

Partners in Reading



San José Public Library | Adult Literacy Program

Who We Are

Partners in Reading (PAR) is dedicated to improving the lives of San José's adults by helping them improve basic reading, writing, English-speaking skills, technology, and life skills. By improving their literacy in these areas, PAR believes that adult learners will gain confidence and deepen their engagement in different aspects of their lives. We began our work in San José in 1989, and we use a variety of strategies to help learners achieve their basic literacy goals.

The cornerstone of PAR is our one-on-one tutoring program. This program is staffed by volunteers who meet at least twice a week with their learners. At these meetings, learners decide what they want to learn – such as reading a book, creating a resume, or writing an email to their child's teacher – and the tutor helps them achieve those goals. Some goals are completed quickly, and

Adapting to Change

During the pandemic, PAR shifted its services online and bridged the digital literacy gap by offering members access to laptops, e-readers, and hotspots from the San José Public Library. To help with distance-learning, PAR offered new online classes and Zoom trainings. PAR will continue to offer online programs and will soon provide Chromebooks to PAR adult learners.

others may take much longer or need to be broken down into smaller steps. But, throughout it all, the tutoring is learner-centered. By making sure our learners are developing skills that are important to them, PAR makes sure our services are relevant to our learners and change as their needs and wants change.

Over the years, PAR has expanded beyond one-on-one tutoring. We currently offer access to a computer lab and technology assistance, small -group classes for learners, publish an annual anthology of learner writings, help adults earn their high school diploma and a career certificate through the Career Online High School (COHS) program, and offer English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction to non-native speakers through the library and community partners.

PAR also hopes to expand ESL offerings in the future.

In the last year, PAR has welcomed San José Aspires (SJ Aspires) to its program offerings. This program provides students at select, under-resourced high schools in San José the opportunity to claim scholarship dollars for their post-secondary education.



FY 2020-2021 Facts

- **64 Adult Learners**
- **26 Family Literacy Families**
- **24 COHS Graduates**
- **690 SJ Aspires Students**
- **78 Volunteers**
- **6500 Volunteer Hours**

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Maribel (center) with her husband at a PAR outreach event.

“I’m very happy that I understand more than before. I was shy but now I am more confident to speak.”
- Maribel R.

PAR Learner: Maribel R.

Maribel R. was recently nominated as PAR’s most inspiring learner! During the pandemic, Maribel joined every online class from PAR to continue working on her literacy and English goals while meeting with her tutor and studying in her free time.

Maribel thought it was important to improve her English to communicate with her children’s doctors, schools, and social workers, so Maribel looked for help at the San José Public Library. Maribel has been in PAR for about 3 years now! She is most proud of her improvement in pronunciation and computer skills. One of her future goals is to work in childcare, maybe at a preschool or kindergarten.

Maribel really enjoys the PAR online classes, where she can practice her English conversation and learn new vocabulary. Since she received a PAR

laptop and took computer classes, she has been able to improve her computer skills. Maribel is also part of Together We Read, the PAR family literacy program, so her children also benefit by receiving 2 books every other month.

Maribel mostly spoke Spanish at home and with her friends, so there were not many opportunities for her to practice English during the pandemic. However, she is very active in her community. She volunteers for community cleanups, encourages her friends to get involved with their library and use local resources, and advocates on behalf of PAR! Maribel is even a parent volunteer at her children’s schools.

Maribel’s children have told her they are inspired by her desire to keep learning, and we have to agree!

PAR Tutor: Elizabeth A.

Elizabeth A. has been a volunteer tutor with PAR since 2018.

Why did you join PAR? I liked the idea of helping English language learners build or improve their reading and writing skills.

What are you most proud of during your time with PAR? My first learner, Ernesto, became much more confident in his English writing ability.

What do you enjoy most about being in PAR? The staff is great to work with; they are super supportive and encouraging. I am proud to serve the

community through the San José Public Library.

What is one significant thing you have learned during your time with

PAR? There are so many people out there who want to improve their English; I admire their courage in taking the step to reach out to PAR.

