

# Teaching A Kid To Read Can Be A Life Changer; Here's How You Can Help

By Donnita Travis, Founder & Executive Director, By The Hand Club For Kids

If you are reading this newspaper, you probably can read at an eighth grade level or higher. This gives you advantages in life that many children in Chicago will never have. In fact, 37% of third graders in Chicago are not reading at grade level.

What are the consequences of not reading well? A study by City University of New York sociologist Donald J. Hernandez concluded that children unable to read beyond the "below basic" level by third grade are four times more likely to drop out or fail to graduate on time than proficient readers.

So, if good readers are far more likely to stay in school, graduate and succeed in life, what can we do about it? Here's a simple but powerful truth you can act on today: Help kids to read!

The best way to get kids reading more is to give them books they want to read. Children say the number one reason they don't read more is they can't find books they like. If they live in an under-resourced neighborhood, they can't find books, period. A study of low-income neighborhoods in Philadelphia found a ratio of one book for sale for every 300 children. That's a book desert.

By The Hand Club For Kids is taking this information to heart and kids are learning to read and reading to learn. By The Hand Club is a faith-based, after-school program serving 1,000 children living in four of Chicago's most economically depressed and under-resourced neighborhoods. Paid staff and volunteers work with the children on improving reading, math and study skills as well as providing spiritual guidance and counseling. Hot meals, snacks, medical services and safe transportation to and from the clubs are also provided

As a result, By The Hand Club saw an 82% increase last year in the number of students that met state reading standards. By The Hand Club believes a big part of their success is giving kids high interest, culturally relevant books to read.

Leo is a great case in point. He said, "When I was in the 3rd grade, I thought reading was BORING. When I started reading books like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, I saw that reading can be fun, if you find the right books."

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Now, By The Hand Club kids are taking their love of reading to the streets through a Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaign motivating kids to read more. The PSAs also promote a book drive to put a book in the hands of more than 6,500 children and put an end to the book deserts.

This campaign, as well as the Chicago Public Library's Rahm's Readers summer reading program, will launch on June 11, the day Mayor Rahm Emanuel has proclaimed as By The Hand Club Literacy Day in Chicago. Dwyane Wade is helping to promote the literacy campaign through his Wade's World Foundation.

Here's how you can help:

**Text READ to 27722 on your mobile phone to donate \$10\* to buy books for kids or go on-line to give at [www.readingtakesyoufar.com](http://www.readingtakesyoufar.com)**

**Tell your friends to "Like" the Reading Takes You Far Facebook page or by tweeting our website [www.readingtakesyoufar.com](http://www.readingtakesyoufar.com)**

\*\$10.00 donation to By The Hand Club. Charges will appear on your wireless bill, or be deducted from your pre-paid balance. All purchases must be authorized by account holder. Must be 18 years of age or have parental permission to participate. Message and data rates may apply. Text STOP to 27722 to stop. Text HELP to 27722 for help. Full Terms: [www.mGive.org/T](http://www.mGive.org/T).

By The Hand Club For Kids  
**Literacy Day**  
June 11, 2012

Book giveaway and Rahm's Readers registration at participating Chicago Public Schools. For more information contact [Sherry.Arthur@bythehand.org](mailto:Sherry.Arthur@bythehand.org).



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