

FOG
READERS
ANNUAL REPORT
Fiscal Year 2025

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SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY
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Fiscal Year 2025

FOG Readers
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San Francisco Public Library





WHERE IS FOG READERS? It covers the City.

The FOG Readers program is based at The Bridge at Main, the Library's print and digital literacy center, which recently marked its 10th year. In that time, The Bridge has grown into a hub for transformative literacy programs—from Tech Week and ESL tutoring to 3D printing workshops—and has hosted FOG Readers since 2016.

Created by Learning Differences Librarian Laura Lay, FOG Readers offers free, evidence-based reading intervention in a city where private tutoring can cost up to \$150 an hour. Its name—Free Orton-Gillingham—reflects its commitment to accessible, science-based instruction for students with dyslexia and other language-based learning challenges for free.

FOG Readers operates across all 28 San Francisco Public Library locations. Volunteer tutors are trained to work systemwide, and librarians help families connect with the program. This collaboration—FOG Readers staff, librarians, tutors, families and students—demonstrates the power of a community working together. Like the San Francisco fog, the program extends far beyond The Bridge, reaching and connecting all 28 library locations throughout the city.

Looking ahead, the program aims to grow through new partnerships and continued community involvement so that every child in San Francisco can become a confident reader.



NOT READING AT GRADE LEVEL

47%
OF SAN FRANCISCO STUDENTS

San Francisco Unified School District (2025), Smarter Balanced Assessment Test Results.



51%
OF CALIFORNIA STUDENTS

California Department of Education (2025), Smarter Balanced Assessment Test Results.



A MESSAGE FROM THE CITY LIBRARIAN

Since 2016, the FOG Readers program has been making a transformational impact in the lives of San Francisco youth who struggle with reading. Garnering local and national attention, the FOG Readers program has led the way in providing accessible, free literacy support for students in grades 1–4, critical years for students to develop reading skills. In recognition of the impact that FOG Readers had made in literacy development, SFPL previously received the Urban Libraries Council's Top Innovator Award in 2018.

Over the years, the FOG Readers program has evolved—from pre-pandemic waitlists of more than 100 students to virtual sessions during the pandemic to maintain student support, to current offerings of both virtual and in-person options to meet family needs. It has expanded to include family and tutor resources and staff training. In the past fiscal year, 344 students were served, representing 90 schools in San Francisco, which includes 57 SFUSD elementary schools.

In 2024, the FOG Readers program was identified during the Strategic Planning process as a key initiative in positioning the Library as a Literacy Champion. Under Vision 2030, FOG Readers continues to make a meaningful impact—supporting students who need extra help, connecting families to resources beyond the program and empowering dedicated tutors who show up every day virtually or at library locations where sessions are held.

In 2025, the FOG Readers, in collaboration with the Library's Collection Development unit, launched Decodable Readers Collections at all 28 San Francisco libraries. This special collection is designed to support children in developing foundational reading skills and follow a prescribed scope and sequence developed by the FOG Readers team. Information about the collection has been shared with SFUSD schools and families as a valuable resource and supports the district's goal of ensuring that 70% of third graders reach grade-level reading proficiency by 2027.

I hope this report demonstrates the Library's dedication to ensuring that every student not only experiences the joy of reading but also achieves academic success by reading at grade level and, ultimately, has the key to unlocking a future full of opportunity.

Michael Lambert
City Librarian

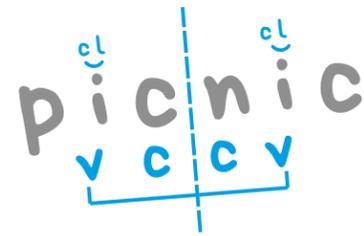


FOG READERS

FOG Readers serves San Francisco students in grades 1 through 4 who are behind in reading. Each student is paired with a trained volunteer for weekly, one on one tutoring sessions, offered in person at library branches or virtually, allowing students to learn at their own pace.

The program follows a structured literacy curriculum focused on phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding and fluency. Grounded in the Science of Reading and guided by Orton Gillingham principles, the curriculum is systematic and sequential, organized into five levels. Students begin at Level 1, mastering foundational skills such as phonograms, and progress through each level to more advanced concepts, ensuring there are no gaps in their reading foundation.

