

READ ALOUD

WEST VIRGINIA

What teachers say

Each school year, we survey teachers so we can plan for the following year. All those bits of data are precious to us. So are the comments that teachers shared in 2018 from across the Mountain State:



This is an excellent program that is very beneficial to my students!



Selections of books were so interesting that it created other learning opportunities and activities. Stimulated great discussions and extended learning.



The students loved that our Read Aloud person was a parent of another 4th grader. Our Read Aloud person was always good at catching up each week before continuing the story.



This has been great for my class. Thank you!

(continues throughout)



Photo by Bethany Kinder

At the Annual Read Aloud West Virginia Conference, chapter representatives were awarded books in honor of the hard work of outstanding school coordinators around the state. The books, complete with a book plate acknowledging that coordinator, will be donated to the coordinator's school library.

IMPACT

Volunteers, educators gather to help WV children succeed

By Bethany Kinder and Dawn Miller

Daily read aloud puts children almost a year ahead of children who are not read to every day, literacy specialist Christy Schwartz told a room full of Read Aloud West Virginia volunteers at their fifth annual conference in July.

Schwartz works for the state Department of Education's Campaign for Grade Level Reading. She and her colleagues support county school systems and teachers to ensure children are reading on grade level by third grade. They focus on school readiness, attendance, learning opportunities outside of school and high-quality instruction.

"I'm really excited by all the connections and the way that our work corresponds with one another," she told representatives from local Read Aloud chapters meeting at Stonewall Resort July 23 and 24.

Read Aloud leaders were there to connect and share ideas and inspiration for the coming school year. This annual summit has proven to be an invaluable gathering for the organization and its local groups.

Schwartz reminded volunteers of the need they fill.

West Virginia has high rates of poverty, and years of research confirm that poverty is a risk factor for many problems, including poor school readiness. Education researchers have zeroed in on oral language skills.

"It is the foundation for literacy," Schwartz said.

Children who have strong oral language skills often have strong reading and writing skills, she said. Those who don't are at higher risk for difficulty. One old study famously measured a 30-million-word gap between what low-income children heard and what wealthier

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**Read Aloud has NIP tax credits available (see page 8).
Annual fund letters will arrive in mailboxes soon.**

'Tell me all the books'

I am typically a newsletter editor's nightmare — waiting until the last minute to turn in my article. There is a reason for that. Invariably, close to deadline something will happen which crystalizes for me what I want to say. So it is with this issue.

Jennie Fitzkee, blogger extraordinaire and a frequent contributor to this newsletter (see her wonderful article about visiting E.B. White's farm on the next page) recently sent two posts which dealt with book selection and the "best words from a child."

The former touched on the most frequently asked question we receive from our volunteers, "What book is best?" To ask me (or any reader!) that question is almost like asking a parent to pick a favorite child — can't be done! Nevertheless, we know it is an important question that needs to be addressed and this issue is chock full of suggestions from our conference attendees. (In Jennie's own classroom the early favorite this year is Mo Willems' *Knuffle Bunny*.) You can also find links to the growing list of favorite titles submitted by Read Aloud volunteers over

the years at readaloudwestvirginia.org/book-lists-and-reviews/.

The other post referenced a kindergarten student who, after observing the impressive display of books in Jennie's room, said, "Jennie, tell me all the books."

That made me think of our volunteers beginning another school year of "telling" (aka reading) so many books to children and introducing them to new words, new worlds and new authors. Those thoughts led in turn to an article I read this week about one of my very special heroes, Fred Rogers. As you probably know this is the 50th anniversary of "Mr. Rogers Neighborhood," and he has been the subject of many articles and honors, as well as a commemorative stamp and several documentaries.

That documentary seemed to make everyone leaving the theatre walk a little straighter and smile a little brighter. One of the most touching moments was when those remembering Mr. Rogers were asked to do something he had asked numerous audiences from Congressional committees to college graduates to do. He called it an

"invisible gift" as he asked them to take one silent moment to "think about those who have helped you become who you are today."

