

Jensen Elementary Students Receive Mensa Excellence In Reading Award

Three Jensen Elementary students collaborate to accomplish the outstanding task of achieving the Mensa Excellence in Reading Award by the Mensa Foundation®

URBANDALE, Iowa – September 26, 2016 – What do “Paul Revere’s Ride” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and “The Tale of Despereaux” by Kate DiCamillo have in common? They were two of 60 selections, consisting of novels and poetry, read by three [Jensen Elementary](#) students during their third grade year in order to achieve the Mensa Excellence in Reading Award. Emma Brown, Caroline Morris and Omnyi Ojeke, now in Mrs. Johnson’s fourth grade class, worked throughout their third grade year to advance their studies in literature. By meeting together in a book club and weekly over their lunch break, Brown, Morris and Ojeke were able to successfully complete the task of reading the entire Mensa Foundation reading list resulting in the Mensa Excellence in Reading Award.

“I would have never read these amazing books without the Mensa List,” said Ojeke. “This taught me that if you work hard amazing things will happen. When I am reading my mind lets loose. With great books I go into a different world.”



Jensen Elementary Mensa Excellence in Reading Award winners: Emma Brown, Caroline Morris and Omnyi Ojeke with Jensen Elementary Extended Learning Program Teacher Janine Choudhury.

“For me, what I got was the reading because I love reading,” said Brown. “Reading gives me peace. I liked the challenge, too, because it made me go up two levels in reading!”

Throughout the district students and teachers are partners in education in order to help students grow their literacy skills. One aspect of literacy development is to help students discover their own joy in reading which serves to enhance many aspects of their educational experience.

“I liked it because it got me to read books that I don't usually read but I ended up liking them,” said Morris. “Don't judge a book by its cover—I can be too picky about books that I read.”

Recently, the district had the honor of hosting the Governor’s Special Assistant for Education Linda Fandel, Iowa Department of Education Director Ryan Wise and Governor Terry Branstad during the Governor’s fall reading tour. Throughout the visit the Governor and his team had an opportunity to learn more about the specific actions Urbandale is implementing which are resulting in significant gains in literacy achievement—with early literacy scores having improved the most of large school districts in the state—in both the Iowa Assessment and FAST (Formative Assessment System for Teachers) Early Literacy measurements.

“I noticed that the girls were struggling to find a book that they would like,” said Jensen Elementary Extended Learning Program Teacher Janine Choudhury. “They were getting stuck in book series that are fun, but not as rich in text. There is some incredible literature out there; working through this list gave my students the chance to explore genres and authors. The district librarians were very helpful in sending books over from different schools if we did not have a copy or needed multiple copies. The kids worked so diligently and I am proud of their achievement!”

With literacy scores on the rise and students sharing feedback that they are becoming more and more engaged in their reading, the district would like to recognize and thank students, families, teachers and staff for their collective efforts in making literacy a priority in the lives of all students. Urbandale congratulates Brown, Morris and Ojeka for their commitment to meeting the Mensa Foundation’s requirements throughout the school year and is proud of their teamwork and collaboration in achieving the Mensa Excellence in Reading Award. In addition, the district extends a special thank you to Choudhury for her leadership, inspiration and mentorship of these outstanding students. To learn more about how Urbandale is transforming education, visit: UrbandaleSchools.com and follow on Twitter [@UrbandaleSchool](https://twitter.com/UrbandaleSchool).

About Mensa Education & Research Foundation®

The Mensa Education & Research Foundation benefits society by inspiring and empowering intellectually gifted people. For more than 40 years the Foundation has supported the best and brightest through scholarships and awards. It encourages research and intellectual inquiry through the Mensa Research Journal and its various Colloquiums. Governed by a volunteer Board of Trustees, the Mensa Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization and is funded by American Mensa, Mensa members and other charitable donations. To learn more about the Foundation and the scholarship program, visit: mensafoundation.org

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About Urbandale Community School District

The Urbandale Community School District includes portions of Des Moines and Urbandale, Iowa. The District serves over 3,900 students in six elementary schools, one middle school and one comprehensive high school. The Urbandale District supports an increasingly diverse student population where 47 languages are spoken. Building on the existing foundation of excellence in education, Urbandale is transforming education throughout the District. By implementing innovative [Quality/Continual Improvement](#) strategies that create learning

environments that more fully engage, challenge and motivate students, Urbandale is taking transformation from theory into practice. Urbandale prepares students for becoming lifelong learners and is a school district that brings learning to life for everyone. To learn more, visit: UrbandaleSchools.com and follow on Twitter [@UrbandaleSchool](https://twitter.com/UrbandaleSchool).

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