



R.E.A.D.® **ON!**

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

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Discouraging—but Motivating!

We hate to have to keep talking about this, but you have no doubt heard or read about at least one article reporting on the truly dire state of public education throughout the U.S., including in this publication. As R.E.A.D. folks know, the news hasn't been great for a long while—a Gallup analysis in 2020, using U.S. Department of Education data from 2012, 2014 and 2017, found that 130 million Americans have low literacy skills, and that **the U.S. is ranked 125th internationally for literacy**.

Then came the COVID pandemic, when it all got even worse and from which, for many reasons, things have simply not recovered.

Our local example: January 5th, this year, our *Salt Lake Tribune* reported that nearly half of Utah's kindergarten through third grade kids currently cannot read at grade level.

This is discouraging, to say the least. Our Founding Fathers warned that literate, well-educated citizens are essential to maintaining a democracy. And you may have children or grandchildren in school and of course want the best possible education and life-preparation for them.

People can argue over the fine details and the statistics—and they do—but all in all, we are in trouble. Among the culprits cited are the use of screens, like iPads and phones, which are now known to have a damaging effect on brains, attention spans, social and emotional development, and all manner of other things. School systems are now making late but concerted efforts to limit their use and exposure during class time. There are many worthwhile reasons to read real books.

Another major factor is that, in huge numbers, kids are simply not going to school. Attendance plummeted, understandably, during COVID, but that's another element that has stayed stuck in the doldrums.

Here's the motivating part for us: The world, and especially our own U.S.A., needs R.E.A.D. more than ever! We wish we had literally thousands more R.E.A.D. teams to help with this continuing, persistent problem, but as we have always said, the only thing that's important is the impact that each of you has with each child you spend time with. You will change all those lives forever.

Oh yeah, and that thing about attendance? **Remember how motivating it is for the kids**, how they never want to miss school on their R.E.A.D. days?

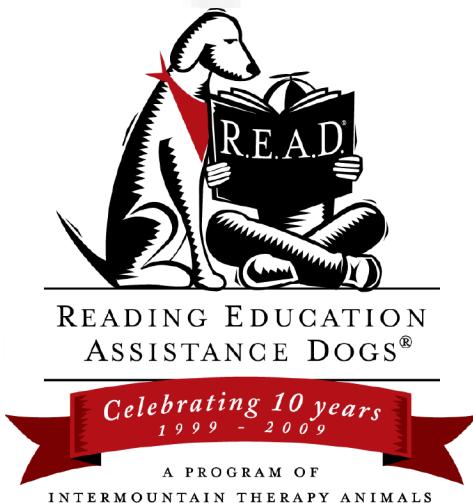
Carry on, never minimizing how valuable you and your partner are to the kids in your realm!

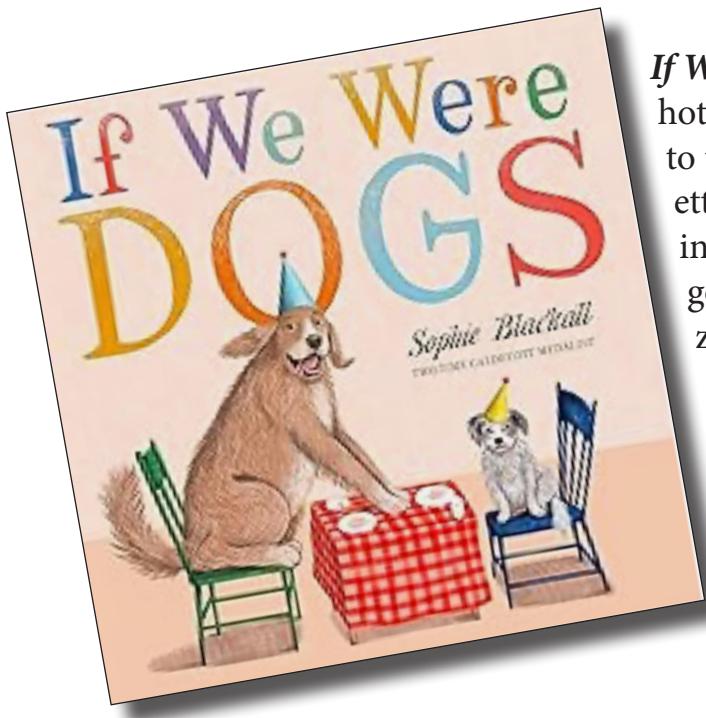
—Kathy Klotz

Why do we R.E.A.D.® to dogs??

Dogs are the ideal reading companions! Because research has shown that reading to them:

- Increases relaxation and lowers blood pressure
- Floods the body of the reader with oxytocin and other positive hormones
- The reduction in stress helps the reader focus and be capable of learning
- Children proceed at their own pace
- Dogs are not intimidating, like peers can be, so fears melt away
- Dogs listen attentively, which kids adore
- Dogs do not judge, laugh, criticize or gossip!





If We Were Dogs (by Sophie Blackall) was one of the hottest in-demand children's books of 2025, according to the end-of-year reviews on PBS News. Ann Patchett, the wonderful adult author who owns a bookstore in Nashville (Parnassus Books), couldn't say enough good things about it. And when ordering on Amazon, you can't even get it right away.

The illustrations are magnificent, and the story is quite special, too. It may well remind you of kids—or even adults—that you know!

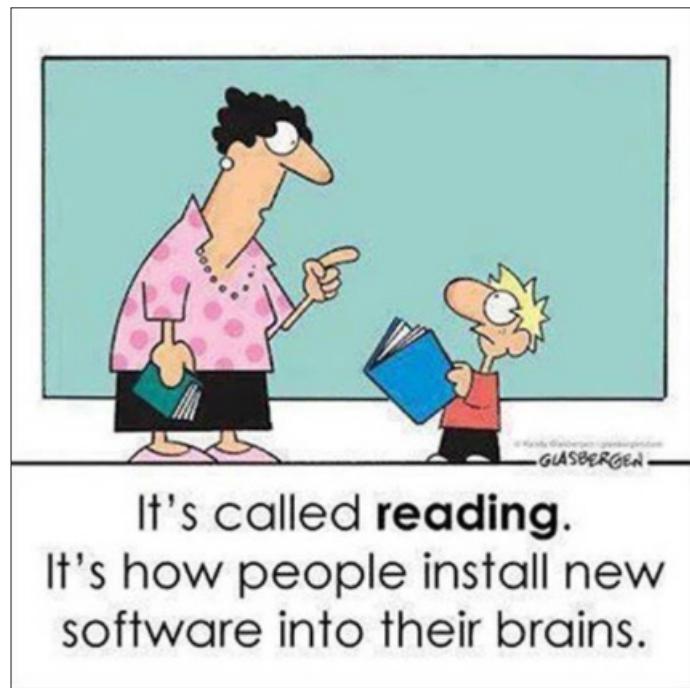
Check it out!

— KK

R.E.A.D. Handler-Authors

Just a reminder that the *February issue of R.E.A.D. ON!* will include the first semi-annual listing of R.E.A.D. handlers who have also written books. If any of you out there have not let us know about something you've been creating in that regard, right now is the time. Please email me at kathy@therapyanimals.org to be included.

— KK



It's called **reading**.
It's how people install new
software into their brains.