



# SAN GABRIEL UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

## PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Oct. 3, 2017

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## San Gabriel Unified Middle School Pledges to Read 10,000 Books, Boost Literacy

**SAN GABRIEL, CA** – Jefferson Middle School seventh-grader Rachel Liao, having just read three books in the span of a week, proudly considers herself a bookworm because she enjoys the feeling of immersing herself in a good book.

"I love how reading through a new book means being able to meet another group of interesting characters," Liao said. "Every new book I read is like a whole new adventure I can learn about."

Liao is among 1,000 Jefferson Middle School students who are burying their noses in new novels as part of the 10K Reads Challenge. The challenge encourages students to read a combined total of 10,000 books by the end of the 2017-18 school year as a way to improve student literacy rates. The school is also touting the initiative as a community event and is asking parents and teachers to join in and read to inspire students.

The challenge was launched Sept. 22 during the school's annual book fair, where attendees were encouraged to start the challenge off strong by picking up new books. Principal Matt Arnold kicked off the event by reading Dr. Seuss' "Oh, the Places You'll Go!" and "Green Eggs and Ham" to students.

"We want to encourage our students to enjoy reading because it's the foundation for all learning," Arnold said. "We think this challenge will encourage students to expand their minds and creativity, and that it will lead to a marked improvement in our students' academic success."

Arnold came up with the idea for the challenge at a recent English language development training event, where a speaker outlined the importance of reading to and for English learners.

Language arts teacher Annette Maier and language arts department chair Elizabeth Harrington helped expand the idea to improve literacy rates in all students through positive reinforcement.

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"I think the challenge is going well because our students seem to be very enthusiastic about it," Harrington said. "One of my biggest endeavors has always been to get students to read and become life-long readers because we believe it helps them in their academics."

Each time a student reads and summarizes a book, the school hangs a pennant in its office praising the student's achievement. Students who are seen reading will also be given small prizes by teachers. Large events are being considered when the school reaches certain goal milestones. Possible events include a water balloon fight and inviting an author of children's books to speak with students.

By the end of September, Jefferson Middle School students read 400 books and had created 400 pennants giving the synopsis of each book to be displayed in the school's office.

"Literacy is a cornerstone of lasting academic achievement and personal success for every student," SGUSD Superintendent Dr. John Pappalardo said. "Congratulations to Jefferson Middle School's teachers, staff and administrators for seeking creative and exciting ways to encourage literary excellence."

Some students are giving themselves personal goals during the challenge, including eighth-grader Victor Bueno, who plans to read every Maze Runner and Harry Potter book. Others are challenging themselves to read a specific quantity of books, like Liao, who has pledged to read 30 books by the end of May.

Students are also encouraged to showcase their literary accomplishments on social media by taking a "shelfie" – a selfie with a book – and using the hashtag #jms10kreads.

### **PHOTO CAPTIONS:**

**100317\_SANGAB\_10KREADS1:** Jefferson Middle School seventh-grader Rachel Liao reads "Ruby Red" by Kerstin Grier as part of her school's 10K Reads Challenge, an initiative that aims to have students read a combined total of 10,000 books by the end of the school year as a way to improve student literacy rates.

**100317\_SANGAB\_10KREADS2:** Jefferson Middle School students create rows of pennants detailing books read by classmates during the 10K Reads Challenge, which encourages students to read a total of 10,000 books by June 2018 as a fun way to improve literacy rates.

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