

PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND CAREGIVERS AS READING MODELS,  
MENTORS, AND MOTIVATORS

Approved: Alison Bunte

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Carolyn Laufenberg  
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Parents, teachers and caregivers make every effort in their daily lives to do what is right for children. Parents and caregivers are providing food, shelter, and tender loving care, while teachers provide a safe learning environment. At the same time parents, teachers and caregivers are dealing with changes in society that is changing the education system and the raising of children. As youngsters, children need to have the people around them serving as positive role models in many different ways. One way to be a positive role model for children is to read to them and be seen reading. This will set the reading for pleasure stage.

Long before children are able to read, moms, dads, grandpas and grandmas, teachers, older siblings and other caregivers should be reading aloud to the children around them, not only from children's books but also from the novels being read, the newspaper, and magazines. Children will remember very vividly the word usage and new and unusual words used in these various genres.

Children growing up with just one parent, teacher, or caregiver that models reading by reading various types of print, mentors the children and builds up reading skills and strategies, and motivates them to read and read and read. Throughout the lives of these children, teachers, friends and colleagues will become additional role models, mentors and motivators.

The importance of modeling, mentoring and motivating children to read is two-fold. Parents, teachers, and caregivers invite young readers into the reading world where they can then become successful individuals in all that they do.

## MODELS

When parents, teachers and caregivers are caught reading this serves as active, rather than passive modeling. When the content is appropriate it can be shared with bits and pieces of what is being read. This gets the students interested in topics they may not have thought about before and encourages them to read books at their level on the same topic.

Parents, teachers and caregivers do not have to have their noses in a book to model the value of reading, but can do everyday reading of the daily newspaper including the comics and completing the crossword and other puzzles. Students should see parents, teachers and caregivers reading magazines, recipes, owner's manuals for new toys and household gadgets. The more modeling that is done, the more children will understand the value of the written word.

## MENTORS

Parents, teachers, and caregivers can use a broad range of techniques to mentor students into the reading community. As with any other subject, there is no one size fits all recipe. We need to individualize the techniques we use with students to ensure that they develop reading skills that help them become proficient, independent readers that enjoy reading for pleasure. As reading mentors, parents, teachers, and caregivers are building the reading community. By mentoring students we build supportive and caring relationships. Teachers show students that they care about them on a personal level, not just about their academic status. Parents and caregivers can take their relationship with the children to the next level developing trust.

## MOTIVATORS

Parent, teachers, and caregivers should encourage reading whenever the opportunity arises. Students need a generous amount of time to read. Time should be set aside at school as well as at home for pleasure reading. This will give the students the notion that pleasure reading has value. Pleasure reading means reading what brings pleasure and enjoyment to the reader, whether it is fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or any other genre. Today, it is also important to recognize that pleasure reading can take place with books, magazines, newspapers, and electronic forms. Any and all types of reading materials should be readily available both at home and in the classroom.

Even in an age of high technology the written word remains the foundation of literate society. Without reading strategies and skills, students will struggle and become frustrated when exploring the latest technology and the effects it has on society. It is important for us as parents, teachers, and caregivers to model reading, mentor our growing readers, and motivate reading to nurture the reading habit.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Title I reading teachers are faced with a variety of challenges. For example, students may read two or more grade levels below their peers, do not like to read because it is difficult, or find no pleasure in reading.

The problem to be addressed in this project is to improve the current reading incentive program by implementing a school-wide reading initiative at Iowa-Grant Elementary School. Putting into practice the researched parental involvement and student motivation articles and a self-created reading program will be the major focus.

### **Purpose of the Research**

The primary goal of this educational project is to enhance the current reading program at Iowa Grant Elementary School. Implementing a school-wide reading initiative gives the teachers and staff the opportunity to reach all of our students, not just those that struggle. Researching student motivation to read gives me the opportunity to help classroom teachers reach students that may not qualify for Title I services or further the advancement of higher readers.

