



Turning Books into Bling

Woodbridge students choose charms to showcase reading **BY KELLY BASILE**

“THE MORE THAT YOU READ, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.” – Dr. Seuss.

When you enter the halls of Woodbridge Early Childhood Education Center (WECEC) in Greenwood, you will see hundreds of students proudly displaying colorful charms on necklaces around their necks. You will see all sorts of charms like guitars, stars and dinosaurs. But more importantly, you will see these children are inspired to read.

This is what WECEC aims to do every day with its students. “We wanted to find a way to get the students excited about reading,” says WECEC principal Kim Mitchell.

Studies show that the best way to increase fluency and develop vocabulary is to read. When the school’s original literacy program wasn’t quite serving the students effectively anymore, the Wizards of Words (WOW) team of teachers came together to design and implement a more creative,

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cost-effective way to both expose children to more books and encourage at-home reading.

The result was the Book Bling program, which incentivizes students in kindergarten through second grade to read more by rewarding a ticket when every 10 chapters or books are completed. The tickets are then turned in on Book Bling Day every Monday morning at the school's library in exchange for charms. Redeemed tickets are also saved for drawings of special prizes at several reading assemblies throughout the year.

To generate the students' excitement around the program, WECEC holds a Book Bling Kick-off Assembly at the beginning of each school year. At the assembly, reading is celebrated by having student athletes and cheerleaders from Woodbridge High School serve as role models and share their favorite books with the students. The cheerleaders also perform reading-related cheers. This is where the school charm goals are set for the year, and 2019 has the largest goal yet of awarding 3,000 charms schoolwide.

Assistant principal Dane Sears says, "There's nothing like it out there. And a defining moment for knowing the true impact of the program, was when the Greenwood Library called us."

The community library approached WECEC and proposed pairing their new summer reading program with Book Bling because they had so many kids asking about charms when visiting the library. The partnership is set up so that students anywhere in Sussex County who attend WECEC can register for the summer reading program and earn charms. The Greenwood librarian then comes to the kick-off assembly at the beginning of the school year and



recognizes summer reading participants with special charms.

"This community tie-in piece is very important aspect of the program," says Mitchell.

The Book Bling was implemented with several other schoolwide initiatives that the WOW team believed would encourage reading throughout the school. Other initiatives include "Idiom and Words of the Week" morning announcements, "Currently Reading Posters" hung by teachers outside their rooms, "Flashlight Fridays" to encourage tracking with their finger while reading and "Dr. Seuss Read Across America Week."

Mitchell reflects, "It's fun to see the kids come out of the library each Monday morning showing off their new football or glow in the dark charm. They're so proud!" ■

An advertisement for Delaware Tech. The background is a close-up photograph of hands working on architectural blueprints. One hand is holding a pencil, and another is holding a ruler. The text "DELTECH MAKES DELAWARE" is overlaid in large, bold, white and blue letters. Below this, the slogan "WE BUILD IT UP. WE DRIVE IT FORWARD. THEN WE DO IT ALL AGAIN." is written in blue. Further down, there is a paragraph of text and a call to action. At the bottom, the Delaware Tech logo (a green diamond) and the name "DELAWARE TECH" are displayed.

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