It made me think of those who are serving as that person for a child or children in our state now, guiding the next generation. When you read to a child as a volunteer, parent, grandparent, guardian or friend you are adding to who that child will become.

Those of you who support our organization and enable us to offer our programs are also fulfilling that role. You will read about some who are doing that in these pages (conferees, page 1; Dan Foster, below). Others may remain anonymous, but it does not diminish the incredibly important role they play. As we start the new school year, know that when you introduce a child to the pleasure of reading you are providing an incredibly important gift.

Also know we are always looking for additional volunteers to join us in our efforts.

— **Mary Kay Bond**

Executive Director, Read Aloud West Virginia

Congratulations and thanks, to Dr. Dan Foster and the YMCA

Dr. Dan Foster of Charleston was recognized by the YMCA with the 2018 Spirit of the Valley Award for his four decades of work in health care and public service in the Kanawha Valley.

The award comes with a donation, made in the recipient's name, to a non-profit organization chosen by the recipient. Dr. Foster chose Read Aloud West Virginia.

In his remarks at the award luncheon, Dr. Foster talked about his mother and how she shared her love of reading with him. He pointed out that both the YMCA and Read Aloud have an impact on the lives of children.

Read Aloud West Virginia seeks to improve West Virginia's literacy rates and educational attainment by motivating children to WANT to read. Read Aloud's research based programs — Volunteer Readers, Book Distribution, Public Education and Classroom Enrichment — put books in the hands and on the minds of West Virginia's children.



Photo by Chris Dorst, courtesy of the Charleston Gazette-Mail

Dr. Dan Foster

The 501(c)(3) organization also raises community awareness regarding the importance of reading to children from infancy into adolescence and the value of providing children with a print-rich environment. During the past school year, Read Aloud distributed more than 8,300 books and placed 1,113 volunteers in over 1,652 classrooms across West Virginia.

These volunteers serve as live commercials for reading. The readers are also important

role models who allow children to experience the joy of reading and, in so doing, motivate them to become proficient readers. Once equipped with this essential skill, students experience more success in all subject areas and are better prepared for a promising future.

Read Aloud thanks the YMCA for recognizing Dr. Dan Foster's service and commitment to the Kanawha Valley. The organization is tremendously grateful to be allowed to share in Dr. Foster's honor as his non-profit designee. Recognition from those so dedicated and accomplished as Dr. Foster and the YMCA strengthens our own commitment to serving our mission in the Kanawha Valley.

Among the many congratulatory messages compiled for the booklet printed for the August award ceremony was this one from the John L. and Maude H. Dickinson Family:

"Thank you for making West Virginia your home and for making our community a better place to live."

'Salutations!'

I've been reading *Charlotte's Web* to children for 30 years. This summer, E.B. White's niece invited me out to the farm

By Jennie Fitzkee

I read aloud every day in my classroom, and weekly at the library. Picture books are a mainstay, yet reading aloud chapter books can move the world.

Are you surprised? Don't be. Thirty years of reading *Charlotte's Web* is proof, my proof. Every year former students return to be a guest reader. I don't invite them. They want to come. Their parents pull me aside to tell me their child has become a voracious reader. Many return as high schoolers to volunteer in my class.

If I go back to when they were preschoolers in my class, glued to chapter reading, their favorite book every year was *Charlotte's Web*. At the end of each school year we vote on our favorite chapter book, and the winner is always *Charlotte's Web*. Always.

My public library hosted a special event, E.B. White's grandniece speaking about her beloved grand-uncle. The librarian was beside herself to tell me.

"Jennie, she has his typewriter. She's bringing it. And do you know that she calls him Andy? That's E.B. White's nickname."

Yes, I know. I read *Some Writer* by Melissa Swift. If you want to know everything about E.B. White, it is the book.

I was out of town and unable to attend the event. To say that I was devastated is an understatement. Perhaps E.B. White's grandniece would see the library poster of me reading *Charlotte's Web*.

A week after the big event, the librarian said, "Jennie, E.B. White's grandniece (Lindsay) would like to meet you. She knows about you, and has heard about how you read aloud *Charlotte's Web*."

