



**Everybody Wins! Connecticut
Reading Mentor Handbook
2008-2009**



Welcome to the Everybody Wins! Connecticut Power Lunch Program. Thanks to each and every one of you for the commitment of your time and for your ongoing support.

In this Reading Mentor's Handbook, you will learn about Everybody Wins! CT and how you can begin to make a difference in the life of a child, and have some fun at the same time. Please read the entire handbook so that you may gain a better understanding of your roles and responsibilities. Please see your School Coordinator with any questions at any point during the school year. Your School Coordinator is here to help provide the best possible experience here Everybody Wins!.

Thank you again for being a part of Everybody Wins! CT Together we can improve the lives of many children living in the greater Hartford area.

History of Everybody Wins!

Founded in New York City in 1991, Everybody Wins! is a not-for-profit children's literacy and mentoring organization dedicated to encouraging positive attitudes about reading in school children.

Everybody Wins! CT has been an independent affiliate since October 2004. Last year we served 1,000 students who were involved in our Power Lunch and Readers as Leaders programs. Currently, we provide programming in the Greater Hartford/ New Britain area. We have Power Lunch programs in Hartford, Windsor, Bloomfield and New Britain and Readers as Leaders Programs in Hartford and New Britain.

Power Lunch

The Power Lunch Program pairs elementary school children with volunteer adult Reading Mentors. Reading Mentors are recruited from corporations and typically spend thirty (30) minutes a week at schools with their student partners. Each week, the pairs read from good books and share conversations about books. Power Lunch provides children with positive role models and fosters a love of reading. If desired, Reading Mentors who continue with the program are encouraged to stay with the same student throughout the student's elementary school years.



Readers as Leaders

Readers as Leaders, originally developed by a task group of active retirees, is a program that honors the importance of leadership and giving back to the community. Readers as Leaders uses books and reading as a vehicle for teaching this important message. Middle school students are taught leadership and team building skills through classroom and group activities and a 3 day team building retreat. The middle school students are then paired with kindergarten students whom they read to. Middle school students have an opportunity to read to approximately 3-4 kindergarten students. Kindergarten students are introduced to the value of books and reading and acquire an older student role model. Each kindergarten student in the school is read to for at least a 4 week period.

Gift Books

To ensure students have books to call their own, EW! CT distributes high quality children's books to participating students throughout the school year.

Reading Mentor Job Description

Schools spend large amounts of time and money teaching children how to read. With your help, EW! CT hopes to motivate children to want to read. As a Reading Mentor, you meet for approximately 30 minutes a week, one-to-one, with an elementary school student. Reading Mentors are encouraged to bring lunch; books are available at the school site. The Reading Mentor reports weekly to School Coordinator, who is an EW! CT staff member located at the school site. The Reading Mentor has lunch (if desired) talks with and listens to the child, reads aloud with the child, and encourages the child's interest in reading by exploring books and word games together. The Reading Mentor also provides positive, consistent, weekly attention. There are a few simple things you need to know about your job description:

- **Have fun reading!**
- **Build a relationship** by talking about shared interests, by reading aloud with your student, and by being positive and consistent.
- **Make a commitment** to volunteer for one school year and are encouraged to continue reading with the same child in following years.
- **Receive support from Everybody Wins! CT**, specifically from the School Coordinator.
- **Provide structure** in the Power Lunch by bringing or helping select the reading material, by keeping their students engaged, and by encouraging questioning and conversation.
- **Stay with the student** during each reading session.



Application Form & Orientation

Reading Mentors come to Power Lunch as representatives of the community that recognize and support the program. Every Reading Mentor submits an application form, which includes a work address and phone number, the names of personal and work references, and a signature that signifies commitment to adhere to the Reading Mentor standards described above. Reading Mentors undergo an orientation session, presented by EW! staff prior to meeting with their students for the first time. They are also invited to attend Parent Programs and additional volunteer activities within the school. Reading Mentors must notify the School Coordinator of employment status or other changes in information on the Reading Mentor application form.

