



OUR

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Clarissa Mendoza-Library, Literacy, and a Love for Learning

Much like the Wardrobe in C.S. Lewis' Narnia. Clarissa Mendoza's portable classroom library never fails to transport students into a world of excitement. Every year the theme of her Library changes from underwater submarines, to Diagon Alley, and wonderlands. Walnut Grove students are able to escape their realities and enter educational reading challenges based on monthly themes. An abundance of resources from celebrity read books, to books read and recorded by Mendoza herself are also made available to students through the [Walnut Grove website](#). In this month's promise feature we'll enter Walnut Groves wardrobe, the Library.



PHS Class of 2000 Graduate

Walnut Grove Library Media Technician Clarissa Mendoza has made her library a place of educational exploration and wonder. A modular classroom from the outside, boasting a large University of the Pacific flag alongside the door, Mendoza's alma mater, students are transported to a submarine submerged under the sea once inside.

"The theme and decor change every year," said Mendoza. "This year's theme is 'Dive Into A Good Book at the Library'."

The decor that Mendoza uses for her yearly theme also correlates with the Accelerated Reading incentive program. After students receive their reading diplomas, they are able to add a fish to the wall of the library that represents them and their achievements.

Past themes have included: Reading is a Wonderland (Alice in Wonderland), Reading Turns Muggles into Wizards (Harry Potter), and No Place like the Library (Wizard of Oz).

The interactive themes excite and motivate students to complete their Accelerated Reading quizzes and become a part of the Library.



AR quizzes are taken based on a monthly theme. Last month's theme was: Travel Around the World. "It had to be a real place in the world," said Mendoza. "They could visit a city, a state, a Mission. We had a student do Area 51 and Alcatraz."

A graduate of Patterson High School class of 2000, and University of the Pacific class of 2004, Mendoza has been with the district for 10 years and enjoys everything about being the Walnut Grove Librarian.

"I like interacting with the kids, buying and organizing new books. I love the smell of new books and I like hosting the reading challenges and rewarding [the students]."

"A lot of the teachers said they enjoyed the online stories and now the whole school can listen to [them]."

In addition to maintaining a fun, and inviting school library; Mendoza has built an equally impressive webpage on [Walnut Groves school website](#). The webpage features photo slideshows of monthly AR award winners, a reading level guide, an AR diploma rubric, and links to several external reading resources, such as videos recorded by Mendoza herself of books being read aloud in both English and Spanish.

"It started during COVID and I've just kept it up since then," said Mendoza. "A lot of the teachers said they enjoyed the online stories and now the whole school can listen to [them]...Kids have come to me and said, 'hey I listened to a book online.' One kid, a 4th grader came in after I had read [to their class] and said '[Mrs. Mendoza] you sound just like you do in your videos.'"

During the time that Mendoza started her reading videos, she applied and received a grant through "First Book Marketplace" to purchase and pass out free books to students. Mendoza also enrolls Walnut Grove in "Open eBooks" every year, which gives access to countless books in both English and Spanish free of charge.