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Read with Me Books Creation and Explanation

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Reading has always been a social experience for me. Between my mother and grandmother, I constantly had access to books and a warm lap to be read to on as a child. Both my mother and grandmother earned their teaching licenses, so they knew what voices to make, questions to ask, and impromptu word work activities to lead while reading with me. In my mind, all adults knew how to lead literary discussions since they themselves could read. Needless to say, I was quite shocked to learn when I began student teaching that many parents, not just families from low SES or other challenging backgrounds, requested my advice regarding ways they could read with their children. Wanting to help these families create meaningful reading experiences with their children, I decided to make several *Read with Me* books that are specially formatted to encourage easy shared reading experiences between parents and children for my Honors Senior Project.

The benefits of shared reading, or the exploration of a text between a beginning reader and his or her parent, are invaluable. In shared reading, a parent and child take turns reading a story aloud, developing positive emotional reactions about reading. The parent serves as a model reader for his or her child, showing the child that books are read from left to right, up and down, and from front cover to back cover. Additionally, by listening to his or her parent read fluently, the child is being exposed to proper speech and the idea that each word, or jumble of letters on the page, has a meaning. During shared reading, a parent may also point to pictures and identify objects, helping build his or her child's vocabulary. The parent also supports his or her child in shared reading as the child learns different strategies to read unfamiliar words. All of these early literacy skills, which serve as prime indicators for future academic success, can be developed through shared reading, and my *Read with Me* books support parents as they help their children gain these skills.

In each *Read with Me* book, both the parent and child have pre-determined phrases and sentences to read. The parent read the lengthier, more complex text on the pages while his or her child reads the simpler phrases throughout the story, as indicated by uppercased text.

Almost all of the words intended to be read by the child are Fry's Instant Words, or words used so commonly in English that individuals should be able to recognize them in an instant. These words were targeted throughout the story to build recognition and fluency in the young reader. Additionally, several pages throughout the story are starred, prompting the parent to turn to the reading guide found in the front of the book. The reading guide contains questions and activities for the parent to complete with his or her child to support reading comprehension and language development. Additionally, extension activities are listed in the back of the book to encourage the family to interact with the story on a deeper level based on the child's interest and needs. Essentially, *Read with Me* books are designed to guide parents as they help their children develop early literacy skills and a love for reading.

It is my hope that *Read with Me* books find their way into classrooms and in the hands of parents who want to read with their children, but need a little guidance. I plan to use these books not only with the parents of my students, but in the classroom as well. Students could chorally read aloud the sentences and phrases designated for children as an entire class. My students could have older student reading buddies who could read the "adult" sentences and support my students in their reading of the simpler phrases from the books. Additionally, students could create new stories about Ted and Drew independently, in small groups, or as a class. The possibilities are endless, and I am excited to see how my colleagues can help *Read with Me* books grow into a valuable resource that creates meaningful reading experiences for children like the ones I experienced in my youth.

If you would like more information about shared reading and early literacy skills development, please see the resources listed on the next page.

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