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JOURNAL:  
LITERACY, A JOYFUL  
TRANSFORMATION**



**WVRA**

*Literacy: A Joyful Transformation*  
2022 Conference

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Literacy, A Joyful Transformation***

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## Introduction

### Literacy, a joyful transformation

When one is asked to be a conference chair, the reaction is filled with hesitation, trepidation, humbleness, and excitement. When I accepted the beautiful challenge, the first task was the design of a conference theme. Upon reflection, it was only natural for joyful transformation to emerge as the theme. As a mother, friend, daughter, student, academic, and teacher educator, I have been a witness, as well as a benefactor, of the wondrous nature that literacy may have on one's life. From a well-written children's literature text that teaches us a powerful lesson to the acquisition of new vocabulary, the nuances and impact of literacy in our lives is incredible. It is time to celebrate the beauty and wonder of the transformation that literacy may have in the classroom, as well as on the individual. As you explore the journal articles, I hope you experience feelings of inspiration and motivation to be a catalyst of wondrous transformation. Joyful reading,

*Angela Curfman*

2022 Conference Chair, Visual Conference Journal Lead Editor



**We've all heard it... "I don't want to write":  
A teacher's approach to engaging her early writers**

Aimee Morewood, [Aimee.morewood@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:Aimee.morewood@mail.wvu.edu)

Courtney Shimek, [Courtney.shimek@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:Courtney.shimek@mail.wvu.edu)

Allison Swan Dagen, [Allison.swan@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:Allison.swan@mail.wvu.edu)

Melanie Cox, [mlmills@k12.wv.us](mailto:mlmills@k12.wv.us)

West Virginia University

Hedgesville Elementary School, Berkeley County, West Virginia

**We've all heard it... "I don't want to write":**

**A teacher's approach to engaging her early writers**

Time and time again, we hear P-12 teachers in our local context and across the country discuss the need for effective writing instruction in classrooms and teacher professional development. In fact, there is now longitudinal data describing the need for more effective writing practices in our schools and for learning opportunities for teachers in this area. In an annual survey of "what's hot" in literacy distributed to literacy teachers and researchers across the United States, writing has not received much attention since 2004 (Grote-Garcia & Ortlieb, 2022). 39% of respondents stated that they needed more professional development in writing. 75% of respondents agreed that this topic was "cold," meaning it was not discussed much, and yet, 75% of participants also agreed that this topic should be hot. This article provides an overview of an action research motivation project on writing and the story of one teacher's journey with this project.

Because of this need, the Literacy Education (LE) program at West Virginia University (WVU) decided to specifically focus one of its courses on effective writing instruction. The LE program at WVU is a 30-credit, 100% online Master of Arts with Reading Specialist certification that has a grant, funded by WVU and Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, to support practicing kindergarten, first, and second-grade teachers in obtaining this degree. The grant has three components: 1) establishing a statewide network of literacy leaders, 2) mentorship with National Board-Certified teachers in West Virginia who are also alumni of the LE program, and 3) completing the coursework of the LE program. This article highlights the action research project of one grant participant, Melanie Cox, and what she learned implementing this project in her classroom as she explored new ways to design and deliver reading and literacy instruction that embraced and supported all learners.

## **Writing Research**

Given the questions we are asked by LE candidates, we know that effective writing instruction is on the minds of teachers in WV. Teachers in this state are working hard to provide all students with literacy learning opportunities that involve reading and writing. Research shows that writing is an essential component of any literacy curriculum. Early writing is one of the strongest predictors of children's later reading and spelling (National Early Learning Panel, 2008).

Some researchers argue that writing is the most effective way to get children reading (Durkin, 1989; Stahl et al., 1998). Writing instruction is an effective way for students to develop phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, and word decoding skills, which are essential building blocks to learning to read (Jones & Reutzel, 2015). Using what research tells us about early writing, what we know about teaching writing, and that this is a topic teachers need more support with, an action research assignment was designed for teachers to implement in their classrooms related to writing.

### **Review of the Action Research Process & WVU's Literacy Education Project Focus**

Action research is a way for teachers to systematically dig into pedagogical questions they see in their classrooms. The action research process allows flexibility to better understand different teaching and learning aspects within a classroom while having a structured process. The cycle of action research involves defining a question about an instructional practice, grounding a question in the field's research, implementing a change, systematically collecting data to study the instructional intervention implementation, reflecting on the collected data, and sharing the findings with others (Fichtman et al., 2003; Thompson & Hirschy, 2008). This is an iterative



cycle as teachers continuously revisit the different areas of this process. At WVU, candidates engage in a motivation project focusing on writing that follows the action research cycle. The action research cycle allows the teachers in this program to better understand the connections between the theory and research discussed in the course and apply this information to the instructional practices they use with their students.

Teachers must understand the influence motivation has on student literacy learning. The International Reading Association's (2000) position statement on Excellent Reading Teachers suggests that within the complex process of reading, teachers should continually “develop and maintain students’ “motivation to read” (p. 2). The LE program recognizes the need to extend motivation concepts to all literacy learning, including writing. Therefore, this particular assignment requires the LE candidates to systematically study their practices by engaging in the action research process through the lens of writing motivation & engagement.

Given that this assignment is intended to broaden literacy experiences with interest, engagement, and motivation in writing, the primary goal of this assignment is for candidates to better understand effective, research-based writing instruction. Furthermore, how to use student data provided by the writing assessment instruments that focus on motivation, attitude, interest, engagement, and/or self-perception are also key components of this assignment. Using the individual student data for this assignment guides the LE candidates instructional planning and helps them be well-prepared to meet individual learning needs (Darling-Hammond, 2019; Duke et al., 2016; Pearson & Hoffman, 2015). Then, after this project, they disseminate their findings by sharing presentations with their class peers and instructor. Next, Melanie shares her story about how she came into the LE program and how this action research project impacted her learning about her instructional planning and implementation around writing and motivation.

## **Melanie's Story**

Teaching Context Experience: I have taught first grade in Berkeley County, West Virginia, for 20 years. I have my National Board Certification in Reading as well. I am married, and a mother of 2 kids and 2 dogs. I work with an amazing group of teachers at a very large K-2 school. We have a team of 8 first-grade teachers that encourage and support each other in life and career.

Grant participation: I received an email in April of 2021 about a K1RS Grant for K-1 teachers to receive their master's in Literacy Education through WVU. I had always wanted to get my master's degree in reading, so I signed up to attend the virtual meeting. The professors sounded knowledgeable yet fun too. I liked that it was an 18-month program with a cohort of teachers from all over the state. I knew another person at the meeting, so I texted her about her thoughts. She said, "Let's do it!". Getting to know the other teachers and bonding over the craziness was probably one of my favorite parts of the program. That kind of support made it doable and fun.

ARMP Overview/Summary: In LE 627, a major part of the course is to create an Action Research Motivation and Engagement Project (ARMP). For me, that was a lot of words, but simply find a need in your classroom, research to fill the need, and then implement the research with engaging lessons that motivate students to want to write.

My essential question for the project was, "If students are explicitly taught to use a sound chart to support effective encoding and inventive spelling, will it motivate students to increase the readability of their writing?" I used six first graders from my classroom. The students were

exposed to Secret Stories daily and given portable charts with visuals and sound patterns. I used instructional strategies like whole group, small group, conferencing, and peer editing. Using the Writing Attitude Survey (Kear, et al., 2000), I determined my students' interests in writing. One thing that stuck out for my students was letter writing. Therefore, I used letter writing to their favorite author to engage the students in a writing task. This also encouraged students to increase the readability of their work because they had an authentic audience. Throughout this project, I also added a curious box, sticker stories, and a mailbox to my writing center to motivate students to write independently.

The data showed that all students improved their writing skills and their motivation to write increased. The findings in this project are that students need authentic purpose and increased opportunities to increase their motivation to write. The personal tools built their confidence as writers, but motivation is key. Getting to know your student's interests and using that throughout lessons and activities will boost the motivation and engagement of students in any subject.

Melanie's story exemplifies how she came to the WVU's LE program through the grant and what she learned through her collaborations across the courses and particularly with the action research project. She is a WV teacher like many in the LE program who have many personal commitments. Melanie continues to grow as a professional so that she can impact her students' literacy learning, as exemplified here in her description of her action research project. Please take a few minutes to view and listen to Melanie's project presentation and see how her students grew in writing and motivation (<https://youtu.be/P890NMVieY>).

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**Bringing joy into reading**

Allyson M. Varlas, [allyson.whorton@k12.wv.us](mailto:allyson.whorton@k12.wv.us)

Marshall County Schools, West Virginia

### **Bringing joy into reading**

All children are readers. It does not matter the level they are at or what the benchmark may say. While data is a great driving force for instruction, building a love for reading is what creates readers. My goal is to provide students with a wide variety of diverse books that they can relate to, see themselves in, and can use as an escape. There are no limits on what students can read if they are school and age appropriate.

To promote ownership and authentic reading experiences for students, we must allow students choice. In “The Power of Reading Choice, Time, and Pleasure” (n.d.), Dr. Bill McBride wrote about his research findings and found that self-selected reading is twice as powerful as teacher-selected reading in developing motivation and comprehension (Guthrie and Humenick, 2004). Students in our classrooms should be able to pick what they want to read without barriers. There is a time and place to have students read something on their level, however, to motivate them to read, we must allow them the chance to pick what they want.

Another way I bring joy into reading is based on the work of Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) and her mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. In Bishop's famous quote, she refers to books as windows, views of the world that may be real or imagined, familiar, or strange, or sliding glass doors, that allow students to walk through into a different world, or a mirror where they can see themselves inside the book. (Bishop, 1990). This quote and the work of Bishop reminds me to offer my students books from different genres, such as fairytales, nonfiction, or poetry, and books with diverse races, ethnicities, languages, genders, and abilities. When students can see themselves in a book, learn about a different culture in a different country, or let their imagination run wild, then the joy of literacy and reading is being fostered.

