



**INVITATION: LIBRARIANS, TEACHERS, PARENTS,
BOOKSTORES & OTHERS WHO WOULD LIKE TO HELP KIDS**

BECOME CERTIFIED LAUGHTER READERS, PLEASE CONTACT:

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FUNNY LITERACY: Using Humor to Help Kids Enjoy Reading

The Certified Laughter Reader Literacy Project

"Almost all children love funny books, it's what helps hook them into the reading habit."

~Michael Rosen, U.K. Children's Laureate

Everything that has to do with children, including this project, must have room to grow. The purpose of this project is to encourage children to read by introducing them to the naturally attractive phenomena of humor and laughter. Children can grow in significant ways through opportunities to explore their own humor, laughter, and mirth. These topics bring variety and freshness to the classroom and the school culture, promoting eager interest, emotional resilience and self-confidence. The CLR project capitalizes on the observation that effective teaching techniques must be balanced with humanity and spirit in the form of "a radical performance indicator, namely, laughter."⁽¹⁾

Goals: To provide incentives for kids to love reading by having them complete activities based on reading humorous books; to encourage kids to embrace their own sense of humor and laughter; to promote positive expressions of humor.

To promote laughter and humor as a feel-good factor when reading, by encouraging reading together and to discover the pleasure of funny books in families, schools and libraries. This in turn will reinforce the

message that reading together promotes family well-being, and that embracing one's sense of humor promotes personal well-being.(2)

To draw attention to funny books as readable and enjoyable books. We hope that the CLR project will enable these books to gain a profile that makes them more credible and accessible to children and young people. The CLR Project will work to achieve this through a range of activities supported by libraries, teachers and parents.(3)

Kids who complete a prescribed reading activity, e.g., 1 hour per week of funny books, in fifteen minute intervals, during April, plus a follow-up-activity, e.g., tell a joke, write a poem, or draw a picture, will receive the designation of *Certified Laughter Reader*. Actual requirements will be decided locally.

KICK-OFF: Envisioned as a year 'round program, the pilot project will invite several libraries to start the program in April 2009, in conjunction with National Humor Month.

Pilot Method: Certified Laughter Leader (CLL) volunteers will partner with local libraries to support CLR project during National Humor Month (April) and thereafter. CLLs will be the liaisons between the library and World Laughter Tour (WLT). CLLs who volunteer will lend a hand and could present talks and laughter club programs open to the public or geared to particular audiences, e.g., 5th graders, parents, teachers. CLLs will assist and advise the library staff as needed.

Background: The World Laughter Tour, Inc., (WLT) created by psychologist Steve Wilson, trains lay persons and professionals in a systematic therapeutic laughter method. The method capitalizes on the universality of laughter and the positive benefits of laughter, humor and mirth, chiefly as tools for health, happiness, stress reduction, self-confidence, academic achievement, and interpersonal harmony. More than 5,000 people have been trained and earned the designation **Certified Laughter Leader (CLL)**. The program is embraced by hospitals, schools, workplaces, and in long-term senior residential care.

Wilson is director of National Humor Month (April), a licensed psychologist, educator, author, and professional speaker. He has been pursuing the allure of humor and laughter professionally since 1984, and personally all of his life.

The WLT slogan is "***Think globally, laugh locally.***" Libraries are an important local gathering place for social and intellectual exploration. They are logical and convenient focal points for the CLR project. Librarians, educators, and CLLs will lead and guide kids in the CLR project.

Vision & Involvement: CLR is open to everyone who is interested. Spearheading the initiation of the project are National Humor Month, World Laughter Tour, Inc., and the Laughter Arts & Sciences Foundation (501.c.3). Mary Mullen, a librarian and CLL in Pittsburgh, PA, has agreed to serve as a library advisor for the project. A team of other specialists will be assembled to guide the project.

The heart of the pilot program is the development of guidelines and materials (bibliographies, suggested activities, contests, a website, and a reward/recognition structure), which will then be distributed to librarians, teachers and parents who join the program.

April is the logical month for libraries to bring attention to their humor collections because it is National Humor Month, and leads up to World Laughter Day (May 3, 2009). Displays can be mounted; bibliographies distributed; laughter sessions conducted; discussions held; riddle contests; joke fests; speakers can present talks on topics such as “Humor for the Health of It,” and “Putting Humor to work at Work.” Media attention will put the spotlight on humor and ‘funny literacy’.

World Laughter Tour, Inc., will organize the effort to get Certified Laughter Leaders from all across the USA to volunteer to team up with local librarians and teachers to conduct the program. CLLs can present a variety of fun & educational laughter events, such as the laughter club and informative talks, for the community.

Additional alliances will be explored with the “Reading is Fundamental” initiative, the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor, the International Society for Humor Studies, and others.

Partnering support will come from a number of businesses, foundations, and private individuals. Support will enable the widening of the program nationally, and the development of better materials, training, for those who lead the CLR project, and the availability of a range of incentives (t-shirts, caps, posters, trips, etc.).

Data collection: This component will be designed by appropriate consultants to provide information on the success of the project (numbers of kids who participate; their productivity of stories, poems, drawings; their academic progress; and, classroom management & atmosphere).

PARTICIPATION/REGISTRATION: If you would like to participate, **call or e-mail Steve Wilson** (info below) to register. Support materials (tracking, etc.) are being developed by the child staff librarians at the Bethel Park Library in Bethel Park, PA, and will be available.

Websites to visit for more information: www.worldlaughtertour.com www.humormonth.com
www.laughterfoundation.org www.stevewilson.com

(1)Counteracting performativity in schools: the case for laughter as a qualitative and redemptive indicator. Helen Johnson, International Journal of Children’s Spirituality, Vol. 10, No. 1, April 2005, pp. 81-96.

(2)Parallel to goals embodied in the U.K.’s Roald Dahl Funny Prize.

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