

Dear Lions Club,

Thank you again to Janyce Rossall, the Lions Club, and all of the generous volunteers for their commitment and dedication to helping our first grade students at Echo Loder Elementary school.

As an educator, one of my priorities is helping students gain the skills to become successful lifelong readers. Many of my students struggle with reading and fluency. Let us face it, if reading is difficult for a student, they are less likely to want to practice or read for pleasure. My students practice their high frequency words and learn strategies to decode unknown words, but still struggled reading fluently. Students are expected to be able to read 60 words per minute to be considered fluent readers by the end of first grade. There is continued pressure for educators to help students read at grade level to avoid retention as mandated by the recently adopted Nevada K.I.D.S Read program, which requires interventions for all K-3 students who are struggling in reading.

When Janyce approached me in November of 2017, I learned about the program they have for saccadic fixation screening. Kindergarten and First grade are crucial years where students are learning foundational skills to become successful readers. In kindergarten, most student text are single lined sentences accompanied with a picture. When students come to first grade, their on level reading material contains approximately 60-80 words. When students complete first grade they are expected to read a DRA level 16 with full fluency and comprehension. Reading fluency and comprehension go hand in hand- if you are not a fluent reader and skip lines of text, you cannot comprehend the text. A DRA 16 contains less picture support, varied sentence patterns, has up to six lines of text on each page and contains approximately 250-350 words. What a big leap! The program the Lions Club conducts just makes sense. Students will be unable to read high level, multi lined text, at a rate of 60 words per minute if their eyes simply do not have the ability to track word to word, phrase to phrase, and wrap their reading to continue to the next line. My students and their parents would have never known they struggled with this eye movement if it were not for the Lion's Club because this is not something tested or monitored with yearly eye exams by their doctor.

At first, I was so excited about the program, but with 26 students and all of the required instructional minutes and curriculum, I told her that I simply did not have the time to set aside to do this with my students. Janyce along with many volunteers offered to come in one morning to screen over 100 first graders. The entire process took under 1 hour! After analyzing their data, they selected six students from my class that scored "at risk" and stated that they would benefit from daily metronome practice. Those six students struggled with reading fluency, but sadly, I did not have the time to pull another small group to practice each day in addition to the guided reading and reading intervention they receive under the Nevada K.I.D.S Read mandate.

Again, Janyce and her wonderful volunteers offered to come in daily for ten minutes to work with those struggling students. Janyce and her crew were excited and committed! They came every day and graciously worked around our busy schedule of testing and our end of the year activities. The Lions Club supplied the metronome practice activities and materials. The students looked forward to meeting with the Lions Club and often referred to themselves as "The Lions Club Kids." The daily activities were fun, engaging, and students did not even realize they were