

Parents and Reading Committee

The ARA Parents and Reading Committee exists to ...

- Promote family literacy
- Assist parents in helping their children be more fluent, strategic, and motivated readers
- Offer appropriate literacy activities for children
- Assist Local Councils in developing and meeting their objectives

"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents."

— Emilie Buchwald



Three decades of research provide convincing evidence that children with "involved" parents have significant advantages.

- 
- They are 18% more likely to recognize all letters, count to 20 or higher, and write their name by age 5.
 - They are 20% more likely to read or pretend to read storybooks by age 5.
 - They are almost twice as likely to score in the top 25% on primary reading tests.
 - They are more likely to score Proficient on 4th-grade literacy assessments.

"One of the problems I found in teaching first grade is the wide difference in preparedness for reading that children exhibited from the first week of school. I could usually guess which children had parents who spent some time reading to them. They knew how to handle books, they liked stories, they knew how to listen actively, they had well-developed vocabularies, and they were eager to begin reading by themselves."

— Ann Moulton Johnson,
teacher and author

Students with involved parents are more likely to attend school regularly, earn high grades and test scores, enroll in higher-level programs, pass classes, earn credits, be promoted, graduate and go on to postsecondary education ... ***no matter what their income or background.***



Children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more when schools, families, and community groups *work together* to support learning.



Even school age children still spend 70% of their waking hours outside the school setting. Schools and families need to recognize this tremendous learning opportunity.

**Schools *can't improve*
without the help
of parents.**

Parents benefit, too!

Involved parents develop:

- greater confidence in dealing with parenting issues and school issues;
- higher expectations of their children; and
- a greater likelihood of enrolling in continuing education to advance their own schooling.



*To what extent does public policy
acknowledge the importance
of parent involvement?*

NCLB

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, **defines parental involvement** as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student learning.

No Child Left Behind stresses shared accountability between Title I schools and parents for high student achievement, including ...

- expanded public school choice and supplemental services,
- local development of parental involvement plans, and
- *building parents' capacity for using effective practices to improve their own children's academic achievement.*

*Involving parents isn't JUST a good idea ...
IT'S PART OF OUR JOB!*

Schools must actively promote programs and activities to ensure ...

- ▶ that parents play an *active, integral* role in assisting their child's learning *at home and in school*; and
- ▶ that parents become *full partners* with teachers and school decision-makers

The Common Core Standards

- Designed by a diverse group that included parents
- Reflect both our aspirations for our children and the realities of the classroom
- Rigorous, consistent across the states
- Set clear, realistic goals for success in college and the workplace, enabling all stakeholders -- including students and parents -- to work together

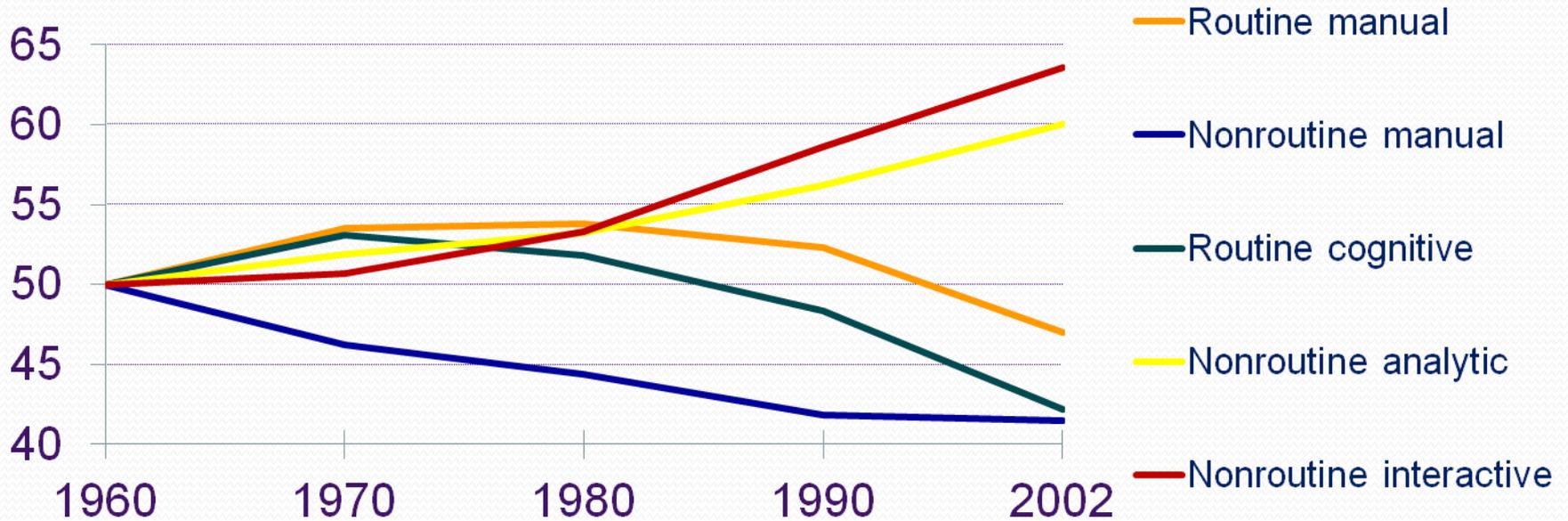


“National standards and testing are unlikely to overcome *the deficiencies of American elementary and secondary schooling*, which are rooted in the public education system’s power and incentive structure.

“Federal policymakers should provide states with increased flexibility and freedom from red tape to *make state leaders more accountable to parents and taxpayers*. States should also strengthen standards, increase transparency about school performance, and *allow parents to act on that information by choosing their children’s schools.*”

(Burke and Marshall)

How the Demand for Skills is Changing



The dilemma for schools is that the skills that are easiest to teach and test are also the ones that are easiest to digitize, automate, and outsource.

(Source: Levy and Murnane)

"Many things we need can wait. The child cannot. Now is the time his bones are formed, his mind developed. To him we cannot say tomorrow; his name is today."

— Gabriela Mistral

Why Don't Parents Get More Involved?

One study found that only 14% of elementary school Parent Centers are used “very frequently.” According to parent surveys, the top four reasons parents fail to become involved are:

- ▶ “I don't have time.”

- ▶ “I don't know what to do.”