Well, that's about the best invitation I ever had. And so, with a note to me that was addressed, "Salutations, Jennie!" I was invited to her farm for a visit!

Lindsay's grandfather was E.B. (Andy) White's brother, Albert. He was the keeper of the letters and memorabilia (most went to Cornell University). He cared. Lindsay inherited her grandfather's genes, and also much of what he kept. Albert was one of six children. His brother, Andy, was the youngest. Lindsay has the same look and expression as her grandfather in a family photo.

And there I was, standing in a room filled with E.B. White memorabilia. And, with E.B. White's grandniece. Humbling and exciting. Words escaped me. I felt like Wilbur.

Seeing and touching that typewriter, something real and dear, was a piece of heaven for me.

Alongside is Lindsay's first edition of *Charlotte's Web*, signed to her: "To Lindsay with love from her great-uncle Andy. E.B. White."

His wife, Katherine, was the love of his life.

"She was a strong woman," said Lindsay. "She was



Photo courtesy of Jennie Fitzkee

E.B. White, who wrote for *The New Yorker* before he established himself in the childhood memories of millions with his now-classic children's books, wrote on this typewriter, carefully kept at the family farm.

older than he was, 11 years older. He adored her. His mother was a strong woman, too. She was much older when Andy was born."

We talked a great deal about *Charlotte's Web*. "Would you like to hear a recording of Andy reading the book?" Lindsay asked.

"Of course!" I said.

As we listened to the opening of the book, I found myself whispering the words I knew so well, along with Andy. Yet, I was surprised to hear how he read the story.

"I don't read aloud the words like that at all. His voice is calm and steady. Mine is emotional." And so I recited a few sentences aloud. Lindsay smiled.

Then she said, "Do you know it took him 17 takes to read the final chapter, *The Last Day*? Seventeen. He couldn't stop crying. You see, in *Charlotte's Web*, Wilbur was actually Andy, and Charlotte was his wife Katherine. He was devoted to her and adored her. She was his best friend, as Charlotte was to Wilbur. Reading that chapter aloud brought back all the memories of his wife."

I did not know that. It makes perfect sense. E.B. White is Wilbur the pig, and his beloved wife Katherine is Charlotte the spider.

Jennie Fitzkee, a preschool teacher for 30 years, is originally from West Virginia, now lives in Massachusetts and is a supporter of Read Aloud West Virginia. This article is abridged from a version that first appeared on her blog, *A Teacher's Reflections*.

Thank you for the Read Aloud program. Encouraging students to read and enjoy books is vital to teaching

This has been great for my class. Thank you!

[Our reader] was great. She had the kids actively involved!

Great to have other adults (other than classroom teacher) model the enjoyment of reading.

Students were sad to miss this Read Aloud time!

Students were excited for [our reader] to come read to us. He made the stories come alive!

[Our reader] was the best gift we could have had... this year. He engaged our students... even our most struggling and reluctant readers. Thank you!

[Our reader] was a joy to have and I would welcome him back anytime.

My reader was fantastic!

[Our reader] is wonderful!

My students and I love Read Aloud. It's always nice to have someone other than me interacting with the students. They love it!!

We loved having [our reader] in our room this year. The kids love her and she is very energetic.

Ten to try

The Read Aloud program gives the students the opportunity to listen to many exciting stories. This increases their interest and love of reading.

Kindergarten loves the Read Aloud program!!!!

Very good expression and relating to students.

To the question: My reader read with expression... "Oh, my! Yes! He needs to do workshops.

"The children comment on the books read by our Read Aloud reader?" — Always

She bought all students a bookmark for Christmas! She also asks students for book suggestions which they love!

My students look forward to our reader coming every week!

My students loved being read to. They were very quiet and engrossed in the story, The kids "light up" when our reader comes in the room!

The children look forward to her visits. She makes excellent book choices.

Great job...! Thank you for your time organizing this program!!

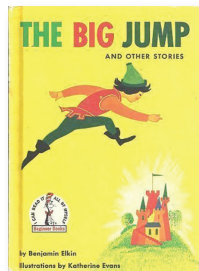
I enjoyed listening to [our reader] and my students were excited each week to hear the next chapter! We ♥ our reader!

