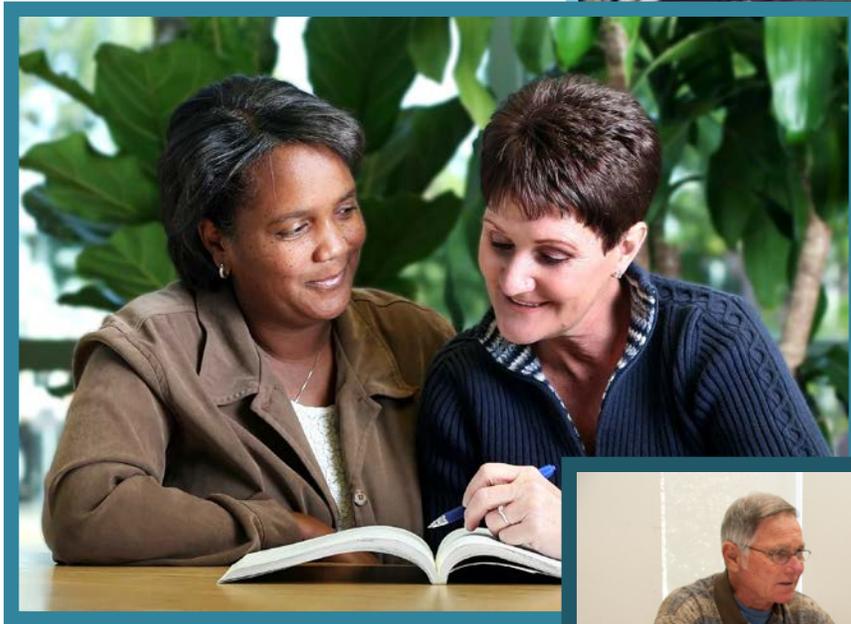


# Report to the Legislature on the California Library Literacy & English Acquisition Services Program



Submitted by  
Greg Lucas, California State Librarian

June 10, 2015



“You cannot un-educate a person who has learned to read.”

- Cesar Chavez



REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE ON THE  
CALIFORNIA LIBRARY LITERACY AND ENGLISH  
ACQUISITION SERVICES PROGRAM OF THE CALIFORNIA  
STATE LIBRARY

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown, Jr., Governor

CALIFORNIA STATE LIBRARY  
Greg Lucas, California State Librarian

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE ON THE CALIFORNIA LIBRARY LITERACY SERVICES  
The report covers fiscal year 2013-14. This report was prepared pursuant to California State Education Code (Title 1, Division 1, Part 11, Chapter 4.6., Sections 18880-18883).

Additional copies of this report can be obtained from:

California State Library  
California Library Literacy Services  
900 N Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 653-5217

Or online at <http://libraryliteracy.org/>



# Executive Summary

The societal and financial dividends of literacy make it the most cost-effective investment in human capital government can make.

California's Library Literacy Services program celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2014. Over those three decades, hundreds of thousands of Californians can now share a book with a child, help their kids with homework, understand the instructions on a medicine label, complete a job application, create a resume, pass a written exam and enroll in adult education and community college courses.

Learners receive free, confidential services—critical factors in attracting hard-to-reach adults who don't have the skills or comfort level to attend traditional classroom-based programs at adult schools or community colleges.

These are individuals who have hidden their inability to read, individuals whose reading skills generally fall below the Fifth Grade level.

The literacy program takes on even more significance as the governor and the Legislature grapple with the future of adult education, which depends on programs like this one to elevate the skills of participants at least to a Fifth Grade reading level.

An estimated 15 percent of American adults over age 16 read at or below the Fifth Grade level, according to ProLiteracy, [www.proliteracy.org/the-crisis/adult-literacy-facts](http://www.proliteracy.org/the-crisis/adult-literacy-facts). Almost 30 percent of Americans read at or below the Eighth Grade level.

State funding for California's library literacy program – then at \$4.6 million -- was eliminated in the 2011-2012 fiscal year, severely hampering help for adult Californians trying to improve their reading skills.