What advice do you have for people considering volunteering with

PAR? Follow your heart! If you love talking about the English language and want to share your time and talent with determined learners, you will find this to be very rewarding!

COHS Grads: Blanca and Mario

*"I had a chance
to prove what
I'm capable of.
Not to anyone
else, but to
myself."
- Mario*

Meet Blanca and Mario. They are not your ordinary Career Online High School (COHS) participants. They are a mother/son duo who graduated together in August 2021.

One reason Blanca chose to enroll was so that she could show her son that education is important, rather than simply telling him to go back to school.

Blanca is passionate about learning. During her time in the program, Blanca not only learned for herself, but she also learned about what high school students need to know. She needed a diploma so she could become the director of a preschool and transitional kindergarten program, which she opened in June.

Her career certificate in Childcare and Education enabled her to learn more about what her young students will need to ensure their success throughout their schooling. To get an education at the same time her son got an education is a dream come

true for Blanca, because she had always wanted to return to school.

Mario joined the program so that he could find direction and to help and motivate Blanca. He had to relearn how to learn and proved that he could study 100 hours a month without sacrificing his business.

Mario enjoyed how the program was organized and the support that was provided. He also discovered that he enjoys reading and has set a goal of reading two books a month! He found that completing this program alongside his mother was much easier and more fulfilling than it would have been doing it on his own.

Now they are both small business owners and are looking forward to more learning. Mario is planning to earn a bachelor's degree next!



Mario (middle-left) and Blanca (middle-right) in their caps and gowns at the online COHS graduation



COHS graduation gifts from the San José Public Library Foundation

SJ Aspires Student: Leslie G.

Why did you join the SJ Aspires student committee?

To seek a new leadership opportunity and to learn more about SJ Aspires, especially the program's financial benefits.

What was most challenging during virtual instruction?

Communicating with different teachers and staff members in the new virtual setting. It takes longer to receive a response. Because of that, I sometimes had to find solutions and answers myself. Overall, with virtual instruction, I had to be more self-sufficient because there wasn't as much support available.

You spent part of your school year doing virtual learning in Mexico. What was that like?

I enjoyed being able to be surrounded by family and having their emotional support. It was also nice to build more breaks into my schedule and not be studying all the time.

What was the best part of your summer?

The best part of my summer was getting a job. I've been thinking about getting a job for a while, and SJ Aspires program opened a new view of trying to save more money for college. I now work with JUMA, and actually work with someone who attended the SJ Aspires Meet the Students

event. It was nice to be able to have that connection through the program.

What are you excited about next year?

I'm most excited and nervous about entering my International Baccalaureate year. I heard it's very challenging, but I'm very confident in my work ethic and ability to deliver.

I'm also involved in: Key Club, We Stand Together, Latino Student Union, Book Club, Medicine Club, Environmental Club, Oasis Club, and am the Public Relations Coordinator for the Leadership Class of 2023.

What are you most proud of during your time in SJ Aspires?

The thing I've been most proud of is meeting my goal by the June 30th deadline. My goal was to get up to \$1,500 in Scholar Dollars by the final day of the school year and that was my proudest moment. I keep myself motivated by setting goals and benchmarks for myself. When I reach them, I get more confident and set small goal after small goal, so they'll get bigger and bigger.

What do you enjoy most about being in SJ Aspires?

Having resources provided for us with different interests. Having someone to talk to, knowing that I

can go to someone and ask a question if I needed it. Having people in the community to reach out to is a big support.

What is one significant thing you have learned during your time in SJ Aspires?

One thing I realized is that I have strong communication skills, and I know how to connect with people. I never thought I could be the person to present to a room of adults. Doing that boosted my confidence. I now know that I'm able to communicate to a large group of people when I really set my mind to it.

What's your advice for new SJ Aspires students?

Get involved, not just in your school but also with different events. You're able to meet new people and potentially those people can help you in the future with something you need.



Leslie G.

