

As Reading Recovery teachers and teacher leaders, we must reach beyond our Reading Recovery roles to advocate for struggling readers. We have to gather the important numbers and present them to district decision makers so they can make informed decisions. In these economically tough times, our district administrators are under pressure to operate in cost-effective ways. Prevention of literacy failure is a wise and responsible use of funding.

*Cynthia Owens, teacher leader  
Nixa Public Schools  
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### Building community support through fun reading events

Reading Recovery students and teachers in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, celebrate children's progress during a Reader's Café held at the end of each school year. All students who have received Reading Recovery lessons during the year select their favorite Reading Recovery books to take along when they are bused to the hosting school. There, they enter a gymnasium decorated around a reading theme such as "Take a Ride on the Reading Railroad" where paper trains showing pictures of each student smiling out a window decorate the walls, or "Read S'More Books" where campsites complete with faux campfires provide cozy places for students to sit and read.

Each student invites parents, grandparents, cousins, and friends to attend the Reader's Café and listen to students read. Other community members—district office personnel, firemen, policemen, sheriff deputies, public librarians, the city mayor, and more—are also invited to listen to the children read and celebrate



*Jesse and his handler, Theresa McKinney, are members of the Tales of Joy R.E.A.D. (Reading Education Assistance Dogs) Program within the Rio Rancho Schools and New Mexico community. Theresa, coordinator of the local program, and Jesse were first invited to participate in the Reader's Café in April 2006 and have been listening to children read ever since!*

their accomplishments. The local chamber of commerce sends invitations to its members, and many local business people attend. The students love traveling from person to person, reading aloud and sharing the stories they have grown to love.

As much as the students love reading to community members, the highlight for all the children is one

special visitor they have all grown to love. Though not the actual star made famous in the series of books written by Mia Coulton, a Danny look-alike listens to children read. The role of Danny is played by Jesse, a yellow labrador retriever and reading therapy dog. Jesse brings his human friend, Theresa, and three or four of his reading therapy dog bud-