

Date of Hearing: June 29, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Patrick O'Donnell, Chair

SB 1183 (Grove) – As Amended May 3, 2022

SENATE VOTE: 38-0

SUBJECT: The California State Library: Statewide Imagination Library Program

SUMMARY: Establishes the Statewide Imagination Library Program, under the administration of the State Librarian, to provide age-appropriate books to children age birth through age five who are registered for the program, sent to the child's home on a monthly basis at no cost to families, through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the Statewide Imagination Library Program under the administration of the State Librarian for purposes of developing, implementing, promoting, and fostering a comprehensive statewide initiative for encouraging children from birth to five years of age, inclusive, to develop a love of reading and learning.
- 2) Creates in the State Treasury a fund to be known as the Imagination Library of California Fund. Requires all moneys deposited in the fund, including state General Fund appropriations, public or private bequeaths, donations, gifts, or grants, and any federal funds, to be continuously appropriated to the California State Library for this purpose.
- 3) Requires, commencing January 1, 2028, that the deposit of state moneys into the fund is contingent upon the submission of an annual report to the Legislature.
- 4) Requires moneys from the fund to be used to provide age-appropriate books on a monthly basis, at home, to each child registered in the program, from birth to their fifth birthday, inclusive, at no cost to families, through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.
- 5) Requires moneys from the fund to be allocated to qualified local entities that agree to a dollar-for-dollar match for purposes of the program.
- 6) Defines "qualified local entity" to mean any existing or new local Dolly Parton's Imagination Library affiliate.
- 7) Requires the State Librarian to coordinate with a nonprofit entity and organized solely to promote and encourage reading by the children of the state, for the purpose of implementing this article.
- 8) Requires the State Librarian to do all of the following:
 - a) Promote the statewide development of local Dolly Parton's Imagination Library programs;
 - b) Advance and strengthen local Dolly Parton's Imagination Library programs with the goal of increasing enrollment;

- c) Recruit volunteers to assist in the development, promotion, and coordination of the programs;
 - d) Solicit donations, gifts, and other funding to financially support local Dolly Parton's Imagination Library programs;
 - e) Develop community engagement;
 - f) Develop, promote, and coordinate a public awareness campaign to make donors aware of the opportunity to donate to the affiliate programs and make the public aware of the opportunity to register eligible children to receive books through the program.
 - g) Administer the local match requirement and coordinate the collection and remittance of local program costs for books and mailing; and
 - h) Develop statewide marketing and communication plans.
- 9) Requires a report to the Legislature, by January 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, on all of the following:
- a) The deposits made to, and expenditures made from, the Imagination Library of California Fund;
 - b) Whether any local match requirements were waived;
 - c) How many local programs exist, where they are located, and which entity or organization serves as the local partner; and
 - d) How many children are enrolled and how many books have been sent to enrolled children.
- 10) Authorizes the California State Library to promulgate regulations as may be needed for the administration of the Statewide Imagination Library Program.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes in the state government an agency known as the California State Library, and provides that the California State Library is under the control of an executive who is to be a technically trained librarian and is to be known as the "State Librarian." (Education Code (EC) 19301 and 19302)
- 2) Authorizes the State Librarian to, in part:
 - a) Make rules and regulations, not inconsistent with law, for the government of the California State Library;
 - b) Sell or exchange duplicate copies of books;

- c) Authorize the California State Library to serve as regional library for the blind and print disabled, in cooperation with the Library of Congress; and
 - d) Give advisory, consultive, and technical assistance with respect to public libraries to librarians and library authorities, and assist all other authorities, state and local, in assuming their full responsibility for library services. (EC 19320 and 19321)
- 3) Requires the State Librarian to establish the Reading Initiative Program with funds appropriated for that purpose and with funds received from private sources. The State Librarian is to administer the program, develop a list of recommended books and develop a method of involving K-12 students in the program. (EC 19336)

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- By establishing the Statewide Imagination Library Program, this bill could result in significant, General Fund cost pressure each year to fund it. While an exact amount is unknown and would largely depend on enrollment in the program, based on the cost of the literacy programs recently established and those that are proposed in the Governor’s Budget, the costs could be in the millions of dollars each year. Local entities that elect to participate would be required to provide matching funds for purposes of the program.
- The California State Library estimates General Fund costs of approximately \$1.06 million and 9.0 positions to implement the program. However, these expenses could be offset by resources provided by the non-profit entity that partners with the State Library in administering the program.

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, “It is widely understood that the most significant amount of brain growth occurs in the first five years of a child’s life and by age three most of the brain structure has formed. Research shows that young children who are exposed to a variety of linguistic and literacy experiences often do better in school.

