

AUSD Students Send Books, Art, and Hope to Paradise Students

Students across Alameda Unified School District have been reaching out to students who lost their homes and schools in Paradise, California this week.

Fourth and fifth graders in Mary Otieku's class at Bay Farm School sent new books to 40 third graders from Ponderosa Elementary School in Paradise, for instance. The school burned during the wildfires that raged in Butte County in November.



Ms. Otieku, who is AUSD's 2018 Teacher of the Year, decided to embark on the project after learning that a Bay Farm School teacher had lost a home in Paradise and also after reading about "Adopt-a-Family" efforts after the fires. She decided she'd like to "adopt" a classroom and connected with Andrew Reid, who teaches third grade at Ponderosa. He asked for new books, which the Bay Farm students collected. They also wrote notes to the Ponderosa third graders and added a few small gifts, such as modeling clay and colored pencils. Bay Farm School

teacher/librarian Roxanne Clement also collected used books to help Ponderosa start a new library.

Meanwhile, the [Alameda Education Foundation](#) issued a call for student artwork to display in the buildings where Paradise students would be starting classes this week. In a press release sent yesterday, AEF reported that it had collected more than 130 pieces of art and literature in the drive, including:

- Letters and drawings from 5th graders in Sara Greenberg's class at Wood Middle School, Joyce Craig's class at Haight Elementary School, and Kate Flanagan's class at Edison Elementary School.
- Poems from 4th graders in Kristin Furuichi-Fong's class at Ruby Bridges Elementary School.
- Letters from 7th graders in Sharmaine Moody's class at Lincoln Middle School.
- Notes of encouragement from Alameda High Students taught by Lisa Piazza.

Community members who are interested in helping teachers, staff, and students in Paradise may be interested in the [North Valley Community Foundation](#) (which is collecting monetary donations) or Color a Classroom with Love (which is collecting monetary donations, supplies, and starting an "[Adopt a Classroom](#)" campaign.

"These are the messages and gestures of hope, love, connection, and support that we so need in these troubling times," says Superintendent Sean McPhetridge. "I am so honored to be a part of a school community that reaches out to those in need in these kinds of ways."