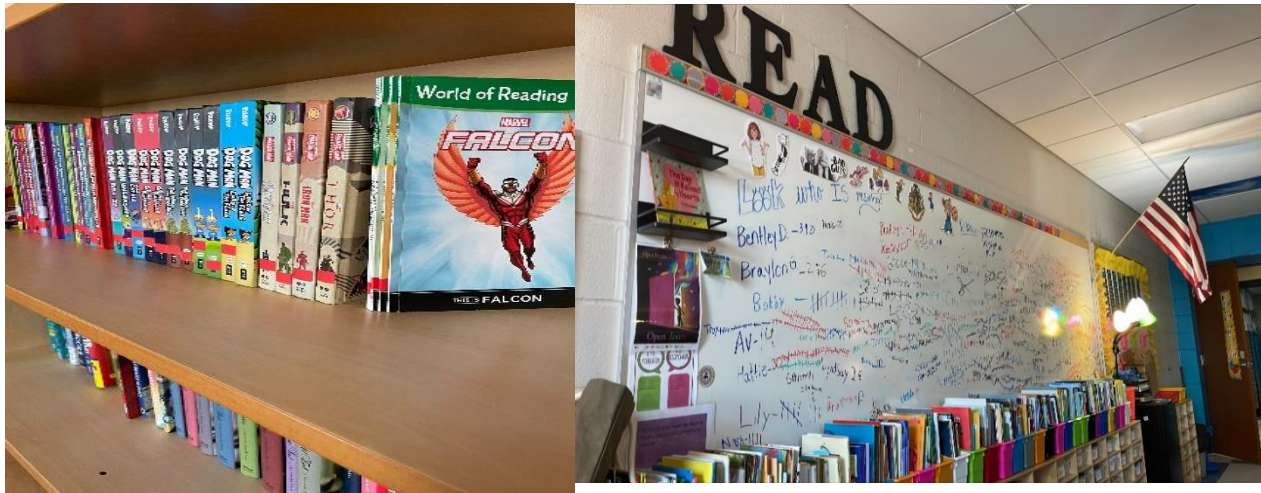
Joyful experiences can be created for students through literacy initiatives. One literacy initiative that encourages an enjoyment of literacy is Flashlight Friday. Flashlight Friday can occur one Friday a month. This allows and encourages the students to read independently with a flashlight to promote and enhance their accuracy and fluency.

Another simple task I use to encourage students to read is through my whiteboard where students can tally how many books they have read and every time they read 10 books, they get a small prize (sticker, tootsie roll, mint). This is how I begin my journey to create readers. At first, I make sure that when they read their 10, they get their prize immediately, however, students end up getting ahead of their prizes and continue to still read even when I do not give them that prize right away. I have had students say, “Mrs. Varlas, I read 10 books, you owe me a prize” and a week goes by. Unbelievably, they are still reading a week later, even after I forgot to give them their small prize. I have never had a student complain about this or complain when they tell me they have read 40 books and I tell them to take three prizes because I am running low.

Lastly, I encourage the use of children’s literature in your reading lessons. Picture books can be seen as a tool for the primary grades, however, there is no age limit on picture books. These books are full of elaborate illustrations that support the author’s perspective and can help promote a variety of literacy skills, such as symbolism. Picture books are rich in vocabulary, can be cross curriculum, can be used for phonics interventions, and can promote diversity while teaching lessons to students that can be difficult to discuss, such as slavery, World War II, or women’s rights.

The greatest joy I have as a teacher is when a student becomes excited over getting a book, reading a book, seeing themselves in one of the books, or experiencing the joy of escaping with a book. Since I work with fifth graders, reading is not always the number one hobby they

prefer, but my students know and understand that Mrs. Varlas leaves no one behind and will make sure everyone of every “level” will find a book they love, and they will leave fifth grade saying, “I love to read!”





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**Sparkling early literacy: Reversing pandemic-era learning losses**

Allison Swan Dagen, Ph.D., [allison.swan@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:allison.swan@mail.wvu.edu)

Canyon Lohnas, [canyon.lohnas@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:canyon.lohnas@mail.wvu.edu)

Donna Peduto, [dpeduto@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:dpeduto@mail.wvu.edu)

Melanie Claxton, [mclaxton@benedum.org](mailto:mclaxton@benedum.org)

West Virginia University

West Virginia Public Education Collaborative

Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation

## **Sparkling early literacy: Reversing pandemic-era learning losses**

### **Introduction**

The year 2020 will forever go down in history as the year of the COVID-19 pandemic. School buildings were closed, but schools remained open for business. In West Virginia, counties scrambled to secure student access to laptop computers and internet service. Teachers, some for the first time, embraced technology-based teaching tools like Zoom, Google Docs, and other learning management systems (LMS). PreK-12 students created classroom learning spaces in their homes. Parents engaged in new ways, supporting the youngest learners with some “attending” class at the dining room table. Instead of transporting students, school bus drivers delivered lunches on their regular bus routes. School leaders were charged with the Herculean task of making quality decisions in the ever-changing landscape, with information changing daily, even hourly. Everyone in education did their best to adapt to the “new normal” of pandemic-era learning.

In the nearly three years since the building shutdowns, we know the COVID-19 pandemic has cast a light on issues around access to technology, inequity across schools, the importance of students' and teachers' social and emotional needs, and has also magnified the critical area of early literacy. Nationwide, the latest scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (The Nation's Report Card, 2022) show the lowest average reading score among students in fourth grade since 2005. As a result, the education of PreK-12 learners – and what has been referred to as “COVID learning loss” – has become a focus of school officials, parents, legislators, educational organizations, and the media. Calls for school improvement and transformation have been as loud as ever. The shift from traditional education to pandemic-inspired learning has again brought the topic of schools and schooling, particularly early literacy,

to the forefront. Federal, state, and foundation monies have been poured into schools to support strategic plans, including improving technology infrastructure, extended learning/after-school education opportunities, teacher professional development, and curricular-focused change to address COVID-19 learning loss.

Transforming how schools support all early learners by delivering quality literacy instruction – both in and out of schools – is a primary focus of the West Virginia Public Education Collaborative’s (WVPEC) Sparking Early Literacy Growth in West Virginia’s (SELGWV) initiative, described below.

### **Context**

The WVPEC was established in 2016 through a partnership between West Virginia University and the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation. The WVPEC’s statewide mission (Figure 1) guides the collaborative’s work toward significant educational pursuits and workforce development in the state, including SELGWV, the West Virginia Department of Education’s Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics Technical Assistance Center (STEAM TAC) at West Virginia University, Focus Forward, the Legislator’s Forum on Education and the Economy, and the K-12 Speakers Bureau. An executive director leads the WVPEC with oversight by a Board of Directors that includes state and national leaders in education, business, and public policy.

### **SELGWV Initiative**

In 2019, a year before the COVID-19 pandemic, in response to declining statewide literacy performance as measured by the state’s 3rd-grade assessment, the WVPEC partnered with the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, a philanthropic organization headquartered in Pittsburgh that serves southwestern Pennsylvania and the state of West Virginia, to develop a

grant initiative to increase early literacy in the state. The partnership focused on creating a grant award process, prioritizing innovative and transformational ideas and interventions to support the early literacy growth of West Virginia children from birth to age 8 in high-need schools and communities. The WVPEC titled this initiative Sparking Early Literacy Growth in West Virginia and assembled an advisory network of statewide educator leaders from the Department of Education, higher education, K-12 schools, and non-profit and community organizations. The group met multiple times to develop a process for soliciting proposals and awarding yearlong grants to schools and organizations interested in piloting early literacy projects.

The first recommendation from the advisory group of statewide literacy experts included aligning the SELGWV efforts with the West Virginia Transformative System of Support for Early Literacy, a legislative mandate supporting schools' strategies to close the 3rd-grade reading achievement gap, namely through the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. As such, grant seekers were required to align their projects to high-quality instruction, school readiness, and/or extended learning – or some combination of the three. Further, providing ongoing professional learning for classroom teachers and grant personnel (e.g., after-school program director, classroom aides) was recommended, given that teacher knowledge has consistently been recognized as an essential element of transformation.

Additionally, the WVPEC advisory group recommended each grant project address the learning needs of specific groups. Target high-need populations include, but are not limited to: children and communities in poverty, children in foster care, children in the custody/care of grandparents or other extended family members, special education, children identified as homeless, children experiencing trauma and behavioral challenges, children who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and children who are reading and writing below grade

level. To evaluate each project's effectiveness, the WVPEC required that all proposals include a measurable outcome for student growth using a formal or informal literacy assessment tool. By implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of transformational early literacy projects within local contexts, an outcome of the grant projects is to provide recommendations for statewide replication and/or legislative initiatives to support early literacy.

The WVPEC created a Request for Proposals (RFP) and a multifaceted, supporting Resource Guide to share the initiative's goals, process, and requirements. These documents included maps of high-need areas, a literature review of best practices, and suggested evaluation tools for specific age groups and interventions. West Virginia educators, including those representing public and private schools, early care and early childhood programs, after-school and summer learning programs, nonprofit organizations, colleges and universities, and other literacy-focused stakeholders/communities/public organizations, were invited to apply for funding. In addition to the initiative's large group informational sessions, the WVPEC provided 1-1 technical assistance for educators interested in submitting a grant proposal.

### **Funded Projects**

The WVPEC, with Benedum Foundation support, has administered two rounds of grantmaking in 2021 (Table 1) and 2022 (Table 2). Across these two funding phases, the WVPEC reviewed 101 proposals using a two-tier review process of statewide literacy experts, and 20 projects have been awarded nearly one million dollars. These 20 grant projects spanned 18 counties in West Virginia (Figure 2) and were awarded to preschools and elementary preschools, afterschool programs, counties, higher education institutions, and after-school and summer learning programs. The WVPEC continues to support these projects with ongoing technical and early literacy content and pedagogical support by assigning each project a literacy

consultant. The consultants are West Virginia University's Literacy Education graduate program faculty and affiliated educators.

The 20 funded projects vary in focus, setting, duration, participants, and grade levels. The WVPEC approach to early literacy grantmaking spans four concepts: approaches to literacy instruction, teacher professional learning, learning beyond the school day, and family and community engagement (Figure 3). These four primary concepts, especially in conjunction with each other, represent a holistic and realistic framework for transformation.

