

READ ALOUD

WEST VIRGINIA

NEWSLETTER: FALL 2019



Third graders at Kanawha County's Piedmont Elementary School listen to *They All Saw a Cat* by Brendan Wenzel. Reading well by third grade is big predictor of later success.

Make or break time

What happens by third grade has lifelong influence

By Dawn Miller

After third grade, more than 85 percent of the school curriculum is taught by reading, says Maggie Luma, coordinator of the West Virginia Campaign for Grade Level Reading.

"Third-grade reading is one of the highest predictors of high school graduation," Luma told about 50 Read Aloud West Virginia volunteers at Read Aloud's sixth annual summit at Canaan Valley State Park in July. "Eighty-eight percent of our high school dropouts were struggling readers in the third grade."

The Campaign for Grade Level Reading's goal is to increase the percentage of children reading proficiently by the end of third grade by 5 percentage points each year. Literacy specialists offer evidence-based help to teachers, schools

and communities.

Here's another data point: vocabulary development by age 3 predicts achievement by third grade, Luma said. So reading to babies from birth, singing, rhyming, talking and naming things with your toddler actually contributes to their school success later in life.

"Unfortunately, 74 percent of those students who are falling so behind in third grade are never going to catch up," Luma said. "That doesn't mean that by the end of third grade we forget about those students, but it means we really need to be thinking about prevention."

"What is the solution?" Luma asked. "Maybe you could buy a reading program, right? We're all looking for that magic bullet, the newest thing to come out of Pearson or Houghton Mifflin or

(continues on page 3)

... And the pay is great

By Robert Johnson

As a (mostly) retired public servant, I am eager to resume my reading aloud with primary students this school year.

To say that the process is 'rewarding' is an understatement. I am often paid in hugs. While the classroom teachers with whom I have worked value my presence every week, it is the students of grades three, four and five who show their genuine appreciation.

A typical Thursday morning involves driving to the school and schlepping the three-ring binders of my prepared-and-rehearsed readings for the day. In the classroom, I place my binder(s) on a stand-up table or lectern and wait for enough silence to commence. I have never sat for a reading period. Call it the performer (aka 'ham') in me, if you will, but I believe it is impossible to read with engagement — and gestures —

(continues on page 7)

It's Annual Fund Time: Why we ask

Keep books in the hands and on the minds of West Virginia children

A gift for Read Aloud West Virginia

NAME _____

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Enclosed please find my gift of \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 Other _____

☐ NIP CREDITS

Read Aloud West Virginia, P.O. Box 1336, Charleston, WV 25301-0336
or visit us online at readaloudwv.org for a more complete form

Our volunteer readers and chapters are the face of Read Aloud, doing the rewarding work, week after week, of motivating children to read for fun. Children who read for pleasure grow into better readers and are more likely to excel in school and beyond. That makes Read Aloud a long-term economic development program.

By supporting Read Aloud, donors make possible the recruitment and organization of our army of 1,100 weekly volunteers, intentional book distribution efforts that stress children's book choice and ownership, and public education programs that teach families about the importance of reading together.

We have NIP credits! See page 8 for ways to help. Thank you.

More than a 'nice little thing'

A new school year brings with it such excitement! New relationships for teachers, students and parents.

A fresh start, which brings excitement and occasionally some trepidation. Our Read Aloud staff and volunteers begin the year with those same feelings.

It was no surprise to me that we began getting calls from returning readers even before the first day of school. These dedicated individuals are ready to bolt out of the starting gate. They see that we can make a difference with what seems like a simple, "nice little thing" — a regular classroom visit to share a love of reading. And yet that "nice little visit" is so much more!

In this issue, educators such as Maggie Luma (Page 1) and Steve Knighton (below) attest to the difference they know the Read Aloud experience can make for students. It is one piece of the literacy puzzle — the motivation piece — all of us need to work

harder, whether it is in sports as WVU Football Coach Neal Brown noted at Read-A-Palooza (Page 6) or in the classroom.

Experiencing a "commercial for reading" and bonding with a caring human being over good literature is an experience each child deserves daily. It should be a regular part of the curriculum to build vocabulary as well as interest in books. Our volunteers deliver! They also come back year after year because they see the impact they're making, as Bob Johnson explains (Page 1).

I can recite with the best of them the litany of West Virginia's challenges — diversify the economy, fight opioid addiction, improve our school systems. The fact is they are all interrelated. We can wring our hands and be paralyzed, OR we can do something. All important change comes with multiple small steps.