Although still successful in helping thousands of Californians learn to read in an incredibly cost-effective way, the program has not been able to return to the same reach it had prior to the one-year elimination of funding.

In part that's because the program has received \$2.82 million annually, 60 percent of what the program received prior to the year funding was eliminated.

While \$1 million was added by the governor and the Legislature for the 2014-2015 fiscal year, it was one-time only funding which didn't allow for growth or future planning.

In his May revised budget, Gov. Brown proposes adding \$2 million to the program.

During the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014, 18,008 adult Californians improved their reading skills with the help of 10,062 volunteer tutors at nearly 800 libraries around the state.

This drop in learners is partly a result the elimination of funding four years ago leading to a loss of 24 percent of local literacy staff. The staff losses meant decreased capacity to recruit and train

volunteers, contributing to a 14 percent reduction in volunteer tutors and a wait-list of more than 3,000 adults statewide eager for service that still exists today.

The governor’s proposed ongoing state commitment of nearly \$5 million will allow stabilization of existing local library literacy efforts, add library jurisdictions who want to participate in the program and significantly reduce the statewide backlog of Californians who seek tutoring.

## Background

Low literacy is a national issue.

The U.S. Department of Education’s February 2015 report, “Making Skills Everyone’s Business,” says that nationwide:

- 👤 **One in six adults has low literacy skills**
- 👤 **One-third of those adults are under the age of 35**
- 👤 **One-third are immigrants**
- 👤 **More than 60 percent have completed high school**
- 👤 **Two-thirds are employed**
- 👤 **Americans with low literacy skills face much higher chances of poor health**
- 👤 **Children of less-educated parents are far more likely to become low-skilled adults.**

*"I couldn't read."*



Thanks to his volunteer tutor, Steve Tafoya not only learned to read, but is attending a California Community College.

Low adult literacy is *not* inevitable. Unfortunately, more than 3,000 of our fellow Californians are on waiting lists statewide.

Extrapolating from this report, if California represents 12 percent of the nation’s population that means 12 percent of the Golden State’s population have low literacy skills.

In a state where nearly 30 percent of its residents are born in another country, the percentage of immigrants with low literacy skills is likely higher than the national level.

The Department of Education report suggests that adults with higher literacy skills are healthier, more productive and more active in their communities. Perhaps more importantly, raising adult literacy skills helps improve community educational attainment for the next generation.

**CLLS Outcomes: Goals Reached By Adult Students - 2013/2014\***



73% were able to share a book with their child

63% were able to help their children with their homework.



61% were able to complete a job application

59% wrote a resume



49% interviewed for a job

37% actually secured a new job or were promoted at work



40% were able to vote

42% became volunteers in their community



70% were able to search the internet

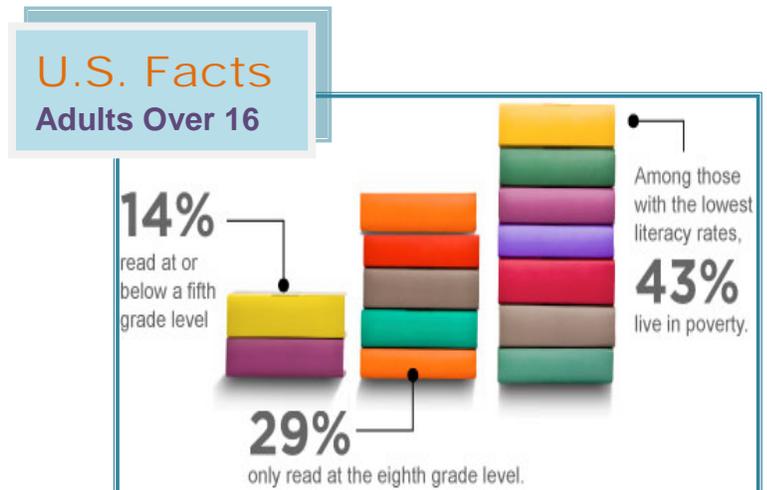
*\* Results are based on 18,057 adults reporting over a 12-month period in June 2014.*

## Cost Effectiveness

Investing in adult literacy saves public funds. Better readers get better jobs, are unlikely to be incarcerated and, if mothers, improve the academic success of their children.

