



Read Better Be Better.®



Annual Report 2022 - 2023

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Mission

Read Better Be Better's mission is to connect young readers and youth leaders to inspire a love of literacy and learning.

Vision

Read Better Be Better envisions a world in which empowered communities demand equitable access to foundational skills.

Values

Be Excellent.
Be Kind.



Letter from the CEO

This year has, I think, felt to many on our team as one of evolution, but to me, it feels more like fruition.

When I first moved to Phoenix from Peru, I worked in a nonprofit role in which I witnessed, daily, the inequities of Arizona's education system. Students from different Arizona School Districts in different socioeconomic regions visited our experiential education programming and would arrive at the center with vastly different degrees of preparation. As such, some had a successful experience, and some struggled to get started. Those who were well-prepared left the center with improved confidence and positive academic impact. Too many children, the depressing majority of whom were students experiencing poverty, struggled to read the directions, and left frustrated and overwhelmed.

My purpose statement, or my 'why' is an acknowledgement and a commitment that when resources are equally distributed, then all children will have the opportunities for self-actualization that my economic privilege afforded me. It is only then when we will all thrive.

I was driven to found Read Better Be Better from that purpose. The end goal for me was always to address the root cause – an inequitable education system in which not all children can access the (unique) opportunities necessary for them to thrive.

Nine years later, the organization has built upon its proven-effective literacy intervention to develop a systems-change model that leverages the brilliance of students, the strength of educators and the power of community to ensure that a high-quality education is accessible to all students, with a particular focus on the importance of 3rd grade literacy as a foundation for equity and social justice.

The Pathways to the Education Profession and Pathways to Civic Leadership programs provide further leadership opportunities for Read Better Be Better student alumni to develop the skills and confidence to strengthen their communities through literacy. These young people, with lived experience of both the problem AND Read Better Be Better's effective solution, can power communities to more confidently demand equitable access to foundational skills.

Our organization has evolved from a programmatic response in 3rd grade to an entire

changemaker continuum from kindergarten through continuing education. We have had readers come back as leaders, and now even again as future educators.

While I am overwhelmed with gratitude and incredulous at the talent and commitment of the students, educators and the exceptional Read Better Be Better team that came together to build out this programming, I wouldn't say it's a change, exactly. My objective was always this, I just didn't know how it would happen. We needed to build credibility and confidence. We needed to build infrastructure for strength and sustainability. Ultimately, the specifics of the solution had to come from those closest to the problem – the students themselves.

This year, Read Better Be Better grew up. It was hard. We reflected and reinvested. Things became clearer. We grew into our original purpose. Next year will be our tenth year and I couldn't be prouder or more excited to celebrate that milestone. We have earned it.

Sincerely,
Sophie Allen- Etchart



Founder & CEO
Read Better Be Better
sophie@readbetterbebetter.org
(602) 374-8695



Letter from the Chair

I am immensely proud of my involvement and association with Read Better Be Better. Last year we gathered to consider how far we have come and how we want to evolve. Part of this process was an update to our vision statement. At the heart of our mission is a vision that guides our journey: “A world in which empowered communities demand equitable access to foundational skills.” This vision captures the reason for our work; it’s the north star that directs every strategy, program, and decision we make at RBBB.

Founded on the belief that literacy is a fundamental right and a cornerstone of personal growth and empowerment, Read Better Be Better has dedicated itself to serving our community’s children. Our commitment is rooted in the understanding that when children become proficient in reading, they are not just learning to read—they are reading to learn. This critical shift opens doors to endless possibilities, sparking curiosity, fostering independence, and laying the groundwork for lifelong learning.

As we reflect on our journey, I am overwhelmed by the impact of our collective efforts. Through the dedication of our staff and partners, we have witnessed remarkable transformations. Children who once struggled now read with confidence and joy. This is not merely an academic achievement; it is a lifechanging milestone that echoes into every aspect of their lives and our community.

Our leadership team is inspired by this vision, ensuring that every decision aligns with our goal of empowering children through literacy. We understand the profound responsibility that comes with this mission and are committed to being innovative, inclusive, and effective in our approach.

The success stories we’ve seen are testaments to what can be achieved when a community unites for a common cause. But our work is far from over. The path to a society where all children are independent and confident learners is a continuous journey, and we are ready to face the challenges ahead with renewed vigor and unwavering commitment.

