

Going by the book, schools rise to the occasion

By Andrew Murfett

September 4, 2005



Keen readers (from left) Nicole Todino, Thomas Uhe, and Leo Lee, of Mitcham Primary School.
Photo: Ken Irwin

ACCORDING to principal Ian Sloane, literacy has always been a passion for the staff and students at Mitcham Primary School.

In fact, the school's appetite for books is unmistakable in the hall leading to Mr Sloane's office. A giant thermometer towers over much of the wall, indicating that all 128 students who entered the Premier's Reading Challenge have completed it.

The Premier's Reading Challenge was a State Government idea supported by *The Sunday Age*.

Children from school years 3 to 9 were asked to read 12 books by August 16. Ten of the books had to come from a recommended list of titles available on the official website. Next weekend, *The Sunday Age* will publish a supplement that names the 55,500-plus students who completed the challenge.

Premier Steve Bracks will host a ceremony this Wednesday that will honor some of the challenge's outstanding participants. Mitcham Primary will send four students to the ceremony, including Leo Lee, Thomas Uhe, and Nicole Todino.

Mr Sloane says the students had had additional time to make choices for the challenge.

"Leo is always down there, anyway, he's a really avid reader," he notes.

Leo is particularly fond of the Harry Potter series. "The Harry Potter books have good plot, the characters are really good, and it doesn't reveal too much," he says.

A particularly advanced reader, Leo found the challenge's list "too easy", and instead opted to read books from the grade 5 and 6 list.

Leo says he likes longer books because "they keep me going for a while".

Mr Sloane credits one of Mitcham's teachers, Velda Jefimovs, as an important part of the challenge within the school and a key to its success.

Lousie Brewer, a grade 2-3 teacher, says the school's grade 2 students, who were too young to officially enter the challenge, were so keen to enter that the school produced its own certificates for

grade 2 students who read more than 10 books during the challenge time.

"They are hoping the challenge returns next year so that they can participate," Ms Brewer says.

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