



West Royalty Elementary School students, from left to right, Kate Richard, Grace Richard and Matthew Cole are more keen to dive into books since taking the Summer Tutoring Program for Kids. GUARDIAN PHOTO BY JIM DAY



James McCormack was one of the approximately 30 students Ashley MacIntyre tutored this year under the Summer Tutoring Program for Kids. SUBMITTED PHOTO

By JIM DAY

TRANSCONTINENTAL MEDIA

Ashley MacIntyre cracked open more than her share of books over the summer.

The 22-year-old UPEI student helped close to 30 children with their reading.

MacIntyre, who is studying to be a teacher, has spent the past two summers working as a tutor with the Summer Tutoring Program for Kids.

She tries to open the students' eyes to how important reading is without making the tutoring session seem like a chore.

"We do a lot of activities to make reading fun . . . so they don't see it like a school in the summer time," said MacIntyre.

She works one-on-one with each student for one hour a week for eight weeks.

The time MacIntyre and many like her spend tutoring students in this program gets high marks from all connected. Program coordinator Jinny Greaves says an evaluation done with parents, resource teachers, tutors and students indicates the program is making the grade.

"So we always get lots of feedback — 95 per cent of it is positive," said Greaves.

"You can't please everybody but for the most part everybody is happy with it."

Greaves says students, when asked what they learned about themselves during the tutoring program, commonly respond that they like reading and that they are smart.

"I learned that I loved the library (a lot)," one student wrote in his evaluation of the program.

Noted another: "I like books."

MacIntyre was touched by the way one of her tutoring subjects chose to answer the survey question: 'If you could change one thing from the program, what would it be?' The child could not think of anything that needed to be changed because he learned so

much from his tutor MacIntyre, who he called The Great One.

"It makes it all worthwhile, for sure . . . to reach someone and make them realize that reading is fun," she said. "It's a great feeling."

The number of students being reached by the Summer Tutoring Program for Kids is growing.

The Public Library Service began the program in 1998 with five tutors and 97 students in eight libraries.

In 2001, the P.E.I. Literacy Alliance became the main force behind the program. With sponsorship from the likes of the Public Library Service, Rotary Club of Charlottetown Royalty, the Post-media Raise-A-Reader program (sponsored on P.E.I. by Transcontinental Media), the three Island school boards, the Department of Education and Service Canada, the program has flourished.

This past summer, 25 tutors taught more than 800 students from grades 1 to 6 in some 25

libraries across the Island. Still, more than 60 students were on a waiting list.

"I guess it shows there is a greater need than we can actually meet," said Greaves, who feels hundreds more children could be helped by the program.

Resource teachers recommend students who may need some extra reading help over the summer. Individual strategies, based on level of literacy skills, are developed for each student who ends up in the program.

Greaves says one of the goals of the program is to instill the love of reading in the children. To that end, tutors use fresh approaches to engage the students.

"We don't want them to just sit down and force the kid to read," she said. "So we want them to be creative and innovative."

Recent research from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) looks at school engagement and engagement in reading and correlates them directly with higher achievement and future success in school and life, notes Greaves.

"Another interesting correlation in the PISA results is between confidence and achievement," she added.

"We can see from the

comments from both children and parents that confidence is raised by the Summer Tutoring Program for Kids."

The provincial government released Excellence in Education: A Challenge for Prince Edward Island in 2005. The recommendations included the importance of early childhood interventions, specifically developing an intervention program for children identified as being at risk.

Greaves feels the Summer Tutoring Program for Kids is an example of how these children can be helped.

"A goal of the Excellence in Education report is to have all children learning to read by Grade 3," she said.

"This program aids in achieving that goal. We know from research that reading enjoyment and student and parent engagement are huge factors in reading attainment."

Greaves says its proven track record as a valuable community initiative should result in continued expansion of the program in order to benefit a greater number of children.

MacIntyre, who hopes to continue to work with the program in the summer, praises the program for its plentiful resources and quality training.

"I recommend it with anyone who plans to be a teacher," she said.

"It is such a good program for the tutors and the students."



Summer Tutoring Program for Kids co-ordinator Jinny Greaves, second from left, and resource teacher Debbie Dodds check out some reading material in the library with West Royalty Elementary School students Matthew Cole, Kate Richard, and Grace Richard. All three students took part in the program in the summer.

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