

# READ Plan Project

## Jefferson County Public Schools

### Golden, CO



The READ Plan Project started with an idea - *What if we engaged families of 1st graders on READ plans, with a triangulation of academic support between teachers, the Family Engagement Liaison, and families?*

Research shows that the longer a student remains on a READ plan, the more likely they are to continue to fall short of grade level reading benchmarks. District staff's thought was to change this trajectory with a laser-focused approach that leveraged relationships, strategy building workshops, and provided additional reading resources and ideas for families to support learning at home. The Title I Department worked with the district READ team to identify 2 pilot schools, Slater Elementary and Foothills Elementary.

READ Plan Project had several objectives:

- Monitor the growth of identified 1st grade students.
- Increase communication and family-school partnership - specifically with the teacher.
- Increase family understanding and the urgency of the READ plan.
- Create resources and strategies for parents.
- Increase efficacy of families to support and impact their child's reading growth through individual support and group networking opportunities.

Principal leadership was integral to the success of the program. The Family Engagement Liaisons worked collaboratively with the 1st grade teachers, instructional coaches, and district READ team. Together, they co-designed a plan for family conversation and networking, collective and individual personal connection (face-to-face, email/text, phone call), teaching at-home reading strategies and skills, increasing access to appropriate, relevant reading material, goal setting and progress monitoring, and celebrating success. Schools worked with their Instructional Coaches and district staff to conduct regular data digs. It was key to include the Family Engagement Liaisons at these meetings so they could gain a deeper understanding of grade level expectations. In turn, Family Engagement Liaisons were viewed as being part of the 'academic success team.'

Reading events were open to all 1st grade families, with additional personalized outreach to families of students on READ plans. Family Engagement Liaisons Shantell Lopez (Slater Elementary) and Bernadette Marquez (Foothill Elementary), tapped into their creativity to make reading and reading strategies fun for families! Slater Elementary launched their *"1st Grade Super Readers - a Mission to Read"* and Foothills their *"Foothills Falcons Soaring Readers"*. Both schools hosted guest speaker, Gary Johnston, with an evening family event that emphasized building their child's *love of reading*. His message was simple, "A child will learn to love to read by reading with people they love". Kids had fun too with programs like, *How to Build a Reading Cubby* and *Cocoa, Forts, PJs and Reading*. Each event provided an opportunity for children to choose books to add to their home library. Slater Elementary Family Engagement Liaison worked with staff to video tape reading mini-lessons demonstrating a particular strategy so families could see and hear the strategy in action.

#### Five Finger Rule for Choosing a "Just Right Book"

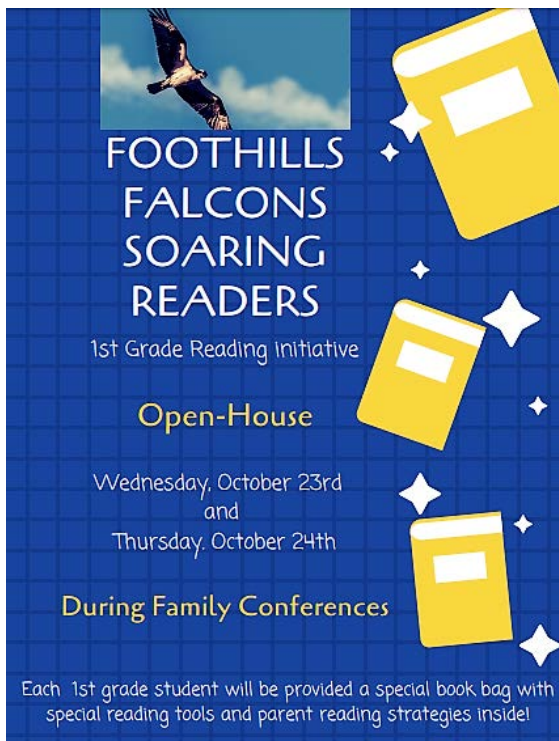
1. Choose A Book!
2. Open the book to any page and begin reading.
3. Put one finger up for each word you don't know.



- 0-1 Fingers Too Easy
- 2-3 Fingers Just Right
- 4-5 Fingers Too Hard

The READ Plan Project has shown promising outcomes. At Foothills Elementary, Instructional Coach Bonnie Kurtz indicated that students were showing marked improvement as compared to previous years. However, as of March 13th, with school districts shifting to remote learning as a response to the COVID-19 crisis, schools were not able to end the year as planned. While Slater and Foothills teachers and Family Engagement Liaisons continued their personal outreach to these families, understandably, some momentum was lost. Now, with the 2020-2021 school year in sight, the hope is both Slater and Foothills will continue with this initiative and modify as needed to meet the new demands of a remote and/or hybrid learning environment. Slater and Foothills are poised to lead other schools in launching their own programs.

As stated earlier, this program is a coordinated approach aimed at building the capacity and efficacy of families to support their child's reading success. It spans family, school, district, and community. For schools considering implementing this idea, here are some considerations:



- Planning and buy-in are key.
- Approach the project with a willingness to try something.
- Create a solid communication plan.
- Include Family Engagement Liaisons in the data and academic conversations.
- Impress upon families that they have agency and can impact their child's academic growth.
- Make it fun for kids and families! Provide books, learning-fun-at-home ideas, and other incentives.
- Celebrate and recognize, with kids, families, teachers etc., the hard work it takes to reach a goal.