



# Press Release

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## Dodgers Catcher Shares Story of Jackie Robinson with Students

### More than 100 students welcomed the pro baseball player in finale to Read Lead Summer Literacy Program

*Lynwood, Calif.* – Dodgers all-star catcher Yasmani Grandal took a break from the pennant chase Friday to share an inspiring story of success with more than 100 students at Lynwood Unified's Helen Keller Elementary.

Grandal, who came to the school as part of the Read Lead Summer Literacy Program's finale, read a story about Jackie Robinson, who broke baseball's color barrier in 1947. The book titled "Stealing Home" gave students insight into Robinson's historic home plate steal, which earned the Brooklyn Dodgers a win in Game 1 of the 1955 World Series against the New York Yankees.

The trip and the story provided Grandal, who was born in Cuba, with the opportunity to encourage students to never give up.

"I want to tell the children to always work hard so they can reach their dreams," Grandal said. "In coming here, you never know whose life you can change. A little encouragement can really make a big impact on a child."

During the six-week Read Lead program, students ages 5-13 read culturally relevant books as a way to boost self-estimate, instill a love of reading and generate a positive attitude toward learning. The free program was designed as a way to stem summer learning loss, which researchers have identified as a primary factor in widening the achievement gap between student groups.

Students with perfect attendance received four tickets to an upcoming Dodger game, courtesy of the Los Angeles Dodgers. The Dodgers Foundation helped fund the program.

"The Dodgers were excited to be able to support the Read Lead program not only with our funding, but with the sort of inspirational support that comes from players such as Yasmani Grandal," Foundation Executive Director Nichol Whiteman said. "Literacy is one of those foundational skills critical to success in all educational endeavors."

"In education, the foundation focuses on college access and success, but another major component is literacy," said the Foundation's Executive Director Nichol Whiteman. "So when we heard about Read Lead



Program and that it was a part of the Freedom Schools Initiative and that it was working with schools in Lynwood, we became very interested in the program."

Whiteman hopes to continue working with the District to introduce programs that boost student achievement.

"The children were thrilled to spend time with a professional baseball player, who really took the time to inspire them to go after their dreams," said Lynwood Unified Superintendent Paul Gothold. "I want to thank the leaders at Read Lead, who are instrumental in running the literacy program, and the Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation for the its support in helping us prepare our children for success."

More than 300 students throughout the Los Angeles area this summer participated in the Read Lead Program, which provides leadership opportunities for youth and young adults in Los Angeles County. Founded in 2011, Read Lead is led by young professionals and educators who have an innovative approach to service delivery that leverages community resources and expertise to improve the educational landscape.

"The Read Lead program has been a tremendous success in Lynwood Unified because it helps us to provide additional motivation and support for our students as they approach the new school year," said Maria Lopez, Lynwood Unified Board of Education President. "I want to congratulate all of our student participants for their dedication to their education."

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## Captions

**Grandal1:** Dodgers catcher Yasmani Grandal reads the book "Stealing Home" to more than 100 students at Lynwood Unified's Helen Keller Elementary School as part of the finale to the Read Lead Summer Literacy Program on Friday, July 31. The book tells the story of Jackie Robinson's historic steal of home plate which lifted the Brooklyn Dodgers to victory in Game 1 of the 1955 World Series against the New York Yankees.

**Grandal2:** More than 100 students at Lynwood Unified's Helen Keller Elementary School sit with Dodgers catcher Yasmani Grandal on Friday, July 31. The students are all posing with horns in honor of Grandal who is nicknamed "Tasmanian Devil."

**Grandal3:** Dodgers catcher Yasmani Grandal reads the book "Stealing Home" to more than 100 students at Lynwood Unified's Helen Keller Elementary School as part of the finale to the Read Lead Summer Literacy Program on Friday, July 31. The book tells the story of Jackie Robinson's historic steal of home plate which lifted the Brooklyn Dodgers to victory in Game 1 of the 1955 World Series against the New York Yankees.

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The mission of **Lynwood Unified School District**, the cultivator of innovative thinkers, is to ensure each student fearlessly achieves his or her highest academic and personal aspirations while contributing to the greater society through a unique system distinguished by:

- ★ People of great character who inspire and lead by example
- ★ The instilling of courage to be creative
- ★ The transformative uses of technology
- ★ Safe and clean environments
- ★ The honoring of all voices of our community