

READ FOR A BEAD

DELMAE HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
FLORENCE, SC

Every student needs a good education to be a good citizen. With this in mind, Delmae Heights' Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and others at the school implemented a program to link student reading to the community. For one month, students recorded the title of each book they read and wrote a sentence about the book in their Read-for-a-Bead Logs. Then, each student went to a participating local business, told about the book they read, and collected a red, blue, orange, green, or yellow bead, and a signature from the proprietor. When students read five books and collected all five colored beads, they delivered the completed log to their teacher.

The Literacy Coach placed the names of these students on the Bead Board in the cafeteria. These students qualified to play in the Bead Ball Games (free throw, volley ball, relay, and others). Students at each grade level rotated through the games led by parent volunteers. Refreshments were provided for all.

The ATP and Literacy Coach were well organized in planning Read for a Bead. Local businesses were invited to a Community Interest Meeting on how to partner with the school to increase students' reading skills. The local newspaper ran an article about the meeting to spark attendance. Each business—25 in all—that became a partner received a jar of beads of one color and a plaque that identified the site as a Read for a Bead stop for students. Five businesses were given each color bead to ensure that no place would be overwhelmed by student visitors. Some partners went further. For example, an orthodontist gave a free t-shirt to every student reader who visited him. A bank gave away piggy banks and contributed \$5 to a new student bank account (opened with parental permission). Chic-Fil-A donated reading bookmarks and free

meal cards for the school to give as prizes to every student who collected five beads.

The literacy coach visited all 30 classrooms at Delmae Heights to explain the project to students and answer their questions. Students were enthusiastic. During Read for a Bead month, 197 students participated, made 985 visits, and made necklaces of their colored beads. Some businesses received more than 100 visits from students and others just a few. One student said, "This is the most fun thing I have ever done in my life!" Parents enjoyed taking their children to visit the businesses. They also read books with their children at home.

At the end of the month, students and the Literacy Coach wrote thank you notes to each business partner. They all sent positive comments and were eager to partner again. The remaining beads and plaques were collected.

Other donations were made to the Bead Ball games to celebrate reading. Barnes & Noble donated gift cards that were raffled off to the readers. Wal-Mart sent volunteers to help staff the event and supplied free refreshments. Chic-Fil-A sent its cow to celebrate with the students.

Delmae Heights serves one of the most culturally diverse populations in the district. The well-organized project was a hit because everyone—students, parents, teachers, and business partners—understood the importance of reading. The manager at Barnes & Noble summed things up noting that reading is important for all students *and* for the future of the community.

TYPE 6

READING & LITERACY

Jill Russell
Read to Succeed Literacy Coach
jillrussell@fsd1.org
