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Access  
Books  
Annual  
Report



## OUR VALUES:

### Literacy is a fundamental right

We believe that all children, regardless of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, have the right to an educational environment that fosters a love of reading. Study after study has shown that students who read more do better, not just academically, but in life. Every child has the right to discover the joy and benefits of reading for pleasure.

### School libraries matter

In schools with high-quality, well-stocked school libraries, children do better. California provides no dedicated funding for school libraries. This is clear in underserved schools and communities. In many cases, the books are decades old. They hold little interest and relevance to the communities we served. These are communities with little access to books and literacy opportunities outside of school. We believe that every child has the right to have access to a welcoming library space and collection that will help foster their love of reading.

### Diversity & representation matter

When the books in a school library do not reflect the lives and reality of the students at the school, or are full of outdated information and harmful stereotypes, children are not inspired to read. We believe that every child has the right to see themselves in the books they read, as well as to become inspired, and gain empathy by walking in the shoes of others.

**THE MISSION** of Access Books is to provide high-interest reading material to underserved children and youth in Los Angeles by providing a myriad of literacy opportunities and access to high-interest books.



*"Access Books has transformed our sad, outdated library into a magical wonderland. Its energy has completely shifted. What was once a dreary exterior is now a bright spot on our campus. What was once was filled with old, dusty books is now filled with literature that yells, PICK ME! The buzz is palpable. Your generosity is transformational."*  
*(Burton Elementary Vice Principal)*

Access Books has been replenishing, refurbishing and revitalizing approximately 20 libraries in underserved neighborhoods per academic school year. We remove old, tattered, irrelevant books and replace them with enough new books to stock all the shelves. We also donate new library furniture including sofas, rocking chairs and reading rugs. For schools that have an empty room but no books, we fill the shelves with brand new high quality, high interest, culturally relevant books. With the help of volunteers, we also paint literacy themed murals in the libraries. Since 1999, Access Books has donated well over 2 million books to over 350 school and community libraries in the greater Los Angeles area.

# 2022- 2023 SCHOOL YEAR:

This school year, normal operations began to fall back into place for our school partners and volunteers after COVID related school closures. We were able to conduct fully operational volunteer programs. Everyone—school staff, students and volunteers were eager to create meaningful literacy opportunities for the students we serve. For the schools we serve, the effect of COVID still lingers in their community. Inflation is deeply felt and housing remains unstable. At least 90% of the population live at or below poverty. Many students are unhoused and there is a substantial number of foster children. The students we serve have little, if any access to books in the home. For most, because of transportation and/or childcare issues, the public library is not accessible. The only source of pleasure reading books is the school library.

For communities we serve, the school library is more important than ever. The library is not only a bridge for academics, it is a nourishing part of their life. As one student at Laurel Avenue Elementary school in Compton said, “I just feel so good when I come into the library. I feel calm. Honestly, I feel like the library loves me.”



## THIS YEAR:

- Close to 9,000 students attended a school that received a refurbished or newly built school library.
- 10,000 foster children benefited from community center libraries or book giveaways.
- 1,800 volunteers helped refurbish or create a school library or bundle books for students to take home.
- 1,950 students met an author and received a signed book.
- 145,000 books were bundled and given away.
- 70,000 books (20% Spanish) were provided to schools for the school and classroom libraries.
- 6,000 books were provided to local health care facilities.
- More than 222,000 books were provided for school, classroom, community, and home libraries.

# LIBRARY REFURBISHMENTS:

Every library project begins with one our Access Books librarians, both of whom hold a Masters in Library Science, curating collections.

“The intent for every collection is for students to want to visit the library. I purchase books that I know are popular and in demand. I also spend a lot of time choosing books that reflect the community. Students need to see themselves in the books on the shelf. Lastly, I choose books that will support the curriculum,” Stefani Tovar reports. Megan Gaynor, our lead librarian added, “we are very deliberate in our choices. We know this is the only source of reading material for most students. We want to cover all their needs and what interests them.”

During the 2022- 23 school year, we refurbished 13 school libraries in the Valley, Compton, East Los Angeles and South Los Angeles. McNair Elementary, and Anderson Elementary in the Compton Unified School District were refurbished. In the Los Angeles Unified School District, we refurbished Burton Elementary, Vista De Valle Elementary, Middleton Elementary, Beachy Elementary, Lillian Street Elementary, 74th Street Elementary, Stanford Elementary, Lorena Street Elementary and 118th Street Elementary. In total, 7,800 students benefited this year from the refurbished library (many more students will in the future.) As with every library project, we purchase books at a discount. For additional savings (about 50% per title), volunteers catalog the books. Because of volunteer labor, we can provide significantly more books.



