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Kids learn the joys of reading

College students help area children enhance reading skills during two-week workshop

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ZANESVILLE - Grace McCutcheon has read a lot of books this week and answered numerous questions about them, but she was ready for more.

"I'm reading 'A to Z Mysteries: The Bald Bandit,'" said the 9-year-old. "It's got a lot of interesting clues you have to put together to find out who done it."

McCutcheon is one of 20 area children enrolled in the Reading Road Trip Workshop being taught by 19 undergraduate education major students at Ohio University-Zanesville.

"It's been really interesting so far," said Kim Merino, a middle childhood education major. "They are so willing to do everything and enjoying it."

The nearly two-week program for ages 5 to 11 gives children the opportunity to work on their reading skills and explore other states through literature, art, music, food and games.

In addition to reading her mystery book, McCutcheon also was learning about states in the southwest.

"I didn't know Georgia was the state of peaches," she said.

Tessa Denny's lessons about the United States were coming from "The Scrambled States of America."

"I was looking forward to coming back today to read more of it," said the 9-year-old. "I like reading funny books like this one."

Helping Denny through her book was Jay Brehm, an early education major.

"This week has been awesome," he said. "I like being able to experience working with kids."

Beverly Bell, assistant professor of education at OUZ, thought her students were doing a great job of teaching the children.

"They were given an outline of what needed to be done during the workshop but told to select the materials they would use during it," she said. "I'm very pleased with what they've brought in. They have some great activities and material."

The workshop is teaching some of Bell's students to be flexible.

Haley Mayle, an early childhood education major, quickly discovered Randy Geis, the 7-year-old she is working with, is much more advanced than she thought.

"She's actually reading 'Harry Potter' right now," Mayle said. "I'm trying to increase the level of my plans and make things a little more challenging to her. It's also been fun trying to find out what she's interested in."

While reading about New York, Mayle learned that Geis likes fashion.

"She wants to be a fashion designer when she's older," Mayle said. Geis was glad Mayle turned this discovery into a fun lesson. "She got me a book about fashion and now I might think of some of my own (designs)," Geis said.

Fletcher Rollins, another 7-year-old taking part in the workshop, was ready for snack time and the "Indian Jones" book Amanda Uniacke picked out for him.

Bell was glad she had enough students so the children could get some one-on-one attention.

"We've done this workshop before and had as many as 100 children enrolled, but only having 20 is very manageable," she said. "It's very easy for them to target what each child needs to work on."