Whether you are a long-time supporter or new to our cause, your involvement is invaluable. I hope you find this report meaningful and informative. Together, let's continue to make a profound difference in the lives of our children and, by extension, the future of our community.

Sincerely,
Rachel Aja

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Aja". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rachel" and the last name "Aja" clearly distinguishable.

Board Chair
Read Better Be Better



Governing Board Members

Read Better Be Better's Governing Board is comprised of leaders from our community. As members of the Board, these volunteers are charged with the responsibility of assuring the integrity of our organization by overseeing financial, structural, and policy decisions that guide the organization, staff and volunteers.



Rachel Aja
Board Chair
Cox Communications,
Manager of Government
& Regulatory Affairs



Noriana Hermes
Vice Chair
Young Center, National
Program Coordinator



Artem Tretiakov
Board Treasurer
Silicon Valley Bank,
Accounting Policy



Sophie Allen-Etchart
CEO & Founder



Laura Ory
Board Member
Marketing and
Community Volunteer



Dawn Wallace
Board Member
Flinn Foundation,
Vice President, AZ Center for
Civic Leadership



Mitzi Woodmore
Board Member
Organizational and
Leadership Development



Vince Yanez
Board Member
Helios Foundation, Senior
Vice President, Community
Engagement and Strategic
Partnerships

Read Better Be Better In-Office Staff



Lori Adukeh, Chief Operating Officer
Sophie Allen-Etchart, CEO & Founder
Cherie Arel, Executive Assistant
Rylie Boll, Pathways Program Coordinator
Dylan Bradsby, HR Coordinator
Danyelle Brown, Program Coordinator
Tanner Buckner, Program Coordinator
Cherrita Ceasar, Recruitment Outreach Coordinator
Danyelle Dean, Development Coordinator
Anthony Duchesneau-Berumen, Program Administrative Assistant
Kayla Duchesneau-Berumen, Operations Manager
Erika Fallon, Data Analyst
Shailee Haven Gardiner, HR Manager
Nia Hinkson, Program Manager
Megan Jefferies, Development Director
Linda Jensen, Program Manager
Lucia Lopez, Program Coordinator
Kristisha Mevises, Program Coordinator
Grace Nasr, Program Coordinator
Delainey Noe, Communications Coordinator
Alexandra Peck, Pathways Program Director
Alissa Trigo, Program Coordinator
Laura Tully, Community Site Coordinator
Camille Valenzuela, Program Director
Quinn Vasquez, IT Manager
John Vernon, Program Coordinator
Jordan Walkey, Community Based Organization Manager
Lacey Zellmer, Program Manager

RBBB Expansion



Read Better Be Better has had significant strategic growth within our organization. Our foundational programs, designed to support students in literacy and beyond, have expanded to serve more young minds. In addition to our core offerings, we've introduced new programs such as our Pathways to Education and Civic Leadership programs, broadening our impact and reach.

We've also welcomed new team members into key roles, enhancing our organizational structure to support this growth. In less than a year, we have added crucial positions such as Chief Operating Officer, Operations Manager, Pathways Program Director, IT Manager, and expanded staff roles in support of our program and community outreach. We're proud to note that we've promoted two exceptional individuals from within to assume leadership roles. Together, we look forward to advancing our mission and making a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve.