FOG Readers helps students build accuracy, fluency and confidence in reading, preparing them for the shift in higher grades from learning to read to reading to learn.



This example illustrates how the word "picnic" is decoded by breaking it into syllables and smaller parts. This is a skill that FOG Readers students learn and apply to help them decode words independently.

STRUCTURED LITERACY & SCIENCE OF READING

Reading is a learned skill that takes time and practice.

Reading involves two essential components: decoding and comprehension. Decoding involves recognizing letters and letter combinations and connecting them to their corresponding sounds that can be heard—a process known as sound-letter correspondence. When learners become comfortable with decoding, eventually increasing speed and accuracy, the brain can focus on comprehension, stringing together the words to create meaning and understanding. In the early stages of reading, the goal is to learn how to read so that later the learner can focus on reading to learn.

Reading is one of the most studied aspects of human development. Unlike speaking or walking, which we acquire naturally, reading is not an innate skill. Science of Reading refers to how humans learn how to read from a multidisciplinary lens that includes reading development from the perspectives of neuroscience, psychology, linguistics and education.

At FOG Readers, we embrace a structured literacy approach to tutoring. Structured literacy emphasizes systematic and explicit instruction in the five pillars of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.



LUCA

IN-PERSON TUTOR | WORKING ADULT

I stumbled across the FOG Readers program when I was looking for an ongoing volunteer commitment, and as a lifelong avid reader, it immediately appealed to me. I've found it immensely rewarding to build one-on-one relationships with my students and see them progress towards being more confident readers. In fact, my experience in the program played a large part in inspiring me to make a career shift away from tech and into direct service work, which has been a huge positive change in my life.



MEET OUR TUTOR

"We are truly grateful for all the support he has received through the FOG Readers program. It has been amazing to watch his confidence and reading skills grow over these past months."

- FOG Readers Parent



MEETING DEMAND, MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Program demand

FOG Readers held **18 family orientations**, welcoming **386 families**, of which **311 enrolled** their children. These orientations serve as the first step in connecting families to reading intervention, guiding them through program expectations and the enrollment and matching process.

The program maintains a dynamic, ongoing waitlist that grows as new families enroll and shortens as students are matched with tutors. During the year, **320 students received support**, including those continuing from the previous year, reflecting sustained engagement and steady demand for services.

To meet this demand, FOG Readers offered **six 8-hour tutor trainings** between family orientations, preparing new volunteers and strengthening returning tutors' skills to ensure students receive consistent, high quality instruction.

FAMILY ORIENTATIONS

Orientations that spark success

FOG Readers offers flexible, multilingual orientations—available in English, Spanish and Cantonese—online or at the Main Library. These sessions introduce the Science of Reading, outline what students will learn, and show how families and tutors collaborate to help children achieve reading goals. They build strong partnerships and empower families to support their child's literacy journey.

18
6 English
6 Spanish
6 Cantonese
ORIENTATIONS

386
FAMILIES
ATTENDED

311
NEW
STUDENTS

320

FOG READERS
STUDENTS
SERVED

STUDENTS BY GRADE

1st grade = 13

2nd grade = 65

3rd grade = 89

4th grade = 153^{*1}

STUDENT GROWTH AND PROFILES

AVERAGE ENROLLMENT TIME

6 MONTHS On average, students were enrolled for **200 days**, or roughly six months.

AVERAGE LITERACY GAIN

↑ All Students
HALF
A GRADE

↑ Graduated Students
ONE
FULL GRADE

Growth over 200 days: ⁺²

- **All students:** increased by an average of half a grade level
- **Graduated students:** increased by nearly one full grade level

These results reflect measurable progress within approximately six months of structured literacy support.

WHO WE SERVE

We are committed to ensuring literacy support is accessible to students who are behind grade level, including those with diverse learning needs.

We serve students who:

- Have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or receive special education services
- Have identified or suspected learning differences
- Are English language learners
- Come from families who cannot otherwise afford literacy support

No eligible student is turned away based on learning differences. We meet students where they are and provide the targeted support they need to grow as readers.

