Inspired by *The Lemonade War*, students at Bells Elementary School in Bells, Texas staged a competition for a good cause - and got to paint their principal in the process.

Yalonda Ivers, principal at Bells, worked with the school’s student council to hold a canned food and personal hygiene item drive while reading *The Lemonade War* for *One School, One Book*. Ivers promised the grade that donated the most items could paint her yellow - a nod to the lemonade at the heart of their book. Ivers also pledged to purchase ice cream for the entire school if the drive produced at least 1,500 items.

The students responded with enthusiasm and collected more than 3,500 items! The fifth grade brought the most donations and earned the reward of painting their principal.

“We all truly loved the book and had a great time with our own competition,” Ivers said. “Our local food bank was very, very grateful. It was a wonderful opportunity for students to not only enjoy a great book together but to put into practice helping others who are less fortunate.”

When life gives you lemons, paint your principal!

Bells cares about their community.
When Bolivar Road Elementary School read *The Chocolate Touch* for OSOB this past fall, the school’s Chittenango, New York community stepped forward to ensure that reading the book was truly a collective, shared experience.

During the course of OSOB, a local diner, a local supermarket, the community library and a Barnes and Noble each hosted events or offered specials related to the book and the school’s reading effort. At Darlene’s Diner, customers could order “The Midas” breakfast special in honor of John Midas, the novel’s chocolate-loving protagonist, while Tops Friendly Market offered a sale on chocolate cream pie. The library hosted a special night focused on the book, and Barnes and Noble scheduled a book fair one evening.

In addition, guest readers from the community - including the mayor, a police officer, a fire fighter, and high school football players - read individual chapters from the book that were posted on the Bolivar Reads YouTube channel. The school kept an active online presence that gave students and their families ready access to numerous related resources, including the reading schedule, a calendar of events, games, a photo gallery, a blog, read-along videos and healthy eating choices.

Bolivar integrated *The Chocolate Touch* in other creative ways, like a unit in PE which included the games played in the book and special menu items were available in the cafeteria throughout the month. Renee Burgess, the Bolivar principal, challenged students think critically about the book with her weekly challenge questions. Students also gave back to the community with a Halloween candy donation for a local veterans’ association.

---

**Guest Readers for The Chocolate Touch**

---

**Share your One School, One Book Tweetables! Send your stories, pictures, videos, and links to:**

*newsletter@readtothem.org*
Gerald B. Probe Elementary School in Lethbridge, Alberta used social media in expert fashion to build anticipation for the announcement of its selection for this year’s One School, One Book program. Then, when it was finally time to reveal the book, the school found a way to deliver a fitting climax that thrilled its students.

Starting on March 4, the school and community celebrated the previous 10 books that had been featured in Gerald B. Probe OSOB programs. Each day, the school tweeted a message with the book cover of a previous OSOB selection, creating a countdown through the years. With each message, the school shared key lessons that the featured book had provided to readers. For instance, GBProbeSchool posted on March 7 about its 2011 OSOB selection, *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*, saying, “Seven years ago, Ralph roared through our school and taught us about true friendship as he learned that gaining freedom also brings responsibility.”

In addition to generating enthusiasm for this year’s OSOB experience, the tweets reminded families of the value of the program and encouraged their participation in this year’s activity. Members of the school community responded with likes, retweets, and tweets of their own. One family member wrote in response to a tweet about 2014’s read, *Kensuke’s Kingdom*, “This was my family’s first 1s1b experience! Such a powerful story! #readthroughtears.”

The final tweet celebrated Peter Brown’s novel, *The Wild Robot*, which was Gerald B. Probe’s 2017 OSOB read and a particularly popular choice with its students. Finally, in an assembly on March 13, Brown himself appeared via video to announce that Gerald B. Probe would be reading his brand-new sequel, *The Wild Robot Escapes*, in 2018. The announcement prompted a boisterous burst of applause from students. One observer would later tweet it was as if Brown had “told them they were all going to Disneyland!” The assembly ended with the students dancing together en masse.

After a decade, Gerald B. Probe’s embrace of Read to Them programs continues to grow. The school also recently announced that its district, the Lethbridge School District No. 51, would soon be participating in One District, One Book for the first time.
Grass Lake Middle School in Grass Lake, Michigan found an ideal way to launch the new academic year in August. Grass Lake read Rob Buyea’s *Because of Mr. Terupt* as part of the *One School, One Book* program. *OSOB* offered an ideal runway to the new year for students, helping to build a sense of community from the outset and providing a fun re-entry into the academic year.

“The *One School, One Book* program was an awesome way to start out the school year,” said Joanna Botte, resource room teacher at Grass Lake. “It brought all the students together and refocused them on reading and learning after having the summer off.”

Botte said the students quickly became engaged in the *OSOB* experience “because of each other” and their shared interest in the selected title. The school organized activities throughout the month to stoke that enthusiasm, such as weekly trivia quizzes and interactive bulletin boards. An assembly concluded the *OSOB* event with games of Family Feud and The $100,000 Pyramid with questions related to the book. Winners of the weekly trivia contests received copies of the Terupt sequel – *Mr. Terupt Falls Again*.

