



November/  
December  
2010

# Friends of Different Learners

2010/2011

## MEETING SCHEDULE

Meetings begin at 7:00 p.m.  
Birmingham Covington School  
(BCS)

1525 Covington Road  
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48301

Meetings are on the first Thursday  
of the month unless indicated by  
an \*.

Meetings begin with a brief busi-  
ness meeting followed by the  
Guest Speaker and topic presenta-  
tion.

Informal Networking opportuni-  
ties are available after every meet-  
ing to share ideas about how to  
help our different learners and to  
learn from each other.

*Friends meetings  
and functions  
are open to everyone!*

**December 2 • 6:00-9:00 p.m. \***  
**HOLIDAY BAZAAR @ BCS**

**January 20, 2011 \***  
**CAMP & RESOURCE FAIR**

**February 3**  
**DISABILITY AWARENESS  
WORKSHOP**  
*for Friends Members*

**March 3**  
**SOCIAL SKILLS**

**April 14\***  
**NETWORKING**

**May 12\***  
**APPRECIATION AWARDS**

**June 2**  
**WRAP UP/  
PLANNING MEETING/  
BOARD ELECTIONS**

More meeting information  
in the sidebars  
on pages 2 and 3.

## President's Letter

*Dear Friends,*

Hello, and welcome to the second quarter of the school year! Time sure flies when you're having fun, right?

This year, at our "What's New in Special Education" meeting in October, we asked attendees to write questions for administration in order to help administration update its FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) page on the website. So many of the questions that we got that night had to do with teacher training. As President of Friends, I meet with Dr. Larson and Kelly Lovik each month, and this month we discussed the issue of teacher training.

If you have questions about what training your teacher has had, the administration suggests that the best way to find out is to ask your child's teacher! It is important to keep the conversation friendly. Remember that you and your teacher are working together to be sure that your child receives the best possible educational experience. If you are not satisfied with the answer, you could ask the special education supervisor for your child to assist. Remember, the "Who to Call" chain of command is listed on the district's website. It is helpful not just when you have a problem, but when you want information.

It is true that you could get a record of your child's teacher's training through a Freedom of Information Act request, however that record is likely to be incomplete. Experienced teachers generally don't list all training that they complete on the district's system for tracking training, because they have more training than they need for their certification. So, once again, if you want to get the best possible information regarding the teacher's training, the very best resource is the teacher!

This year, the district plans to offer an unprecedented amount of training. Dr. Larson and Kelly Lovik discussed this in detail at the coffee that they hosted at the administration building on October 27. Some of this training will focus on the new technology in the district, and other training will focus on areas where there is just more to learn. Our teachers are constantly learning, and even teaching each other what they learn. If you hear of a teacher in the district who has been trained in something that you would like to know more about, contact them, or ask your child's teacher to do so! That teacher may be able to work with your child's teacher to help them get up to speed in a new area, even without taking time away from the classroom for formal training.

If you are uncomfortable opening the training discussion with your teacher, here is an idea: give them a copy of this letter from me. Hand them the letter, and say "Friends of Different Learners says that the best way to find out about training is through the teacher. Can you tell me about the training that you have had that will help you to be a great teacher for my child?"

Thanks for all that you do to help our kids and our district!

*Warm Regards,*

*Diana Moak,  
President of Friends of Different Learners*

***Kids First. Understand their differences. Focus on their needs. Educate all.***

## Administrator's Letter

*Hello Friends,*

As the days grow shorter and the temperature gets colder, we are reminded of just how quickly each school year goes by! By now, most of the buildings have hosted their Special Education Building Coffees with our final ones wrapping up by the end of November. Overall, the coffees have been well attended with many familiar faces in attendance as well as many new faces. While the coffees have provided wonderful opportunities to provide information to parents and answer questions in a more personal manner, more importantly it has been exciting to see the growth that I have noted in the networking capacity among parents and staff since these began last school year which ultimately provides a richer, more collaborative learning community for students. There is much research which reflects that increased parent involvement and collaboration with schools results in improved student achievement, so we are clearly moving in the right direction!

