

France: “Read and encourage reading”

Organization implementing the project

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Context

About 15% of all pupils entering the 6th grade in France (age 11) have serious reading problems, making them more prone to have a literacy problem as adults. One of the most important reasons for these difficulties comes from the family context in which reading practices are scarce and reading for pleasure is nonexistent. The project “Lire et Faire lire” was launched in 1999 by the French writer Alexandre Jardin. It is based on a model that existed already in 1985 in the city of Brest.

Two complementary objectives are at stake: to give all children the possibility to discover literature by the means of senior volunteers who are happy to share their time and the pleasure of reading with the younger generation.

The target groups are senior volunteers (50 years and over) and children attending primary schools and other educational settings (secondary schools, recreation centers, kindergartens, libraries etc.)

Action

The program is developed throughout France by the coordinators of two national networks: the League of Education and the National Union of Family Associations.

The commitment of each partner is described in two charters:

- the Charter of the reader : <http://www.lireetfairelire.org/LFL/article68.html>
- the Charter of educational structures : <http://www.lireetfairelire.org/LFL/article39.html>

Summary of the solutions that were considered:

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At the request of the teacher or facilitator, volunteers offer some of their free time for children in order to stimulate their interest in reading. The reading sessions are organized in small groups (2 to 6 children) with one senior who reads aloud (20 to 30 minutes) a story for the children. The readings occur at least once a week throughout the school year. The approach is based on the pleasure of reading and the sharing between generations.

Outcomes and impact

In 2011, more than 12000 volunteers (retired seniors) are involved in these actions that take place in 5036 primary schools and 865 educational settings throughout France (including 150 secondary schools) which represent 250,000 children.

Impact on key stakeholders:

This action contributes to improve children's literacy skills:

- by developing the pleasure of reading (children participate voluntarily)
- through the transmission and sharing between generations

It is the educational structure that decides its participation in the program: the intervention of senior citizens is integrated into its activities consistent with its educational project.

"Lire et faire lire" is a program designed for children but also for seniors. In exchange for their involvement with the children, they receive training, information and appropriate support. In 2010 the seniors involved benefited from 800 days of training and a review entitled "Il était une fois ..." ("Once Upon a Time"), entirely dedicated to them.

A qualitative study on the commitment of the volunteers of the "Lire et faire lire" association is available on the "Lire et faire lire" website: <http://www.lireetfairelire.org/LFL/rubrique3.html>