

Fall 2025

VOICE OF LITERACY

www.literacysandiego.org

(888) 850-7323

contact@literacysandiego.org



A Message from the San Diego Council on Literacy



Dear Friend,

Welcome to the San Diego region's 40th year of leading an urban literacy effort. Over most of those years, the Internet has captured virtually everything sent its way. After all this time, here's what A.I. says about the San Diego Council on Literacy:

The San Diego Council on Literacy has played a significant role in advancing literacy initiatives in San Diego. It has provided leadership that has focused on expanding access to reading resources, fostering partnerships with local organizations, and promoting community engagement in literacy programs. Its efforts have aimed to improve educational outcomes, increase awareness of literacy issues, and support programs that help individuals of all ages develop essential reading and writing skills. Additionally, it has been involved in advocacy efforts that highlight the importance of literacy in economic and social development.

Here's what we wrote:

The San Diego Council on Literacy (SDCOL) was formed in 1986 with the aim of producing a coordinated literacy effort for residents of the region. Central to this goal has been the SDCOL's relationship with its 35 affiliated literacy programs. Together, these programs annually serve over 100,000 San Diego County residents at no cost to users. The relationship with these programs has been the foundation for the SDCOL's history of, 1) Creating an identity for the local literacy effort; 2) Defining the state of literacy in the region; 3) Raising literacy awareness; 4) Instilling the importance of literacy in the community; 5) Creating a community of affiliated programs; 6) Filling services gaps, and; 7) Securing and distributing resources.

In the past 40 years we have produced many opening messages for the Voice of Literacy newsletter. While the subject matter varies, we end up saying the same thing:

Thank You!

We do not do this work alone. With every new book given to a child, and with every person who can read their first words, sentences, pages, stories, and books, WE succeed.

As we approach the holidays, we ask that you contribute what you can to our efforts. Please see the last page of this newsletter to make your next donation. With every dollar, great things happen. The return on investment is immeasurable. Please give today!

Thank you Friend.



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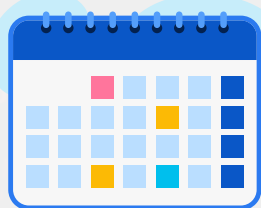
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The San Diego Council on Literacy invites you to attend its annual **Literacy Champions Reception & San Diego Literacy Hall of Fame Induction Program**



Wednesday, December 3, 2025

11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.



San Diego Oasis, Rancho Bernardo

17170 Rancho Bernardo Center

Dr. San Diego (92128)



Invitations will be sent in early

November.

The time has come. This year's Hall of Fame inductee is
Jose L. Cruz, CEO, San Diego Council on Literacy



Jose has a 40-year history of coordinating literacy efforts on a national, state, and regional level. He is in his 19th year as SDCOL CEO, with a total of 33 years as an SDCOL staff person beginning in 1988. He was present in 1986 when the SDCOL was formed and has witnessed the roster of affiliated programs grow from 5 to 35. Congratulations Jose!

San Diego Literacy Hall of Fame

Community Champions

Robert Alden
Gordon Baker
David C. Copley
Paula Cordeiro & David O'Brien
Gregory Cox
Jeffrey Demos
Audrey Geisel
Judith Harris & Dr. Robert Singer
Jane Johnson
William D. Lynch
Shula Monroe
Helga Moore

Ron Roberts
Nancy Rohland-Heinrich
Drew Schlosberg
Laura Walcher
Robert Walcher

Practitioners

Robert Condon
Stoney & Gloria DeMent
Nancy Hampson
Valerie Hardie
Lynda Jones
Stan Levy

Chris McFadden
Carrie W. Scott

Learners

John Corcoran
Maria Gonzalez
Nyla Henry
Denise O'Neal

Founders

Brian Bilbray
Helen K. Copley
Murray Galinson



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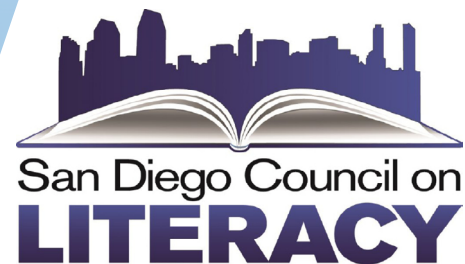
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San Diego Council on Literacy 2024-2025 Achievements

The San Diego Council on Literacy is well positioned to collect and distribute resources for our region's network of 35 affiliated programs and partners. A great example is the 70,000 new books the SDCOL received through the generosity of Fondo de Cultura Economica. With the support of the San Diego County Library, Words Alive, and Education Begins in the Home, we relocated and distributed all books in short time. A total of 40,000 books for children and 30,000 books for adults were quickly moved to all corners of San Diego County. These books had a value of \$500,000, but to the community they are priceless.

Another exciting development is SDCOL's partnership with the San Diego County Fair to present the 2026 fair theme, "Once Upon a Fair." Over 20 fair days, books, stories, fairy tales, reading, and libraries will be highlighted with activities and displays that reinforce the importance and joy of reading in our community.