The end of October marked the end of Maria Power serving as our Special Education Liaison. Maria did an outstanding job enhancing communication between the school district staff members and our parent community. She was also instrumental in providing resources and information in a variety of ways to stakeholders on Local, County, State and Federal practices and requirements. Maria conducted surveys which provided us with a wealth of information from parents and staff members, she coordinated informational and interactive meetings, and she created, updated and maintained technological initiatives, such as the department webpage, eNews, and Blog, just to name a few! In addition, Maria was instrumental in assessing the data and information obtained which allowed us some valuable opportunities to improve past performance. It is impossible to capture all that Maria Power was able to do in such a short period of time, but we appreciated her hard work and dedication. We will benefit for years to come from all of her efforts. Thank you Maria!!

Many thanks to Friends of Different Learners for your dedication and commitment to completing "A Parent's Guide to Special Education" in collaboration with Birmingham Public Schools. This was one of the final projects that Maria Power was involved and is reflective of the accomplishments that can be achieved when strong partnerships are established. A packet of information is being sent out this month to all parents of students who currently have an active Individualized Education Plan (IEP) which will include the Parent's Guide as well as some additional information and resources that we hope will be of interest and helpful to you. We appreciate those of you who were able to volunteer your time and energy to assist us with this.

Finally, we are excited to announce that Midvale Center is now offering parents a childhood development Resource Library. This library will be available to both parents and teachers within the district. There are many books, binders and resources available for review. Please check it out and give us your feedback. This is yet another example of collaboration between parents, the district and support from the Birmingham Educational Foundation. Thank you all!!

*To everyone, have a happy holiday season!*

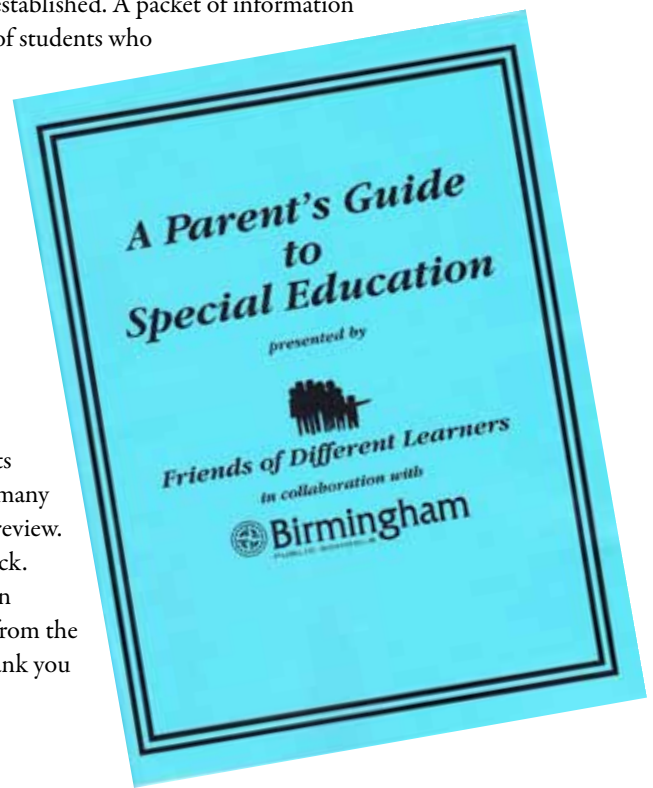
*Kelly Friedland-Lovik  
Executive Director of Special Education*

### Disability Awareness Workshop for Friends Members

Our February meeting this year will provide Friends members with a chance to experience the DAW themselves! The Disability Awareness Workshop (DAW) is a hands-on, activity-based workshops whose main emphasis is to help students understand the challenges of daily living for individuals with disabilities. *Friends* presents the DAW annually to every fourth grader in the district (5/6 at BCS). To date more than 9,000 students, teachers, transportation staff, and parents have learned through this experience that people should be respected no matter how they look, act, walk or talk. If you are interested in helping to coordinate the DAW at your school, please contact JoEllen Schwartz at [joellenschwartz@gmail.com](mailto:joellenschwartz@gmail.com).

### Appreciation Awards

The May meeting is devoted to honoring our partners in education, BPS teachers and staff, who have made a significant difference in the life of a different learner. *Friends* members select up to two individuals who have gone the extra mile for a different learner and those education partners are honored at an evening reception that is filled with entertainment, heartwarming stories and an awards presentation. If you are interested in helping with the Appreciation Awards, or even in co-chairing this event, please contact Aryn Zwierchowski at [arynz@comcast.net](mailto:arynz@comcast.net).



