Penguin Random House
EDUCATION

How to Start an All-School Reading Program

A Resource to Engage Students, Staff, and Families

A Note to Educators and Administrators

from Roberta Jacobs,
Principal of William F. Cooke, Jr. Elementary School
(Hockessin, Delaware)

Are you interested in bringing your entire school community together for a shared literacy event? If your answer is "YES!," an all-school reading program—appropriate for K-12 levels—is an exciting and engaging experience to consider. During an all-school reading event, all staff and students receive a copy of the same book and read it simultaneously at home, following a school-wide calendar—think of it as a school-wide book club.

In my experience, it creates a unique buzz throughout the school, centered on the selected book. While walking through the hallways, you may overhear students and staff enthusiastically talking about the characters and events they're reading about!

Planning a wide array of activities to support the engagement of students, staff, and families is a great way to ensure your program's success. In this resource, I have included helpful tips and ideas to get you started, so please read on and good luck!

Yours in Learning,

Roberta Jacobs

Roberta Jacobs is a graduate of the University of Delaware with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and a Master's in Instruction. She has served the students of Delaware as an educator for more than twenty years. She is currently the Principal of William F. Cooke, Jr. Elementary School in Hockessin, Delaware, serving K-5 students. She founded the Facebook group, All School Reads: An Educator's Forum, bringing educators from around the world together, focused on sharing programming ideas. You can reach her by email: roberta.jacobs@redclay.k12.de.us or on Twitter: @RoJacobs

Let's get started!

Here are some important things to consider:

- **February and March are great months for your school to participate in an all-school reading program**
  February is I Love to Read Month and March is National Reading Month. February 1 is also National Read Aloud Day, giving February an extra bonus to kick off an all-school reading event!
- **Provide a copy of the book to every student and staff member**
  EVERYONE in the school gets a book: secretaries, teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, therapists, nutrition workers, custodial crew and bus drivers. Ideally, you want everyone talking about the book!
- **Select a book with a reading level at the mid- to high level so that it engages younger and older students**
  An all-school reading program is a shared reading experience. For younger students, families are encouraged to read chapters aloud to their children. Older students may read aloud to their parents or their parents may want to read to them. Reading aloud has many benefits. It creates strong bonds between children and their parents/guardians, promotes healthy brain development, stimulates imagination, builds connections, develops stronger vocabulary and makes everyone happy.
- **Selecting a chapter book makes for an easy way to divide up the nightly reading**
  Create a monthly calendar for your school community to help everyone stay on track with the nightly reading. In my experience, it works best to read nightly Monday through Thursday and leave Fridays and nights before a day off clear. Families appreciate that!

Planning ahead:

There are many things to plan, so you should ideally start the book selection process months in advance. Some schools have one person organizing the all-school reading program while others form a committee dedicated to the selection, planning, and execution of the program.

What do I need to do to plan?

☐ Make a book selection

It is recommended that those planning for the program at your school read the title before ordering copies for the school community. This will ensure the book is appropriate in both content and reading level. It will also be helpful in generating ideas.

☐ Consider your budget

Funding is needed to cover the purchase and shipping of books for every student and staff member. Additional funding will be needed if you choose to purchase trivia prizes, host a family event, get a mascot or arrange for an author visit.

☐ Figure out how to fund the program

- Parent Teacher Associations/Parent Teacher Organizations may be willing to fundraise or create a line item for the full cost. The administration can also ask for a financial contribution that they can use to offset the cost to the school budget.
- Schools can see if their district office will provide funds or other resources for an all-school reading program.
- Title One schools can purchase books using Title One funds as this is a community engagement activity.
- A teacher can submit a DonorsChoose grant for the purchase of books. Note that the book's title must be identified in the grant and, when you share the link for people to contribute, the title will be visible. This will impact the surprise factor.
- Your district may have an educational foundation in which you can write a grant for the books.
- The principal may choose to use the building budget to cover the costs of an all-school reading program.
- Reach out to a publisher, bookstore or organization for a bulk purchase quote.

☐ If you wish to invite an author(s), visit their website to see if they conduct visits virtually or in-person.

☐ Plan a "Book Reveal Day" for staff (see page 5 for tips on building excitement).

