No Book Left Unread

Parkdale Elementary is a K–5 school of approximately 260 students, of which 75 percent are on the free and reduced-cost lunch and breakfast program and 65 percent are Hispanic, largely migrant families.

The primary goal for our school is to provide literacy development for all our students. This is a major challenge since many of our students are from literacy-poor families and English is not their primary language. We looked for ways to reach out to our students and their families and that’s how our librarian, Marie Pickering, and two parents, Bob Danko and Jenni Donahue, created a low-cost, easy-to-implement book exchange program called No Book Left Unread.

Exchanging Ideas, Sharing Books

The idea of a book exchange began to take shape during a planning meeting for a book fair to raise money for the school library. Someone at the meeting offered to bring in books their children had outgrown and that other families might enjoy. Everyone thought bringing books from home to “trade” was a great idea.

The committee decided to collect books the first week in November with a goal of giving each child at least one “new” book to take home at Thanksgiving. Parents came to school each morning to help collect the donated books and the event was publicized by sending notes home with students, advertising on a local cable television station, and placing collection boxes in stores. The school received more than 1,600 books from teachers, families, and the community. Nearly all were in good condition and appropriate for elementary schoolchildren.

Unexpected Benefits

Students in our after-school program assisted library helpers in counting and categorizing the books. The after-school program participants included about 20 fifth graders, most of them second-language students and reluctant readers. The books fascinated them, and an unexpected benefit of the program was seeing these students talking about and sharing books with each other. We were delighted, even though we often had to tell them, “Hold off on the reading and get back to organizing!”

On the day of the exchange, the books were placed on tables in the library and students came in with their classes to make their selections. Each student was given four tickets and allowed 20 minutes to exchange the tickets for four books. Teachers also selected books for students from migrant families who had gone to Mexico and were not expected to return until January. The remaining books became a resource for our English Language Learner and special education classes, and for our after-school program.

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Books for the Bookless

Our No Book Left Unread program was a great success and we plan to expand it. It was fun and exciting for the children—they were delighted with their books—and it was relatively easy for the adults. By providing books for bookless homes and an incentive for family literacy, the program has become a major catalyst of literacy development for our children. Because of this program, we have been able to give children books that they can call their own. For some of our students, these were the first books they had ever received.

Promoting literacy development with students and families has paid off with significant academic gains for our students. In the last four years, the percentage of students meeting the state reading standard has increased from 58 percent in 2000 to 87 percent in 2004. Parkdale has also been recognized for the last two years as an Oregon School of Excellence.

No Book Left Unread is one of many school programs—our Project PM after-school program, Start Making A Reader Today (SMART) program, Book Bag program, Pizza Power Reading Incentive program, and NEARStar Second Language Support program—that, combined with improved classroom instruction, have been major elements in achieving our goal of literacy development for our children.

Anyone who visits Parkdale can see how important reading is to our staff and students. Here, there is no such thing as an “old” book or an unread book.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like more information about the No Book Left Unread program, contact Parkdale librarian Marie Pickering at mpickering@hoodriver.k12.or.us or principal Pat Echanis at pechanis@hoodriver.k12.or.us.