



R.E.A.D.®

ON!

Continuing Education for R.E.A.D. Teams

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R.E.A.D. Shines Internationally

Some of us had the great privilege of attending the triennial conference of IAHAIO (International Association of Human Animal Interaction Organizations) in Amsterdam on August 23-24. It was quite exciting for many reasons.

It's ALWAYS INSPIRING AND EDUCATIONAL to hear about the latest research in our beloved area of endeavor, and we all learned a lot, but what was especially impressive this year was the widespread interest in R.E.A.D. (and, okay, even other versions of reading with animals).

We were thrilled to finally get to meet in person some R.E.A.D. leaders that we have corresponded with for a long time, like **Kim Kistler** in Germany and **Goranka Furlan** in Croatia. There were others: **Maha** from Slovenia, **Vincent & Slavka** from Slovakia, and **Alesys Lischyshyna** from Ukraine.

Certainly not least was the dazzling contingent from Tallahassee Memorial in Florida: **Patti Mitchell**, **Lauralee Moore**, **Nancy Upthegrove**, **Robin Brock-Ginaldi** and **Allison Hankinson**! They show edup in force because the leader of their Tallahassee Memorial therapy group, **Stephanie Perkins**, was being installed as the new president of IAHAIO!

Here is **Kim Kistler** giving her presentation on her **Lese-hund** R.E.A.D. program in Germany. She drew a capacity crowd; every chair in her room was filled.



The event setting was rather like a summer camp—lots of tents! Here are a handful of R.E.A.D. instructors under the gorgeous and cool Amsterdam skies: **Kathy**, **Kim**, **Lauralee** and **Patti**.



And (at left), **Allison**, **Patti**, **Lauralee** and **Robin**, part of the R.E.A.D.ers from Tallahassee.



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And [FANFARE, PLEASE] here is the R.E.A.D. poster from Tallahassee Memorial, created by **Lauralee Moore**, that won best in show from among more than 90 entries! If you've ever seen conference research posters, you know that a lot of them are frankly pretty dull and boring, cramming in mostly too much fine print. Lauralee's had irresistible photos, QR codes leading to video interviews with kids, parents, school personnel and more, and compelling facts and figures in an eye-catching format. Big congratulations to Lauralee!

Finally, on the next page you will find the poster for the study in which kids read to sheep!

PAWS FOR PROGRESS
EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF R.E.A.D. DOGS IN SCHOOLS

"Reading is important, because if you can read, you can learn anything about everything and everything about anything."
TOMIE DEPAOLA

R.E.A.D. - WHAT IS IT AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?
The R.E.A.D. program boosts kids' reading and communication skills through a simple but powerful method: reading to a registered therapy animal and their handler. These volunteer teams visit schools, libraries, and more as supportive reading buddies. R.E.A.D. helps reluctant readers in grades 1-8 build confidence by reading aloud to a friendly therapy animal and their human sidekick!

SNIFFING OUT THE PROCESS
A 2010 University of California study found that students who read to dogs for 15-20 minutes a week over 8 weeks improved reading skills by 12-20%, along with increased self-confidence and classroom participation. Research shows therapy dogs create calm, non-judgmental spaces that reduce stress—potentially lowering blood pressure, anxiety, and cortisol. A 2022 PLOS ONE study confirmed this, showing dog-assisted sessions significantly reduced children's salivary cortisol during the school day compared to controls.

SNIFFING OUT THE PROCESS
R.E.A.D. teams visit schools weekly, giving students one-on-one reading time with the same furry friend and handler all year. Kids read at their own pace to a calm, non-judgmental animal who never corrects—just cuddles and listens. Handlers offer gentle reading support, while pets "help" with comprehension by nudging pages or tilting their heads like, "Wait, what happens next?!"

UN-FUR-TUNATE FACTS
According to The Children's Literacy Project:
• Approximately 1 in 3 fourth-graders in the U.S. reads below the basic level
• 80% of low-income fourth-graders never reach reading proficiency
• Each year, 13 million fourth-graders fall below basic reading levels
According to the National Literacy Institute:
• 54% of adults read below a 6th-grade level
• Low literacy levels cost the U.S. up to \$2.2 trillion per year
• The United States ranks 36th in literacy among developed countries

SCHOOL LEADERS BARK THEIR APPROVAL OF R.E.A.D.

PAW-RENTS SPEAK OUT

VOICES FROM THE FIELD: FEEDBACK FROM 19 SCHOOL LEADERS AND EDUCATORS

Have you observed changes in the students' motivation to read since participating in the program?

Response	Percentage
No Change	5.3%
Some Increase	36.8%
Significant Increase	57.9%

Did the therapy dog presence appear to reduce students' anxiety or stress about reading aloud?