☐ Plan a "Book Reveal Day" for students and families

Consider how you will distribute books to students. One suggestion is to bag the book using clear gallon bags along with a letter home to families describing your school's program and a calendar for the nightly reading. Another idea is to wrap each book individually and have students unwrap them at the same time.

☐ Develop a communication strategy to share information with families.

☐ Brainstorm daily trivia questions to go along with nightly reading.

☐ Purchase book-themed prizes for trivia winners.

Bonus tips:

Hunt for book deals throughout the year. You may be able to secure your next title on sale the year before! If you have a place to store your books, grab the deal while you can.

Don't forget to order enough books for your projected number of students and staff. It's always best to order extra for students who may enroll during the year.

Do you have to spend your budget at the end of the school year or lose it? That is a great time to use your school budget to purchase the books for next year's all-school reading program!

How do I find the right book?

Visit Penguin Random House Education's Common Reads website: commonreads.com, where you can browse curated titles appropriate for all-school reading programs at the K-12 level (turn to page 11 for more information).

Check out Read to Them®, a national nonprofit that has been helping families and schools read together for 20 years. Over that time, Read to Them® has provided strategy, guidance, and resources to over 3,000 schools and over 2 million families in all 50 states. Schools who participate in a One School, One Book® program with Read to Them® choose from a carefully curated list of over 150 titles, ranging from classics to contemporary works. They receive everything they need to enjoy a successful reading event. Visit their website at: readtothem.org.

Collaborate with other schools! I encourage you to join the Facebook group All School Reads: An Educator's Forum. It is comprised of educators from around the world who share ideas, title recommendations, photos of all-school reading events and other resources. It's a great place to ask questions!

Staff, Family, and Student Engagement

Staff

Plan a date a few weeks in advance to reveal the book to staff. I secure my books in envelopes that say TOP SECRET! No one wants the secret title revealed ahead of time!

This can allow staff to read the selection in advance and potentially create ways to incorporate it into their lessons.

Think of clues related to the book that can go along with the reveal. For example, you could buy an item that is referenced in the book to give away. You can have a lot of fun getting creative about this!

Families

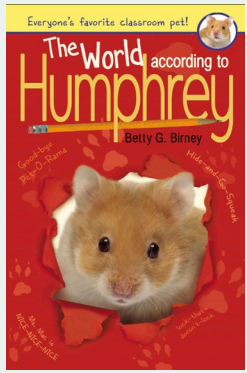
It's important to educate parents and guardians on what to expect from an all-school reading program. I suggest writing a family letter to send home with the book on the reveal day.

You can also share information, book clues, prize winners, daily trivia questions, etc. on your school's social media outlets or website.

Students

Generate excitement about an all-school reading program by providing clues over the course of several days leading up to the school-wide reveal. Ideas include having a bulletin board on which one clue a day pops up for all to see. Another idea is to have a showcase with clues or a display depicting scenes from the book.

For *The World According to Humphrey* (Puffin Books), the 2023 all-school reading selection at Cooke Elementary School, we displayed clues from the book, including characters, items, and events. Each day for eight days, a new clue would appear in the display.



School-Wide Kick-Off/
Book Reveal Day Assemblies

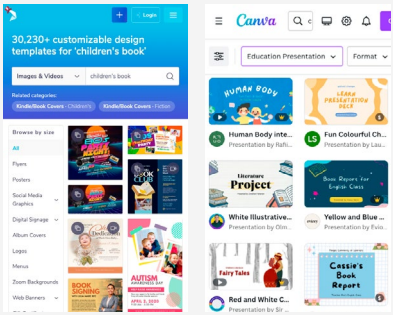
- Bring the students together in the school auditorium
- Create a slideshow
- Find a pre-made book trailer video online or make your own!
- There may be a song that goes along with the theme or characters of the book
- Dress up as a character(s)
- Staff members can act out a scene from the book
- Send the books home on this day with each student

This is me dressed as a character from a previous book we read together!

Share a trivia question for each chapter with the school community during morning announcements and on social media so families can engage.

