

**THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA  
ABIGAIL VARE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
1198 S. 5<sup>th</sup> STREET  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19147**

**FAMILY HANDBOOK  
2013/2014**



**TOGETHER  
HELPING CHILDREN  
*DO MORE, BE MORE***

**Joanne M. Capriotti, Principal**

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ABIGAIL VARE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
1198 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19148

Joanne M. Capriotti, Principal

215-952-8620  
FAX 215-952-8508

September, 2013

Dear Families,

On behalf of the members of our staff, it is my pleasure to welcome you to Vare Elementary School. This year marks a new beginning for the families of Abigail Vare and the families of George Washington. Many of you were able to join our brief gatherings earlier this year to meet some of the staff and tour the school. We have spent a great deal of the summer working to prepare the building for the students' return. We are anxious to watch our Vare family grow as we begin this new journey. There's nothing like a close family. We are looking to forming close relationships with the families we serve as we strive to provide a solid foundation for our community of learners.

This handbook is intended to provide you with information you may need while your child is a student here at Vare Elementary. In addition to the Vare School Pledge and our daily schedule, we have included several guidelines and policy statements of the School District of Philadelphia and Vare Elementary School. We are looking forward to working with you as the year progresses.

We welcome visitors to our building and ask that you report to the main office to sign in and receive a visitor's badge. To help us maintain security, please be prepared to present identification whenever visiting the building. Remember, **Together Everyone Achieves More**. Please join our team!

Sincerely,

*Joanne Capriotti*  
Principal

## VARE SCHOOL PLEDGE

I am an Abigail Vare student  
Making this pledge today.  
I am here to work and learn  
And grow in my own way.

I'll respect myself and others  
As I do my best each day.  
For Abigail Vare is our learning place.  
We're making a better tomorrow – today.

**SCHOOL COLORS – RED AND WHITE**  
**SCHOOL UNIFORM – NAVY BLUE BOTTOMS, RED TOP**  
**SCHOOL MASCOT – A TEDDY BEAR**

## OUR DAILY SCHEDULE

- 7:45-8:05 Breakfast is served in the lunchroom.
- 8:15 The bell rings and our day begins. Children should be in line when the bell rings.  
Children who do not participate in the breakfast program should not come to school before 8:10.  
**STUDENTS ARE CONSIDERED LATE IF THEY ARE NOT IN THE CLASSROOM BY 8:20.**
- Lunches are served in four settings depending on grade.
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 10:25 - 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> | 11:00 - Kindergarten                        |
| 11:10 – 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> | 12:00 – 7 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> |
| 12:40 – 5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> |   |
- 2:54 Dismissal.

**All students** are dismissed into the schoolyard. For safety and security, please allow the teachers to dismiss the line before calling your child. Please stay beyond the halfway point in the yard.

**Siblings should be instructed to identify a meeting place near the fence to gather younger students. Students are not permitted to reenter the building once their teacher has dismissed the group.**

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## STUDENT SERVICES

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: Pre-K – 3

The mission of this office is to provide high quality, comprehensive developmentally appropriate programs and services for children from birth to age eight. The focus and purpose of our work is to ensure that every child in Philadelphia is safe and health and arrives at school ready to learn and succeed.

### HEAD START

These are comprehensive child development programs that serve our preschool children from ages 3 to 5. They are child-focused programs that strive to increase the level of school readiness of young children. With that in mind, the programs provide a range of individualized services in the areas of education and early childhood development; medical, dental and mental health; nutrition and parent involvement.

### KINDERGARTEN

Abigail Vare is pleased to offer full day kindergarten to our families. The student day begins at 8:15 and ends at 2:54. Parents are asked to bring the children to line in the morning in the yard and meet their kindergartner outside in the same yard at 2:54. **Students will only be released to adults who are listed on the parent location card.**

### HEALTH SERVICES

**Our school nurse is Ms. Marsha Collier.** The school nurse evaluates the health status of each child through growth screenings, vision and hearing screenings, health histories and physical examinations as necessary. Parents who have children with a known health concern should contact the school nurse as soon as possible. The health room is located next to the main office. Ms. Collier can be reached by dialing the main office number 215-952-8620 and waiting for the prompt .