Response	Percentage
Not Sure	15.8%
Somewhat	5.3%
Yes	78.9%

Have you noticed an increase in student confidence related to reading?

Response	Percentage
Not Sure	5.3%
Yes	94.7%

ONCE YOU SIT, YOU STAY... WHY R.E.A.D. TEAMS KEEP SHOWING UP

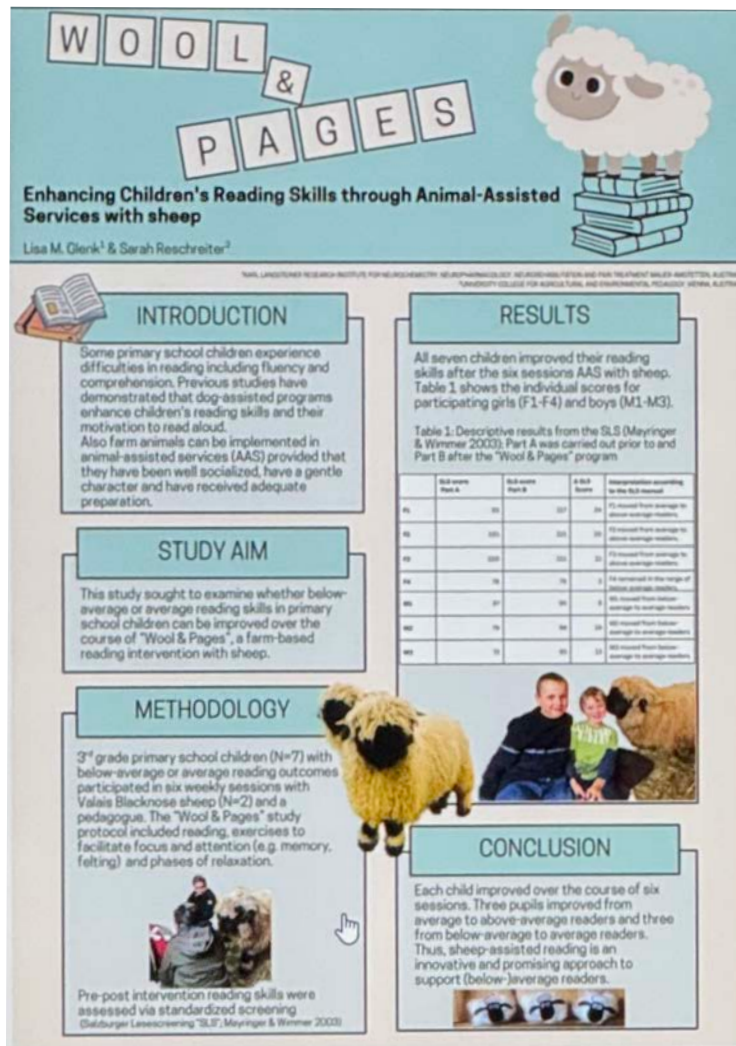
THE PUP-TASTIC PERKS ACCORDING TO STUDENTS

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References
also.org, childrensliteracyproject.org, tallahasseeanimaltherapy.com, International Therapy Animals, "R.E.A.D." International Therapy Animals, (therapyanimals.org/read)

Tallahassee Memorial 40 YEARS



At left is the poster for the research study in which kids read to sheep. All seven participating children, at the conclusion of six sessions, had improved their reading skills.

And at right is Tallahassee Memorial's **Stephanie Perkins**, accepting her new role as President of IAHAIO from retiring **President Marie-Jose Enders-Slegers**, who had been at the helm for nine years.



Book Review

I just discovered two lovely books that I think are worth mentioning. Both are by an author named M. H. Clark,

Everywhere, Still (2023) is "a book about loss, grief, and the way love continues," and it is sweet, peaceful, calming, and beautifully illustrated by Claire Lemp.

One More Book Before Bed (2024), says "More than a book, this is a nighttime ritual of comfort and connection, to ease worries and help kids get to sleep."

It will never be the same twice, because it's filled with gentle questions that inspire meaningful discussions between parents and kids: "What was your favorite part of today? Will you tell me about it, before we turn the page?" ... "Would you like to put one or two hands on your heart? Just feel for a moment how special you are." ... "Is there someone you've been thinking of? Let's take some time to send them some love." ... "Do you think that right now, they are loving you back? What do you feel, imagining that?" ... "Do you know that *my* love is right here in this room? It'll be here all night, right next to you."

Such questions can help kids express their worries, feel calm and surrounded by love, and relax to be tucked in for the night. It seems like an incredibly valuable guide to ending a day in just the right ways for a child.