Knowing this, select California communities have tried to bring together partners and non-profits in establishing a local Imagination Library affiliate to provide more books to families for preschool children. Though many have been successful, barriers remain, especially those in rural communities that lack the resources to establish an affiliate.

SB 1183 establishes the Imagination Library of California under the leadership of the State Librarian and in partnership with Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library aimed at offering a supportive and meaningful education resource for families by providing more books to more children at no direct cost to families regardless of where they live.”

Dolly Parton Imagination Library programs. The Dolly Parton Imagination Library is a book-gifting program that has been operated by the Dollywood Foundation for over 25 years. The Library maintains a database of book selections and a process that enables local affiliates to register children through the Library’s existing system. According to the Library’s website, “Each year, the esteemed Blue Ribbon Book Selection Committee, a specially selected panel of early childhood literacy experts, is responsible for reviewing hundreds of potential titles for inclusion in Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library.” This program essentially functions as follows:

- A non-profit entity or an entity such as a business that partners with a non-profit (a school, library, or any 501(c)3 non-profit) becomes a Dolly Parton affiliate;
- The local affiliates raise matching funds, promote the program, enroll children in Dolly Parton Imagination Library's program (information goes into the national database), and pay \$2.10 per child per month to the national program;
- The Dolly Parton Imagination Library maintains the enrollment database, manages book selection, coordinates monthly book orders and fulfillment, and covers all overhead and administrative expenses for local affiliates;
- Books that have been ordered by enrolled children/families are sent by the Dolly Parton Imagination Library directly to each child's home; and
- The state-level partner provides matching funds and promotes the program statewide.

Existing Dolly Parton programs in California and other similar programs. There are 40 Dolly Parton affiliate programs in California, providing approximately 1.8 million free books to children age birth to five years. These programs are operated by school districts and county offices of education, public libraries, community-based non-profit organizations, county First 5 agencies, United Way, and a mayor's office. This is no statewide coordination, outreach, or financial support for these local programs.

It is likely that there are other book-gifting early literacy programs that function similarly to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. This bill would not affect those programs; other programs could continue to exist as they are or they could become an affiliate of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

Existing law requires the State Librarian to establish the Reading Initiative Program with funds appropriated for that purpose and with funds received from private sources. The State Librarian is to administer the program, and develop a list of recommended books and develop a method of involving K-12 students in the program. This program was never fully funded or implemented.

The state recently allocated \$50 million to establish the Early Literacy Support Block Grant Program to award funds to the 75 schools with the highest percentage of students in grade three scoring at the lowest achievement standard level on the State Summative English Language Arts assessment (funds go to the school districts that maintain these 75 schools).

Early literacy. The benefits of reading to young children and early literacy are well-documented. Studies have also found that, by three years of age, there is a 30 million word gap between children from the wealthiest and poorest families. According to a 2013 Developmental Science article, *SES Differences in Language Processing Skill and Vocabulary are Evident at 18 Months*, the vocabulary gap is evident in toddlers; by 18 months, children in different socio-economic groups display dramatic differences in their vocabularies. By 2 years, the disparity in vocabulary development has grown significantly.

According to a 2022 EdSource article, *California Has the Lowest Literacy Rate of any State, Data Suggests*, data published by the World Population Review indicates that nearly one in four people over the age of 15 lack that skills to decipher the words in this sentence. Further, only