"Bring a book to recommend," participants in Read Aloud's annual conference were instructed. Then at a good pausing point (or technical glitch, because books don't glitch, right?) a volunteer would offer a quick show-and-tell. This issue's book reviews include some of those favorites from around the state:

The Book With No Pictures

B.J. Novak

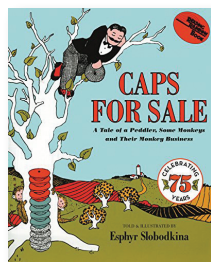
The Book with No Pictures by B.J. Novak
You may know the author better as Ryan from the TV show "The Office." Don't be daunted by the hilarious video online of Novak reading it to a school in New York. But be warned. Here's a sample: "Everything the words say, the person reading the book has to say. "No matter what." Young listeners wisely get the foreshadowing here and anticipate with giggles.



The Big Jump and Other Stories

by Benjamin Elkin
This one, originally published in 1958, was recommended by Berkeley County volunteer Casey Wilson because it is one of his wife's favorites. He read the first of the three stories in the book to a first-grade class,

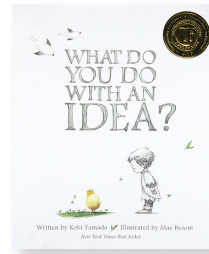
and then closed the book. A student raised his hand and said, "There are more pages in that book." Caught holding out on them, Wilson re-opened the book and read all three stories to the class in that one sitting. "It's as different from what's coming out that's new and contemporary as it can be, but the kids love it. Don't be hesitant to pull out the old-timers," he said.



Caps for Sale

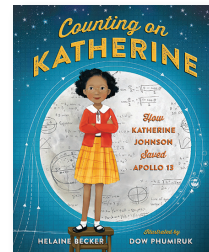
by Esphyr Slobodkina
Speaking of old-timers, this folktale was first published as the beloved picture book by an avant-garde artist in 1940. It has sold millions and makes a great board book because of the repetitive language suited to small children. If you read

it, though, make sure you know what monkey noise you're going to make when the time comes.



What Do You Do with an Idea?

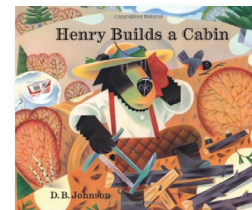
by Kobi Yamada and illustrated by Mae Besom
A national bestseller this all-ages story and light, inviting drawings explore something anyone can recognize -- what do you do with that idea? Sequels include What Do You Do with a Problem? and What Do You Do with a Chance?



Counting on Katherine: How Katherine Johnson Saved Apollo 13

by Helaine Becker and illustrated by Dow Phumiruk.
This beautiful new picture book traces West Virginia's recently discovered hero Katherine Johnson, of Greenbrier County, educated at West Virginia

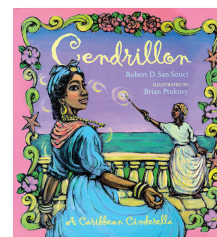
State University and WVU, who then worked quietly behind the scenes at NASA doing the math that made space travel possible. It's aimed at younger students, but it has something to inform and inspire all ages.



Henry Builds a Cabin

by D.B. Johnson
This is the first in a short series of picture books drawing on specific stories and imagery of Henry David Thoreau. This Henry is a bear who sets about

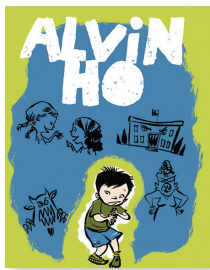
building a cabin in the woods. The sentences are simple enough for little ones to follow, but the book is even better in fourth and fifth grades, where students kick off discussion with "Why is he doing that?" Or someone insists that no one can build a house for 28 dollars, 12 and a half cents, and we discover the word inflation.



