

## IDEAS FROM LIBRARIANS, PARENTS AND TEACHERS FOR ENHANCING TEXAS BLUEBONNET PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES\*

You are encouraged to adapt these ideas to fit your situation!

Many resources and ideas are available on the Texas Bluebonnet Award (TBA)

website: <http://www.txla.org/TBA>

### ONE-TIME CELEBRATIONS

These are usually used for kick-off, voting, or finale. Voting or Finale events are often limited to students in 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grades who have qualified to vote.

**Names Used for Parties:** Bluebonnet Bash, Bluebonnet Tea, Bluebonnet Reception, Bluebonnet Ice Cream Banquet, Bluebonnet Breakfast, Bluebonnet Chuck Wagon Breakfast, Think Blue, Bluebonnet Brunch, Bluebonnet Blowout, Bluebonnet Cookie Decorating

### **Ideas of what other librarians have served at these parties:**

**breakfast /brunch:** blueberry muffins, juice, toast with bluebonnet jelly (made in Fredericksburg)

**lunch/dinner:** pizza, soda, ice cream

**ice cream banquet:** the kids create their own ice cream sundae

**tea:** cookies in the shape of Texas, Bluebell ice cream with blue sprinkles, blue punch, blue cookies, blue juice boxes, blueberry tea, blue sprite (add food coloring), popcorn, cake or cupcakes with sugar bluebonnets on it, root beer floats

### **Some suggested activities for these parties:**

- Special person, such as principal, superintendent, chief of police, mayor, legislator reading one of the shorter Bluebonnet nominees.
- TBA winner announced.
- Room decorated in blue, bluebonnets, Texas themes
- Bluebonnet cookie decorating: A baker, using a carrot cookie cutter, makes cookies for each student. The children ice the cookies with blue-and-white icing to make them look like bluebonnets – then eat them!
- Music
- Give blue goodie bags with candy, pencils, bookmarks, etc.

- ❑ Chuck wagon breakfast: served from a chuck wagon. Cowboy ropers invited, steer head on bale of hay set up for students to try their hands at roping, throwing horseshoes, stick horse races, students dress western for the event
- ❑ Students and librarian dress as a character from a Bluebonnet nominee
- ❑ Invite children's families to the party
- ❑ All attendees wear blue
- ❑ Read, or have students do Readers Theater for The Legend of the Bluebonnet by Tomie DePaola.
- ❑ Fingerpaint bluebonnets
- ❑ Invite local newspaper/TV station to report the event
- ❑ Give certificates (order from the Bluebonnet website) to participants. Have the principal or other well-known community figure hand out the certificates to each child. Take a photo of each child receiving the certificate to e-mail to their parents.
- ❑ Give "Lamp of Knowledge" to participants with their name engraved on it. Have the principal or other well-known community figure hand them to each child. Take a photo of each child receiving the certificate to e-mail to their parents.
- ❑ Take a group grade-level photo of all the Bluebonnet voters. Enlarge the picture to poster size. Put them up at special event.
- ❑ Kids book talk their favorite nominee

## OTHER ONE-TIME EVENTS

**Bluebonnet Stomp:** After raking the area you choose to loosen the soil somewhere around your school or library grounds, each child is given a snack size baggy of bluebonnet seeds. A sticker might be attached that says, "Reading blooms with Bluebonnets." The TBA video could be shown prior to the Stomp, and refreshments could be served afterwards. October is usually a good month for this, but check with a local nursery to see what the best time for planting bluebonnets is for your area. Perhaps a local feed store or nursery might donate the seeds. Hopefully, the bluebonnets will come up and beautify the area.

**Bluebonnet Sleepover:** See other sections for activities, goodies, etc., but here is an idea that really fits a sleepover: kids decorate pillowcases with titles

of nominated books on one side and signatures of sleepover participants on the other.