### MESSAGES FOR STUDENTS

Telephone and/or other messages cannot be relayed to students during the day since such action interrupts the instruction of the classroom. If there is a serious emergency, the principal or dean of students should be contacted for assistance.

### Speciality Classes

Students at Vare Elementary enjoy specialty classes that include music, physical education, art, computer science and health. The instructors of these classes are certified in their respective content areas.

## STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

### ENGLISH FOR SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL)

An ESOL program is intensive literacy instruction for students who are non-native speakers of English. The goal of the program is to exit students at a level of English proficiency where they can succeed in the mainstream. ESOL services are currently provided by three full time teachers.

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## **GIFTED SUPPORT**

The gifted support program services students who have demonstrated above average intellectual and creative abilities. Student eligibility for the gifted support program is determined by a multidisciplinary team.

## **MIGRANT EDUCATION PROGRAM**

In accordance with federal, state and local mandates, the school district is responsible to assess a student's eligibility for participation in the Migrant Education Program. This program is a federally funded organization through the U.S. Department of Education and is administered by the PA Department of Education and the Chester County Intermediate Unit. A student is eligible for Migrant Education Services based on a Certificate of Eligibility (COE) which indicates a move across school district lines within the past 36 months and intent to seek temporary or seasonal agricultural employment. Eligible students can receive supplemental education services for up to 3 years of the qualifying arrival date.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

The School District of Philadelphia offers a full continuum of special education programs and services. If you have a child with special needs or a child who is thought to be exceptional, contact the school to receive additional information. Student eligibility is determined by a multidisciplinary team.

# **SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA ABIGAILVARE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL POLICIES AND GUIDELINES**

## **ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY OF PUPILS**

The policy of the School District requires that school-aged students enrolled in the schools of this District attend school regularly, on time, and for the whole school day in accordance with the laws of the State of Pennsylvania. The educational program offered by this District is based upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation.

A **note** signed by a parent/caregiver must be brought to school after each absence, indicating the dates and reasons for the absence. Absences will be coded "**unexcused**" if a note is not provided by the parent/caregiver **within three days** of the absence.

**When a pupil is absent for three or more days due to illness**, a written doctor's note documenting the medical necessity for the absence must be brought to school unless the principal has verified the legitimacy of the absence through other means. **Unexcused absences in excess of three days will automatically begin the truancy investigation process.** When possible, a parent is to notify the school if a pupil is to be absent for several days. Every effort should be made to complete work missed as a result of illness or other absence. **Students are also responsible** for completing work missed as a result of suspension or other disciplinary action.

Students will be marked late if they are not in their classroom by 8:20. **Unexcused lateness** which causes a student to miss all or a substantial part of the day's instructional time may be coded as an unexcused absence. In addition, **more than three latenesses will result in after-school detention.**

## **BEING PREPARED FOR SCHOOL**

Before your child leaves for school, please support him/her to see that all books, pencils and homework have been packed for the day. It is also helpful if bags are checked for those items that students should not bring to school such as toys, cell phones, etc. All children should have a school bag of some kind in which to carry books and other classroom necessities. Teachers will provide a list of necessary classroom supplies.

## **CELL PHONES**

School District policy prohibits the possession and/or use of cell phones, beepers, pagers or other electronic equipment while in school. Extenuating circumstances should be discussed with the Principal.

## **CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT**

The School District of Philadelphia has established a Code of Student Conduct with a zero tolerance policy for conduct that endangers the safety of the school and/or disrupts the educational experience for other children. Students attending Abigail Vare Elementary School are expected to comply with the behavioral standards of the District policy. A complete copy of the Code of Student Conduct is distributed in September of each school year.