Moreover, these concepts also reflect the recommendations of the International Literacy Association (ILA), which identify areas for literacy reform, including teaching and teachers, schools and schooling, student support, and families and community (ILA, 2016). The organization asserts these research-validated areas can serve as a framework or blueprint to help those interested in the hard work of reform and transformation.

An example of a SELGWV project that exemplifies the comprehensive nature of the approach to literacy transformation is in Weirton. The county officials partnered with the Weirton Christian Center, a popular after-school care provider in the community, to train caregivers in the same approach to literacy instruction provided in schools, ensuring curricular and material consistency during tutoring sessions. By providing a "double dose" of reading and writing instruction outside of the school day, reading proficiency among students involved in the program has improved by more than one-and-a-half grade levels. Furthermore, the professional learning element has increased teachers' confidence in providing effective phonics instruction.

### **Moving Forward with Transforming Literacy Practices**

WVRA 2022 conference strand four: "a joyful transformation," focused on the importance of transformative design and delivery of literacy instruction for all learners, making

SELGWV a natural fit for the conference schedule. Through SELGWV, the WVPEC prioritized awarding early literacy grant projects that proposed “innovative and transformational ideas, initiatives, and interventions to support the early literacy growth of West Virginia children” (WVPEC, 2022, p. 2). The schools and agencies have taken the first steps by implementing these pilot/demonstration projects. From here, their focus on transformation shifts from implementation to scale or sustainability. We want to end this manuscript by highlighting two elements integrated into the SELGWV grant award process that significantly contributed to the successful implementation and possible sustainability of the early literacy projects: literacy consultants and collaborative partnerships.

### **Literacy Consultants**

The WVPEC assigned a literacy consultant to each awarded grant to support the implementation of each project. These consultants served as a liaison between the WVPEC and the project. In many ways, the role was a combination of ILA’s Literacy Coach and Literacy Partner (ILA, 2018). The consultant assisted with the technical aspects of the grant work (e.g., reporting) and, more importantly, provided content and pedagogical early literacy support. The literacy consultants maintained regular communication during the entire funding period and, in some cases, became vested collaborators with the project leadership teams. Feedback has indicated that literacy consultants’ support has positively impacted the projects, and the WVPEC believes they are essential to their success.

### **Collaborative Partnerships**

In the first round of SELGWV grant awards, collaborative partnerships were a recommended element of the grant project proposal; by the second round, they were a grant requirement and condition for funding. The WVPEC defined collaboration as “two or more



entities working together toward a shared goal" (Frey et al., 2006, p. 384). These collaborative efforts allowed projects to leverage resources toward improving early literacy with activities including, but not limited to, co-planning, problem-solving, facilitating access to students or groups, developing materials, or in-kind or additional monetary support. The WVPEC believes meaningful partnerships are necessary and may positively contribute to a project's sustainability beyond the grant's funding cycle.

Emphasizing the work of the literacy consultant and collaborative partnerships created a culture within the grant projects, which asserted that the "joy of transformation" can be elevated when a people or a group of people invest in the success of the grant - and ultimately of the PreK-3 learners. The notion of the "whole being greater than the sum of its parts" was undoubtedly a critical understanding of the structure of support in place for the grantees.

At the time of the 2022 WVRA conference, ten of the early literacy projects were entering their second year, and an additional ten projects were in the early stages of implementation. Building upon this momentum, philanthropic partners, such as the Roy and Gwen Steeley Foundation, the EQT Foundation, and the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, have funded additional SELGWV projects across the state.

As with any transformational effort, especially with grant funding, sustainability is challenging. Looking forward, the budget for these projects will expire in 2023. The WVPEC will engage with the initial group of statewide literacy experts and literacy consultants to evaluate the outcomes of the projects, focusing mainly on student literacy growth. The WVPEC is then positioned to provide recommendations to support the state's efforts to address COVID-19 learning loss, including the West Virginia Department of Education's Ready. Read. Write. West Virginia campaign. Through the Sparking Early Literacy Growth initiative, the West

Virginia Public Education Collaborative is proud to encourage a joyful transformation of literacy in the Mountain State.

### **Additional Resources**

To learn more about Sparking Early Literacy Growth in West Virginia, please visit

<https://wvpec.wvu.edu/events-and-initiatives/sparking-early-literacy-growth-in-west-virginia>

To view the 2022 WVRA Presentation, please visit

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1fcz4ENN5PVCxX8TXjWOFt\\_vJGILJnX5WstulTU3swWc/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1fcz4ENN5PVCxX8TXjWOFt_vJGILJnX5WstulTU3swWc/edit?usp=sharing)

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The WVPEC is a non-partisan collaborative of diverse state and national leaders committed to championing public education at all levels through outreach and innovation while engaging government, education, and business leaders to respond rapidly to emerging issues. By creating a pipeline from educational and training opportunities to jobs, the WVPEC helps strengthen West Virginia's future workforce and economy.

Figure 1. WVPEC Mission



West Virginia Public Education Collaborative  
Sparkling Early Literacy Growth in West Virginia  
2021-2022 Projects

CLAUDE  
WORTHINGTON  
BENEDUM  
FOUNDATION

Title	Project Lead	Focus	Approach
Born to Achieve - I Can Read!	WVU School of Medicine (Monongalia County)	Low-income families of kids birth-5	Parent training for reading instruction at home
Building Literacy Leaders	Pocahontas County Schools	Grade-to-grade learning loss	Peer learning network for K-2 teachers
Bridging Literacy Gaps through Looping, Learning, and Play	Mylan Park Elementary (Monongalia County Schools)	Grade-to-grade learning loss	Looping: Pre-K to K teachers stay with classes from one grade to the next
A BEACON	Logan County Schools	Grade-to-grade and summer learning loss	Extended day/extended year program
Read with Me Weirton	Weirton Elementary (Hancock County)	Lowest performing students and COVID learning loss	Extended day/extended year instruction through community learning hubs
Remote Tutoring Program	Lewis County Schools	Lowest performing students and COVID learning loss	Remote tutorials for students and parents
Forging Foundations for Families	Moorefield Elementary (Hardy County)	English as a second language students	Family literacy tutoring
Future Literacy Leaders	West Liberty University	Pre-service teacher training	Mentoring for reading specialists on individualized and multisensory learning plans
Teacher Literacy Bootcamp (co-funded by the Steeley Foundation)	Berkeley County Schools	Grade-to-grade learning loss	Literacy boot camp and revised instructional practices for teachers
UpSTREAM (funded by the Steeley Foundation)	Jefferson County Schools	Low-performing students	Extended year program that immerses students in science, technology, reading, engineering, art, and math (STREAM)
MC After 3, Jr. (funded by the Steeley Foundation)	Morgan County Schools	Early elementary students	Extended day/year program with targeted intervention and STEAM integration

Table 1. 2021-2022 Projects



Title	Project Lead(s)	Focus	Approach
Bringing the Science of Reading to Clay County	Clay County Schools	K-3; Low-Socioeconomic Status (SES), students identified as homeless and special education	Teacher training on balanced literacy and the science of reading
Building Self-Efficacy One Writer at a Time through I CAN Plans and STEAM Journal Writing Clubs	Berkeley County Schools	PreK-3; Students receiving Title I services, low-SES, reading below grade level, English Language Learners, rural communities	STEAM Journal Writing Clubs
Building a Village: A Community Building Approach to Increasing Early Literacy and School Readiness	West Virginia University/Mary C. Snow Elementary (Kanawha)	Birth-Grade 3; low-income, minority students	Early literacy and readiness support through community building
Creating Thoughtful Writers through Science	Pocahontas County Schools	K-3; Low SES (61%), students with Individual Education Plans, low reading proficiency	High-quality instruction for student science engagement and development of critical thinkers and thoughtful writers
Eagles' NEST (Nurture, Educate, Succeed Together)	Mason Dixon Elementary School (Monongalia)	Students in second grade and their siblings; low reading achievement, low attendance, students in foster care or grandparents as guardians	Provision of literacy and school readiness resources, including grandfamily support and nutrition education
Summer SPARKS	Wood County Schools	PreK-1; Low-SES students and parents/caregivers	Summer programming to support kindergarten transition and social and emotional learning development
Strengthening Teachers Knowledge of Foundational Literacy Skills	Kanawha County Schools	K-3; two high-achieving schools, two low-achieving schools	Peer learning network between high and low performing schools
Bright Beginnings	Upshur County Schools	PreK-1; low-SES, chronic absenteeism	Effectiveness of early childhood classroom assistant teachers (ECATs) study
Grandfamily Mentoring Program (funded by the EQT Foundation)	WVU Extension Service - Doddridge County	K-3; low-SES students in kinship care	Literacy tutoring for students and mentoring for grandparents

Table 2. 2022-2023 Projects

Figure 2. Project Sites

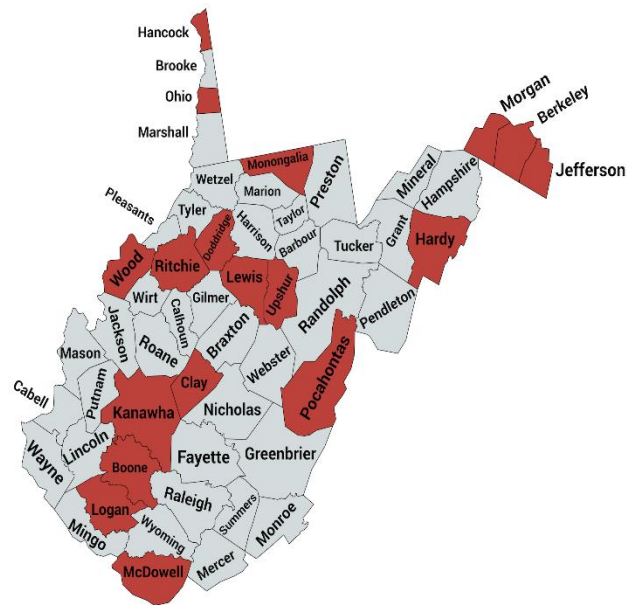
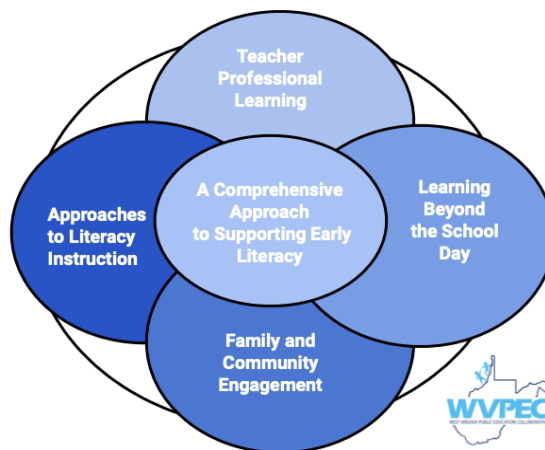


