



Our mission is to make reading fun for children so they become confident, lifelong readers.



## The Magic

When children read to a dog, the outcomes are amazing! It's non-judgemental, children's focus improves, literacy skills increase and confidence soars. The non-judgmental, loving nature of dogs gives this program its magic and helps children relax, open up, try harder and have fun reading to a friendly and calm dog.

Story Dogs is based on the successful American literacy program **Reading Education Assistance Dogs** (R.E.A.D.). The R.E.A.D program was launched in 1999 in Utah USA, as the first comprehensive literacy program built around the appealing idea of children and young adolescents reading to dogs.

Reading sessions take place in a quiet area of the school grounds, such as the library or outside the classroom. A reading session is approximately 20 minutes long, where each child is one-on-one with the dog team. Books are chosen to suit the student's reading level. During the session, the handler often speaks through the dog, such as; "Sam doesn't understand what is happening on this page, could you help him out?" The child becomes the teacher; and their confidence soars!

Our volunteers come with fun, interesting books, specifically chosen for beginner readers. The students also have input into what they read. We encourage the students to write letters to the dogs at home, thereby encouraging literacy skills.

# The Nuts and Bolts

## **The dogs**

Learning to read is often less about intellectual limitation than about overcoming fears. "Fear can destroy intelligence," says educator William Ayers. Animals are ideal reading companions because they promote relaxation and lower blood pressure, do not judge, laugh or criticise and allow children to proceed at their own pace.

## **The volunteers**

Story Dogs handlers are volunteers trained to teach emergent readers. This ensures the handler will not judge the child and will help in a non-threatening way. We are fully insured and our handlers have 'Working With Children' checks as per each state's regulations.

## **Which children are chosen for the program?**

The children are usually Year 2 students generally between the ages 7- 8 years old who are chosen by the school. We do not take children below Year 1. Story Dogs does not assess the children in any way as the sessions are designed to be as fun and non-threatening as possible. We rely on assessment results taken by the school. Parental consent is required before a child can participate in the program.