### **Delimitations of the Research**

The research will be conducted in and through the Karrmann Library at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville, over twenty-five (25) days. Primary searches will be conducted via the Internet through EBSCO host with ERIC and Academic Search Elite as the primary sources. Key search topics included “reading motivation” and “parent involvement”

### **Method of Approach**

A brief review of literature on reading motivation will be conducted. A second review of literature relating to research, studies, and anecdotal evidence of parental involvement and student motivation will be conducted. The purpose of the review of literature is to provide a guide for conducting the educational project. The primary goal of this project is an opportunity to get families involved in the literacy development of their children

All program and reading motivation techniques will take place at Iowa-Grant Elementary School, Livingston, Wisconsin with 314 students in kindergarten through fifth grade participating. Differences in students' attitudes, daily reading logs, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to read will be observed and discussed. The focus of the educational project will be to enhance the reading program involving all individuals in a child's life including parents, teachers and caregivers.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Learning to read is perhaps the most important skill for success in society that a child can gain from school. Being illiterate puts students at risk for several negative outcomes in life such a poor income potential, limited employment options, and quality of life issues. In order to provide our young readers with the literacy skills they need to be successful in school, parents, teachers and other caregivers need to work as a team in helping children to acquire the skills necessary for reading fluently.

Reading is a pastime that requires extra effort and involves large selections to choose from. Motivation is key to reading dedication and enjoyment. (Wigfield, 2004).

The reading that students experience in the classroom influences the motivation to read out side of the classroom and in other subject areas. As teachers, we all know that phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension are all components of a successful reading program. Many times one very important component is overlooked. We usually focus on what goes on behind classroom doors, not worrying about what the students are doing at home and what kind of involvement the parents have in the process (Rasinski, 2003). Parent involvement should be added to the lengthy list of important components of teaching reading. It is fair then to say that not only the reading experiences at school, but those at home also affect a child's motivation to read (Wigfield, 2004). "The role of parents as their children's first and most important teacher is widely accepted." (Fox, 2003). A child's literacy development is directly related to how their family approaches reading and the manner in which they view reading (Fox,

2003). Parents need to be aware that literacy development begins way before the child enters school. They are laying the foundation by reading aloud, talking about what happened throughout the day, and playing games. As teachers, it is our duty to educate the parents how important this foundation is in the development of background knowledge and literacy skills (Biggam, 2003).

Administrators, teachers, parents, and caregivers all need to come together to form a community regarding the teaching, practicing, and enjoyment of reading. As a team, we can work together to find out what gets children excited about reading, what they want to read, and what motivates them to keep reading. Edmunds and Bauserman found that children like books that have the following: a direct link to their interests, attractive covers and illustrations, action packed plots, and humorous themes. Children also want a choice in what they read (Edmunds, 2006). So how can we as models, mentors and motivators promote reading motivation in our children?

The following list will serve as a guide and mission statement for the Educational Project in Chapter Three. The implementation of the ideas will bring parents, teachers, and caregivers together to enhance the education of all students. As the teachers work with the parents, the results will be more positive than if we were to work independent of each other (DeCusati, 2004).

### Parents and Caregivers as Models, Mentors, and Motivators

- Model reading at home. Read the daily newspaper, a magazine, a book by your favorite author. Any reading your child sees will motivate him/her to read too.
- Form book clubs to chat about books your children are reading together (Willis, 2007).
- Have your child read to you, your spouse, siblings or stuffed animals (Mandelbaum, 2007).
- Create a special place for your child to read.
- Volunteer to listen to your child and his/her classmates read at school.
- Mentor your child: ask him what he is reading, have her share a new strategy learned at school.

### Teachers as Models, Mentors, and Motivators

- Read aloud to students of all ages (Cunningham, 2005).
- Have students participate in Readers' Theater performances
- Show excitement for reading.
- Link parents with resources they may need to enhance the reading experience at home.
- Make reading time special. Do not allow for interruptions.
- Communicate with parents when things are going well, not just when a problem arises (Biggam, 2003).