Motivating our children to work to become good readers improves their

chance at school success, opens career opportunities in a variety of fields and, believe it or not, reduces their vulnerability to substance abuse. One small step — a reader in the classroom — can bring about a change in the trajectory of a child's life and in the future of this state. Won't you join us?

There are multiple ways you can help us continue our work. You can volunteer. (Find Reader Orientation dates on Page 7 and on our calendar at readaloudwv.org.) You can donate (Page 8). Or, you can do both!

Change does not occur overnight, but many small steps will change the literacy climate of West Virginia. Use the fresh start of the new school year to join Read Aloud in a way that works best for you. You CAN make a difference!

Mary Kay Bond is the executive director of Read Aloud West Virginia.

Read Aloud makes a difference, at all levels

By Steve Knighton

The ebb and flow influence of Read Aloud West Virginia is totally dependent on the volunteers willing to sacrifice an hour a week to leverage their personal literacy to support the unimaginably difficult process of motivating struggling, passive children to develop their own reading skills.

I was an elementary principal for 33 years and witnessed amazing teachers practicing a research-based pedagogy designed to produce students capable of decoding words.

The pendulum of strategies was always alternating. We embraced phonics, big books, whole language, story organizers, cloze, word families, basal texts and more.

Each had a proven success record in teaching children to read. Each failed a significant portion of children incapable of converting letters into words, words into phrases and phrases into comprehension.

So, too many of the very young were moved along, forced to apply reading strategies that were beyond their grasp. They began resenting the incessant skill and drill of wall sound cards or the robotic



utterance of a phonemic cadence that meant nothing toward satisfying the gaping chasm between what they knew about applying their primitive reading skills with the written words the teachers expected them to translate.

Reading appeared to be an unrealistic goal for them. Students develop understandable reactions:

— "Why bother? I'm too far behind and embarrassed that I am in the yellow bird

grouping."

— "Maybe the teacher is correct. She told my parents that I'm not mature enough, and there was still time to become a student capable of not only learning to read but reading to learn."

— "I do enjoy the stories that are read to me. I imagine a magic carpet or a grinchlike meanie."

Children want us to help motivate them to try harder! They want us to help them to overcome a hesitancy to even try to read aloud. They so enjoy hearing you read and learning about the many places, mysteries, humor and intrigue locked inside that book you hold.

Please join the cadre of volunteers whose passion is to find a book worthy of a classroom of the most precocious children mixed among the most disadvantaged readers.

Thank you for reading if you are. Thank you for planning to read if you currently aren't.

Steve Knighton retired as the longtime principal of Kanawha County's Piedmont Elementary School, and is a Read Aloud supporter.



Chapter representatives from around the state gather at Canaan Valley State Park for Read Aloud's 6th annual conference in July.

MAKE OR BREAK (continued from page 1)

wherever it is that is going to get all our kids reading. We're going to put them on a computer, right? And get them all to be playing games so that they know how to

"I think Read Aloud West Virginia speaks to my heart because it shows children authentic reading..."

—Maggie Luma



read. I think if that were the case, we'd all be reading, right?

Students need a more intentional approach, she said. "Instead of buying a new program, instead of just praying a little bit harder, we could do what the research tells us." We could use evidence-based literacy practices:

- Deliver explicit instruction. That means telling students what they're learning in words they understand. "Make the learning goal visible," she said. "Yes, we need to develop a love for reading, but they're not going to develop that love if they can't decode."

- Increase practice turns and feedback. "Let's get the students talking more. They need increased discourse," she said. "They need to be talking about what they're learning." They also need a teacher on hand to give immediate feedback: "That's wrong. This is what's right. Let's try it again."

- Design instruction for students' needs, but we really need to know where the students are before we do that, she said.

- Work collaboratively. "We know we have one major goal, and that's get our kids reading by the third grade. But there are so

many ways that we can get there. Our job at the Campaign for Grade Level Reading is to support teachers, to support schools and to support communities with a roadmap. Here's what we've learned. Here's what the research says, and here's what we are going to provide supports in, so you can take what you need according to your specific data and apply it to your reading instruction."

"I think Read Aloud West Virginia speaks to my heart because it shows children authentic reading and why they need to be readers, because it brings joy," Luma said.

"You enjoy what you read. You learn about what you read. And I really think this needs to be our message when we are talking to students. You don't just need to learn this to learn it. It's because words are powerful. Words have meaning, and you can use them to change the world.

"Literacy is one of the biggest antidotes to poverty," she said. "Literacy becomes the currency for all other learning."

Dawn Miller, a classroom reader in Kanawha County, is Read Aloud's operations director.