## **ACT 26**

The Pennsylvania General Assembly has enacted legislation (ACT 26) which requires all public schools to take a mandatory action in dealing with students who are found to be in possession of weapons. These measures required by ACT 26 are designed as a safeguard to ensure that all public schools are safe havens in which all students may interact in an environment and climate that fosters learning and discourages acts of violence.

## **CORE CURRICULUM**

The School District of Philadelphia adopted a Core Curriculum based on the Pennsylvania State Standards. The Core Curriculum for all major subjects has now been fully implemented. A curriculum based on standards provides teachers and their students with a clear picture of what constitutes proficient work in all schools. Students are provided with appropriate textbooks to complement each of the core academic areas. **The SRC charges each student with the responsibility for the proper care of school property and the textbooks, supplies and equipment entrusted to his/her use.** Students and/or their parents will be assessed penalties for lost or damaged textbooks, supplies and/or equipment as follows: a charge for replacing the item; withholding of a report card; and/or loss of privileges such as participation in sports or other extracurricular activities.

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## **DRESS CODE**

All students in the School District of Philadelphia are required to dress in the manner adopted by their individual schools. At **Abigail Vare Elementary**, the uniform consists of

- Navy blue bottoms (pants, shorts, skorts, skirts, capris or jumpers)
  - **CARGO PANTS, JEANS, CUT OFFS ARE NOT PERMITTED**
- Red collared three-button shirts **OR** Abigail Vare T-shirt
- A black or white low cut sneaker is required. Sandals, boots, ballet flats, etc are not permitted.

### **WARM WEATHER MONTHS – APRIL 1 THROUGH OCTOBER 31**

- Students may wear knee-length navy blue shorts.
- The girls may also wear capris. They must be tailored and free of bows, buckles, strings and so forth.
- A sneaker is still required. Sandals, flip-flops and similar styles are not permitted.

### **COLD WEATHER OPTIONS**

- Navy blue bottoms. If **tights** are worn with skirts, they must be white or navy blue, full length and cover the foot.
- Uniform tops include
  - Long sleeve collared shirt
  - A red or white turtleneck under the short sleeve collared shirt or t-shirt
  - A solid navy blue or red sweater.

### **HOODED SWEATSHIRTS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO BE WORN IN CLASS.**

- When **BOOTS** are worn to school, students are required to change into their sneakers once inside the building.

**PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASS** – Students must wear navy blue sweats/shorts and the Abigail Vare t-shirt. The t-shirt can be purchased in school for \$6.00.

**PLEASE NOTE: STUDENTS MUST BE IN UNIFORM IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN CLASS TRIPS.**

## **EMERGENCY DISMISSAL REQUESTS**

School District policy #103.7 addresses the special release of students during he school day. Requests by parents for early dismissal during school hours may be made **ONLY in case of emergency.**

Please schedule medical and/or dental appointments after school hours.

Should it become necessary to excuse a child during the school day, please send the teacher a written request in the morning. A parent or designated adult **WHO IS LISTED ON THE EMERGENCY CONTACT CARD**, must come to the office, produce proper identification and

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sign the register. The student will then be called to the office. Students will not be released alone or to anyone other than a parent or designated adult. **This is a School District regulation enforced for the safety of our students.**

**STUDENTS WILL NOT BE RELEASED AFTER 2:15.** This is an extremely busy time when students are copying homework, completing other assignments and preparing their materials to go home.

## **EMERGENCY INFORMATION**

Each year the School District distributes an Emergency Information Form which indicates where parents can be located in case of an emergency. **IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT THE SCHOOL OBTAIN THIS INFORMATION.** Whenever a student becomes ill or is injured, it is important that we be able to contact a parent, another family member or emergency contact. Please notify the office if any emergency numbers change. In case of serious emergency, the student will be transported by the police to the nearest hospital.