According to ProLiteracy ([www.proliteracy.org/the-crisis/adult-literacy-facts](http://www.proliteracy.org/the-crisis/adult-literacy-facts)):

- 📖 **Low literacy costs the United States more than \$225 billion each year in non-productivity costs in the workforce and loss of tax revenue due to unemployment.**
- 📖 **Low literacy adds an estimated \$230 billion to the country's annual health care costs.**
- 📖 **75 percent of state prison inmates and 59 percent of federal prison inmates did not complete high school or can be classified as low literate.**
- 📖 **43 percent of American Adults with the lowest literacy levels live in poverty.**



“Half of all homeless parents in New York City shelters don't have a high school diploma. In essence, this means they can't read or write at a level required to get a decent job, permanently sentencing them to low-wage, dead-end jobs or, as is the case for many, no employment prospects at all,” according to a March 25, 2015 article, “[The Dollars and Sense of a Basic Education](#),” from Huffington Post.

“Studies of family literacy programs demonstrate that [every dollar invested in adult literacy yields over \\$7](#) in higher incomes, tax contributions, reduced criminal justice expenses, and diminished reliance on public assistance,” the same article concludes.

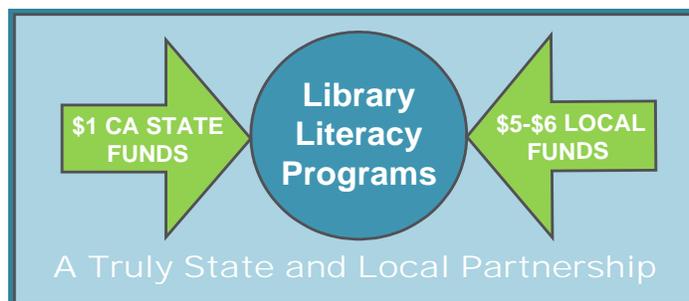
California doesn't collect state-level statistics on literacy but the Census finds 16.8 percent of California's population at or below the federal poverty rate.

An August 2013 Public Policy Institute of California study found that the poverty rate among families headed by an adult lacking a high school diploma was 36.7 percent.

## How It Works

The California Library Literacy Services program is a state and local partnership. Although the state has never met its 50 percent funding match, cost-effectiveness and sustainability are achieved by local governments and private donors contributing \$5 to \$6 for every state dollar provided.

Each year, an average of 20,000 adults are helped by literacy programs offered at 800 libraries throughout California. Since many adult students have failed in traditional classroom settings, they see the library's non-threatening, information-rich environment as a welcoming place to ask for help.



The one-on-one instruction is customized to each learner's immediate needs. There is no one-size-fits-all curriculum. Instead, each learner starts at their beginning.

During intake and assessment, each learner identifies personal literacy goals and works with their trained volunteer tutor to achieve them. Outcome measures known as "Roles & Goals" document life-changing achievements.

Special literacy services for families were added to the program early on, and a 2010 study by the National Institutes of Health found that a mother's level of reading is the greatest determinant of her child's academic success.

Learners with a child under the age of five receive: Instruction in reading to children, selection of age appropriate children's books and use of activities like songs, finger-plays and word games to promote the love of reading. They also receive free children's books to increase the availability of print materials in the home.

The literacy services program succeeds because it's built on the foundation of a trusted and enduring community entity – the public library. Its resources, its reach, and its commitment to the communities it serves have created an innovative and effective local service model.

## AB 86—Partnerships with other Adult Education Providers

The importance of library literacy services is even greater in the wake of discussions between lawmakers and the Brown administration on the future of adult education.