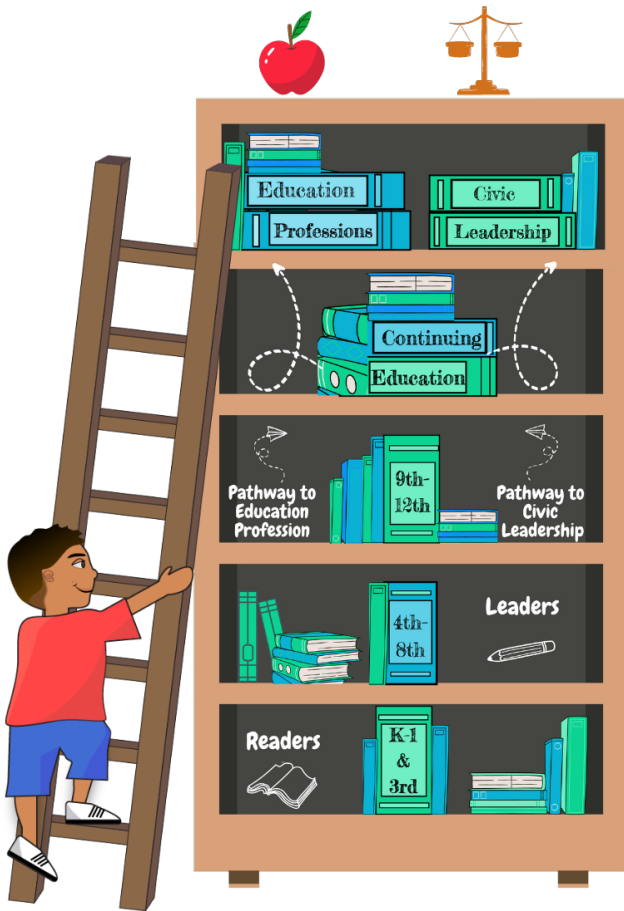


Programs

Read Better Be Better programs teach literacy skills to affect lasting change. These programs are designed to be a full-circle system of impact which we call the “Changemaker Continuum.” Students not only gain essential literacy skills but also the experience to become educators and civic leaders in their communities. By equipping students to go into their

neighborhoods as agents of change, we disrupt structural barriers in education and implement sustainable, community-led solutions.

Our goal is clear: to provide all students, regardless of economic, racial, or marginalized status, with the power of literacy. Through this approach, we’re not just improving individual lives; we’re working to transform entire communities for the better.

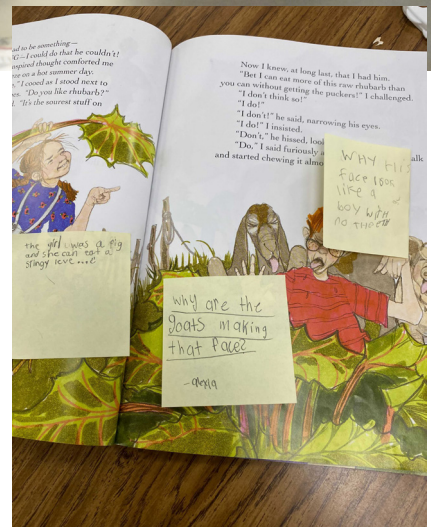


- **K-1 Program** – This prevention program pairs Kindergarten and 1st-grade Readers with 4th and 5th-grade Leaders to improve reading comprehension skills and bolster confidence in becoming a leader.
- **Core Program** – This intervention program pairs 3rd-grade Readers with 6th-8th grade Leaders to improve reading comprehension skills and bolster confidence in becoming a leader.
- **Pathways to the Education Profession (PEP) Program** - The PEP program is a “grow-your-own teacher” pipeline, providing high schoolers with a paid-internship opportunity working alongside RBBB staff during after-school literacy sessions.

- **Pathways to Civic Leadership (PCL) Program** – In collaboration with the Arizona Center for Civic Leadership at the Flinn Foundation, RBBB will pilot this program in Spring '24. PCL imagines participating students strengthening their communities as elected officials, public servants, nonprofit leaders, and community advocates, equipped with knowledge of, and tools to address Arizona's literacy crisis.



- **Community Program** – Brings our K-1 and Core programs to RBBB community partners throughout the state including local libraries, YMCA's, and other after school clubs. This program allows RBBB to expand its reach into communities which aren't already being served especially in rural areas.



Reaching entire communities, this prevention pathway stresses four main points of impact: Academic Growth, Leadership Development, Community Engagement, and Professional Development and engages a full range of student from kindergarten through college bound scholars. We believe literacy can be a vehicle for social justice, inspiring generations of engaged learners and leaders and uplifting the social and material conditions of communities in need.



Program Highlights

Reader Evaluations 2022-2023

89% of readers said they read better than they could before the program

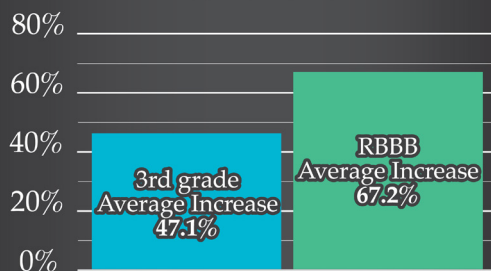
Leader Evaluations 2022-2023

9/10 Leaders said they have what it takes to be a good leader after the Read Better Be Better Program

