

422 Valverde Commons Dr
Taos, NM 87571
January 23, 2020

Dear Joy of Reading,

This is my fourth school year working with students at Taos Day School. I am so appreciative of the students we are blessed to read with every week, watching these young children gradually grasp how and why to read. Even more rewarding is watching them blossom as human beings.

I have read one-on-one with kindergarteners, first and second graders. The growth from the beginning to the end of the school year is remarkable.

Earlier this year, my little nearly 5-year-old had trouble sitting still for even five minutes. Now she comes to the library and immediately chooses a pile of books to share with me. Then we settle into chairs and she hurries through an ABC book, which she couldn't do a few months ago. Then with rare needing to get something, I read her stories — the half hour is gone before we know it.

Last year I worked with a different kindergartener who was very unhappy, was disruptive in her classroom, and who had little interest in joining me to focus on books. This year she comes into the library smiling, runs over and gives me a big hug, and then she reads to me expressively, engaging in the story. We recently read a book about sharing snacks, stories, toys, etc, in the classroom. When she read that we share secrets, she corrected the author and told me that in her Taos Day School first grade class, they do NOT share secrets. She proceeded to explain how two girls had been whispering about a third girl and made her cry. The whisperers were asked to instead find nice things to say about the girl whose feelings they had hurt, and my little friend told me they succeeded in making the sad girl laugh and fixed the situation. I was so proud of my little friend and told her so — talk about empathy! I feel that our time together, six-year-old and adult, one-on-one, is invaluable in sharing this kind of feelings and in developing emotional intelligence. The continually improving reading skills and comprehension are the added bonus!

The children really look forward to the book giveaways, which occur approximately monthly. Many come from homes with limited resources and few books. The program provides books for everyone in each class, not just the kids who come to us for extra attention with their reading. Books cost money, and financial help is much needed.

I have received many expressions of appreciation from the classroom teachers and from the principal. However the smiles on those little faces are the biggest reward! Hopefully the Joy of Reading program receives the necessary funding to flourish.

Sincerely,
Kristin Ulibarri

