

Rx for reading

Your "Read for Health" newsletter • Winter 2007

Carol Scoggins, Editor

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FORWARD

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Florida Department of Health

State Read for Health Coordinator



While rapid advances in medical science have enabled more than 90% of children born with disabilities to reach adulthood, they are much less likely than their non-disabled peers to finish high school, pursue postsecondary education, find a job, or live independently according to the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. There is a

growing body of evidence indicating that persons with disabilities are particularly susceptible to secondary conditions that can further impact their quality of life. In light of this, it is particularly important to provide activities and services for young people with disabilities that address all aspects of health and well-being, including promoting health, preventing secondary conditions, and providing access to the adult health care system.

That is why October's Health Literacy in the Classroom volunteer reading project focused on children with special healthcare needs.



HEALTH CARE TRANSITION

Susan J. Redmon, RN, CCM, CRRN, MPH

Florida Department of Health, Children's Medical Services

As teens become adults they have more and more opportunities to make important decisions that affect their lives. In Florida, teens are legally considered adults when they become 18 years old and are able to vote and sign legal documents and contracts. Many other changes happen at age 18 and some of them are about health care.

Did you know that when you turn 18:

- Your doctor can't talk to your parents or anyone else about you unless you give written permission
- Your health information cannot be shared with your parents or anyone else unless you give written permission
- If you see a pediatrician for your health care that soon you will be asked to change to a doctor who sees adults (an Internal Medicine doctor or a Family Practice doctor--Family Practice doctors see patients of all ages)



Teens can start learning how to take charge of their own health care in many ways before they turn 18. Some of those ways include:

- Making your own doctor appointments
- Getting new prescriptions filled or getting refills for prescriptions
- Asking and answering questions when you go to the doctor and spending time alone with your doctor
- Understanding how to tell a doctor how you feel or what questions are important to you
- Keeping a health journal with information for the doctor about how you feel and questions you want to ask at your next appointment

One way that you can learn how to talk to a doctor is to use the...

3 questions for health literacy

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is it important for me to do this?

Health literacy means that you can read, understand, and use health information so that you are able to make good health care decisions and follow the doctor's orders if you need any type of treatment. Along with using the 3 questions it is helpful to:

- Keep a health journal and write down any questions or problems you have and bring that to your doctor's appointment
- Ask the doctor or nurse to explain again or have them write out the instructions if you don't understand or think that you may forget
- Ask the doctor or nurse where you can find more information about your questions or concerns—some websites and other resources are better than others

Examples of How Health Literacy Reading Projects Impact Students Across the State

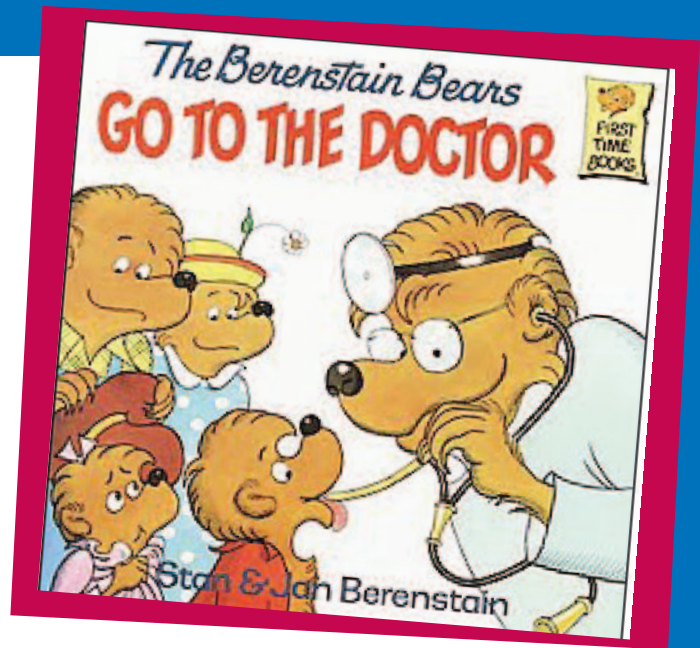


Derrick checking Matthew's heart rate after reading "The Berenstain Bears Go To The Doctor."