Figure 3. A Comprehensive Approach to Supporting Early Literacy

### Sparkling Early Literacy Growth in West Virginia



**Using gameplay to enhance literacy instruction**

Amanda Cordray, [ancordray@westliberty.edu](mailto:ancordray@westliberty.edu)

West Liberty University, West Virginia



## **Using gameplay to enhance literacy instruction**

Maintaining students' attention for long periods of time is a battle for many educators, especially those with struggling students. As a result, some educators are turning to technology and game-based learning as a means of motivation and engagement for their students. Students themselves even note that the use of technology during instruction helps keep them attentive and engaged during lessons (Project Tomorrow, 2016). By using gameplay and technology, educators can increase engagement and literacy among their students by tailoring learning activities to reflect students' interests and adjusting successful learning activities to practice a variety of skills.

Students' interests can play an integral part in their learning (Gerber & Price, 2013). When students are engaged with a topic, such as videogames which attract 97% of students, they are more likely to give attention and make contributions to that topic (Gerber & Price, 2013). This engagement is shown in the classroom when students become more interested in a topic because of gameplay that incorporates the topic (Gerber & Price, 2013). As students discover their interests, educators can use this information to set the foundation for their engaging lessons. Researchers report that "motivation and positive emotions are powerful factors in learning" (Iten & Petko, 2016, p. 151). Therefore, if educators can craft lessons incorporating materials and topics that students feel positively towards then students are more likely to have the motivation to participate (Iten & Petko, 2016).

Regardless of a student's ability level, game-based learning provides an engaging platform for student success (Kaltman, 2019). Malaquias and Malaquias (2021) create a comprehensive list of 25 serious games that can be used in an educational setting. Five of these specifically make positive remarks regarding student attention and motivation as benefits of the

games. Improvements in literacy skills are also noted with these game benefits (Malaquias & Malaquias, 2021).

Student interest can be used to select engaging activities and games such as those pictured in Figures 1, 2, and 3. The games pictured in these figures were utilized by M.A.Ed. students in a reading tutoring program for struggling elementary students at West Liberty University. The tutor found that students were less hesitant to play the reading game when it incorporated a topic they enjoyed. For example, the tutor noted that many of the male students like Pokémon. Knowing this, the tutor selected games that utilized Pokémon characters and themes. The added component of competition also increased student interest, thus sparking the struggling readers to have high participation in the reading games. By the end of the 3 months of tutoring, the students looked forward to attending tutoring sessions despite their previous dislike for reading because the tutor used engaging reading activities and games.

As educators work to incorporate games and technologies into the classroom, they need not worry about creating new methods of learning but rather use features already in the games and utilize current educational theories, methods, and strategies (Gerber & Price, 2013). Additionally, these features should be adjusted to incorporate “multiple literacy experiences” to provide students with choices (Gerber & Price, 2013, p. 54). Games can provide students with numerous opportunities to practice literacy skills especially when the games can be easily adjusted to practice other literacy skills (Schrier, 2019). This can be done by taking existing games students enjoy and adjusting the skill being practiced such as the games in Figures 4 through 9. These games are offered in an editable template or can be easily recreated using different literacy skills.

Allowing for a variety of skills to be practiced requires that the games be used as practice alongside teacher instruction and not as a means for students to independently learn skills (Schrier, 2019). These games can provide quality support and intervention for struggling students but should not be the sole basis of instruction. In some cases, technology and game-based learning can be completed independently by the student (MacArthur et al., 2001). However, teachers should be readily available to assist the students should problems arise. As MacArthur et al. (2001) found in their studies, teacher guidance is necessary to make corrections for students' word pronunciations as the game is unable to correct students' oral responses.

The use of technology gameplay provides learners with an interactive and multi-sensory means of storing information. These features along with the adaptiveness of game-based learning through technology are attributed with an increased connection to writing and reading among students (Eutsler et al., 2020). For some games, educators can adjust how, when, and what content is being taught to the student through the game (Pflaumer & Berkling, 2021). Such is the case with the activities in Figures 10 and 11. This allows for higher success rates as students' instruction is catered to their needs which is especially beneficial for struggling students and those in special education (Carnahan et al., 2012).

Despite a student's struggling reading ability, educators can help students achieve success using gameplay and technology. Educators can push their students to become successful readers by meeting them where they are. Using students' interests and available resources, educators can provide engaging and quality support for their students. This will further push students to be the successful individuals society needs.

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## Figures

The figure shows two worksheets. The left worksheet, titled 'Sort the POKEMON by blends in their names', has a table with three columns labeled 'bl', 'cl', and 'ff'. Below the table is a line for the student's name and a prompt to read the names to a reading buddy. The right worksheet, titled 'Draw and write about two of the POKEMON:', has a large box for drawing and lines for writing. It also includes a line for the student's name and a prompt to read the sentences to a reading buddy.

Figure 1. Pokémon blend sort and writing prompt. This figure depicts a Pokémon themed word sort and writing activity (Breuninger, 2022). Students are tasked with sorting the names of Pokémon based on the blend present in their name. They are then tasked with drawing and writing about two of these Pokémon.

The figure shows a 'Roll and Write a Story' worksheet. It has three columns: 'Roll a Setting', 'Roll a Character', and 'Roll a Plot'. Each column has a list of prompts corresponding to different die rolls. The 'Roll a Setting' column has prompts for 1 through 6. The 'Roll a Character' column has prompts for 1 through 6. The 'Roll a Plot' column has prompts for 1 through 6. The worksheet is decorated with a border of black dots and a cartoon character holding a notepad.

Figure 2. Roll and write a story. This figure depicts a Roll and Write a Story writing activity that provides guidance in selecting a writing prompt (Capotosta, n.d.). Students will roll a die to determine which setting, character, and plot they must write about. Students still have choice in how to craft their writing but are provided guidance in determining the major story elements.



Figure 3. Angry bird oops! Cards. This figure depicts an Angry Birds themed Oops! card game that practices words with y as a long e (Total Language Connections – The TLC Shop, n.d.). Regardless of their theme, Oops! card games task students with taking turns drawing a card and reading what is printed on the card. If they get an Oops! card, or in this case the Green Pig, the student loses all of their cards. Whoever has the most cards once the deck is out is the winner. This game allows for various words lists or skills to be interchanged and practiced.



Figure 4. I have, who has??. This figure depicts an I Have, Who Has? card game which can be adjusted based upon the desired skill to practice (Inspiring Primary, n.d.). The student with the “Start” card begins by reading their card, the student with the card matching the last word read proceeds to read their card. Students continue reading matching cards until they reach the stop card.

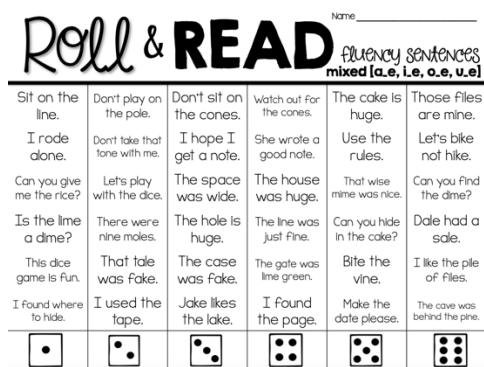


Figure 5. Sentence roll & read. This figure depicts a fluency roll and read which utilizes short sentences with varied skills (Sparkling in Second Grade, n.d.). This roll and read tasks students with rolling a die to determine which column they must read a short sentence from. The first student to fill in a row or column is the winner. This game can be adjusted to practice a variety of skills.

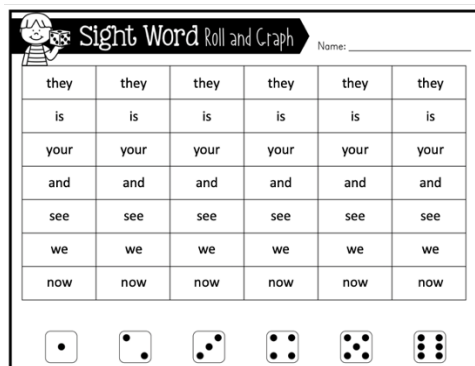


Figure 6. Sight word roll & graph. This figure depicts a sight word roll & graph activity that can be prefilled with a desired word list to be practiced (Amanda's Little Learners, n.d.). This roll and read tasks students with rolling a die to determine which column they must read a word from. The first student to fill in a row or column is the winner. This game can be adjusted to practice a variety of skills or word lists.



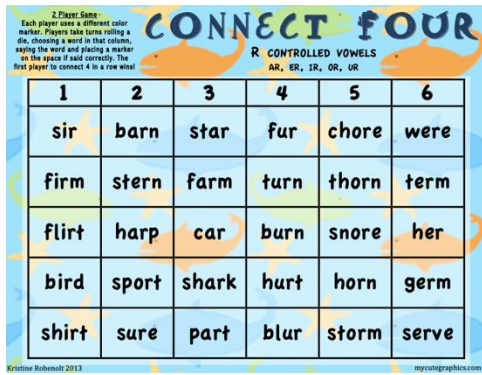


Figure 7. Connect four. This figure depicts a printable Connect Four using words with r-controlled vowels (Robenolt, 2013). This game tasks students with taking turns selecting and reading words, the first to read four words in a row wins. This game can be adjusted to use other word lists to practice various skills.



