

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Valerie Martinez

Juliette Funes

(909) 445-1001

Allison Elementary Opens Ben Carson Reading Room

\$10,000 grant funds new books, furniture to promote leisure reading

POMONA – Allison Elementary hosted a festive ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the grand opening of its Ben Carson Reading Room, a cozy area connected to the school's library that features more than 1,200 non-fiction books, new furniture and a mural that aims to inspire children to "THINK BIG."

During the March 25 celebration, Allison students packed the reading room to observe the new space, themed "Read to Explore," and see the hundreds of new books available to them thanks to the Carson Scholars Fund, a nonprofit founded by noted neurosurgeon Benjamin S. Carson.

"Reading is the foundation of success and it is exciting to provide a literacy-enriched environment for our children to develop their reading and comprehension skills and be inspired to dream big," said Pomona Unified School District Board of Education Vice President Adrienne Konigar-Macklin. "I want to thank the donors for their generosity and Dr. Carson for his support of literacy in our schools."

The Ben Carson Reading Project is an initiative of the Carson Scholars Fund that has created more than 120 school reading rooms across the country. This is the first of its kind in Pomona Unified. The room will be dedicated to the memory of Dean T. Wickstrom, whose family provided \$10,000 to the organization for the project.

"The 21st century learner must become knowledgeable about the events, people and places around them, as well as dream up possibilities for the world and future they will live in," Principal Elizabeth Valenzuela said. "We are looking forward to Allison students having an opportunity to experience these topics in their own reading sanctuary."

So far this school year, Allison students have read 15,833 books, with third-graders learning 2,500 new vocabulary words, fourth-graders accomplishing 52 minutes of reading every night and sixth-graders reading nearly eight million words between Jan. 5 and March 13 alone.

"I love reading because you can read about anything, anytime. It's so much fun," said sixth-grade student Daja Love, who last year read between 30 and 40 books.

To promote further reading, all of the books purchased are part the District's Accelerated Reader program, which ensures that students are growing their reading, vocabulary and literary skills.

“At schools across Pomona Unified, we have expanded our libraries and reading spaces to encourage students to develop a love of reading, be creative and recognize the importance of everyday reading for pleasure,” said PUSD Superintendent Richard Martinez. “The Ben Carson Reading Room is conducive to accomplishing our goals of making reading part of their lifelong experience.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

READINGROOM1: Allison Elementary School celebrated the grand opening of its Ben Carson Reading Room on March 25. Pictured are, from left, Dr. Ben Carson, Pomona Unified School District Board Member Frank Guzman, Vice President Adrienne Konigar-Macklin, Board Member Dr. Roberta Perlman, Allison Principal Elizabeth Valenzuela, Superintendent Richard Martinez, Deputy Superintendent Stephanie Baker and Director of Elementary Education Lilia Fuentes. In the center is third-grader Alejandro Carlos, who has read the most books in a single quarter – 157.

READINGROOM2: Allison Elementary School students Leyla Dias, left, and Amy Jacobo explore the new books the school purchased with a \$10,000 grant awarded by the Carson Scholars Fund for its new Ben Carson Reading Room. The celebration took place on March 25, 2015.

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OUR MISSION: The Pomona Unified School District provides a well-rounded and challenging educational program of the highest quality, empowering students to lead productive, fulfilling lives as lifelong learners. Supported on a foundation of integrity and respect, students will gain academic excellence and take personal and community pride as responsible citizens and productive participants in a diverse society and global economy.



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