1. Includes rising 5th grades with a 6-month duration

2. Gains reflect the average of 200 days served, about six months of the year. The program admits students on a rolling basis. Data reflects students with at least two reports within the fiscal period.

FOG READERS ACROSS THE CITY

Your neighborhood library is home to FOG Readers tutoring—find us at nearly every branch citywide (except those being renovated).

The map displays branches and their tutoring pair counts.

FOG STUDENT NEIGHBORHOODS

Top 10 Neighborhoods our Students Call Home

1. Outer Mission
2. Parkside/Sunset
3. Central Sunset
4. Bayview Hunters Point
5. Portola
6. Inner Mission
7. Lake Merced
8. South of Market
9. Civic Center
10. Russian Hill, Nob Hill and Tenderloin

FOG STUDENT SCHOOLS

94 Schools in San Francisco	60 SFUSD	34 Private/ Independent
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Top 10 Schools with Enrolled FOG Students

1. West Portal Elementary (SFUSD)
2. Dianne Feinstein Elementary (SFUSD)
3. Robert Louis Stevenson Elementary (SFUSD)
4. Commodore Sloat Elementary (SFUSD)
5. Chinese Immersion School at De Avila (SFUSD)
6. Claire Lilienthal (SFUSD)
7. Jefferson Elementary (SFUSD)
8. Leonard R. Flynn Elementary (SFUSD)
9. Jose Ortega Elementary (SFUSD)
10. Lawton Alternative Elementary (SFUSD)



VOLUNTEERS POWER LITERACY

The tutors behind FOG Readers

FOG Readers relies on a dedicated team of volunteers. Over the fiscal year, **344 tutors** contributed to the program, including **197 new volunteers**, with an average of **170 tutors active at any given time**.

Collectively, tutors dedicated **7,514 hours** to supporting student literacy, including direct instruction, lesson preparation and travel to tutoring sessions. On average, each tutor contributed approximately **22 hours** over the year, reflecting meaningful engagement across the program. These totals reflect reported hours and likely underestimate the full extent of volunteer time contributed.

6

8-HOUR TUTOR TRAININGS

197

NEW RECRUITED TUTORS

344

TOTAL TUTORS
Includes rematched tutors

7,514
VOLUNTEER HOURS
DEDICATED TO SUPPORTING
FOG READERS

WHO ARE OUR TUTORS?

WORKING ADULTS 77

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT 61

COLLEGE/GRADUATE STUDENT 6

RETIRED 24

UNEMPLOYED 14

TUTOR NEIGHBORHOODS

Top 10 Neighborhoods
Our Tutors Call Home

1. Russian Hill, Nob Hill, Tenderloin
2. Buena Vista Park
3. Outer Mission
4. Castro, Noe Valley
5. Parkside, Sunset
6. Central Sunset
7. West Portal, Balboa Terrace, Miraloma Park, Sunnyside
8. Inner Richmond
9. Glen Park, Twin Peaks West
10. Daly City, San Mateo County



MEET OUR TUTOR

CIARA
IN-PERSON TUTOR
Working Adult

The library has always been an important place for me - through growing up, during my years of study and more recently as a welcoming community space after moving to San Francisco.

Books have been my constant companions over the years, and it all began with The Chronicles of Narnia, the first series I truly fell in love with and that sparked my lifelong passion for reading. When I came across the FOG Readers Program, I was excited by the opportunity to share that love with the next generation.

Volunteering felt like a meaningful way to help ensure that children in a city facing significant social and economic challenges still have access to the library as a safe and nurturing space. My experience has been incredible; I've been tutoring my student, Alex, for nearly two years, and it's been so rewarding to watch his confidence and reading skills grow week by week. While I enjoy our classes immensely, I can confidently say he has taught me more than I could ever teach him—about hard work, imagination and the joy of learning.

The FOG Readers Program, and the wonderful library team behind it, make volunteering a truly enriching experience, and one I'm proud to continue!



GROWTH, INNOVATION & IMPACT

The FOG Readers team is driven by one mission: making every child's reading journey smooth, supportive and successful. While managing the daily operations that keep the program running, the team continues to innovate, refine and expand—resulting in exceptional feedback from tutors and families alike.