Figure 8. Crack!. This figure depicts an example of Easter egg themed Oops game cards which can be adjusted to use words with a desired skill to practice (Jessica – Littlest Scholars, n.d.). This Oops! card games task students with taking turns drawing a card and reading the sight word printed on the card. If they get an Oops! card, or in this case Crack!, the student loses all of their cards. Whoever has the most cards once the deck is out is the winner. This game allows for various words lists or skills to be interchanged and practiced.



interactive activity (Early Elementary Extras, n.d.). The Google Slides can be projected for students to take turns interacting with. The Google Slides could also be shared with students to complete individually on their devices.



Figure 11. Task cards for adding -s or -es. This figure depicts a set of task cards that allow students to check their answer using the QR code (Glitter and Glued 4 K-2, n.d.). Students are tasked with recording the plural form of the words on the task card. They can then scan the QR code to see if their answer was correct. These task cards can be adjusted to practice other skills.

**Families reading together spread joy to school and community**

Cheryl Ann Terry Jeffers, [cherylannjeffers@gmail.com](mailto:cherylannjeffers@gmail.com)

Ashley White Stephens, [Astephens@k12.wv.us](mailto:Astephens@k12.wv.us)

## **Families reading together spread joy to school and community**

Connecting families, students, schools, and communities through a literacy link will build relationships and a lifelong love of reading for pleasure. Research clearly shows the home environment contributes to the academic success of students. Collaborating in after school literary events, especially after-school book clubs, is one venue that has proven to be extremely successful in West Virginia (Cabell County) for the past decade. A vision to improve literacy and develop a deeper love of reading could have lifelong effects on families, students, schools, and communities across the state.

### **Reading, Vocabulary, and the Role of the Family**

The phrase a 30-million-word gap (Hart & Risley, 2003) speaks to the significant difference in the number of vocabulary words children living in poverty hear compared to the number of words children living in higher income homes hear. In addition to hearing fewer words, children from low-income homes were given praise less often than those who came from a higher socioeconomic background. Conversations in the home made a distinct impact on children according to the researchers who found children echoed their parents' words, averaged the same number of words, the length of conversation, and used similar speech patterns 86-98 percent of the time (Hart & Risley, 1992). However, Nancy Atwell, author of *The Reading Zone: How to Help Kids Become Skilled, Passionate, Habitual, Critical Readers*, believes the amount of time children spend reading is a better predictor of academic success compared to focusing on their economic or social status. The value of parents and caregivers reading in the home and modeling reading to ensure a child develops a lifelong love of reading is paramount to student success. According to Baker (2003) research has shown that supportive home environments foster motivation for reading, which leads to more frequent voluntary reading, which improves reading achievement. Many collaborative interventions involving home and school have enhanced the reading motivation of struggling readers.

### **Reading and Literacy Goals in West Virginia**

Research further stated a child's academic abilities at the age of three is indicative of academic performance at nine and ten. Our West Virginia Department of Education's Superintendent, David Roach, is aware of this critical learning milestone and realizes connecting with the home may help him attain one of the literacy goals he set for West Virginia - all children will be reading on level by the third grade. His initiative Ready, Read, Write, West Virginia offers

tools for families to help their children embrace reading. Parental involvement is the strongest component of the home literacy environment with parent-child engagement in reading and writing as the best predictor of both the child's emerging reading skills and reading interest (Lay et al., 2014).

### **Literacy Advisory Council**

Determined to build on this parent-child engagement a retired schoolteacher, lifetime member of the WVRA, now grandmother of three and volunteer shared her West Virginia Literacy Vision with West Virginia Department of Education's Superintendent, David Roach which consists of a plan to unite all 55 counties via a literacy link to help increase the literacy rate and develop a lifelong love of reading across the state. The plan connects communities and families with their local school for afterschool book club meetings, creates new or supports and rejuvenates existing counties reading councils, and unites everyone with the West Virginia Reading Association (WVRA), the oldest (60 years) literacy nonprofit in the state ran totally by volunteers. In addition to starting book clubs and supporting reading councils throughout the state, the WVRA offers parental and teacher support through its annual reading conference and website by offering tips and relevant information on literacy. The plan or vision fell in line the Literacy Advisory Council Superintendent Roach created and this volunteer was invited to serve.

### **Magic Treehouse Afterschool Book Club: a Cabell County Case Study**

The West Virginia Book Club Model has been proven effective in a couple Cabell County schools and can easily be replicated to fit the dynamics of any school. This easy model features monthly family reading events centered upon a simple chapter book. There are various elements we have chosen to include in the book club. Feel free to use this model as a springboard and adjust it to your school's specific needs.

### **Book Selection**

The Magic Treehouse Book series by Mary Pope Osborne works well because of there are 10 short chapters that families can easily read throughout the month. Most of the fictional books also have a companion nonfiction book called a Fact Tracker that offers informational text related to the science, history, or areas featured in the novel. Students K-5 respond well to the content and delivery of Magic Treehouse books, especially when accompanied by the corresponding Fact Tracker. Including the Fact Tracker helps students in older grades identify

with the material differently and keeps the learning aligned with content standards across the varying grades.



Avid MWWBC supporter, Dr. Ashely Stephens and her daughters Penelope and Nora proudly holding the November book club, Magic Tree House book, Late Lunch with Llamas and the Fact Tracker nonfiction book, Llamas and their bookmark craft made with real llama wool.



Mr. Liggins and his daughter, Charleigh sharing the January nonfiction book Bears, the companion book to Polar Bears Past Bedtime and her lovely artwork completed during the meeting.

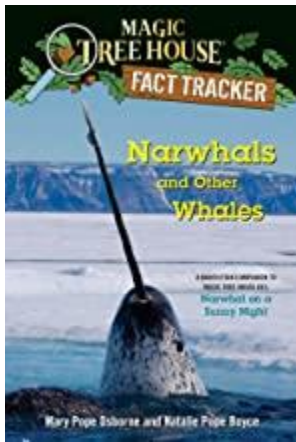
## **Crafts**

Each month a craft is included that coordinates with the book's monthly theme. In our book club, these have been designed by a retired art teacher. Typically, families begin the crafts when they arrive at the meeting. Parents help their children with the activities, and this creates a great flow from the varied arrival times into the more structured, time-bound parts of the meeting.





MWWBC artist, Linda Childers leads children through a multi-step craft to create a wintery polar bear scene for the craft. Siblings Nolan and Harrison Vance share their masterpieces.



Trinity Williams, Mackenzie Barbera, and Kathleen Collier model their narwhal horns just like the ones in the Fact Tracker book, *Narwhals and Other Whales*.



Emma and Gracie Taylor proudly share their Christmas ornament with the MWWBC logo.





Kathleen Collier's rocket was a highflyer during the meeting.

### **Snacks**

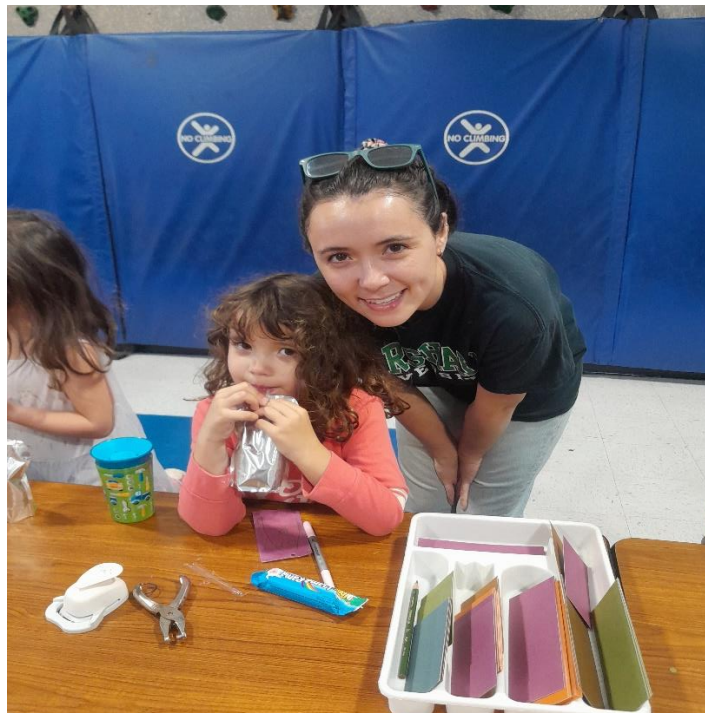
Each meeting includes small, themed snacks, a treat and a juice of some sort. Be intentional in selecting these to have them align as closely with the theme as possible and keep parents in mind in your selection. We have had wonderful reactions from parents when we've featured snacks that were childhood favorites of theirs that perhaps their children had never tried. For example, we had MoonPies when we read *Midnight on the Moon* and SnowBalls when we read *Polar Bears Past Bedtime*. Families enjoyed reminiscing over these snacks and sharing them with their children.



Elena Mielcarek enjoying a Moonpie before she launches into space inside the Skylab.



MWWBC parent Jennifer Cottrell and one of our youngest book club members, Jenni enjoying the juice snack.



Devoted MWWBC parent CarolAnn Williams contributes in every facet of the book club by helping with crafts, snacks, running the Kahoot game or anything needed to help promote the love of reading for her daughter and book club members.



Enjoying snacks while playing Kahoot with Principal, Amy Maynard.

### **Kahoot**

Kids (and parents) come *alive* when the Kahoot game begins. This free, interactive online trivia game is easily our kids' favorite part of book club. It lets them show off what they have learned in a fast-paced, competitive environment. Kids love teaming up against their parents to see who learned the most from the books they read. This is a perfect element to end the meeting because kids stay engaged until the game ends to see who won and to claim any bragging rights they earned while competing against their parents. We have utilized the school-issued iPads and projected the game on a monitor to make this an easy, plug and play activity.





MWWBC supporter CarolAnn Williams helping children log on to Kahoot so they can start the game.



Getting signed in to play Kahoot using their student issued iPads.



Kahoot first place winner Penelope Stephens, second place Kathleen Collier, and third place Mackenzie Barbera of this month's Narwhals on a Sunny Night!



MWWBC Christmas party Kahoot while wearing Santa hats.