Linda Mello

*Exceptional Student Education
Teacher, Karen M. Siegel Academy
Lake Alfred, Florida*

We began Health Literacy Month by reading the story, "The Berenstain Bears Go To The Doctor." What fun my students and staff had reading and incorporating week long activities into this story book. The students in my class not only had a lesson in literacy, but the story allowed me to expand into other health related areas.



"I teach mentally and physically challenged students ranging in age from fourteen to twenty-one."

The information found in this story allowed me to incorporate several hands on and sensory activities which capitalized on my student's abilities.

The story talks about going to the doctor and having him use a stethoscope to listen to the bear's chest. Each student was given an opportunity to hold and touch a real stethoscope and listen to their own heart beating. We then went on to talk about the heart and the importance of keeping it and your body healthy.

"Dr. Grizzly" looked into the bear cub's ears, throat, eyes and nose." After discussing the importance of these body parts and what Dr. Grizzly was looking for during the check up with my students it was a great way to begin a unit on the Five Senses.

Thank you, Florida Health Department for donating this book which gave my classroom the opportunity to expand their knowledge of health and literacy.



Karen M. Siegel Academy is public school in Polk County. It is an educational setting that serves students who are developmentally challenged and have additional handicapping conditions. Our learning environment provides continuous supervision, personal assistance with activities of daily living, complex medical care and supervision, comprehensive behavior programs and a differentiated curriculum with substantial modifications. Students range in age from 3 to 22 years of age.

Cyndi Henry, RN, BSN

Brevard County Health Department

“As a Public Health Nurse I am often dreaming of new ways to get the message of good health and prevention to the folks in my community.”

....So when I read about the opportunity to participate in the October Health Literacy Month Read for Health initiative in 2007 I knew right away that it was something that I needed to do.

This project was even more exciting to me because I would have the opportunity to share my life-long love for reading with a generation of kids who are entertained in so many other ways in today’s world that I often fear that video games, x-boxes, premium channels on the television and the internet may just replace the old fashioned adventure of laying across their beds or curled up on a chair on the back porch to read a great book.

I initially signed up to read this year’s book, “The Bernstein Bears Visit the Doctor” to one kindergarten class. But the Resource teacher emailed me to ask if I would read the book to ALL of the kindergarten, pre-kindergarten, first grade and one Special Education (ESE) class made up of kindergarten to second grade students. I jumped at the chance not only to reach so many students with my message but also for the chance to impact the ESE students who potentially could interface with the healthcare system throughout their lives.

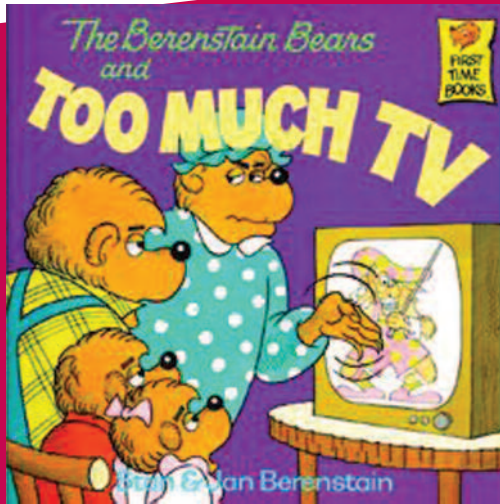
I scheduled thirty minutes with each class. I read the book to them, shared how important it would be throughout their lives to learn about ways to keep themselves healthy by reading about health through newspapers, magazines and books and then helped each student listen to their own heartbeat with my stethoscope. I was able to provide a mini-lesson on infection control by explaining why I needed to clean the ear pieces of the stethoscope after each student in order for us not to share germs with each other.