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE PROJECT

The center of the school-wide reading initiative at Iowa-Grant Elementary School is motivation for all readers. Motivation is possibly the most important aspect of a literacy program. Reading is required to accomplish everyday activities at school from the youngest students identifying their written name, to the older students reading to complete assignments or for pleasure. We usually focus on those students that struggle with reading and present the greatest challenge to us as educators. But all students, not just those that struggle have a need for repeated and uninterrupted contact with printed material. Those students that do struggle now have positive reading role models and because their homes may not have the resources to provide interesting and appropriate reading material, they will have a chance to share some resources from school with their families. Reading time is critical for reading growth and motivation for all students.

A lack of reading practice leads many students, those that struggle with reading and those that are proficient readers to take on a negative attitude toward reading. The reading initiative has been designed with the input and participation of Title I teachers, classroom teachers, parents, caregivers, and the elementary principal playing key roles in the literacy development of our students. See Appendix A and Appendix B for detailed duties.

As noted in the review of literature, reading role models give students lots of motivation to read. No matter how well organized, or exciting the reading initiative might be, it can only be successful with the support and cooperation of all parents, teachers, and caregivers. If parents are not aware of the program, if teachers are not willing to promote

and encourage their students and if administrative support is absent, the reading initiative will not reach all students. Our goal is to improve reading test scores at IGEMS and get students excited about reading, not because they have to but because they want to read...for fun.

A lively introduction during the elementary assembly on the first day of school will get students excited and set goals for themselves. The program will be introduced with a brief snippet of the goals to be accomplished.

## **The Program**

### **Goals**

Each school year will begin with a new theme that the reading program will be based upon. Some themes that will be used include: “Read around the World” with a visit to each continent, “Book-A-Neers” a pirate theme, and “Score with Reading” based on various sports. The program has been designed to run October- March. Each teaching team (kindergarten-fifth grade) will use their Harcourt Trophies reading series to choose an attainable reading skill for the students each month. As students reach the predetermined goal, the student will be one step closer to reading success. Each month students will be rewarded with small incentives to keep reading. The ultimate goal is to reach each goal for the month and become a “Book-a-Neer” or possess tickets from each continent in the world and participate in the culminating activities in March.

## **Author Studies**

Throughout the year, students will take part in classroom, small group and school-wide reading activities focusing on a particular theme or author. See Appendix C for the tentative schedule and possibilities of events for each author study.

## **Literacy Bags**

Several times throughout the year, students will have the opportunity to take home a literacy bag. In the literacy bag there will be literacy activities to complete using the newspaper, an age appropriate story with an activity, and a game to practice literacy skills at the various levels. See Appendix D for Traveling Literacy Bag Letter to Parents.

## **Culmination**

The culminating activity will take place in March along with the annual Read Across America day. On this day we will celebrate reading with a huge reading bash. In the evening the annual IGEMS Reading Fest will take place with families gathering to read together and listen to special guest readers and student readers' theater performances.

