

Caught in 'Charlotte's (worldwide) Web'

Glendale kids part of attempt to set record for reading story

By Laura Houston

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There was no giggling when second-graders at Challenge Charter School sat cross-legged on the cafeteria floor to read *Charlotte's Web* aloud at the same time, teacher Tammy Neitch said.

All 102 of them signed forms that said they would read a passage from the kids' classic in an effort to break a world record for "the most people reading aloud simultaneously."

"They were very serious," Neitch said as the Glendale school's students filed out of the cafeteria where they attempted to make history. "We have practiced a lot being in unison."

For about 10 days, the kids read the Chapter 5 passage together.

The passage that Challenge students read — along with as many as 547,037 kids in all 50 states and 28 countries — was where Charlotte the spider first meets Wilbur the pig and teaches him the meaning of the word "salutations."

The school expects to receive official



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Emily Martin, 8 (foreground), and other second-graders at Challenger Charter School in Glendale read from *Charlotte's Web* on Wednesday.

confirmation in January of whether or not they helped shatter the 2004 record Wednesday, Neitch said.

Three independent witnesses with no affiliation to the school confirmed that the students all read aloud. Pam Morrison, an employee at a nearby

Wells Fargo branch, was one of them.

She was about as giddy as the kids were with the prospect of entering the *Guinness World Records* book.

"It was so exciting," she said, holding her student-autographed copy of the book. "Just to watch the look on their

faces and know they're part of the community. It's great to see them involved."

The record-breaking attempt fell in with regular core curriculum for the charter school, said Neitch, a master teacher for the second grade who organized the event.

A search for teaching material associated with the book turned up information for the record challenge, Neitch said.

There was more than just reading and gaining potential fame that made the event special. Teachers handed out black plastic spider rings. Winners of a coloring contest received animated, plush piglets.

Alex Gonzalez was one of the lucky winners. Almost as soon as he received the bright orange Pancake, his classmates coaxed him to make it waddle and snort.

Flicking the switch on Pancake's belly, Gonzalez proudly showed off his new toy's tricks.

"He walks like that," the 7-year-old said with a smile on his face.

He was still letting classmates pet the pig while standing at the front of the line, leading fellow second-graders to recess after the event.