

Reading Rover Program Evolves at Alden Elementary School

Therapy dogs are being utilized at Alden Place Elementary to assist students with reading fluency. The Canine Links program provides volunteers and their trained therapy dogs each Thursday for an hour session.

Students are chosen to read aloud a book of their choice for 20-25 minutes. The volunteers support the reading by assisting with context clues and some pronunciation.

Our Millbrook PTO initiated the program last school year, and it has grown due to a refocus on student support in developing skills. According to Mr. Libka, Alden Place principal, "We have tied the program to one classroom in order to provide individual students a regular opportunity to practice with the volunteers and their dogs. PTO president, Kellen Lehmkuhl, and Canine Link coordinator, Susan Fireman, brainstormed the classroom connection

this fall, and it's paid off for Alden students."

Currently, Mrs. Loparco's classroom enjoys the weekly visit and has since October. Her students recently wrote letters to

Canine Link to express their appreciation and to comment how the program has assisted their reading skills. They certainly enjoyed meeting the dogs: Lily, Scoop, Pilot, Duke and Sassy. The program will be moved soon to another classroom to support their reading fluency. Two more dogs will also be added to the program making for 5-6 weekly teams.



Dear Dog Club,

I love reading to the dogs and I know that it helps me learn a lot. It is fun to hear about the dogs week in the beginning. I feel more comfortable (secure) reading to a dog and grown ups. The adults help with sounding out unknown words. The adults can help you read and read. Reading with the dogs is fun and helpful.

Sincerely,
Angelina