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## **First 5 San Bernardino Addresses California's Early Literacy Decline Through its 'Gift a Kid a Book' Campaign**

*10,000 Free Books, Community Fairs and Other Literacy Resources Available*

**SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (November 7, 2023)** – First 5 San Bernardino (F5SB) is working to address [early reading literacy loss](#) by encouraging families to “Gift a Kid a Book” at every opportunity. Research studies show that 90 percent of a child’s brain develops by age 5, and encouraging young children to read supports healthy brain development.

The global pandemic amplified an existing decline in California and San Bernardino County student literacy rates. To help turn this trend around, the [First 5 San Bernardino Gift a Kid a Book campaign](#) is putting books directly into the hands of 10,000 young children and encouraging San Bernardino County residents to gift books in lieu of toys and sweets.

“Gift a Kid a Book is a reminder that there are many milestones in a young child’s life that can be celebrated with the gift of a book,” said First 5 San Bernardino Executive Director Karen Scott. “From learning their ABCs to a visit to the doctor or their first day of school, these are great occasions that can be celebrated with a book. By emphasizing reading at a young age, children have a better chance to appreciate lifelong learning.”

First 5 San Bernardino is gifting a free book to every Transitional Kindergarten (TK) and Kindergarten student in the San Bernardino City Unified School District and will continue to gift books to other school districts in the county in the future.

Additionally, Gift a Kid a Book Community Fairs have been scheduled this fall in partnership with the San Bernardino County Museum. The Gift a Kid a Book Community Fair at the [Victor Valley Museum](#) was held Saturday, October 14, and the Gift a Kid a Book Community Fair at the [San Bernardino County Museum in Redlands](#), Calif. is Saturday, November 18, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The campaign also uses advertisements on billboards, radio, websites and social media to remind families of the many times it’s appropriate to gift a book.

"Books also make excellent birthday and holiday gifts. They can be gifted at any time, for any occasion," added Scott. "Wrap the book like you would a present! You can make it fun with bows and gift bags so kids see it as an important gift."

Visit [first5sanbernardino.org/reading](http://first5sanbernardino.org/reading) for lists of book recommendations by age, a free downloadable bookmark and more important reading resources.

### **About First 5 San Bernardino**

First 5 San Bernardino's distinct purpose is to improve the lives of young children and their families by giving them the best possible start in life. For 24 years, First 5 San Bernardino has been working dynamically through strategic partnerships to promote, support and enhance the health and early development of children prenatal through age 5, their families and communities. Funded through the 1998 voter-approved initiative, California Children and Families Act (Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues), First 5 San Bernardino has evolved into a system where stakeholders and services are integrated, coordinated and sustainable, and one that families experience as accessible, inclusive and equitable. For more information, visit [First5SanBernardino.org](http://First5SanBernardino.org).

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