

# My View: Help end illiteracy with Hooked on Books

By By Tilcara Webb/Special to Generation Next |

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In less than a year, Hooked on Books, a campaign aimed to introduce and maintain reading habits among K-12 students, has spread across Santa Fe.

The campaign is led by local students who host writing contests and reward winners with prizes.

Hooked on Books' primary goal is to aid children and youth in reading, and improve literacy in the state. The organization believes that if children become interested in reading at an early age, they will become more successful later in life. The campaign realizes New Mexico has a problem with high dropout rates and illiterate adults.

As a member of Youth United, I take part in Hooked on Books. Youth United is a group of 36 students from 10 different Santa Fe schools who are part of the Hooked on Books campaign. We design the contests and maintain the campaign by drumming up community support.

Last October, 43 students from Santa Fe School for the Arts and Sciences kicked off the campaign. The first contest, held between October and November, asked students to come up with ideas on how to get kids interested in reading.

When the campaign first began, my English teacher, Geetha Holdsworth, who also helps oversee Hooked on Books, gave my peers and I a written test in French (she also gave us name tags written in Hindi) to help us experience firsthand what it's like to be tested in another language. We could not show our knowledge.

This experience is comparable to what many New Mexico students face when they are tested in English. I have realized that the ability to read and write is one of the most important tools in life. Learning to read and write from a young age is essential in helping students get through school and make better futures for themselves.

To make this possible, I have raised awareness about Hooked on Books in the community. Many community officials also have showed interest and support for Hooked on Books. Mayor David Coss even declared 2012 as "The Year of the Book," in honor of Hooked on Books. The campaign has quickly received attention and praise as different corporations, sponsors and kids sought to help the campaign.

Since its first contest, Hooked on Books has gained citywide attention, and more and more students are participating in the contests. The winner of our last contest, Sabrina Civale, wrote an essay for The Hunger

Games contest, and she was given the opportunity to attend the movie premiere in Los Angeles. She was awarded the tickets at a Hooked on Books event on March 3.

With Hooked on Books, students of all ages are fighting to eradicate New Mexico's illiteracy problem. We must promote literacy in New Mexico. For more information, visit [www.nm.allianceforliteracy.org](http://www.nm.allianceforliteracy.org)

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