

Reading Is Power

Newsletter of the Open Book Program
Fall, 2000

Open Book Continues to Expand Program now in seven schools, U of C, and McDonald's

The Open Book Program is now in seven Chicago Public Schools (CPS), at the University of Chicago Office of Special Programs' College Prep (OSP-CP) and at the 35th St. Jazz McDonalds. Students at each location meet after school or on Saturdays to explore literature through reading, writing, dramatic arts and media.

"We are pleased at the rate that Open Book is expanding," states Executive Director Marrice Coverson. "The good word about Open Book is spreading and we've received many requests and inquiries from throughout the Chicago area. Our objective is to grow the program at a measured pace in order to ensure that all student participants receive the same high quality activities and experiences."

One of those who heard the good word about Open Book is OSP-CP Director

Larry Hawkins who decided to launch the program during the OSP-CP summer program this year. He was so impressed that Open Book is being incorporated into OSP-CP's Saturday program for the 2000/2001 school year. "Open Book engages the students so well on every level," says Hawkins. "It's like a spirit rally. I participated in the class and got caught up in it."

New to Open Book this fall is Kohn Elementary School at 10414 S. State St. and McDonalds Restaurant, 207 E. 35th St. Both of these locations, as well as the other six CPS sites meet after school. Returning CPS sites include Esmond, 1865 W. Montvale, Mayo, 249 E. 37th St., Raymond, 3663 S. Wabash, Shoop, 1460 W. 112th St., Wells Preparatory, 244 E. Pershing Rd. and Williams, 2710 S. Dearborn.

Parents, teachers and principals are

pleased with the results of last year's program and delighted that Open Book is back for the 2000/2001 school year. Ms. Lee Brown, principal of Shoop Elementary, for example, points out that Open Book brings reading to life for the kids. "Occasionally they invite me up and I have observed that they have these really interesting discussions about the books," she says. "These kids are using higher level thinking skills." Ms. Lee also notes that Open Book participants showed more growth in their reading comprehension skills on the Iowa test.

"This will be another exciting year for Open Book participants," promises Coverson. "We're starting out the year with *Jazmin's Notebook* and *My Man Blue* by African American author Nikki Grimes. We've also launched a Web site and have added an Internet component to our curriculum."



The Open Book Program was inaugurated this summer a component of the University of Chicago (U of C) Office of Special Programs' College Prep (left). Open Book continues during the school year at U of C on Saturdays. Kohn Elementary School, 10414 S. State St., became part of the Open Book family this fall. Kohn students are pictured with Teacher Dina Everage and Dramatic Artist Norissa Pearson.



*Open Book Program Founder and Executive Director Marrice Coverson is pictured with Glennette Tilley Turner, author of *Running For Our Lives* and students from Raymond School.*

A Message from Our Founder...

An Open Book is an Open Door

When we open doors for children to understand the world through books, we are contributing significantly to our society. I believe that everyone should be given the opportunity to explore the world through books. I remember when I first started the Open Book Program. A fairly well-known artist stopped by to see me just before I left my previous employment. The artist asked me what I would be doing when I changed positions. I told him about the Open Book Program. Then the artist revealed a secret about himself. "I wish there had been a program like Open Book when I was growing up," he said. "If there was, then perhaps I would be able to read today."

I was astonished because in all my years of working with this man, he had never shared this information. This artist got along in life by depending on others to read for him. How sad and how unnecessary!

My goal is to create as many avenues as possible so that parents and children can learn to read—not just at the basic level, but at the level where reading becomes a joy and an adventure. The Open Book Program's goal is to expand the imagination of children through books. Technology has taken a lot from the imagination. At Open Book, we are using the best of technology like video and the Internet to foster books and imagination. We are creating opportunities for all people to once again enjoy the world through books. We visualize a day when all individuals will know the joy and excitement of reading and books.

-- Marrice Coverson

Three Books Three Authors Three Interviews



Face to face interviews with children's book authors is an important part of the Open Book Program. Pictured here with students are Darwin McBeth Walton, author of "Dance Kayla!" (top), Jan Spivey Gilchrist, author of "Madelia" (middle) and Glennette Tilley Turner, author of "Running For Our Lives" (bottom). Excerpts of these interviews are published on the Open Book Web site at www.openbookprogram.org.

Success is the Goal of Open Book

Success stories are a hallmark of the Open Book Program. Due to limited space, only a few of those stories can be featured in this newsletter. For more success stories, as well as author interviews and examples of original student writing and artwork, go to the Internet and visit the Open Book Web site at www.openbookprogram.org.

