

EDUCATION

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MIXING IT UP:
Students are asked to move outside their comfort zone.

TUESDAY

SNOOZING TEENS:
Does your high school student sleep through class? Ways to energize them.

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Phoenix librarians enlist elementary aides

By Connie Cone Sexton
The Arizona Republic

Phoenix librarians are out to create a generation of readers, and they are pinning their hopes on first-graders. First-graders like Mia Aguilar. And Jacob Murrietta. And Marissa Godson.

These three were seen beaming this month while standing in the middle of the children's section of the Burton Barr Central Library. They each sported a multicolored necklace with a clip-on library card of their very own.

Mia, Jacob and Marissa had arrived with several of their fellow Kenilworth Elementary School classmates to participate in the city's GOAL (Grade One At the Library) project.

Now in its seventh year, the program is continuing its simple mission: Put a library card into the hands of every first-grade pupil in the city. GOAL has distributed more than 80,000 cards to first-



Photos by Michael Grog/The Arizona Republic

Brooke Bessesen keeps first-graders from Kenilworth Elementary School enthralled during a GOAL project trip to a Phoenix library.

graders in that time. No. 100,000 should come through the doors of the main library or one of its branches this year, said Carol Finch, project GOAL coordinator.

Elaine Meyers, who supervises children and teen services at the Central library, said librarians have seen increasing numbers of children arrive with their families.

"It becomes a family habit," she said.

Mia, 6, knows only that she came that morning to get something special. "Having a library card is going to help me learn," the *Cat in the Hat* lover whispered.

Jacob, 7, said he'll like coming to the library to look for books, especially "ones about cheetahs." Marissa, 6, simply smiled as she clung to the *Surprise Garden*.

Packets of information are sent to first-grade teachers in public and private schools.

"We sent out all materials in September, and they're coming back to us, maybe 30 packets a day," Finch said. She estimates 1,000 first-grade classrooms can be found across Phoenix.

Each first-grade classroom that participates gets the book *look who lives in the desert!* by Scottsdale resident Brooke Bessesen. The book was published by *Arizona Highways*, one of the library's partners for the GOAL project.