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First 5 San Bernardino, Santa Claus Visit Elementary School to Kick Off 4,000-Book Giveaway as Part of 'Gift a Kid a Book' Campaign

*All TK and Kindergarten Students in San Bernardino City Unified
Will Receive Free Book to Help Fight Low Literacy Rates*

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (December 7, 2023) – Students at Ramona-Alessandro Elementary School were the first of 4,000 children from San Bernardino City Unified School District being gifted a free book from [First 5 San Bernardino](#) as part of its [Gift a Kid a Book](#) campaign. Literacy rates in young children have declined since the pandemic and Gift a Kid a Book wants to encourage people to consider the gift of reading this holiday season.

First 5 San Bernardino, which focuses on the early development of children under 5, created a winter wonderland to kick off the book gifting. The students at Ramona-Alessandro shared in a book reading of "Give a Mouse a Cookie," a holiday singalong and a surprise visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus.

"We are passionate about the role early reading has in a child's development, and since the season of giving is upon us, there is no better time than now to give back to our young school children," said Karen Scott, Executive Director of First 5 San Bernardino. "Seeing the look of joy in their eyes when they received their book is just as magical as the season. It gives me confidence that the work we are doing at First 5 San Bernardino to encourage reading at a young age is having an impact."

Research studies show that 90 percent of a child's brain develops by age five, and healthy brain development is supported by reading at a young age. First 5 San Bernardino is working to address [early reading literacy loss](#) by encouraging families to Gift a Kid a Book at every opportunity, such as swapping a toy for a book this holiday season.

"To have the support of local community organizations like First 5 San Bernardino means everything," said Teresa Hopkins, Principal of Ramona-Alessandro Elementary School. "Our passion is helping these students develop and grow up to enjoy learning, so donations like

these make us feel like a little bit of the weight is taken off our shoulders. The surprise of Santa and Mrs. Claus handing out books made today magical for our students ... they will remember this day for a long time!"

Visit 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.

About San Bernardino City Unified School District:

The San Bernardino City Unified School District is California's eighth-largest school district and is dedicated to providing a high-quality education that prepares students for college, career, and life. With a focus on equity, excellence, and empowerment, the District serves a diverse student population in the San Bernardino and Highland community.

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