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Maria Zate

California Writing Project wins Library of Congress literacy award

The California Writing Project, based at UC Santa Barbara, has been selected as a 2026 Library of Congress Literacy Awards Successful Practices Honoree. The honor, which includes a $10,000 cash prize, recognizes the successful implementation of a specific literacy promotion practice.

With a network of 15 regional sites headquartered at UCSB's Gevirtz Graduate School of Education (GGSE), the California Writing Project — and its affiliated South Coast Writing Project at GGSE — is rooted in the conviction that teachers are the most powerful change agents in schools. The project's mission is to improve the teaching of writing at every level of education and across all disciplines. The Library of Congress commended the project for its comprehensive reach, replicable model and commitment to community-responsive literacy education.

"I am honored and humbled by this recognition from the Library of Congress," said Tim Dewar, project director and GGSE teaching professor. "This award recognizes the strength and power of our local, regional and state-wide network, which is driven by the knowledge, skill and leadership of classroom teachers. This award is really for the thousands of teachers who are affiliated with the California Writing Project."

The project aims to strengthen teacher leadership, advance equitable instructional practices and support meaningful civic and community engagement. The project's

signature event, the Invitational Summer Institute in Composition and Critical Literacy, selects outstanding teachers to participate in a four-week summer think tank, with teachers from grades K through college, across all disciplines. Teachers collaboratively investigate best practices in writing and literacy instruction through shared demonstrations of practice, readings and an intense focus on their own writing and reading processes.

A total of 21 organizations worldwide that are working to expand literacy and promote reading were awarded the 2026 Library of Congress Literacy Awards on September 8, International Literacy Day. The awards program, sponsored by David M. Rubenstein since 2013, and by the Kislak Family Foundation since 2023, honors promising initiatives that provide exemplary, innovative and replicable strategies that promote literacy.

“The 2026 Literacy Awards winners and honorees have successfully demonstrated thoughtful responses to their learners’ unique circumstances in their approach to literacy education,” said Acting Librarian of Congress Robert R. Newlen.

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