Teacher Evaluations 2022-2023

79% of teachers said Read Better Be Better helped students enjoy reading

Dibels Daze Score Readers 2022-2023



School Program Highlights 2022-2023



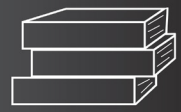
1,745
Readers



1,359
Leaders



7
K-1 Pilot
Programs



11,455
Books
Read

66 Schools

Income:

\$1,716,906

Expenses:

\$1,593,221

CBO Program 2022-2023

10 Community-Based Organizations

Caregiver Evaluations

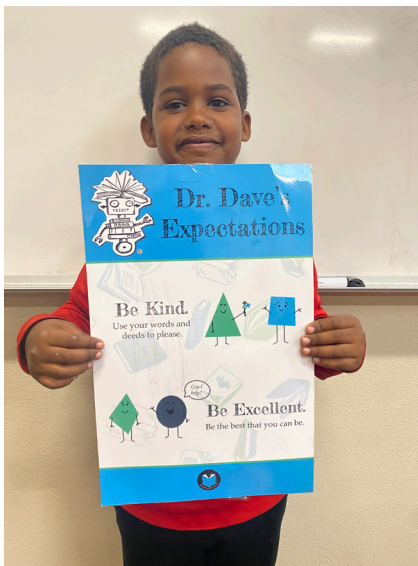
87% said their child understands what is read to them better than they did before.

91% said their child will choose to read, rather than any other activity, more often than they did before.

Testimonials

**"I started believing
in myself."**

Student, Jose Vega
James W. Rice Elementary

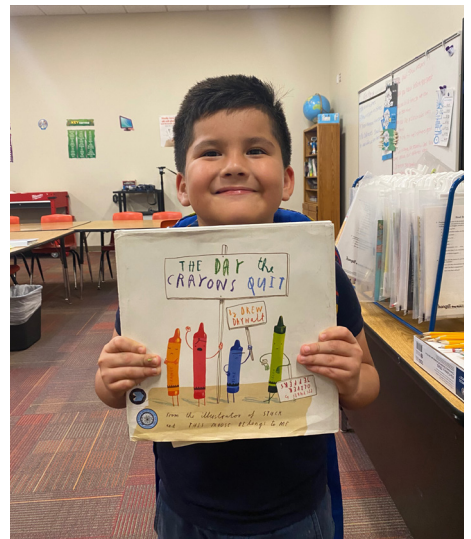


**"On my learning test
I had a 36 but once
I started (RBBB)
I got a 79."**

Reader, Kaylynn
Wildflower Elementary
School

**"I feel like I have
the confidence to
read out loud."**

Reader, Payton
James Family YMCA
Prescott



Participating Family Testimonial

Did you see any changes in your student's willingness to help after participating in RBBB?

Jude became more helpful with his little sister, which was amazing!

Have you noticed any change in your students reading habits/willingness to read at home?

Definitely! The biggest change I saw was that Jude would not read out loud at home before the RBBB program. Now he will read out loud with the family.

Do you have a particular story/experience that you would like to share?

One time Jude had to miss an afternoon with RBBB, due to a scheduling conflict and he was so bummed about it. He did not want to miss out on his "book club".



Partner School Testimonials

What observations do you have on the change in Leaders after participating in an RBBB program?

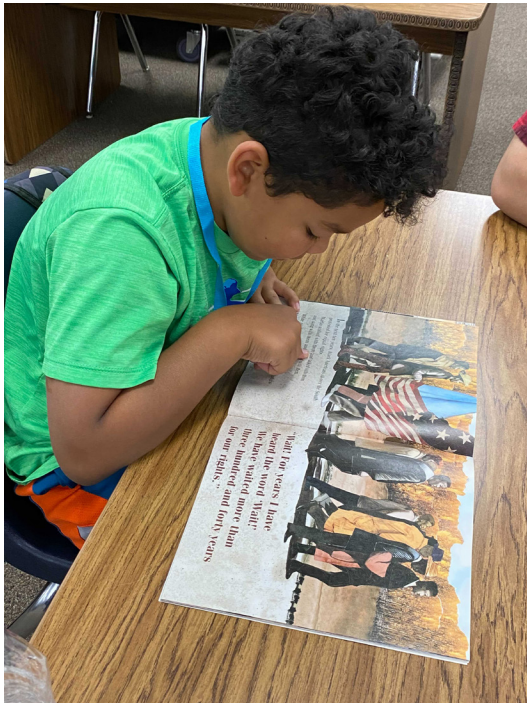
"The Avondale Elementary School District has Leaders that have participated in the RBBB program as not only Leaders but they started as Readers. Since some of them were Readers first I think the RBBB program has had a powerful impact on the Readers becoming Leaders. Our Leaders are ones who like to support the younger Readers and have taken the Leadership opportunity to heart!"

