



July 2015

Reading Partners

Marlyn's Message



It's summer and the livin' is easy---but not for Reading Partners! Even though we are not actively engaged right now, the wheels are still turning as I plan for this coming school year.

I have read through all the Feedback Forms and responded to those who had concerns or questions. Thank you for filling them out. Several weeks ago, all of us Team Leaders convened for a summer lunch and discussion about the information on the forms and ideas for the coming year. These forms are like "gold" for me, as I mine them for your experiences and suggestions to improve the program. See below for more details on the results.

One of the issues that comes up with some regularity is: How do I know as a Reading Partner that I am being Effective? It has been a long time since we've compiled any organized data for the program. We FEEL that we're doing good, we're ASKED to return year after year to the schools and the students RESPOND to our tutoring with great enthusiasm. But, for the strength and vitality of the program, it's important to quantify the effectiveness of our service.

In conjunction with several of our Staff Liaisons, I have been researching tools that can be used within the parameters of our program to address this issue. We're only with these students once a week for 1/2 hour each--but we do make a difference. How can we measure this difference? What's it going to

look like? How will it capture the "softer" aspects of what we do versus things like de-coding, vocabulary knowledge, fluency improvement? This is the crux of the matter. Keep tuned for more details.

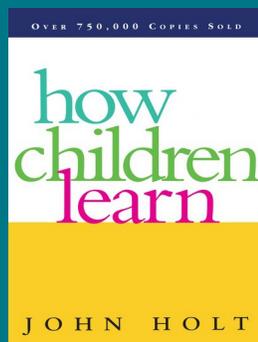
The students return to school on August 31 and the teachers will begin their assessments in September. Starting on September 13 and ending on October 6, the Jewish High Holidays and other festivals occur. During this time period, some days are set aside for observance and others are not. Reading Partners does not schedule events or service to children when a major Jewish holiday is observed and my office is closed. (See dates below.) Each year the Team Leaders consult with our Staff Liaisons to determine when the best start day for their school is. For most teams, this year it will probably be the first week of October. So, be on the lookout for those emails and telephone calls from us.

Enjoy, enjoy this lovely, hot, weather!

Warm regards,

Marlyn Agatstein

Highlighting a Team Leader



Lesley Sandison is Team Leader at
Julia A. Stark School

Many years ago I came across this book and now I find many of its passages resonate with our program philosophy. Here are some

I was born and grew up in Edinburgh, Scotland. I

exerpts:

~ One of the most important things a teacher can do for any learner is to make the learner less and less dependent on them.

~ It takes a child some time to get used to the shapes of letters and words, to the point where she can see at a glance that this word is like that one, and this other word almost like it, and this other word altogether different. So we must give her plenty of time and not be surprised or upset by what looks like slowness, or stupid mistakes.

~ We must begin with what children see, do and know and have them talk and write about such things, before trying to talk to them about things they don't know.

~ He quoted Dr. Bruno Bettelheim: "...even if a child can't read, give them instructional material that is fitting for their age, otherwise they're ashamed of their lack of abilities."

studied law at college and was a litigation lawyer. I took a career break after the birth of our 3rd boy although subsequently did some part time university tutoring. My husband, Jamie's job brought us to the States and we have now lived here for 10 years; enjoying every minute of it. We still have a house in Scotland, near St. Andrews. I love all sports but especially skiing, tennis and paddle. I am also a qualified ski instructor. I love gardening and am a member of the Garden Club of Darien.

I think my interest in children's reading developed because one of my boys is dyslexic and struggled to read. He has received great support from schools in Scotland and the US and is now doing very well at university. I therefore felt it was important for me to give back and help in any way possible. My favorite part of being a reading partner is seeing the children's faces light up when you enter the classroom.

Feedback on the Feedback Forms

Forms received= 39

Schools/Community centers that responded= 12

Overall comments: People used these words to describe their experience-- satisfying, positive, rewarding, worthwhile, fulfilling, excellent. Many people mentioned the support aspects of the program, such as comes from the teachers, administrators, and even the students. Most report that the students are eager, warm, friendly, cooperative and fun. People agreed the trainings prepared them adequately. Of all the workshop presenters, Betsy DeSantis got the highest marks.



Areas to address: 1/3 felt that the appropriateness of the assigned children might be improved, that space issues affected their performance and that keeping a log of the visits is not that useful.

Suggestions:

- ~ More guidance with book selections.
- ~ Better student assignments.
- ~ Help in finding just the right books.
- ~ More contact with Staff Liaisons.
- ~ More newsletters.
- ~ More help with strategies for K students.

Jewish Holiday Dates 2015-2016

Sept. 13 Erev Rosh Hashonah

Sept. 14 Rosh Hashonah

Sept. 15 Rosh Hashonah

Sept. 22 Kol Nidre

Sept. 23 Yom Kippur

Sept. 28 Sukkot

Sept. 29 Sukkot

Oct. 5 Shemini Atzeret

Oct. 6 Simchat Torah

Apr. 22 Passover 1st day

Apr. 29 Passover 8th day

Mark your calendars:

October 8, 4-6 PM. New Volunteer Orientation and workshop with Judy Martin, Reading Teacher from Northeast Elementary School.

She will present on working with early readers and focus on K and 1 student profiles. Location TBD.

Last week September, Day TBD, 8:30 AM-9:30 AM: Workshop with Jennifer Grant and Iuliana Roata, Reading Teachers from Stillmeadow School. Workshop focusing on early readers and strategies to use with them in our service.

August is recruitment time for us and our best referrals come from you! Already we have 12 NEW volunteers for the fall--but we have the capacity and desire at our schools for more. Please reach out to your friends and family and tell them about this exciting and satisfying work we do and the grateful children who thrive on our presence in their lives. I love talking with prospects about the program and appreciate your referrals.

Marlyn Agatstein

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