

## ***Worthington News***

Guest Column

By Scott DiMauro

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### **Tuesday, March 2, was a pivotal day for our community, but not only because it was Election Day.**

As Worthington School District residents went to the polls, our teachers were joining National Education Association affiliates from across the country to celebrate "Read Across America" Day.

The date is significant because it marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Theodore Geisel, better known to millions as Dr. Seuss. His legacy is being honored this week as we invite guest readers into our classes, team older children as "book buddies" with younger children, dress up as storybook characters, form book clubs, and lead a host of other classroom-based activities that promote and celebrate the joy of reading.

Of course, the celebration of reading is not simply a one-day event, nor is it focused merely on remembering a great author of children's books. Day in and day out, teachers use reading to provide our students with basic skills and empower them to explore new horizons of learning about themselves and the world around them.

Reading is the cornerstone for all learning at every grade level, and we continually identify the individual needs of children in our schools and design instruction to help each of them grow to their fullest potential.

There is nothing like the printed word on a page to fire the imagination. Television, computers, and various other forms of digital technology have their place in society and education, but there will never be a suitable substitute for a book as the most valuable learning tool at our disposal.

Books by Dr. Seuss and others have been used to give our youngest learners the basic tools they need to decipher meaning from our complex language. When children have success early, the stage is then set for a long journey that continues through elementary, middle school, high school and beyond. Sparked by good teachers and good books when they are young, our students' literary journey ultimately immerses them in such classics as William Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.

Worthington Schools have made reading and writing across the curriculum, not just in English or language arts classes, a top priority. This is why books like Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park* supplement textbooks and primary source documents in history and science courses. A mix of fiction and non-fiction enriches our curriculum in all subject areas. It should, therefore, be no wonder that we're taking a little bit of time this week to highlight the importance of reading through the "Read Across America" celebration.

Educators in every discipline agree that all children should enter school ready to learn. To help make this vision a reality, the Worthington Education Association sponsors a special service project each year as the centerpiece of our "Read Across America" activities: a book drive involving staff and students to collect new and gently used books for the Children's Hospital *Reach Out and Read* program. Over the past five years, WEA members and friends have provided thousands of books for low to moderate-income children around Franklin County. Through *Reach Out and Read*, every child between the ages of one and five who visits a Children's Hospital clinic receives a new age-appropriate book from an attending physician. We are proud to partner with the medical community in this vital endeavor.

The importance of early exposure to books cannot be underestimated. Children who come from families in which reading is encouraged on a daily basis do far better in school than those who do not. Programs like *Reach Out and Read* make a huge difference in the long-term success of our young people. Even more significant is the time parents and caregivers spend, from birth through school-age years, reading to and with their kids. Occasions like "Read Across America" Day serve as reminders that this simple daily activity should never be taken for granted.

Our community is fortunate to have an excellent school district. Because all segments of our community—well-trained and caring teachers, nurturing parents, motivated students, and supportive citizens—have worked together throughout the years, our students' academic successes are unrivaled. This week provides you with two opportunities to carry on the traditions of the past by investing in our future. One was by voting. The other is by taking some time to read with a child. Please join us in doing both.