The school also had two projects involving Buyea that especially appealed to students.

In one of the activities, Grass Lake teachers invited their students to write questions to the author. Teachers selected questions from the submissions, and those students whose questions were picked received the opportunity to ask their questions personally to Buyea via Skype. The Skype interview was recorded and shared with teachers so they could play it for their students and enrich their discussions of the book.

“The kids really liked this,” Botte said.

The other activity involving Buyea was a schoolwide door-decorating contest. Students collaborated to decorate the classroom doors, inspired by the book and its characters. Winners were selected by a collection of judges that included school officials, *Read to Them* representatives and Buyea himself. The winners received a popsicle party.

Botte said Grass Lake saw promising student engagement during *OSOB* and the experience sparked compelling discussions.

“One of the most crucial benefits of the program is that it gives the entire student body a common topic to discuss,” Botte said. “Our choice, *Because of Mr. Terupt*, allowed every student to identify with one of the characters in the book. It was fun to hear their thoughts on Peter and Lexi and all the others and some maybe even took a look at themselves and made some changes.”
Author Spotlight with Victoria J. Coe

Victoria J. Coe is the author of three books for children about a charming Jack Russell terrier named Fenway and his human friend, Hattie. Coe conceived the idea for Fenway and Hattie, the first book in the series, after realizing the confusion her dog must feel after moving to a new house.

What interests you about writing for younger readers?

I adore connecting with younger readers, whether it's listening to them, chatting with them, reading to them, or writing for them. I just love kids! They're full of unique ideas and positive energy; you just never know what they're going to say or do.

I’m especially drawn to writing stories for elementary school readers because of my own kids. I read aloud to them every single night -- books that I loved at their ages as well as new books that we discovered together. Reading has been a huge part of our family.

What has been the most rewarding part of finding an audience with your books?

Without a doubt, the most rewarding (and amazing) thing is seeing and hearing about the art and writing and drama and music and games and digital creations and countless other projects that the books have inspired in young readers. The most I hoped for is that some people would read the books and enjoy them. I never dreamed that this little dog I created and his doggy way of experiencing things would capture young readers’ imaginations the way that they have. Honestly, it sort of blows my mind!

Why do you think Fenway and Hattie has struck a chord with readers?

Well, first, I think readers get a kick out of figuring out what’s really going on in the story. It’s not a straightforward read, so they have to work at it, kind of like a game. And realizing that there’s more than one takeaway from the exact same experience is totally fascinating.

Second, I think readers identify with Fenway. He’s young and small but he sees himself as large and in charge. Oh, and have you seen the cover? That face is pretty hard to resist!

And they identify with Hattie, too. I think they wonder what it would be like to have a dog like Fenway, and how they'd react to his shenanigans!

Can you tell us about your newest title in the Fenway and Hattie series?

Fenway and Hattie Up to New Tricks began with my wondering what dogs think when we try to trick them into taking medicine. In the book, Hattie decides to learn magic tricks to impress her nana, and Fenway knows she’s up to something. But after he gets stung by a bee, Hattie starts playing tricks on HIM, and he wonders if he can still count on his beloved short human.

While this story has all the fun and humor of the other two books, I think readers will find it tugs on the heart strings just a little bit harder.
Kimberly Pinto, Library Media Specialist, John J. Daly Elementary School, Port Washington, New York

“Find creative ways to bring the book to life. RTT provides wonderful suggestions. If you can, get a school pet to tie in with a story. We got our very own hamster in the library that the students named ‘Mr. Cuddles’ to go with our The World According to Humphrey program and the excitement that this generated was amazing. One of our self-contained classes got so involved that they started a STEM challenge to create a maze for Mr. Cuddles. For The Enormous Egg, we started with a large ostrich egg placed inside a glass tank to generate curiosity. Then we swapped it out with a gigantic baby triceratops (Preskool electronic toy) that the children loved, and which now resides in the library.”

Denise Miller, Assistant Principal, Weirton Elementary School, Weirton, West Virginia

“This is not a one-person program. You must have a team of staff with the same passion to pull this off. This is a great program to find out the different strengths and talents you have on your team. I found out so many unique things from my staff - talents I didn’t even know they had. Several teachers were such wonderful artists and helped draw all the props for the play at the kickoff. We had teachers come up with the words to our theme songs. Teachers made displays outside their classrooms that were so creative and unique. I had teachers complete a skit for the kickoff.”

Carol Nenni, Principal, Murwood Elementary School, Walnut Creek, California

“Create that sense of excitement around the book and commit to having everyone participate. I buy books for every family, in multiple languages if it is available, and I make sure that every staff member, volunteer and even our board members receive a copy. We commit to a shared reading schedule and have different grade levels share their thoughts on community bulletin boards while we are reading the book.”

Learn more about our selected titles at: www.readtothem.org books