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*“I am not really sure Access Books and its volunteers understand the impact they make. When our students walked into a new, fresh library, they seemed overwhelmed. They could not believe the new space was created so quickly and it was so nice. They were equally surprised when they checked out all the new books. For many, it is books they have wanted to read for so long. We had old, tattered books. To break open a new book and be the first to read it is very special. I can tell how much time is put into ordering the collection. It was like you knew our kids and our community. The books they took home to keep were just what they wanted. The icing on the cake was when you hosted an author to meet the kids. In the 20 years I have been here, no author had ever come to the school. He could have been boring and it would have meant something but he was so engaging and thoughtful. The entire program was incredible.” (Los Angeles Unified School community liaison).*

# LIBRARY BUILDS:

From the ground up, we created 2 libraries in the Compton Unified School District.

## Rosecrans Elementary School (K-8)

has a dedicated and engaged staff serving inquisitive students. With the goal of creating life-long learners who “engage with the past and the present,” the staff is determined to assist the students in loving books and reading. As the principal, Tamara Carter stated, “we want them to love reading and read not just for school but for pleasure. We want our wonderful students to have all the benefits they can from reading.”

Built in 1923, Rosecrans Elementary’s buildings, including the library, showed their age. The outside door of the library had been tagged with gang symbols, the library sign had been altered and the surrounding walls were pale and drab. Thanks to Ms. Carter, the space got new flooring and shelves. All it needed was books and murals. Local nature artist Jen LaVita [www.jenlavita.com](http://www.jenlavita.com) led volunteers in painting the outside murals and Access Books’ artist, Sydney Kysar [www.sydneykysar.com](http://www.sydneykysar.com) led them inside the library. Most books in the collection were from 1970’s-1980’s. The books were outdated and didn’t reflect the student population. Once the library was weeded, it had 3 books per student.

Our librarian created a new collection that volunteers cataloged and shelved. According to Ms. Carter, on Monday morning, students were eager to see the new space. “The excitement was crazy! The students were so thrilled and excited. They could not believe people spent their Saturday doing something for them. It was amazing.” Perhaps 5th grader Antonio said it best, “I hope I can come every day; it will be my best favorite thing about school.”



## Bunche Middle School

serves close to 500 6th- 8th grade students. 100% of the population receives free or reduced lunch. Close to 75% are students of immigrants. The school serves close to 80 foster children. Poverty is especially challenging for many of the students. COVID has increased their difficulties as well as their anxieties. The new principal, Latrece Polk informed us that the school has, “quite a few homeless children though the parents do not admit it. She estimates close to 75 families are homeless. She added, “many families are living 2 to 3 families in an apartment having lost housing in the past year.” Bunche Middle School reached out to Access Books to create a new library space. As Mario Marcos, a district administrator said, “our students are desperate for good books. They want to read but live in a community with little access to books. For them it is not a lack of interest but a lack of chance.”

Close to 75 volunteers helped create the library space. New books were cataloged and shelved. Murals were painted. Mario, a 7th grader said it best, “we have never really had a library here. It looks amazing and fun. I am so glad it is here and I am not leaving until next year. I get to hang out here.” 8th grader Letizia said, “ya, this is one bad thing about leaving the school. We don’t get this space for too long.”

## AUTHOR VISITS:

One of the most requested aspects of the Access Books program is author visits. "I think it is something that kids remember for years, if not forever," said Dr. Kang Moon of the Compton Unified School District. To meet someone who actually wrote a book is amazing for kids. Kids will tell me about visits for years to come." Thanks to generous donors, 13 authors visited schools this year. At every visit, students received at least one (most often) 2 signed books. In total, 1,950 had the opportunity to meet and engage with an author

## Valentine for Mother Earth Event

Six talented local writers, artists, and expert science educators met with students in their classrooms where they led a total of twelve reading, science, and art workshops inspired by the natural world. From learning about the presence of bats in our local neighborhoods to the role that bugs play in ecosystems, to reading a traditional Tongva creation story from Southern California - the event had more than four-hundred students learning about the beauty and mystery of Mother Earth. After each learning session, every student was surprised with a book that was fit for their grade level and focused on a nature theme, to take home, read, and keep learning from!