# Holiday Boutique Bazaar

Thursday, December 2, 2010 • 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Birmingham Covington School • 1525 Covington Road, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48301

**Come enjoy our one-stop holiday shopping event  
at our second annual "Friends Holiday Boutique Bazaar."**

**Local Artisans featuring handmade jewelry,  
photography, purses, beauty gifts and more.**

Sponsored by **FRIENDS OF DIFFERENT LEARNERS.**

To learn more about vendor participation,  
please visit [www.friendsofdifferentlearners.org](http://www.friendsofdifferentlearners.org).

## *We Welcome Vendors*

Sterling Brady Designs • Jewelry

7 Siblings • Purses

Jessica's Natural Foods • Granola

So Zen Designs • Jewelry

Monica Bunde Photography  
Landscape Photography

Paige Hanley • Home Goods

Discovery Toys • Educational Toys

Bower Family Bower Books • Children Books

Mary Kay • Makeup

Stella And Dot • Jewelry

Tuttle Town Books • Book Author

Seaholm Annex  
Jewelry And Dog Treats

Laura Horvath • Antique Decorative Plates

S.P Jones Creations • Knits

Laura Turner Beaded Jewelry

Cara Rippet Golf Cart  
Seat Pads And Bookmarks

Soulful Earth Herbals • Lotions, Soaps...

Melany Hallgren Photography

Groves Links Cookbooks

Ima's Handmade Bags And Mittens

Passion 4 Fashion • Clothing

Yvette's' African Purses

Post Secondary Ai Cards And Tote Bags

Derby Ai Class • Candy Boxes

German Knife Sets

Thirty-One Gifts

Strike One • Book Author

Rosemarie Rust Tupperware

Pampered Chef

Debby's Friend • Antique Jewelry

Sally Baggett  
Pony -Tail Holders And Holiday Pins

The Candyville Gift Co.  
Retro Lunch Boxes, Piggy Banks

*For information on how you can participate in the Holiday Boutique Bazaar  
contact Maureen Gibbons at 248-593-8251 or [maureengibbons@comcast.net](mailto:maureengibbons@comcast.net).*

## *Camp & Resource Fair January 20, 2011*

Held annually in January, the Camp and Resource Fair is an information fair servicing families in Southeastern Michigan seeking summer and year round programs that accept children with special needs in both self-contained and inclusion environments. The 2011 Camp and Resource Fair will be at Groves High School Commons on January 20. If you are interested in helping to organize the fair, or in having a booth for your organization, please contact Aryn Zwierzchowski at [arynz@comcast.net](mailto:arynz@comcast.net).

## *The LINKS Program*

LINKS is a peer-to-peer support program facilitated by BPS social workers and staff. Students are able to build new friendships as well as learn to relate to people with different needs and develop an understanding of individual differences. If you are interested in helping with LINKS, please contact Leigh Herbster at [leighherbster@yahoo.com](mailto:leighherbster@yahoo.com).

## *Holiday Bazaar December 2, 2010*

The December Holiday Bazaar offers unique holiday shopping showcasing local artisans and handmade crafts by students and organizations that support students with special needs. Jewelry, food, cards and many other gifts can be purchased for teachers, friends, family and kids of all ages. Proceeds support the work of *Friends* and the community of different learners. If you are interested in helping with the Bazaar, or if you would like to reserve a table to sell your goods, please contact Maureen Gibbons at [Maureengibbons@comcast.net](mailto:Maureengibbons@comcast.net).

## Meeting Notes

Meeting Minutes for November 4, 2010 Friends of Different Learners Meeting

Topic: Curriculum Modification

President, Diana Moak called the meeting to order at 7:05. Bob Kotrba, the new district Assistive Technology Specialist was introduced.

Bylaw Revisions were voted on and passed. Diana reminded everyone about the Holiday Bazaar, Camp Fair and Disability Awareness Workshop

Questions from last month's meeting were reviewed by President Moak.

Jodie Middleton, Middle School Supervisor - Eton Academy discussed Eton's Accommodations vs. Modification approach of "meeting the child where they are at."

