



## JBSA service members mentor San Antonio elementary students

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Although school officials use many tactics to encourage students, one cooperative venture, Military Reading Days, seems to be paying off.

During a recent military reading day, Soldiers from U.S. Army North joined other Joint Base San Antonio service members spent the morning of Oct. 7 reading books and participating in activities with children at Valley Hi Elementary School.



The military reading day at the elementary was the second venture organized by JBSA leaders.

Students need positive role models and this was an opportunity for them to meet Soldiers face to face, according to school principal Daeon Harris.

“We’re constantly trying to build college career readiness,” Harris said. “Any time we can join forces with the military community or other positive role models, we try to do that.”

Capt. Michael Norton, operations officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, Army North, and Sgt. 1st Class Morris Thornton, communications noncommissioned officer, Army North, spent time with Denise Candelario’s fourth-grade class.

The two led math bingo, read excerpts from “Frankenstein” (the Classic Starts Series version), helped make bracelets with beads that symbolized different stages of the water cycle, and led the kids in a rendition of “Water Cycle Boogie.”

“It was a great experience to give back,” said Thornton, a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan. “Just seeing what’s going on around the world and then coming back – we’re so different and unique in that we can do things like this.”

Norton agreed with Thornton that helping kids is important for Soldiers.

“It was an opportunity to share a couple hours with some amazing kids, as much for us as for them,” Norton said.

It was also a reunion of sorts for Norton, who had been stationed nearby the school with the 514th Military Intelligence Battalion and had visited the school to read with students in 2008.

Candelario said that children need positive, real-life role models to counteract the negative influence of some musicians, celebrities and athletes.

“It’s always wonderful to have our military members interacting with our children,” Candelario said. “They need to see positive role models outside of what they see on the news.”

U.S. Air Force Command Chief Master Sgt. Juan Lewis, command chief, JBSA, said the events are a way for the military to give back to the community in San Antonio.