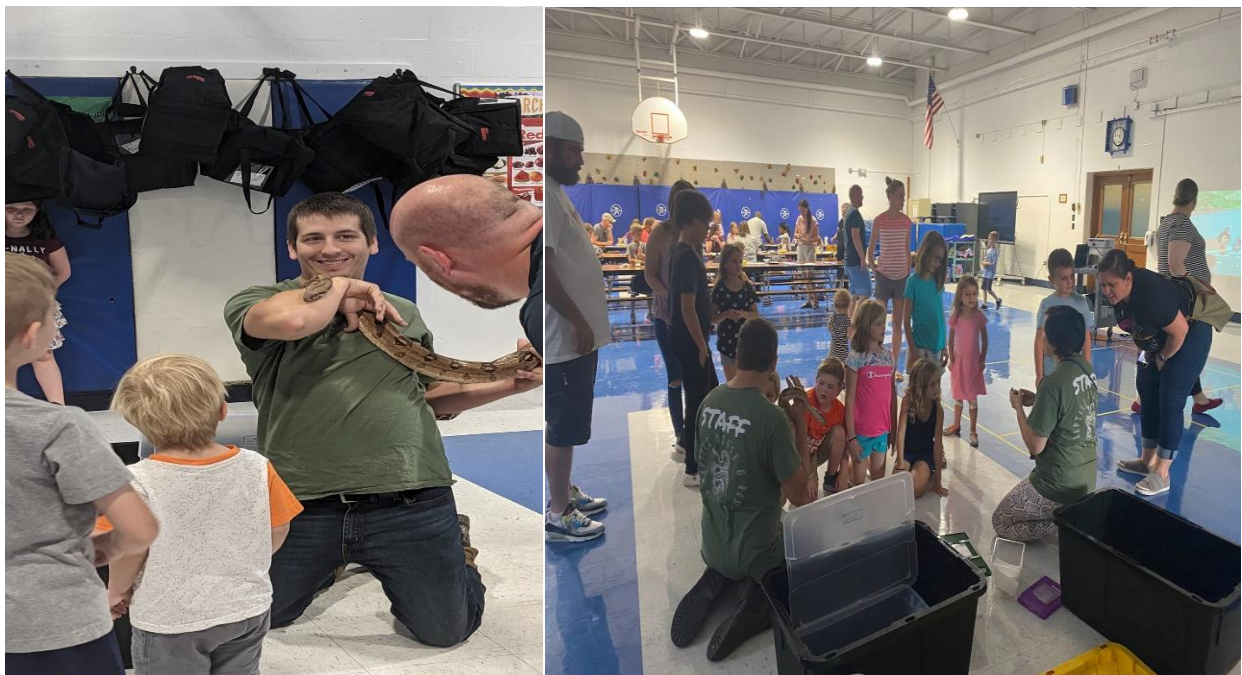
## Community Engagement

We are extremely fortunate in Cabell County to have many local resources that have been perfect collaborators for our book club. When examining the themes of the Magic Tree House books, we were able to identify community partners for several of the books featured. These community groups have joined us and brought their resources and expertise to provide additional learning opportunities during our monthly book club meetings. While your area will undoubtedly have diverse groups and resources, here are some of our collaborations to help get your wheels turning:



Book	Activity	Community Partner
Afternoon on the Amazon	Meet and pet Amazonian animals	The Reptile House & Rescue <a href="https://www.facebook.com/wvreptilehouse">https://www.facebook.com/wvreptilehouse</a>
Midnight on the Moon	Explore the moon with a show in a StarLab inflatable planetarium	June Harless Center – Marshall University <a href="https://www.marshall.edu/juneharless/">https://www.marshall.edu/juneharless/</a>
Late Lunch with Llamas	Meet and pet llamas and create a bookmark with real llama wool for the tassel	Good News Llamas <a href="https://goodnewsllamas.com">https://goodnewsllamas.com</a>
Local community member, Joe Smith volunteered to visit the book club meeting as Santa for the MWWBC Christmas party.		
Local community member, John Baker of JB Graphics designed and donated the MWWBC logo to the book club to use in all our advertisements, announcements, or promotions.		

### The Reptile House & Rescue



The Reptile House & Rescue brought animals from the Amazon to the first book club meeting of the year to celebrate the Magic Tree House book, *An Afternoon on the Amazon*. Children cautiously visited the animals, and some were brave enough to touch them.

### **The June Harless Center Marshall University**



Students launched their origami rockets in front of the huge SkyLab dome from Marshall University's June Harless Center. Once inside students were sent into space with all the sound effects, graphics, and videos one would need to let their imagination leave this world just like the book *Midnight on the Moon*.

### **The Good News Llamas**



The Good News Llamas, a local nonprofit organization thrilled book club members by bringing their live Llamas to the meeting. Book club members loved petting the live soft furry animals and reflecting on the book, *Llamas at Bedtime*.





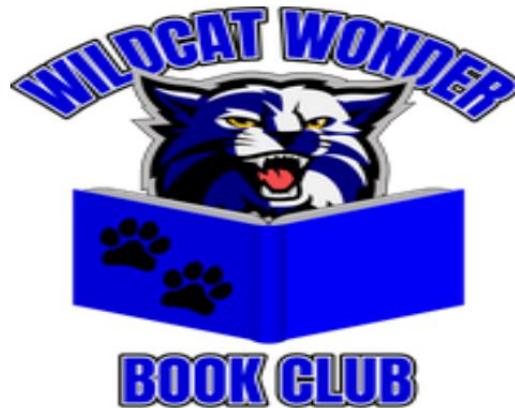
MWWBC Christmas party and group photo with Santa, community member Joe Smith.



Dedicated MWWBC supporters, grandparents Roger and Barbara Collier pose with our famous community member Santa and grandchildren James and Kathleen during the MWWBC 2022 Christmas party.



**JB Graphics, owner John Baker**



Local businessperson John Baker of JB Graphic Designs donated his unique design for the book club logo.

Additionally, the local newspaper included two feature articles about the book club and our book club coordinator. Students enjoyed seeing themselves and their activities on the news. The first article published by Sarah Ingram was Meadows Elementary School Book Club Explores New Places Via Reading published on October 9, 2022.



MWWBC members' excitement grew as they prepared to visit outer space.

The second article by Sarah Ingram was well received when published on November 6, 2022, titled, Cheryl Jeffers a Committed Community Member Shares Her Love for Reading.



James Collier and Dr. Cheryl Jeffers launching their origami rockets. 3.. 2..1..Blast Off

### **Family Reception of Book Club**

To ensure the book club structure, book selections, and activities were beneficial for families and their students, we surveyed families about their experiences. The results of the survey were overwhelming positive comments on the positive impact the book club is having on the students and their families.

- 100% of families stated that their family enjoyed reading together.
- 90% stated that the monthly meetings were enjoyable for their families.
- 100% strongly agreed that their child looks forward to new books and/or meetings each month.
- 60% stated that their child was a more eager reader than before joining the book club.
- 50% strongly agreed that their child was a more confident reader than before joining the book club.
- 70% stated that their child reads more frequently than before joining the book club.

When asked what changes parents have noticed in their children's reading habits, they said that there was more discussion around books, more shared experiences, and that their children are choosing longer books to read as a result.

When asked about any academic changes parents noticed in their children because of participating in book club, they said that the club has helped improve reading scores and spelling and increased the children's love of reading.

## **Conclusion**

Bringing communities together with a primary focus on literacy benefits families, students, and schools as evidenced by the ongoing and steadily growing Meadows Wildcat Wonder Book Club. The principal, students, families, and community members attest to the overall increase in academic scores, families realizing how much they enjoy reading together, the rise in students' confidence levels, and the fact students are choosing to read in their free time. While the lasting impact of the MWWBC cannot be measured, the love of literacy it has fostered in families will continue to pay dividends long term.

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## **Looking back at SRIG**

Chloe Walker, [walker.chloem@gsu.glenville.edu](mailto:walker.chloem@gsu.glenville.edu)

Autumn Tusing, [tusing.autumnj@gsu.glenville.edu](mailto:tusing.autumnj@gsu.glenville.edu)

Abigail Long, [long.abigaile@gsu.glenville.edu](mailto:long.abigaile@gsu.glenville.edu)

Glenville State University

### **Looking back at SRIG**

The Student Reading Interest Group at Glenville State University provides pre-service teachers with an opportunity to work in public schools and enhance student literacy through active, hands-on activities in collaboration with partner schools. West Virginia students, like much of the United States post-pandemic, have experienced challenges in core subjects such as reading and math. During Covid, much of the Student Reading Interest Group's (SRIG) activities were halted. School year 2023 marked a resumption of the group's activities in the classroom. Student learning outcomes (and teacher well-being) can be improved with an occasional deviation from the standard classroom schedule. Emerging educators have the opportunity to accrue experience in the classroom, and students get the benefit of fun, educational activities along with seeing young professionals entering the field of education. Many students find being taught by emerging educators both an interesting and inspirational experience. Emerging educators, and students themselves, gain confidence in their abilities and classroom management skills. However, the service does not stop in the classroom.

Members raise much of the group's funds through activities such as Literacy Dessert Auctions. Themed desserts are paired with books and auctioned to the highest bidder. The winners go home with both a good book and a tasty dessert. This beloved auction is held annually and can raise major funds for this growing group.

These events are as much about recruiting new members as accruing funds. One of the biggest goals for the SRIG is to make sure the program continuously expands. The members do this by making lasting impressions on incoming college students, handing out fliers, and word of mouth. This group also strives to have a positive connection with every faculty member in their local education department. By doing this, it makes a major goal possible.

This goal is to have a positive, permanent, and meaningful relationship with the community. The SRIG makes this connection possible by completing regular community service projects. An example of community service this group has completed is their recent and quite successful clothing drive. Community service that SRIG is especially proud of is the annual Dr. Seuss activities. Dressing up as The Cat in the Hat is especially popular with local elementary and childcare students. During this time, students have been caught saying things such as “THE CAT IN THE HAT, I’VE READ YOUR BOOK!!” as well as “Thank you, Cat in the Hat, I had so much fun with you!”