There were many special moments during this very busy visit but two that stand out are when Mrs. Alvitre and Ms. Carly Lake took over the auditorium and led kids in a colorful art activity where they created their very own, milky way and used colorful chalk on black paper and added stars and galaxies and everything else they imagined the milky way could look like. The kids were absolutely blown away by this activity and most didn't want to go back to class...and every one of them was eager to show off their art. A second very special moment was the interaction between biologist, Miguel Ordenana and the kids he worked with. He spent each session teaching kids about his research on local Los Angeles bat populations and the kids were totally into it. They had so many questions and every class he met with - wanted him to stay longer so they could keep learning about bats!



## BOOK GIVEAWAYS:

Within a few weeks of COVID school closures, Access Books rallied generous donors and eager volunteers to create bundles of 5-8 high interest books for students we serve. This was a literacy lifeline for many students and families we serve. These giveaways were extremely popular with students, families, and volunteers so we decided to make this a permanent program. We realize that many students we serve do not have books in the home and have little access to books in the community. We provided 148,000 books to students for winter break, spring break and the upcoming summer. As Kaiya Bailey at 107th Street Elementary reported, “kids were so excited go get books and then when they saw what amazing books they were- all books they wanted- there was visible joy. I walked around campus and there were smiles everywhere.” Added Rachel Collins, the principal at Laurel Avenue in Compton, “this is all most of the students will have to read at home. It is important to own books but it is also really important that someone they don't know cares enough to give books. They are always shocked!”

### YALLWEST 2023

Our new annual event is an all-day authors' event for young readers. Thanks to our generous donors, hundreds of students from around Los Angeles County attended the YALLWEST conference [www.yallwest.com](http://www.yallwest.com) Santa Monica High School on April 29. The sponsorship included bus transportation, 5 books written by authors at the event, a sturdy tote bag, and lunch.

**This was our first year sponsoring students. It turned out to be more special than we anticipated. A few highlights:**

A 7th grade student from McNair in Compton declared on the bus home, “I did not know about any of these authors but after seeing them, I want to read every book.”

Another student stated when getting off the bus, “Ms. Pugh, I really think we should go again next year. Please ask them if we can. It made me feel so cool to be around all those people.”

At lunch, a 6th grader reported, “to tell you the truth, I really did not want to come because it's about books and I thought it would be so boring but it has actually been fun and I want to eat fast so that we can see more. The day just flew by.”

A librarian reported, “I think the most amazing part of the day was that my students saw so many people who look like them. They saw people at the event and they saw authors who look like them. They really felt like they belonged there.



*A few schools took advantage of the location to take students to the beach at the end of the day. Said one East Los Angeles librarian, “I was pretty discouraged to find out that more than half of my students have NEVER seen the beach. Going at the end was a perfect finish to the day. All the kids had such a great time at the event and the beach was like dessert.”*

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**“It was amazing to be around kids with the same interests! I can't believe I am here. It is one of the best things I have done!”  
(East Los Angeles 7th grader)**

# BOOK CLUBS

Integral to Access Books is providing opportunities to students we serve that are equal to middle school and affluent students. A growing component of our program is book club. With a simple application, schools we serve can request sets of books for each semester. This school year we provided 8 schools with over 500 books they selected. Teachers or library aides choose the books. We do not require reports or updates. The goal is for students to enjoy reading and all the benefits that reading for pleasure brings. All the schools we served reported that the initial book club attendance was modest- around 20 but in all cases, word "got out" (to quote a 3rd grader) and attendance doubled.

Ms. Garcia, the library aide at Burton Elementary wrote, "the students really enjoyed reading and just talking about a book. They gathered on and around the couch, you gave to the library and had so much fun! It is so important for our students to understand that reading is fun and interesting and it is not just something for school. They immediately asked me if they could do another book club and want to sign up for next year."



## LA CARE PARTNERSHIP:

This year, we have partnered with LA Care to provide 7 Mini-Libraries Featuring Hardcover, Popular and Spanish-Language Books. Each mini-library has popular and culturally-relevant books for children ages 3-16. To kick off the libraries we held 3 Guest Author Child & Family Reading Experiences. In addition to the author experience, 100 children received a book bundle with 8 popular titles.

**JENNIFER TORRES** held two Spanish language read alouds and a meet and greet around her most recent book, "Lola Out Loud: Inspired By the Childhood of Activist Dolores Huerta."

**DOYIN RICHARDS** held a read aloud and meet and greet. He is a great public speaker and is especially great with kids. Mr. Richards read one of his most recent books and each family received copies of his two most recent books, "You Matter to Me" and "Watch Me."

