

## **“Texas Reads One Book 2019” Comes to West Elementary**

By Cari Detlefsen, West Elementary School Principal

Over the past extended weekend, I came across the following quote from Neil Gaiman-English author of short fiction, comic books, novels, and films-on social media and re-shared on our campus Facebook account, “We have an obligation to read aloud to our children. To read them things they enjoy. To read to them stories we are already tired of. To do the voices, to make it interesting, and not to stop reading to them just because they learn to read to themselves.” The benefits of reading aloud to children of all ages are astonishing.

Why read aloud? Well, beyond the obvious of sharing your love for reading with your children, reading aloud has multiple academic benefits. For starters, reading aloud helps with the development of literacy skills and language. Did you know that the number of words a kindergartner knows is an important predictor of their academic success? When reading aloud at home, students are exposed to a rich vocabulary. By only reading 20 minutes a day, a student reads on average 3,600 minutes a year and 1,800,000 words a year. Beyond academics, reading aloud at home creates purposeful time set aside for bonding. For me, my favorite part of the day is when I am sitting in bed with my daughter reading books before bedtime. A majority of the time “one more book” turns into five or six more books. During this time, nothing else matters.

As a campus, we wanted to be able to provide all families with the same opportunity to read aloud at home in a family literacy event. Thus, *Texas Reads One Book*. Through this literacy event, we hope to encourage families to continue reading aloud at home by offering families with the resources needed.

Kicking off at the beginning of February, we will be ‘reading’ in grades 3-5 *The World According to Humphrey* by Betty G. Birney. During this event, every student in grades 3-5 will receive a copy of this book to take home for families to read aloud at home during the evening. Our grade level English Language Arts teachers will provide a reading schedule, reading log, questions for parents to ask before, during, and after reading, and much more for families to make this event a part of their night. At school, we will keep the energy alive as students engage in multiple activities through electives, class discussion, and more. During this event, we will have recordings of West ISD and City of West officials reading and reflecting upon various chapters of the book. These recordings will be posted to our campus social media pages.

Then in April, we will continue the series with our Spring family literacy event featuring the book *Friendship According to Humphrey*. This book will feature a kick-off of Jason Garrett, Dallas Cowboys Head Coach, reading the first chapter of the book in a video cast which will be made available for all parents. During this event, students in grades 3-5 will once again receive a copy of the book to take home.

A special thank you goes out to the West Ministerial Alliance and First Baptist West for their kind donations in helping make these literacy events a reality! I hope that you take a second during the month of February and beyond to make reading aloud at home a part of your nightly routine. The great

author, Dr. Seuss, once said, "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."