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Students Katie Fox, Skyle Morton, Jennifer Brown, Kailey Cimin, Kianna Hepburn and Natalia O'Kleasky look through the books at the book swap at Washington Oak School's library in Coventry.

Washington Oak book swap is biggest hit of reading week

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COVENTRY—The book swap has taken on a life of its own.

Students elbow their way close to the table covered with books by the front door of the Washington Oak Library. Coming in droves from their classrooms, they peruse a growing stack of gently-used books dropped off by their classmates.

This year, for some reason, the book swap has been the biggest hit of reading week at the elementary school, says librarian Lynn McDonald. She's held book swaps during reading week before, but the students have never responded this enthusiastically.

While McDonald is talking a student comes in holding a white slip of paper that says "15" on it.

This means, she explains, that the student brought 15 books into the library today. And that means they can take

15 books home. Some students are bringing in that many books every day.

First-grader Natalia O'Kleasky is eager to find as many chapter books as she can, she says, as she sorts through the baskets on the swap table.

After she saw her twin-sister walking home with a stack earlier this week, O'Kleasky scoured her house for more books to turn in so that she could get her own chapter books, she said.

Like many of the students at Washington Oak, O'Kleasky has turned off her television for the week and is reading instead, she said. Every day that students read instead of watching television, they get to post a new train car on the reading train that hangs in the school halls.

The goal, McDonald added, is to get the train to wrap around the building before the week is over. With 700 students reading as much as they can, the goal is within reach.

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Hector Rivera, Emily Barone and Sydney Baxter look through the books.

Swap

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Another first-grade student, Kianna Hepburn, said that she learned for the first time this week that reading was better *for her than watching television*. She is searching the book swap for more Goosebumps chapter books, Hepburn adds.

"They give me nightmares," she admits. "But I like that because when I wake up I know it was only a dream."

Reading isn't everyone's best subject or everyone's idea of a good time, so Reading Teacher Jenn Limoges has been working with her population to make sure they are able to engage in reading week as well, she said.

Many of McDonald's activities for the week already engage both readers and non-readers. Every morning she reads a book excerpt over the intercom. In library class, students are confronted with book clues that are tactile and visual; all of these books are ones that have either been read to them in library class or recently been adapted into movies.

To kick off reading week Magician Lon Cerel came and told stories to the students. All of these activities are friendly

to bookworms and non-readers alike.

Limoges's students have had special responsibilities during reading week, she said, so that *they will truly be part of the celebration*. They get to put up the reading train cars that students bring in. They've been reading many books in their classroom during the week and have used the stories to help create a massive collage of "The Three Little Pigs" on their classroom door. They've also been in charge of collecting all the book swap contributions from the pods in the school.

"It's rewarding for them," Limoges said. "As they get more involved they see themselves as readers. We've been talking a lot about reading outside of school. This is a great week for them because there are so many simple things we're doing to involve them—but all of these things are very evident and very visual."

The book swap has been so popular for everyone, Limoges speculated, especially because the books are free. So many of the students at Washington Oak lost things in the flooding and to be able to take new books home for free is very