## VIP Foster Children Partnership:

[www.violenceinterventionprogram.org](http://www.violenceinterventionprogram.org) provides much needed care to Los Angeles County foster children. The services are wide ranging and impactful. Years ago, Access Books created a library space for children and families waiting for medical services. This year, more than 10,000 children benefited from this partnership. We replenish books in the library space and also create book bundles for foster children and families to keep.

## Book Talk:

Claudia Magana, on-site book cataloguer and the librarian at Farmdale Elementary, one of our partner schools in East Los Angeles, implemented our newest program. On a Saturday, the library was set up like a restaurant and students were invited to browse, discuss and finally choose a book from each table for summer reading. Each student took home 4-5 books. Students loved the project. "I picked a book I would not have even looked at and now I really want to read it," said a 3rd grader. A 5th grader commented, "I don't like fantasies but I chose one because I might end up liking it. I never thought about this type of book before." Access Books is committed to providing a variety of books to students. For every child, there is one book that will "hook" them to be readers. We strive to provide that book.



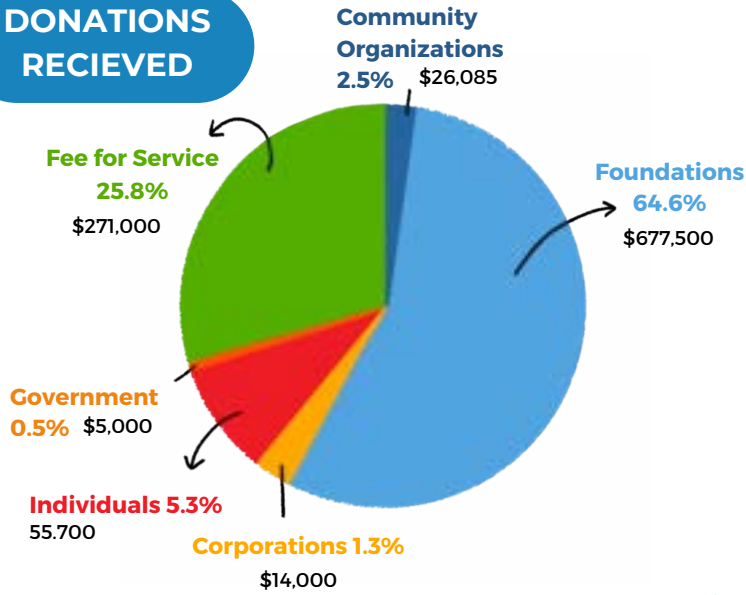
## Compton Unified Library Project:

This year, we began a partnership with the Compton Unified School District to update and organize collections at each school site. Working directly with the district and school site staff, our staff members are training volunteers to organize the collection. The process is critical:

- **To maintain a current, useful, dynamic collection**
- **To adapt to changing needs and interests of students and teachers**
- **To accommodate changes in the school's curriculum**
- **To make the best use of floor and shelf space**
- **To improve the physical appearance of the collection**
- **To assess the collection's strengths and weaknesses**
- **To increase circulation**

As will all our projects, this effort relies on volunteers- dozens at each school site. While this is a daunting task, it is critical to provide every student we serve with not only a welcoming library but an organized, up to date and engaging collections.