Maureen Martin, Special Educator with Birmingham Public Schools discussed BPS's approach to Accommodations and Modifications approach of "As Special As Necessary." Additionally she provided reviewed tools that are used in classrooms.

Renee Boogren, Educator and BPS parent suggested that all parents should review their child's GLCEs (Grade Level Content Expectations) available on the MDE website prior to an IEP.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:00.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Peggy Branch*

2010-2011

### Friends Board

#### Board President

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## Help Wanted

Each year in May, FRIENDS produces an Appreciation Awards Ceremony. This is an event where any FRIENDS member can nominate 1-2 BPS employees to be honored. It is a special night for parents and staff and is eagerly anticipated by all. As well, it is very fun to plan. This year, we are looking for a new person to co-chair the event, with our experienced past chair, Aryn Zwierzchowski. If you enjoy planning parties and want to explore your creative side, please consider this position. Besides the co-chair position, there is a need for 3-4 people to join the committee. The framework is already there - you just need the inspiration.

### **FRIENDS NEEDS WEB SAVVY INDIVIDUALS!**

Friends of Different Learners has benefited from several talented volunteers, including some currently in high school, who have helped develop and maintain our web site. We could use additional help from anyone who is able to navigate their way around a web site. If you can help FRIENDS update and improve our web site please contact Jo Ellen Schwartz at 248- 646-5172 or joellen11@comcast.net.

We need of articles for our next newsletter. From allergy sensitive recipes to book reviews we want to hear from you our loyal readers. If you write an article that you would like to see published, please send it to our current editor, Karen Selby, at selbykl@udmercy.edu. Feel free to forward completed original work or ideas for articles. If you include pictures please remember that we will need releases.

Friends of Different Learners is a non-profit organization that depends upon our willingness to work together. Want to help Friends, but don't know where to start? Contact Diana Moak for volunteer opportunities by phone 248-644-7222 or email DPMoak@aol.com.

# What are Considerate Texts

By Renee Boogren

For many different learners, especially those in the upper grades, reading is difficult. Parents get frustrated trying to motivate their student to read the assigned books for their English Language Arts class or as a leisure time alternative. Help is here! There are reading materials available for students who are not reading at grade level but need books that are age appropriate. Whether you need to match the content to titles of assigned text or your special learner's interest, considerate texts are available.

According to Richard C. Anderson and B.B. Armbruster's article "Studying" (from the Handbook of Reading Research), "considerate text" is that which assists the reader in the course of reading itself, in particular allowing poor readers to understand the message and information of the written piece. A "considerate text":

- is well-written,
- is well-organized
- signals to the reader the organization of thought

Basically, "considerate text" teaches reading and content simultaneously. Graphic novels are a great choice for struggling older readers when they are well written, well-organized, and the pictures are helping the reader understand the text. Even Beowulf is available in graphic novel format.

Considerate text can allow a student access to content information at a reading level (and format) which they can comprehend. Birmingham Public Schools recently purchased the Don Johnston Start to Finish materials which include; Start to Finish Literacy Starters, Start to Finish Core Content and Start to Finish Library. These materials provide students access to grade level materials at a reading level which they can access independently. The materials are available in audio, computer CD and book formats and the electronic versions of the books are compatible with the Don Johnston Solo software which include a text reader (reads the text out loud to the student). The Solo software text reader can also be used with Bookshare (www.bookshare.org accessible books and periodicals for students with print disabilities)..

## Learn More About Considerate Text

Below is just a partial list of sources of considerate text with low readability and high interest titles.

### *Brodart Books*

<http://www.books.brodart.com/Content3.aspx?P=21>

### *Sundance Publishing*

<http://www.sundancepub.com/c/@J3wBR2cZS82bw/Pages/hslit.html>

### *Barbs Books*

<http://www.barbsbooks.com/RemediRd.htm>

### *Firelight Books*

<http://www.firelightbooks.com/>

### *Don Johnston Start to Finish Books*

<http://www.donjohnston.com/products/reading/index.html>

### *Keystone Books from Capstone Publishers*

<http://www.capstonepub.com/product/9781434210753>

### *Orca Book*

<http://www.orcabook.com/showproducts.cfm?FullCat=20>

### *High Interest Low Vocabulary Books*

<http://www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/hilo.html>

### *Engage Students with High Interest Low Readability Books*

[http://www.youthreach.ie/webwheel/reports/READ%20-%20hi\\_low%20books.pdf](http://www.youthreach.ie/webwheel/reports/READ%20-%20hi_low%20books.pdf)

### 2010-2011 Friends Committee Chairs

**Appreciation Awards**  
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**Building Reps.**  
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## Who is a Different Learner?

