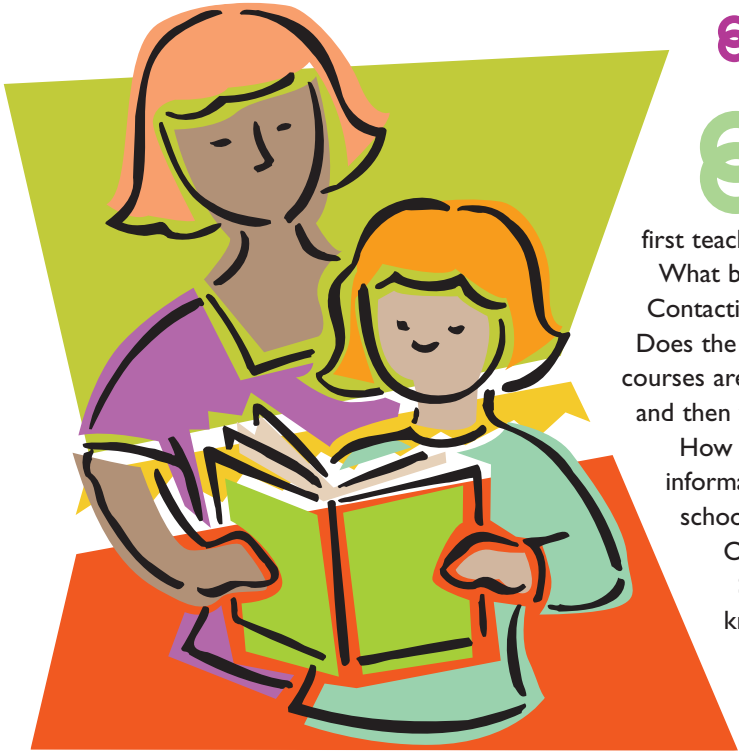


Classroom Connections

Become Involved in Your Child's Education



Emphasis on children's education is at an all-time high, and parents are a big part of the equation. Schools recognize the key difference that parent involvement makes in the success of children.

Furthermore, it is becoming more and more apparent that parents are not only their children's first teachers; they continue to play a vital role throughout their children's educational experiences.

What better reason to become more involved in your child's education?

Contacting your child's school to ask about parent involvement opportunities is a good place to start. Does the school have special days for parents to come to class with their children? Ask if parent education courses are available. Suggest family events (like a family reading night, for example) held on school grounds—and then volunteer your time to make the event happen.

How can your local newspaper help? Check the community section of your local newspaper for information on meetings of parent-teacher organizations, upcoming academic, arts and sporting events, schoolwide fundraisers and other happenings.

On the flip side, you can also be a school advocate and information source for the newspaper.

Suggest that student honors be recognized in the newspaper, or make sure a newspaper contact knows the details of a special school event.

Working together benefits everyone—parents, children, teachers, schools, newspapers and your whole community. So investigate, communicate and collaborate.

And have fun!

Literacy Stories DALE SHERMAN

Dale Sherman remembers his third-grade teacher saying he would never amount to anything. He was pulled out of regular classes for being a slow learner. "In the sixties, they really didn't know how to deal with learning disabilities," he says. "I was teased and called stupid by the other kids."

By junior high, Dale had become good in sports, but he barely made passing grades. When he was a senior in high school, he decided to make a change. "I need to learn," he says. "I want to do something with my life." When other kids were out playing sports, Dale was home studying. He would copy chapters from his textbooks by hand. "I knew I had a problem with reading, and it took me at least twice as long as other kids to do my assignments."

Most people with learning disabilities have average or above-average intelligence. Dale is no exception. He was determined to do well, and he did. Dale graduated from high school with a 3.8 grade point average in spite of reading at about the third-grade level.

