



Press Release

For Immediate Release:
March 9, 2015

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Fifth-Graders' Fund-raising Efforts Help Revitalize La Merced Elementary Library

District Honors Team that Contributed to Fundraising, Construction and Design of Library

MONTEBELLO – In a special and intimate ribbon-cutting ceremony, the La Merced Elementary community celebrated the official opening of its newly renovated library on March 6, a legacy gift made possible by the combined efforts of Montebello Unified and La Merced’s Fifth Grade Committee, which raised more than \$3,500 for the top-to-bottom makeover. The ribbon-cutting ceremony, which kicked off Read Across America Day, featured words by the MUSD Board of Education, school and District administrators, as well the presentation of certificates to parents and District staff who contributed to the library's renovation.

“It is so humbling and extremely rewarding to see our students, school community and District staff work together to encourage imagination, spark creativity and promote literacy,” Montebello Unified Board President Edgar Cisneros said. “We are so proud of our La Merced community for taking on something so worthwhile and for making a difference in the lives of students for generations to come.”

The ribbon-cutting was enthusiastically attended by dozens of La Merced students wearing the red and white striped hats made famous by the Cat in the Hat and holding aloft their favorite Dr. Seuss book, in honor of Read Across America Day, which is timed each year around Dr. Seuss' birthday.

La Merced’s Fifth Grade Committee, comprised of five representative school parents, works throughout the year to raise funds for a variety of school activities. After a book fair last year, the departing fifth-graders lobbied to make upgrading the library their legacy gift.

“The kids really wanted to do this,” Gloria Diaz, president of last year’s Fifth Grade Committee, said. “They were so committed and worked so hard to help raise the money. The District pledged their support and made sure the students realized their dream.”

The District approved all of the construction work, then dispatched their Maintenance & Operations Department to make the improvements. The library now provides new books, and has been updated with new carpet, paint and shelving -- in addition to all-new artwork donated by local artist and Montebello Unified alum Beatrice Borjorquez.

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Borjorquez played a major role in the renovation, working with last year's fifth-graders to create a rainbow mural made entirely of student handprints. In addition, Borjorquez designed and painted an assortment of beloved Dr. Seuss characters to hang on the library walls.

The Maintenance & Operations team, along with last year's Fifth Grade Committee and artist Borjorquez, received certificates of appreciation from Board members and Superintendent of Schools Cleve Pell and Superintendent of Education Susanna Contreras Smith at the ceremony.

"It's wonderful to see these students and their parents come together with enthusiasm in the name of reading and literacy," Superintendent of Education Susanna Contreras Smith said. "We thank all who contributed to beautifying the library and making this day so special."

After the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the school kicked off a day of readings by Board members, Montebello Intermediate School administrators, parents, members of the Bell Garden High School basketball team and community members, including local firefighters.

Read Across America is an annual event created by the National Education Association to promote the joy and importance of reading and to celebrate the birthday of author Dr. Seuss. This year's celebration includes the "Kids, You'll Move Mountains" theme that targets students who excel in the areas of STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math.

Along with La Merced Elementary, nine other District elementary schools participated in Read Across America activities.

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