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## 15 fifth-graders read their way to lunch with D-Backs pitcher

**Betty Reid**

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Some fifth-graders from Sierra Vista School had an incentive to read a bunch of books: a chance to eat lunch with Arizona Diamondbacks pitcher Brandon Webb.

Tiffany Nowacki's students logged in 1,756 hours of reading outside of school during August and October. Those numbers allowed Nowacki's 15 students to travel to a Chandler Outback Steakhouse last week, where they toured the restaurant and had lunch with Webb.

Her students, determined to win a lunch date with a star athlete, read so much that it didn't immediately dawn on them that they had achieved the goal they had set for themselves.

"We came back and I asked the kids, 'How many of you set a goal and reached it?' Every single child said, 'This is the first time.' And I cried," Nowacki said.

The Roosevelt Elementary School District is connected with Webb's foundation. It focuses on getting students to read. The foundation selected Roosevelt because it believed students there would benefit most from the program. Nowacki's students competed against other Roosevelt fifth-grade classes. Roosevelt has 1,350 fifth-graders.

Nowacki said her students' writing improved during the contest. When the teacher reads research papers, for example, she notices the work is more elaborate and the students' spelling and vocabulary have improved.

Melissa Gable, the foundation's executive director, said the students are cheeseburgers, steaks and ribs. Many were shy, so conversation stayed pretty on reading.

Oh, and a little bit of writing, too: The students walked away with autographs.

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