## Appendix

Appendix A

The Models, Mentors, and Motivators

<p><u>Teachers</u></p> <p>Set expectations/monthly goals for students</p> <p>Provide quality materials in sufficient quantities</p> <p>Praise small successes</p> <p>Provide a schedule that enables success</p> <p>Provide the data needed to refine instruction</p> <p>Celebrate reading successes as a group</p> <p>Engage Ts in brief conversations about reading</p> <p>Ask “What can I do to help?”, &amp; follow-through</p> <p>Seek resources for reading support materials</p>	<p><u>Students</u></p> <p>Read to visitors in the classroom</p> <p>Read to Mrs. Quam in her office.</p> <p>Take part in the reading project.</p> <p>Attend reading programs at school</p> <p>Set personal goals</p> <p>Read at home</p>
<p><u>Support staff</u></p> <p>Viewed as reading support staff</p> <p>Participate in reading program and have a stake in student success</p> <p>Listen to kids read</p> <p>Bus drivers—can use recorded books on bus</p> <p>Work to erase lines between regular and special</p> <p>Counselors, cooks, custodians, and others are encouraged to read to classes</p> <p>Talk w/kids about reading</p>	<p><u>Parents</u></p> <p>Have kids read at home nightly</p> <p>Attend reading information sessions</p> <p>Volunteer in key roles</p> <p>Invited to read to classes of kids</p> <p>Visit public library, get a card</p> <p>Ask for age appropriate recommended book list</p> <p>Give books as gifts</p> <p>Converse with teachers about kids’ reading</p> <p>Form friendship or neighborhood book groups</p> <p>Find inexpensive sources for kids books</p>
<p><u>Community Members (retired teachers)</u></p> <p>Mystery readers</p> <p>Visit classrooms and listen to students read</p>	<p><u>Title I Teachers, Reading Specialist, Librarian</u></p> <p>Organize RIF distributions, book swaps, Literacy bags, Family Reading Fest</p> <p>Stay in contact with community members</p>

## Appendix B

### Principal's Reading Initiative Duties

<p><u>Daily Tasks</u></p> <p>Conduct walk abouts (w/informal conversations)          Make informal classroom visits (with feedback)          Provide praise, affirmation, encouragement for teachers and students around reading          Talk w/one or more students about reading during daily supervision times</p>	<p><u>Bi-monthly/Quarterly Tasks</u></p> <p>Schedule &amp; participate in building literacy team meetings (may be monthly)          Communicate with elementary staff to share ideas and maintain program focus</p>
<p><u>Weekly Tasks</u></p> <p>Read with or to kids or listen to them read          Have a brief conversation with a few teachers about how the reading program is going.          Try to learn one new thing about the reading programs being used in your building          Meet with literacy committee          Ask students about what they are reading          Talk with one or more parents about their child's reading progress and how they can help          Talk with a staff member other than a classroom teacher about the school's reading programs</p>	<p><u>Annual Tasks</u></p> <p>Staff the school to promote reading          Develop a schedule that supports reading          Create a "reading friendly" budget          Review reading data for the year          Order reading materials          Develop annual professional development plans for reading for your school          Provide information to parents on reading and how they can help their child succeed          Visit another school w/similar demographics &amp; higher reading scores to learn what you can change to improve.          Review/update building reading plan          Seek available funding for any resources which will expire in the next year</p>
<p><u>Monthly Tasks</u></p> <p>Schedule &amp; participate in grade level meetings          Incorporate some brief reading professional development in a staff meeting each month          Review some recent reading data          Talk with district administrators to update them about the reading program successes/needs</p>	<p><u>Notes/Other</u></p> <p>"Captain" of the ship—sets the bar for teachers and students.</p>

## Appendix C

### Author Studies

	Author/Theme	Mystery Readers	Activities
October	Election	Elected officials from the area—school board members, mayors, etc.	RIF distribution Vote for Books Book Swap
January	Jan Brett The Hat The Mitten	Trelay employees	RIF distribution Book Swap Popcorn Party
March	Dr. Suess	Bus drivers Retired teachers	Read Across America Tom Pease Concert RIF distribution Family Reading Fest Book Swap
May	Eric Carle	Ice Cream Shop	Ice Cream Party Book Swap

Dear Family,

Your child was chosen today to bring home the traveling literacy bag. Inside the bag you will find a book to read with or to your child and an activity to do after reading the book. You will also find part of the newspaper to use to complete the newspaper activity. Lastly, you will find a notebook for you to record your thoughts about the traveling literacy bag.

Please make sure all materials are in the bag before it is returned to school. We would like our traveling literacy bag sent back on the next school day, even if you didn't get a chance to do all the activities. We want to keep the traveling literacy bag traveling!

It is our hope that your whole family has fun and participates in the activities included in the traveling literacy bag.

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