



Carlsbad Unified School District

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October 6, 2011

For Immediate Release

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POINSETTIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL'S READING ACADEMY HELPS FIRST- AND SECOND-GRADERS IMPROVE VITAL LITERACY SKILLS

Carlsbad, CA ... Every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon, enthusiastic and earnest first-and second-grade students bound into Room 509 at Poinsettia Elementary School for 45-minute sessions during which they work hard to improve their reading and comprehension skills, and as a result, their confidence in their overall learning ability and achievement in other academic subjects. Working equally hard to help them succeed is a committed volunteer group of parents, community members and K-5 Poinsettia teachers. The teachers give up one prep period per week to the program, which is overseen by coordinator Teri Sittner, a veteran teacher and reading specialist.

Sittner says her work is a joy. "The kids are excited to come here. They love to improve, moving up from level to level. I tell them, 'The more you do something, the better you get at it.' They take that lesson to heart. We reach kids who are reading below grade level but may not fall under other support programs, so these children might otherwise fall through the cracks," she believes.

Poinsettia Principal Steve Ahle says those cracks could widen into huge fissures without intervention. "Our goal is to ensure that every student can read by the end of grade two. Beginning in grade three, children who cannot read adequately are apt to struggle in every subject, because most subjects require reading and comprehension skills."

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Poinsettia Reading Academy Provides Concentrated Help

Second-grade teacher Cathy Devich says that now especially, with increased class size, the 1:2 volunteer-student ratio is important. “I love encouraging and helping these kids to improve their reading. It’s great to know that struggling students in my own classroom are getting the concentrated help they need.”

The Reading Academy operates on a formal structure in which students, with volunteer input, read each book three times, including at home to a family member. The formula works wonders, says parent Brook Pollind, who has been a Reading Academy volunteer since her son Cyrus, now a third-grader, entered Poinsettia. “This is a very positive way for me to contribute to our school. When Mr. Ahle told our volunteer group that the Reading Academy and its many success stories couldn’t happen without us, it made me teary-eyed.”

Academy students are bright-eyed and energetic. Laura Kennan says, “I like when Mrs. Pollind tells us whether we did it right or wrong. If it’s wrong, she shows us. Then we do it right.” Alyssa Marquez explains why reading is important to her: “You can get smarter and smarter. Then you can read to your cousins and even your friends.”

Each Poinsettia Reading Academy volunteer donates 90 minutes per week to the program. “It’s so worth my time. The students are very responsive,” Pollind reports, giving her students a smile and accepting hugs in return. People who are interested in the program are invited to call Teri Sittner at 760-331-6500.

Sittner offers this advice to anyone who wishes to become a better reader: “Read, read, read. Read the newspaper, read comic books, read the back of cereal boxes, read anything, read everything. Just be a reader.”