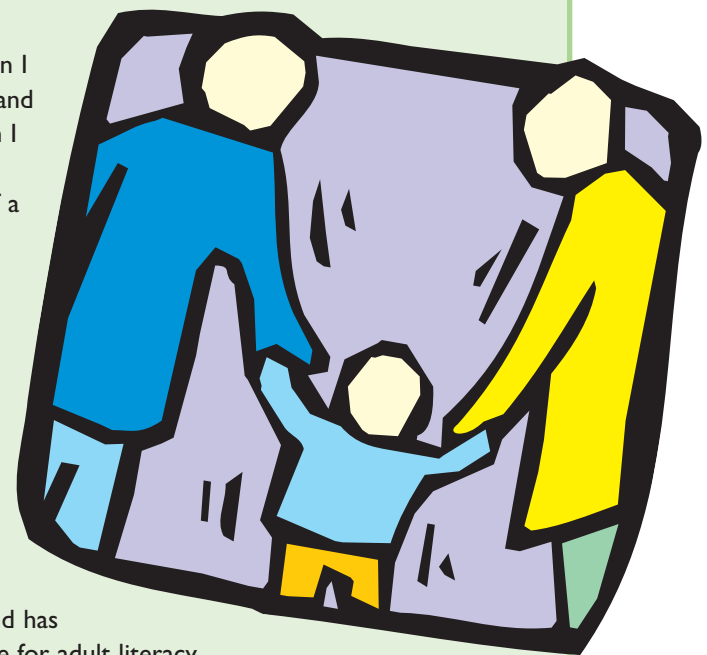
Dale was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder in January 2001. He was referred to a specialist, who administered a series of tests designed to screen adults for learning disabilities. Through the tests, Dale was diagnosed with a reading disorder.

Dale started at Project: LEARN in Medina, Ohio, in 1995, after he was referred by his children's daycare provider. He has trouble concentrating and focusing and needs extra time to read and understand information. "Sometimes it's like the words scatter all

over the page. That's when I use blue plastic overlays, and that helps a lot. But when I get stuck on a word, sometimes I lose track of a whole sentence and have to read it all over again," he explains.

Even so, his reading and writing have improved, and Dale has joined the staff as an Americorp VISTA volunteer to work on student-related projects. He coordinates the student support group and has become a strong advocate for adult literacy students. He is president of Ohio's Adult Learners for the Future and serves as a board member for Ohio Literacy Network. He is also active on the board of Voice for Adult Literacy United for Education (VALUE), a national student advocacy group.

"When I was a kid, I was teased a lot and I felt like a nobody," Dale says. "Now I'm proud of who I am."

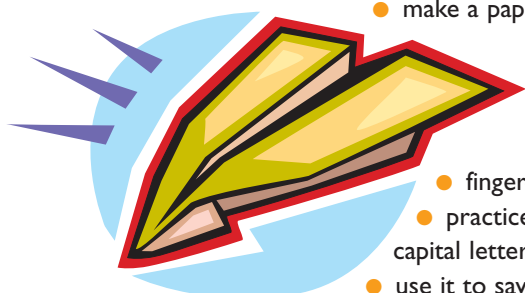


What is the national definition of family literacy? Find the answer at www.verizonreads.net.



After You Read Your Newspaper, You Can...

- stand on a pile of them to look taller
- cut into pieces and make a puzzle
- roll up to make a telescope
- make rustling sound effects for home movies
- make confetti
- stuff clothing to make a soft sculpture or scarecrow
- cut out a comic strip and use it as a bookmark
- make paper flowers with it
- make comic books



- make a paper airplane

- finger-paint on it
- practice writing capital letters
- use it to save the seat

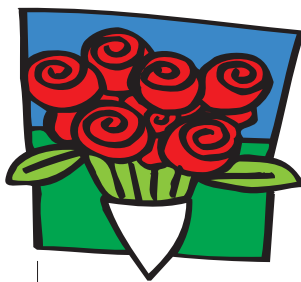
- next to you
- make a collage
- use it as a book cover
- give a subscription as a gift

You could even ...

- teach the dog to fetch it
- use it as a tablecloth at a picnic
- use it as packaging material
- roll it into fireplace logs
- use it as insulation
- put it on the floor when painting or doing arts and crafts activities

