

APRIL NEWSLETTER

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Luminosity

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We Want to Hear from You About the Parent Newsletter

Welcome to the April edition of the Aim High Parent Newsletter. I would love to hear your thoughts about this and earlier editions.

- What has been useful providing new information and ideas?
- Is it visually stimulating and easy to read?
- Do you share it with your Aim High middle schooler and other family members?
- What would you like to see in future editions?

Please email or call me at jjordan@aimhighstl.org or 314-432-9500, ext 3.

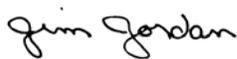
As always. We hope you share this with extended family and friends to let them in on what your achiever is up to during the school year.

Summer will soon be upon us and mark your calendar for the Aim High Family picnic Sunday, May 22 in Tower Grove Park (Turkish Pavilion, same location as last year) from noon to 2:30. We will have a parent session as well as facilitated activities and games for the whole family.

If you would like to volunteer as a parent helper or greater, please contact me.

If you forward this newsletter to others, please use the forward button and enter their name and email in the appropriate boxes. You can also direct friends to our website to view the newsletter at [Aim High Parent Newsletter](#)

Best,



Jim Jordan, Director of Programs Newsletter editor

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12 Ways to Nurture a Love of Reading—Elena Aguilar

FEBRUARY 12, 2016

As a classroom teacher, nurturing a love of reading in my students was almost an obsession. This continued when I had a child. Here are twelve ways to nurture a love of reading in kids.

1. Reflect on reading. We will only do things that we enjoy doing or feel are worth it. When kids have a positive reading experience -- one in which they learned something or felt deeply engrossed in a story -- guide them to name those positive experiences. They need to think and talk about the experience, to mentally register the positive impact, as this may motivate them to repeat the activity.

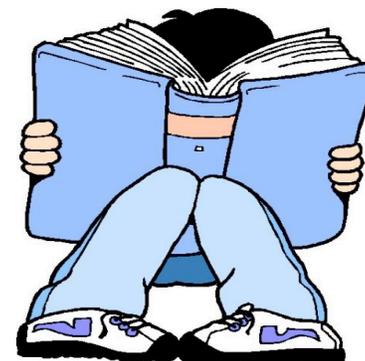


2. Listen to audiobooks. There are so many benefits we can glean from listening to audiobooks. We can set aside the mechanical skills we need to read and just focus on plot, characters, and accents; we can lose ourselves in a story. For struggling readers, this is a treat. This is one way to give them occasional access to age-appropriate texts and to get them hooked into reading.

3. Identify reasons for reading. We aren't going to do something we don't see a purpose for doing. The more we can engage kids in thinking about why they're doing something, the more chances we have of increasing their investment. When I taught middle school, at the beginning of the school year, I always did an activity called, "Why Read?" I asked students to generate as many reasons as they could think of for why we should read. It was fun. I challenged each class to come up with more reasons than the other classes (a light, competitive element generated sixth-grade energies). We kept these up on the wall all year.

4. Generate excitement about words. When reading with kids, identify a word or two per reading session that you can get them excited about, a new word, one that they might, or might not, want to use. Find the joy in discovering a new combination of sounds, of a word that precisely describes a feeling or place. Then, repeat it aloud, and use it in different ways. Just play with it, and have fun. Don't identify too many words per reading session, just one or two will do. Reading is all about words. (On that note, for younger kids, see this beautiful picture book, [The Boy Who Loved Words](#).)

5. Learn about what boys need. My approach to teaching reading in middle school changed radically after I read, [Reading Don't Fix No Chevys: Literacy in the Lives of Young Men](#) by Michael Smith and Jeffrey Wilhelm. As I implemented ideas based on this book, I saw my male students' interest and appreciation for reading skyrocket. I've applied these same ideas while raising my son. Essentially, it's offering them lots of nonfiction and texts that have practical application -- and it has worked for my son, too.



6. Read educational graphic novels. Offer kids a variety of genres, including educational graphic novels. Two very popular and exceptionally well-written graphic novels are: [Resistance](#), a three-part graphic novel about the French resistance to the Nazis, and [Boxers and Saints](#) by Gene Luen Yang, a three-part graphic novel about the Boxer Rebellion. My son has read each of these several times.

