



**Read-Aloud Virginia is dedicated to improving literacy and strengthening families
by encouraging parents to read aloud to their children every day.**

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

Tuesday, May 17, 6 pm: Annual RAV Board Meeting
Saturday, May 21, 11 am: Annual RAV School Coordinators' Luncheon
Saturday, May 21, 1 pm: Avi, Newbery award-winning author of *Crispin* and other popular novels to speak at the Byrd Theater on Cary Street, Richmond

NEWS FROM RAV

Good luck, Gary Anderson! This month, Gary steps down as RAV Executive Director. As one of RAV's first visionaries and a six-year champion of the organization's mission, Gary has been a tireless contributor to the growth of reading aloud throughout the state. Writing now as president of Read Aloud International, Gary says, "It is my hope that RAI and RAV will stay closely connected so that reading aloud to children will become a regular practice in every home, school, and childcare facility worldwide." With deep appreciation to Gary for all he's done, we wish him the best of luck in his continuing work with RAI.

Congratulations, Joanie Bache! In describing Joanie, whom we all know as the passionate motivator of RAV's programs and events, Gary says, "Joanie has stepped up and will become the real leader of RAV. Her energy and devotion are amazing and she appears ready to take on the job responsibilities of Executive Director of RAV." We couldn't agree more, and we wish Joanie all the best in her vital role.

Teacher of the Year: RAV member Mary Williams of Ingleside Elementary has been named Teacher of the Year by the Norfolk Wal*Mart. Mary will receive \$1,000.00 to use for literacy. Congratulations, Mary!

RAV School of the Year: Northumberland Elementary School has been selected Read Aloud School of the Year for 2005 - 2006! RAV will honor Principal Annette Butler, Assistant Principal Theresa Larsen and RAV Coordinator Jan Bates; the Northumberland Women's Club, its President, Mrs. Jackie Brittain, former President, Mrs. Peggy Roberts, and Chairman of the Ed. Committee, Sylvia Ball, at the annual RAV Board meeting on May 17 and at our annual RAV school coordinators' luncheon on May 21.

Simon Kidgits Book Club Blast: The Book Club Blast, sponsored by the Simon shopping malls, ran their second Charity Book Drive in March at Virginia Center Commons. Led by WRIC TV-8's weeknight anchor Juan Conde, Lite 98's Kat Simons and the Radio Disney Fun Squad, celebrities read popular books to the children. Other activities included an activity station, giveaways, and appearances by Winnie the Pooh and the gecko from Geico Direct. RAV was the recipient of a collection of slightly used books that were donated during the Book Club Blast. For more information on the Simon Kidgits Club Book Blast and other Simon-sponsored events, visit www.simonkidgitsclub.com.

4,839 (!) books for kids in need: Barnes & Noble, Virginia Center Commons, and participating schools Pemberton, Pole Green, Oak Knoll, Battlefield Park E.S. and Emmanuel Episcopal Church have collected almost 5,000 books for needy children since December, as part of spreading the gift of reading. Thank you, Richmond Area Reading Council, RAV, and Brian and Baylor Dickerson for collecting books for homeless families and for bookless homes throughout the Richmond area!

Successful school-wide read-aloud project: Jan Bates, RAV coordinator at Northumberland Elementary, reports that over 500 copies of "Because of Winn Dixie," by Kate DiCamillo have been distributed to the school's children as part of a reading project that has been embraced by not only every student in the school, but by the entire Northumberland community. The books were paid for by kids, parents, community donations (through the public library and local luncheonette), one church, a community member who saw it in the newspaper, and school staff members. The broad participation reflects the success of Jan's enthusiasm and efforts in taking the pleasures of reading aloud to the whole student body! Congratulations, Jan!

TIPS FROM TEACHERS AND PARENTS:

Success Through Motivation: At Pemberton Elementary, where 10 out of 16 classes have 100% participation in the read-aloud program, Joanie Bache reports that a little extra incentive can work wonders. For teachers, they used chocolate, a traditional way to tell people that their hard work is appreciated. (Valentine's Kisses were the favorite.) For the kids, the teachers promised a free homework pass for each report that was turned in, a technique that is especially popular in the upper grades. At Pemberton, the parents of older students sometimes read textbooks, newspapers, or magazines to their children and then discuss the material as part of fulfilling their read aloud pledge for the month.

Books on tape or CD: Some schools are beginning to build a "Listening Library" where kids check out books on tapes or CDs if they can't get an adult to read aloud to them. They might listen with an adult – alone or within a small group – and then discuss the stories with the adult. Books on tape or CDs are a great way to change the "Are-we-there-yet?" chorus of long car rides.

