



**RAISING**  
a Reader

# Funding Your Raising a Reader Program in California

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A Practical Guide for Schools,  
Districts, and Community Partners

# Why Literacy & Family Engagement Matter in California

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California faces a persistent literacy challenge—one that schools, districts, and community partners are actively working to address through family engagement, early intervention, and expanded learning opportunities.



## California Literacy Snapshot

**28.4%**

of California adults read at a low literacy level

**49<sup>th</sup>**

California ranks 49th out of 50 states in literacy outcomes

**58%**

of students read below grade level by 3rd grade

**Literacy outcomes vary widely by county and district, creating deep inequities across the state**

These data points reinforce what educators already know: early, consistent, family-centered literacy support is essential to long-term student success.

# Alignment With California's Family Engagement Priorities

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Raising a Reader directly supports California's Family Engagement standards and statewide education priorities, including:

- **Freedom to Decide**  
Supporting meaningful family participation in school decisions and program priorities.
- **Freedom to Thrive**  
Ensuring students have a fair start through foundational supports that strengthen learning at home.
- **Freedom to Learn**  
Providing diverse, high-quality books that reflect children's identities and expand access to learning resources.
- **Freedom to Succeed**  
Building early literacy and life skills that support long-term academic and career pathways.

California's literacy and family engagement efforts are led by Tony Thurmond, whose office prioritizes early literacy, family engagement, and equitable access to educational opportunity statewide.





# About Raising a Reader

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## A Proven, Evidence-Based Family Literacy Partner

Raising a Reader (RAR) is a national nonprofit that helps schools build consistent, joyful home reading routines that strengthen family engagement and improve literacy outcomes.

### **RAR programs are:**

- Evidence-based
- Turnkey and easy to implement
- Designed to integrate into existing school and district initiatives
- Aligned with federal, state, and local funding priorities

RAR does not replace classroom instruction—it extends learning beyond the school day by equipping families with books, routines, and confidence.

# Raising a Reader Programs



## Classic Red Book Bag Program

A school-based program where children take home rotating collections of high-quality, diverse books, building a consistent shared reading routine with caregivers.



## Home Library

We know the power of families reading together. Our Home Library Programs help families build strong reading routines, grow their home libraries, and develop key skills for school and lifelong success.

## Expanded Learning & Community-Based Models

RAR integrates seamlessly into:

-  TK – 2nd grade classrooms and afterschool programs
-  Charter and Community schools
-  Family engagement initiatives
-  Early learning and intervention settings

Programs are adaptable across grade levels and community contexts.



# Evidence of Impact

Across backgrounds, states, and settings, families participating in Raising a Reader report:

-  More frequent reading
-  Stronger home learning routines
-  Increased excitement about books
-  Better communication skills
-  Stronger family connections
-  Greater confidence supporting learning at home



## Key Metrics



**3,000**  
program sites  
across **34 states**



**60%**  
more time reading spent  
by families per session



**49%**  
Children ask to read  
49% more often



**96%**  
of families establish  
consistent reading routines



**121 minutes**  
Weekly reading  
time increases from  
52 minutes to 121  
minutes



**93%**  
Caregiver confidence  
increases from 74% to 93%

# How California Schools Pay for Raising a Reader

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## Federal Funding Pathways

RAR aligns with allowable uses of:

- **Title I** – Family engagement, literacy intervention, schoolwide programs
- **Title II** – Professional learning, instructional support, coaching
- **Title III** – Multilingual learner engagement and home language support
- **Title IV** – Well-rounded education and student supports
- **IDEA** – Family engagement and early intervention components

## California-Specific Funding Opportunities

### **ASES (After School Education and Safety Program)**

Raising a Reader supports ASES goals by:

- Strengthening literacy during expanded learning time
- Supporting family engagement requirements
- Extending reading beyond the school day

### **Literacy Coaches & Reading Specialists Grants (CA DOE)**

Funding supports:

- Development of school literacy programs
- Employment and training of literacy coaches
- Targeted literacy interventions

### **Literacy Screenings & Professional Development (CA DOE)**

Supports early identification and educator training in K-2 literacy.