- Many chapter comprehension questions can be found online or you can create one question per chapter on your own

- Using a website like Canva.com or postermywall.com, make social media graphics for each question to share with families



- Purchase prizes for trivia questions themed to the book OR themed to a love of reading in general

These prizes related to themes in The World According to Humphrey (little hamsters, mini notebooks and pencils)

- Have buckets, tubs, or a related box to collect grade-level trivia answers, or ask students to contribute to a Google form

Since the main character Humphrey lived in a cage, we collected trivia questions in hamster cages

Staff read-alouds of each chapter

- Create a sign-up sheet for staff who would like to record each chapter (be sure to secure permission with the publisher first)
- Share the link with families
- Teachers can ask students to watch daily, especially those who may not have someone at home to read aloud with

Book mascot

Some books have a character that you can use as a mascot. Since the main character in *The World According to Humphrey* is a hamster, we purchased a gigantic stuffed hamster. Each day the Humphrey mascot would spend the day learning with a different class!

- The mascot can be raffled off at the end of the month
- Record a video of the raffle and share it with your school community

Culminating/End-of-Book Activities

Author Visits

Hosting an author is one of the most exciting parts about an all-school reading program.

- Authors often craft their presentations to the varying grade levels at your school, so you can work with them to plan your assemblies as such (for example, K-2 and 3-5 assemblies)
- Organize a book signing so students can meet the author and get their own copy personalized!
- If an author is not available for an in-person visit, they may be able to visit over Zoom or send you a pre-recorded message

Culminating Activity Ideas

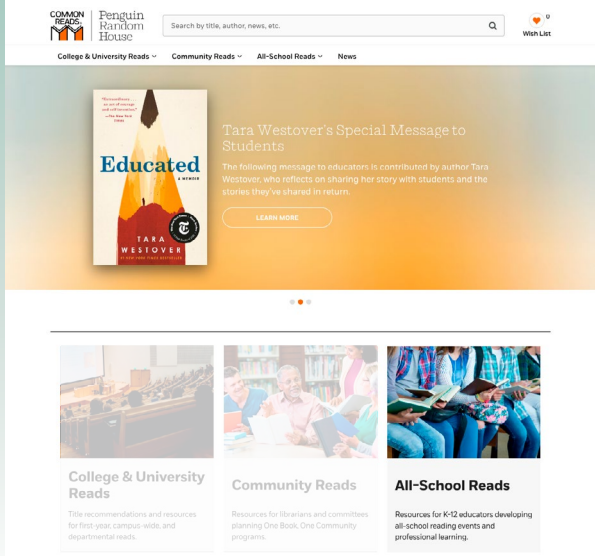
- If the book is part of a series, purchase copies of the second book and auction them off or give one to each homeroom
- Tie in an end-of-book activity where students create a project
- Have an end-of-book family event. Ideas include:
  - Reading the last chapter together
  - Discussing events
  - Playing games related to the book
  - Creating a culminating art project
  - Writing book reviews
- Consider surveying your staff, students and/or families, asking questions like:
  - What did you like about this program?
  - What suggestions do you have for a future title selection?
  - What additions would you recommend for future programming?