Different Learner is an inclusive term. Some different learners have identified disabilities such as autism, AD/HD or dyslexia and others simply have unique learning styles that present challenges in the classroom. Topics addressed by *Friends* may be specific to students with special needs or may be relevant to all students.

## Earn Money for Friends every time you shop at Kroger

It's Easy... just shop, swipe your card & earn!

Follow these simple instructions to register Friends of Different Learners as your designated Community Rewards recipient with your Kroger Plus Shopper's Card on-line. Kroger will pay up to \$500,000 on a quarterly basis to participating organizations based on their percentage of spending as it relates to the total spending of all participating Kroger Community Rewards organizations.

- Go to [www.kroger.com](http://www.kroger.com).
- Click on the picture of the Kroger savings club card.
- If you have not registered your card online, click on the registration link. Kroger will send a confirmation e-mail for you to complete before proceeding to the next step.
- If you have registered your card online, sign in, and edit your savings card information.
- Under Community Rewards type "Friends of Different Learners" or use NPQ number 90711.
- Select "Friends of Different Learners" and click Save Changes.
- Your card will now be registered and you will start earning points for *Friends* every time you shop at Kroger!



## Summer And Year Round Programs For Children With Special Needs!

Friends of Different Learners is pleased to sponsor our annual Camp and Resource Fair 2011 on Thursday evening, January 20, 2011. Since 2003, this Fair has been an information vehicle servicing families seeking programs that accept children with special needs in both self-contained and inclusion environments. Participants will include camps, therapist, tutors and more!

Over 140 organizations from across Michigan (and a few others just outside Michigan) have been invited. Last year we had representation from 50 organizations and over 125 families attended. Each organization attending the Fair will have a display table manned by a representative with whom you will be able to speak. Additionally, most organizations bring along various printed information and video. Friends of Different Learners is excited to offer this service to parents each year. Learning about qualified and appropriate programs can be challenging and frustrating. This event has grown into a valuable resource for families of children with special needs.

**What:** *Camp And Resource Fair 2011*

**Where:** *Groves High School Commons, 20500 West Thirteen Mile Rd., Beverly Hills, Mi 48025 (Enter School From West Parking Lot)*

**When:** *Thursday, January 20, 2011, 7:00 – 9:00 P.M.*

For any other information about the Camp and Resource Fair or for information about Friends of Different Learners please contact one of our Camp and Resource Fair committee members.

**ARYN ZWIERZCHOWSKI 248-552-1335      AMY TYRRELL 248-885-8282**

2010-2011

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# *LINKS Supports All Learners*

*A Letter by Anna Leslie*

Dear Parents,

I am Anna Leslie, mother of first grader Jamie Leslie in Mrs. Briona McKinney's Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) classroom and mainstreamed in Miss Deb Woodman's first grade classroom. I am Harlan's Friends of Different Learners representative and the parent representative for LINKS. I also educate our 4th graders across the district on Autism during the Autism Hour on the day of the Disability Workshop.

What a pleasure it has been to educate our children about the disability I live with each and every day with our 7-year old son Jamie. One group I presented to last year was here at Harlan Elementary. I was so touched by how many of the children not only knew Jamie, but had so many wonderful things to say about him. Being a parent of a child with Autism makes me face my own challenges every day. Each day is a struggle, for we work so hard to accomplish things that typical children get naturally. Yet, each day is a miracle especially when those accomplishments have been met. We are truly blessed to have such a loving child. Our teachers, therapists, and school staff give so much to our children daily. I'm honored to be presenting the Autism Hour again this year along with 2 other parents to all our Birmingham Elementary Schools. It is a way for me to give back to our schools and advocate for Autistic children. It is vital to educate our children so that they may be friends and role models to children of this disability. What a privilege it is to work with the 4th graders educating them on Autism. It's one day at a time trying to make a difference.