**Battle of the Bluebonnet Books:** In January, each classroom or public library Bluebonnet group presents one or more teams to compete in the Battle of the Bluebonnet books. (The most successful teams are usually made of children who read different books, who did not all read the same books.) All students can submit questions throughout the year as they read the books, or the librarian or teachers can make up the questions about the books. (AR, etc., tests might supply you with questions for each title, too.) Kids work in teams to provide the answers, and the last team standing is the winner. Perhaps a prize or a privilege could be awarded to each member of the winning team. Usually, a team captain is appointed who provides the “final” answer for each question after consulting with his/her team. (Sometimes, the book titles are put on cards. The answers could all be the name of the book, and the students would just hold up the proper card instead of calling out answers.)

**Bluebonnet Parade:** Classrooms select their favorite Bluebonnet Book and decorate an AV cart to depict details from the book. Awards are given each entry, such as the Superintendent’s Award, the Principal’s Award, Third Grade Award, and so on. Floats are paraded around the school cafeteria, and students from each entry’s classroom emcee the parade by describing the float, titles and author.

Instead of floats, this could be a parade of Bluebonnet characters.

**Pumpkin Parade or Display:** Students can decorate a pumpkin in October representing their favorite Bluebonnet nominee.

**Bluebonnet Commercials:** Students can make commercials advertising their favorite book. They can make banners, posters, costumes, etc., and you can videotape them. The videotapes of the commercials can be played at announcement time or on individual DVD players, etc. This is a popular activity just before voting day.

**Bluebonnet Voting Rally:** Have students speak to rally others behind their favorite before voting day. This could be school-wide at an assembly or in individual classes.

**Bluebonnet Buttons:** Just before voting time have kids design button covers for their favorite book using the form from the TBA website and, using a button machine, create the buttons for them to wear.

**Classroom Door Decor:** Each class selects a book from the master list and decorates their classroom door to represent their book. A prize could be given, perhaps an extra library period, etc.

## INCENTIVE IDEAS

### For Teachers

- Teachers Tea in the library: to introduce the new Texas Bluebonnet nominees to the teachers after school with refreshments and a display of and information about the new nominees.
- Each time a teacher reads a Bluebonnet nominee to his/her class (or if you prefer, each teacher whose entire class qualifies to vote), the teacher's name is entered into a drawing to win a prize. At your January or February faculty meeting, hold the drawing and award the prize(s). Suggestions for prizes: gift certificate donated by local business such as a restaurant, free book from Book Fair, take care of his/her class while the teacher goes out for lunch, give the teacher an extra break by inviting the class to the library for an extra class (you could read the class another Bluebonnet book!), freebies picked up at TLA conference, etc.
- While at professional conferences such as TLA, pick up posters, pencils, pens, highlighters, note cards, bookmarks, cups, and other freebies that vendors are giving away. Sort these into goodie bags that can be given away whenever a teacher reads a Bluebonnet book to his/her class or when the entire class qualifies to vote.
- If an entire grade level has 100% of their students qualify to vote, take them goodies during their planning period. You could put the goodies on a cart and call it the "Bluebonnet Express."

## For Students

- Any of the celebrations or events, above can be an incentive for students.
- If 100% (or whatever percent you choose) of 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> graders qualify to vote, have your principal, librarian, etc. volunteer to dye their hair blue, or wear a blue wig at school all day.
- Show the TBA video (order from the Texas Bluebonnet website) and talk about your program.
- When a student reads 5 of the nominated books, he/she may enter his/her name (and any other information you might need) in a drawing. Names can be drawn as the Bluebonnet program progresses, perhaps one name a week or a couple of names a month.
- Create a Bluebonnet Readers wall by laminating the book covers from each nominated book. Place these covers on a large empty wall, like a hall wall, and create lists under each for students who have read that book to sign their names.
- Make up some “Bluebonnet Bucks” for the kids that qualified to vote which can be used as credit at your Book Fair.
- Make a Bluebonnet name plate for the desk of each child who has qualified to vote. This can be made from the bluebonnet die cut that many schools own or from an outline picture of a bluebonnet which the child may color.
- Bluebonnet “Wall of Honor”: When students qualify to vote by reading 5 nominated books, they are given an outline of the leaves and stem of a bluebonnet plant (no flower). They complete the bluebonnet by sticking their thumb in a blue inkpad and using the thumbprint to make the bluebonnet flower. These are put on the “Bluebonnet Wall of Honor.” The kids’ blue thumb is also a badge of honor!
- Flyers could be posted that say, “Alex can vote! Can YOU?” or “Jessica has qualified. Have YOU?”

