



Gardner Bullis students record language-learning 'talking books'

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Students at Gardner Bullis School recently got the chance to help record a series of "talking books" aimed at assisting young children in learning another language.

Los Altos resident Michelle Glorieux, whose son is a kindergartner at Gardner Bullis, founded Ta-Da! Language Productions, a company creating interactive books to help kids learn languages. When readers touch pictures on the page, they hear the word spoken aloud.

Gardner Bullis students Jan. 29 helped record the English-language version of two books – one about the ocean and the other about camping. Students at other schools throughout the Bay Area recorded versions of the book in other languages.

The two books are part of the "Language Adventures" series, aimed at babies to 5-year-olds. Each book is being recorded in English, French, German, Mandarin Chinese and Spanish, and features 12 words. The first title in the series is about the zoo and had already been recorded.

"For us, it's very important that we're not just selling books, but people know that we care



ZOE MORGAN/TOWN CRIER

Gardner Bullis student Etta Granbery helps record "talking books" meant to aid young children in learning another language.

about what we're doing," Glorieux said. "We care about this mission and we want to do it right."

In that spirit, Glorieux has been involving local students and educators in the process, including the kids at Gardner Bullis. The mission of Ta-Da! is "to inspire children to love language and culture – to enjoy this, to want to pursue language," she said.

Rather than being an obligation, Glorieux said she wants to bring the "fun factor" to language learning. Her own fam-

ily is trilingual, speaking English, French and Dutch, and she wanted to help children like her own young son learn languages.

Promoting fluency

Music producer and sound engineer Jesse Lewis worked with the Gardner Bullis students to record the 12 words in each book. The kids spoke into a microphone, saying the words at varying speeds and with different emotions.

For Lewis, who has won four Grammy awards, the work

See TA-DA!, Page 21

TA-DA! From Page 20

Ta-Da! is tackling is personal. His young daughter is bilingual, speaking both English and Japanese. Although Lewis' wife speaks Japanese, he doesn't.

When reading Japanese books to his daughter, he makes up the plot based on the pictures and tells the story in English. His daughter knows what the pages actually say, and Lewis said the two of them laugh about the situation.

"We make fun of this problem, but it is an actual problem," he said.

Creating children's books with high-quality sound can solve that problem, Lewis said. The sound in children's books has lagged behind audio technology in devices such as cellphones, Bluetooth speakers and computers.

"All have exceeded by leaps and bounds the quality of the

sound in sound books, which is essentially stuck in the late '80s," Lewis said.

According to Glorieux, the books already have double the sound quality of other books on the market, and Ta-Da! is aiming to get them to six times the quality. Another thing Glorieux said differentiates her books is their simplicity. They don't require a CD, pen or download to use.

"It's super easy for kids to pick it up on their own, but they can also enjoy it in the lap of a parent," she said.

Next up after the "Language Adventures" books is a series of talking picture dictionaries, which Ta-Da! is developing. The dictionaries are aimed at children ages 6 and older and will have 720 words that can be played. Each word will be recorded by multiple speakers and one will play randomly each time the image is pressed.



MEGAN V. WINSLOW/TOWN CRIER

Ta-Da! founder Michelle Glorieux reads one of her company's books to her son.

Looking into the future, Glorieux said Ta-Da! is interested in a variety of paper-based products, from puzzles to posters.

Currently, the company is working on raising money, which will enable it to mass produce and ship the books.

Some of the "Language Adventures" books are available to pre-order online. For more information, visit tadalp.com.