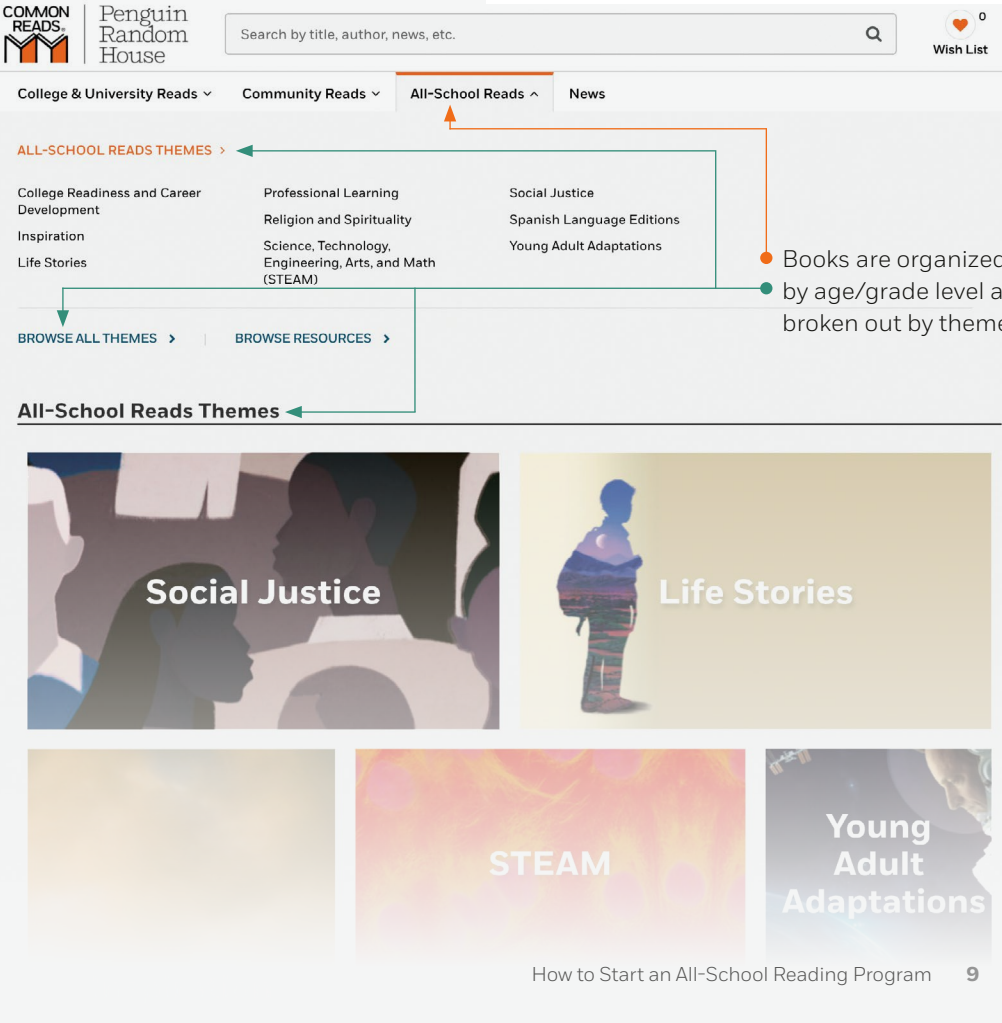
Penguin Random House Education Website Resources

Welcome to the PRH Education Common Reads site: the perfect spot to browse books and find K-12 resources for all-school reading programs.

COMMON READS

www.CommonReads.com

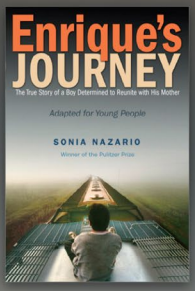




Books are organized by age/grade level and broken out by themes

Get all the facts about the books that interest you

Each book's web page may include a description, list of awards, reading excerpt, reviews, theme, and educator guide



DOWNLOAD HIGH-RESOLUTION IMAGE
LOOK INSIDE

Enrique's Journey (The Young Adult Adaptation)

The True Story of a Boy Determined to Reunite with His Mother

Author Sonia Nazario

ADD TO WISH LIST

PAPERBACK

$10.99 US
RH Childrens Books | Ember
On sale Aug 05, 2014 | 288 Pages | 978-0-385-74328-0
Age 12 and up | Grade 7 & Up
Reading Level: Lexile 770L

