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Bonita Unified’s Shull Elementary School Fosters Love of Literature During Family Reading Night

SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE – Shull Elementary School students and their parents took an intergalactic journey through a solar system of literature, exploring new worlds and learning new words during the school’s inaugural Family Reading Night on Nov. 14. With its theme of “Blast Off Into Reading,” the Shull community reaffirmed its commitment to literacy, with a night of fun, food and fiction.

More than 250 Shull community members attended the reading night, where students read books, took Accelerated Reader (AR) quizzes, posed for photos behind a space backdrop, enjoyed snacks and listened to Shull reading intervention teachers conduct “read-alouds” of their favorite books.

“The Shull family reading night was a huge success. We were amazed at the turnout,” Shull reading intervention teacher Dr. Mikara Gallegos said. “It was so nice for parents to see the process of how our accelerated reading program works, with students picking out books, reading them and then taking an Accelerated Reader test. We look forward to having a reading night once a month for the remainder of the year.”

It was a full team effort at Shull, with the school secretary checking out books, parents helping to serve food in the cafeteria, and San Dimas High School students volunteering their time to help Shull students log onto Chromebooks in the library.

“We had a wonderful time,” Shull parent Arleene Aguirre said. “My son Jim was so excited to finish the book he was reading we missed a few of the read-alouds. It was a fantastic event. We can’t wait for the next one.”

Tables were labeled by grade level, with reading activities available on each table, as well as colorful space-themed book marks, space-themed reading passages and various word lists. Students could check out up to three books at a time, then demonstrate their comprehension of the text by taking an AR test.

AR is a program designed to set personalized goals for students and allow teachers and parents to monitor their progress. Students earn points for reading and then completing a test. During the family reading night, Shull students checked out nearly 500 books and earned 130 points in two hours.

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"I had so much fun," Shull second-grader Billie Brummer said. "I read a Piggie non-fiction book and took a test and got 90%."

For Gallegos, the best part of the night was the teacher "read-alouds." Gallegos read from the book "Even Firefighters Hug Their Moms" by Christine MacLean. Her colleague, speech therapist Erin Roundtree, read from the book "Dragons Love Tacos" by Adam Rubin, delighting students by embellishing her reading with a dragon puppet.

Shull Elementary is known for its culture of reading, providing each grade level with monthly goals on how many books to read, and rewarding students who attain a certain word count. Students also work together to earn "college degrees" in reading, with students able to receive associate's degrees for reaching a specific word count depending on their grade level. For example, Shull second-graders receive an associate's degree by collectively reading one million words, a bachelor's degree for reaching two million words, all the way up to a Rhodes Scholar degree for reading eight million words.

Schools across the District, including Ekstrand and La Verne Heights elementary schools, held similar family reading nights throughout the fall. Bonita Unified's emphasis on boosting reading comprehension across all grade levels has earned the District a No. 1 ranking on the California Reading Coalition's California Reading Report Card for two consecutive years.

PHOTOS:

BUSD_SHULLREADINGNIGHT1: Shull Elementary School parent Jayanne Hampton assists her children, Paxton and Jesslyn, during the school's inaugural Family Reading Night on Nov. 14. Students read books, took Accelerated Reader quizzes, enjoyed snacks and posed for photos. The reading night was so successful that the school plans to continue them monthly throughout the school year.

BUSD_SHULLREADINGNIGHT2: Shull Elementary School second-grade teacher Julie Pasquarella reads from "Can I Be Your Dog?" during its inaugural Family Reading Night, held on Nov. 14. More than 250 Shull students and parents attended the event, which focused on developing a love of reading throughout the Shull community. The highlight for many was when Shull reading intervention teachers gave a group reading of a favorite book.

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