

Creating a passion for reading in the Vail Valley

Students celebrate Dr. Seuss, take part in Read Across America Day
Lauren Glendenning
lglendenning@vaildaily.com
Edwards, CO Colorado



Eagle County Charter Academy reading specialist Elizabeth Dekanich, dressed as the Cat in the Hat, helps students play a memory game about Dr. Seuss's books Monday in Edwards. The Eagle County Charter Academy participated in Read Across America Day to celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday.
Kristin Anderson | Vail Daily

EDWARDS, Colorado — Ten-year-old Ripley Bryant learned that she should always try something first before deciding if she likes it.

She learned that from "Green Eggs and Ham," by Dr. Seuss, which she read with her class at the Eagle Valley Charter Academy Monday for national Read Across America Day, which is also Dr. Seuss's birthday.

Keavy Quagliano, 9, loved reading the rhyming words in Dr. Seuss's books. She says the rhymes inspired her, and she learned a few new words.

The day of reading celebrates not only Dr. Seuss, but literacy. It was a perfect fit for the Youth Foundation's after-school literacy program. At Edwards Elementary alone, about 140 students ate cake, colored, listened to stories and most importantly, they read.

"In today's world when there's so much stimuli (like television and video games), we can't forget about reading," said Tricia Swenson, TV-8 host and a reading volunteer.

Vail Resorts 360 Engaging Kids in Community Program, a partnership with the Youth Foundation, helped sponsor the after-school reading events for the day. About 25 Vail Resorts employees read to children throughout the valley.

"We're looking at getting involved with programs that help kids achieve what they need to achieve in school," said Nicky DeFord, Vail Resorts spokeswoman.

Read Across America Day tries to instill in children the idea that reading is fun — something that Youth Foundation Executive Director Susie Davis said is especially important.

"We take fun very seriously," she said. "We think it's very serious that (the kids) have a good time."

Reading aloud to children promotes their development of language and other literacy skills, according to the National Reading Panel, a government panel that studies ways to teach children to read. Reading aloud to children is also a time when parents and children share attention and emotions, and it reinforces that reading is fun, according to the panel.

At the Eagle County Charter Academy, fun was not forgotten. The students who read "Green Eggs and Ham" got to eat green eggs and ham for breakfast. Their faces lit up with excitement, and some with fear, as teacher dished out the green scrambled eggs onto little plates. Ripley said that's why she learned the lesson to try things first before making

an opinion — she ended up liking the eggs a lot.

Mason Putnam, who says he is 6 and a quarter years old, liked the “tongue twisters” in the Dr. Seuss books he read. He got so excited when he started talking about the rhymes in all of the books.

Those rhymes make the reading more enjoyable and easier for the students, said Elizabeth Dekanich, the reading specialist at the Eagle County Charter Academy. The books are something the kids like reading over and over again, when some books by other authors are hard to get through even once, she said.

That repeat reading is what helps them learn to be fluent readers. They get the rhythm down and they end up having more emotions and excitement about what they’re reading, she said.

“Dr. Seuss (books) evoke a lot of passion in the kids,” Dekanich said.

And the simple lessons learned in Seuss’s books go a long way, too. In both “The Sneetches” and “Green Eggs and Ham,” the lesson stuck with many of the young readers.

“I learned you shouldn’t judge something by the way it looks,” said 9-year-old Katie Coine.

Lauren Glendenning can be reached at 970-748-2983 or lglendenning@vaildaily.com