

EDUCATION • VALLEY VIEW

'Quilting for Kindness' to be a part of Summer Learning Experience

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Valley View's Summer Learning Experience is already full of great activities for elementary school grade levels, but the Valley View School District will feature a new program for third through fifth graders called "Quilting for Kindness."

Through a partnership with Jena Ball, author of the CritterKin series, children will learn how to build their reading skills, as well as their ability to understand and show compassion, empathy and respect.

"Summer Learning Experience is all about helping our children progress from one school year to the next," VVSD Assistant Superintendent Rachel Kinder said. "This engaging partnership with CritterKin will give our intermediate grade level students even more opportunities to learn as they prepare for increased rigor at their next grade levels in the fall."

Ball has been a writer, illustrator and educator for almost 35 years. The concept for CritterKin was born while she volunteered at her local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and realized what a powerful impact animals have on kids. Using the real dogs she met at the shelter as the basis for her characters, she began writing stories about a goofy pack of mixed breed mutts and the challenges they faced.

Based on the themes in the books, Ball developed project-based learning activities for



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Jena Ball works with students during a recent visit to Tibbott Elementary School in Bolingbrook. The CritterKin series author will bring her special kind of magic to students enrolled in VVSD's Summer Learning Experience starting June 11.

elementary school students across the country. Valley View's Tibbott Elementary School partnered with her this past school year.

The six-week Quilting for Kindness program at VVSD's Summer Learning Experience will focus on giving students an opportunity to practice core curriculum skills, such as active listening, reading comprehension and writing, within a social, emotional context. Through Ball's book, *Lead With Your Heart*, and multimedia storytelling tools (drawing, blogging, tablet apps, video making and photography,) students will use creativity to explore and respond to key themes, which include prejudice, bullying, feeling different and making mistakes.

The result will be a collaborative "kindness quilt" created by each class. The quilts will be living symbols of both their individual and collective creativity and demonstrate their understanding of the subject matter.

"The multimedia, multi-modal approach used in the project supports a wide range of learners," said Ball. "Students will come away with concrete examples of what they have learned helping ensure that kindness, empathy and respect for differences become second nature."

Summer Learning Experience begins June 11 at three different sites in Bolingbrook and Romeoville.

More information on CritterKin is available at www.critterkin.com.