{I'm not a teacher/I've never had any educational training/I don't want to do something wrong.}

Studies consistently show that, when schools and teachers tell parents specifically, step-by-step, what they can do to help their children do better in school, parents will try their best to do it.

- ▶ “I don't know why it's important.”

Almost all parents know that education is important to their children's success in life... but all too many don't understand that they, as parents, are also their children's first and most influential teachers—whether they want to be or not! The research actually suggests that parents simply don't realize the influence—and, therefore, the responsibility—they have in their children's education.

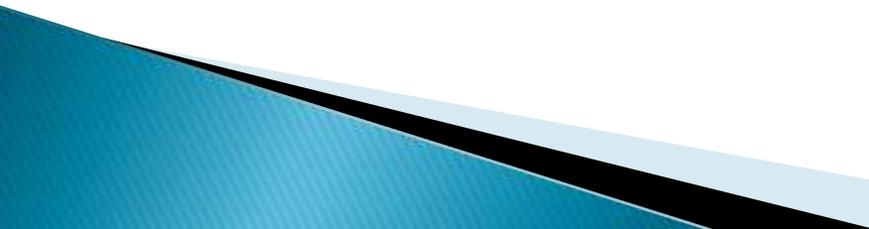
- ▶ “I don't speak English.”

Non-English speaking parents feel at a disadvantage in supporting their children's school work, and may have significantly different cultural norms and expectations that can affect the way they interact with schools and teachers.

Identifying the barriers is the first step to overcoming them!

And sometimes we are our own worst enemy!

According to surveys of school personnel ...

- Many of us still tend to see the parental role as *passive and home-based* – when in fact many parents are interested in more active roles.
 - We often *fail to invite parent participation* in addressing school concerns, creating an atmosphere of “unwelcome.”
 - We frequently organize “parent events” with more attention to *our own convenience* than to the needs of the at-risk parents who are most in need of our assistance.
- 

Understanding poverty

- May be defined as *the extent to which an individual does without necessary resources*.
- May be manifested in multiple forms, including *financial poverty, emotional poverty, mental poverty, spiritual poverty, physical poverty, poverty of support systems, poverty of relationships/role models, poverty in knowledge of group norms and expectations (“hidden rules”)*.
- *Generational poverty* – poverty which has persisted in a given family for at least two generations.
- Considering only *financial poverty* will not equip educators to understand how and why some individuals escape the circumstances and effects of poverty while others do not.

Ruby Payne,
A Framework for Understanding Poverty

Some statistics about poverty

- Regardless of race or ethnicity, poor children are much more likely than others to suffer developmental delay or damage, to drop out of high school, and to give birth during the teen years.
- Poverty-prone children are more likely to be in single-parent families, often accounting for their lower incomes.
- Poverty is caused by interrelated factors including parental employment status and earnings, family structure, and parental education.

Ruby Payne,
A Framework for Understanding Poverty

"One of the reasons it is getting more and more difficult to conduct school as we have in the past is that the students who bring the middle-class culture with them are decreasing in numbers, and the students who bring the poverty culture with them are increasing in numbers. As in any demographic switch, the prevailing rules and policies eventually give way to the group with the largest numbers."

Ruby Payne,
A Framework for Understanding Poverty



*How can we build meaningful
parent involvement in our schools?*

The Importance of Language and "Hidden Rules"

- Language and discourse patterns of people living in generational poverty are different than those of the middle class to which most educators belong.
- Impoverished people, middle class people, and wealthy people each have their own sets of norms and expectations, or “hidden rules,” governing their interactions with others.
- As a rule, the members of each class are ignorant of the language conventions, discourse patterns, and “hidden rules” of the other classes.

Ruby Payne,
A Framework for Understanding Poverty

The Importance of Parent Stories

- Families – both parents and children – face individual and social pressures which we may not know or fully appreciate.
- Schools and teachers need to instigate open communication *between* families and schools – not merely *from* schools *to* families.
- *Parent stories* are the narratives gained from open-ended conversations and/or interviews with parents. They may give teachers insight into “impoverishing” factors of all kinds that affect student achievement.
- Parent stories reflect the realities of many school children growing up in what are typically described as at-risk environments. Information in parent stories – including that which seems negative or counterproductive – represents realities that must be confronted and dealt with.

Patricia A. Edwards,
A Path to Follow: Learning to Listen to Parents

"... Teachers are professionals who can master the challenge of working with and relating to families, not just children."

Patricia A. Edwards,

A Path to Follow: Learning to Listen to Parents



Parents need to know what teachers know.

Learning of all kinds involves hard work – success in school is not a “biological awakening,” a stroke of good luck, or a secret belonging only to some people. Teach parents about the skills their children need to be successful and how they can help develop them.

*Parents need to know how to set
appropriate expectations.*

Realistic parental expectations – neither too high nor too low – are associated with high performance on cognitive tasks. Teach parents what children are expected to know and be able to do at each grade level, and how they can help.

Parents need to believe, "I can do this!"

Teachers can help build parents' confidence about family literacy by teaching them to ...

- ❖ share conversations with their child at meal times, in the car, and other "together" times.*
- ❖ read to and/or with their child daily. Even parents who are not confident readers can be good listeners - and can usually help their child read primary- and intermediate-level text.*
- ❖ take time to read "ordinary" text together -- cereal boxes, recipes, billboards, the sports page, and the comics ALL COUNT!*
- ❖ advocate for their child by staying informed of his reading progress and assisting his teacher in his learning.*
- ❖ be a reader and writer! Children learn values and habits from the people around them.*
- ❖ keep books in the home. Home libraries consisting of "bargain books" and frequent visits to the public library help to create a climate in which family literacy can thrive.*

*"Once you learn to read,
you will be forever free."*

— Frederick Douglass



*Parents need to believe, "This is worth my time."
Start your planning with the end in mind.*

- Determine what parents need to know and need to be able to do to support their children's academic success.
 - Determine how family and community engagement can support school goals.
 - Link all events to student learning, including those activities focused on making all families feel welcome.
- 

Consider the National PTA Standards for Parent Involvement Initiatives

- ▶ **Standard I: Communicating**

Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.

- ▶ **Standard II: Parenting**

Parenting skills are promoted and supported.

- ▶ **Standard III: Student Learning**

Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.

- ▶ **Standard IV: Volunteering**

Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance are sought.

- ▶ **Standard V: School Decision-Making and Advocacy**

Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.

