



News Release

From Seattle Public Schools

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Superintendent Maria L. Goodloe-Johnson and City Librarian Deborah L. Jacobs Set a Challenge: “Read a Million Words, Seattle!”

On Tuesday, October 16, Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Maria L. Goodloe-Johnson, PhD. and City Librarian Deborah Jacobs of The Seattle Public Library announced the city-wide launch of “Read a Million Words, Seattle!”

Speaking to an audience of third grade students at Dunlap Elementary School, community partners, and guests, these leaders illuminated why it is vital to create an entire city of readers – starting from early childhood.

“Good reading skills are so vital to success in every aspect of school – and in life,” said Superintendent Maria L. Goodloe-Johnson. ‘Read a Million Words, Seattle!’ provides a fun way to challenge our students to read one million words per year, and to encourage reading for pleasure. This is a campaign that will support and enhance the many great reading and literacy programs already in place around the city.”

The Seattle Public Library is an enthusiastic partner in the “Read a Million Words, Seattle!” campaign. “It is a pleasure to partner with Seattle Public Schools on this project,” said Deborah Jacobs, City Librarian, The Seattle Public Library. We hope that ‘Read a Million Words, Seattle!’ will motivate everyone to read for pleasure as well as knowledge and information. Our librarians all across the city are excited and eager to support this program.”

Dunlap Elementary principal Greg Imel shared the enthusiasm of his students for the program. “Dunlap Elementary is a school of readers,” said Principal Greg Imel. “Our students are very excited and enthusiastic at the prospect of reading one million words this year.”

Plans are underway to hold celebrations of progress towards reading a million words. Community-based organizations, faith communities, civic groups, and businesses are invited and encouraged to support “Read a Million Words, Seattle!”

“I hope that this year will be the first of many when all of Seattle embraces this program,” said Superintendent Goodloe-Johnson. “I challenge every student – and every adult across the city – to join me in reading a million words this year.”

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About Read a Million Words, Seattle!

The program is modeled after a similar campaign initiated in the Denver Public Schools in 1992. It has also been embraced at several cities in the United Kingdom.

Research consistently demonstrates the importance of reading. A study by Guthrie, et al. in 1999 concluded that “reading volume predicted reading comprehension.” A 1988 study of out-of-school reading demonstrated that achievement levels for fifth grade students correlate to reading volume. Students in the 90th percentile of achievement read an average of 40 minutes per day, or 2.3 million words per year; while students in the 10th percentile read an average of two minutes per day, or 50,000 words per year.

The concept of “Read a Million Words, Seattle!” is a simple one – to read the equivalent of one million words per year from books, newspapers, web sites or digital text. Students and adults may count minutes, words, or books – whatever is easiest. A Web site devoted to Read a Million Words, Seattle! is available at www.seattleschools.org. Select “Academics” and then “Read a Million Words, Seattle!”

Resources at the site include links to free downloadable books, an overview of the program, sample reading logs, and a guide to how to count minutes, words or books. For example, third grade students who read aloud 20 minutes per night, seven nights per week at an average of 100 words per minute will read one million words per year. This includes the reading the student does at school as well as at home. The reading time translates to one early reader or part of a chapter book per night; or 40 chapter books, with an average of 100 pages each, over the year.

Seattle Public Schools plans to build on this program each year. Progress will be celebrated in classrooms, schools and at the district level through certificates of achievement, bracelets that say “Read” in several different languages, and more. For students who read one million words per year, the goal is to provide a gift certificate to select a book of the student’s choice.

For additional information about “Read a Million Words, Seattle!” contact Seattle Public Schools Library Services Supervisor, Cathy McLeod, at (206) 252-0500 or csmcleod@seattleschools.org.

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