Cendrillon

by Robert D. San Souci and illustrated by Brian Pinkney
This is another picture book that grows with the students. It's the Cinderella story, so easily recognizable, but set in the French West Indies, with all the color, imagery and a peppering of French Creole

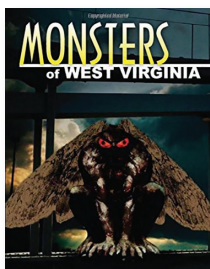
language. Also, it is told from the point of view of the Fairy Godmother, or nannin'.



Alvin Ho: Allergic to Girls, School and Other Scary Things

by Lenore Look and illustrated by LeUyen Pham
A chapter book, this features second-grader Alvin Ho, aka his superhero alter-ego Firecracker Man, who does everything you would expect,

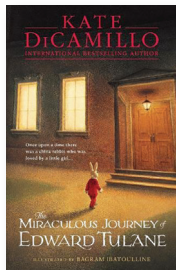
except that as soon as he steps off the bus at school he can't talk. The characters inspire laughs and compassion in listeners. It's not too young for third grade, where students begged for the next one in the series.



Monsters in West Virginia

by Rosemary Ellen Guiley
There is something even more suspenseful about allegations of monsters and fantastic beasts just out of sight, if the places they were supposedly spotted are places you know — Grafton, Point Pleasant, Braxton County, for example.

A good lure for older listeners.



The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane

by Kate DiCamillo

"I love the connections we can make between how the author explored different kinds of love, friendship, family love, betrayal, all of these rich ideas and plot twists and things that we can look at together when

we read those books," said Christy Schwartz, literacy specialist with the West Virginia Department of Education's Campaign for Grade Level Reading. (See page 1)

"There's a really powerful moment at the end. Every time my students saw me tear up at the end, they thought, 'Wow.' They fell in love with the characters, with the author, and they tended to read more books by that author." This is another one for upper elementary students.

Looking for your next Read Aloud hit?
Need to freshen your repertoire?

We link to helpful booklists online. Scroll through and click around. You'll find inspiration here: readaloudwestvirginia.org/book-lists-and-reviews/

My guest reader was great! Picks wonderful books.

We enjoy our Read Aloud time very much and she is awesome. The kids love having someone they love come be a part of the class! My children would ask many questions when presented with books read to them by the volunteer. Thank you.

[Our reader] read to my kids as if they were her own. She was very patient with their questions.

I can't wait for next year's Read Aloud! [Our reader] brings a variety of genres that interest all listeners. Many of her books cover science and social studies standards.

I appreciate the program. It allows my students to get to sit and enjoy books. It helps promote a love of reading. Having a reader like [ours] is such a special treat!

It was very positive and the students loved it. My students enjoy the Read Aloud program.

Thank you, this is a great program. I love that she asked the students their interests and picked a variety of books accordingly!

This is a marvelous program!

Thank you for providing this worthwhile time to students of Berkeley County.

IT'S OFFICIAL: TWO MORE CHAPTERS

Read Aloud West Virginia is pleased to announce the two newest counties to organize local chapters:

**Gilmer County and
Ritchie County,
Welcome!**

Library Commission TV show to feature Read Aloud

The West Virginia Library Commission will feature Read Aloud West Virginia's work on a program that will air during the first week of October on Channel 17 for Suddenlink customers in Kanawha and Putnam counties.

"Libraries Today" airs regularly on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10:30 a.m., 4:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.; on Wednesdays and Fridays at 4:30 a.m.; and Saturdays at 1:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

The video will also be available on the Library Commission's YouTube Channel.

UPCOMING DATES

Oct. 7-13

Teen Read Week, a national adolescent literacy effort sponsored by the Young Adult Library Services Association.

Oct. 23

The Great American Read final airs on PBS at 8 p.m.

Oct. 26-27

West Virginia Book Festival, Charleston

Nov. 1-30

Picture Book Month, an international literacy event sponsored by many in the publishing industry, library profession and other fields.

Nov. 3

District V Literature Fair at Glenville State College, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, call 304-462-6214.