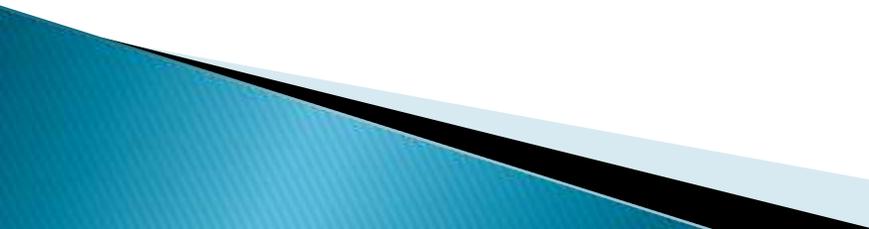
- ▶ **Standard VI: Collaborating with Community**

Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.

(The full guide is available
at the National PTA website
and is downloadable as a PDF.

It provides additional details, background, research, and success stories.)

Consider A Workshop Format

- Workshop offerings may include reading, word study, writing, math, science, social studies, parent involvement opportunities, behavior management, homework/study skills, child social skills, preparing for standardized tests, etc.
 - Parents are allowed to choose what they will attend depending upon what they believe they need to learn.
 - Teachers, counselors, administrative staff, etc., conduct workshops based upon existing knowledge and skills.
- 

"I have always imagined
that paradise
will be a kind of library."

— Jorge Luis Borges

Bargain Books on a Budget

Scholastic Book Clubs – the bargain book hunter's oldest friend

Library sales, garage sales, thrift shops – Encourage parents to look for books in these familiar settings.

Online books -- just download, print, and assemble

- ▶ **Reading a-z** – You can download 30 of their books for free! More than 1,200 books in 3 languages, with lessons, worksheets, and more than 1,500 flashcards.
- ▶ **Learning Page** – With free membership, you can download "Ewe Books" and "Mini Books" for more advanced readers at no charge. Some are available in Spanish.
- ▶ **Reproducible Books** – Reproducible blackline masters of easy books
- ▶ *Decodable Little Books* and *Little Books* by Christine E. McCormick
- ▶ *Sight Word Stories* and *More Sight-Word Stories* by Gloria Lapin
- ▶ *Stories for the Classroom and the Home* by Gloria Lapin
- ▶ *Beginning Reading for Older Students: 30 Reproducible High-Interest/Emergent Skills*
- ▶ *Fun Phonics Mini-Books* by Linda Ward Beech
- ▶ *26 Interactive Alphabet Mini-Books* by Mary Beth Spann
- ▶ *Reading Success Mini-Books* – Word Families , Vowels, Consonants , Sight Words
- ▶ *Keep Books* ® and *Libritos Míos* – 25¢/book from The Ohio State Literacy Collaborative

Reread, Reread, Reread! Make parents aware of the benefits of rereading favorite books.

Five Great Ways to Fail!

- ▶ Think of just one person as the “main” parent involvement person at your school.
- ▶ Think of parent involvement as something that only happens when parents are in your school building.
- ▶ Communicate with parents using **ONLY** newsletters, memos, newspaper articles, TV, other mass media. Person-to-person contact is much more effective for creating and changing attitudes – conferences, workshops, home visits, Open House, phone calls.
- ▶ Keep on thinking that children from 'broken' or 'disadvantaged' homes do not have the benefit of parent involvement. The extended family these children often have is amazing ... parents, step-parents, foster parents, grandparents, older siblings, aunts and uncles, neighbors, family friends. We need to enlist the support of this network!
- ▶ Write parents off as apathetic and lazy when they fail to show up for programs you provide for them at school. The vast majority of parents want to help their children. We need to walk a mile in their shoes, respect what they already do to help their children, find out what they really need, and issue genuine invitations.

Proven Strategies for Making Parent Involvement Work...

IN THE HOME:

- ▶ Remember why parents say they are not involved: don't have time, don't know what to do, don't know why it's important, don't speak English.
 - ▶ In conferences and written communications, recognize and praise what parents are already doing to help their child.
 - ▶ In conversations with parents, don't be afraid to share experiences you have had with your own children – it gets you out of your “expert role” and helps parents see you as a fellow parent.
 - ▶ Enlist parents' help in sponsoring a "No TV Week" to encourage family reading and other literacy activities at home.
 - ▶ Encourage teachers to assign homework that requires talking with someone at home.
- 

Proven Strategies for Making Parent Involvement Work...

AT SCHOOL:

- ▶ Remember the 3 "F"s for success—Food, Families, Fun. Provide child care for younger children. Offer incentives (door prizes, raffles, etc.).
- ▶ Get DADS, GRANDFATHERS, UNCLES, and OLDER BROTHERS involved with projects that call on their strengths.
- ▶ Set up a parent center in your school stocked with resources to help parents and at-home learning activities.
- ▶ Write for parents at a 4th to 6th grade level ... just in case.
- ▶ Arrange to film each teacher in the building giving his or her “Open House” presentation. In the first week of school, send a copy home with each child who was not represented by a parent on Open House night.

Proven Strategies for Making Parent Involvement Work...

IN THE COMMUNITY:

- ▶ Set up a program with local family physicians, clinics, and hospitals for contacting expectant mothers. Provide books and parenting materials before the baby is born.
 - ▶ Try an “after-hours” read-in at school with parents, kids and LOCAL CELEBRITIES.
 - ▶ Work with other social service agencies that help parents.
 - ▶ Remember that hard-to-reach parents can often be reached through their churches.
- 

Link Parents to Powerful Sources of Information

There is a wealth of information for parents who want to help their children succeed ... if they know where to look for it!

Public libraries usually carry current issues of parenting magazines.

School Parent Centers should be stocked with pamphlets and brochures from organizations such as the International Reading Association (IRA), the National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), Reading is Fundamental (RIF), and the U. S. Department of Education (USDE).

