

# TRASH TO TREASURE BOOK FAIR

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## RUTH LIVINGSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PASCO, WASHINGTON

Type 3

Oftentimes, the corporate-sponsored school Book Fair can, for students, become an event that's less about promoting good reading habits than about, well, buying stuff. To put the Book back in Book Fair, the Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) at Ruth Livingston Elementary scrapped the traditional, profit-driven event and started turning some students' literary leftovers into others' learning libraries.

In its sixth year, Ruth Livingston's week-long Trash to Treasure Book Fair brings together students, families, school staff, and community partners to contribute their time and resources to a thriving literary event. Gone are the fluffy pencils and glittery notebooks competing for kids' attention and dollars. Instead, students browse a broad sampling of gently used, affordable, and age-appropriate books.

Students and their families are involved from beginning to end. In the weeks before the fair, students bring their unwanted books to school, where they receive \$1 in Book Bucks for every two books they donate. Adult volunteers sort the books, removing any that are too worn for sale or inappropriate for an elementary student.

Students receive Book Bucks for their donations even if they are not put out for sale. At the same time, the ATP Co-Chairs advise, "Be picky . . . Parents don't want junk brought home."

Next, the volunteers see that all the books are cleaned and priced. Every book sells for \$1 or \$2. Chapter books, novels, and other upper-level books in good condition are \$2; board books, picture books, books for younger readers, and those more-than-slightly worn are \$1. Not all the books are displayed at once. Volunteers (working short shifts) re-stock the tables as the books are sold.

Students can visit the fair all week: before and after school, during recess, and as a class during

regularly scheduled library periods. Students who don't have any Book Bucks or money to spend can still browse or find a spot to read in the library.

Initially, organizers had trouble acquiring enough upper-level books. Since the first year, the PTO has provided \$400—the event's sole expense—to supplement the inventory with used books from local thrift stores.

The scale of the event remains impressive by any standard. This year, the ATP reports that 2,775 books were sold.

The fair provides teachers with an incentive they can use to encourage good work in the classroom. This year, they gave 315 students coupons for a free book for a Job Well Done! All 120 students who entered the district's annual Battle of the Books reading competition were rewarded with a coupon. Each teacher selected five books for his or her classroom. Another 65 books went to the school's library, which received every dollar of the fair's profits.

That said, the ATP Co-Chairs caution any team looking to turn Trash to Treasure in their schools: "Remember, it's about the students and the books, not the money."

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READING