7. Read books over and over. Many young children love hearing the same book over and over. Continue this practice as kids get older. Give older kids permission to read books again and again. Ask them what they're experiencing as they reread books: What new insights do they get from the story? How do they see things differently? What did they appreciate this time?

8. Ask kids for their opinion. Ask kids how you think you could nurture their love of reading. Engage them in this process as an active participant. Ask them what gets them excited about reading, what makes them love it. The next suggestion was my 12-year-old son's suggestion when I asked him for his opinion.



9. Talk about the story. During the story, stop and talk with kids about what's happening. Talk about the characters. Ask them to make predictions. Ask them to make connections. These are all basic reading comprehension strategies, but they are also strategies to get kids more deeply engaged in the reading.

10. Teach kids how to read. When I began teaching sixth grade, I undertook a three-year action research project about how I could nurture a love of reading in my students. One of the unexpected findings I arrived at was that I needed to make sure I was explicitly teaching my students how to read. Appreciating narratives, words, character development, or whatever we learned from nonfiction texts wasn't enough. My kids wouldn't love doing something that was really hard. I had to make sure I knew their reading levels and that I helped them fill the gaps in their reading skills.

11. Model being a reader. Teachers *and* parents: read in front of your kids. Talk about reading. Talk about why you read. Make connections between your life and the world and things you've read. Model how reading enriches your life -- maybe through your ability to read recipes, or to assemble a piece of furniture, or to research a question on the internet.

12. Take fieldtrips related to reading. Go to the library for a field trip, (or go on the weekends, parents). Go to a bookstore just to hang out and browse the books. Walk around and talk to kids about what you're seeing in the library or bookstore. What calls your attention? Which titles? Which book covers? Ask them what they notice. Read the backs of books. Get excited. Flip through books. Wander into a section you'd never go to. Send kids on a treasure hunt: find a book about stamp collecting, find a book about ancient Rome, find a memoir by someone with whom you have something in common.



Cool Chemistry at Millipore Sigma

On Saturday March 12th, Aim High Achievers from all three Aim High sites visited MilliporeSigma, a life sciences company (Sigma Aldrich). The morning got rolling right away with an introduction to pursuing a career as a scientist led by two of MilliporeSigma's female scientists. They told the story of how and why they chose their career path and what dreams they hoped to accomplish in their work. There were over a dozen staff who gave up their Saturday morning to be with us and provide a personal behind the scenes experience. After breaking up into six groups we rotated through three sessions.



We toured the research and development facilities where we saw and learned how genome and cell research is conducted. MilliporeSigma then provides research labs and universities around the world with the genetic material and cell lines needed to conduct medical and biological research. Students then dove right into a hands-on lab activity from their fragrance and flavor group. Scientists taught proper pipetting techniques as well as the importance of wafting to protect from direct exposure to chemicals. Students took notes on five different fragrances and then worked to combine the chemicals to create a new unique scent. The groups

then decided what their scent would be used for, what it would be called, the target audience, and the suggested retail price.

The groups' products varied from a \$30 candle named after the group's initials, to a \$4 cologne for all ages and genders to be sold at grocery stores. It was a great exercise in both science and marketing!



After the tour and hands-on activity, students watched a short video that encouraged curiosity as a key factor that propels humanity forward. After the video Aim High achievers were encouraged to write down and discuss their own questions on how the world works.

Thank you to our partners at MilliporeSigma for this interactive and fun Saturday session, we will definitely be back again!

Luminosity Page

Aim High St. Louis is celebrating its 25th anniversary! To commemorate this milestone, Aim High is thrilled to announce the 11th Annual Luminosity cocktail party and fundraiser will be held at Barnett on Washington on Thursday, April 28, 2016.

Several alumni will be in attendance and honored, as well as our founders and founding donors. This event is particularly special because some well-known St. Louis natives will be joining in the celebration. Entertainment will be provided by Brian Owens and the Deacons of Soul. Gary Moran of Soul Tracks recently said: "Brian Owens has been called the next great voice of American soul and, although he's quick to point out he's simply upholding the traditions of other great soul singers from years gone by, Owens clearly relishes the honors bestowed on him, assuming his mantle with utmost seriousness." Local celebrity and former Aim High board member Koran Bolden will emcee the short event program. Mr. Bolden is deeply connected to the mission of Aim High as his own studio, Street Dreamz, seeks to empower urban youth. In 2014, Mr. Bolden was honored by St. Louis County when the County Executive's Office declared March 21st Koran Bolden Day in appreciation of his work with youth in St. Louis County. The event's platinum sponsors are Centene, World Wide Technology, and the Steward Family Foundation.