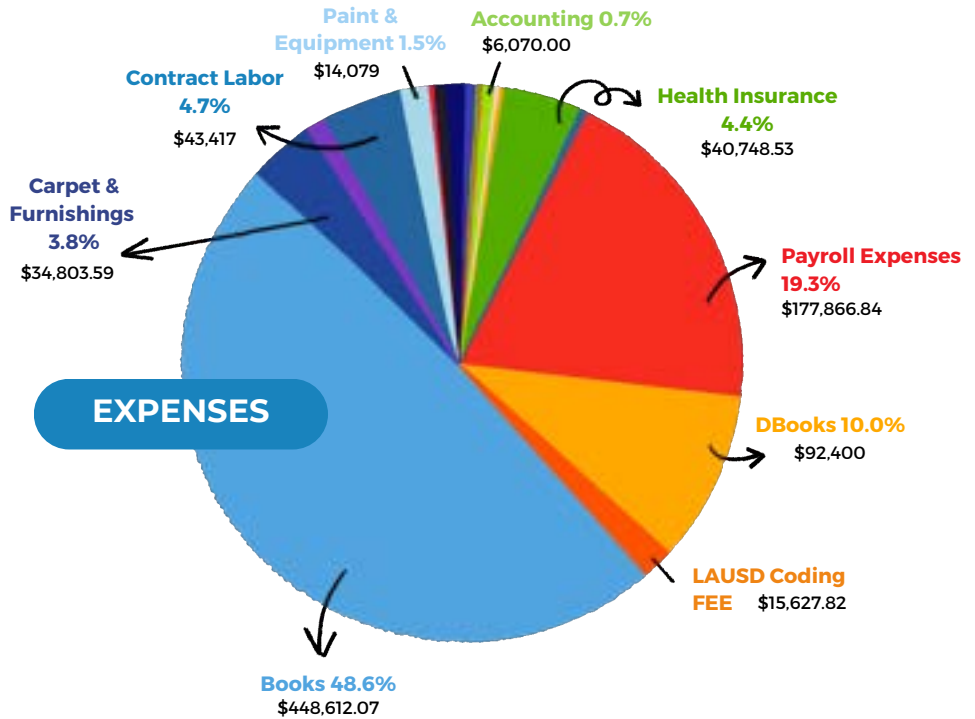
## DONATIONS RECEIVED



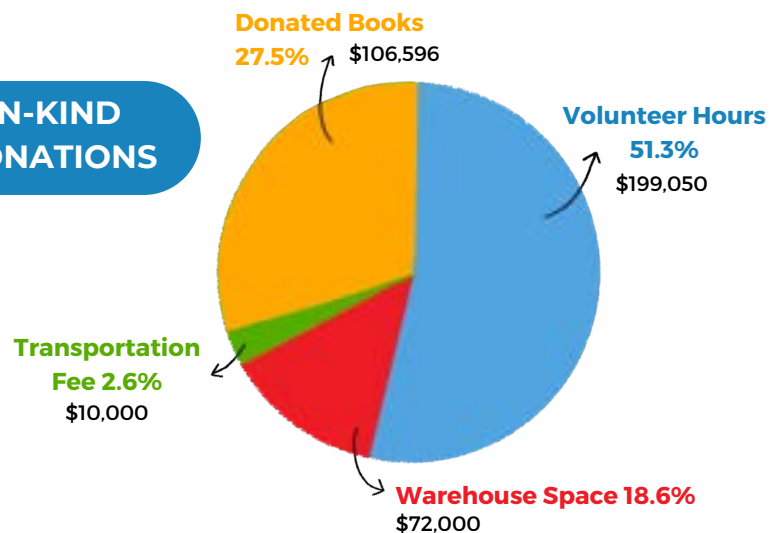
## HOURS WORKED



| Expenses                  | \$           |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Gifts                     | \$470.00     |
| Grant Writing             | \$199.00     |
| Parking & Tolls           | \$1.75       |
| Bank Service Charge       | \$15.00      |
| Depreciation Expense      | \$316.00     |
| Dues and Subscriptions    | \$1,247.65   |
| Work Comp Insurance       | \$5,430.10   |
| Annual Fees               | \$597.00     |
| Fund Raising              | \$1,100.00   |
| Postage and Delivery      | \$1,376.30   |
| Printing and Reproduction | \$1,469.85   |
| Accounting                | \$6,070.00   |
| Cell Phone                | \$2,125.70   |
| Website Fee               | \$312.00     |
| Office Supplies           | \$2,636.81   |
| Marketing & PR            | \$902.03     |
| Health Insurance          | \$40,748.53  |
| Dental Insurance          | \$3,619.76   |
| Payroll Expenses - Other  | \$177,866.84 |
| DBooks                    | \$92,400.00  |
| LAUSD Coding Fee          | \$15,627.82  |
| Books                     | \$448,612.07 |
| Carpet & Furnishings      | \$34,803.59  |
| Catalog Supplies          | \$10,139.27  |
| Contract Labor            | \$43,417.00  |
| Paint & Equipment         | \$14,079.00  |
| Donated Paint & Supplies  | \$400.00     |
| Photography               | \$71.99      |
| Transportation            | \$996.00     |
| Storage Rental/Books      | \$13,200.00  |
| Meals                     | \$595.27     |
| Author Workshops          | \$1,552.96   |



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**Librarian – Stefani Tovar**

**Art Director – Sydney Kyser**

**Program Coordinator – Lorri Kampfner**

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**Development Director – Spike Dolomite Ward**

## ACCESS BOOKS DONORS

2022/23 school year

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