



Newsletter for Educators

Issue 2
Spring/Summer 2009

Dear Educator,

Welcome to our Spring/Summer issue of Raising A Reader Massachusetts' newsletter for educators! We created this newsletter as a way for you to feel connected not only to our organization, but to the dozens of other educators that are using Raising A Reader across the state. In this newsletter you will find: ideas for blue bag celebrations, activities that connect with a book, and resources for continued fun this summer. Feel free to print out a copy of this newsletter and pass it along to co-workers, friends, and family. We are happy to announce that this newsletter is now in Spanish, for a complete newsletter en **español**, click [here](#)!

Thank you for all you do every day. We are so grateful to be working with such a large group of dedicated, inspiring, and committed individuals.

Best wishes for a relaxing summer,

The RAR-MA Program Team

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RAR Program In Action:

Photos of Recent Events



Visiting Moms Family Event:

On February 19th, families from the MGH Visiting Moms program joined together for a day of learning and fun.



CDE Family Event:

On March 30th, families and staff from the Child Development and Education Family Childcare System gathered for an evening of food and training. 48 parents attended and learned more about RAR,

Year-End Celebrations:

Making the most of the blue bags

Did you happen to catch the parade in Lawrence with a long line of children and teachers wearing hats and sporting crazy hair? Community Day Care Learning Centers' Campus Site, had their "Crazy Hat, Crazy Hair Day" on April 22, 2009! This was also the day the Campus Center invited Raising A Reader-MA to come and distribute a much anticipated surprise.



Two Raising a Reader Coordinators show up with pink and purple hair, shared a story with the children, and then came the big surprise: Raising A Reader blue bags! The blue bags, which say "My Very Own Library Book Bag..." are gifts for the children who have completed the Raising A Reader program and are moving on to kindergarten. Each Blue Bag contained several surprises and most importantly, the Lawrence Library brochure in English and Spanish. The teachers congratulated all the children who had worked so very hard and had shared so many, many books with their parents throughout the year. After the distribution of bags, the center had a small parade walking along the street of the Campus Site Center. The success of this event wouldn't be possible without the hard work and dedication of all the teachers and the director, Judy.

Are you wondering how to make a special end of the year celebration for the children participating in your Raising A Reader program?

Would **you** like to plan a special event around blue bags? Check out our...

Tips for how to create your own fun "End of the Year" celebration:

- Use caps and gowns for the children "graduating" and moving on to kindergarten

dialogic reading, and brain development. All families who attended took home a brand new book!



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Drawings for RAR Bookmarks:

Children from CAAS Head Start and Breen Public School created bookmarks based on storytimes and their Raising A Reader experience.

- Invite guest readers to come in and read stories to the children
- Use the event as an opportunity to invite the children's librarian into your class to read a story and talk about the library
- Put little treats (bookmarks, pencils, library flyers, a book) or a note in each child's blue bag
- Make individual certificates for each child who graduates from the program
- Invite parents to come at the end of the day for a celebration and take photos of each parent with their child and the blue bags

Featured Educators:

Kathleen and Denise at Tri-City HeadStart in Malden



"In the beginning we didn't have much success getting the bags or correct books back."

Our featured educators of this newsletter are Kathleen and Denise - they faced challenges in implementing RAR and showed creativity and engagement to overcome them!

Kathleen and Denise worked hard to customize RAR to their families and help them adapt to the red bag rotation. Their experience shows that sometimes families do need support and instruction in order to be successful in rotating the bags.

Here are some of their key strategies:

1. **Getting children excited about RAR material:** Before starting the bag rotation, teachers took the time to present all the material to children, who got really excited by books and bags.
2. **Reminders, reminders, reminders:** As a way to



Lawrence Community Daycare: Children eagerly search their red bags to see what book will come home this week.



Lawrence Library Event: See the "Book To Expand On" article for more details)



Family Network Playgroup at Everett Library: Over the course of the spring, a group of parents and children met at the Everett Public Library for the Reading Adventures Playgroup, facilitated by the Malden/Everett Family Network and Sue Eaton.

remind families about missing material, teachers would constantly send notices in the red bags.

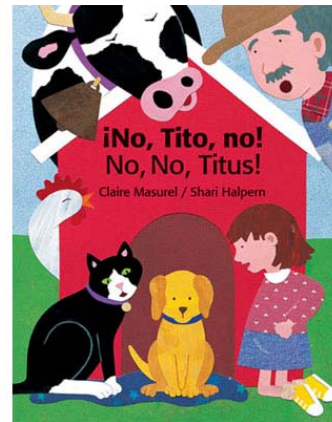
3. **New approach:** They developed a new strategy to rotate the books. Instead of rotating bags, they gave each child his or her own bag, and had children choose the books they would take home each week. That way they could help families that were losing books more easily by sending them a smaller amount of books. In addition, this new approach allowed children to be even more active in the process!
4. **S.O.S RAR program coordinator:** Kathleen and Denise contacted their RAR program coordinator for support! Heloísa Alvarez provided them with the material they needed to restart the rotation, as well as with gift baskets that were raffled for families as an incentive! They also asked Heloísa to participate in a second family meeting, in order to reach out to a larger number of families.

Don't forget that you can always count on the RAR team to help you with the program. We would love to work closer with you in order to better serve your children and families.

Book To Expand On:

No, No Titus!

No, No, Titus!, by Claire Masurel, published in both English and Spanish, is a wonderful book to share with your children. Raising A Reader program coordinators even used it to draw the attention of 130 children at once!



The book tells the story of Titus, a dog who lives on a farm. Surrounded by all the other animals, Titus tries to learn how a good dog should act. It takes him many tries to learn his real role on the farm.

There are many wonderful art activities, songs, and conversations that complement the story and can be done in the classroom or at home to reinforce and expand on the story.

To help keep things on track, Linda Teves took advantage of the Raising A Reader Pocket chart.

Quick Links
RAR MA Website
-
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The book lends itself to questions for children about:

1. **Making predictions** (for example, "What do you think Tito will do now?")
2. **Discussing different feelings** (sadness, loneliness, happiness)
3. **Discussing different jobs of animals on the farm** (cows give milk, hens lay eggs, etc.)
4. **Asking about the sounds that each animal makes** (for example, "What does a cow say?")

Additionally, there are many activities that also complement the story:

Dog ear crowns:

- Black strips of construction paper (to fit around a child's head)
- 2 construction paper "dog ears" cut free-hand
- Glue to glue the paper and the ears onto the strip of paper

Animal Sounds

Share pictures of different animals with the children, like cats, cows, birds, and sheep, and ask them to make the different sounds.

Alphabet Connections:

Use the names of each animal to connect with a letter (for example, "C is for Cow"). Reinforce the sounds with pictures of each animal.

Dog Ears:

Click [here](#) for directions.

More Expansion Activities:

- Read another book about farm animals, connecting them to Titus' friends.
- Ask children to talk about different animals they know and what makes each of them unique!
- Invite a friend with a pet dog to visit your class and make observations about the pet together
- For more farm activities, click here.

Summer Events:

What's going on in your community

If you're interested in learning more about what is going on this summer, check out the websites for your city, local library, and talk to your RAR coordinator. Summer is a great time to explore all the free activities that your



local library or community may have. Below are links to some of the summer activities planned by our local libraries:

[Cambridge](#)

[Chelsea](#)

[East Boston](#)

[Everett](#)

[Lawrence](#)

[Malden](#)

[Medford](#)

[Revere](#)

[Somerville](#)