For more information, contact Natalie Hartwig at nhartwig@aimhighstl.org.



Common Sense Launches Pioneering System to Identify Movies and TV Shows That Teach Character

What if you had a tool that helped you find great media for kids that highlights character strengths like integrity and gratitude?

SXSWedu™ (Austin, Texas) – In today’s 24/7 digital world, kids are saturated by media and parents are concerned about the messages their kids are soaking up. Today Common Sense Media is announcing a new rating tool to help parents discover, use and choose TV shows and films that portray positive character strengths in a way that experts have determined can support kids’ development. The initiative is funded by the John Templeton Foundation and the Bezos Family Foundation.



The 2015 Common Sense Census charted the enormous amount of time that tweens and teens in the US spend with media - 6 and 9 hours a day, respectively. Common Sense also recently hosted a survey of over 3,000 parents asking them to name their top concerns for their child’s education. Overwhelmingly, the number one choice was “my child’s social and emotional learning,” scoring more than “my child’s stress” or “the quality of teaching.”

“Media is a powerful force for both positive and negative learning,” said James P. Steyer, CEO and Founder of Common Sense. “By highlighting storylines that focus on important character strengths, we can harness the power of media and help parents address one of their top education concerns, which is social and emotional learning. We hope this initiative provides parents with information to make educational media choices that will help their kids thrive in today’s world of media and technology.”

The eleven character strengths are: **integrity, compassion, gratitude, self-control, empathy, humility, teamwork, courage, curiosity, communication, and perseverance.** Over 600 movies and TV shows will be rated at commonsense.org, where parents can also find conversation guides to help them talk to their kids about the pro-social messages in each program.

“We often think about the negative effects of media, but it’s also important to look at the positive value of storytelling,” said Richard Weissbourd, a child and family psychologist and senior lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. “Stories can teach children about prosocial behaviors just as they can model antisocial behaviors, such as aggression. Common Sense is helping parents choose the right stories to make family movie night a family learning night.”

About Common Sense

Common Sense is the nation's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to helping families and educators thrive in a world of media and technology. We rate, educate, and advocate on behalf of kids, families, and schools. Common Sense Media, which facilitates the consumer website, offers the world's largest and most trusted library of age-based ratings and reviews of all types of content targeted at kids, and our research-based curriculum and tools are used in over 100,000 U.S. schools. For more information, go to www.common sense.org.

For more information, visit
www.common sensemedia.org

As the nation's trusted source for unbiased information about media content, Common Sense embarked upon a project, with the visionary support of the Bezos Family Foundation and the John Templeton Foundation, to harness the power of media for character development.

With our new website features, there are three ways that the millions of parents and educators who visit Common Sense Media will be able to identify movies and TV shows that encourage positive character development:

1. Search **Common Sense Media's library of content** using advanced tagging filters to find media that matches one or more of 11 character strengths.
2. Browse **Top Picks Lists** of media such as Movies That Inspire Gratitude, TV Shows That Promote Humility, and Movies That Encourage Curiosity.
3. Access Common Sense Media's **Conversation Starters** for tagged media titles. Research shows that parents who co-view and talk about stories with their kids reinforce their own values as well as the content's prosocial messages.

The final list of 11 character strengths featured on the site was chosen after consulting with a multidisciplinary advisory council of academics, educators, and Hollywood executives; conducting an online survey of parents and grandparents; and finalizing the list with our internal team of editors and educators. The tool was introduced today during a SXSWedu panel discussion, "Can Media Teach Character Strengths and Life Skills?," featuring character education experts and entertainment producers.

We encourage you to share this with your network. Please forward this email, and, if possible, post the following on your social media accounts:

TWITTER: New tool from @CommonSense identifies movies + TV that builds kids' character! comsen.se/1Xb1iE4 #storystrong

FACEBOOK: Check out the new tool from Common Sense Media helping parents identify movies and TV shows that build kids' character comsen.se/1UQVW24