Chapters share local strategies for putting books in kids' hands

Read Aloud chapters from around the state shared ideas and information at the 2019 Read Aloud WV Summit, strengthening the statewide Read Aloud program by forming cross-county connections. Here are some highlights:

- The Cabell County Chapter shared information on how to put on a "Flashlight Reading Night," a new type of book distribution and public education event. Children

receive a book and a flashlight to read in the dark.

- The Nicholas County Chapter presented about their new sidewalk libraries made from refurbished newspaper vendor boxes, which led to a lot of interest in expanding this project to other counties.

- The Randolph County Chapter explained their new "Buckets of Books" initiative, in which they work with the local library to place

milk crates of books on school buses to give children something to read during their commute.

- The Raleigh County Chapter frequently distributes nursery rhyme books at their events because children need the preliterate skills that old nursery rhymes support. Volunteers sometimes dress as Mother Goose to make events even more memorable.





FOOTBALL COACH NEAL BROWN SAYS:

“I think *education sets you free*. I really do. If you want to control your own destiny in this day and age, you’ve got to be educated, and the foundation of any education is *reading*... It provides the opportunity for *lifelong learning*.”



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Ten to try: Back to school!

We polled our chapters for some of their favorite books. Here are a few good icebreaker books to start the new school year:



The Monster at the End of this Book

By Jon Stone and Michael Smollin
Grover was breaking the fourth wall before it was cool. Whatever you do, don't turn the page. "There is a monster at the end of this book." This was an inexpensive grocery store book back when today's grandparents were in kindergarten. It still delights young and old.

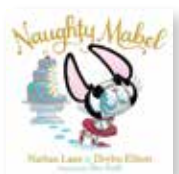
— Ginny Dixon, Upshur County



Rosie Revere, Engineer

By Andrea Beaty and David Roberts.
"This is the story of Rosie Revere, who dreamed of becoming a great engineer." In rhyming couplets, Rosie secretly works on her wonderful gadgets.

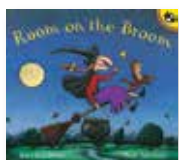
— Amber Myers, Harrison County



Naughty Mabel

By Nathan Lane and Devlin Elliott.
From the first page, in a pool before a classical mansion, Mabel sets the tone: "Hello, darlings. Allow me to introduce myself. I'm Mabel. Mabel of the Hamptons. And this is my humble abode." Witty use of vocabulary, even for middle school.

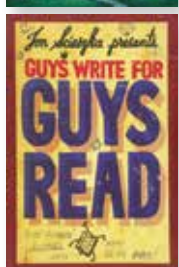
— Stephanie Burns, Pocahontas County



Room on the Broom

By Julia Donaldson.
A witch and her cat are perfectly content on their broom, until the witch starts inviting new friends along.

— Bev Mathias, Hardy County



Guys Write for Guys Read, specifically a short story called "The Follower"

By Jack Gantos
Young Jack is fascinated (and too easily led) by the wild and dangerous kid next door, who, among other things, catapults himself into the next yard and rides his bike off the roof. I like to leave students laughing on the first day and

hungry for more next week. This funny but cautionary tale is a discussion starter for the upper grades.

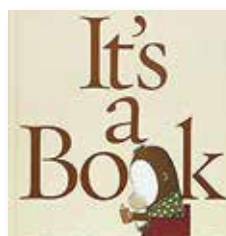
— Dawn Miller, Kanawha County



We Don't Eat Our Classmates

By Ryan T. Higgins
Preschoolers may see themselves in Penelope Rex, who wonders how many teeth her new classmates will have.

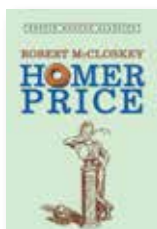
— Steph Murphy, Randolph County



It's a Book

By Lane Smith
"How do you scroll down? Do you blog with it? Can you make characters fight?" A little character peppers his reading friend with questions. Combine that with **Oh, the Places You'll Go!** by Dr. Seuss, with your head full of brains and your shoes full of feet. I like to start with these.

— Casey Willson, Berkeley County



Homer Price

By Robert McCloskey
First published in 1943, the funny, gentle, witty tales can still amuse. Centerburg is a place to return to, again and again. The short stories slot nicely into read aloud sessions around fourth grade.

— Lauren Jarroll, Nicholas County



The Dot

By Peter H. Reynolds
A frustrated student who insists that she cannot draw finds out where just making an attempt can take her, thanks to a wise art teacher. This book speaks to a range of ages.

