

Western Coventry Elementary snags prize a third time



Submitted Photo

Back row: Sherri Arnold (reading assistant), Liz Widdifield (reading specialist), Karen Guilmette (reading specialist), Jan Sullivan (principal), Dr. Gordon.

Middle row: Sabrina Felix (5th grade) and Elizabeth Lahoud (4th grade)

First row: Tiara Rochon (2nd grade), Sophia Quindazzi (1st grade), Ben Carrigan (1st grade), Jenna Farber (3rd grade).

LAUREN KNIGHT

lknight@ricentral.com

COVENTRY—Western Coventry Elementary School was recently handed a \$1,000 check after their students made an effort to read over the summer. Local orthodontist William Gordon offers the prize up each year to the school in the district who reads the most books.

“We don’t want to have that summer backslide of learning. Reading helps them to keep up with what we’ve taught them over the school year,” said Karen Guilmette, a reading specialist at Western Coventry.

Continued reading helps to build the student’s vocabulary,

reading strategy and provide background information, said Guilmette. Also, “it’s for enjoyment.”

At the end of the school year, teachers encourage students to read what interests them, whether fiction, nonfiction, comic books, picture books or magazines. They are encouraged to read to their younger siblings or reread their favorite book.

“Sometimes they love that, especially the younger grades,” said Guilmette.

Gordon came to the school on Friday, Oct. 21, to announce that the school won, present the check and congratulate the students on winning, according to Guilmette. After the cer-

emonies, he awarded the class—Ms. Millard’s first grade class—who produced the highest number with a pizza party.

Collectively, the 385 students at Western Coventry read roughly 4,000 books.

Guilmette attributes the school’s success to their preparation. She said that before summer begins, the faculty goes into each classroom and reminds the students to keep up with their summer reading and reading logs. Each grade participates in an assembly that explains the benefits of summer reading, not only for themselves but for the entire school.

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Reading program pays off with pizza, cash

Reminders are periodically sent out to parents, reminding them to encourage their children to read.

This is the third year that Western Coventry has won the reading contest.

The first year that Western Coventry won, they spent the money to purchase packs of guided reading books for teachers to use in their small group reading instruction. The school has accumulated an extensive library for guided reading books, used for grades kindergarten through five, said Guil-

mette.

Guided reading groups are typically comprised of a small number of students and the teacher selects a book for everyone to read. Teachers will select a book appropriate for each group at their instructional level.

They then meet with three to four groups within an hour, working with each of them on reading strategies.

"They will work on reading the words accurately, fluency and understanding the story," explained Guilmette.

Guided reading groups have been a practice at the school for years now and the faculty works to continue purchasing more books and expanding the library.

When Western Coventry won last year, they used the money to purchase story picture books to assist with teaching reading comprehension strategies. The main strategies to developing reading comprehension, said Guilmette, are making predictions, visualizing, summarizing, making connections, inferencing and asking questions.

"The teachers love the [books]—it's such a huge benefit to enhance their teaching of reading. They more materials they have [access to] is a great plus," said Guilmette. She said that the problem is that the books are very expensive and they want a good variety for each grade level.

Guilmette said that the English Language Department plans to decide next week where the \$1,000 will be spent. Gordon only asks that the money is used to buy more books.

Next year, Gordon plans to also award the schools with the second and third highest response.

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Mailing Address: P.O. Box 589, West Warwick, R.I. 02893

Street Address: 1353 Main St., West Warwick

E-Mail News: KCEditor@RICentral.com

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