**Book to teach pupils finance**

**LR schools getting 12,000 copies of The Lemonade War**

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This article was published today at 3:32 a.m. Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

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Rotarian Kenny Gibbs (left) talks to the children of other Rotarians about the book The Lemonade War as the children sell lemonade at the Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock on Tuesday.

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http://media.arkansasonline.com/static/arkonline/images/icons/photo_icon.pngLittle Rock School District Superintendent Mike Poore addresses the weekly Rotary Club meeting at the Clinton Presidential Center, where he unveiled a...

Every child in kindergarten through fifth grade in the Little Rock School District will be given a copy of Jacqueline Davies' book *The Lemonade War* as part of an initiative to simultaneously promote reading skills and financial concepts.

Approximately 12,000 books -- including some audiobooks and some written in Spanish -- will be distributed with great fanfare in school assemblies to pupils throughout the state's largest school system on April 28, Little Rock Superintendent Mike Poore said Tuesday.

Along with the fictional story of a brother and sister who use their different skill sets in a competition to raise money, classroom lessons and family activities based on the concepts in the book will be provided. A culminating event celebrating the initiative will be held for students, their families, teachers and community members May 20 at the Clinton Presidential Center. Lemonade stands and yellow clothing will be prominent that day.

Poore described the One Book, One District shared reading initiative to about 150 members of Rotary Club 99 at a noon meeting Tuesday at the Clinton Presidential Center.

Partners in the initiative are Rotary Club 99 Foundation, Bank of the Ozarks and First Security Bank -- each of which has donated $10,000 to the purchase of the books for students and related materials -- and Economics Arkansas, which has developed the curriculum and activities based on the book.

"I hope first off that we as adults are saying, 'Oh my gosh, this is a huge win for this community. It's a huge win for us as an organization as we support the district,'" Poore said. "Secondly, this is going to be beneficial to families. This book is not just about financial literacy concepts. It's about family dynamics as well. That's what makes this book special as you get to read it, and I would encourage all of you to read it" as a way to increase buy-in to the initiative and to be the basis for conversations that civic leaders have with students they encounter.

"That's a game-changer, people. That's a game-changer in terms of what that does for a young person," Poore said.

Every chapter of the book begins with a definition of a marketing term, said Ericka McCarroll, principal of Bale Elementary School. Additionally, the characters in the book have to attempt to calculate sales and profits for their lemonade stands. Math problems are embedded throughout the book, she said.

"It's going to be amazing to see how students all over the district, from different backgrounds, receive the same messages about financial literacy," McCarroll said in thanking the program's backers.

Cynthia Collins, principal at Meadowcliff Elementary, echoed that gratitude, saying the *The Lemonade War* may be the book that makes a child a lifelong reader. She praised the book for its lessons on the importance of communications in resolving conflicts, working for a common goal and building goodwill.

The reading initiative and its focus on financial literacy at the elementary school level came about as a result of Poore's membership on the Economics Arkansas board of directors and that board's discussion a year ago about how to improve student understanding of finances. The conversation focused initially on high school students but then moved to teaching the skills to younger children.

The financial literacy focus is an extension of Read to Them, a nonprofit based in Richmond, Va., that works to educate families and schools about the importance of reading aloud at home.

A Bentonville School District principal in 2009 had urged a districtwide shared reading project after her school's success in a schoolwide shared reading project through the Read to Them organization. Poore had inherited the reading program while superintendent of the Bentonville district for five years before becoming Little Rock's school superintendent last year.

Poore said the financial literacy program is being adopted by other Arkansas school districts, including Magnolia, El Dorado and Texarkana, and it will be the subject of a presentation at a national conference later this year.

*Metro on 02/22/2017*

*Print Headline: Book to teach pupils finance*