



Major Literacy Partnership Launching in 2025-26 by Lytton Rancheria, Read On, Sonoma!, and Windsor Unified School District

*Joint Initiative Aims to Boost Reading Levels and Empower Young Students
Across Sonoma County*

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WINDSOR, CA - In a united effort to tackle illiteracy and support student achievement, the Lytton Rancheria of California, Read On, Sonoma!, and the Windsor Unified School District today announced a new partnership that will bring a high-impact literacy program to elementary students across Windsor. The initiative will launch with the start of the 2025–2026 school year, expanding a proven, incentive-based reading model that has already transformed outcomes for thousands of students in Sonoma County.

Founded in 2020 by celebrity chef Guy Fieri and entrepreneur and philanthropist Lawrence Amatore, *Read On, Sonoma!* has empowered over 1,400 children in grades 2 through 6 to read more than 59,000 books in a single school year—more than eight times the national average. The program uses gamified goal setting, targeted student support, and real-world rewards to make reading joyful, measurable, and motivating.

With the support of the Lytton Rancheria, the Sonoma County-exclusive program will nearly double in size and extend into Windsor Unified School District schools, including Mattie Washburn Elementary, Brooks Elementary, and Cali Calmécac Language Academy—reaching over 1,200 additional elementary students, many of whom are English learners or from underserved communities.

Since launching in 2020, Read On, Sonoma! has shown steady and impressive growth in student achievement. In the 2021–22 school year, just 53% of 3rd and 4th grade students met their reading goals. That number rose to 68% in 2022–23, 77% in 2023–24 and reached a record high in 2024–25: 89% of 3rd graders and 88% of 4th graders met their reading goals in the third

trimester alone. Among 70 participating classrooms this year, 47 had over 80% of students reach their goals, and 23 classrooms saw every single student hit their target—proof of just how far the program has come in five years.

Jeremy Decker, Superintendent of Windsor Unified School District, said:

“This partnership brings together the best of public education, private initiative, and tribal leadership to lift up the next generation of readers. We know that literacy is a powerful predictor of long-term success in school, in the workforce, and in life. By investing in our students now, especially through programs that are engaging and effective, we are shaping a brighter future for our entire community.”

Chairperson Andy Mejia, Lytton Rancheria, said:

“Education has always been at the heart of our community’s values, and literacy is the foundation upon which opportunity is built. This initiative gives students the tools they need not only to succeed academically but to imagine and achieve more in their lives. We are proud to stand with Windsor Unified and Read On, Sonoma! in this effort—because when children learn to read, they gain the power to shape their future and strengthen the future of us all.”

Michelle Leisen, Executive Director of Read On, Sonoma!, said:

“This is more than a reading program—it’s a movement. As a former school principal, I’ve seen firsthand how this program transforms students. They go from reluctant readers to excited, confident learners who can’t wait to share what they’ve accomplished. When 138 students become members of the Million and Multi-Million Word Club, it demonstrates that students are not just meeting expectations, they’re exceeding them. This partnership allows us to reach even more kids who deserve that kind of spark—and support.”

Lawrence Amaturio, Co-founder of Read On, Sonoma!, said:

“The results we’ve seen are some of the most rewarding of my life. And thanks to thousands of rewards handed out—from soccer balls to savings accounts—we’ve made reading something kids truly want to do. Read On, Sonoma! proves what’s possible when we stop waiting on bureaucracies and start acting with urgency. With Lytton Rancheria’s leadership and the schools’ trust, we are bringing real change to classrooms—and more importantly, to kids’ lives.”

Using STAR assessments, students are assigned individualized reading goals. They earn tokens for hitting milestones, which can be redeemed for items like soccer balls and bracelets, or for top-tier rewards such as Chromebooks, e-readers, savings accounts, and field trips to beloved local venues like Snoopy’s Home Ice, Epicenter, and Scandia.

The results speak for themselves:

- More than 85% of students now meet or exceed their reading goals
- Hundreds become “Million Word Readers” each year
- Across the board, fourth graders in the program now read at or above 4th-grade level—nearly 2 ½ grade levels above the statewide average

The initiative is fully endorsed by the Sonoma County Office of Education and is expected to serve over 1,200 Windsor students in the coming year. The program will officially launch in September 2025 and will run throughout the school year.

For more information, visit www.ReadOnSonoma.org.

About the Partners

***Lytton Rancheria** is a federally recognized tribe of Pomo Indians in Sonoma County, California. Deeply committed to cultural preservation, economic self-sufficiency, and community investment, the Tribe supports education as a cornerstone of sovereignty and future prosperity.*

***Read On, Sonoma!** is a privately funded nonprofit founded in 2020 to combat illiteracy and improve reading outcomes in Sonoma County schools. The program combines research-backed assessments, meticulous measurement and engaging rewards to help students build lifelong reading habits.*

***Windsor Unified School District (WUSD)** serves more than 4,000 students across a diverse community. WUSD is dedicated to academic excellence, equity, and preparing students to thrive in a rapidly changing world.*

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