As part of the process created by the 2013-14 Assembly Bill 86, regional adult education consortiums have mapped out strategies for streamlining services and prioritizing them within a more constricted budgetary environment.

Participation in adult education or community college courses requires a minimum Fifth Grade reading level. The vast majority of library literacy learners read below a Fifth Grade level. For example, “Learn the Alphabet” is the goal set by 14 percent of learners when they begin tutoring.

Library literacy services provide the reading skills that allow learners to participate in and benefit from the classroom environment of adult education and community college courses. Libraries are the farm team that feeds the majors.

Local libraries and the State Library have worked to be part of the AB 86 regional consortia planning process. Some public libraries have been welcomed to the process, others haven’t.

Library literacy programs are an important part of the continuum of adult education services locally because they assist lower level learners who aren’t yet ready for adult school or community college.

Gov. Brown’s \$2 million augmentation to the program will help library literacy programs do a better job of achieving that goal, not only with their current students but also with the more than 3,000 Californians who want to read but remain on a waiting list.



## Realignment

Federal and state statistics show low literacy skills to be widespread in California’s prison population, a large chunk of whose non-violent offenders are being moved to county jails as part of the Brown administration’s so-called realignment plan.

Some libraries are creating inter-agency agreements with probation departments to conduct literacy programs in county jails and juvenile justice centers.



For example, San Benito County used a \$40,000 federal Community Block Grant to create its two-year “Grow Strong” literacy effort.

Partnering with the Superior Court and Probation Department, the library targeted first time drug offenders with children ages three to six. Fifty clients were referred to the program and 34

completed it. The Probation Department reports most have not re-offended. During the last session, none of the six participants re-offended.

A higher level of state investment in library literacy efforts would allow expansion of services to this still largely unserved population.

## Volunteers

While not easily quantifiable, participation in the library literacy program has a significant qualitative impact on the participants. Not just the learner but also the volunteer tutors.

Literacy coordinators at libraries throughout the state offer numerous examples of tutors who say their lives have been changed for the better by participating in the program which often puts them in close contact with persons they might not otherwise encounter in their day-to-day lives.

There is no “dollar savings” from those connections but there is certainly a psychic payoff and a greater appreciation of California’s unique diversity.

*“When I learned to read,  
I was finally free.”*



*At age 35, John Zickefoose was unable to read his children's report cards.*

*Today, he's a school board member and founder of a local nonprofit.*

## FY 2013/2014 CLLS Awards

Library Literacy Program	Adult Literacy	Family	ELLI	MLLS	CLLS Award Amount 13/14
Alameda County Library	√				\$ 56,586
Alameda Free Library	√				\$ 15,771
Altadena Library District	√				\$ 14,298
Amador County Library	√	-			\$ 15,882
Anaheim Public Library	√				\$ 10,000
Azusa City Library	√				\$ 13,379
Beaumont Library District	√				\$ 13,371
Benicia Public Library	√	√			\$ 18,042
Berkeley Public Library	√	√			\$ 30,632
Beverly Hills Public Library	√				\$ 27,247
Brawley Public Library	√	√		√	\$ 20,922
Burbank Public Library	√				\$ 20,858
Butte County Library	√	√		√	\$ 33,227
Calaveras County Library	√				\$ 14,207
Calexico (Camarena) Library	√				\$ 18,092
Carlsbad City Library	√				\$ 31,736
Chula Vista Public Library	√				\$ 23,850
Colton Public Library	√	√	√		\$ 24,304
Colusa County Library	√			√	\$ 20,149
Commerce Public Library	√		√		\$ 21,556
Contra Costa County Library	√	√			\$ 38,597
Corona Public Library	√				\$ 17,433
Covina Public Library	√	√			\$ 17,035