Class of 2023 at San José High School

Upcoming Events

- **September 2021**
 - International Literacy Day/ PAR Learner Book Event
 - ESL Classes begin
 - New Learner Orientation
 - New Tutor Orientation
- **October 2021**
 - New Learner Orientation
- **November 2021**
 - New Learner Orientation
- **December 2021**
 - PAR Holiday Event
- **January 2022**
 - New Tutor Orientation
 - New Learner Orientation
- **February 2022**
 - New Learner Orientation
- **March 2022**
 - New Tutor Orientation
 - New Learner Orientation
- **April 2022**
 - Volunteer Recognition Day
 - New Learner Orientation

Call (408) 808-2361 for more information about PAR events.

Join Partners in Reading (PAR)

If you, a friend, or a family member could use any of the PAR services, please contact us at (408) 808-2361 or email us at par.sjpl@sjlibrary.org.

If you are contacting us on behalf of a friend or family member, please know that we will need to speak with them directly in order to enroll them in one of our programs.

If you'd like to be a volunteer tutor, visit our website at www.sjpl.org/par-tutor

You can learn more about our programs by visiting:

- www.sjpl.org/par
- www.sjpl.org/cohs
- www.sjpl.org/sjaspire

"This has been an experience that I will always cherish. It is a reward of life and living."

- Mike, PAR volunteer

Sponsor Highlight: Patelco

How did you learn about us? What about the mission inspired you to support our programming?

We were referred to Partners in Reading's Career Online High School (COHS) program by the Mayor's office.



What program specifically drew you to PAR and how does that connect to your organization's long-term vision for the community of San José?

We appreciate that COHS students want to continue and finish their education. We felt that COHS aligned with Patelco's Mission and Vision, by fueling hope and creating opportunities to build financial resiliency and empowering people to achieve financial freedom.

Why has Patelco chosen to commit its support to PAR and COHS?

It's part of our commitment in supporting our community. Having local Patelco branches gives us the opportunity to be part of a wonderful program.

Partners in Reading
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150 E. San Fernando Street
San José, CA 95112



Phone: (408) 808-2361
Email: par.sjpl@sjlibrary.org
Website: www.sjpl.org/par

PAR Office Hours

Monday	1 pm - 6 pm
Tuesday-Friday	10 am - 6 pm
Saturday	10 am - 1 pm
Sunday	Closed

Mission

Partners in Reading (PAR) is dedicated to improving the lives of adults by supporting them in basic reading, writing, language, technology, and life skills to engage with greater confidence in all areas of their lives.

Adult and Family Literacy

Trained volunteer tutors customize individual instruction for adults who read or write below the high school level. Instruction is based on life goals determined by each adult learner.

Together We Read

A family literacy program that encourages parents to take part in school activities and events, and model storytime to help children practice and build confidence in reading.

Career Online High School (COHS)

COHS offers scholarships for adults to complete their high school education online and receive a career certificate.

Manager's Statement



Adrian McBride
Program Manager

Hello all. My name is Adrian McBride, and I began working as Community Programs Administrator for Partners in Reading (PAR) in November of 2020. Before coming to PAR, I worked on the San José Aspires program and other college and career readiness programs for the San José Public Library.

I quickly learned how wholly committed the PAR staff is to working with and supporting under-resourced individuals and communities. Ellen Loebel, Catherine McBain, and Cassandra Landicho work tirelessly to ensure that tutors and learners have the resources they need to build their basic literacy skills; Julie Cullen assists learners and volunteer computer instructors in the computer lab and manages in-kind donations to PAR; Paul Liu and Susan

Robledo track our data and ensure that our learners and tutors are aware of upcoming PAR programs and events; Katie Linder and Ngoc Lien work to help high school students build a personal scholarship fund through the San José Aspires program; and Katie Bauman, our AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer, supports PAR outreach and finds new ways for us to connect our community.

Together, we're excited to present this newsletter to you. We hope you enjoy the stories of some of the individuals our programs serve. If any of these programs interest you, please contact us at par.sjpl@sjlibrary.org and we can help you become a volunteer, learner, or supporter of our programs.