Program Operations that Power Success

Behind the scenes, the FOG Readers team ensures a high-quality experience through:

- Thoughtful matching of tutors and students
- Responsive email communication
- On-demand support for tutors and families
- Monthly report review and data tracking
- Comprehensive tutor training
- Family orientations
- Ongoing tutor and student recruitment
- Monthly tutor meet-ups to foster connection and growth
- Program outreach for student and tutor recruitment
- Consultations with other library organizations and agencies

FY 2025 Highlights & Accomplishments

Refresh of Learning Resources

- Completed a full supply refresh at every branch—the first since 2016—ensuring students and tutors have updated materials.

Updated FOG Readers Manual (Version 6.5)

- Delivered a more detailed, streamlined and user-friendly manual with improved organization and clarity.

Expanded Family Access & Inclusion

- Introduced an in-person family orientation option, allowing families to view the presentation while bridging technology gaps.

Streamlined Onboarding Process

- Simplified onboarding for tutors and families, boosting efficiency and engagement.

Stronger Reporting & Curriculum Fidelity

- Achieved over 90% completion rates for monthly report logs.
- Added a new question to the report log to ensure curriculum alignment and instructional consistency.

Family Voice & Feedback

- Launched a 6-month family feedback survey to gather insights on student experience and program impact.

Inaugural FOG Family Day – January 2025

- Hosted the first-ever family literacy celebration featuring literacy-based games, crafts, shared reading—and a fan-favorite guest, **Jeffrey the reading dog**, owned by a FOG Readers tutor.

DECODABLE READERS

In August 2025, FOG Readers expanded literacy access by launching a Decodable Readers Collection at every San Francisco Public Library branch. Designed to support structured literacy, these books provide targeted practice with letter sound patterns and decoding skills, allowing students to read material that aligns with their current abilities and experience success as readers.

This collection reflects FOG Readers' commitment to supporting all students, not only those enrolled in the program. It supports early and developing readers across the city, including English language learners and students with learning differences. By making these resources widely available, literacy practice can continue beyond tutoring sessions and classrooms.

Families and educators can access the collection at San Francisco Public Library branches citywide and online at sfpl.org/decodables.



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Volunteer Coordinator
The Bridge at Main

FOG Readers Tutors

Students, Families and Teachers

The Bridge at Main Staff

Past and Present

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MEET OUR
TUTOR



KAREN
VIRTUAL TUTOR
Working Adult

A friend told me about FOG Readers and it seemed like such a wonderful way to share my love of reading (I'm a lifelong bookworm). This was early in the pandemic and it seemed like such a wonderful way to support the community through something that I already love to do. I've worked with two students and it's so fun to see their progress and engage with books.

The library staff is so supportive and helpful with the curriculum and in making sure I can best support the kid I'm working with. Reading has been such a large part of my life and I love getting to help someone else (hopefully) build a love of reading too.

"The tutor is very patient and approachable, with excellent attitude to motivate my kid to read. My kid had a hard time before asking for help, now she is willing to ask for help when reading without being so frustrated."

- FOG Readers Parent

TURN THE PAGE. CHANGE A CHILD'S STORY.

Nearly 50% of students in San Francisco and California are not reading at grade level.

Many children in San Francisco struggle to read at grade level. Those most affected face additional challenges, including limited family resources, language barriers, learning differences or frequent absences from school. Falling behind in reading can make it harder to keep up in class and affect long-term academic success and opportunities.

Volunteers with FOG Readers provide one-on-one support that helps students strengthen reading skills, build confidence and experience success. No prior teaching experience is required. Volunteering takes dedication, but all it requires is a willingness to help and a commitment to making a difference in a child's learning journey.

Join us and make an impact.

Learn more and sign up at sfpl.org/readers.

MEET OUR
TUTOR



KARMA VIRTUAL TUTOR
High School Student

I was interested in FOG Readers because I've always loved to read and so the opportunity to help others develop literacy skills was very appealing to me. My experience so far has been great. My favorite thing about tutoring is seeing my student overcome specific reading struggles. One of the reasons why I wanted to continue beyond the 6-month mark was because of the joy I got from tutoring and watching my student improve.