



## WHY DO WE INSIST THAT OUR MENTORS DO THE READING?

We all want our participating students to ultimately be good readers, right? So why don't we want our volunteers to "teach" their students to read or let the students do the reading during lunchtime reading sessions? It's certainly not that there isn't merit in tutoring and sitting with students while they read. However, our name is "Read TO a Child" for a very good reason. When we chose that name, we wanted to make our mission and call to action very clear. Here is why we are passionate about our volunteers, and not the students, doing the majority of the reading during the Lunchtime Reading Program:

- Study after study indicates that being read to is the single most important activity to promote a child's reading ability. The most notable study, and the one that inspired our founder, is the 1985 report "Becoming a Nation of Readers" written by the Commission on Reading which asserts that reading aloud is "the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading." More recently, a 2000 study by Bredekamp, Copple, & Neuman came to the same conclusion.
- There is a huge disparity between low and high income students with regard to the amount they are being read to at home. This contributes to a tragic achievement gap in our country. All our students are getting the same reading instruction at school, but not the same opportunity to be read to at home. Our goal is to make up for this one simple but impactful disparity. We want to ensure that those students who are not hearing the same number of words at home, hear more words through our program.
- We have precious little time to do this - one lunchtime a week! So any time we spend doing something else - teaching, tutoring, listening to them read, drawing, playing games, doing puzzles, etc., takes away from this central and essential mission.

- When students are doing the reading, it is by nature necessary for them to select lower level books (they can listen at higher levels than they can read). Also, they are likely laboring through words and therefore getting exposure to fewer words and less background knowledge in a given session.
- Especially for those students who struggle with reading, tutoring and reading lessons can be stressful which can be counter productive to Read to a Child's vision of developing an association of reading with pleasure among our students.
- We encourage volunteers to have discussions with students because we know that building a trusting relationship will provide students a model for the love of reading we are working to instill as well as the extra socio-emotional support our students often need. Discussing book content also helps students develop reading comprehension, background knowledge that can help in other subjects, critical thinking skills, and vocabulary.

#### Resources and Continued Reading:

- 1) <http://www.trelease-on-reading.com/rah-faq-outl.html>
- 2) <http://knowledgequest.aasl.org/reading-aloud-kids-important/>
- 3) <https://www.education.com/reference/article/reasons-read-aloud-children/>
- 4) More information on the Achievement Gap: <http://www.nea.org/home/20380.htm>