The members of the SRIG are predominantly thankful for the opportunities they have been able to experience through this group and the activities they have taken part in. The relationships that these pre-service teachers acquire will have a lasting impact on their future careers as well as their personal lives. The connections that take place in this group last a lifetime and will continue to touch pre-service teachers as long as the SRIG continues to be a striving student organization on the Glenville State University campus.



**Over a decade of making a positive impact  
on students and families in an after-school book club**

Cheryl Jeffers, [cherylannjeffers@gmail.com](mailto:cherylannjeffers@gmail.com)



## **Over a Decade of Making a Positive Impact on Students and Families in an After-School Book Club**

Family literacy can be enhanced when a partnership between the home and school is developed through the dynamics of a monthly after-school book club where students, siblings, parents, grandparents, friends, and neighbors are welcome to come together as a community to celebrate literacy will enhance reading skills and foster a lifelong love of reading. According to Kabuto (2009), “Families engage their children in different types of literacy practices and events both inside and outside of the home.” By committing to reading a book once a month at home as a family, parents have the potential to enrich their home environment and enhance their child’s development (Green, Lilly, Barrett, 2002).

The literature on after-school book clubs involving students and their families is sparse. Most articles focus on after-school programs where students have worked with a teacher or program to improve their skills in a specific area, but few share about students and their families coming together as a community, meeting consistently after reading the same book during the month, to celebrate literacy in an after-school book club model. The purpose of this article is to contribute to the literature, in the area of Family Literacy by offering authentic documentation on the positive and profound impact being a member of a community book club has on the student and family as evidenced by the over a decade of involvement of students and parents in the after-school book clubs, specifically the Marvelous Martha Mustang Book Club (MMMBC) and Meadows Wild Cat Wonder Book Club (MWWBC) in Cabell County.

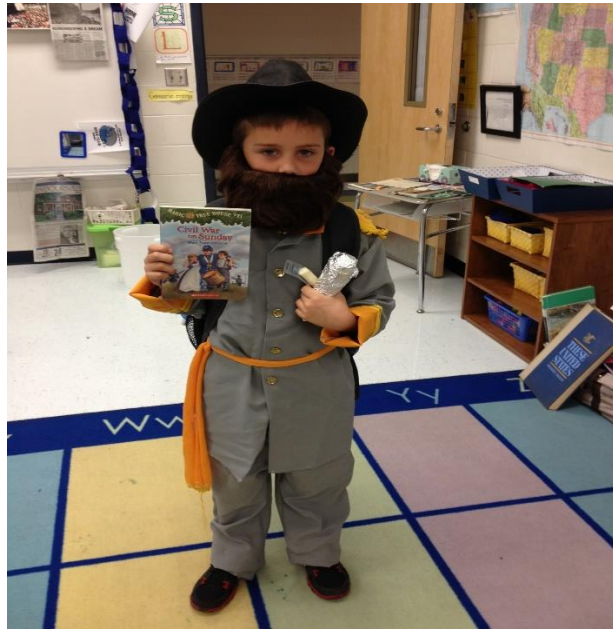
### **History of a Decade of After – School Book Club Experiences**

#### **Marvelous Martha Mustang Book Club 2011 - 2019**

The original book club began while teaching first grade at Martha Elementary School at the beginning of the 2011-2012 school year. As a mentor teacher working with a first-year

teacher, the easiest way to offer support in the classroom and with the parents at home was to collaborate throughout the school day during the reading language arts block and invite the new teacher, her class, and all the parents to be members of the Marvelous Martha Mustangs Book Club (MMMBC). Using the Magic Tree House book series, by Mary Pope Osborne, the teachers guided the students in how to predict, infer, ask questions, make connections, and summarize chapters or complete books. To enhance the reading program the books were sent home by the students and the family was asked to read the book together. The book traveled back and forth from home to school all month. The parents read and reread the book at home while the teachers used the literature across the curriculum incorporating Science, Social Studies, Health, Math, Writing, Reading, and Language Arts. Students researched the book and prepared presentations to share with families at the meeting. At the end of the month the students and parents celebrated completing the book during the first MMMBC meeting. The book was *Midnight on the Moon*. The students had studied the cycles of the moon, gravity, man walking on the moon, the list was endless. The students' work was on display. The students ate Moonpies, created paper rockets, and challenged their parents to a game of trivia. The students won the game against the parents.

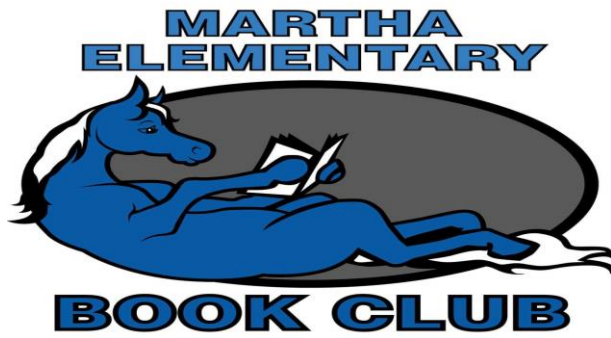




### **Parents Applaud and Support Book Club Efforts**

Evidence that the first book club meeting was a success was the students' cheers and high fives when they beat their parents in the trivia game. Another sign the meeting was successful was when the parents asked the details of how the club was funded and stated they would take on the responsibility from this point on to pay for the books and bring the snacks. They offered cash donations stating, "These books are expensive, and we can purchase them for kids instead of you paying for them out of your pocket." The parents also vowed to read the book a little closer throughout the month and beat their children during the next game. However, the children remained undefeated!

Additional evidence of parental involvement and support came through the gift of our own book club logo and t-shirts. MMMBC parent, Bill Napier created an adorable logo depicting the school mascot propped up reading a book and MMMBC parent and Lawyer, Kimberly McGann sponsored the purchase of book club t-shirts for every book club student (t-shirt design by Bill Napier).



Parents also attended the Families Leading Change Conference where they wrote a grant and were awarded \$1,500 dollars to help with the Accelerated Reader (AR) costs for the school.

### **Book Club Marches in the Community Fall Fest Parade**

The MMMBC and its mascot marched in the Barboursville Fall Fest Parade in October of 2011. The parents marched alongside their children who were dressed as their favorite Storybook Character. The club marched behind the Cabell County Reading Council's carrying posters to show the club's affiliation with the International Reading Association and the West Virginia Reading Association.



Ethan Midkiff marching and holding up the Cabell County Reading Association poster.

One parent said, “I never had the opportunity to march in a parade before. I loved it!” Parents shared their appreciation of the opportunity to march in the parade as part of an academic group because some of their children were not members of a sport, band, or dance team so the opportunity to be included was never offered before. Another parent smiled and said, “It was so much fun! Thank you for the opportunity. The kids loved it!” At the end of the parade all the children waited together for their parents to pick them up. A small group posed with the mascot and said, “Look, we are like our logo!” They propped themselves up against the reclined horse and were pretending to read the latest book together.

### Creating a Lifelong Love of Reading for Pleasure



Exhausted mascots (CarolAnn Williams and Tiffany Swanson) and young book club members Isaac and Grace Napier creating a life size version of the book club logo.

### Young Book Club Members Present at the WVRA Conference

Evidence the book club was making a difference to the students, families, and the school was when the principal, Mr. Boyd Mynes requested the book club be opened up to include all grades instead of just the first grade. The Christus and Napier families were asked to attend the West Virginia Reading Association in 2014 so their children could present during a presentation on how the book club was making a difference in the school. They were the first youth presenters



to speak at the WVRA conference. They stood boldly and shared their credentials, their Accelerated Reader status, and membership in the MMMBC to a room filled to capacity.



Grace Napier Second grader, MMMBC member, and Principal Award AR reader presenting at the WVRA conference 2014.

### **After-School Book Club Impacts Community**

Mustangs Making Their Mark was the 2017-2018 Community Service Project the MMMBC took on to help raise funds for the children at Clendenin Elementary School. The school worked together to create quilt pieces, that were later sewn together into six grade level quilts by award winning artist, Wilanna Wales. The quilts were raffled off and the money raised was donated to their school. To promote the project the students created the commercial, Martha Elementary's Service Learning Project: Mustangs Making their Mark: <https://youtu.be/Kv9ESYzQzn8>.

### **WV's SMART529 Contest Winner Becomes Advocate for Literacy**

Isaac Napier demonstrated the effect the book club was having on his life when he won the SMART529 What I Want to Be When I Grow Up contest by requesting the \$500 award donation be set aside to help pay for his school to purchase the AR program for the school and to contribute to the whole school's annual trip to Camp Arrowhead. He also set up and staffed a vendor table during the WVRA 2018 Conference to sell tickets for the quilt raffled.



Second Grader, Isaac Napier selling tickets for the Martha Elementary School's Mustang Making Their Mark Community Service Project at the WVRA Conference.



Martha Elementary School's Annual Camp Arrowhead Outing Grades 1<sup>st</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> Partially Sponsored by MMMBC





Martha Elementary School's Annual Camp Arrowhead Outing Grades 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Partially Sponsored  
by MMMBC

### **Marshall University's Harless Center Reaches Out to MMMBC**

Marshall University's Harless Center Director, Dr. Stan Maynard contacted the MMMBC asking for their support in raising awareness and funds for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. The goal was for the Harless Center to raise funds to finance the postage necessary to pay for all the children birth to five years old to receive the books. By the end of the school year, the book club raised enough money to pay for the preschool children to receive the books.



Supporting the Imagination Library – Isaac Napier, Isaiah Spangler, First Generation Book Club

Member Ethan Midkiff, Drs. Barbara and Stan Maynard, and Dr. Cheryl Jeffers



## Do Book Clubs Make a Difference? WVRA 2019 Presentation

Further evidence was found regarding the impact book clubs can make on family literacy. That was shared during the WVRA 2019 Conference by Dr. Cheryl Jeffers when she asked book club parents and students for their perspectives. A set of former book club members, fondly called First Generation MMMBC members, shared the club's impact on their lives and their willingness to continue to attend and contribute when or wherever needed.

