

SECTION

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# LOCAL & STATE

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## State wants to borrow \$1.4B

The state wants to borrow up to \$1.4 billion to help pay unpaid bills, even as the federal government approved sending more than \$775 million a year over the next five years to help care for Medicaid patients. The short-term borrowing means businesses waiting months to be paid should get at least some of their money soon. But the state is just exchanging one kind of debt for another. It will have to pay off the \$1.4 billion loan by the end of the fiscal year in June 2009, **4B**

# 5th-graders learn from serving as mentors

By Cathy Bayer

ROCKFORD REGISTER STAR

ROCKFORD — It's not uncommon to see Jackson Elementary School fifth-graders sprawled out, belly-down in the hallway on Fridays. They even invite the second-graders.

Airiss Ruiz, 11, takes his job seriously as a mentor to second-grader Keith Clement, 7.

Airiss teaches Keith about consistency, one of the 12 ideas in "Just Bee," a character development coaching program.

The students are taking part in the 12-week program based on the book by Saul Serna, a Rockford-based Just Bee coach, public speaker and real estate executive

with Century 21.

Airiss told Keith that consistency is something you do over and over, every day.

The students try to explain concepts in second-grade terms, said fifth-grade teacher Holly Armato.

The themes are simple, with ideas like: Be kind, compassionate, on time, creative, consistent, positive, prepared and healthy.

Fifth-graders went through the program as second-graders, and now they're taking what they've learned to mentor current second-graders.

## Role models

The book is in English and Spanish and follows bees

Papi and Honey.

Serna and Sue Hollander, a retired teacher, teach the program. Hollander had the current fifth-graders as students in second grade.

"You wouldn't believe the difference in the kids," Hollander said.

They're more grateful — they show and tell her that, she said.

Kyla Gutierrez, 10, said she used to have an attitude, but she's let that fade after going through the program, she said.

"I'm a role model," she said. "And I'm so happy that I've gotten this far."

She's excited for Mondays — that's lesson day — and Fridays, which is mentoring day.

"It's cool," she said. "I wouldn't give anything up for this. I get so excited to come here and see my little friends."

The book also has a home connection chart, in which parents work with children.

"Teachers are saying the same thing as parents, and it's all connecting," said David Molck, Jackson principal.

Although it's not on state tests, these are lifelong lessons that kids need to know, Armato said.

"These little life skills are something you don't have time to teach," she said.

## Adapted from CEO lessons

In 2004, Jackson School

was reporting low grades and achievement, something that Serna noticed.

"If we want to change the behavior," Serna said, so he suggested the program.

The program morphed from Serna's lesson to CEOs into a children's version about character building. And the kids take those story examples and add them into their lives.

"Not only are you reading it, you're personalizing it," Serna said.

Locally, the program has gone through the cycle at Jackson School. Now it's the model school for the program, and Serna is hoping

other schools will pick up Just Bee.

Students and teachers are invited to a celebration dinner Dec. 18 at Cliffbreakers, a reward for finishing the program.

Organizers are looking for corporate sponsors for the dinner. For more information or to help, call 815-391-9383, or visit justbee.tv or papiandhoney.com.

Airiss is looking forward to his first visit to Cliffbreakers.

"I'm thinking it's going to be really nice," he said, grinning. "And really expensive."

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