The Stories

Velma Oliver, a student at Mayo, was all excited when she came back from Christmas vacation. She had read the Open Book selection *Madelia* by Jan Spivey Gilchrist to her family during their Christmas party. Then she got her cousins together and performed the story. She reports that she received high praise from her family for her efforts. There were twelve people at the party.

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When Shekeria Gatewoods and Rob Scott from Raymond Elementary came to school on Monday, January 10, they were all excited. That weekend, they had attended an event connected with the Chicago Housing Authority's (CHA) initiative to give books to each child living in a CHA building. Darwin McBeth Walton, author of *Dance, Kayla!*, was a guest author at this event. "We read your book," the enthusiastic students said as they met the author. The event organizers arranged to have the students' pictures taken with Ms. Walton. Then on January 12th, the students got to meet Ms. Walton again when she came to Raymond as part of the "meet the author" portion of the Open Book Program.

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At Williams School, teacher Brenda Wall was impressed with

the improvement of Open Book participant Toni Colon. "Toni has made a drastic improvement in her reading since she joined the program," states Ms. Wall. "She came in during the later part of 1999 and discovered her hidden talents through acting. She is extremely creative as well as dramatic.

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Ms. Lee Brown, principal of Shoop School, noticed that students who participated in Open Book did a bit better on the Iowa test. "I just happened to check the progress of some of the kids in the program," she stated. "They showed more growth in their reading comprehension skills than they had in the past."

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The students at Mayo School did a journal exercise in which they wrote letters to Open Book Executive Director Marrice Coverson. Here are some excerpts:

Malisa St. Clair: "...Thank you for bringing Open Book to wonderful Mayo School...I wouldn't read more if it wasn't for you..."

Angel Buckles: "...Thank you for having Open Book at our school. I really enjoy it. I hope we can have it again...."

Warren Jackson: "...This Open Book Program is really fun..."

Proud Parents...



All four of Pamela Ward's children enrolled in the Open Book Program at Esmond School. Her oldest son, Ryan, 12, was the first to join. He was so enthusiastic about the program that Daniel, Julian and Cynthia all begged to sign up. "I've never seen them excited about doing something after school before," says Mrs. Ward.



Diana Stewart, mother of Deatra Barnes at Wells Preparatory says: "My daughter loves this program. It's the only thing she talks about." Mrs. Stewart is impressed with how the Open Book activities have helped Deatra with her reading and spelling.

Visit Us in Cyberspace

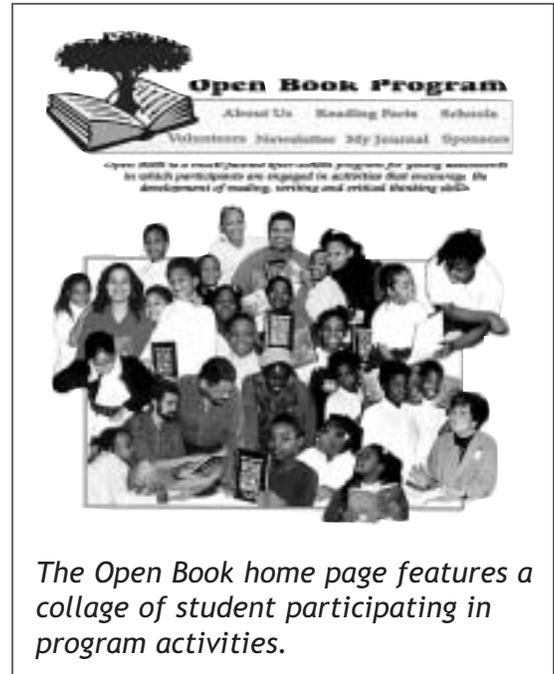
Open Book Launches Web Site at www.openbookprogram.org

The Open Book Program is now on the World Wide Web at <http://www.openbookprogram.org>. "We are thrilled to have an address in cyberspace," states Open Book Executive Director Marrice Coverson. "This puts the program and our student participants on the cutting edge of technology."

In addition to information on the mission, goals and objectives of the Open Book Program, the site is designed to showcase success stories and the creative work of student participants. Sections at the site include "About Us," "Reading Facts," "Schools," "Volunteers," "Newsletter," "My Journal" and "Sponsors."

In the "School" section, visitors can get a glimpse of the students as they participate in a variety of activities. In the "My Journal" section, links are provided to student work including poetry, prose, artwork and author interviews.

"Our aim," says Coverson, "is to make the site interactive. Students will be able to exchange messages with other participants and post original work. Eventually, the site will feature audio and video clips produced by the students." Coverson also notes that an Internet training component has been added to this year's Open Book curriculum.



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