-Kellie Duguid, Assistant Superintendent Avondale ESD



What observations do you have on the change in Leaders after participating in an RBBB program?

I have noticed that the leaders have better attendance and are more engaged students after participating in RBBB. In the first semester, our leaders showed significant improvements in their reading fluency, growing by an average of 13 words per minute. They take the responsibility of leadership seriously, and they are so proud of their buddy's accomplishments!



Have you noticed change in Reader's reading habits or engagement?

Our readers are very excited to attend the program. I have noticed they are enthusiastic about reading new books due to RBBB.

How does Read Better Be Better build community within your school/organization?

RBBB has helped form new relationships between the older and younger students on our campus. It's so fun to see them waving to each other in the halls or on the playground. Our teachers and families all come to support graduation, which shows what a positive force the program is on our campus.

Do you have a particular story/experience that you would like to share?

All of the leaders in our current program are students who participated in the past as readers. They are passionate about the program because they know what an impact it had on them when they were younger, and they keep coming back each semester because they love it so much!

-Sarah, Club Sponsor, Madrid Neighborhood Schools in Alhambra



Helios Historic Investment

October 26, 2023

PHOENIX – Helios Education Foundation has awarded a \$1.5 million grant to Read Better Be Better to expand its evidence-based afterschool literacy programs and build a pipeline of teachers.

Read Better Be Better's flagship program has traditionally served second through fourth grade students as readers who work one-on-one with middle and high school student leaders on core reading comprehension strategies. They meet after school twice a week for 10 weeks. This approach helps younger students become beNer readers while older students, referred to as leaders, improve their leadership skills.

Local high school and college students also participate as trained program coaches, giving them teaching experience and inspiring them to become teachers. This comes at a time when statewide surveys by the Arizona School Personnel Administrators Association constantly show about a quarter of teacher positions remain vacant.

With this landmark, three year grant from Helios, Read Better Be Better will expand its full continuum programming to kindergartners and first graders across Maryvale in partnership with the Alhambra, Cartwright, Pendergast, and Peoria Unified school districts. Students from Glendale Community College will also participate as coaches.

"Over the years, we've seen the readers in our programs come back as youth leaders and become inspired to serve as teachers in their community," said Sophie Allen-Etchart, founder and CEO of Read Better Be Better. "This grant gives us an exciting opportunity to not only expand our programs to include earlier intervention in the K-1 grades, but also to help support middle and high school students interested in becoming educators and leaders in their communities."

There is an urgent need in Arizona to improve literacy. The most recent data shows just 41% of Arizona third grade students scored proficient or highly proficient on the AzM2 English language arts assessment. The rate was even lower for students from low-income backgrounds (27%) and Latino students (30%).

"We have a long way to go to reach our statewide goal to have 72% of third graders reading at grade level by 2030," said Paul J. Luna, president and CEO of Helios Education Foundation. "That is why we are partnering with Read Better Be Better and supporting their unique approach to help our youngest learners improve reading proficiency."

Helios has invested a total of \$2.2 million in Read Better Be Better's programing aimed at improving reading proficiency. That investment includes an efficacy study that will assess the impact and effectiveness of its literacy programs.

Notable Awards

Women of Achievement

2022 - 2023

Sophie Allen-Etchart and Read Better Be Better were profiled in the 2023 September issue of In Business Magazine. Sophie's leadership and community involvement were celebrated, along with the organization, Read Better Be Better (RBBB). At the event, Sophie shared her personal journey, the inception of RBBB, and touching anecdotes of the program's impact. She also spoke of the transformative story of three young men who were former Readers in our program who chose to come back as Leaders years later to serve their community. Sophie's dedication to education and equity shines through in her leadership of our organization.



