

Event Ideas

Buddy Program

- Pair kids up with mentors from the middle/high schools to read together.
- Invite media, particularly those that need strong visuals like TV and photo editors.
- Consider highlighting any of your student Buddies who overcame literacy challenges themselves
- Ask your Buddies why they are volunteering, what their favorite book is, what they got out of the experience. Use this material on social media and offer as quotes to media.
- Approach a school club or athletic team to see if they would be willing to serve as Buddies. If an athletic team participates, you can extend your pitch to local sports reporters.

Partner with a TV station to promote a Read to Your Child program.

- Share stats about how reading to your child from an early age makes a huge impact, how dialogic reading is a simple step everyone can do, how literacy rates in PA are declining. For example:
 - America ranks 16 out of 23 for literacy, 21 out of 23 in math and 17 out of 19 in problem solving, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/10/08/america-tests-below-the-international-average-on-oecd-tests>
 - More than 50% of students at four-year post-secondary schools and more than 75% at two-year colleges lacked the skills to perform complex literacy tasks. In addition, almost 20% of students pursuing four-year degrees had only basic quantitative skills –The National Survey of America’s College Students
 - The performance advantage among students whose families read to them in their early school years is evident regardless of the family’s socioeconomic background –PISA-OECD
 - Family involvement is a more significant factor in children’s academic performance than the qualities of their school –NC State University
 - A single year of family education has a greater impact on the likelihood of a son or daughter attending a post-secondary institution than does \$50,000 in family income –Seeds of Literacy
 - Family involvement is directly tied to student performance and has a sustained impact—15-year-old students whose families often read books with them

during their first year of primary school show markedly higher scores in Program for International Student Assessment than students whose families read with them infrequently or not at all.

- Links to NAEYC documents on reading aloud with young children with tips
<https://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200303/ReadingAloud.pdf>
<http://families.naeyc.org/everyday-steps-to-reading-writing>
- “I have always believed that, for oral language development, Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz* was right: ‘There’s no place like home.’” - Lucy Calkins, *Raising Lifelong Learners*
- Along with reading talking to children is key to develop oral language and vocabulary. The Meaningful Differences study is generally cited to reinforce this. Here is a summary of that study:
 - This study of ordinary families and how they talk to their very young children is no ordinary study at all. Betty Hart and Todd Risley wanted to know why, despite best efforts in preschool programs to equalize opportunity, children from low-income homes remain well behind their more economically advantaged peers years later in school.

Their painstaking study began by recording each month—for 2-1/2 years—one full hour of every word spoken at home between family and child in 42 families, categorized as professional, working class, or welfare families. Years of coding and analyzing every utterance in 1,318 transcripts followed. Rare is a database of this quality. “Remarkable,” says Assistant Secretary of Education Grover (Russ) Whitehurst, of the findings: By age 3, the recorded spoken vocabularies of the children from the professional families were larger than those of the families in the welfare families. Between professional and welfare families, there was a difference of almost 300 words spoken per hour. Extrapolating this verbal interaction to a year, a child in a professional family would hear 11 million words while a child in a welfare family would hear just 3 million.

The implications for society are staggering: Hart and Risley’s follow-up studies at age 9 show that the large differences in the amount of children’s language experience were tightly linked to large differences in child outcomes. And yet the implications are encouraging, too. As the authors conclude their preface to the 2002 printing of *Meaningful Differences*, “the most important aspect to evaluate in child care settings for very young children is the amount of talk actually going on, moment by moment, between children and their caregivers.” By giving children positive interactions and experiences with adults who take the time to teach vocabulary, oral

language concepts and emergent literacy concepts, children should have a better chance to succeed at school and in the workplace.

- Challenge families to read a certain number of books per week to their children
- Invite viewers to comment on the station's Facebook page about how/what they read to their kids
- Introduce a hashtag around the campaign and encourage viewers to continue the conversation and/or post photos of themselves reading to their kids on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
- Have the station's media personalities and/or local celebrities come to school and read their favorite children's books to the kids as part of a program

Book Drive

- Partner with local businesses for book drops. Creates a great visual for media. Helps engage the community. Promoting the book drive can be tied to themes of reading a book per week, reading at home, reading with families or to younger children.

Partnership Opportunities

- Many local United Way programs are focused on literacy, especially to help prepare younger children for kindergarten. They may be funding a local program or charity that is working on literacy issues. Offer to help participate with students and/or teachers from your school.
- Local minor league baseball teams often have programs designed to help nonprofit organizations promote themselves. They can be asked to help collect books in a book drive (see above) and will often offer free space to nonprofit organizations to promote their programs. Contact your local team's public relations manager and ask to discuss opportunities.

Writing Workshops

- Conducted by local teachers, professors or authors

Read-a-Thon or Write-a-Thon (or Read-in or Write-in)

- People assembling to read or write en masse for several hours in a public setting