## **PROMOTIONAL IDEAS**

- Submit an article to your local newspaper or school or district newsletter about your Bluebonnet program. (Any information on the TBA’s website may be used to create your article.)
- Use the PA system at announcement time once a week to reveal which students have qualified to vote during that week.
- Have kids write reviews or book talk a book during announcements.

- When a class comes to the library, book talk a few of the books and talk about your program. Or have kids talk about the Bluebonnet books they have read.
- One high school librarian buys a set of Bluebonnet books each year and encourages her students to check them out and read them to their 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade brothers and sisters, cousins, neighbors, etc.
- Have a contest in your school or library to make a Bluebonnet bookmark that you give to each student at a particular time: when they read their first book, when they qualify to vote, when they vote, etc.
- Have student Bluebonnet-related work on display at your Parent's Open House.
- Have students draw pictures representing a Bluebonnet title and put them up in the library.

## ONGOING PROGRAM IDEAS

**Breakfast Club:** Students are invited to the library before school for breakfast (muffins and juice) periodically during the year where they hear a special person (or the librarian) read a Bluebonnet Book. Special people might be the principal, one of the "specials" teachers, chief of police, mayor, high school athlete, etc.

### **Bluebonnet Lunch Bunch:**

- 1) Host scheduled Bluebonnet lunchtime meetings. Any student who has read the book scheduled for that week is invited to bring his or her lunch and participate in the Bluebonnet discussion.
- 2) Kids come to the library to eat their lunch and read their bluebonnet book while dining.

**Camp Bluebonnet or Bluebonnet Bunch:** This would make a good summer program, after school program, or sleepover program: Each session should last about 1½ to 2 hours. First, share a Bluebonnet book with them. Then the children will participate in a "deepening" activity that relates to that particular book. (See the TBA website for activities and resources for each nominated book.) These activities might be a craft, listening and interacting with a special visitor, performing in a readers theater production to which family may be invited, a related game, a related dance, a writing activity, a computer activity, preparing a related food, etc. You can do one book per session or

rotate through several books during a session. These activities work best when they are fun and interactive. Sometimes the goal is to qualify all participants to vote by the time the program is done.

**Parents start their own Bluebonnet program for their kids:**

This could be done by homeschooling parents or parents with kids at the same elementary school: Parents and their Bluebonnet kids gather once a month to discuss nominated Bluebonnet titles after reading them to their children at home. Discuss themes, writing styles, grade level appropriateness, and personal opinions with a party at the end. This could also be done with one adult leader and just the kids.

**Bluebonnet checks:** Create a blank check for students to fill out with the amount they believe each book they read is worth. As they finish a title, they may write a check to the author of what they believe the book is worth. A million dollars? Five cents? On the back of the check they justify the amount.

**Music to Fit the Book:** Each time you read a book to your group, you might choose a piece of music that fits the book and have it be the theme song for that day. At the end of the Bluebonnet program, if you wish, you could play the piece of music so that the children have to match it up with the correct book title. (For instance, an ocean-themed song for a book having to do with the ocean.)

**After-School Bluebonnet Club:** Choose titles that you can read aloud in maybe no more than 3 one-hour sessions. Send out flyer inviting the students to the club and giving time and dates.

**Newsletter Articles Created by the Kids:** Through a library or classroom newsletter, you could send TBA reviews, TBA articles and other Bluebonnet-related child-created work to the parents.

**Read a Little Each Week:** Read to the students for 5 to 10 minutes from a different Bluebonnet Book as a way to familiarize them with the titles.

