June 19th, 2012

Dear David Cottle;

On behalf of the students, families and staff of Andrew Hunter Elementary School, I would like to thank you for your donation of 300 copies of *The Clever Boy and the Terrible, Dangerous Animal*. Your donation had a wonderful impact on our entire school community.

When we received the books and saw what high-quality literature they were, we ordered six copies of each of the teaching stories, the teaching guides and the CDs. We met as a staff for a full day to plan a school wide, six-week unit on the Teaching Stories. Many of our teachers went further and did a unit on Afghanistan and the children who live there. We found that our students were very interested in the country and the culture, and that they were very motivated to understand the Teaching Stories.

As teachers, we found that it took nerve to introduce the Teaching Stories. The unexpected endings were jarring, and we were worried that we didn’t understand them well enough to teach them. The students, however, gave very insightful interpretations of the stories, and were eager to hear them again and again. One class even dramatized the stories.

Interestingly, our Special Education teachers reported that their students absolutely loved the stories, and their responses to the stories showed a deeper understanding than we have seen in the past. Upon reading *The Clever Boy and the Terrible, Dangerous Animal*, for example, one student answered that “This story is about how the West doesn’t understand the East”. Many of their answers showed a deep understanding that impressed us all.

Another exciting experience for our students was exploring your website and your videos on youtube. The kids were especially excited at seeing Afghani children reading the very same books we were reading here at school. It made our global community seem closer, and made the children in Afghanistan seem like our classmates and friends.
Last week we had the wonderful author and storyteller, Aubrey Davis, come to our school. He told teaching stories during three sessions: one for the primaries, one for juniors and one for intermediates. He chose the perfect stories for each age group, and the students were spellbound.

In the evening, we hosted our Family Reading Night. We had a good turn out with a lot of involvement from our staff and school council. We had a variety of games and activities, and each child who came got their own copy of *The Clever Boy and the Terrible, Dangerous Animal*, which was exciting for everybody. We had the *Magic of Reading* DVD playing in the entrance hall, and gave the families a copy of your literature on reading to your child. Families also had the opportunity to make puppets to go with their new books. It was very satisfying to see how engaged the parents were in working with their children on this project.
After the activities, Aubrey Davis told Teaching Stories to the families, and, again, it was a wonderful success.

When I applied for this book grant, I really didn’t know how extensive their influence would be on our school community. The success of our reading night, and the incredible learning that we saw at our school was exciting and motivating for us all. I know these are stories that, as a librarian, I will return to again and again. Thank you for your generous donation of books; but more importantly, for introducing us to the magic of the Teaching Stories. It was a wonderful learning opportunity for us all.

Yours in Literacy,

Rosemary Renton
Teacher-Librarian