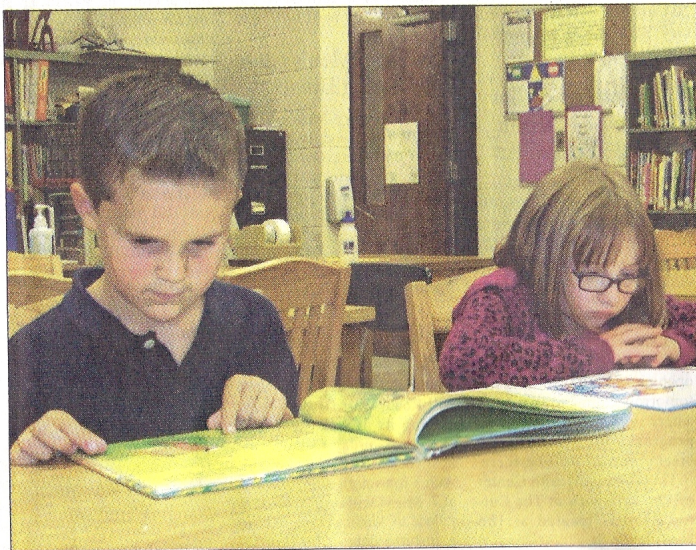


Reading response high at Blackrock



Lauren Knight-Daily Times

Nathan Onorato, Jr., 7, and April Walker, 7, both participated in the summer reading program at Blackrock Elementary School.

Summer reading program was a “huge success” at the elementary school

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COVENTRY — Reading teachers from Blackrock Elementary School had cause to celebrate as September rolled in and with it, came students with pages full of books they read over the summer.

As teachers Kristin Pires and Ann Sansone began filing through the impressive reading logs, they were overjoyed to find that of the 446 Blackrock students, 3,432 books were read collectively.

“The majority of children have no formal instruction during summer vacation so most children lose ground,” said Pires. “Summer vacation [was] the perfect opportunity to let children select books that they wanted to read.”

Pires stated that even students

with the highest grades are affected if they do not read.

“They come back in September and we lose time over that,” she said.

According to Principal Alicia Castle, regression is always a factor at the beginning of the school year for those who do not read. “It can be a battle sometimes to read,” said Castle, referring to the typical pull between parents and kids.

Pires and Sansone headed off the summer reading program in June, compiling logs that every grade level would fill out as they read books. This year’s coordination worked well amongst the entire school, according to Pires.

The summer reading program was nothing new to Coventry students but with the new concise and consistent logs for all grades, all of the students,

teachers and parents knew what was expected, Sansone and Pires explained.

Students were prepped with motivation to, as the Blackrock Bees, “bec a reader” and contribute as a community by reading all summer, they said. Kids were allowed to read any author, style or genre that they could get their hands on.

According to Castle, students were encouraged to read other genres including newspapers, magazines, comics and more. The purpose was for kids to read what they liked to “instill a love for reading,” she said.

Books included Harry Potter, Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Dr. Seuss, and hundreds of other selections. Author David Shannon was a popular choice amongst the student readers.

“It was basically structured

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Bring on the books for these kids

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pleasure reading," said Pires.

Sansone and Pires were both excited with the high response of students, as they seemed to enjoy the books and opportunity to read. Kids at Blackrock are required to, throughout the year, read 25 books. Some of the books read over the summer would count towards this total, possibly for the fantasy or fiction categories, Pires explained.

Students also had motivation to read due to the contest that local orthodontist, Dr. William Gordon, offers each year. The school that reads the most,

based on percentages and student population, will receive a prize of \$1,000 to spend on more books.

"We had a humongous response, so whether we win or lose, we want to celebrate what has been done," said Pires.

The Coventry Public Library also provided motivation for in the summer event. They kept a log of which students came to the library and participated in their activities, according to Pires.

"We are fortunate to have a wonderful public library that we can collaborate with," she said. The school encouraged parents to over the summer take their

kids to the library and let them fill up a bag of books.

There was no homework associated with the summer program, aside from logging each book they read. The focus was to merely "put books in their hands," according to Sansone and Pires.

"This summer was a huge success," said Castle. "It is a nice opportunity with Dr. Gordon. Kids are naturally competitive and this year is the most we have ever gotten."

The district is expecting to hear back regarding Gordon's reading contest within the next week.