

R.E.A.D. Parents and Family

(for library internal use only)

Why We Ask Parents to Wait Outside

The Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.) program works so well because it creates a pressure-free, non-judgmental environment by allowing children to read TO the therapy animal. If the parent sits with the child, then the nature of the session changes completely. The atmosphere that the R.E.A.D. program model is structured can never be achieved. The child might as well stay home and read to the parent instead. Every child knows that if a parent is within hearing distance, their reading is being judged. Even if they read well, the fact that the parent has a basis for judgment puts the pressure back into the R.E.A.D. session.

Librarians are encouraged to introduce the parents to the R.E.A.D. teams. This can be done at the beginning or preferably at the end of the session. By including them in the process, parents can better understand why they need to step aside and let the animal and their handler do their work during the actual R.E.A.D. session.



Our intent is not to deprive the child of the opportunity because his or her parents are too involved. However, we feel it is important for the parents to understand the R.E.A.D. model and to set expectations. Their role is to support the child's enthusiasm for the R.E.A.D. session, not to be a part of the session. Guidance from the library staff and the flyer handouts serve to reinforce the R.E.A.D. model and the purpose of the program.

Other Siblings

Families often bring other siblings to the R.E.A.D. sessions. This is inevitable for a variety of reasons. Please encourage the parent to take the "non-R.E.A.D. participating" children to explore other aspects of the library's many offerings.

Having other siblings present while the R.E.A.D. child is trying to cover the reading material becomes very distracting for the therapy animal and the human handler. We want the child that is R.E.A.D.ing to focus on just that--reading a book with the therapy animal.

For any additional information or concerns, please contact our Pet Therapy Program Manager at andrea.wendlandt@hinsdalehumanesociety.org



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