The LINKS program is designed to "link" typical peers with children of delay (speech, social, or physical abilities), ASD, Downs Syndrome, and all other disabilities. Your child will help them in ways of being a lunch or playground buddy. Your child may be asked to go into the ASD classrooms and help in social settings like playing a board game so that the child with the disability can learn turn taking, etc. More than anything, by being a LINKS member, your child is setting the example of being a typical kid and being a role model to those whom need it. Being a friend to a child with a disability, delay, or someone whom needs a friend will be their most important role in this program. Now that sensitivity training in classrooms has been done by our Social Worker, Todd Barlass, we are ready to launch LINKS.

Jamie is in Miss Woodman's first grade classroom and I am so humbled by his classmates and the wonderful example they are of being a great friend to my little guy. I've seen first hand at field trips, parties and volunteering in the room what caring and helpful children they are. I went in with Todd Barlass to do the sensitivity training on Jamie about Autism. As first graders, they don't understand everything about Autism, but they do understand that Jamie likes them and wants to be their friend even though he can't verbalize it. They know that he needs help and they guide him in ways an adult can't.

If anyone has any questions about Autism, FODL or LINKS and Jamie specifically, please don't hesitate to contact me at jimannaleslie@yahoo.com or 1-248-593-0393.

Thanks for participating in this wonderful program. Together we are going to make great things happen throughout the Birmingham district!

*Anna Leslie, Jamie's Mom*

## *Learn More About Autism*

Have you read about Donald T? He is identified in the annals of psychology as autism 'Case 1'. He is now 77 years old, living a full life in his hometown of Forest, Mississippi. I particularly liked that this article focused on this person's life through adulthood.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/10/autism-8217-s-first-child/8227/1/>

### **2010-2011 LINKS School Representatives**

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#### **District Wide Schools Representation**

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## Teacher Gifts

Don't forget your teacher this holiday season! A Friends of Different Learners membership makes a great gift! The membership costs \$10.00 per person, but as a teacher gift, it also includes a tote bag, a certificate informing the recipient of the membership gift, and a Friends pen. If you are purchasing a membership as a holiday gift, please indicate that on your membership form. If you would like to purchase a gift membership, please contact Diana Moak at [DPMoak@aol.com](mailto:DPMoak@aol.com), with your name, your child's name and the teacher's name by December 1. The gift memberships will be available for pick up at the Holiday Bazaar on December 2 at BCS.

## Fall links

- 1) *Friends of Different Learners Links* to upcoming events — <http://www.friendsofdifferentlearners.org/7.html>
- 2) *CHADD of Eastern Oakland County* — [www.chadd.net/527](http://www.chadd.net/527)  
Monthly meeting and parent-to-parent class information.
- 3) *Birmingham Bloomfield Families In Action (BBFA)* — [www.bbfaprevention.org](http://www.bbfaprevention.org)
- 4) *Michigan Department of Education Grade Level Content Expectations* — [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-28753\\_33232---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-28753_33232---,00.html)
- 5) *Michigan Department of Education High School Content Expectations* — <http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-38924---,00.html>
- 6) *Considerate Texts*. Below is just a partial list of sources of considerate text and low readability high interest titles.
  - Brodart Books* — <http://www.books.brodart.com/Content3.aspx?P=21>
  - Sundance Publishing* — <http://www.sundancepub.com/c/@J3wBR2cZS82bw/Pages/hslit.html>
  - Barbs Books* — <http://www.barbsbooks.com/RemediRd.htm>
  - Firelight Books* — <http://www.firelightbooks.com/>
  - Don Johnston Start to Finish Books* — <http://www.donjohnston.com/products/reading/index.html>
  - Keystone Books from Capstone Publishers* — <http://www.capstonepub.com/product/9781434210753>
  - Orca Book* — <http://www.orcabook.com/showproducts.cfm?FullCat=20>
  - High Interest Low Vocabulary Books* — <http://www.indiana.edu/~reading/ieo/bibs/hilo.html>
  - Engage Students with High Interest Low Readability Books*  
[http://www.youthreach.ie/webwheel/reports/READ%20-%20hi\\_low%20books.pdf](http://www.youthreach.ie/webwheel/reports/READ%20-%20hi_low%20books.pdf)  
[http://www.youthreach.ie/webwheel/reports/READ%20-%20hi\\_low%20books.pdf](http://www.youthreach.ie/webwheel/reports/READ%20-%20hi_low%20books.pdf)