

NEA's Read Across America Activity Ideas

Seuss-themed reading parties are the celebration of choice for many of the millions of participants in NEA's Read Across America. While you can't beat the combination of birthday cake, Dr. Seuss titles and guest readers wearing the Cat's traditional red and white striped stovepipe hat, if you're looking for more ways to celebrate, consider some of these tried and true ideas of NEA members.

Spirit Day for Reading

Mark Read Across America Day with Seuss spirit. Have a school-wide Crazy Hat Day, Wear-Red-and-White Day, Foxiest Socks Day, Pajama Day, Wear-Your-Clothes-Inside-Out Day, Wear-Your-Grinchiest-Green-Day or Come-As-Your-Favorite-Seuss-Character Day. Be sure to tie books into your festive-wear theme with read alouds of related titles.

Door Décor

A school-wide door decorating activity gives everyone a chance to show enthusiasm for reading—from the kindergartners to the school nurse. Door décor can feature elements from favorite books or be totally Dr. Seuss themed. Get students involved by using photographs or student drawn self portraits embellished with Cat in the Hat hats, Thing 1 and Thing 2 blue hair, or notable features from other favorite Seuss characters. Don't forget to include a reversible door hanger—Do Not Disturb, We're Reading! / Come In and READ with Us!

Cook Up Some Reading Fun

Serve up some green eggs and ham on Read Across America Day or make these tasty toppers: Cat in the Hat pattern snacks! Provide kids with wooden skewers (or small straws) and red and white foods: banana and strawberry slices; raspberries and mini marshmallows; red pepper and white cheese. Have kids alternate the red and white foods as they put them on the skewer then let them enjoy the snack as you read aloud.

A Chorus of Readers

It's hard not to join in on a reading of a Dr. Seuss book. His inviting rhymes and rhythms are hard to resist! Reading aloud in unison with a whole class or large group is great reading motivation and helps build students' fluency and self-confidence. Plan choral readings of Dr. Seuss titles for the classroom or school-wide assembly. Use a projector to display the books so everyone can see the book and read aloud.

Reading Buddies

Sharing what's inside a book with younger kids is great fun for older readers. Pair students in early elementary grades with older readers from upper grades, middle or high school. Prepare older students to read aloud and work with their younger buddies on a reading related craft such as making bookmarks or writing books of their own.

Literary Field Trip

Plan a field trip to your local library or bookstore. Work with the librarian or bookseller to develop a guided experience for your students that includes time for both exploring and hearing books read aloud. Local libraries and museums also often host exhibitions that focus on children's book authors and bookstores have authors for public readings and events. Take advantage of their efforts and offerings.

Online Reading Action

Bring readers and reading fun to kids through your Internet connection. The [Skype an Author Network](#) can help you plan a virtual visit with an author for a classroom or a school-wide assembly. With [Google Lit Trips](#) students can step into stories they've read and take the journeys of characters from famous literature on the surface of Google Earth. Or you can "Read Across America" with a video call to share a story with classroom or guest reader in another part of the country.

The Reading Challenge

Many schools use Read Across America Day to kick off a school-wide reading challenge. And there's nothing like the promise of an adult to make a fool of himself/herself to inspire readers to read to great lengths. To make the reading challenge work, the challenge must be challenging, but doable, and the incentive, hilarious. Some themes to consider:

- **Human Hot Fudge Sundae.** Challenge kids to read food-themed titles with the reward of turning an authority figure into dessert—a human sundae covered with chocolate syrup and whipped cream!
- **Clowning Around.** If kids meet the challenge of reading a certain number of humorous books, an authority figure dresses as a clown for a day.
- **Looking Good!** Kids reading a remarkable number of books or minutes makes a remarkable change in an authority figure's appearance: shave heads or beards, dye hair outlandish colors, wear costumes or unusual clothes, etc.
- **Animal Love.** Fill your challenge list with books about animals and have your authority figure kiss one (pig, snake, goat, cow, llama, yak) to reward readers for meeting the challenge.

Fill Your Dance Card

The Cat in the Hat Ball has been a popular Read Across America activity for some NEA Higher Education members. Consider holding a Hat and Book Bop of your own! Boogie and browse books in the afternoon with younger students. Or hold a more formal evening affair for older readers—attire is dressy casual, with a hat!

Caught Red Hatted

Some kids long to sneak away and escape inside a book while others need encouragement. Boost book interest by awarding raffle tickets to students “caught” reading. Offer a fabulous Cat in the Hat hat, a lunch of green eggs and ham with the principal, and books as prizes. The [Get Caught Reading campaign](#) has more suggestions for catching readers.