Internet websites with information and tips about family literacy and other parenting issues include:

- ▶ <http://www.reading.org/InformationFor/Parents.aspx>
- ▶ <http://www.ed.gov/parents/landing.html>
- ▶ www.nncc.org
- ▶ <http://www.literacyconnections.com/Parents.php>
- ▶ www.parentinstitute.com/educator/resources
- ▶ <http://www.readinga-z.com/samples/index.html>
- ▶ www.learningpage.com
- ▶ <http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents>
- ▶ <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids>
- ▶ <http://school.discoveryeducation.com/homeworkhelp>
- ▶ http://www.pta.org/topic_parent_involvement.asp

*"There is more treasure in books than in
all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island."*

— Walt Disney



Acknowledgments

- ▶ Burke, Lindsey, and Jennifer Marshall. “Why National Standards Won’t Fix American Education: Misalignment of Power and Incentives.” [www.heritage.org]
- ▶ Edwards, Patricia A. A Path to Follow: Learning to Listen to Parents. Heinemann, 1999.
- ▶ Edwards, Patricia A. Tapping the Potential of Parents. Scholastic, 1999.
- ▶ Johnson, Ann Moulton. “I Had a Mother Who Read to Me.” *Ensign*, Feb. 1977, 76.
- ▶ Kadlic, Melanie, and Mary Anne Lesiak. “Family Environment and Family Literacy.” From *Early Reading and Scientifically-Based Research Implications for Practice in Early Childhood Education Programs*. National Association of State Title I Directors Conference. February 2003. [www.ed.gov]
- ▶ Lopes, Marilyn. “Eight Ways Parents Can Promote Reading at Home.” [www.nncc.org]
- ▶ Payne, Ruby K. A Framework for Understanding Poverty. Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc. 1996.
- ▶ www.corestandards.org
- ▶ www.literacyconnections.com
- ▶ www.nifl.gov
- ▶ www.parentinstitute.com
- ▶ www.ptasonline.org
- ▶ www.readingrockets.org

Time for a break.



Sam-I-Am Takes a Look at ...

Parents ...

and

(with apologies
to Dr. Seuss)



Reading

Where Are the Parents?

(This is us.)



Maybe trying to steal a quiet moment?



Maybe had a bad day at work?



That Sam-I-am!
That Sam-I-am!
I do not like
that Sam-I-am!

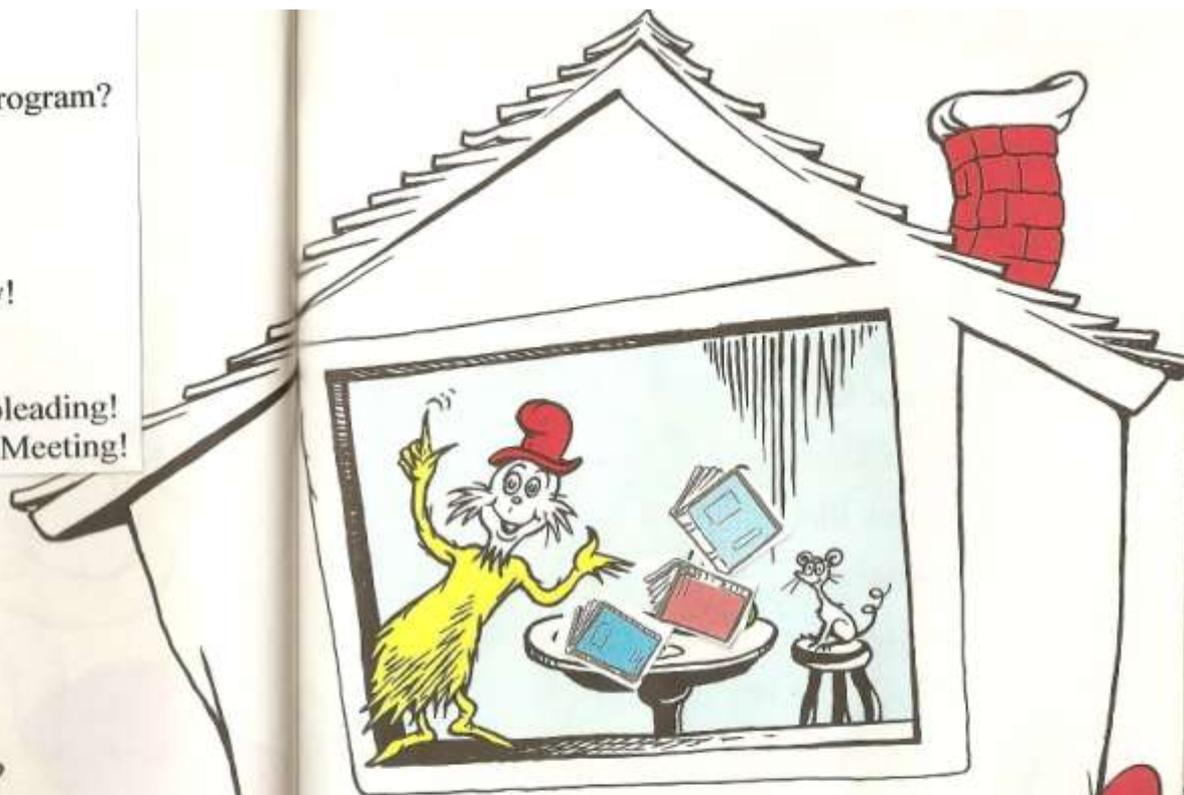
Maybe just wishing we'd go away?

But would you like ...
to attend a Parents and Reading Program?

I will not come to your program.
I will not go there, Sam-I-Am.

But we've planned a terrific show!
I'm sure you'll love it, if you go!

I've told you once, so stop your pleading!
Shove your Parents and Reading Meeting!



What if I send home a gorgeous flier
With all the info you require?
Would you come for a door prize?
Look me, look me, in the eyes.
Would you come if we serve chili?
Would you please? We want you, really!



Are we driving them crazy?

What if I drive you in my car?
What if there is an open bar?
We'll play some games, we'll teach you stuff,
We'll make some crafts – and if that's not enough ...
We'll even babysit the baby
With snacks, a movie, and then maybe ...
You'll come to our Parents and Reading program.
Oh won't you come? begged Sam-I-Am.