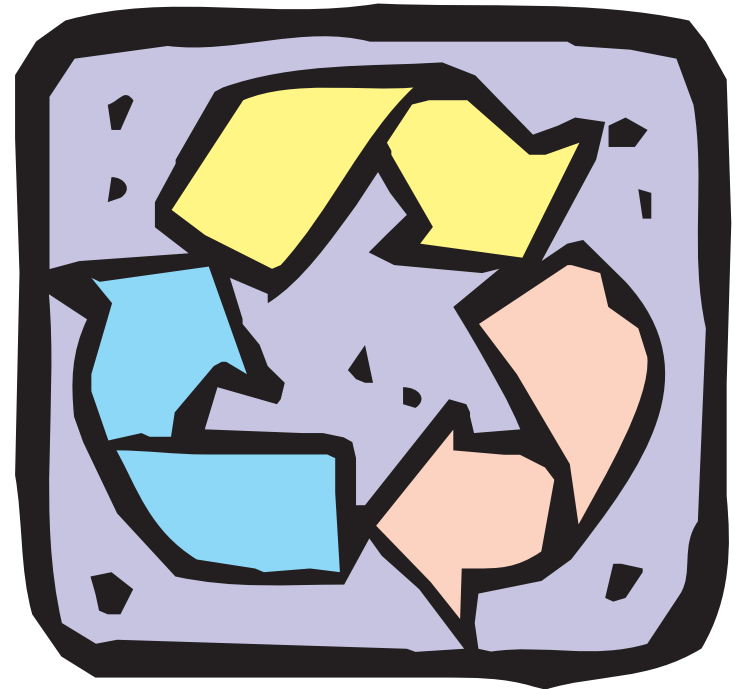


- keep flowers fresh until you can get them into a vase



- make mulch for the garden
- clean windows with it
- soak up things you spill
- scoop up dead bugs

But whatever
else you do...
Recycle It!



VIRGINA MARTINEZ

When Virginia Martinez came to the United States, she found herself in a different world, a world in which she could not communicate with anyone. Virginia couldn't speak, write or read in English.

Virginia grew up in Juarez, Mexico, in a family of 13 with seven sisters and three brothers. She completed elementary, secondary and preparatory school. When she was 24-years-old, Virginia went to work at a "maquiladora" electronics factory. There, she qualified for a grant and received a degree in electronics through Edison University. Virginia was a supervisor at the factory for 10 years.

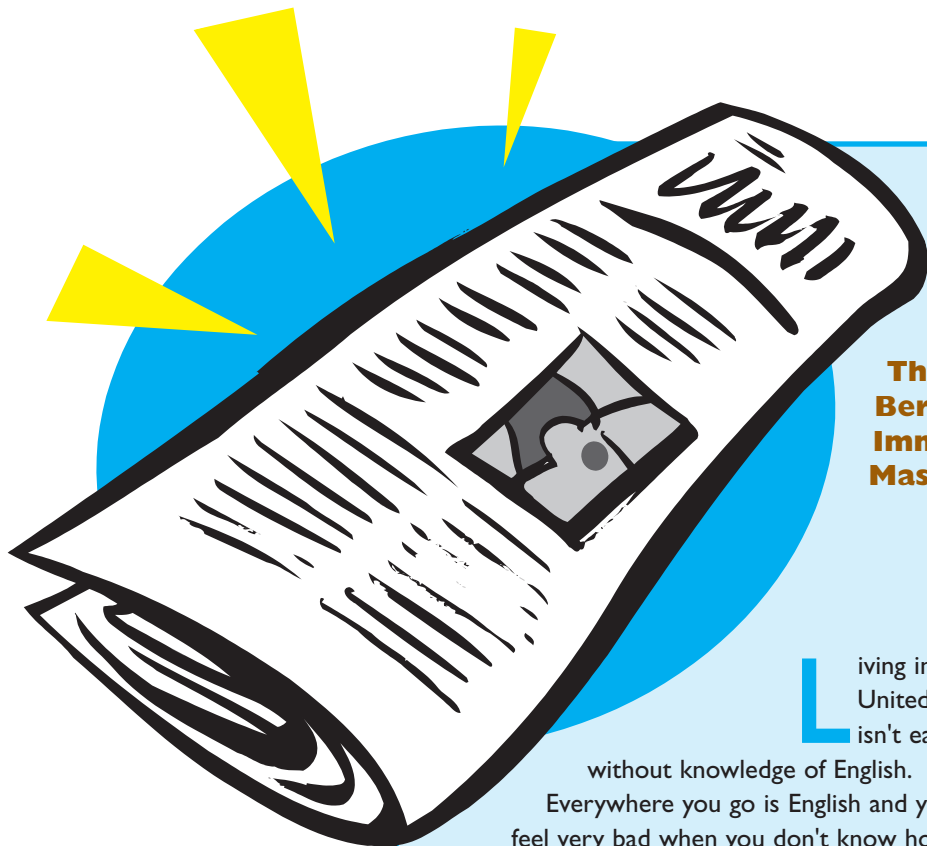
Virginia often vacationed to the United States to visit three of her sisters, and after a time, she moved to New Mexico. The rest of her family remained in Mexico. Virginia was offered information and transportation to ESL (English as a Second Language) classes by the New Mexico Literacy Center in Carlsbad. Virginia enthusiastically accepted the opportunity to learn English.

