



Senator Angelique V. Ashby, 8th Senate District

SB 321 – Youth Literacy Act

Increases access to libraries for third-grade students.

SUMMARY

SB 321 requires the State Librarian to facilitate partnerships between local public libraries and elementary schools to issue Student Success Cards to third grade students. It also requires the State Library to report outcome data to the legislature.

This bill would help ensure that all children, regardless of socioeconomic status, can succeed in school and life through education by creating public library partnerships with schools.

BACKGROUND

The Leaders Library Card Challenge, introduced in 2013 through the ConnectED initiative by President Obama, was created to form collaboration among school administrators and library directors. The partnerships enhanced educational outcomes for students, started to close achievement gaps, and laid the groundwork for an integrated approach to education and reading.¹

More than 100 library systems participated in the initiative, giving 3 million kids new library cards. Participating library systems reported major successes - 90% built stronger relationships with school leaders, 66% saw an increase in student use of library resources, 63% entered into a formal agreement or MOU with one or more school districts to ensure continued collaboration, 71% launched new or expanded work with schools beyond library cards, and 40% built new relationships with elected or appointed officials.

During Senator Ashby's tenure as a Sacramento City Councilwoman, she established a partnership between the lowest performing school in her council district and the Sacramento Public Library. Librarians presented students with information about their local library, and students received library cards through the program. That same year, summer reading rates skyrocketed for participating students.

The pilot program was so successful that the Sacramento Library, in partnership with the County Office of Education, expanded it to five additional schools across the region.

Sacramento is not the only city to adopt library-school partnerships, jurisdictions throughout the state also understand the importance of these partnerships. The Los Angeles Unified School District has a memorandum of agreement with the City of Los Angeles' Board of Library Commissioners to provide every pupil with a student success card. The Oakland Public Library partners with Oakland Unified School District, the Napa County Library partners with Napa Valley Unified School District, and the San Francisco Public Library partners with San Francisco Unified School District.²

These partnerships help ensure that all children, regardless of socioeconomic status, can succeed in school and life by encouraging reading. SB 321 – reading is fun!

THE PROBLEM

California ranks lowest in the nation for third-grade reading levels.³ Half of our third-graders, including two-thirds of Black students, and 61% of Latino students, currently do not read at grade level.⁴ Students unable to meet third-grade reading levels are four times less likely to graduate from high school, and low-income students are six times less likely to graduate high school.⁵ Approximately 85% of youth in the juvenile court system are functionally low literate. High school dropouts are 3.5 times more likely to be arrested in their lifetime.⁶ According to The Department of Justice, over 70% of people incarcerated in America's prisons cannot read above a fourth-grade level.

Third-grade is a crucial pivot point in a child's education – it is the time when students shift from learning to read and begin reading to learn.

¹ [The Leaders Library Card Challenge \(urbanlibraries.org\)](http://urbanlibraries.org)

² [Examples of Successful School/Library Partnerships – Pacific Library Partnership \(plpinfo.org\)](http://plpinfo.org)

³ <https://edsources.org/updates/california-has-the-lowest-literacy-rate-of-any-state-data-suggests>

⁴ <https://www.aecf.org/resources/double-jeopardy>

⁵ [CPE learning to read reading to learn white paper 2015.pdf](https://www.aecf.org/resources/double-jeopardy)

⁶ <https://dropoutprevention.org/resources/statistics/quick-facts/economic-impacts-of-dropouts/>

Interventions for struggling readers after third-grade are seldom as effective as those in the early years.

THE SOLUTION

Our students must have the resources they need to succeed. SB 321 will help third-grade students continue learning outside of school hours by providing them with access to their local libraries.

Ensuring that students have the resources they need to check out books is essential to enhancing educational outcomes for students. SB 321 ensures that libraries work together to encourage reading amongst California's third-graders, and builds on local, statewide, and federal goals set to increase literacy rates across the country.

SUPPORT

- California Library Association
- California School Library Association
- Children's Law Center of California
- Sacramento County Board of Supervisors
- California Catholic Conference
- League of California Cities
- City of Buena Park
- City of Norwalk
- City of Thousand Oaks
- Armstead Academic Project
- Association of California School Administrators

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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