— Angie Westfall, Upshur County

Read-a-Palooza generates funds, friends, excitement for books

Read-A-Palooza 2019: Join Team Read was the most successful fundraising event yet.

Thank you to Brickstreet (now Encova Mutual Insurance Group), the Elliot Family Foundation, Moses Auto Group, United Bank and all the other sponsors.

Read-A-Palooza is the only fundraising event we host each year and is vital to sustaining Read Aloud's programs to keep books in the hands and on the minds of West Virginia children.

This year's event focused on creating excitement for books and reading the same way our society generates enthusiasm for sports. In his remarks, our special guest WVU Football Coach Neal Brown beautifully connected the importance of a strong reading foundation to athletic success.

Read-A-Palooza was held in June at the University of Charleston, a new partner.

Special thanks go to Coach Neal Brown, Coleman Barnes, and West Virginia

University; to Tony Caridi, children's book author and MetroNews sports reporter; to The University of Charleston, UC President Marty Roth, Robert Elmore of the UC Vice President's office, and Ray Singleton of the UC Department of Education; to David Hager Photography; and to all the sponsors and silent auction donors. Thank you.

See our pull-out poster to promote reading in your community.

'Find the right book' at the WV Book Festival, Oct. 4-5

Looking for your next favorite book? The West Virginia Book Festival's got you covered. With a used book sale, writing workshops, and a line-up of authors including James Patterson, Salina Yoon, Orson Scott Card, and more, this gathering of readers and writers will have something for the whole family.

Read Aloud is particularly excited about the opportunity for cross-generational interest in authors. Headliner James Patterson, for example, a well-known adult author, also has several successful young adult (YA) series, including **Maximum Ride, Middle School, and I Funny.** **Orson Scott Card**, author of the popular sci-fi novel, **Ender's Game**, also has a YA series called



Orson Scott

James Patterson claims to have set a mission with his writing career that we heartily agree with – “to prove that there is no such thing as a person who ‘doesn’t like to read,’ only people who haven’t found the right book.” We hope to see this message resonate through all aspects of this year’s book festival and awaken the reader in everyone.

Join us on October 4-5 at the Charleston Coliseum & Convention Center to celebrate our favorite thing – books! — *Amanda Schwartz*

Pathfinder. This is a great opportunity for parents to foster and/or bolster a love of reading with their children through the shared experience of meeting or discovering an author they both enjoy.

Want to try it?

Here's how Read Aloud works:

Volunteers attend a one-time 90-minute orientation. From there we match the reader with a classroom, based on the reader's schedule and preferences.

Volunteers spend about an hour a week, including preparation time, to make this difference in the lives of children.

Fall orientation schedule:

Sept. 12 – Fayette County Board of Education, 111 Fayette Ave., Fayetteville, **11 a.m.**

Sept. 12 – Fayette County Board of Education, **5:30 p.m.**

Sept. 17 – Jackson County, **6:30 p.m.**

Sept. 19 – Jefferson County, U.S. Coast Guard, 408 Coast Guard Drive, Kearneysville (open to the public but registration is required 703-727-2518).

Sept. 19 – Berkeley County, **6 p.m.**, Tuscarora Elementary, 2000 Tavern Rd., Martinsburg

Sept. 20 – Berkeley County, Senior Center, 217 N. High St., **10 a.m.**

Sept. 26 – Raleigh County

Oct. 1 – Kanawha County, WV State University, Wallace Hall, Room 622, **9:30 a.m.** (open to the public, but please register)

Watch readaloudwv.org for more orientation details as they are confirmed or call 304-345-5212 to register.

We'll come to you

Employers may schedule an orientation at the workplace, and then encourage employees to volunteer.

AND THE PAY (continued from page 1)

while seated. Call me 'old school' if you like.

Over the last few years, I have become an invited member of my county chapter of Read Aloud West Virginia, a vetted-and-authentic organization of volunteer readers....

Recollecting on my own experience as a primary student, now these many years ago, it was the teachers or community members who read aloud with my class and me that always fondly come to mind. What they did had impact. Learn about the affirming studies that show student improvement in classrooms in which a spoken reader participates in learning. And I can vouch that I am, without fail, warmly welcomed in every classroom.

Although what I read is likely not as important as how I engage students in a quality story, the expression of interest in their collective faces says it all. Afterward, it is not unusual for students to steal a hug on my way out of the classroom, often on the way to the next classroom in my schedule.

Yeah, I also have the gratification of teaching in an after-school program three afternoons a week, but it is ordinarily the weekly reading sessions that make it oh-so-easy for me to get up on a Thursday morning.

