Reflecting on Embracing Dr. Seuss' Differences Day 2017

By Beth Duda

Classrooms were abuzz with volunteers and books
The excitement was real, all you had to do was look.
They talked about acceptance, tolerance and more
With smiles that filled the rooms, from ceiling to floor.
In some rooms cheers were heard when it became known...
That each child would get a book to keep as their own.

My apologies to Dr. Seuss! But, in thinking about all the activity surrounding Embracing Dr. Seuss' Differences Day, which was held on March 2, 2017, I couldn't help but break into rhyme. Throughout Manatee and Sarasota counties, more than 600 classrooms had volunteer readers arrive to share the wisdom of Dr. Seuss on what would have been his 113th birthday.

The excitement and joy could be felt in every school. Many schools and
classrooms made the day even more special with the addition of Dr. Seuss hats, costumes, stickers, and even cookies.

Dr. Seuss' use of rhyme and whimsy delight audiences of all ages, and that combined with the serious messages in his books of acceptance, tolerance, and taking care of the world and each other brought a depth of meaning to the connections between the volunteers and the students.

**Embracing Our Differences** partnered with the **Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading** with support from the **Community Foundation of Sarasota County, Manatee Community Foundation, The Patterson Foundation, and United Way of Manatee County** to bring this special day to life.

Research tells us in middle-income neighborhoods the ratio of books per child is 13 to 1, but in low-income neighborhoods, the ratio is 1 age-appropriate book for every 300 children. In order to change that sobering statistic, students in many participating classrooms in Title 1 schools also received their very own copy of a Dr. Seuss book to add to their home libraries.

We are grateful to the hundreds of volunteers who shared their love of reading with children throughout the Suncoast region.

**Embracing Dr. Seuss' Differences Day:**

- Total number of Students participating from Manatee and Sarasota counties: 11,482
- Total number of classrooms with Volunteer Readers: 636
- Total number of Dr. Seuss books given to children in Title 1 schools: 3,360
- Total number of Dr. Seuss books given to teachers in all schools: 640
- Total number of Dr. Seuss books distributed: 4,000

**Embracing Dr. Seuss' Differences Day Photo Album**

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**Focus On Early Education**

By Bronwyn Beightol

On March 2, Bronwyn Beightol, Chief Operating Officer of the United Way of Manatee County, was featured as a guest columnist in the Herald-Tribune writing about her observations on the "development of 'connective tissue' that can help our communities improve the lives of children and families."
She expands on three recent events: the ALICE report; the Florida Chamber of Commerce vision for ending the cycle of generational poverty; and the introduction to a new program for Sarasota and Manatee counties, Reach Out and Read.

*Click each image to learn more.*

*What is the common thread?*

Bronwyn says, "Recognition that a consistent, dedicated, collaborative focus on our children's education is imperative to community and individual
Mind in the Making

The Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is committed to bringing Mind in the Making to parents, grandparents, child care professionals, early learning educators, and caregivers. If you are interested in individually participating in these important workshops, or would like to have a series of workshops at your place of employment, church, or community organization, please contact bduda@thepattersonfoundation.org

The Seven Essential Life Skills, With Ellen Galinsky | Big Think Mentor (7:13)