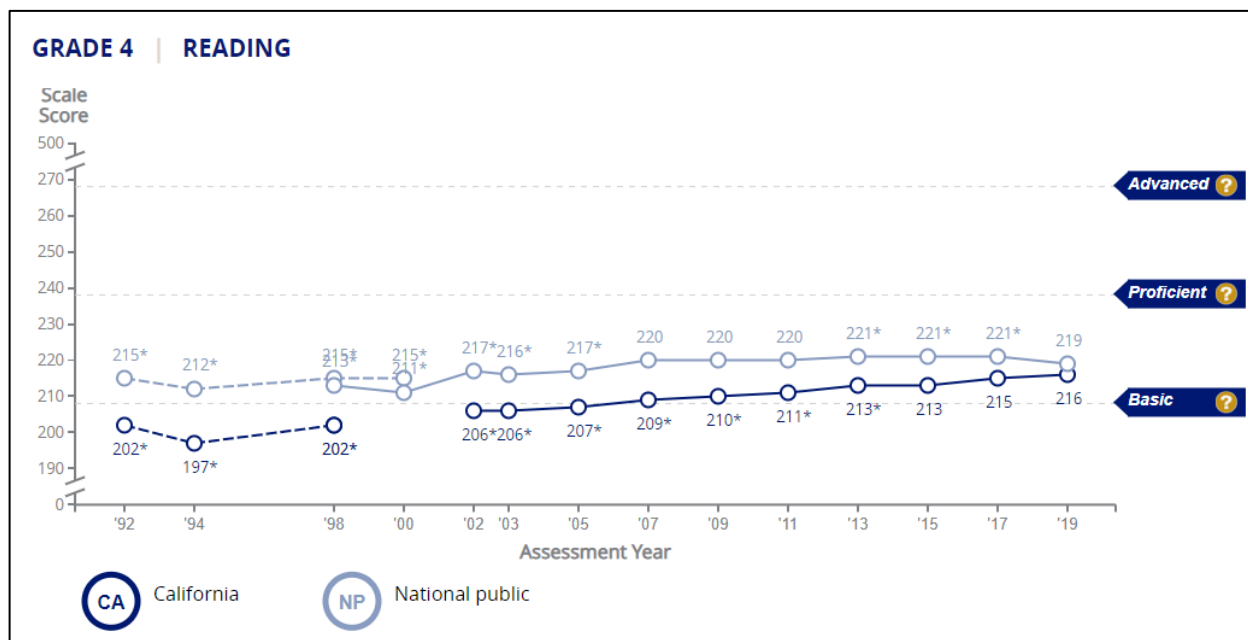
77% of adults are considered mid- to highly literate. The State of California has the lowest literacy rate (76.9%) compared to other states.

A March 2021 Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) report, *Changing Patterns of Growth in Oral Reading Fluency During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, reported that school-age students' development of oral reading fluency (ORF) "largely stopped in spring 2020 following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fall 2020, students' gains in reading were stronger and similar to prepandemic rates. However, fall gains were insufficient to recoup spring losses; overall, students' ORF in second and third grade is approximately 30% behind expectations. We also observe inequitable impact: students at lower achieving schools are falling farther behind and 10% of students were not assessed this fall. While growth in ORF was stronger in the fall than in the spring, measures to address accumulated learning losses and to support students falling behind are needed."

Students' reading skills have improved over time, but still below proficient and achievement gaps persist. Early reading skills are critical to future academic success. One frequently cited study of older data suggests that a student who can't read on grade level by 3rd grade is four times less likely to graduate by age 19 than a child who does read proficiently by that time with effects compounded significantly by poverty. (Hernández, 2011).

Over the last 20 years, California students' scores on the 4th grade reading portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have consistently improved, and the gap between the state and the national average has nearly closed. In 2019, California 4th graders scored 216 compared to 219 nationally, and 8th graders scored 259 compared to 262 nationally, both on a 500 point scale. Since 1998, the percentage of California 4th graders scoring proficient in reading has increased from 20% to 32%. However, both the national average and California's performance remain below the NAEP "proficient" threshold.

NAEP scores also identify significant achievement gaps which have largely persisted over the same time period. In 2019, students who were eligible for free or reduced price meals had an average score that was 31 points lower than that for students who were not eligible. This performance gap has only slightly reduced since 1998 (36 points). 8th grade scores show similar patterns, though with less improvement over time.



Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

State data from the Smarter Balanced summative assessment in ELA show that in 2018, nearly 50% of California students met or exceeded standards in ELA. This represented an increase of nearly 6% since 2015. Achievement gaps remain for students with disabilities, students who come from low income families, and students who are English learners. Gains also vary significantly by grade level, with third grade (the first year in which students take the assessment), showing significant gains, rising over 10% between 2015 and 2018.

COVID-19 related school disruptions effect on literacy. Statewide summative assessments of ELA and mathematics were suspended in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, so it is not possible to gauge the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic-related school closures. However, research released in 2021 strongly suggests that these disruptions have had a deleterious effect on ELA achievement.

California ELA and mathematics assessment data representing a large number of students and disaggregated by grade and subgroup, released in 2021 by Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), shows significant learning loss, with the largest effect among low income and EL students.

These data come from the CORE Data Collaborative, and represent the performance of over 50,000 students enrolled in 18 school districts, on the MAP and STAR assessments in ELA and mathematics administered in grades 4-10. Researchers compared growth from 2019 to 2020, compared to typical growth, based on the prior three school years. The analysis found that:

- There has been significant learning loss in both ELA and math, with students in earlier grades most impacted; and
- The equity impact is severe – certain student groups, especially low-income students and English Learners, are falling behind more compared to others.

Additionally, a 2021 PACE analysis of oral reading fluency assessment data in over 100 U.S. school districts in 22 states found that students' progress largely stopped in spring 2020 following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fall 2020, students' gains in reading were stronger and similar to pre-pandemic rates, but those gains were insufficient to recoup spring losses. PACE's analysis found that, overall, students' oral reading fluency in second and third grade was approximately 30% behind expectations.