"Slow down!" says Joanie Bache. "Most of us tend to read aloud very quickly, but as with a good piece of candy, you need to savor the words from a book that you are reading aloud to someone. The listener will savor it along with you. The speed of your voice can really enhance the story as you read it aloud. Slowing down at some points while reading aloud "re-sets" the listeners' attention to you. Why did you slow down? They will listen carefully to find out. Slowing down a whole sentence or paragraph builds up drama, suspense, and emotion in the story. Listeners will notice immediately when you slow down!"

Multi-faceted kick-off program: Lynette Metzger at Donahoe Elementary reports that the RAV kick-off night in January was a great success, thanks to an energetic assortment of activities. Starting the afternoon of the event, students were given reminder stickers to wear home so they couldn't forget the promise of the "Pizza and Pop-the-Top Night." The parents had pizza, pop, and cookies in the cafeteria as they watched the RAV- Jim Trelease parent video together and staff from the Sandston Public Library helped get parents and children signed up for library cards. The children ate pizza and cookies together as a group first, and then broke into smaller groups (preschool, K -1, 2-3, 4-5) for age-level appropriate literature-based activities. Einstein was there, of course! Each child who attended was given a book to take home.

Remember to enlist the help and inspiration of experts who are available to help boost your programs:

Jim Trelease, pioneer in the current read-aloud movement, was "great!" reports Janice Fitzgerald at Henry Elementary School. She goes on to say, "He is a wonderful speaker and had the audience involved in his message. People who are involved in RAV need to hear him speak. He shows us how it's worth all of the little things that we do to get parents to read to their children."

Jump-Start Your Program: Bruce Coffey, an inspiring speaker on the techniques and benefits of reading aloud, is available to come to your school. Contact him at papahans5@mac.com.

The Einstein Mascot: Einstein, the RAV bird, will visit your school, pass out book marks, etc. while you have a PTA reading activity or school celebration for reading aloud. Einstein doesn't talk, but the kids sure love to hug him! To schedule a visit at your school, contact Joanie Bache at: mbache@aol.com.

Visiting Authors: "James River Writers" has local writers who will speak at your school. The children at Pemberton loved it when Libby Meggs shared how she wrote and illustrated her book, *Go Home Cat*, with parents and students at their PTA Meeting. Visit www.JRWF.org and look for "Reading, Writing Richmond" for more author information.

PICTURE BOOKS: READING ALOUD TO KIDS WHO DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH

By Bonnie Connelly

Picture books are a rich resource for all teachers and parents, and they are truly a godsend for ESL teachers. ESL classes usually comprise students of varied backgrounds, language abilities, and even grade levels. How do you make reading aloud meaningful to such a diverse group? Picture books are the answer. Picture books bridge the gap between students of different abilities, and sharing a story becomes a rewarding experience for all.

Listening to and looking at well-crafted picture books gives ESL students the opportunity to engage in all the literacy-building activities that make reading aloud valuable. Because of their limited English skills, ESL students need picture clues to understand fully the action of the story. In addition, read-alouds give them the opportunity to listen to grammatically correct English, expressively read. Learning that language has rhythm is an important part of language acquisition. Reading aloud address that need, too.

Reading picture books aloud helps students find the meaning of text and emphasizes the connotations as well as the denotations of vocabulary. Good stories introduce vocabulary and highlight the purpose of enriched vocabulary. An example of vocabulary extension is the use of descriptive verbs, i.e. the cat can *walk*, *prance*, or *sneak* into the room. Each verb gives a different image, and the picture illustrating the action makes the meaning clear.

Picture books create an environment in which all students are involved, regardless of their abilities. The Caged Birds of Phnom Penh, written by Frederick Lipp and illustrated by Ronald Himler, is an example of a story that engages a wide spectrum of students. I have used it with students from fourth grade through high school. The language is rich in vocabulary (*lush* and *plush* not only rhyme, but also have a relationship in meaning), and in the use of literary devices (“birds as colorful as a thousand kites,” “Ary eyed the little prisoners.”) The story can be understood on a concrete level or looked at more philosophically. It uses meaningful dialogue to move the story along, and its illustrations make the story accessible to all ESL students.

As a follow-up to the story, I read and discuss Maya Angelou’s poem “Why the Caged Bird Sings” with more advanced students. This provides a good opportunity for comparing and contrasting genres. In The Caged Birds of Phnom Penh, the meaning of the children’s names is discussed. A good follow-up activity is to have the students write about why they received their names. I have books available that tell what names mean and where they originated. Students are encouraged to discuss the history of their names with their parents. As an end activity, they write acrostic poems based on their names.

Try using picture book read-alouds with children of varying reading abilities or language facility – I know you will be impressed.

