



PRESS RELEASE

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Norwalk-La Mirada's Waite Middle School Recognized for Boosting Student Literacy

Waite Middle School has been recognized for raising student literacy levels by strengthening student reading, vocabulary and comprehension skills over the last three years through Project Raising Educational Achievement for students with Disabilities (READ).

Waite achieved Project READ's Exemplar status by involving family and community members, aligning school English language arts curriculum with the California Standards and teaching reading skills across all subjects.

"Project READ is changing the way parents approach their children's education," Waite Principal Dr. Susan Newcomb said. "Our parents are active and engaged in a way we have never seen before."

The literacy initiative, which runs for five years and enhances English language arts, selected Waite and 41 other middle schools across the state through a competitive application process based on school readiness goals and academic challenges.

Waite holds workshops throughout the year to teach parents on how to become more involved in their children's reading, showing them how to interpret text and explain reading concepts such as word identification and comprehension.

"The best thing you can do for your child is to read to them and encourage them to read on their own," Project READ reading specialist Dr. Sue Abel told parents during a recent workshop. "Whatever interests them – books, magazines, even baseball cards."

Dr. Abel said reading 20 minutes every day to children can increase vocabulary by nearly 2 million words a year.

Waite parent Angelica Herrera took those strategies home to help boost her seventh-grade daughter's interest in reading.

"With the tips I received from the parent workshops, I can motivate my daughter to read more," Herrera said. "I would recommend these workshops for other parents in the District."

Through Project READ, teachers also have access to training and online resources to strengthen literacy skills among English learners, students with disabilities and socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

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Waite students also acquire tools throughout the school year that help them visualize language, such as using word banks to categorize vocabulary words, which leads to stronger comprehension.

As an Exemplar Project READ school, Waite will have the opportunity to showcase its methods and progress through webinar panels, presenting at regional institutes and hosting site visits.

“Thanks to Waite Middle School, Norwalk-La Mirada Unified has an even stronger partnership with our community and parents,” Superintendent Dr. Hasmik Danielian said. “The Project READ award speaks to the commitment that Dr. Newcomb and our staff has toward boosting student success.”

PHOTOS:

040417_NLMUSD_WAITEREADING1: A Waite Middle School vocabulary-building “Word Wall” allows students to see patterns and relationships in words and provides reference support for reading and writing. Waite was recently named a Project READ Exemplar school for raising literacy levels among its students and for involving family and community members.

040417_NLMUSD_WAITEREADING2: Waite Middle School parents receive advice from reading specialist Dr. Sue Abel during a recent reading workshop designed to assist parents in supporting their children’s literacy education. In 2013, Waite began a five-year comprehensive literacy initiative, Project READ, and was recently named an Exemplar school for their efforts in encouraging parent participation.

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