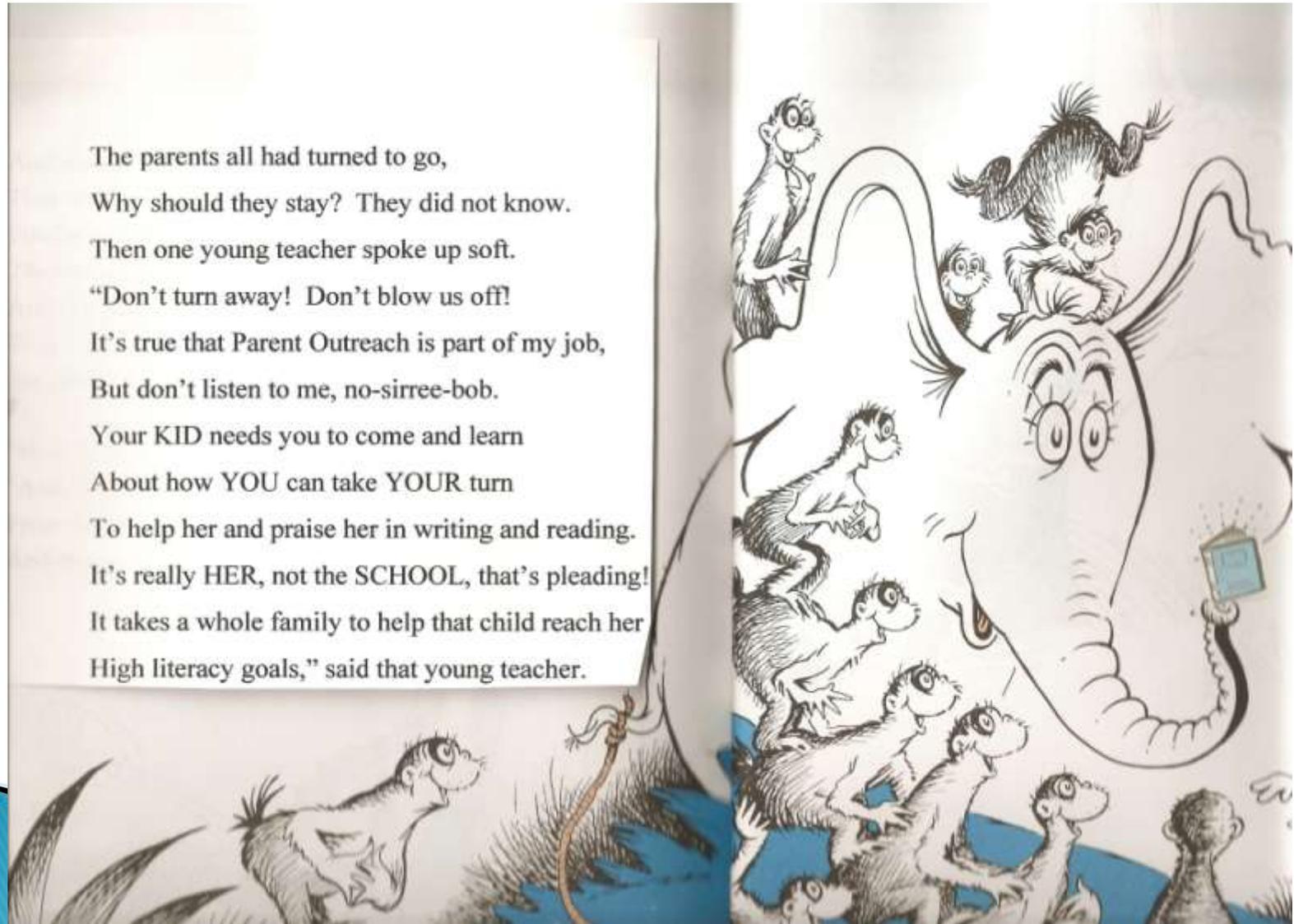
I will not read your gorgeous flier.
I'll toss it straight into the fire.
I probably won't win your door prize.
Don't look at me with those sad puppy eyes!
I can't eat cafeteria chili,
It gives me heartburn. Get lost, really!

I wouldn't be seen in your dopey old car.
And schools can't have an open bar.
I don't like games, I'm much too tough,
I don't do crafts, that's sissy stuff.
Forget your Parents and Reading Program,
And get lost now, you Sam-I-Am!

