



## **Pelham Education Foundation Donates \$60,000 to Reading Program**

The Pelham Education Foundation is making a \$60,000 grant to the Pelham School District to fund "Guided Reading Leveled Libraries" of books and materials at Pelham's elementary schools.

"This grant provides each of the elementary schools with an extensive collection of new fiction and nonfiction books, each of which is identified as being appropriate for a certain reading level," said Laura Sawyer, president of the Foundation.

"Teachers will be able to use these books in the classroom to better meet the reading needs of all students, including English language learners, advanced readers and Special Education students," she added.

Guided reading matches students to books that are "just right" for their reading levels and facilitates small group instruction in which students are grouped based on testing. Ongoing assessment allows for flexible grouping in which students are advanced to a more challenging reading level as soon as they are ready. "This assures that every child is reading texts at a level that is appropriate and challenging," said Siwanoy Principal Susan Gilbert. "This accelerates learning."

"The greatest advantage of guided reading is that students are successful each day," said Carla Tarazi, principal of Hutchinson School. "They see themselves as readers from the first day of school because leveled books are books they can read and, with the help of the teacher, they move up the levels without frustration." In the upper grades, multiple copies of leveled texts are used in literature circles that foster comprehension, dialogue and engagement with text in a collaborative setting.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Charles Wilson said, "Establishment of guided reading leveled libraries is consistent with current district-wide initiatives in curriculum mapping, assessment and differentiated instruction." Pelham's teachers are currently training in assessment practices and will receive additional training in the effective use of leveled libraries. In turn, the Pelham Education Foundation's funding of this initiative will support and accelerate progress in line with the Pelham School District's Strategic Plan.

The books and support materials for these libraries will be purchased from Benchmark Education, a Pelham business. "Benchmark Education is pleased to help bring guided reading leveled libraries to Pelham's schools," states Tom Reycraft, President of Benchmark Education. "Our products have proven to be highly successful in schools nationwide and internationally. It is gratifying to offer the same opportunities to students within our home community."



In this spirit, the Reycrafts significantly reduced the price of the materials Pelham will purchase, enabling four libraries to be established for the price of three. Each school will receive a K-5 BookRoom, which includes 2,736 texts (6 each of 456 titles); a wide range of teacher support tools; assessment materials; comprehension tools for teachers and students; and a system for organizing, storing and managing use of the texts. Benchmark Education will also assist in installing the product and will provide two days of training and additional support, as needed.

"Research demonstrates that use of leveled libraries improves student progress and test scores," said Mrs. Sawyer. "Perhaps more importantly, it boosts student confidence, regardless of grade or reading level. This, in turn, nourishes a greater enthusiasm for learning. I can't imagine a greater gift!"

The Pelham Education Foundation invites community members to visit its web site at [www.pelhameducationfoundation.net](http://www.pelhameducationfoundation.net) to learn more about its initiatives or to make a donation in support of Pelham's schools.