### First Generation Middle School Student Perspectives

**Middle School Student MMMBC Perspective**  
**Grace Napier**



First Generation MMMBC Student  
WV Healthy Kids & Families Coalition  
Former Families Leading Change Grant Team Member

**Middle School Student MMMBC Perspective**  
**Ethan Midkiff**




**First Generation MMMBC Member**  
Magic Tree House series MMMBC Meetings  
Animal Reports  
Literacy Tree  
WV First Lady visited Martha  
Tie-dyed t-shirts


## Elementary Member Student Perspectives

### Elementary Student MMMBC Perspective

#### Isaac Napier



Winner of the SMART 529 essay contest \$500 College/\$500 Martha Elementary  
WV Healthy Kids & Families Coalition (FLC) \$1,500 grant  
Mustangs Making Their Mark Service Learning Project  
WVRA Presentation 2017  
Author of Dragon Attack



### Elementary Student MMMBC Perspective

#### Isaiah Spangler




MMMBC Meetings  
Kahootz Trivia Game  
Fall Fest Parade  
Camp Arrowhead End of Year Literacy Celebration





## Parent Perspectives

### Parent MMMBC Perspective

#### Denise Napier



MMMBC Supporter/Coordinator  
Parent of First Generation and 4<sup>th</sup> Grade MMMC Members  
FLC Grant Team Member





Supportive parents, grandparents, and students enjoying breakfast before they present.

### Community Support for MMMBC and from MMMBC





Walmart Donated to the MMMBC to help with their literacy events January 27, 2020.

Ryan Johnson said he would be happy to fill in as our mascot for this photo shoot. I warned him, your picture will not be in the paper as you, just the mascot. He told me that would be fine. He just wanted to help. This photo shows him with his elementary tie-dyed book club t-shirt. He showed up with it the first time he came back to volunteer as a First-Generation book club member. He said, “I knew exactly where it was. I look at it all the time. I loved the book club. I will always be a part of it!”

The Barboursville Library started construction on a new building and requested the community contribute to their building by purchasing a leaf for a tree that would be displayed in the new building once construction was complete. So the MMMBC began fundraising by offering a photo shoot with their own mascot, purchased from past fundraising events. One of the younger book club members, Trinity Williams took to FB and asked for people to contribute to the new library because they, “need the money.” Eventually monies were raised and the book club members, who were in middle school now joined in with 3-year-old Trinity to present a check from the MMMBC.



Ribbon Cutting of the Barboursville Public Library – Trinity Williams helped cut the ribbon.

## Meadows Wildcat Wonder Book Club 2022 - 2023

The first book club meeting for the Meadows Wildcat Wonder Book Club was held on Thursday, September 1, 2022 at 4:00 in the Meadows Elementary School gymnasium. The students celebrated reading the Magic Treehouse book, An Afternoon in the Amazon. They made a monkey craft, ate bananas and juice, played Kahoot, and looked at live animals from the Amazon, compliments of Herpetologist Andy McKee, owner of The Reptile House Mountain State Reptile Rescue.



Reptile House brought live animals.

Monthly meetings continued throughout the school year with visits to Space when we blasted off to space with the help of the June Harless Center's Skylab, snacked on Moonpies, created origami rocket ships, launched them to space with a straw, and played Kahoot.



They played with live Llamas after reading Late Lunch with Llamas and the non-fiction Fact Finder Llama and created bookmarks with real Llama yarn.

**MEADOWS WILDCAT WONDER BOOK CLUB**  
**Thursday, November 3, 2022**  
**4-5:00 pm**  
**School Gymnasium**

**Come to the MWWBC meeting to:**

- Pet and Feed one of the Good News Llamas
- Create a Llama craft with WV Artist Linda Childers
- Enjoy a Llama snack
- Play Kahoot Trivia with parents on last month's book.

**Pick up your copy of *Midnight on the Moon* and the *Fact Tracker Space* in Mrs. Maynard's office.**

Please consider helping us promote literacy by joining:

- Cabell County Reading Council for \$0.00
- West Virginia Reading Association for 20.00 or Lifetime Membership \$150.00

Together we will create and enhance a life-long love of reading for the children and families of West Virginia!

For additional information contact: Dr. Cheryl Jeffers 304.942.3929 cheryljeffers@gmail.com

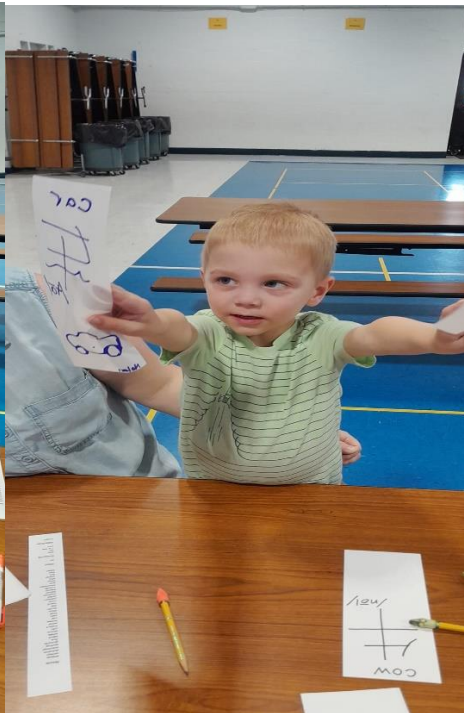
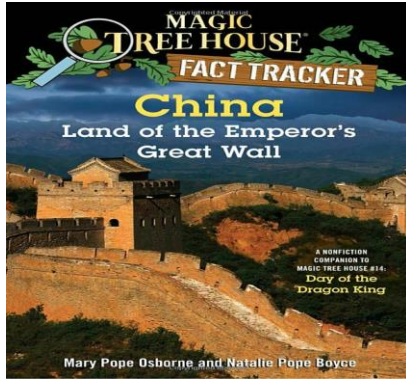
Find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MeadowsWildcatWonderBookClub>

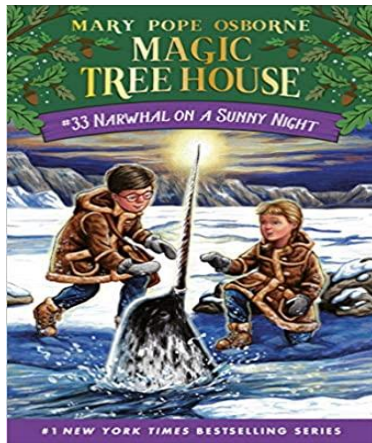
My child/children,  
 plan/s to attend the MWWBC meeting on Thursday, November 3, 2022 and bring this/these guest/s  
 (name of siblings/friends/community member)



The book club traveled to China and created bookmarks on rice paper from China with artist, Linda Childers. Their favorite Chinese characters were the ones to create Fire.







Narwhal horns are attached, and members are ready to play Kahoot with their Mrs. Maynard!

The last book club meeting for this year was a huge success. Children were welcomed with a lei from the Cabell County Reading Council as they celebrated reading *High Tide in Hawaii* and the *Fact Tracker Tsunami and Other Natural Disasters*. They snacked on fruit and Hawaiian punch. Their craft was to create their own volcano. Then the club members joined all their volcanoes to create a Ring of Fire and erupt them simultaneously.





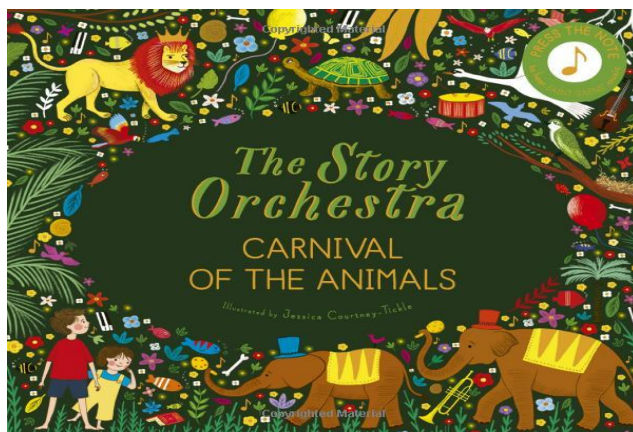






## Huntington Children's Museum a Resource for Family Literacy and Fun

The Huntington Children's Museum (HCM) continues to enhance literacy throughout the city and has summer events planned where families will have several opportunities to meet and explore hands on events. Several MWWBC members are working with HCM committee to bring literacy events to the community. The Meadows Wildcat Wonder Book Club participated in a preview of April's Huntington Children's Museum Carnival of the Animals event at Meadows Elementary.



PreK-1<sup>st</sup> grade children were given a sneak preview of the Huntington Children's Museum's upcoming event, Carnival of Animals by the MWWBC coordinators.

The development a lifelong love of reading by fostering the relationship between families and an after-school book club is evident by over a decade review of experiences with the Marvelous Martha Mustangs Book Club and the current Meadows Wildcat Wonder Book Club. Research states the experiences adults offer children through crafts and extended literature activities will strengthen their comprehension of a story (Green, Lilly, Barrett, 2002). Data from over a decade of literacy experiences with students and families clearly depicts not only the development of a lifetime love of reading, but also the enhancement of communities from the collaboration of the after-school book clubs in Cabell County. The students and families who participated in the after-school book clubs in the past and those who are currently participating are not only strengthening their comprehension of the stories they read, but are authoring their own family literacy stories. The positive impact of the MMMBC and MWWBC clubs are evident by the extended student involvement from first grade through middle and high school where first-generation students are still reaching out, attending, and supporting book club events. Book club members feeling empowered to become involved in fundraising opportunities to help their school and community is indicative of the positive influence the after-school book club has on its members as evidenced by their donations to the flood relief in Clendenin, donations of SMART529 award money for school AR expenses, grants monies raised, fundraisers for the Imagination Library and the new Barboursville Public Library, and a plethora of literacy events. After – school book clubs can and do make a difference in communities and family literacy.

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# WEST VIRGINIA READING ASSOCIATION VISUAL CONFERENCE JOURNAL: LITERACY, A JOYFUL TRANSFORMATION



## WVRA

*Literacy: A Joyful Transformation*  
2022 Conference

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