Virginia has made great progress, scoring well on literacy tests and developing confidence in herself. At first, Virginia was hesitant to speak out or to converse in English. Now, she serves as a role model for other students and is eager to speak out in class.

Eventually, Virginia began tutoring an ESL student and soon she was tutoring a group of older, beginning ESL students, committing 96 hours of her own time to the effort. She has also assisted teaching a beginning ESL course and used creative methods that have inspired other instructors. In 2001, Virginia Martinez received the Ruth J. Colvin Student of the Year award at the Literacy Volunteers of America national conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

What is the national definition of family literacy? Find the answer at www.verizonreads.net.

Newspaper Trivia



BERTHE KUINKAM

The following story was written by Berthe, who is an adult learner at the Immigrant Learning Center in Malden, Massachusetts

- There are approximately 10,086 daily, weekly and Sunday newspapers published in the United States.
- An average roll of newsprint weighs about one ton.
- Most newspaper ink is made from soybeans.
- The Boston Nation, a newspaper published in the mid-19th century, had pages 7 1/2 feet long and 5 1/2 feet wide. It took two people to hold the paper to read.
- Almost half the newspapers in the world are published in the United States and Canada.
- A newspaper tears smoothly up and down, but not side to side because the tear goes in the direction of the tiny wood fibers in the newsprint.
- In 1999, almost 70% of all newspapers in the United States were recovered and recycled.

Living in the United States isn't easy without knowledge of English. Everywhere you go is English and you can feel very bad when you don't know how to speak or you don't understand English. And that was the way I felt when I came to this country with my children in October 2000.

Every time I had to go before a person who spoke English, I was afraid. I had to find a school for my children, and that was my first difficulty because they needed to receive shots for their health before they could enter in their classroom. Every time I had to go to the hospital, I postponed because I couldn't explain what I needed.

The first day my children began school, I couldn't talk with their teacher. I couldn't understand what they were saying, and I really didn't want to go to their school because of that anymore. One day, my son asked me why I sent them to that school if I knew that I couldn't help them at home with their homework. It was very difficult for me to know that I couldn't help them with the language at home.

I thought about that and decided to do something. I came here at the Immigrant Learning Center and registered myself. It takes time. I went to the library every single day. I was still afraid to meet people with whom I couldn't communicate. I was afraid, the fear took all my mind, this kind of fear that makes you think that every person in the street is laughing because of you. Then I started to take a class in family literacy.

I had the opportunity to meet parents like myself, in the same case as mine, to speak with in English. The teachers taught me how to read report cards of my children, how to read with them at home, how to practice math at the supermarket, how to speak with the teachers and what kind of questions I can ask them to be really involved in the education of my children.

I enjoy the way we're acting now, my children and I. We have at home a game, the winner is the person who reads the most books in the week. So, Saturday when we are cleaning the house, every person has one hour to tell the stories of the book; if it's interesting or if we laugh a lot, he's the winner and he gets more ice cream or some treats. Before we would go to the supermarket, we would make a list, and I would say, "We have \$60 for the week and you know that every day I have to give \$1.25 to each of you. How much do we need to spend at the supermarket?" That is mathematics; I can help them to find the answer if they didn't know, but together we help each other.

We talk in English. I helped them with their homework. We read a lot. We're trying to translate a French book in English—that is our goal for this summer. The teacher of my son told me one day that I was doing great with English, and I was very happy.

Family literacy brought me confidence. I'm not afraid to talk in English anymore, even before people of Immigrant and Naturalization Services. I really feel comfortable with people around me—at the store, at the subway and everywhere else. And above all, my children are proud of me.

