

# Milpitas Student Boosts Child Literacy Program, Milpitas Post Article

by Ali Abdollahi

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In 2005, Jamie Yao, then a student at Milpitas High School and a member of the school book club, thought of a way to expand the group's goals beyond the school campus.

"I was interested in helping to perpetuate (the book club's) mission of improving literacy in the community," Yao said.

She decided to initiate a summer tutoring program at the Milpitas Community Library for students entering grades one to seven to help promote literacy and love of reading in young Milpitanes. Yao felt that Milpitas would be an ideal city for this type of program.

"Milpitas is a community full of immigrant families. I thought it was all the more important to help children learn how to read because of the fact that many children may not be able to get that extra help at home," she said. "This realization came to me through a story I read in 'Chicken Soup for the Soul,' in which a boy helped his own grandfather, who did not have access to reading when he was younger, learn how to read."

As she developed her program plan, Yao sought to engage her fellow Milpitas High students as volunteers. She made presentations to honors English classes and recruited 25 volunteer tutors.

Yao presented Milpitas librarians Melanie McInerney, Linda Arbaugh and Karen Armendariz with her idea for the Read to Succeed! program in 2006.

Head Librarian Arbaugh connected Yao with Vision Literacy, an organization that provides literacy training for adults throughout Santa Clara County. Vision Literacy

chose to sponsor the program. The program has doubled in size since its first year, now boasting 50 tutors and 70 students. Yao had to create a volunteer application process this summer because there was an overwhelming interest in volunteering for the program.

Vision Literacy also provided the tutors with literacy training to better serve the students.

"Vision Literacy's training was very instrumental in helping our tutors improve their skills and showing them different ways to tutor," Yao said. "Vision Literacy also helped us by giving us ideas on how to work with the different literacy needs of our students."

Read to Succeed! tutors meet in small groups and one-on-one, depending on the student's reading level.

Yao praised the motivation and devotion of Read to Succeed! tutors, and said that many go far beyond their responsibilities to prepare for tutoring sessions by creating tests, assignments and vocabulary lists. She also recognized the students for their effort.

"The students put in a lot of hard work during the summer improving their reading and writing skills. I admire that in these kids," Yao said. "I think that many of these children not only learn from their tutors, but also look up to them as role models. One of our goals is to make the program personal, so we take time to match the students up with the right tutor."

Librarian Arbaugh said, "I'm proud of Jamie and her crew for what they have accomplished. Children who read well generally do better in all of their subjects than those who do not. Jamie and her team of volunteers are making huge differences in the lives of the children they are helping."

Yao was honored at the Milpitas Unified School District Board of Education meeting last month for her efforts in the Read to Succeed! program. Yao graduated from Milpitas High in June and will attend the University of California at Los Angeles. She will pass the leadership in the program on to Milpitas High senior Anh Nguyen, but plans to stay closely involved.