Nov. 6

Election Day

Nov. 7-9

West Virginia Library Association Annual Conference at Stonewall Resort

Nov. 11-17

West Virginia Family Reading Week, sponsored by the West Virginia Library Commission

Nov. 15-16

West Virginia Reading Association Conference at The Greenbrier

My kids love Read Aloud!

I sincerely believe the program itself is a great tool. The coordinator for our school has increased the organization and functionality of this program at our school.

Our Read Aloud volunteer is wonderful. The kids do look forward to her visit each week. They are engaged in the story she has been reading. She makes it interesting and exciting!

Our reader is great!

We have had a great experience this year with our reader. She always lets me know when she can't be here. She reschedules. She is great with the students, and they love her!

I hope it continues next year.

Hope it continues to grow.

The only reason library usage has not increased is because students have designated times to use the library for our class. That is their only opportunity to use the library.

[Our reader] does an excellent job reading to the students. My students get very excited when they know it is read aloud day.

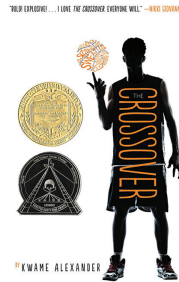
Positive influence for all ages. I especially see how powerful it has been for upper elementary students.

Authors to read ahead

Newbery winner among those featured at WV Book Festival

By Kaitlyn Guynn

The West Virginia Book Festival is returning to the Charleston Civic Center on October 26 and 27 with Newbery Award-winning children's author Kwame Alexander.



His series *The Crossover* is about a boy and his brother who love basketball, but face challenges together much deeper than who wins a game of one-on-one.

Alexander and singer-songwriter Randy Preston will perform "A Literary Concert with Kwame Alexander and Randy Preston," from 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 27 in

Conference Rooms 202-205.

One of Alexander's latest novels, *Rebound*, is a prequel to *The Crossover*, which is about brothers, loss of a father and becoming a man. Another novel, *Solo*, is a poetic verse novel about a 17-year old girl who learns that the life of a rockstar isn't all the glamour it seemed.

Alexander has also published picture books and poetry books.

Leading up to the festival, Harvard history professor and New Yorker staff writer Jill Lepore will give the annual McCreight Lecture in the Humanities at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 24 in Riggleman Hall at the University of Charleston.

Among her many books, Lepore wrote *Book of Ages*, a biography of Benjamin Franklin's little-known sister, and *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*, which won the American History Book Prize. Her new book, *These Truths: A History of the United States*, was published in September.

West Virginia
Book Festival



Children's author Kwame Alexander

Also appearing at this year's Book Festival schedule are:

- Debbie Macomber, author of the popular *Cedar Cove* and *Rose Harbor* series.
- Dennis Lehane, staff writer of the HBO series "The Wire" and author of many bestsellers including *Mystic River* and *Gone, Baby, Gone*.
- John Scalzi, award-winning science fiction writer and blogger, author of *Redshirts*, among many others.
- David Grann, another New Yorker writer and author of *The Lost City of Z*, whose stories frequently make it to the screen.

The festival is free to the public. For more information about the schedule, writing workshops or other events visit wvbookfestival.org.

Kaitlyn Guynn is a senior at the University of Charleston

Americans will choose their favorite novel for Oct. 23 broadcast

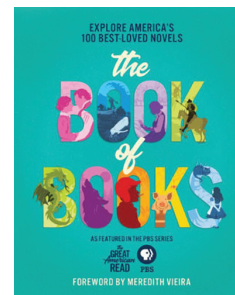
The Great American Read, a project of PBS for viewers to vote on their favorite novels of all time, will air its grand finale at 8 p.m. on Oct. 23.

This project creates opportunities for families and classrooms to discuss books and engage each other in what they are reading.

Is it even possible to choose America's favorite novelists? Turns out you can, writes Adam Kirsch in the Wall Street Journal essay, "The Way We Read Now." It's storytelling that moves people, more than literary quality, the results show.

The power of story will be no surprise to Read Aloud volunteers or their classroom teachers.

PBS has just published *The Book of Books*, a



companion volume to the series, full of short essays about the books by guests, sure to appeal to readers looking for the next great read.