Where can I get statistics about adult literacy? Find the answer at www.verizonreads.net.

Literacy Trivia

- 16 percent of all books sold in the United States are books for children.
- More than \$800 million was spent in 2001 on children's paperbound books.
- About one in seven high school diplomas granted in the United States each year is a GED (General Equivalency Diploma).
- GED graduates increase their earnings on average in the first year by \$2,040.
- 14.2 million adults have earned a GED since 1949.
- Famous GED graduates include Colorado Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, entertainer Anne Murray, Wendy's founder Dave Thomas, comedian Bill Cosby and gymnast Mary Lou Retton.



Paper Flowers

By Wendy Bable

"Benjamin! I'm waiting for an answer!" Miss Thomas stood in the front of the room, glaring at Benjamin. All the other students were sitting with their pencils hovering over their worksheets, hoping that the teacher wouldn't call on them. They were working on fractions today, and nobody had gotten any of the homework problems right. They were glad that Miss Thomas hadn't called on them.

Miss Thomas walked over to Benjamin's desk. "Where is your homework?" she asked in an angry voice. "You don't even have your book open to the right page!" Benjamin looked up at her and then quickly started looking through his math book. All he could find were some little white paper flowers he had tucked into the glossary. He timidly held one out as a present for Miss Thomas. The class giggled.

"Benjamin, this is the third time this week that you haven't done your homework. You'll have to stay after class today. Now, does anyone else have the answer to number seven?" Miss Thomas continued teaching the lesson, and Benjamin sighed. He kept unfolding and refolding one of the paper flowers without really looking at it until the end of class.

As the other students picked up their books

and backpacks and walked out of the classroom, Benjamin slowly went to the teacher's desk. She did not look happy.

"Benjamin, you can't keep forgetting your homework and daydreaming in class! You're too careless, and your grades are dropping. I want you to turn in all three homework assignments you've missed by the end of school tomorrow. Do you understand?" Benjamin nodded his head, and Miss Thomas went to erase the board. As she turned around, he put one of the paper flowers on her desk, then left the room and walked to his next class.

When he sat down to dinner that night, he told his mom what had happened in math class. "'I did my homework, Mom. I know I did.'" Benjamin pushed his mashed potatoes around with his fork and sighed. "I guess I'll have to do it again tonight so I can turn it in tomorrow."

His mother thought for a moment and passed the bowl of carrots. "Did you check your desk upstairs, Benjamin? Maybe you forgot to put your homework in your book after you finished it."

"I don't know. I thought I picked it up. May I be excused, please, so I can go look for it?" Benjamin's mother nodded and he raced up the stairs. He looked on his desk, on the floor around his desk, even in the trash can! All he could find were some more little paper flowers. Disappointed, he plodded back down the stairs and sat at the table. "I couldn't find it, Mom."

Benjamin's mother gave him a sympathetic smile. "I'm sorry, Sweetie. If you help me clear the table, I'll help you catch up on your homework.

Okay?"

"Okay, Mom. Thanks." Benjamin took his plate to the kitchen and helped clear the table.

The next day, Benjamin quietly sat down at his desk and waited for Miss Thomas to begin class. He had all three assignments out, his math book open, and his pencil ready. Miss Thomas put the day's math problems on the board and turned around to face the class.

"Before we start today, I have a surprise for one of you." All the students whispered and wondered who it would be. She pulled out a stack of brightly colored paper and carefully placed it on Benjamin's desk. The whole class was shocked, especially Benjamin! He looked up at Miss Thomas with a curious expression on his face.

"Benjamin, I found your homework." She held out a creased piece of paper with fractions on it. "Do you know what this is?" Benjamin shook his head. "It's the paper flower you gave me yesterday."

Benjamin was amazed! "It is?" he asked quietly.

"Yes, it is. You must have folded your homework into a paper flower," Miss Thomas replied. "I'm sorry I wasn't very patient with you yesterday. I got you some special paper for your paper flowers, so hopefully you won't use your math homework anymore." She smiled at Benjamin as he looked at the beautiful colors on the paper. He didn't say a word—he just looked up at Miss Thomas and smiled the most wonderful smile she'd ever seen.