## **EMERGENCY CLOSING OF SCHOOLS**

### **Citywide School Closings for a Full Day**

If the Superintendent is given reasons in advance not to open schools, every attempt will be made to have information regarding the closing of schools on the air by 5:00 AM. Radio and television stations will refer to **Philadelphia's public schools**. If **public schools are closed citywide for the day**, no transportation will be provided for Philadelphia pupils attending non-public schools.

**When schools cannot open at their regular time and admission is delayed**, a late arrival schedule will be implemented. In this case, transportation will be provided.

### **School Closings During the Day**

If inclement weather or any other emergency leads to a decision to close a school prior to regular dismissal time, **IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE HAVE INFORMATION ON FILE INDICATING WHERE YOUR CHILD SHOULD GO IF YOU ARE NOT HOME.** Please complete and return the form that will be sent home during the month of September.

## **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND SPORTS**

The School District's policy on student participation in all extracurricular activities, with the exception of high school sports, sets forth academic, attendance, citizenship and behavioral requirements for grades 5 through 12. **For students in grades 5 through 8**, the academic requirement is that any student who fails two or more subjects which meet five periods a week is ineligible for participation in sports or extracurricular activities. **Absence from school** on the day of an extracurricular activity will result in the student's ineligibility to participate in that event. **Three or more unexcused absences** during a report card period makes a student ineligible for extracurricular activities for the remainder of that report period and the next report card period. Cuts are included as absences from school for the purposes of athletic and extracurricular eligibility.



## **FOOD SERVICES**

All Philadelphia schools participate in the National School Lunch Program. This provides **breakfast and lunch to all students**. Students at Vare Elementary participate in the Universal Feeding Program that provides **meals at no cost** to schools pre-determined by Federal guidelines.

## **GRADUATION AND PROMOTION POLICY**

Each year the School District of Philadelphia prepares and distributes a current copy of the Promotion and Graduation Policy. **In order to participate in closing exercises** at Abigail Vare Elementary School, eighth grade students must receive passing grades in all four major subjects and have satisfactory behavior ratings when averaged on their final report cards. A student contract detailing these requirements is signed in September of each school year.

## **HOMEWORK TIPS**

Homework is a regular part of school. Teachers provide homework four nights each week. Parents can support their children with homework in the following ways:

1. Set up a regular time and a quiet place for your child to work.
2. Have your child gather all materials needed before beginning.
3. Make a homework calendar to help your child organize long-term assignments.
4. If your child is having trouble with homework, talk to his/her teacher about the problems.
5. Talk to your child about any teacher comments on the homework assignments.

## **SCHOOL TRIPS**

The educational value of a school trip and the safety of pupils are overriding considerations in approving a school trip. All school trips must be approved by the principal and Regional Superintendent. A permission slip for a pupil to take the trip must be signed by the parent and returned to the school prior to the trip. In some cases, transportation costs for school trips may need to be paid by parents. School Off-Premises Special Events Accident Insurance is required for all trips outside Philadelphia. **STUDENTS MUST BE IN UNIFORM IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE.**

## **SPECIALIZED SERVICES**

### **Immunization of Pupils**

All pupils must be completely immunized or exempted before admission to any public, parochial or private school in Pennsylvania. This is required by the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Philadelphia County Board of Health and the School District of Philadelphia. These requirements protect pupils from preventable communicable diseases and their medical and educational complications. **Exemptions are made for religious or medical reasons as follows:** Students need not be immunized if the parent or guardian **objects in writing** to the immunization or religious/ethical grounds. Students need not be immunized if a **physician or his designee provides a written statement** that immunization may be detrimental to the health of the child. When the physician determines that immunization is no longer detrimental to the health of the child, the medical exemption ceases to be valid and the child must be immunized.

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## **School Health Services**

School Health Services personnel will perform/conduct **vision screenings** on all children every year, **growth screenings** every other year and **hearing screenings** in kindergarten and grades 1, 2, 3, 6 and 9. **Scoliosis screenings** are performed in grades 6 and 7.