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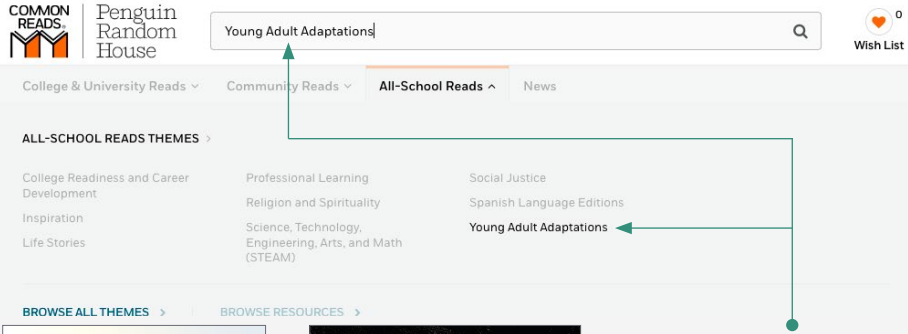
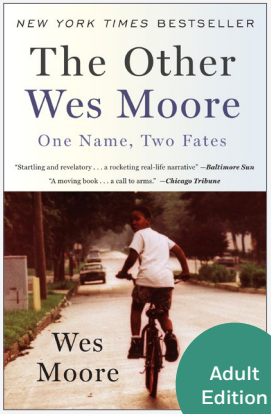
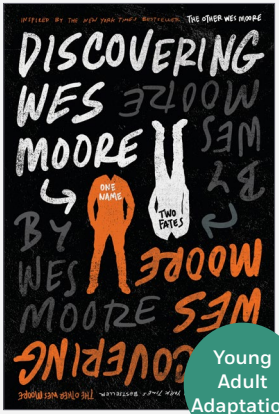
Find age-appropriate editions of the same book





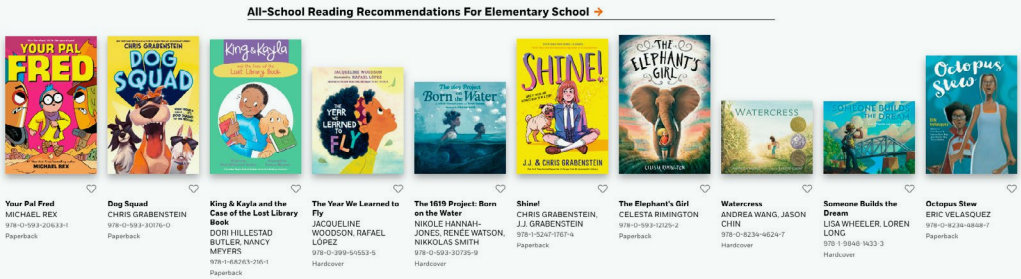
Adult Edition

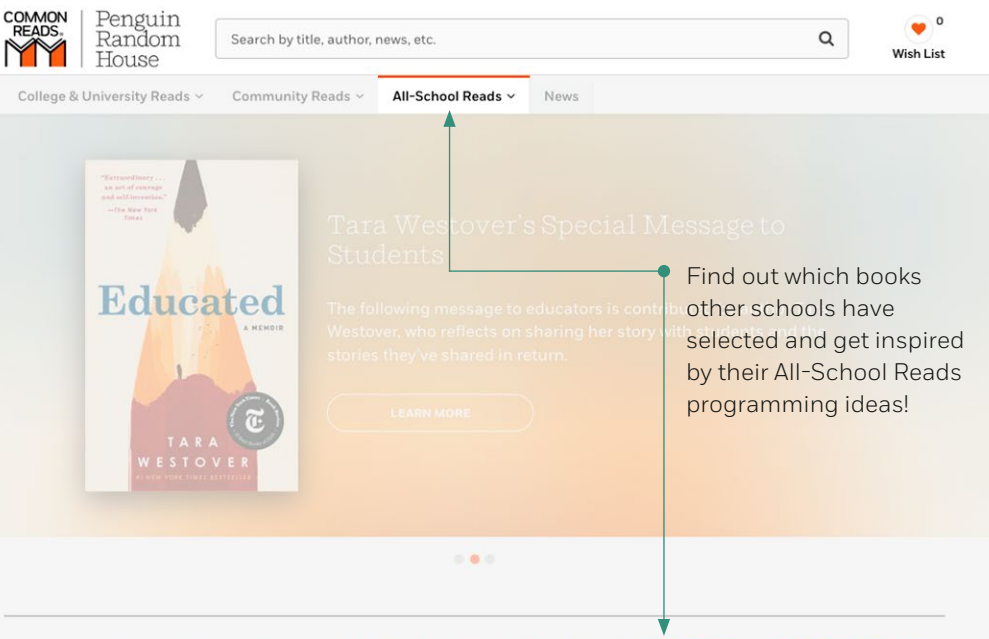


Young Adult Adaptation

Create an inclusive reading experience for younger and older students by choosing age-appropriate editions of the same book

Browse curated title collections





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Please reach out to us anytime at

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