You can keep up with The Great American Read at pbs.org/the-great-american-read/home/. Fair warning: You are likely to encounter

Charlotte's Web. You can connect with The Great American Read on Facebook and through West Virginia public libraries.

Lessons from the research

Here's what data and experience tell us about closing the word gap and helping West Virginia students to succeed, says Christy Schwartz, of the West Virginia Department of Education's Campaign for Grade Level Reading:

■ **Keep reading aloud to children from birth to adolescence, and keep educating families about the need to do it.** Reading aloud does more for vocabulary development than talking with them, which is also good.

■ **Encourage teachers to read to students daily.** "If children are responding well to a book you're reading, encourage them to find another in the series, in that genre or by the same author that the teacher might read with them," she said.

■ **Put books in children's hands.** "I grew up in eastern Kanawha County, and my favorite thing was when the Bookmobile came to the churchyard and I got to check out as many books as I was allowed to check out," Schwartz said. "So I have a real passion for getting books in the hands of children in West Virginia."

■ **Read multiple texts on the same subject.** "One of the best ways that research has shown you can close that gap is to read multiple texts about the

same topic," Schwartz said. Encourage teachers to add books to the classroom library or display some that explore topics in the read-aloud book.

"I was really excited that some of the enrichment opportunities that you all provide for the classrooms are book trunks and book sets," she said. "That's wonderful. And some of them are heavily focused on informational texts. Those could be a great support to teachers when they're trying to read multiple texts about a topic.

"So I'm really excited about that and that's a really great connection between your work and our work."

■ **Do pause in your reading to briefly explain strange words, or introduce them in advance.**

Being read to is the best way for children to develop word mastery and grammatical understanding, she said. Children learn more words and learn them better by reading and by being read to than by direct instruction, studying words in isolation.

■ **Involve community partnerships.**

"We know schools work really hard. Counties work really hard to educate children, but they can't do it alone," she said.

IMPACT (continued from page 1)

children heard by the time they reached school age.

"I always try to take that with a grain of salt, because I did grow up poor in West Virginia, and so any study that says people who live in poverty are this or that, I know that that's not necessarily the case for everyone," Schwartz said. "And I know that there are many people in this state who don't have a lot but who value education, who are educated, who are intelligent, who have good vocabularies, so I know that we have to kind of take that with a grain of salt, but we do kind of need to also look at what the data is telling us and use it to help our students."

Also at the conference, Read Aloud welcomed the West Virginia Department of Education's Janet Bock-Hager, who spoke about a longitudinal study of the effects of preschool. Participants also heard from Read Aloud state board member and pediatrician Dr. Kim Cross, who shared details of Reach Out and Read, the medical community's recognition of the importance of encouraging families to begin reading to children in infancy, and of the Academy of Pediatrics policy on limiting screen time for young children.

Chapter attendees were invited to share some of their favorite Read Aloud books in 30-second "book talks" (See "Ten to try" on page 4).

The conference addressed best practices for starting and administering Read Aloud's programs, which fall into four major categories: Volunteer Readers, Book Distribution, Public Education and Classroom Enrichment.

The needs and expectations of local chapters were addressed through presentations as well as group



Read Aloud conference attendees

discussion. Each attendee received chapter information to share with their local leadership and a Resource Kit that provides all the "how to's" of Read Aloud.

Read Aloud staff and board members have been encouraged each year by the commitment of the organization's volunteers and the impact the conference has had on local chapters.

"I am always inspired to do better each time I go," one participant said

"This was my first," said another. "I learned so much. The people were so friendly and I enjoyed meeting people from other counties. I received information to help me be a better school coordinator. I plan to use a lot of information in my monthly newsletters to send to families."

The state Read Aloud office thanks each chapter representative in attendance and is inspired by the dedication of all the Read Aloud chapters and volunteers.

This is my third year with [our reader], there are not enough hours in the day to tell you how happy I am to have her in my classroom. I am very thankful for her. My kids love her and look forward to seeing her on Fridays.

My kids really enjoyed it.