### **Golden State Literacy Plan (AB 1454)**

Passed in the June 2025 state budget to coordinate statewide literacy improvement efforts.

### **Community Schools Partnership Program**

Funds integrated approaches connecting academics, health, youth development, and family engagement.

*And more!*

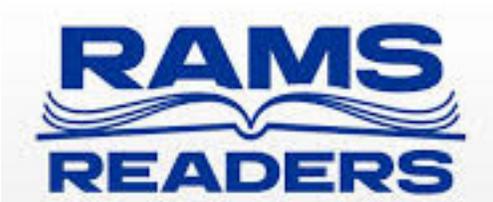
Contact our team today to learn about funding opportunities: [hello@raisingareader.org](mailto:hello@raisingareader.org)

# Corporate & Community Funding

(California Examples)

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Many California-based funders prioritize literacy, education, youth development, and family engagement, including:



These partners often support **regional, school-based, or community-centered initiatives**, making Raising a Reader a strong programmatic fit.

# Plug-and-Play Language for Proposals & Plans

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## **Boilerplate Language: Funding & Implementing Raising a Reader**

### **Program Overview (Use Anywhere)**

Raising a Reader (RAR) is an evidence-based family engagement and early literacy organization that helps schools build consistent, joyful home reading routines. Through high-quality, diverse books and simple implementation tools, Raising a Reader strengthens family–school partnerships and supports reading achievement from early childhood through second grade.

RAR is designed to integrate seamlessly into existing school and district literacy efforts and is aligned with federal, state, and local funding priorities focused on family engagement, early literacy and student success.

### **Identified Need (Problem Statement)**

Many students lack consistent access to books at home and regular opportunities for shared reading with caregivers—both critical predictors of early literacy success. Families often want to support learning at home but need accessible tools, guidance, and culturally responsive resources to do so effectively.

Raising a Reader addresses this gap by providing families with books, routines, and support that reinforce literacy beyond the classroom.

# Plug-and-Play Language for Proposals & Plans

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## Program Description (What We Will Do)

Schools implementing Raising a Reader will:

- Distribute rotating collections of diverse, high-quality children's books to families
- Establish a consistent, school-supported shared reading routine
- Engage caregivers as active partners in their child's literacy development
- Reinforce classroom instruction through home-based reading experiences
- The program is turnkey, scalable, and adaptable to diverse school and community contexts.

## Evidence of Impact (Use for Grants & Justification)

Raising a Reader has demonstrated measurable outcomes across diverse communities nationwide:

- **Over 3,000 program sites across 34 states**
- Families spent **60% more time reading** per session
- Children asked to read **49% more often**
- **96% of families established consistent reading routines**
- Weekly family reading time increased from **52 minutes to 121 minutes**
- Caregiver confidence in supporting learning at home increased from **74% to 93%**
- Nearly **90% of families report strong, sustained shared reading routines**

Across backgrounds, states, and settings, families reported:

- More frequent reading
- Stronger home learning routines
- Increased excitement about books
- Better communication skills
- Stronger family connections

# Plug-and-Play Language for Proposals & Plans

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## **Short Insert (For Tight Word Limits)**

Funds will support implementation of Raising a Reader, an evidence-based family engagement and literacy program that increases shared reading, strengthens caregiver confidence, and extends learning beyond the classroom.

## **Extended Boilerplate**

Raising a Reader is a national, evidence-based family literacy program that supports early reading development by helping families establish consistent shared reading routines. The program aligns with federal, state, and local funding priorities and strengthens family engagement while reinforcing classroom instruction.

# Use This Guide to Take Action

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This guide helps California educators and partners identify the funding sources they can use—right now—to launch and sustain Raising a Reader without adding new initiatives or administrative burden.

**This guide is designed to support:**

- Grant applications
- School and district improvement plans (SPSA, LCAP)
- Early Literacy and Family Engagement Funding proposals
- ASES proposals
- Funding conversations with community and corporate partners

Raising a Reader works with the funding you already have—and helps you build a clear, fundable plan for literacy and family engagement.

# Ready to Get Started?

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**Request a Quote**

**Talk with our Team**