

MN Reading Corps at World Cultures Magnet School
By Gloria Narabrook, MN Reading Corps Literacy Coordinator at WCMS

MN Reading Corps is a statewide, federally funded initiative to help children ages 4-3rd grade who are reading below grade level. The program targets students who are just below grade level and simply need an extra boost to bring them to where they need to be. It's been a year of "firsts" for the Reading Corps program here at World Cultures Magnet School: this is the first year the program has been at the school, so it's new to staff, new to the students, new to parents and new to the two MN Reading Corps members, Elizabeth Barry and me. Elizabeth works in the Pre-K classroom alongside classroom teacher Gina Hass, while I work with 1st, 2nd and 3rd grade students one-on-one. Ideally, the program will also serve Kindergarten students at World Cultures in the future. I'm really enjoying working with students here at World Cultures, and I'd like to give you an idea of the types of reading activities we do together.

First grade students who qualify for the program come with me one at a time for fifteen minutes every day. We work with material from a program called Great Leaps. Every day we start with a "Sound Awareness" exercise that helps them improve oral language skills. They are asked to do things such as pick out two rhyming words from a set of three words that I read to them, or identify sounds at the beginnings and ends of words. Although it might seem strange to have them start with an activity that involves only listening and no reading, building strong sound awareness will help them to be better readers, writers and speakers. Then we move on to a "Letter Recognition and Phonics" exercise, which has students read letter sounds and short words. First graders get to chart their progress on a graph so they have a visual record of the work they have accomplished.

2nd and 3rd graders who qualify for the program come one at a time to work with me for twenty minutes each day. We do reading activities called "interventions" that include blending sounds together to make words, practicing words on flashcards, and reading short stories. One intervention that has been particularly successful with 2nd and 3rd grade students is called Newscaster Reading. In Newscaster Reading, the student reads a short paragraph, while I provide immediate error correction. Then the student follows along while I read the same paragraph three times. Then the student and I read the passage together three times, again stopping to fix mistakes. Lastly, we get into newscaster mode: we grab our "microphones," I do a short introduction, and the student reads the passage to a make believe TV news audience. Being on the late-night news is an especially big hit with the students. It's incredible to hear the difference between the first reading and the final one. This is just one example of the many different interventions that I do with students.

Research has shown that these kinds of reading activities are highly successful at improving children's literacy skills. Research also shows that *any time* a child reads out loud with an adult, she learns more than when she reads alone or not at all. That means that all adults in our community – teachers, parents, aunties, uncles, and neighbors – can help children become better readers just by sitting down for a few minutes to hear them read a book. I'm excited for all of us to continue to work together to help students at World Cultures to become great readers!