**Physical examinations and health histories** are required upon entry to school and again in grades 6 and 9. Parents are expected to have these examinations performed by their primary health care providers. Your family doctor is the best person to perform this checkup and provide all necessary health care. If you would like help in finding a family doctor, clinic or specialist, or if you have other concerns about your child's health, please call the school nurse. In some instances, a school nurse practitioner or school physician will conduct the examination in accordance with the guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics, which requires the child to be unclothed. Genitalia may be examined at the time of the physical. Parents are invited and urged to be present.

**Dental examinations** are required for kindergarten and grades 3 and 7. Parents are expected to have these examinations completed by their family dentist.

The school nurse can also help you with **information about health insurance**. There are free and low-cost insurance plans for which your family may qualify.

## **Prescription and Non-prescription Medication in School**

Parents who wish to have prescription medication dispensed to their child during school hours should ask the school nurse for a **“Request for Administration of Medication”** (Form MED-1). **The form must be filled out and signed by the child's doctor and the parent.** When the school nurse is not in the school, other members of the staff that have been trained by the nurse, may give the medication under the guidelines established by the School District of Philadelphia.

If your child has any health problems or is taking prescription medication for any reason, even if the medication is not taken in school, it is important for you to let the school nurse know about it. **Over-the-counter or short-term medications may not be sent to school with your child without a physician's prescription and a note from the parent.**

**Possession of medication without authorization by the school nurse will result in disciplinary action. The sharing of medication with another student will be deemed an aggravated offense under the Code of Student Conduct.**

## **Child Abuse and Neglect**

It is the policy of the School Reform Commission of the School District of Philadelphia that all of its employees are to be aware of, and comply with, the Child Protective Services Law of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This law makes it mandatory for School District employees to report suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect to the principal or building administrator, who must file a report with the Department of Human Services. Compliance with the laws of Pennsylvania and the policies of the School District will serve to protect everyone concerned.

## **Homeless, Shelter and Emergency Services**

Homeless children have the right to go to school. The School District's Homeless Children's Initiative works to remove any barriers that prevent homeless children from being

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successful in school. A child whose family becomes homeless may remain in their current school or may transfer to another school if it is closer to the shelter. The receiving school should not prevent or delay the enrollment of a homeless child by requiring proof of residency, immunization or medical records. SEPTA tokens may be provided for homeless students living more than one mile from school. The Office of Specialized Services will also provide uniform and clothing assistant to these students.

Emergency funds may also be available to students who are experiencing crisis. We do not give emergency funds to families. Only students who attend our schools are eligible. It is misleading and many people called us last year because of this. To be eligible for emergency funds, a student must be enrolled in a Philadelphia public school (grades 1-12) and demonstrate an emergency financial demand that is a result of a sudden hardship or major event that negatively impacts the student's family

## **TRANSPORTATION POLICY**

Free transportation is provided to eligible students based on certain criteria. The mode of transportation (school bus or SEPTA) is determined by Transportation Services in conjunction with the school administration. A student must be a resident of Philadelphia, and also fall into one of the following categories:

1. Be designated by the Office of Specialized Services as a participant in a Special Education class, whose participation requires that transportation is needed to enable the student to get to school.
2. Live more than a mile from his/her school and participate in the voluntary school desegregation program of the School District of Philadelphia.
3. Be in grades 1 through 6 and live one and one-half miles or more from the assigned school.
4. Be in grades 1 through 8, whose route to school is determined to be hazardous by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.
5. Be assigned by the Office of the Chief Executive Officer to attend a school other than his/her regularly assigned school for reasons of overcrowded conditions, and be in need of transportation as determined by the School District's Transportation Division.
6. By recommendation of the Chief Executive Officer to the School Reform Commission, be one whose extenuating circumstances dictate an extraordinary need for District-provided transportation.

**STUDENTS WHO RIDE THE BUS** are expected to enter the yard upon their arrival and go to their line. If participating in the breakfast program, bus students are to go directly to the lunchroom where adult supervision is provided. Once finished eating, students are to return to the yard for morning admissions.

