

Award helps kids hit the books

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Students from Glen Elm School cracked the books Thursday. Kids from the school were at Chapters to choose new books for the school library. It was all part of the Love of Reading Foundation, which is providing the school with \$45,000 over three years through its stated goal of supplying books to high-needs schools.

"It was like winning the lottery," said Glen Elm principal Dianne Gulka-Tiechko.

In May, the Regina school won the grant in the form of cash and store credits at Chapters and Coles bookstores. Glen Elm proved to be the most worthy and dedicated school to improving literacy rates among students.

"The students are very excited. They feel very involved in the Love of Reading Foundation award that we won ... We had to show that we are already using some best practices and instructional strategies to improve literacy. The strategies are in place and now to have the resources to support it is fantastic," said Gulka-Tiechko.

Glen Elm was one of 20 schools that were eligible for the grant and is just the second Saskatchewan school to win the award. Grade 1 and 2 students were bused over to the Regina Chapters store where crafts, snacks and balloons were set up.

"It's good to read and you can learn words so you can learn how to make full sentences," said Cassandra Christianson, a Grade 2 student who was anxious like all the other students to find a book of their choice that they thought others would like to read.

The school encourages children to read by having designated reading times each day. SQUIRT, which stands for "super quiet uninterrupted reading time," is one of the acronyms Glen Elm librarian Susan Sanholmes teaches to all of the students who come into the library.

"We're trying to get all kids interested in reading so we do lots of activities in the school that show the importance of reading. We've started grouping kids according to their learning needs and all of the kids come to the library to have story time. We've also partnered some of the grades with the public library. We do everything we can to encourage reading," said Sanholmes.

According to recent studies, 42 per cent of Canadian adults lack basic literacy skills. In addition, public schools are receiving less and less reading materials and other resources for literary means. Statistics Canada said that in 1970, public schools received the equivalent of three new books per child per year and nowadays schools receive less than one third of a book.

Statistics Canada reports that a one-per-cent increase in literacy adds \$18.4 billion to the economy.

"We donate a million-and-a-half dollars each year to schools across Canada to fund their libraries. It's a charity dear to our heart," said Laurie Delongchamp, general

manager of Chapters.

"I love this charity. It brings a tear to my eye whenever I see children with books. It opens a whole new world for children to be literate, to be able to read. You can always dream and hope and have wishes for the future within a book. It's a very amazing charity. The kids are so excited, and they love to read and the illustrations are so wonderful. It just lights up their faces."