I ended up reading the book and carrying my message of a love for reading to twelve classes and 189 students. If even a handful of these kids remember my message as they grow and hopefully develop their own love for reading my mission will have been a true public health nursing and a personal success.



CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS MEET THE BERENSTAIN BEARS

by Rose Marie Jones, RNCMS – North Central Jacksonville, FL



When I heard that the Florida Dept. of Health was having a reading initiative I thought it was great. I had thought about being a mentor through the school system and this was a way I could use my nursing and my desire to mentor in a fun way.

I am a nurse and the mother of two children with special needs. I have been reading to my own children since they were babies. I also help in Sunday School and Vacation Bible School, but I wanted to do more. My oldest son is autistic and loves books. Even before he could read, he would bring me a book to read to him or ask his younger brother to read to him. He thought it would be great if I could come

and read to his class. So I knew this Initiative was my chance to grant his wish and do what I enjoy doing, reading to children. I contacted his teacher and the teacher of my other son and arranged to come and read to their classes. I also arranged to read to the class of one of their best friends who is in another school.

I met with all three classes on different days. When I met with my son's class of autistic students I was so nervous. Would they understand and would they even be able to sit still and listen? I was thoroughly amazed. They not only sat still but they actually got it. It was wonderful. They ranged in ages from 7-13 chronologically and from ages 3-10 cognitively. It was so neat to watch their faces as I read the first book "Berenstain Bears and Too Much TV" to them. Some of the higher functioning students could really relate and was able to tell me how they watched too much TV and need to do other things. I challenged them to turn off the television and try to read at least one book a week and I would see how well they did when I came back. They were so excited that they wanted me to come and read to them every week. The teacher and I arranged to have me come monthly and read to them. She says that they ask every week when will it be time for me to come back.

My younger son is in a school for children with various learning disabilities as well as other special needs. As I walked down the hall to his classroom I could hear a child in his class saying "here she comes...she's really

coming....get ready for the story. "These were third graders of average to gifted ability with various learning disabilities. They really related to needing to turn off the television and doing more reading. After reading the book I challenged them to reading as many books as they could before the end of the grading period. I went back a week after the 1st grading period to check the results and to read the next book. They had heeded the challenge. The grading period was 9 weeks and they had made the challenge 3 weeks into the grading period. All 12 of the children in the class had read a minimum of 5 books. Three of the children (including my son) read an average of 10 books and one of the three had read 18 books. I was so proud of them. I awarded the child that had read the 18 books with a certificate and a ribbon that says I Love to Read. I read to them the next



book in the series, "Berenstain Bears Go to the Doctor" and continued the challenge. My son and the other boys in the class were additionally challenged because they said they didn't like being "creamed by a girl". They have said that they will work hard to make sure that the boys read more books than the girls. It is only the 2nd week into the next grading period and my son has read 25 books. I am overjoyed.

It is so great to make a difference in the lives of children like these. I hope to continue reading to the classes that I have been reading to on a monthly basis and to see these special children excel in ways that some thought impossible. It is such a joy and a blessing for me. I challenge other nurses and moms to get involved and do this for other children with special needs. You will not be sorry. You and the children will be so blessed. Go ahead you can do it!!!

"It is so great to make a difference in the lives of children like these."



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Rose Marie as well as the other reading volunteers are right.....YOU CAN DO IT !!! Our next "Health Literacy in the Classroom" volunteer reading project will focus on "Children's Dental Health Month" with Dora the Explorer-Healthy Smiles book. We have received applications for this project that exceed our expectations of reaching 30,000 children statewide.

The Read for Health Initiative would like to showcase your efforts in addressing health literacy. Please send your photos, if available, and your articles, 250-300 words or less to Carol Scoggins, State Read for Health Coordinator at: Carol_Scoggins@doh.state.fl.us

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