Common Good Challenge

Read Better Be Better was one of the three organizations selected as winners of the Common Good Challenge. The goal of the Common Good Challenge is to encourage and highlight effective collaboration among teams with varied and possibly conflicting perspectives, all the while assisting them in finding shared objectives. This challenge focuses on diverse teams that are committed to finding solutions to persistent issues identified in their communities. RBBB was recognized for its unique cross-age tutoring program and for its commitment to improving Arizona's literacy crisis.

Education Forward Arizona – North Star Award

This year we were also honored with the Education Forward Arizona North Star Award in the Elementary and Middle School category. This recognition from Education Forward Arizona reaffirms our commitment to fostering collaboration, innovation, and excellence in literacy education. As Rich Nickel, President, and CEO of Education Forward Arizona, stated, “Education Forward Arizona represents the willingness of people from all parts of the state... to create better education opportunities.”

With this, Read Better Be Better continues to teach students essential skills for success in school and beyond.



Thank You to Our Generous Donors!

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 Katherine Anderson
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 State of Arizona - Governor's Office
 Arizona Community Foundation
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 City of Avondale
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 Erin Cornelius
 Cox Charities

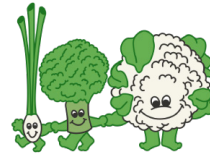
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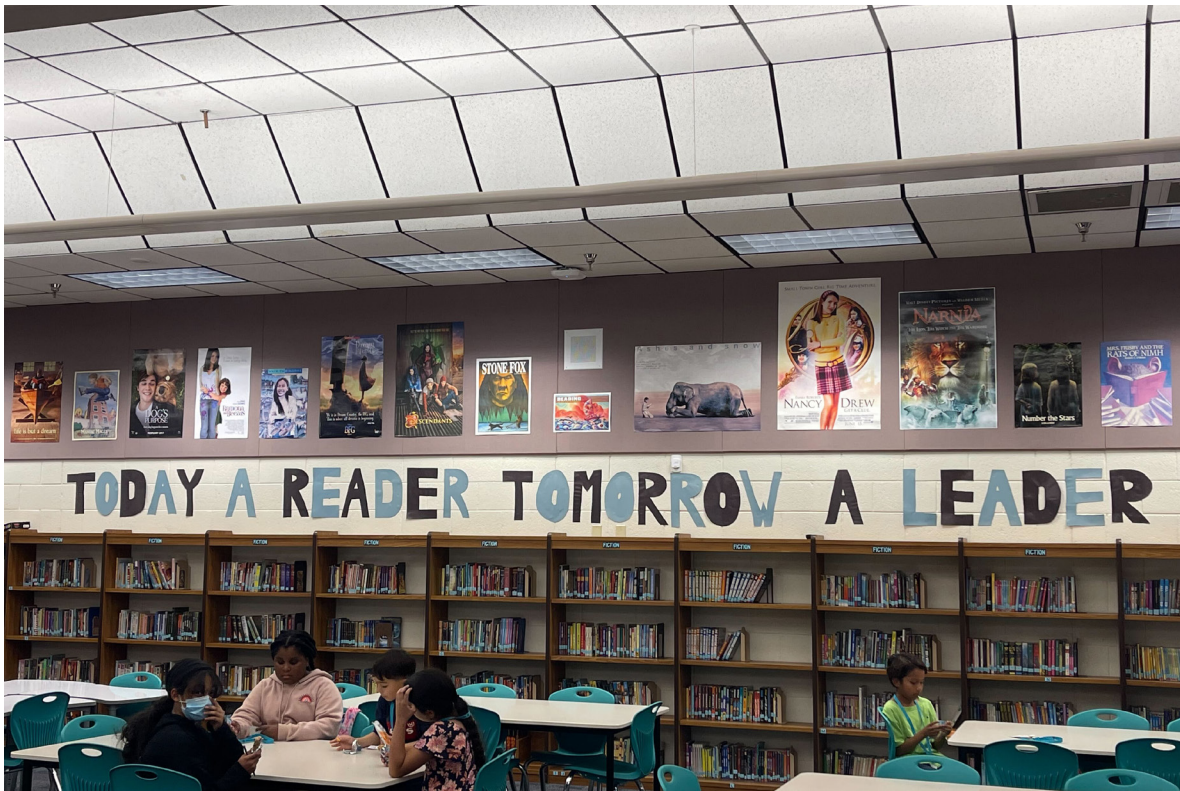
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