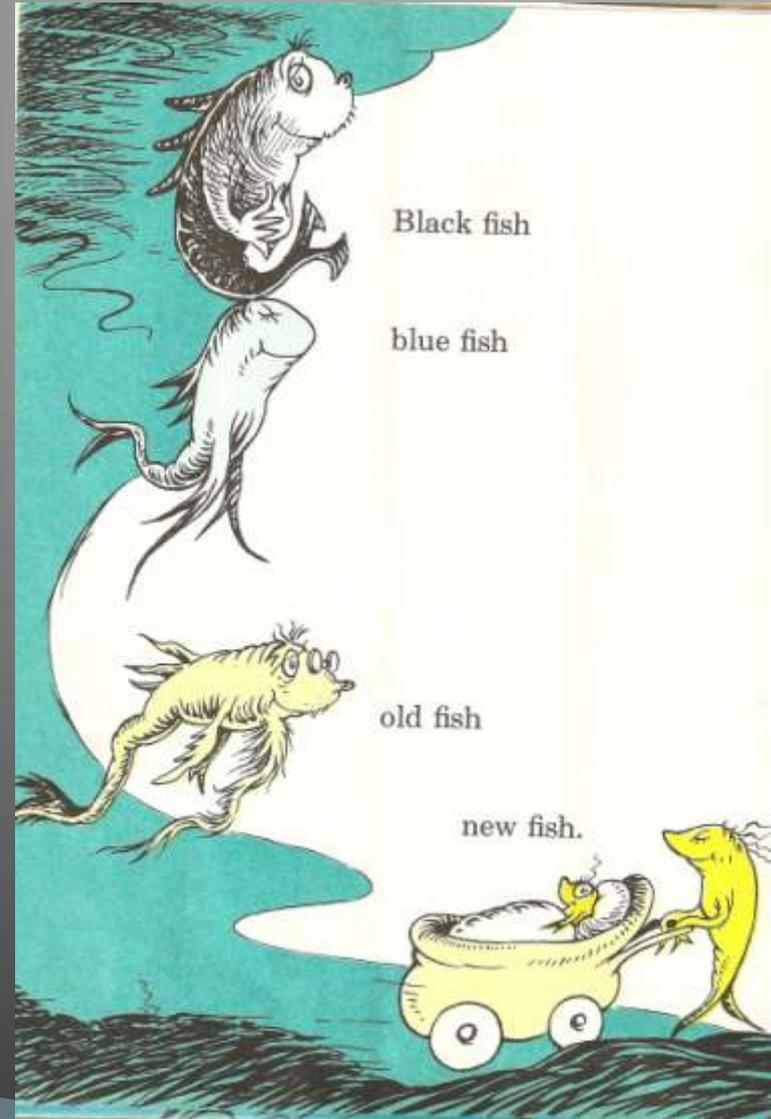
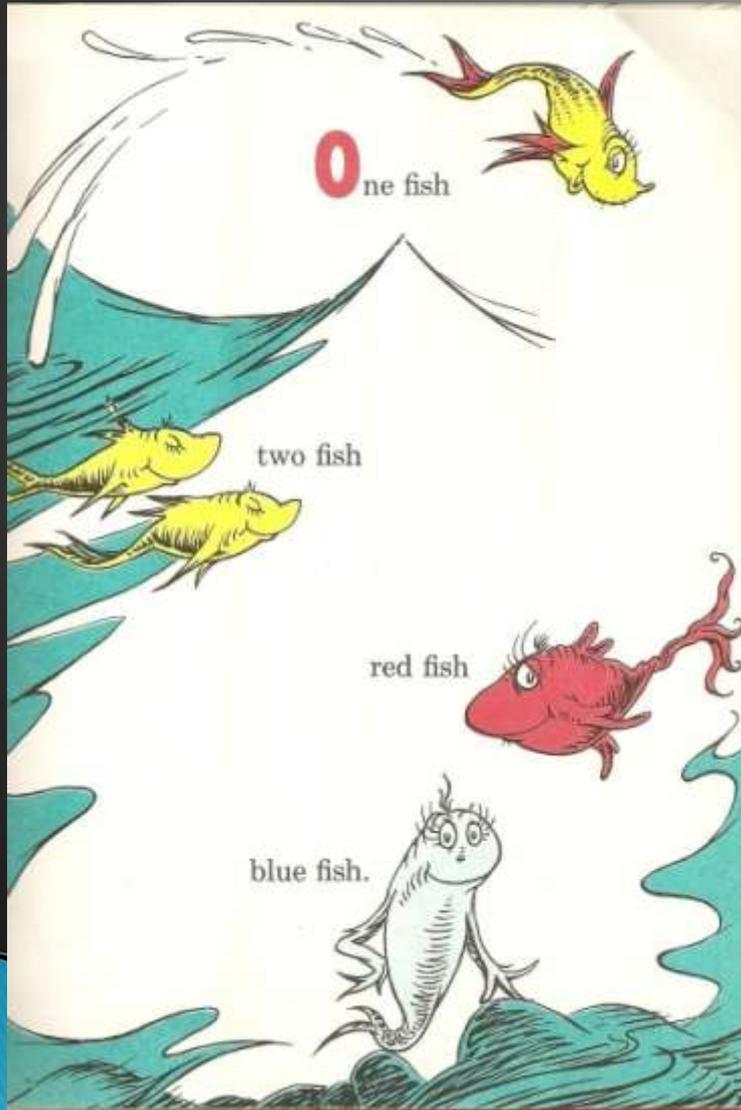


The fact remains that SCHOOLS and PARENTS need EACH OTHER to do our jobs well.

The parents all had turned to go,
Why should they stay? They did not know.
Then one young teacher spoke up soft.
“Don’t turn away! Don’t blow us off!
It’s true that Parent Outreach is part of my job,
But don’t listen to me, no-sirree-bob.
Your KID needs you to come and learn
About how YOU can take YOUR turn
To help her and praise her in writing and reading.
It’s really HER, not the SCHOOL, that’s pleading!
It takes a whole family to help that child reach her
High literacy goals,” said that young teacher.



Hey, Sam-I-Am, You Silly Thing, What Else Should We Be Pondering?

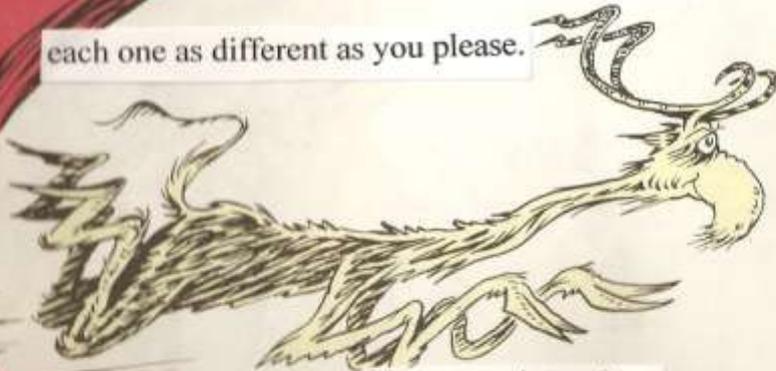


As Your School or Council Makes Plans to Involve Parents in Literacy, REMEMBER...

Students are a lot like these —

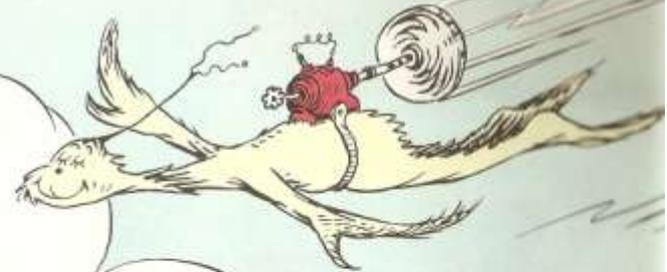


each one as different as you please.



Yes, some learn fast,

And some learn slow.