Don't say, "I don't have time" or "I'm too old" for reading aloud. I am 70 and work with a dozen organizations and community interests. Do the students — and yourself — a favor this school year. Read aloud.

Robert Johnson, a reader, blogger, musician, music promoter/event producer, community activist and educational advocate, is a Read Aloud volunteer and chapter board member in Nicholas County. This is adapted from a blog post published at [medium.com](https://medium.com/@atcsco/year-five-of-reading-aloud-c6c3a35275f3).

<https://medium.com/@atcsco/year-five-of-reading-aloud-c6c3a35275f3>

What teachers say

Each year, we survey teachers about their Read Aloud experience. Results are overwhelmingly positive. Here is a sample of recent teachers' comments from around the state:



I loved having a reader. My students always ask when our reader was coming. They loved listening to the books!



Our reader was AMAZING! The students looked forward to her visit each week! They were excited to see which books she had chosen and were anxious for her to continue the chapter books. Their interest in reading has increased tremendously since Brenda has been reading to them. I am looking forward to having a reader in my classroom next year! I hope it is Brenda again!!



This is a great program for students at my school! It encourages interest in books and reading!



I believe the Read Aloud program prompts students to want to read and encourages them to find books that they would not usually look for.



This program is great and it really benefits the students. They are excited to read their own books because of our awesome volunteer!



Read Aloud is such a positive experience! Passing on the love of reading is one of the most important elements of teaching.



Thank you for this wonderful program! I love the opportunity my class is given to hear another adult that is passionate about reading and gives students another role model.



I think it is a good program. I hope it is continued next year.

Keep books in the hands and on the minds of West Virginia children

A gift for Read Aloud West Virginia



Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email address: _____ Telephone: _____

Enclosed please find my gift of _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$250 _____ \$500 _____ \$1,000 _____ Other

☐ **NIP CREDITS** (as available)
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or visit us at readaloudwv.org to make a secure payment. Thank you.*



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Ways to contribute to Read Aloud West Virginia:

■ Give to our Annual Fund.

Read Aloud West Virginia exists entirely on donations from individuals, businesses and foundations. Read Aloud supporters make everything else possible – winning grants and awards for book distribution, leveraging gifts into higher-impact projects, and collaborating with schools and other groups (see page 1). The remittance slip above gives details to send a check, which is still the most efficient way to give. Donors are also welcome online at readaloudwv.org.

■ Direct a Required Minimum

Distribution from a tax-deferred account. At age 70½, the federal government requires owners of tax-deferred retirement accounts to take a minimum distribution. Have your financial institution send the disbursement directly to a charity, such as Read Aloud, and the IRS doesn't count it as taxable income. If it is \$500 or more, it may also qualify for state NIP tax credits.

■ **Qualify for NIP tax credits.** Donate \$500 or more to a qualifying organization, such as Read Aloud, and receive West Virginia Neighborhood Investment Program tax credits. The credits reduce state personal income tax or corporate net income tax bills by as much as half the gift amount. They can be spread out and used over a five-year period. Donors can receive as much as \$100,000 a year in NIP tax credits. Taxpayers may reduce their tax bills by no more than half. Because it is a tax credit, it lowers a tax



Students at George C. Weimer Elementary School pore over new books they chose during Summer Book Binge, a distribution effort made possible by an award from the UPS Store and by the work of Read Aloud West Virginia. Research shows that when students are given an appealing opportunity to freely choose books to read over the summer, they maintain or even gain reading skills, rather than lose them. Read Aloud donors make it possible to seize opportunities like this.

bill whether the taxpayer itemizes or not.

■ **If you are a Kroger customer, set your Kroger Plus card account to benefit Read Aloud West Virginia.** Then, shop as usual, and every quarter, Kroger sends Read Aloud a check for a percentage of your spending. Encourage a friend or relative to sign up, too. This kind of passive income is extremely efficient for an organization.

■ **If you shop at Amazon, go to smile.** **amazon.com.** Designate Read Aloud as your chosen charity, and as you shop, Amazon will forward a commission to Read Aloud. You must remember to shop at smile. **amazon.com** for Read Aloud to benefit. Recruit a friend and double your impact.



■ **Shop at Books-a-Million's West Virginia stores on Saturday, Sept. 21.**

Save the date. When you shop at a BAM! store in Barboursville, Beckley, Bluefield, Bridgeport, Charleston, Martinsburg, Morgantown, Vienna or Wheeling on Sept. 21 and mention Read Aloud at the check-out, Books-a-Million will donate a generous percentage of your purchase to Read Aloud West Virginia. Thank you!

CONTACT US

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