General Tips & Information

- **Put your student first.** Concentrate on their needs; leave yours at the door. If your student has something on his/her mind, focus on the immediate need then read.
- **Be a friend and not a buddy.** A friend is a person who looks out for your best interest. They do not allow you to do less than your best. A friend does not allow you to shirk responsibilities.
- **Be Flexible with your plans.**
- **Approach your student with mutual respect.** Your student has experienced many things you have not and has knowledge you do not have. Show respect for these things and do not belittle for things not known or skills not yet acquired.
- **Take time to get to know your student.** Some students will be very open; others will not. Using open-ended questions requiring more than a short response will help you get to know your student. Instead of saying “do you like this?” Say “what do you like about this?”
- **Drop the authoritative role.** Be an interesting human being.
- **Talk one-third of the time.** This gives your student an opportunity to do most of the talking and shows you are interested in him or her.
- **Do not interrupt your student when he/she is talking.** This communicates that what s/he says is important.
- **Give the student silence in which to think.** Realize there will be periods of silence while thinking occurs. While initially awkward, a pause of a few seconds may allow conversation to occur.
- **Observe non-verbal cues.**



General Tips & Information (continued)

- **Use brief remarks.** Do not confuse the student with long complicated statements or comments.
- **Don't lecture on how to behave.** Ask the student to suggest alternatives, and allow the student to make the decision.
- **Do not be alarmed at any remarks made by the student.** Instead, focus on the reason behind what is said or done.
- **Do not make false promises.**
- **Be sincere in your praise.** Give positive reinforcement whenever possible. Praise the attempts as well as the outcome when possible. Be specific.
- **Be accepting.** Try not to show impatience.
- **Do not ignore a problem.** Seek help from the school coordinator. You do not need to nor should you handle areas which require an expertise you do not have. Leave the tough areas to staff.
- **Do not become quickly discouraged or expect dramatic changes overnight.** Some of the student's behavior patterns and abilities have taken a long time to develop. You must be patient. Remember, it may take ten years before a student can say my mentor in fourth grade made a difference in my life. You never know the difference you can make in a child's life.
- **Deal with the other person's feelings.** Don't give away unwanted advice or try to change someone's feelings. Just listen and try to understand.
- **Our names are very important to us because they give us a special identity.** Make sure you learn your student's name and pronounce it the way s/he wants it pronounced. Learn to spell his/her name correctly.
- **Understand your student in terms of his/her own background and values.** These may be different from yours.
- **Show that you are interested in your student as a person.** Listen carefully to what s/he says. Ask questions about favorite activities, family members, friends, hopes and dreams. By your words and actions, let your student know you care.
- **Be reliable.** If you must be absent, call or fax a personal note and ask that your student be told you can not come that day. Your student may be disappointed, but s/he will be reassured by the fact you cared enough to send a quick note.
- **We all make mistakes.** Let your student know that making mistakes is part of learning and that it is all right to make them. Do not be afraid of making mistakes yourself and admitting them.



General Tips & Information (continued)

- **Build self-confidence.** Praise your student honestly and frequently. Remember – attentiveness and effort can be as important as performance at times.
- **Ask the students questions that may lead him/her to discover a correct answer instead of telling them directly.** This leads to independent thinking.
- **Know and observe school regulations** (i.e., fire drills, walking in the right direction on staircases, phones, vending machines). Adults may have special privileges in a school that students do not have. Do not take advantage of these privileges or offer them to your student.
- **Act as a role model for all students through your dress and behavior. Communicate regularly with the School Coordinator.** If problems arise, discuss them as quickly as possible with the school coordinator. S/he will develop an appropriate course of action to help resolve any issues.

Power Lunch Guidelines

- **No Game Playing:** Volunteer reading mentors should only play reading related games during lunch. While board games such as Scrabble present good opportunity for student's to learn, it also can be a distraction to other students and volunteers. Please do not play any board games without speaking with your school coordinator first.
- **No Gifts or Food:** Mentors and Students may not exchange gifts or food. Gifts other than time, attention, and friendship detract from the true purpose of the program – sharing and enjoying books. (EW! CT will periodically provide books for Mentors to give to their student partner as gifts.) Food can be brought in occasionally when there is enough to share with every child. Please check with your school coordinator before you bring in any food item.
- **One-to-one:** Each mentor must read with the same student each week. The Power Lunch Program is about building one-on-one relationships between students and mentors. When students bring friends or partners are switched, then the friendship is jeopardized.