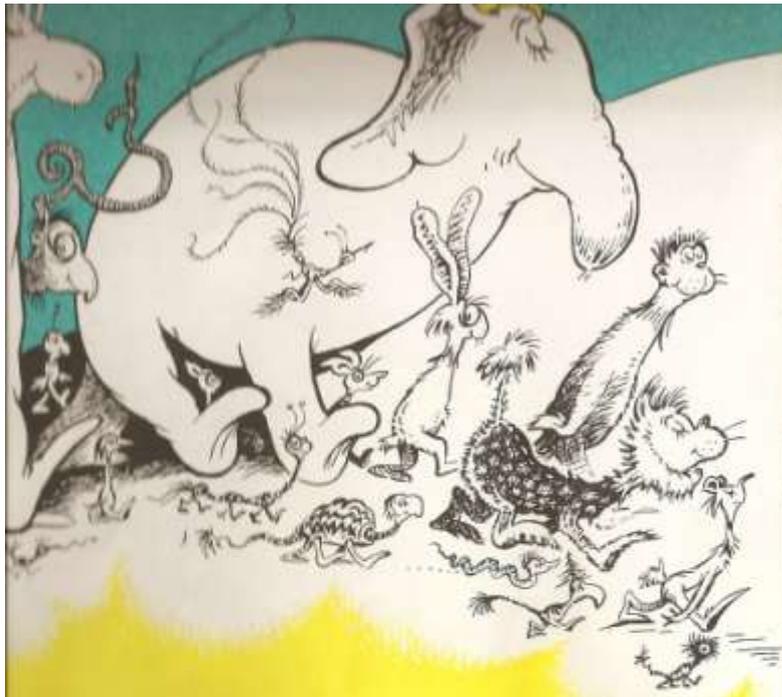
Some come to us high,

And some come to us low.

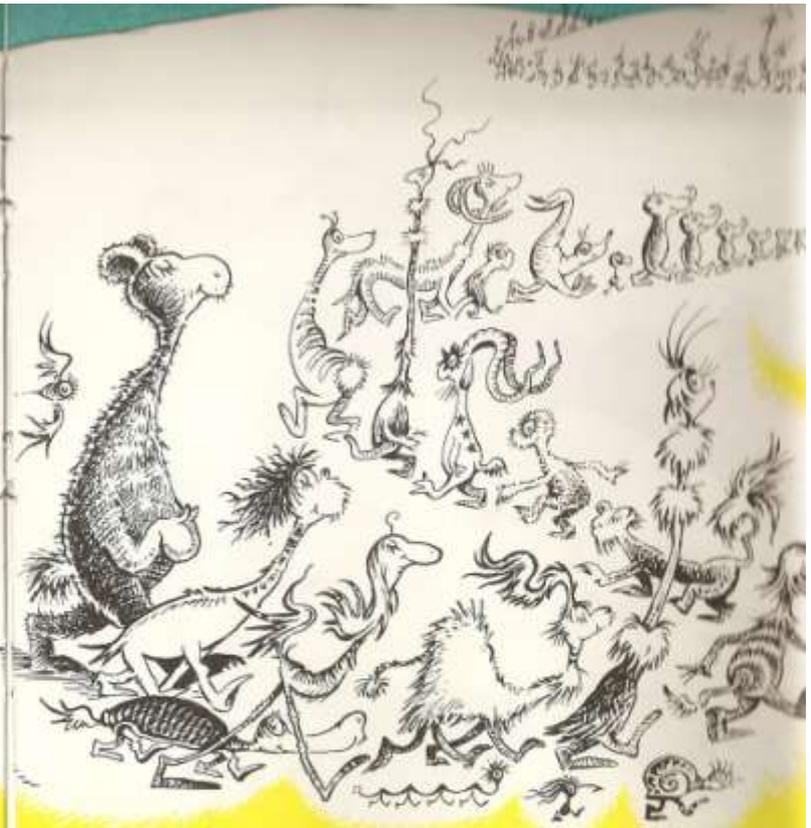
Not one of them
is like another.
Don't ask us why.
Go ask your mother.



Parents Need to Know What Teachers Know.

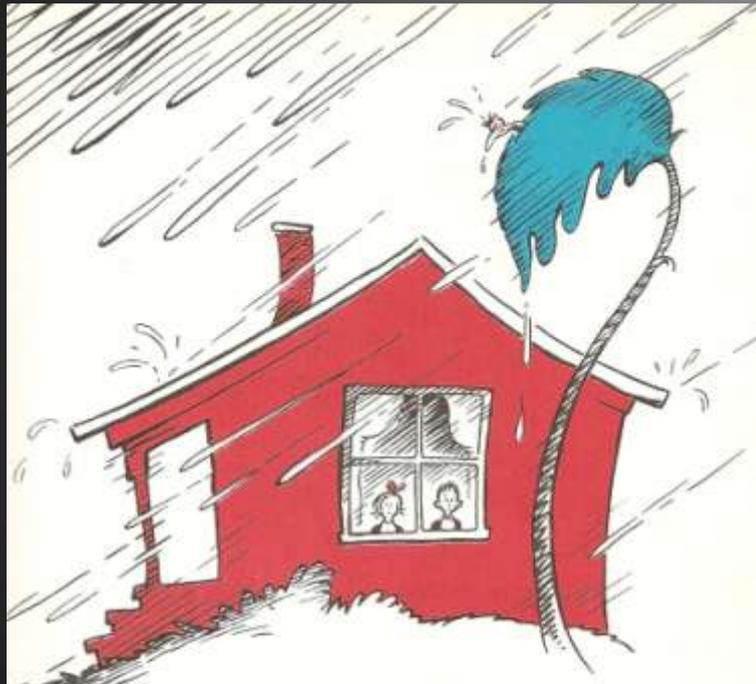


But every Jane, Joe, Jack, and Jill
Needs certain fundamental reading skills.
PSF, LNF, ORF, WUF, RTI:
The acronyms alone seem to reach to the sky.



Oral language, alphabet, fluency, comprehension,
These are the things to which us teachers pay attention.
I eat, breathe, and sleep this stuff, don't you?
And if we share it with parents, it becomes their job, too!

Once We Have Parents' Attention ...



The sun did not shine.
It was too wet to play.
So we sat in the house
All that cold, cold, wet day.



I sat there with Mama.
We sat there, we two.
And I said, "How I wish
We had something to do!"

... And They're Ready to Work With Us ...



And then something went BUMP!
How that bump made us jump!
Who stood at the door?
Postman, plumber, or preacher?
And then she burst in –

... We Must Be Careful ...

(Us
again.)



