

PROMOTING LITERACY

Dear Families and Caregivers,

Dr. Seuss once wrote, “The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.” What a powerful statement. Consider how reading has changed your life, molded who you are, and allowed you to explore worlds other than your own. Promoting literacy and encouraging in your child a love of reading are priceless. Providing your child with a variety of books that showcase different topics, or cultures, books with characters that look like them and books with characters who look or live differently from them can open their world and give them a lifelong love of reading.

Sparking Conversations

Ask your child to share what kinds of books they like to read. Have them say why they enjoy these books. Talk about some of the characters, and ask your child what the characters have taught them about other people and places in the world. Ask your child to think about why it’s important to read a variety of books. Have them consider how reading can change their perspective on something or someone. Go to a library or bookstore and challenge your child to find books that showcase characters or cultures that are different from their own. Have your child read the books, or read to them. Ask questions about the story that prompt your child to put themselves in the shoes of one of the characters. What would it be like to live like that character or how would your child feel if whatever happened in the story happened to them? Introduce your child to the word *empathy*, explaining that it means an understanding of how someone else feels. Have your child think about how reading books can help them feel empathy toward other people.

Get Active

Extend the conversation about empathy by asking your child to consider what it might be like to have no access to books. What kind of information or experiences might one be missing out on? Research local book drives or literacy nonprofits, and see how you can increase access to books in your community. Have your child come up with ideas such as starting a book drive, creating a Little Free Library, fundraising for new books, or advertising local resources. Work together to put an idea into action.

Groups That Help Kids Make a Difference

Little Free Library, littlefreelibrary.org

- Little Free Library has a mission to build community, inspire readers, and expand book access through their global network of Little Free Library book-exchange boxes. Children can get involved by starting a Little Free Library in their community, or by donating books to an existing Little Free Library.

Reading Partners, readingpartners.org

- Reading Partners has a mission to provide students with individualized reading support so they can read on grade level by fourth grade. Families can lead a book drive or donate books to join their Take Reading with You initiative.

World Literacy Foundation, worldliteracyfoundation.org

- A global nonprofit, the World Literacy Foundation is striving to change children’s lives through literacy. With their annual Ambassador Program, young people have an opportunity to be trained as literacy advocates and to facilitate change in their community.