**AT DISMISSAL**, bus students are to assemble in the auditorium in their designated seating area to wait for the bus. When the bus arrives, all assigned students must board the bus. If for any reason a parent is making alternative arrangements for student pick up, the principal must be informed in writing.

### **School Bus Rules**

- a. **Be at the bus stop ten minutes early.** You should not run to board the bus.
- b. **Wait for the bus in an orderly fashion in your assigned area.** Pushing, shoving or creating a disturbance might result in injuries.
- c. **Take your seat immediately.** Remain seated while the bus is moving or when instructed to do so by the bus driver or other authorized individual(s) assigned for that purpose.

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- d. **Enter and leave the bus only at the front door and only after the bus has come to a full stop.** (In case of emergency, you may be given other instructions.)
- e. **Keep your head and arms inside the bus windows at all times.** Throwing objects, no matter how small, is extremely dangerous.
- f. **Save your lunch and snacks until you arrive at your destination.** Eating and drinking are not allowed on school buses.
- g. **Avoid shouting and other loud noises.** In addition to disturbing others, loud noises could distract the driver and cause unsafe operation of the bus.
- h. **Leave the bus in a quiet and orderly manner.** Join your schoolmates in the schoolyard or go directly to class if school has begun.
- i. **Be very careful when crossing streets.** Be sure that you look in both directions.
- j. **Pay attention to the instructions of the bus driver or other authorized individuals.** They are responsible adults concerned about your safety.

Please understand that students who violate these rules may lose their riding privileges for a period of time, or permanently. (In the event that a student is removed from a bus, it will be the responsibility of the parents to make provisions for transporting their child to and from school.) Parents are also reminded that under Pennsylvania State Law they are not permitted to board a school bus without permission.

## **TRESPASSING ON SCHOOL DISTRICT PREMISES**

1. The Trespassing Ordinance, Philadelphia Code of Ordinances, Chapter 10-824, was passed by City Council to prevent unauthorized entry on school premises.

The provisions of the ordinance are as follows:

- a. No one may enter any facility of the School District of Philadelphia without the consent of the person in charge of the facility.
- b. Failure to obtain consent within fifteen minutes of entering any facility or the creation of a disturbance may be considered a violation of the ordinance.
- c. Employees and pupils of the School District of Philadelphia may not enter any facility to which they are not regularly assigned without the consent of the person in charge.
- d. Persons who violate this ordinance are subject to a fine of not more than \$300 and imprisonment for not more than ninety days.
- e. Persons found in rooms other than the office or in hallways not located between an authorized entrance and the office will be considered in violation of this ordinance.

2. Persons asked to leave the building or who have been given a written notice of exclusion, including students on suspension, transferred from the school or expelled from the District, are subject to arrest and prosecution under the defiant trespass section of the Pennsylvania Crimes Code.

## **COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**

### **FLEISCHER ART MEMORIAL**

The Fleischer Community Partnerships in the Arts program is committed to working closely with the community to provide high quality arts programs that integrate the school district curriculum in a meaningful way and enhance student learning and performance. Through Fleischer’s artist residency programs, our students have the opportunity to work for a period of six weeks with a teaching artist in project specifically designed to support a particular area of the curriculum.

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## **PHILADELPHIA READS PROGRAM**

Philadelphia Reads Program creates a partnership between the Philadelphia School District and surrounding businesses (Power Partners). Varying students participate by being partnered with a coach to read for approximately 45-60 minutes each week. The program extends from October through June. Our Power Partners include the law firm of *Saul Ewing* and the staff of *The Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas*. Through this program, our students have the opportunity to develop a love of reading while nurturing a bond with an adult mentor.

## **READING BUDDIES**

Another opportunity for our students to bond with a member of the larger community is found in the relationship developed through the Reading Buddies Program. This program partners our students with residents and staff from the Olde City Presbyterian Apartments. Our students travel to the complex once each week to spend 45-60 minutes reading with their buddies.