Power Lunch Guidelines (continued)

- **Students stay in Room:** Remain in assigned classrooms. If the room is locked or unavailable, or you're the only pair in a room, please notify the School Coordinator. S/he will place you in another room. We need to know where you are at all times in the school in case parents/teachers need to find a child during the Power Lunch Program.
- **Share a Room with others:** Reading Mentors may not be alone with their student (or any other student) at any time.
- **See the student only during EW! events:** EW! CT prohibits unsupervised contact between volunteers and students. Outside meetings are not permitted.

Ten Suggestions for Reading Aloud to Children

1. Allow your listener a few minutes to settle down and adjust their feet and minds to the story.
2. Vary the length and the subject matter of your readings
3. Read material that can be completed in one sitting on most occasions.
4. Allow time for discussion after reading a story.
5. Remember that reading aloud comes naturally to very few people. To do it successfully and with others you must practice.
6. Use plenty of expression when reading. If possible, change your tone to fit the dialogue.
7. Adjust the pace to fit the story. During a suspenseful part, slow down, draw out your words, bring your listener to the edge of his/her chair.
8. The most common mistake in reading aloud is reading too fast. Read slowly enough for the child to build mental pictures of what he/she heard you read.
9. Don't read stories that you don't enjoy yourself; it will show.
10. Don't continue reading when it is obvious that the child does not like the story.



Examples of Questions to Ask While Reading

From Mentor Consulting Group, Susan Weinberger

Reading Mentors can improve their student's comprehension by stopping to ask questions about reading and following the reading with thought-provoking conversation starters.

In general:

- Give a child plenty of time to respond to your question.
- Share your opinion about the question also.
- Don't ask too many questions.
- Only ask if you are genuinely interested in hearing your student's response.

Some questions to consider:

- What do you think will happen next? Why?
- Describe the main character. Find events in the reading that support what you remember about the character.
- Who is your favorite character in this reading? Why?
- Describe the setting (where the story takes place). Find passages in the reading that describe the setting.
- What do you think is the most exciting (or interesting) part of the reading?
- Who would you recommend this book (poem, article, story) to? Why?
- What do you notice about the way the author writes?
- What would you like to ask the author if you met him or her?
- What does the main character learn during the book? What did you learn?
- Find part of the reading that tells when the story takes place.
- How does this reading remind you of something in your own life?
- If you were the main character, what would you do and why?
- How is this reading like something else you have read?
- What important message do you think the author wanted to tell the readers? Is there a lesson in the reading?

NOTE: Use these questions sparingly. They will be special and motivating when you introduce them only once in a while.



Some Serious Items

Physical Contact: Many of the young children we work with have a strong need and desire for positive physical contact with caring adults. You are encouraged to be a positive role model; however, your physical contact should be limited to holding a hand, giving a soft pat on the back or head, or sharing a hug in full view of other reading mentors or school officials. Remember that what you see as simple, friendly affection between the student and your self may be viewed as something entirely different by someone else.

Confidentiality: All information you are told about your student (by teachers, EW! CT Staff, other school staff) is confidential and sharing that information may be against the law. If you have any questions please see the School Coordinator who will help you to speak with the designated school official.

Tell the student that they are free to share information with you; however, there are certain things that you are required by law to tell the principal. These are as follows:

A. If a student confides that he or she is the victim of sexual, emotional, or physical abuse, you **MUST** notify the school principal immediately. Tell the school coordinator and he/she will go with you to talk with the principal. Make a note on your calendar when this information was reported and to whom it was given. Remember, this information is extremely personal and capable of damaging lives. **DO NOT share it with anyone except the school coordinator and school principal.**

B. If the student tells you of their involvement in any illegal activities you must tell the principal immediately. Again, make a note on your calendar when this information was reported and to whom it was given so that you have a record for the principal.



Everybody Wins! CT School list

Hartford

Jumoke Academy-
527-0575

SAND School-
695-5057

Thirman Milner Elementary School-
695-4380

Windsor

Clover Street School-
687-2050

New Britain

Gaffney Elementary School-
225-6247

Bloomfield

J.P. Vincent Elementary School-
286-2640

If you must miss a session, please call your School Coordinator before 10:00 a.m. We also encourage you to fax a personal note to your Reading Partner, using the form included in this Handbook, if you must miss a session. The School Coordinator will ensure that the fax reaches your student Reading Partner.



Fax

TO: _____
(student's name) (school coordinator's name)

FAX: _____

FROM: _____

PHONE: _____

DATE: _____

TOTAL PAGES: _____

MESSAGE/Picture Here: