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News Release

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STUDENTS PROMISE TO READ MILLIONS OF WORDS

County-wide Literacy Campaign Launched to Promote Reading Away from School

(LOS ANGELES) Students at Gratts Elementary School kicked off the annual Million Word Challenge on Thursday with performances and a solemn pledge.

"Our children promised to read more books," principal Titus Campos said. One student, Catalina Garcia, also spoke about why reading is important based on her essay, the best one written by fourth-and-fifth graders at the school. Students throughout Los Angeles County watched via a live webcast as second-and-third grade children sang "Reading to Learn." First-graders performed a rendition of "Where the Wild Things Are," a popular children's book, and kindergarteners shared nursery rhymes.

"Reading opens the door to a world of possibilities for every child," said Board President Mónica García. "Learning how to read and write taught me how to think and believe, and gave me the opportunity to go to college, become a counselor and eventually a Board Member."

The Million Word Challenge is a literacy initiative that encourages students, pre-K through 12th grade, to read millions of words when they are not in school and develop a lifelong love of reading. Students of all ages track books they read when they are away from school at the start of the Million World Challenge campaign in November until it ends in May 2010. Parents also become actively engaged by signing off on the books their child reads and participating in family literacy activities at home.

"Reading is one of my greatest pleasures," said Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Superintendent Ramon C. Cortines. "Books are gateways to new information and experiences."

In May 2010, each Million Word Challenge school will select one student winner. Each will receive a \$50 gift certificate to purchase books at Feria Del Libro: A Family Book Fair, scheduled June 5, 2010 on the grounds of Los Angeles City Hall.

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