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## Volunteers give dictionaries to San Jose third-graders

### HELP GET THE WORD OUT

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Here's a question you won't see on the SAT's: What do you get when you use 100 volunteers to take 3,500 dictionaries to 110 third-grade classrooms in 27 elementary schools in four hours?

The answer, according to San Jose Unified School District spokeswoman Karen Fuqua: a lot of fun.

For weeks she has worked to get the books ready for classrooms throughout the 24-mile-long district. Today she and about 100 others got to do the fun part - give them away.

Students, she said, are shocked and pleased with the project.

"It's just a gift, there are no strings attached," she said. "It's like the volunteers are looking at them saying, 'Go learn more good stuff.'"

Fuqua said the children receiving dictionaries this year have noticed the back of the book is filled with fun facts about the solar system, the amount of water on Earth's surface and other stuff she said the kids found thrilling.

The program, the California Dictionary Project, aims to put dictionaries in the hands of every third-grader in the state, project board member Elizabeth Rhein said. In its fifth year, the volunteer group has donated more than 75,000 to Bay Area students.

Third-graders, according to the group, are a magical match for dictionaries. They're reading, but not yet set in such bad habits as skipping over words they don't know or giving up.

Based on the response from students in San Jose Unified schools, Fuqua said, many of the kids also feel a pride in ownership of their new books.

Thank-you letters written by the kids often say one of two things, according to Fuqua. It's either "'This book is mine and I won't share,' or, 'This book is so cool, I can't wait to show my brothers and sisters.'"

The volunteers - from the San Jose Police Department or Opera San Jose - pass out the books and show the kids how to use them. As a group, Fuqua said, the class looks up the words "college" and "university."

Pointing the way, the district hopes, to another step on the learning path.

### IF YOU'RE INTERESTED

For more information visit

[www.californiadictionaryproject.org](http://www.californiadictionaryproject.org).

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