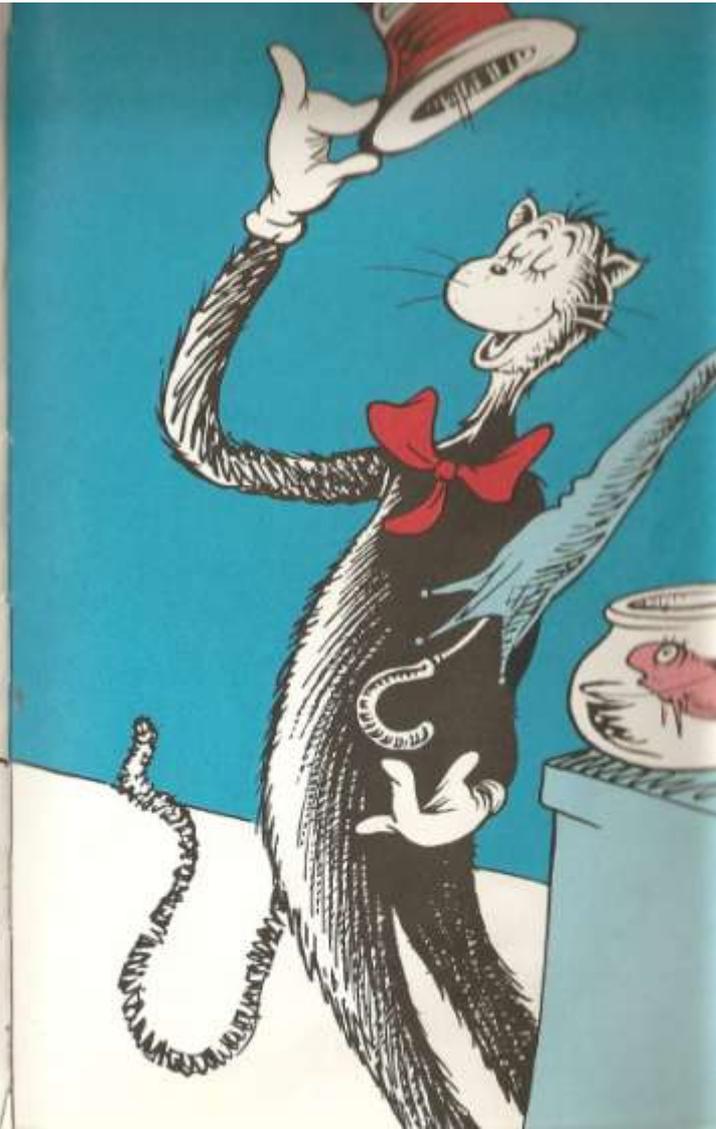
***OUR CHILD'S
READING TEACHER!!!***

... Not To Scare Them Away!

Said she, "I've been sent here
for your betterment.
Sit up straight:
It's a PARENTS AND READING EVENT!
There are so many ways you can help son or daughter,
But it's crucial to do these things just as you oughter!
You've gotta be careful when teaching your child,
'Cause if you screw it up, the results could be wild!



So if teachers project condescension, my dears,
Hey – this is **FLUENCY** and **COMPREHENSION**
we're dealing with here!



YIKES!!!

And NWF, WPM, AYI!
(Don't you dare leave this room,
don't you dare roll your eyes!)
DECODING, RESPONDING,
SIGHT WORD RECOGNITION,
Are all crucial parts
of each student's cognition!
PHONEMIC AWARENESS,
AUTOMATICITY,
Are just the tip of the iceberg
of family literacy!
Now perhaps all this lingo
has your head in a whirl –
But you must do this right
for your boy or your girl!!!”



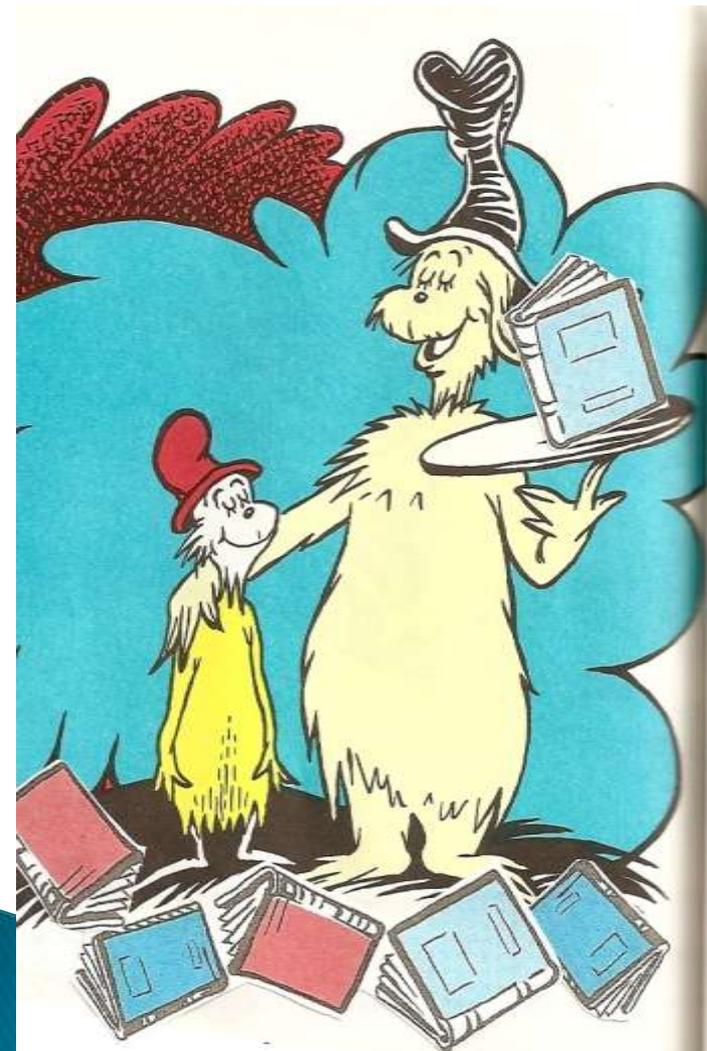
When All Is Said and Done ...

Say your Parent Event is a whopping success.
Moms and Dads who show up leave with much smiliness.
You may ask yourself, just as you turn out the lights,
“Was it worth it – the effort I spent on this night?
Will we see some results after all of this trouble?
Or am I walking around with my head in a bubble?
Will those Mamas and Papas and Aunties and Neighbors
Read more with their kids after all of this labor?
Can it work to make Parents a part of the Plan?”



Now just you keep the faith, because ...

YOU BET IT CAN!



You're teaching those Parents
To hold their heads high,
And say, "I'm my child's
TEACHER -
That's MY little guy!"
And then you, Reading
Teacher,
Can stand proud and tall,
Because Children are Children
And Parents are Parents
And Progress is Progress ...

NO MATTER HOW SMALL.