**Bluebonnet Friendship Bracelet:** When each child reads his/her first Bluebonnet nominee, he/she gets a starter bracelet – a piece of leather about

12"-14" long (could be black, brown, or blue leather) – and a bead. For each additional book they read, they get a bead to add to their bracelet. Two rules that have been used for this: lost bracelets are not replaced, and they must have their bracelet with them to add a bead. Colors of leather and types of beads could be rotated over the years so that each year's bracelet is a little different, and children who participated last year will have a different looking bracelet to add to their souvenirs.

**Bluebonnet Stations:** Cut out activities and related websites found on the TBA website for each book. Laminate them and place them in a Bluebonnet box or station.

**Bluebonnet Maps and Record Keeping:** There are various ways to keep track of the Bluebonnet books each child has read. There are several printables available on the TBA website to use for this.

**Match Game:** Create a laminated match game for upper grades. It can be available for check out by individual students or classes. It can be made from information available on the TBA website by cutting out the titles of the nominees and laminating them individually on cards and then cutting out the summaries for the books and laminating them individually on cards. Then the students can match the description with the right title.

**Jeopardy Game:** Create, or have the students create, Jeopardy style "answers" for each book based on themes, characters, main idea, fact and opinion, events in each book, quotes from each book, setting, authors, etc. Students must, of course, answer in the form of a question. This could be played individually or as a team.

**Bluebonnet Artifact Matching Game:** Use clip art to make transparencies of several items found in each book. Students have to identify the book with the item it was from and explain the connection.

## VOTING AND ANNOUNCEMENT IDEAS

- ❑ Talk about why our country uses a “secret ballot,” and explain that you can tell others your vote but you don’t have to. Explain other ways adults in this country vote.
- ❑ You can make voting as realistic as possible by having election judges, checking the voter registration list, having them sign in before you give them the ballot to vote.
- ❑ Create a voting booth by using a refrigerator box and painting it blue or covering it with blue paper. Put a desk inside for the students to sit at while voting, and a box or bag to put their ballots in when marked. A study carrel also makes a good voting booth. You can decorate with streamers, balloons, stars and bluebonnets.
- ❑ Make an “Official Voter Registration Card” or make labels to stick on a card, for each student.
- ❑ Give away door prizes on voting day as students come in to vote.
- ❑ After voting, give kids “I Voted for the Texas Bluebonnet Award” stickers. The template is available on the TBA website.
- ❑ Everyone could wear blue on voting day.
- ❑ Your classroom/grade level/library/school winner should be announced/posted as soon as possible, and the state winner announced/posted as soon as possible.
- ❑ The Texas Bluebonnet committee is now videotaping an announcement of the winning book that can be broadcast at your school. It will be available on the TBA website. Homeschoolers can be e-mailed this link.

## FUNDING IDEAS

- ❑ Find out what your local grocery store (or other local store) requires for you to ask for a donation, and then fill out the required paper work, if any. Explain what it is being used for. There is information on the TBA website to help with this.
- ❑ Look for grant money.
- ❑ Ask your school’s PTO or PTA for help. Public libraries, ask your Friends of the Library for help.
- ❑ Be sure and write thank you notes if you receive help!
- ❑ Donors always appreciate some sort of public acknowledgement. One idea to do this is to invite donors to one of your events to be acknowledged.

Many of these ideas originally were prepared by the Texas Bluebonnet Committee around 2004 in “Bluebonnet Plant ‘Food’ Ideas.” They have been reorganized and expanded. Contributors include: Wanda Nall, Robin Anderson, Susan Flippin, Terri Orn, Barbara Jinkins, Lynda Morley, Martha Chalhoub, Bobbi Jo Miller, Ann Strautman, Teri Gilley, Donna Coleman, Dixie Holland, Sheila Busby, Sally Rasch, Janis Miller Branum, Sue Shadow, Theresa Henry, Ann Starr, Karen Wallace, Annette Miller, Lex Anne Seifert, Pat Jefferson, Therisa Massey, Carmen Escamilla, Susan Meyer, Bevery Golden, Jane Claes, Mary Pettit, Nicki Stohr, and Anonymous.