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READ ALOUD FOR FUN

Summer's coming, and the living is getting easy. Climb into the hammock, or settle in under a tree, and fill those lazy, delicious days with some shared reading. Here are some books that will let you take a child on adventures near and far. These tales will become part of unforgettable moments for you and your young readers. *Book selections are for suggested listening "read-aloud" levels.* Remember to read books that are 2-to-3 years above what kids can easily read themselves.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

Animal Friends, Maya Aimer & John D. Ivanko
The Pigs' Picnic, Keiko Kasza
Where Is the Green Sheep? Mem Fox

Pre-K and Kindergartners

Toot and Puddle, The New Friend, Holly Hobbie
And Here's to You, David Elliott
Minerva Louise, Janet Morgan Stoeke

Grades 1-2

Wild Beach, Marion Coste
Diary of a Worm, Doreen Cronin
Don't Take Your Snake for a Stroll, Karin Ireland

Grades 3-4

The Mysterious Tadpole, Steven Kellogg
Fat Men From Outer Space, Daniel Pinkwater
Murder, My Tweet, Bruce Hale

Grades 5-6

Hoot, Carl Hiaasen
No More Dead Dogs, Gordon Korman
The White Mountains, John Christopher

Grades 7-8

Inkheart, Cornelia Funke
Summer of My German Soldier, Bette Greene
The Chronicles of Chrestomanci, Diana W. Jones

High School to Adult

The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency, Alex. M. Smith
The Perfect Storm, Sebastian Junger
The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants, A. Basheres

Don't Miss This New Book:

Runny, Babbit: A Billy Sook, Shel Silverstein
(Published Posthumously)

With appreciation to Read Aloud International for the suggested titles.

WORD PLAY:

Experts say that the skills that come from active listening improve receptive language and verbal facility in all children, forever; and that committing poems to memory instills a sense of cadence and rhythm in the young reader's mind. Lewis Carroll, a master at thrilling children with words, gave us father William:

*"You are old, father William," the young man said,
"And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head –
"Do you think, at your age, it is right?"*

*"In my youth," father William replied to his son,
"I feared it might injure the brain;
But now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again."*

From *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, 1866

Message from Gary Anderson, RAV's departing Executive Director

Dear Folks:

All of us who have tried to teach children to read have embarked on a challenging journey. The skills that aid in reading and those that come from reading are being examined in new ways, as the role of oral comprehension becomes better understood. In my thirty years as a school psychologist, most of the students who really got my extended attention were at-risk students, most with IQs between 70 and 80. Even though a high percentage were eventually placed in special education classes because of repeated referrals by teachers, their underlying problems with reading stemmed mostly from poor comprehension of the spoken language.

Peeverly and Kitzen (1998) state, "the processes of language that underlie the ability to comprehend written text are the same as those that underlie the ability to comprehend speech." In a review of research, they found that good readers perform better on measures of vocabulary knowledge, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension than poor readers with language problems. Therefore, to best understand why some students have difficulty learning to read, there is a need to screen their ability to understand developmentally appropriate, orally presented material. According to Kathleen Williams, author of GRADE, reading is a receptive language skill. If this is true, then the primary way to teach reading is to build a stronger receptive language base in students within the lower 50% ability level. Reading is more a function of teaching and understanding language than teaching the technical aspects of decoding.

The very best way to build receptive language is reading aloud to children of all ages, one-on-one, from books two or three grade levels above their age. So read aloud, read aloud, read aloud!

--Gary

Don't Forget the Pizza! Tune in to Channel 6 Richmond (or channel 9 on Cable) every day at 6:15 am for the RAV book "picture of the day." These are pictures based on books and drawn by students who have listened to the books read aloud to them by parents. Students who have pictures shown on TV are given FREE Little Caesar's coupons from Channel 6. Congratulations to Carver, Northumberland, Fox, and Pemberton whose pictures have been featured on channel 6 so far this year. Thank you, Channel 6 and ***Little Caesar's!***

THANK YOU!

RAV is grateful for the support of all our members, teachers, administrators, librarians, and Board members. Thank you for bringing reading aloud to all the children of Virginia.

PLEASE JOIN US

RAV is a membership organization, and we encourage individuals and organizations from around Virginia to join us and become Read Aloud Virginia members. Help take reading aloud to a new level of recognition. For membership information, go to the RAV web site: www.readaloudva.org.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

Read Aloud Virginia is a non-profit organization that is 100% dependent on financial support from outside sources, mainly from folks like you. If you agree that our programs are important to the minds and futures of our children, please consider making a donation to Read Aloud Virginia. With your help we will continue to bring Read Aloud Virginia to more schools and reach even more children. You can send your check to the address below. Thank you.

www.readaloudva.org

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Reading aloud to a child: the most important 20 minutes of your day