**Project LIT (“Literacy In The”) Community @ BPMS**

We started a chapter here at Bay Point Middle at the beginning of the school year. The core beliefs of this nationwide movement are:

* Students deserve access to great books.
* Students deserve time to read, discuss, and celebrate these books during the school day (as well as at home).
* If we increase book access + improve reading attitudes, we will see better reading outcomes.

Students who are regular library visitors are excited about the selection of books which have characters they can relate to.

We began with about 15 core students who were interested in the idea of starting a Project LIT book club at our school and were introduced to the selection of titles. They helped to find books from the Project LIT Middle Grade level list that we should focus on.

The first title they chose to read and discuss as group was New Kid, by Jerry Craft. This is a title that our students definitely enjoy reading and discussing. They have been recommending it to their friends. I started with 30 copies and they are very much in demand- all copies are checked out, with a waiting list of 8 students, as of today.

Our first official meeting was held after school in late October and had zero students in attendance.

The time of the club was changed to lunchtime (A-B-C lunches on Thursdays) in order to accommodate students’ busy schedules. Student attendance has increased from about 15 students total, at first meeting in early Nov., to over 38 students currently.

We use posters and ads on our morning show to spread the word but I believe the popularity of the book itself is what is driving the membership to increase in numbers.

Our next book club selection will be Greg Neri’s Ghetto Cowboy. The author is a Tampa Bay resident and writes fiction based upon real people and events. This book is the basis of a soon to be released major motion picture and has been very well reviewed. With the support of our principal and our PTA, we have secured funding to invite Mr. Neri for a school visit.

After learning about our project, our wonderful Reading Coach, Shan Triplett, worked with Ms. Striggles and our Language Arts team to create a lesson using excerpts from the book. What a difference this has made! I had to rush order 50 copies for class sets and will be ordering 25 more to meet current teacher demand. It is being read in a civics class as well. I estimate over 200 students will be reading and discussing this book.

Furthermore, I have students who are “stampeding” to the library to sign up for Project LIT. We now have over 50 students who are signed up and eager to get their own copy of the book to read on their own and discuss at book club.

Ads are set to air on morning show this week, inviting ALL students at BPMS to read this title. They will be signing up through language arts classes this week. I anticipate the numbers will increase. One of our language arts teachers believes it is a book that has the potential to be read school-wide by over 900 students.