70,000 books from Fondo de Cultura Economica.



San Diego County Fair 2026.



The PBS/SD Book Festival at USD.



Convening the SDCOL Affiliated Programs w/Chair, Michelle Irby at the Downtown San Diego Lions Club.

HIGHLIGHTS

100,000 residents served annually by the 35 SDCOL Affiliated Programs.

70,000 books distributed to residents thanks to Fondo de Cultura Economica.

14,400 books distributed by mail to local children via the Imagination Library program.

Replenishment of Little Free Library stations with the San Diego County Library.

Zip code-based adult literacy statistics thanks to Data Science Alliance.

KPBS San Diego Book Festival, 8/23, at the University of San Diego.

Advancement of Campaign for Evidence-Based Reading Instruction.

Documentary screening, The Truth About Reading, Oceanside Public Library, 9/4.

In-person meeting of Affiliated Programs: 9/30, Downtown San Diego Lions Club.

2024 San Diego Literacy Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony.

2026 San Diego County Fair theme of books, reading, libraries, fairy tales.

Volunteer recruitment and information & referral services.

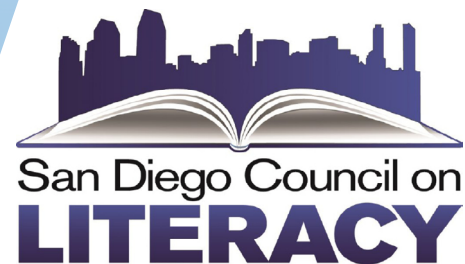
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The State of Literacy in San Diego County

Cities, Communities, Zip Codes, and Largest School Districts Youth & Adults

The San Diego Council on Literacy (SDCOL) has provided reports on the state of literacy in the San Diego region since 1993. In that first year, reports were focused on adult literacy and based on national studies, the U.S. Census, and ethnic populations. This year, thanks to the contributions of Data Science Alliance (DSA), we can provide adult literacy reports based on recent surveys. Also, with DSA's assistance, we can bring more literacy risk factors into our calculations, and, for the first time, on a zip code basis. Additionally, thanks to data provided by the State of California, we can identify the lowest achieving large school districts in all 18 cities in San Diego County.

Why are these numbers important?

1. The percentages of low-level readers in our community are often under-stated. The numbers are higher than most people know. In San Diego County, half of all students are not meeting the standard for reading. And 23% of adults in our region read between a 0 to 4th grade level. To address this challenge, we need to know the extent of it.
2. These numbers equip advocates with data that influences funding. The numbers let us know where we need to invest.
3. With greater literacy, people have more life options. They are better able to succeed as students, parents, community members, and workers. They are more apt to engage in a career of their choosing and more apt to vote.

ADULTS at Level 1, lowest of 3 levels, by Zip Code

San Diego	92113	39.83%
San Ysidro	92173	38.27%
National City	91950	35.75%
San Diego	92105	35.56%
El Cajon	92020	29.68%
El Cajon	92021	29.53%
Imperial Beach	91932	29.50%
Escondido	92025	27.14%
Chula Vista	91911	26.65%
San Diego	92154	25.97%
Lemon Grove	91945	25.86%
San Diego	92102	25.82%
San Diego	92114	25.00%
Vista	92083	24.55%
Oceanside	92058	23.81%

(Communities, low population/not shown above: Guatay (43.6%), Potrero (41.53%), Jacumba (39.56%), Ranchita (33.69%).

Lowest percentage of Adults at Level 1, by Zip Code

91914, 91915, 92007, 92009, 92010, 92011, 92014, 92024, 92037, 92064, 92067, 92075, 92091, 92106, 92109, 92118-92122, 92127-92131.

Source: PIAAC, 2023; U.S. Census, Data Science Alliance

4th Grade, Met Reading Standard, Low to High

S. Bay Union H.S. District [Imperial Beach], 24%
National [City] Elementary School District, 27%
[El] Cajon Valley Union School District, 31%
Escondido Union School District, 34%
Lemon Grove School District, 34%
Oceanside Unified School District, 40%
Vista Unified School District, 41%
La Mesa/Spring Valley School District, 48%
San Diego Unified School District, 51%
Chula Vista Elementary School District, 53%
San Marcos Elementary School District, 63%
Santee School District, 64%
Encinitas Unified School District, 71%
Carlsbad Unified School District, 74%
Coronado Unified School District, 74%
Poway Unified School District, 75%
Del Mar Union Elementary, 81%
Solana Beach Elementary School District, 84%

Source: CA Assessment of Student Performance & Progress

Coming Soon: Please look for comprehensive postings of this data on the San Diego Council on Literacy website: www.literacysandiego.org



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October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025

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Fondo de Cultura Economica

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State of California Imagination Library Program
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MYTHIC

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United Way Suncoast
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EPIC \$50,000+ LEGENDARY \$10,000+ MYTHIC \$5,000+ CLASSIC \$2,500+ ROMANTIC 1,000+ NOVEL \$500+ POETIC Up to \$500

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