

# CREATIVE INITIATIVES BOTH IN AND OUT OF



Reading is the foundation for a good education. Teaching children to read and giving them a passion for the written word will impact their future of learning.

Students become engaged in reading when it is inviting and exciting. Exposure to the right reading material (that is age-appropriate) and giving students a level of comfort can enhance the process.

Structured and creative initiatives for reading are plentiful in KCKPS. The following are just a few examples.

## Strategic Reading

In Jen Hill's 6th Grade Strategic Reading class at Rosedale Middle School, you won't just see students with their noses in books, reading quietly to themselves. In fact, the class looks more like a discussion group, and at times it becomes quite animated. Students converse with each other, work on iPads and have a number of physical tools at their fingertips on any given day. Grouped in fours, the students work as teams to dissect, analyze and understand text. And throughout each class period, they are listening for direction from Hill, who moves them from one reading method to another.

Sometimes the class reads in unison, which Hill calls "choral" reading. Other times they "echo" read by repeating the lines after Hill reads them. Sometimes she tells them to use their "whisper phones" to finish a paragraph. A whisper phone is a tool shaped like a small phone receiver, created out of a simple piece of PVC pipe. Students hold it to their ears and whisper the words into it. It allows them to hear a slight echo of their own voices.

"Sitting there listening and reading to themselves just doesn't hold the interest for every student," Hill said. "I try to give them the tools and resources they need to get invested in the work and become strong readers."

Along with reading, she talks with students about visualizing what the words are describing, and asks them to imagine the scenes and characters. She also has them summarize the passages in writing to ensure their meaning, and also to allow them an opportunity to become writers of their own stories some day.

"Sometimes I use wordless books and have them look at the pictures and make inferences to write the text," Hill said.

Her method of teaching is purposeful and stimulating, and it makes reading more inviting for students.

## Reading with Superheroes

After school on Fridays, nearly three dozen students gather in Ed Henderson's classroom at Northwest Middle School. And among them is Spiderman (a.k.a., a member of the staff, dressed in costume). The students dig through indexed boxes of comic books, looking for their favorites: Iron Man, Archie, The New Avengers, Star Wars, Wonder Woman, the Lone Ranger and Captain America, among others.

Once they find their favorites, they gather in groups or find a quiet corner, and read the latest adventure of their superheroes.

The students are members of the Northwest Comic Book Club, new to Northwest this school year. It was born out of a



Whisper phones are a fun tool used by Rosedale Middle School students to enhance reading.



Spiderman recently made a showing at Northwest Middle School's Comic Book Club.

# MAKE READING INVITING AND FUN, IN THE CLASSROOM



Fourth and fifth grade students at Frances Willard Elementary School can check out Kindles loaded with ebooks from their school library.



## Ways to Enhance Reading

- Have books available at home.
- Visit the library to expose children to a variety of books and reading programs.
- If your child doesn't seem interested in reading, it may be because he/she hasn't found the right book. Check out a book series to encourage extended reading or look at different styles of books and types of books, like biographies or books that are heavily illustrated.
- Read together with your child, 20 minutes every day.
- Have older children read to younger children.
- Have your child aloud and record their reading to help them hear their pronunciation and diction (and to improve your child's confidence in reading aloud).

survey that Henderson conducted. He was looking for a way to enhance reading for his students, so he was researching the types of books they liked to read. What he found was that many said they don't like to read at all.

"I wasn't an avid reader when I was really young," Henderson confessed. "But I do remember that I liked comic books."

A one-time comic book collector, Henderson decided to dig out his old collection and add to it in hopes of sparking students' interest in reading.

The club also provides leadership opportunities for students. There is a president, vice president, secretary and

two archivists (who organize and catalog the collection).

Eighth grade student Justice Thompson is the president. She has a different take on the benefits of the club.

"The club gets students involved socially in literature," Thompson said. "It helps students express their individuality and their creative side through comic books."

## Reading eBooks on Kindles

Fourth and fifth graders at Frances Willard Elementary School don't go to their school library to check out books. They go to check out Kindles so they

can read eBooks! The school has two classroom sets of Kindles loaded with eBooks. Librarian Colleen Charlton said they are "a big hit" with students.

The school's PTA purchased one set a few years ago and this school year, Frances Willard was awarded another set from the National PTA as a reward for the Family Literacy Night event they held. (The event brings students, staff and family members to the library for an evening of literacy and technology-focused activities.)

The Kindles rarely stay in the library very long, Charlton said. She said having access to eBooks this way makes reading more intriguing and fun for students.