State recently adopted the California Comprehensive State Literacy Plan. In 2019, the CDE was awarded \$37.5 million through the federal Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant program. \$36 million of the CLSD funds were to be allocated as subgrants to 11 COEs representing administrative regions of the state and the balance of the funds supported CDE activities.

The goals of this initiative were to expand existing statewide infrastructure, guidance, and expertise to bring coherence to the system of literacy supports to improve student outcomes over a period of five years. Project objectives included:

- Aligning local and state literacy initiatives through a coordinated effort to build state and local capacity over the life of the project;
- Developing and implementing an evidence-based comprehensive State Literacy Plan that aligns and integrates state literacy initiatives, content standards, and state guidance documents to support teachers of students, birth through grade twelve; and
- Building local capacity to establish, align, and implement local literacy initiatives that emphasize family and community involvement to address the needs of California's most vulnerable children.

After months of development and revisions based on stakeholder feedback, the SBE adopted the final California Comprehensive State Literacy Plan on March 17, 2021. The purpose of the State Literacy Plan is to align and integrate state literacy initiatives, content standards, and state guidance documents to support teachers in providing literacy instruction to students. The plan is intended to support continuous improvement of state and local literacy programs by:

- Connecting essential literacy guidance from state guidance documents to support comprehensive and integrated implementation of high-quality literacy programs at state and local levels;
- Focusing on the age/grade band goals for literacy achievement established by the California Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy and the ELA/English Language Development (ELD) Framework;
- Reporting current disaggregated literacy achievement data and literacy needs assessment results to all stakeholders to evaluate the outcomes the current system is producing; and
- Using the continuous improvement process to identify statewide literacy priorities, solidify state-level activities for the CLSD grant, and serve as a model for local literacy plans.

As part of the development of this plan, the state convened a State Literacy Team, a diverse group of stakeholders with experience in literacy education. The State Literacy Team conducted a Statewide Literacy Needs Assessment and developed the following Statewide Literacy Priorities, by grade span:

Birth to Age Five Literacy Priorities:

- Support early childhood education (ECE) programs in creating literacy-rich environments and experiences, and support the quality of ECE programs and their capacity to support early language and literacy skills; and
- Increase parenting support by increasing parental knowledge, skills, and confidence through parenting curriculum and literacy activities with special attention to access and equity for all.

Transitional Kindergarten to Grade Five Statewide Literacy Priorities:

- Build teacher capacity for Tier 1 foundational skills and reading comprehension, including best first reading and writing instruction;
- Build school capacity for effective literacy and comprehensive English language development for English learners, including opportunities to develop biliteracy and primary language instruction whenever possible;
- Build school capacity to support students struggling with reading, including, but not limited to, students with disabilities and students with dyslexia; and
- Increase sustainable high-quality professional learning systems, including literacy coaching models.

Arguments in support. The Dollywood Foundation writes, “Brain science tell us that baby’s brain rapidly grows before entering school with 90% developed by age 4. If we wait till children enter kindergarten for exposure to books and reading – it is too late. The Reading Network in children’s brains does not naturally exist; it is built by reading. Reading at home requires books - this is where we can help!

Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library inspires family reading, is community -based to drive ownership, and is designed to improve the lives of children at scale.

For over 27 years, The Dollywood Foundation annually contributes millions of dollars to make the Imagination Library available, covering expenses such as administrative, operational, database management, marketing, training, technical assistance and more. Our shared cost model keeps local program costs down to only reduced book, mailing and local administrative expenses.

Simply getting books into the home changes the trajectory of kids, families, and communities. Big impact with low cost, low effort, and low risk. Simple and effective way to make communities better places to live!”

Related legislation. AB 2465 (Mia Bonta) of this Session would require the Superintendent of Public Instruction, upon appropriation of the Legislature, to administer the Family and Community Literacy: Supporting Literacy and Biliteracy in Schools, Families, and Communities Grant Program and the California Family Literacy Innovation Project to LEAs to support early literacy.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

40 Affiliates of Dolly Parton's Imagination
ABC Project, Director of A Local Affiliate of The Dolly Parton Imagination Library
Basic Assistance to Students in The Community
California Library Association
County of Kern
Family Resource and Referral Center of San Joaquin
First 5 Kern
First 5 Merced County
First 5 Plumas
Giving Opportunities to Kids
Northern Santa Barbara County United Way
San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development
San Joaquin County Office of Education
The Berkeley Baby Book Project
The Dollywood Foundation (sponsor)
United Way of San Luis Obispo County
Eight individuals

Opposition

None on file

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