

## **PRIME TIME FAMILY READING TIME®**,

developed in 1991 by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities (LEH), is a powerful tool to train parents and children to:

- bond together around the act of reading and learning together;
- develop critical thinking skills through discussion of life experiences and values (i.e. fairness, greed, and deceit) introduced in children's literature;
- express their viewpoints and at the same time hear opposing opinions;
- encourage low-literacy/low-income parents to enter or continue their own educational programs; and,
- help parents and children become active library users.

PRIME TIME is a 6-8 week humanities-based reading program. A university scholar (who functions as a discussion leader) and storyteller conduct weekly book discussion and storytelling sessions based on award-winning children's books. It targets low-income and/or low literacy adults and their 6-10 year old at-risk children, especially those who are infrequent library users.

### **KEY COMPONENTS**

- quality children's literature (see sample book list on other side)
- trained teams (scholar, storyteller and library coordinator)
- services and incentives to overcome barriers to participation –
  - preschool coordinator to conduct activities with preschool age children
  - transportation where needed
  - healthy meals or snacks
  - door prizes

### **PRIME TIME SUCCESS**

Evaluation of PRIME TIME to date by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities indicates it has made an impact on families in the way parents and children talk together – 74% of parents report that PRIME TIME enhanced discussion with reading, fostered more reading or a better quality of reading time, or led to better interactions with their children. Also, 100% of participants have library cards by the time they finish the program.

PRIME TIME has been commended for its quality and lauded as a national standard for excellence in programming for children and youth at risk. It won the *Public Library Association's 2003 Advancement of Literacy Award*. In 2000, it received the *Coming Up Taller Award* from the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities and the *Helen and Martin Schwartz Prize* from the Federation of State Humanities Councils.

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**PRIME TIME** has four reading series available. Here is a sample of one.

### **Favorite Series (PRIME TIME 1)**

- Session One    **The Oral Tradition** – A demonstration and background of the oral tradition as it leads to the written word and reading. Jump rope rhymes ■ Mother Goose rhymes ■ poems
- Fairness        **“Do the Right Thing”** -- *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* by John Scieszka ■ *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears* by Verna Aardema ■ *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst
- Greed            **“What’s in it for Me?”** - *The Talking Eggs* by Robert D. San Souci ■ *Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters* by John Steptoe ■ *Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock* by Eric Kimmel
- Courage        **“No Guts, No Glory”** -- *Lon Po Po* by Ed Young ■ *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak ■ *Abiyoyo* by Pete Seeger
- Dreams         **“Dare to Dream”** - *Fanny’s Dream* by Carolyn Buehner ■ *Amazing Grace* by Mary Hoffman ■ *Wagon Wheels* by Barbara Brenner
- Cleverness     **“Find a Way”** - *Flossie and the Fox* by Patricia McKissack ■ *Monkey and the Crocodile* by Paul Galdone ■ *Dr. DeSoto* by William Steig
- Coping         **“Deal with It”** - *Ira Sleeps Over* by Bernard Waber ■ *Everett Anderson’s Goodbye* by Lucille Clifton ■ *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein
- Determination **“Just Do It”** - *Follow the Drinking Gourd* by Jeanette Winter ■ *The Dancing Man* by Ruth Lercher Borstein ■ *The Very Best of Friends* by Margaret Wild

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The dynamic of a Prime Time discussion is seen in the folk tale [Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears](#), as described by PRIME TIME scholar Robert Becker:

“...The story is funny and dramatic and grabs children’s attention from the first, but it also deals directly with the matter of justice ... In the story, the mosquito shoulders the whole blame for the disastrous consequences of a long string of actions by nine different animals. Discussion leaders might ask, is it fair to blame the mosquito for everything? Shouldn’t some of the other animals share some of the blame? Why?”

“The useful thing about questions like these asked of children’s stories like this one is that none of them have obvious right or wrong answers. Or rather, all of them have several apparent answers, all different, and none unquestionably right or wrong. . . . To illustrate how important the issues raised by a folk tale like this are even today, consider that the courts are now debating just the moral and legal questions raised by Aardema’s tale. If a bartender sells you the drink that makes you drunk, and you drive off and have a wreck, is the bartender in part responsible for the accident? If someone buys a gun at Wal-Mart and uses it to commit a crime, is Wal-Mart in some way responsible? Is the gun’s manufacturer? ....”