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First 5 California celebrates National Read Across America Day with students at the Mustard Seed School

Students listened to story time, participated in activities and received free books

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Today, First 5 California celebrated National Read Across America Day with preschool and Kindergarten students at the Mustard Seed School in Sacramento.

The Mustard Seed School provides temporary emergency schooling for homeless children as they look for permanent housing and transition back into school.

“We’re here to encourage a love of language and reading with children, and provide them with books and activities that can move with them as they go,” said First 5 California Executive Director Camille Maben.

“Some of these students don’t have books of their own or educational activities outside of school, so it’s great that First 5 California provided them with their own bag of books and fun,” said Casey Knittel, teacher and Assistant Director at the Mustard Seed School.

Maben started the day by singing songs and playing her autoharp with about 15 students ranging in age from 3-5.

She read stories including Scholastic’s *Lola Loves Stories* and First 5’s *Potter the Otter Loves to Drink Water*, as well as Dr. Seuss’s *Oh the Places You’ll Go* in honor of his birthday.

Directly after story time, students joined First 5 California’s “edutainers” outside for a series of activities with its Hands-On Health Express that works to educate parents on healthy living while also entertaining the kids with positive messages about fruits and veggies, and exercise.

Each student was given a reusable bag filled with First 5 California resources such as crowns, crayons, coloring sheets, a puppet, stickers and 2 books printed in both English and Spanish.

“We’re glad to reach a group of children who are so eager to learn,” said Maben. “It’s important that we build on their interest as they grow and enter school. Reading and talking to your children from the start helps to build critical vocabulary and language skills.”

About First 5 California

First 5 California, also known as the California Children and Families Commission, was established after voters passed Proposition 10 in November 1998, adding a 50-cent tax on tobacco products to fund education, health, childcare and other programs for at-risk children ages 0-5 and their families. We are the only state affiliated Commission working to improve the quality of California’s preschool programs. We fund programs that educate parents, grandparents, caregivers and teachers about the critical role they play during a child’s first five years. Since our creation, we’ve supported millions of families with programs and services designed to help more California kids grow up healthy and ready to succeed in school – and in life. www.first5california.com/parents.

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