



BOOKS & BADGES FACT SHEET

Linking police recruits with elementary school students

THE PROGRAM

In an effort to build relationships between the community and the police department, and to inform police recruits of the serious issue of education inequity, and to improve reading and language skills in elementary school students, recruits attending the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department Academy spend one hour a week reading and writing with students in classrooms in several elementary schools in the St. Louis Public Schools. It is hoped that this will be a model that can be applied nationally by other police departments.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- To enhance the image of police in the community by presenting recruits as positive, helpful role models which affects children's perception of law enforcement
- To develop in police recruits sensitivity to and knowledge of the communities, neighborhoods, and children they will be protecting
- To improve reading, language and social skills of elementary school students
- To promote the enjoyment of reading, writing and oral communication thereby increasing confidence and self-esteem
- Build rapport between the students, the police and the community

Police Chief Sam Dotson hopes that some of the students will be motivated to become police officers.

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

Books and Badges has been or is in the following schools: Dewey, Mullanphy, Shaw, Shenandoah, Sherman, Sigel, Woerner and Woodward Elementary Schools. Each school has low test scores, a principal willing to participate in the program and students who are reading below grade level. Books and Badges started in November 2002 and has also been in these schools: Adams, Clay, Cote Brilliante, Hodgen, Lyon, Meramec, Oak Hill, and Scruggs.

HOW IT WORKS

Each Academy class of 25-40 recruits is divided into pairs with each pair working with the same classroom every Tuesday afternoon, for several months of their time in the Academy. Before the first visit, the recruits are given training on how to read and write with students to help them be successful and effective reading partners.

EVALUATION

A study by Saint Louis University in 2006 determined that Books and Badges provides a valuable service for both the schools it serves and for the recruits. The principals and teachers were overwhelmingly positive about the program and the benefits it brings to their schools. The recruits, in general, rated the program highly and saw similar benefits as the principals through the development of positive relationships with students and learning to form relationships with young people. Evaluation questionnaires given to recruits since the 2006 study continue to support Books and Badges as an effective program. Most of the recruits either agreed or strongly agreed that the students enjoyed reading and writing with them and that Books and Badges had improved police and youth relationships, given them a better understanding of young people in the community and contributed to a better relationship between law enforcement and the schools. As one recruit stated, Books and Badges "opened my eyes to the young as well as the schools that I will be involved with in the future."