Library Literacy Program	Adult Literacy	Family	ELLI	MLLS	CLLS Award Amount 13/14
Del Norte County Library	√	√			\$ 18,702
Downey City Library	√				\$ 17,563
Escondido Public Library	√	√		√	\$ 27,811
Fresno County Library	√	√		√	\$ 37,218
Glendora Public Library	√				\$ 12,582
Hayward Public Library	√	√			\$ 29,375
Hemet Public Library	√				\$ 18,040
Humboldt County Library	√				\$ 15,569
Huntington Beach Library	√	√	√		\$ 29,943
Imperial County Library	√				\$ 11,085
Imperial Public Library	√				\$ 10,000
Lake County Library	√	√	√		\$ 23,785
Livermore Public Library	√				\$ 24,451
Lodi Public Library	√				\$ 12,294
Lompoc Public Library	√	√			\$ 17,564
Los Angeles Public Library	√	√			\$106,688
Menlo Park Public Library	√				\$ 26,219
Merced County Library	√				\$ 26,721
Monrovia Public Library	√			√	\$ 29,563
Monterey County Library	√	√		√	\$ 27,400
Monterey Park (Bruggemeyer)	√	√	√		\$ 25,436
Napa City-County Library	√	√			\$ 27,843
National City Public Library	√	√	√		\$ 37,411
Nevada County Library	√				\$ 18,255
Newport Beach Public Library	√				\$ 22,235
Oakland Public Library	√	√			\$ 42,912

Library Literacy Program	Adult Literacy	Family	ELLI	MLLS	CLLS Award Amount 13/14
Oceanside Public Library	√				\$ 14,571
Orange County Public Library	√	√			\$ 54,733
Placer County Library	√				\$ 13,168
Pleasanton Public Library	√				\$ 17,683
Plumas County Library	√	√	√		\$ 33,989
Porterville Public Library	√		√		\$ 16,154
Rancho Cucamonga P.L.	√				\$ 17,381
Redwood City Public Library	√	√	√		\$ 74,398
Richmond Public Library	√				\$ 59,126
Riverside County Library	√				\$ 26,232
Riverside Public Library	√	√			\$ 12,236
Roseville Public Library	√				\$ 22,577
Sacramento Public Library	√				\$ 33,642
Salinas Public Library	√	√			\$ 42,670
San Benito County	√			√	\$ 16,037
San Bernardino County Library	√				\$ 89,772
San Bernardino Public Library	√	√	√		\$ 53,329
San Diego County Library	√				\$ 33,381
San Diego Public Library	√	√			\$ 65,687
San Francisco Public Library	√	√			\$ 40,446
San Jose Public Library	√	√			\$ 47,016
San Leandro Comm. Library	√	√			\$ 23,901
San Luis Obispo City-County	√				\$ 40,634
San Mateo County Library	√				\$ 47,611
San Mateo Public Library	√	√			\$ 22,643
Santa Barbara Public Library	√				\$ 31,644

Library Literacy Program	Adult Literacy	Family	ELLI	MLLS	CLLS Award Amount 13/14
Santa Clara County Library	√		√		\$ 40,652
Santa Clara Public Library	√	√			\$ 29,326
Santa Fe Springs City Library	√		√		\$ 16,841
Santa Maria Public Library	√				\$ 15,536
Santa Paula (Blanchard) Library	√	√			\$ 18,029
Shasta County Library	√				\$ 18,924
Siskiyou County Free Library	√				\$ 10,000
Solano County Library	√	√			\$ 39,345
Sonoma County Library	√	√			\$ 25,755
South San Francisco Library	√	√		√	\$ 50,064
Stanislaus County Library	√	√			\$112,269
Stockton/San Joaquin Co. Lib.	√	√		√	\$ 30,727
Sutter County Library	√	√			\$ 28,669
Tulare County Library	√	√			\$ 44,112
Tuolumne County Library	√			√	\$ 14,676
Upland Public Library	√	√			\$ 19,009
Ventura County Library	√				\$ 26,215
Watsonville Public Library	√	√			\$ 22,721
Willows Public Library/Orland	√	√			\$ 29,503
Woodland Public Library	√				\$ 48,640
Yolo County	√				\$ 14,487
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>\$ 2,820,000</b>