The reader is awesome! She draws the students in with her expressive reading. Hope to be able to do it again next year. [Our reader] has been a joy to have in our classroom. The kids get so excited on Thursdays for her to come! She not only has done an excellent job reading and picking out books but she truly has taken a love and interest in each child in my classroom. We adore having her come!

I am so thankful for the Read Aloud program!

My reader goes above and beyond to pick books related to things we might be learning about, as well as to create fun activities to go along with her books.

I have become very close with my volunteer. I think that developing a good relationship with each other is key to the success of our program in sixth grade. I hope [our reader] will be able to be our reader for years to come! She has selected excellent books that my students have loved!



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GET 'EM WHILE THEY LAST

Read Aloud can offer Neighborhood Investment Program tax credits!

Read Aloud West Virginia can once again offer state Neighborhood Investment Program tax credits to qualifying donors. The benefit reduces a donor's state personal income tax bill or corporate net income tax bill by as much as half of the gift amount.

Donations of at least \$500 qualify for the NIP credit and help us pursue our mission to motivate children across the state to want to read. With your help, we are changing the literacy climate in West Virginia.

Donations made by Dec. 31, 2018 can qualify for credits to apply to taxes due in 2019, but credits are limited and offered for as long as they are available.

The tax credit may be applied in one year, or during the next five years. Individuals are limited to receiving no more than \$100,000 in NIP credits in a single year.

Proposed changes in federal tax policy could reduce the effect of the state credit on federal taxes related to donations made

after Aug. 27, 2018, but state rules are unchanged.

Donors may give through our website, or make checks payable to Read Aloud West Virginia and send them to Read Aloud West Virginia, P.O. Box 1784, Charleston WV 25326.

For more information about NIP tax credits or anything else, please call Read Aloud at (304) 345-5212, or email Executive Director Mary Kay Bond at readaloud@frontier.com. Thank you.

Annual Fund drive starting soon

Letters will arrive in mailboxes any day now — it's time for Read Aloud West Virginia's 2018-2019 Annual Fund drive.

Why does a mostly volunteer organization need to raise money? Read Aloud's work, even its very existence, depends on funds provided by our wonderful donors. These contributions enable our staff to support local chapters and grow our program.

While volunteer chapters are the face of Read Aloud in their respective communities, we know from experience that they count on an office and staff to support them. We've actually tried it the other way with all volunteers. Read Aloud was founded in 1987 but from 2000-2007, we existed without staff, and the number of chapters fell from 53 to four in that time period.

Read Aloud was re-established with a central office in 2007-2008. Quality and involvement have grown steadily since. Today, we serve more than 200 schools in 31 counties.

That progress would not be possible without our generous donors.

Read Aloud routinely evaluates efforts to

make sure we put time, effort and money where they do the most good to help West Virginia children grow into successful readers and students. Over time, our activities have been winnowed down to four broad categories: weekly classroom Read Aloud volunteers, distribution of books, classroom enrichment and public education.

During the last school year, Read Aloud volunteers reached 33,000 students across the state. Imagine 33,000 students, week after week, enjoying new books or old favorites, each student seeing a "live commercial" for reading together, just for fun.

As comments from teachers in this newsletter show, students of all ages look forward to this time and "light up" when their Read Aloud reader enters the room.

That is what our donors make possible.

That is why the letters are on their way, to encourage you to consider making a donation to help us continue the work of getting books in the hands and on the minds of West Virginia's children.

Thank you for reading and for being a Read Aloud supporter.

BE A GOOD READER

Did you notice how closely the teachers' compliments for Read Aloud readers track the very things we heard way back at orientation. Remember:

Be prompt. Call or text if you are sick, or otherwise detained. Classroom time is valuable.

Always read books ahead. You are reading to make sure it is appropriate, so there are no unwanted surprises, but also to make sure it is an enjoyable book.

Practice. Time yourself. Be a good classroom guest, in and out on time.

Slow down. Give children a chance to see the pictures, and also ask questions. Explain unfamiliar words or concepts.

Be expressive.

Choose books you enjoy. If you are having a good time, children will catch the habit from you.

CONTACT US

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Follow us on social media!

