

# *El Nido Elementary School's Journey to Book Abundance*

by SHARON ZINKE



What an amazing journey this is proving to be! When we started this school year, El Nido Elementary School had completely dismantled their rundown and limited school library so they could start over with brand new furniture and shelves and more up-to-date books.

By November 2021, the new furniture had arrived but not the new shelves, so almost all of the books were still in boxes. The book count in the library was 5,797 (40% fiction and 29% nonfiction). Very few books were available to students.

As a Bring Me a Book [Literacy Champion](#), I realized I could help. I called the Merced County Librarian Amy Taylor and connected her to Lori Gonzalez, who serves as both the El Nido principal and superintendent of this rural one-school district. Lori explained that El Nido wouldn't be receiving the new shelves until after the first of the year. So Librarian Amy offered to loan temporary shelves to the school. And, indeed, that very week, Amy made the 15-mile country road trek to El Nido in the Merced library bookmobile with not only shelving, but also, with public library cards for every student.

Starting  
from  
scratch!





The El Nido library technician and an AmeriCore student work to place books on the shelves.

The El Nido students have been largely limited to the few books in their classrooms. Slowly, that's beginning to change—soon, through a Bring Me a Book sponsorship and a partnership with Bookelicious, El Nido second and fifth-grade students will also have new books in their homes that they have chosen themselves.

Having retired from more than 40 years of teaching, I realized that I could also add to El Nido's book abundance by donating my own extensive collection of children's literature and give the El Nido K-5 classrooms a fresh collection of great books. Because there is only one classroom per grade level in this small school, each classroom received between 50 and 200 books. I can't begin to describe the excitement and appreciation of the teachers and students when my husband and I arrived mid-November with boxes and boxes of books.

As we were about to deliver books to the second-grade classroom, the custodian stopped us from opening the door. He couldn't contain his excitement as he was grabbing books out of the boxes. Recognizing some of the titles, he began to read aloud one of the books to us before we opened the classroom door and surprised the students with the books.

The second graders enjoyed browsing their new books!



As he is delivering donated books to one of the classrooms, El Nido custodian can't stop himself from reading one of the books to us. Principal Lori Gonzalez listens with rapt attention!

We dropped off the books in the fifth-grade class and let them know I would be back later in the morning to introduce the books to the students. But when I arrived an hour later, each student had already browsed the books in each box and chosen two books to keep at their desks.

Now, for this little school, the possibilities for book abundance and enriched student reading lives seem endless. Kudos to Principal Lori Gonzalez and the teachers for being ready to go for it! I'm sure we will see a transformation to book abundance and joyful reading for the students that will make our hearts soar!



Second-grade El Nido students, amazed at the sudden influx of books to their classroom, take a peek.

Fifth-grade students chose two books each from the box of donated books before they were even introduced!



### **About Sharon Zinke**

[Sharon Zinke](#) is the author and creator of *Rime Magic: Phonics-Powered Prevention and Intervention for All Students*. After teaching for many years as a classroom teacher, reading specialist, special education teacher, and literacy coach, she has spent the past decade helping teachers and school leaders develop effective reading intervention systems that bring fast results and encourage lifelong readers.