

# St. Patrick's students cheer getting \$55,000 in books

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## Education Vice-principal hopeful grant will improve the school's low literacy rate

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SAINT JOHN - Indigo Books is spreading the love of reading by donating \$55,000 for books to St. Patrick's School on the lower west side.



Peter Walsh/Telegraph-Journal

Jeremy Abric, a Grade 5 student at St. Patrick's School, licks his lips as he gets a piece of cake from Julie McGoldrick, general manager of East Point Indigo Thursday. They were celebrating the \$55,000 worth of books the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation is giving the school.

The Indigo Love of Reading Foundation will be sponsoring 20 schools across the country. St. Patrick's is the only recipient of the grant in New Brunswick.

Winning schools are given \$55,000 to be spread out over three years, with \$18,333 funded each year. Ninety per cent of the money is a credit toward books of the school's choosing at Indigo stores and 10 per cent is in cash.

Louise Johnson, the vice-principal at St. Patrick's, directed the school's efforts for the grant. She began to apply in early January for a February deadline. She said it is an intensive process, complete with research and compiling details of the school's existing literacy programs, as well as the school's plans for the grant money.

"My staff here at the school is wonderful. They all go above and beyond in terms of putting in the hours after school and in the evenings," Johnson said of her thoughts on the school's chances for the grant prior to receiving it.

"I think that based on the staff that we have, and the resources we have, we do work hard to promote literacy. I thought we had a strong case."

A large part of the criteria for the grant was based on demographics. St. Patrick's has been deemed a high-needs area, both financially and academically. The school's library is stocked with what Johnson called "dated" books, some from New Albert School, which closed in 1997. Other books were even made from photocopied pages.

The school's literacy rates are also below normal, said the vice-principal, who is hopeful the grant will improve the low scores.

Students in the school's gym were singing excitedly to upbeat songs Thursday and waiting for a "surprise," as announced by their vice-principal. Representatives from the school district, teachers and Indigo employees were also in attendance.

There was anticipation in the air as all waited to hear what the surprise would be.

Johnson began the assembly with a slideshow, chronicling the literacy promotion events held this year at St. Patrick's.

She then introduced Julie McGoldrick, the general manager of East Point Indigo.

McGoldrick had a copy of *Oh, The Places You'll Go* by Dr. Seuss and told the crowd that the staff at Indigo had signed it for the school's library.

Then came the moment of surprise.

"One book is hard to share," McGoldrick said. "So we thought we'd give you a whole bunch of books - \$55,000 worth of books!"

Her exclamation was met by cheers from the student body, some nearly jumping with excitement.

"I think the kids are completely overwhelmed. I'm not sure they actually understand how much \$55,000 will actually mean to them," McGoldrick said.

"I would love to see the looks on their faces when they come back in September and see the change the books make in their classrooms."

Johnson, the St. Patrick's faculty and even students will have a say in what books will be selected for their libraries and classrooms.

"I want quality books that are going to last forever and the children, it's going to touch them and they are going to want to read them again and again," Johnson said.